

15. NI IIM 91-10006, November 1991, *Soviet Tactical Nuclear Forces and Gorbachev's Nuclear Pledges: Impact, Motivations, and Next Steps (Key Judgments only)*



Director of
Central
Intelligence

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**Soviet Tactical Nuclear
Forces and Gorbachev's
Nuclear Pledges: Impact,
Motivations, and Next Steps** (C-NF)

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*Information available as of November 1991 was used
in the preparation of this Memorandum.*

*The following intelligence organizations participated
in the preparation of this Memorandum:*

The Central Intelligence Agency
The Defense Intelligence Agency
The National Security Agency
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also participating:


The Director of Naval Intelligence,
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**Soviet Tactical Nuclear
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- If Gorbachev's *unilateral* initiatives to reduce tactical nuclear warheads are carried out, *almost 75 percent* of Moscow's inventory of these warheads will be *destroyed or placed in central storage.* ~~(S-NF)~~
 - If Gorbachev's *reciprocal* proposals are implemented, all of the Soviet inventory of tactical nuclear warheads will be *destroyed or placed in central storage.* ~~(S-NF)~~
 - The elimination process will take at least several years. ~~(S-NF)~~
 - Soviet arms control positions probably are not fully worked out, but in the future Soviet negotiators are likely to become more flexible and abandon most old agenda items with the exception of dual-capable aircraft and the nuclear weapons of other countries. ~~(S-NF)~~
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Key Judgments

The Potential Impact of Gorbachev's Proposals

The withdrawal of many Soviet units from Eastern Europe and reductions in the size and number of units within the Atlantic-to-the-Urales zone that have occurred over the past two years already have caused a sharp decline in the number of tactical nuclear systems in Soviet forces opposite NATO.

~~(S/NF)~~

President Gorbachev's 5 October proposals, if implemented, further advance that process. We estimate that unilateral measures will lead to the destruction of [REDACTED] more than half the tactical nuclear warheads in Moscow's inventory. [REDACTED] tactical naval nuclear warheads will be moved to central storage. (S/NF)

A unilateral reduction on this scale will:

- Eliminate the nuclear capability of Soviet Ground Forces.
- Increase the amount of time the Soviet Navy will require to arm its ships, submarines, and aircraft with nuclear munitions.
- Take at least several years to implement. ~~(S/NF)~~

Reciprocal measures proposed by Gorbachev would, if implemented:

- Eliminate the tactical nuclear capability of the Soviet Navy.
- Limit the air forces' quick-response tactical nuclear capability by placing warheads in central storage. ~~(S/NF)~~

Motivations Behind the Proposals

The speed and content of Gorbachev's response to President Bush's initiative of 27 September reflect the high priority Soviet officials place on nuclear security:

- Elimination of all nuclear artillery projectiles and short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) warheads will remove most of the tactical nuclear warheads located in non-Russian republics.
- Gorbachev is using the US proposal to reassert himself as a reliable and credible negotiating partner, but his capability to fulfill completely his own proposals is questionable. ~~(S/NF)~~

The Future of Soviet Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Negotiating Positions

Dismantling and destroying nuclear warheads is a complex and time-consuming process, and any new union, therefore, is likely to retain a tactical nuclear capability for the foreseeable future. ~~(S/NF)~~

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Because of continuing improvements in conventional weapon systems, the senior Soviet leadership has probably concluded that tactical nuclear warheads can be eliminated or stored without significantly compromising the war-fighting capabilities they will require. ~~(S/NF)~~

The Soviets probably have not had enough time to think out fully their negotiating positions. We believe the Soviets are likely to:

- Be less insistent on old agenda items and display considerable flexibility, while trying to preserve the option to revisit issues, especially those affected by evolving relations between the center and the republics.
- Maintain a low-key approach to further negotiations to avoid kindling the interest of republic leaders in becoming full players in formal talks. ~~(S/NF)~~

Carryovers from the old Soviet agenda, however, will include concern about US dual-capable aircraft and inclusion of other countries in discussions of tactical nuclear systems. This posture may reflect a greater concern about proliferation to the south and on the continent than about the United Kingdom and France. ~~(S/NF)~~

At a minimum, the Soviets will seek a process of consultations during all phases of the implementation of US and Soviet reductions. They probably will also seek technical—and perhaps financial—aid in dismantling and destroying warheads. ~~(S/NF)~~

Disarray in Moscow and evolving political relations will complicate the negotiating process for some time. Elements in the military may still be recalcitrant, and the republics—especially Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine—want a greater say in the Kremlin's nuclear decisionmaking. ~~(S/NF)~~



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