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4 January 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs
FROM: Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT: Comments on Executive Summary of NIE 11-3/8-79

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25X1 1. Having finally just completed my review of the Executive Summary of NIE 11-3/8-79 I want to say I think this is really a superior piece of work. I particularly like Section D, with emphasis on paragraphs 35 and 36. (Incidentally, the title of Section D may be a bit misleading since it's not only Soviet intercontinental capabilities but US that are compared in this section.) It seems to me this section puts the overall strategic issue into much better balance. At least I read it as saying that throughout this period we're both more than capable of mortally wounding the other even after absorbing a surprise first strike.

25X1 2. My first substantive recommended change would be to expand paragraph 1 slightly to bring out the conclusions in paragraphs 35 and 36 in a summary way. In short, in paragraph 1 we talk about Soviet strategic capabilities continuing to grow relative to those of the United States and NATO. They improve most in certain areas, e.g., hard-target potential. In addition, the net impact of this is still only that we can both kill each other many times over. In some sense it's like saying if the Washington Redskins had Joe Theismann and four other equivalent quarterbacks they would be improving relative to the Dallas Cowboys. In sum, I'd like to make paragraph 1 about a page or a page and one-half and make it a summary.

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3. I have two disappointments with the paper. One is that we retreated from hard-target potential into missile RVs and bomber weapons. Perhaps I agreed to this previously, but I certainly don't understand it now. We're accepting all of the brickbats from Defense for having a

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"net assessment" in here, but we're doing our residual calculations all with static indicators. It seems to me that while there isn't a big difference between lethal area potential and megatonnage (except that you can put a meaningful line on the chart for lethal area potential to indicate its relative value, i.e., comparison of potential with geographical area in both countries), the same is not true with hard-target potential. I would suspect that the curves for US hard-target potential would be more favorable to us especially in the near term than are the curves of comparative missile RVs and bomber weapons. Yes, the Soviets are closing the gap in accuracy but surely it is going to take some time to replace all of those warheads even on the SS-11s, etc. (Incidentally, I'm curious as to whether our estimate of how soon they will have reequipped all of the -18s and -19s is holding firm this year.)

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4. Secondly, the description of why the Defense people disagree with us on displaying the residual calculations hasn't improved at all since last year; in fact, I think it is worse. I think we should be able to improve the statement of this thorny issue by now. Even if we're not ready to use the SAGA work, isn't it far enough along to tell us whether there is a major difference in conclusion from their approach and ours. I doubt that there is and, if that is the case, it would expose the fact that DoD's complaint is not a substantive issue but a matter of turf.

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5. Finally, I'm also disappointed in the several other expressions of dissenting views. After almost three years, I just can't get the idea across that putting the footnotes into the text is not intended to be a matter of doing that literally. The point is to express a comparison within the text of the differing views. This we have avoided in all of the footnotes.

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6. When we print the NIE, and particularly the Executive Summary, I would like to be sure that the charts fold out from the text so that you can look at them while reading even two to three pages of text that explain and interpret the charts.

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7. Good work. My other notes are annotated but are less than in previous years (I think).

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for
STANSFIELD TURNER

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