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Note: The following report is provided for information and represents a preliminary DIA assessment on the topic.

Subject: Anticipated Soviet Response to U.S. Strategic Nuclear Forces Initiatives (U)

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
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Introduction (U)

1. (~~S/NF~~) Major initiatives regarding U.S. strategic nuclear posture outlined by President Bush on 27 September, 1991, have elicited a cautious but upbeat initial response from the Soviets. While elements of the President's initiative will, in all likelihood, be accepted by the Soviets, others run counter to their fundamental strategic nuclear force structure and capabilities. In these areas of probable disagreement, Soviet counter-proposals mitigating perceived U.S. advantages can be anticipated.

Areas of Probable Agreement (U)

2. (~~S/NF~~) Offensive Forces. Regarding offensive strategic nuclear forces, the U.S. can expect or has already received initial Soviet agreement in four areas: 1) Removing heavy bombers from alert status; 2) Removing from alert status some silo-based ICBMs slated for destruction under START; 3) Removing nuclear sea-based land-attack cruise missiles (SLCMs) from submarine platforms and storing those weapons at central depots, and; 4) Initiating bilateral security talks on nuclear physical security and command and control issues.

a. (~~S/NF~~) Heavy Bombers. On 30 September, the Soviets announced that their bomber alert status had been reduced. The importance of this agreement may have been overstated by the Soviets, as it is believed that the Soviets have never held their heavy bombers in an alert status comparable to the U.S. DIA assesses that the Soviet heavy bomber force can be uploaded and fully generated to alert status in 12 to 24 hours.

b. (~~S/NF~~) Silo-based ICBMs. On 1 October, a Soviet spokesman stated that some of the intercontinental ballistic missiles covered by the START treaty will be removed from alert status. Removal of silo-based ICBMs from alert has yet to be confirmed by U.S. intelligence, although this is particularly difficult to discern given the lack of observable signatures. It is anticipated that the Soviet statement will affect over 300 older single RV systems, the SS-11 and SS-13, which would be comparable to the U.S. Minuteman II proposal.

c. (~~S/NF~~) Sea-based Land Attack Cruise Missiles. Although the Soviets have yet to state agreement regarding the removal of nuclear-armed SLCMs (SS-N-21 SLCMs) from submarines, they are likely to respond with a similar proposal. This move will have only a negligible impact on Soviet readiness levels, as the SS-N-

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21 SLCM has never been deployed on operational patrol.

d. ~~(S/NF)~~ Physical Security and Command and Control. The Soviets quickly issued a positive response to President Bush's initiative on bilateral nuclear security talks encompassing physical security and command and control issues. They appear willing to engage in discussions and data exchanges with the U.S. on how security is ensured and maintained in their nuclear forces. They probably will be more forthcoming on issues related to physical and procedural security measures, and personnel reliability. However, they may exhibit greater reluctance to share technical details of nuclear release procedures, strategic command and control and locking device mechanics. In addition, they are likely to use such a forum to request reciprocal information and assurances on the security of U.S. nuclear forces, citing the lack of locking features on U.S. SLBMs, and previous safety problems with the U.S. short-range attack missile and artillery shells in Europe.

3. ~~(S/NF)~~ Defensive Forces. In the area of strategic defense, while the Soviet position is less clear than in offensive weapons-related issues, the U.S. initiative may encourage Soviet flexibility toward the U.S. Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS) system.

a. ~~(S/NF)~~ SDI/GPALS. Statements by Soviet civilian and military officials prior to and subsequent to the President's speech indicate the Soviets may be ready to soften some of their earlier objections to GPALS; however, any Soviet response will probably reflect continuing Soviet concern over SDI and the unilateral deployment of a US ballistic missile defense system outside of the Soviet interpretation of the 1972 ABM Treaty. As part of their response to the President's initiative, the Soviets may push for sharing SDI/GPALS technology and/or the placement of GPALS under the jurisdiction of an international body such as the United Nations.

b. ~~(S/NF)~~ Missile Warning Centers. The initial Soviet reaction will likely be to offer to establish either joint missile attack warning centers or at least to share missile launch indications data. A number of Soviet writers have suggested this option in the last few years, and President Gorbachev proposed this during the G-7 meeting in London.

Areas of Probable Disagreement (U)

4. ~~(S/NF)~~ Reduction in MIRVed ICBMs. Despite Soviet proposals to reduce the number MIRVs on ballistic missiles, the Soviets are unlikely to agree to the US proposal to eliminate all Mirved ICBMs in the near future. They perceive their land-based ICBMs as their most accurate, responsive and reliable strategic systems. A radical reduction of the land-based ICBM force would

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require the Soviets to rely on the navy and air force to carry the bulk of the nuclear deterrent. The Soviets have much less confidence in the survivability and reliability of their SLBM and heavy bomber/ALCM forces. These systems also are more expensive to maintain and operate than land-based ICBMs.

a. ~~(S/NF)~~ The Soviets are more likely to counter with a proposal which would limit MIRVed systems for both ICBMs and SLBMs. Such a proposal would embrace the concept of deep reductions and their concept of strategic stability while maintaining the core of their strategic force.

b. ~~(S/NF)~~ The Soviets currently have an ICBM force of which approximately 90 percent of the warheads are on MIRVed systems. Under START, the Soviets were already planning to eliminate a large number of older ICBMs including MIRVed systems such as the SS-17, SS-19 and half the SS-18 force, while modernizing the remainder of the force. The Soviets may agree to eliminate the older ICBM systems at an accelerated pace. This would include some 44 SS-17, 300 SS-19, and 154 SS-18 MIRVed ICBMs as well as 40 SS-13 and 296 SS-11 single warhead/multiple re-entry vehicle ICBMs. Their willingness or ability to accelerate the elimination of these silos is constrained by their targeting requirements and the availability of sufficient assets and skilled personnel to accomplish this task. This also may also be constrained by future arrangements with the republics on the basing of strategic forces.

c. ~~(S/NF)~~ The Soviets are unlikely to destroy the remaining 154 SS-18 and the 92 SS-24 which are the core of their modernized START ICBM force. It is possible, however, that the Soviets might be willing to trade these systems for similar U.S. systems. For example, the 56 silo SS-24 could be traded for the 50 Peacekeeper. The SS-18 heavy ICBM could be traded for major concessions on the U.S. SSBN/SLBMs or the heavy bomber/ALCM force.

5. ~~(S/NF)~~ Compensation for MIRVed ICBM Reductions. The Soviet ability to compensate for deep reductions in the ICBM force through expansion of their SLBM force is limited. Intelligence reports and statements by the Soviets themselves have suggested delays in the construction of SSBNs. These occurrences, coupled with expected long-term defense cutbacks may result in a slowdown in plans to build a new fourth generation SSBN as well as cancellation of at least one of the three submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) programs currently estimated in development. Nonetheless, the size of the SSBN force will continue to decline, most likely at a more rapid pace, as older boats reach the end of their useful life and are not replaced on a one-for-one basis.

6. ~~(S/NF)~~ While the Soviet bomber force is projected to increase

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under START, this will probably not occur at a pace sufficient to offset the loss of a large number of ICBM warheads. The Intelligence Community has assessed that the Blackjack program probably will be completed with the deployment of 40 aircraft. DIA does not expect the Bear H force to exceed 100 aircraft. Under START the Soviets will primarily increase the number of ALCMs by increasing the number of ALCMs on existing aircraft as opposed to building new ALCM capable aircraft. This probably limits their ability to expand the force beyond the 1700 air-delivered weapons projected under START.

7. ~~(S/NF)~~ ICBM Modernization. President Bush called upon the Soviets to terminate all programs for future MIRVed ICBMs and to limit ICBM modernization to one single warhead missile. Soviet ICBM development programs currently include the SS-24 follow-on, and the SS-25 follow-on. Although the U.S. proposal is somewhat ambiguous, it will likely require the Soviets to cancel the SS-24 follow-on program. The only remaining ICBM modernization program would be the SS-25 follow-on program. Under the U.S. proposal, the Soviets could accelerate the SS-25 flight test program to achieve IOC before an agreement is completed, or terminate the SS-25 follow-on program. The Soviets are likely to counter with a proposal that limits modernization of all strategic forces which would place fewer restrictions on the Soviets while capturing key U.S. programs to include the U.S. D-5 and B-2 programs.

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