



*President George H.W. Bush announces his Presidential Nuclear Initiatives in a prime-time speech from the Oval Office, September 27, 1991. Credit: National Defense University Press.*

Unilateral U.S. nuclear pullback in 1991 matched by rapid Soviet cuts

**Declassified documents tell inside story of “most spontaneous and dramatic reversal” of the arms race**

**Bush initiatives took up Gorbachev proposals from years earlier; combined effect produced “real disarmament at lightning speed”**

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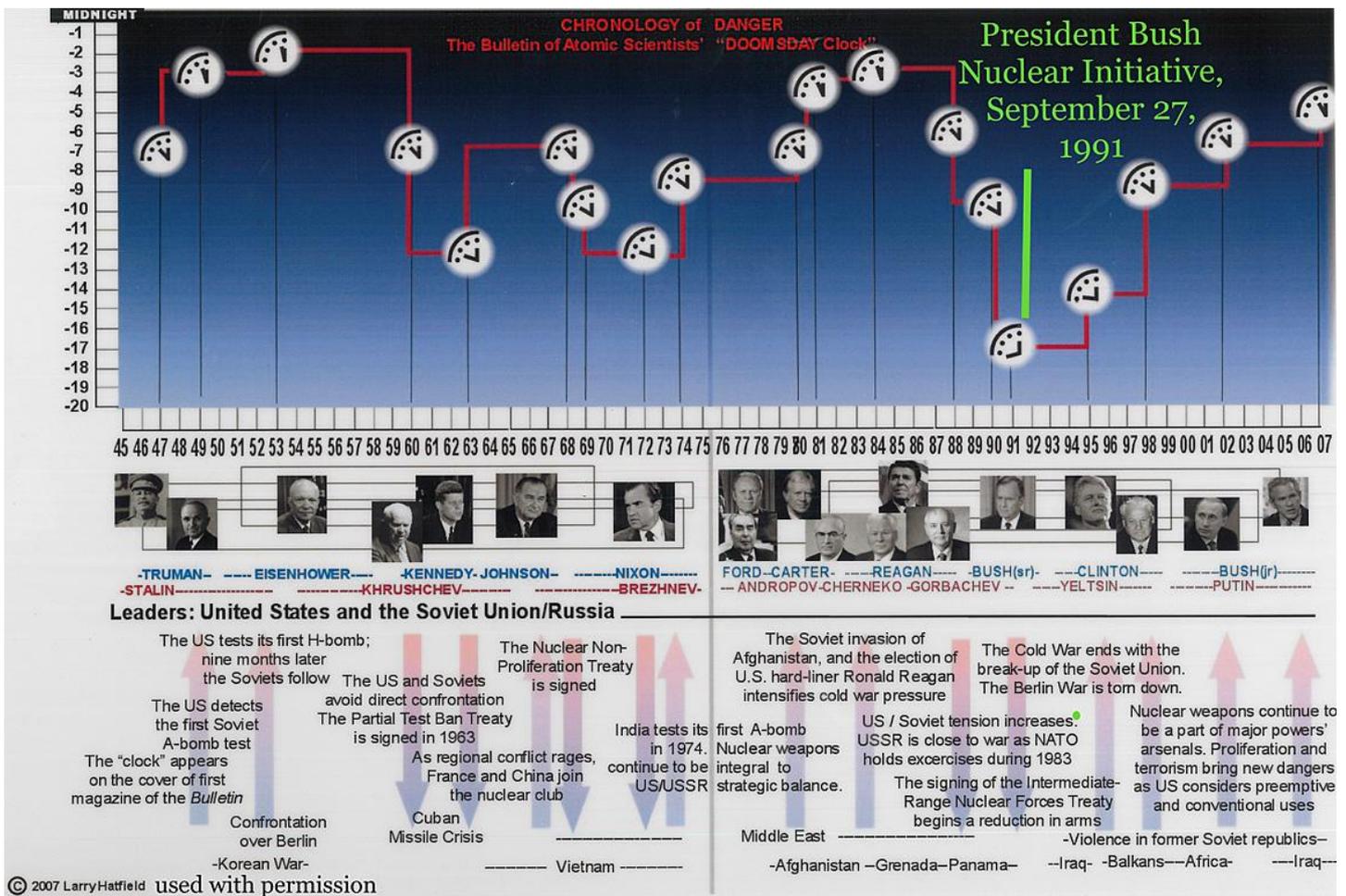
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**Washington D.C., September 30, 2016** – The unilateral nuclear withdrawals announced by President George H.W. Bush 25 years ago this week drew an eager response from Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to produce what experts call “the most spontaneous and dramatic reversal” ever of the nuclear arms race, according to newly declassified documents from Soviet and U.S. files posted today by the National Security Archive to mark the anniversary of the Bush initiative.

The documents include the verbatim transcripts of Bush’s September 27, 1991 phone call to Gorbachev giving the Soviet leader a heads-up on the imminent White House announcement, and Gorbachev’s phone call with Bush on October 5 spelling out the dramatic Soviet nuclear pullbacks that matched and in some cases exceeded the American moves.

Also in today’s posting – just declassified this year – are the actual Pentagon orders to U.S. military commanders on carrying out the nuclear withdrawals, the State Department reports on follow up talks in Moscow, translations of the Soviet transcripts of those talks, and internal Soviet assessments of how much the USSR would save from cutting the nuclear weapons involved in the initiative.

The Bush initiative and the Gorbachev response, together with the post-Cold War cooperation between the Soviet Union and the U.S. on a wide range of issues, produced in 1991 the largest step back from nuclear midnight ever marked on the famous “Doomsday Clock” of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.



*The Bush initiatives helped produce the biggest step back from midnight in the history of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' famous Doomsday Clock. Credit: Larry Hatfield 2007, used by permission.*

Pulitzer-Prize-winning author David Hoffman later wrote of the September initiative, "Only weeks before, in St. Vladimir's Hall in the Kremlin, Bush and Gorbachev had signed a strategic arms treaty [START I] that took nearly a decade to negotiate and allowed seven years to implement; now they both acted immediately, without a single negotiating session. Nothing was binding, and nothing was verifiable, but it was the most spontaneous and dramatic reversal of the Cold War arms race." (*The Dead Hand*, p. 383) Hoffman called the process "real disarmament at lightning speed."

According to the subsequent memoir account written by Bush with his national security adviser, Gen. Brent Scowcroft, the president came up with the idea for a unilateral move on nuclear weapons while vacationing at the family home in Kennebunkport, Maine. The August 1991 coup attempt against Gorbachev had signaled the beginning of the end for his tenure, and for the Soviet Union; Bush was eager to make progress while he still had Gorbachev as a partner; command and control of nuclear weapons was a real concern in a disintegrating USSR; and Bush told his National Security Council on September 5, 1991, that he wanted a "handful" of proposals that "would put us on the offense." (*A World Transformed*, pp. 539-547)

Scowcroft came up with the idea of getting rid of all tactical nuclear weapons (except air-launched ones), as he later wrote, because doing so would address several concerns: German opposition to short-range nukes there (they would all explode on German soil in the newly unified Germany), South Korean requests to lessen the U.S. nuclear presence there as part of engaging North Korea, and U.S. Navy problems over port visits in anti-nuclear countries like Japan and New Zealand. Other parts of the Bush initiatives took bombers and missiles off alert, pressed de-MIRVing of missiles (most controversial in Moscow, because of the higher proportion of MIRVed ICBMs in the Soviet triad), and canceled some nuclear modernization programs (the U.S. Senate had already voted to stop several on budgetary grounds).

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the USSR

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Mikhail Gorbachev, USSR President  
Interpreter: Dmitri Zarechnak  
Notetaker: Ed A. Hewett, NSC Staff

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: September 27, 1991, 9:22 - 9:50 am  
Oval Office

The President: Mikhail, how are you? (U)

President Gorbachev: George, hello. I received your letter. I very much want to talk. (U)

The President: Good. First, I want to extend my cordial best wishes. I would like to go through the talking points and get a reaction to them. (U)

President Gorbachev: OK. In general I discussed them with my colleagues from the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and asked them to give me a preliminary analysis. I listened to the experts. (U)

This is a major initiative of the President of the United States. That is my opinion, and that of my closest associates. There is only one thing: you are doing this unilaterally, and you call on us to consider our steps. Is that right? (U)

The President: Yes. Correct. We'll spell out what we do. In some categories, we'll spell out how the Soviet Union could take similar steps. For example, we cancel ICBM's except for single warheads, and would like to say that the Soviet Union is doing the same thing. (U)

On dismantling nuclear warheads, where I propose we open discussions on the safe dismantling of nuclear warheads, on how we might enhance the safety and security of nuclear weapons, and how to improve nuclear command and control. I'd like to say you and I agree that this would be a good thing to do. (U)

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*The verbatim transcript of President Bush's phone call to President Gorbachev giving him a heads-up on the imminent nuclear announcement, September 27, 1991.*

The documents show that top State Department officials conceded during talks in Moscow that Bush's presidential nuclear initiatives picked up offers that Soviet leader Gorbachev had made years earlier. Gorbachev had even proposed a "third zero" on short-range nuclear weapons when he negotiated the "double zero" on intermediate-range missiles with President Reagan in 1987.

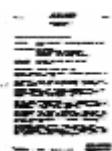
Gorbachev had explicitly raised naval arms control at the Malta summit in 1989, and earlier with Reagan's secretary of state, George Shultz, in February 1988 – only to be roundly rejected by the Americans. Records from the Malta summit to be published in November in the National Security Archive's latest volume, *The Last Superpower Summits* (CEU Press), show some American officials argued that tactical nuclear weapons only equalized what were otherwise two very unequal navies (ie. getting rid of them was in the U.S. interest), but reflexive turf protection by U.S. military leaders kept naval arms control off the table until it was almost too late for Gorbachev to reciprocate.

Gorbachev's October 5 response came as the result of an extraordinary internal debate in which Soviet generals opposed the loss of MIRVs, but saw the value of pulling back tactical nuclear weapons from the Soviet republics that were on the verge of independence – especially Ukraine. Gorbachev went beyond the American proposals by including a nuclear testing moratorium, reducing the Soviet army by 700,000 troops, and proposing to destroy – not just withdraw to storage – Soviet tactical nuclear warheads.

Gorbachev's aide Andrei Grachev later wrote that "President Bush's nuclear initiative gave Gorbachev the chance to take up his position as the head of one of the world's two nuclear superpowers" at a time when the August 1991 "putsch" had reduced the USSR to a "temporary governmental structure." (*Final Days*, p. 26-27) Grachev described the committee that developed the Soviet response as including the foreign ministry, the defense ministry, the KGB, and two political advisers, Alexander Yakovlev and Yury Ryzhov, to serve as "'democratic counterweights' to the corporate interests of the military-industrial complex."

Today's posting includes remarkable fly-on-the-wall accounts of the internal Soviet debates by Gorbachev's national security adviser, Anatoly Chernyaev, and a never-before-published assessment by Vitaly Katayev, deputy head of the Defense Industry Department of the Soviet Central Committee, of the USSR's potential savings from the unilateral and reciprocal arms reductions.

## READ THE DOCUMENTS



### [Document 01](#)

**White House, "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush," Secret, September 27, 1991**

**Source:** George Bush Presidential Library

President Bush called Gorbachev on September 27 to give him a heads-up on the imminent announcement of the nuclear initiatives, details of which were also contained in a Bush letter dated September 26 that had just been delivered to Gorbachev. Here in the American transcript of the call (written up by NSC staffer Ed Hewett), Gorbachev reacts to the U.S. nuclear proposal very positively, calling it "a historic initiative, comparable to Reykjavik" (the famous summit with President Reagan where the two leaders came close to agreeing on nuclear abolition) He wants to know if the initiatives are unilateral or if they call on the USSR to propose reciprocal steps. Bush confirms and suggests reciprocity is expected on such issues as dismantling all MIRVed missiles (many of them stationed in Ukraine and Kazakhstan) and on opening discussions on safe dismantling of nuclear weapons and improving nuclear command and control. Gorbachev inquires about nuclear testing, about which Bush says he is "reluctant." Gorbachev also proposes creating a group to discuss strategic stability, which Bush accepts. To Gorbachev's question whether other nuclear powers are expected to reciprocate, Bush responds with a phrase, which Gorbachev cannot object to: "This is more a U.S.-Soviet superpower relationship."



## [Document 02](#)

**Excerpt from Anatoly S. Chernyaev Diary, September 27, 1991**

**Source:** National Security Archive

Chernyaev vividly describes preparations for Gorbachev's phone conversation with Bush on September 27 and the initial discussions of the U.S. nuclear initiative with representatives of the military, including Chief of the General Staff General Vladimir Lobov and Deputy Foreign Minister and veteran arms control negotiator Viktor Karpov. Chernyaev characteristically ridicules the military's "outdated" outlook and conspiratorial thinking that Bush is out to take advantage of the USSR, to "deceive and humiliate us." He believes diplomatic "digging" into precise numbers and balances prevents real progress and that Gorbachev should reply more appropriately to Bush's sweeping initiative. He wishes that his president had "politicians-generals," an implied reference to Brent Scowcroft, Bush's national security adviser. Chernyaev prepares talking points for upcoming Gorbachev-Bush conversations and eventually persuades the generals. He notes that Gorbachev kept them present during his conversation with Bush.



## [Document 03](#)

**Department of Defense, Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments, "Reducing the United States Nuclear Arsenal," Secret/Formerly Restricted Data, September 28, 1991**

**Source:** DOD. Freedom of Information Act release to the National Security Archive

This memorandum was prepared in order to ensure the timely implementation of President Bush's nuclear initiatives. The secretary of defense instructs secretaries of the military departments, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the undersecretaries of defense for command, control communications and intelligence to undertake the necessary steps. The comprehensive plan is broken down by sections and types of weapons. Fact sheets provide characteristics and number of systems to be decreased or eliminated together with the nuclear initiatives' goals.



**[Document 04](#)**

**Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Telegram, "Nuclear Force Initiatives," Secret, Undated [Circa late September 1991]**

**Source:** DOD Freedom of Information Act release to the National Security Archive

This telegram from the CJCS provides general information about the president's nuclear initiatives, instructs chiefs of staff and services on implementation measures and instructs CINCs and services to provide planning information to the Joint Staff. It underscores that nuclear deterrence remains a "cornerstone of U.S. defense policy" and that the remaining nuclear forces need to be kept modern and effective. Among the goals requiring bilateral agreement, the U.S. is seeking elimination of all MIRVed ICBMs. Among the unilateral initiatives, all ground-launched nuclear weapons are to be destroyed, and naval tactical weapons to be removed from ships and taken to central storage sites, but not destroyed. The telegram states several times that "the capability to employ naval nuclear weapons being placed in storage will be retained" and asks chiefs of services to prepare nuclear annexes that would include the possible regeneration and redeployment of sea-based tactical nuclear weapons. The telegram concludes by emphasizing the U.S. nuclear mission and the need to train for it, and thus asks the chiefs for their thoughts on nuclear war planning under the new circumstances.



**[Document 05](#)**

**White House, "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush," Secret, October 5, 1991**

**Source:** George H.W. Bush Presidential Library

Gorbachev calls Bush to give the Soviet response to the Americans' September 27 initiative. He enthusiastically responds to the idea of eliminating naval tactical weapons (which he has been proposing for several years now) and wants to go further in his unilateral initiatives. He reads a list of proposals, including taking 530 ICBMs, among them 134 MIRVed missiles, off alert; making deeper cuts in warheads than envisioned in START; discussing a non-nuclear missile defense system; reducing the Soviet army by 700,000 troops; and carrying out a nuclear testing moratorium. Bush reacts enthusiastically and the two leaders agree to have their experts negotiate the details of both proposals.



### [Document 06](#)

**Excerpt from Anatoly S. Chernyaev Diary, October 6, 1991**

**Source:** National Security Archive

Chernyaev describes the process of preparing Gorbachev's counterproposals to Bush and his televised speech. The Soviet leader created a special group, which included new Defense Minister Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, political adviser Yury Ryzhov, Gorbachev's old ally Alexander Yakovlev, and "the generals." Chernyaev laments that the group decided against eliminating nuclear bombers. Gorbachev discussed his proposals with Yeltsin, but according to Chernyaev, not with other heads of republics: "They can go to hell ... some presidents they are!" He notes that the TV address had to be given on October 5, before Under Secretary of State Reginald Bartholomew arrived in Moscow, "so that it does not look like we acted on the Americans' bidding."



### [Document 07](#)

**Record of the Main Content of Consultations between A.A. Obukhov and R. Bartholomew, October 6, 1991**

**Source:** Donated to the National Security Archive by William Potter

Reginald Bartholomew leads a delegation of experienced American negotiators and experts to Moscow to discuss details of the nuclear initiatives. Among numerous meetings was this one with chief Soviet START negotiator Alexei Obukhov and generals Omelichev and Ladygin. [This Soviet record of minutes of the consultations between the American and Soviet delegations was first obtained by prominent non-proliferation expert William

Potter.] The record shows that the Soviet side quickly agreed to the U.S. proposals on tactical nuclear weapons, stating, however, that the goal should be not only a reduction but their total elimination. The sides discussed the difference between dismantling and destruction of nuclear warheads. When the Soviets asked about confidence building measures or sharing information about the mechanisms for destroying warheads, the U.S. side insisted on the unilateral nature of these steps. The biggest disagreement occurred over the U.S. proposal to eliminate all MIRVed ICBMs, which presupposed Soviet reciprocity. Soviet negotiators responded that if the USSR agreed to such a step, the balance between the two countries in strategic nuclear warheads would be 2-to-1, which was unacceptable to the Soviet side.



### [Document 08](#)

#### **Cable from American Embassy in Moscow to the Secretary of State, Secret/Specat, October 7, 1991**

**Source:** Department of State. Freedom of Information Act release to the National Security Archive

On his first day in Moscow, Under Secretary Bartholomew meets with representatives of Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus and explains the substance and significance of the American president's initiatives. This Embassy cable quotes him as saying that "the U.S. had conceded in naval arms control what the USSR has long sought," and explaining the need to eliminate all MIRVed land-based ICBMs "because they add instability to the strategic balance." He also strongly emphasizes the U.S. interest in seeing central control established over the Soviet nuclear arsenal and warns that a move by the republics to assert control "would be costly in terms of political access and leverage."



### [Document 09](#)

#### **Record of the Main Content of Consultations between A.A. Obukhov and R. Bartholomew, October 7, 1991**

**Source:** Donated to the National Security Archive by William Potter

The first topic discussed in this Soviet record is the issue of improving security and command and control of nuclear weapons on both sides to prevent unauthorized launches, including installation of PAL systems in SLBMs. The Soviet side then raises the issue of a moratorium on nuclear testing, which in their view would "vigorously accelerate the "disarmament race." General Ladygin also states that the Soviet side is unilaterally

increasing the number of ICBMs that would be cut in addition to what was already announced by Gorbachev. The Soviet experts explain their plan to reform operational management of all strategic nuclear forces putting them under a single command and including strategic defensive systems into a single branch of the armed forces. A major part of the conversation is devoted to the new U.S. ABM proposal. The U.S. side explains that its military doctrine has been reorganized and refocused toward third-world countries and regional conflicts. Along with the threat of nuclear proliferation, it stressed the need for both countries to deploy limited, non-nuclear ABM systems to ensure security against a limited strike. On the Soviet side, General Rogov challenges the "limited" character of the proposed system and expresses concern about the cost of such a system.



### **Document 10**

#### **Memorandum of Conversation between A. N. Yakovlev and Ambassador Reginald Bartholomew, October 8, 1991**

**Source:** State Archive of the Russian Federation, Alexander Yakovlev Collection, Fond 10063, Opus 1, delo 278

Alexander Yakovlev among the most influential thinkers behind perestroika, came back to support Gorbachev after the August 1991 coup as a political adviser. Gorbachev asked him to join the working group to focus on the nuclear initiatives. In this conversation, Bartholomew stresses the spontaneous and personal nature of the initiative that President Bush had initially shared with Brent Scowcroft after the coup. The under secretary of state is concerned that there could be a right-wing backlash against the initiatives in the United States. He mentions his meetings with representatives of the Soviet nuclear republics and his concerns about nonproliferation. He also complains to Yakovlev that in all his meetings in Moscow, he "hasn't gotten a response to one question: what will remain of the new modernization programs for Soviet ICBMs?" Yakovlev asks if "it may be the time to stop all nuclear weapons tests and the production of fissile materials, and to make a statement about non-first-use of nuclear weapons." Bartholomew replies negatively regarding testing, but suggests that he would personally prefer to stop production of fissile materials and redefines the first question as no first-use of force.



### **Document 11**

#### **Cable from American Embassy in Moscow to the Secretary of State, Secret/Specat, October 9, 1991**

**Source:** Department of State. Freedom of Information Act release to the National Security Archive

On the evening of October 7, after all-day negotiations with the Soviet team, Assistant Secretary of Defense Stephen Hadley had a separate meeting with Obukhov, Mamedov and Lysenko to discuss the disagreements on the count of strategic warheads in the event that, according to the President's proposal, all MIRVed ICBMs are eliminated. As the Embassy cable states, "disappointingly, no representative of the Soviet MOD or General Staff attended the meeting," although Ladygin and Omelichev were expected. The conversation revolved around the historically evolved force structures and U.S. superiority in naval strategic weapons. Obukhov is not rejecting the U.S. ideas, but he proposes further negotiations and suggests Bartholomew raise these issues in his discussions with new Defense Minister Shaposhnikov, who is "young, energetic, and quick to understand issues if they were properly explained."



### [Document 12](#)

**National Security Council Memo from John Gordon to Ambassador Reginald Bartholomew, "Nuclear Initiatives Discussion Paper," Secret, October 10, 1991**

**Source:** Freedom of Information Act release to the National Security Archive

This discussion paper from then-Col. John Gordon, the top NSC arms control specialist, went to his peers at the State Department (Bartholomew), the Pentagon (Hadley), the Energy Department (Alessi), the CIA (MacEachin), the Joint Chiefs (Shalikasvili), and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (Hanmer). The focus is on "responding to President Gorbachev's nuclear initiative" and the substance shows how the Soviet leader had matched the Bush proposals (except on de-MIRVing) and raised the stakes by proposing, among other initiatives, destruction (not just storage) of naval tactical weapons, a fissile material cut-off, a joint early-warning system, and a nuclear test ban (a non-starter for the U.S., here indicated by a series of Gordon's exclamation marks).



### [Document 13](#)

**Vitaly Katayev Memo "Reference on expected reductions of defense allocations as a result of the implementation of the new Soviet initiative announced by M.S. Gorbachev on October 5, 1991, as well as allocations for measures for its implementation."**

**Source:** Hoover Institution Archive, Vitaly Katayev collection, Box 11, Folder 33

Vitaly Katayev, deputy head of the Defense Industry Department of the Soviet Central Committee and an important Gorbachev adviser on military matters, prepared a concise table to show the savings that would be realized from implementation of the nuclear initiatives. Altogether, in his reckoning, the Soviet Union will save 11,033 million rubles as defense allocations are slashed and the armed forces are reduced.



#### **Document 14**

**Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for Robert Walpole, "Implementation of Initiative on Safety and Security," Secret, October 29, 1991**

**Source:** Department of Defense Freedom of Information Act release to the National Security Archive]

This memorandum forwards to the White House, DOS, ACDA, CIA, and JCS a Joint DOE/DOD paper on implementation of the president's initiative in the area of safety and security. It "outlines topics that might be included" in talks with Moscow, arguing that safety and security of Soviet nuclear weapons should be at the core of the discussions. The report underlines that any agreements will not include provisions for information exchange, except for non-sensitive information regarding safe storage and transportation of nuclear materials. Among the possible specific topics for discussion mentioned are: nuclear weapons management, physical security, nuclear weapons safety, and containment of nuclear explosions. It is suggested that a small technical team be created in order to brief and instruct the Soviets on these matters.



#### **Document 15**

**Defense Intelligence Memorandum. "Analysis of Soviet President Gorbachev's Responses to President Bush's Initiatives," Secret, October 1991**

**Source:** Freedom of Information Act release to the National Security Archive

This DIA memo assesses Gorbachev's response to Bush's nuclear initiatives, but takes a rather cautious stance. It suggests that Moscow is ready to agree on "proposals that have minimal impact on their overall strategic nuclear capabilities." However, it is not ready to "accept agreements that might prove injurious to the security of a revamped union." The memo argues that even though Soviet reciprocity represents a shift from traditional positions, it is still not clear whether this will have a significant impact on future ballistic missile negotiations. The authors consider different elements of Bush's proposal along with

the reciprocal response from Moscow, but these sections of the document are heavily redacted.



### [Document 16](#)

#### **Excerpt from the Anatoly S. Chernyaev Diary, October 29, 1991**

**Source:** National Security Archive

This paper, reproduced in Chernyaev's edited diary manuscript, was given to President Bush by Gorbachev during their first meeting in Madrid on October 29, 1991, for the opening of the Middle East Conference. The paper summarizes what has already been done in implementing the president's nuclear initiative and what the USSR is pledging to do unilaterally.



### [Document 17](#)

#### **CIA. Special Analysis. "Gorbachev's Response to US Nuclear Initiative." Secret, circa October 1991**

**Source:** CIA. Freedom of Information Act release to the National Security Archive

This brief CIA analysis comes in the aftermath of Gorbachev's response to Bush's unilateral nuclear initiative. It suggests several underlying patterns in Moscow's rapid and eager reaction from Moscow. First, it indicates that "both republic and central authorities strongly support radical reduction in nuclear weapons." Second, it is seen as an attempt by Gorbachev to reassert his role as a leader. Third, negotiations with Washington on elimination of nuclear weapons are assessed as a means of leverage in negotiating with Soviet republics over relocating nuclear weapons to Russia. Overall, Soviet reciprocity on the issue is considered to be a breakthrough.



### [Document 18](#)

#### **National Security Council, Memorandum from John Gordon for Ambassador Reginald Bartholomew, "Tactical Systems Paper," Secret, October 31, 1991**

**Source:** DOD Freedom of Information Release to the National Security Archive

This memorandum transmits a draft paper for discussion at the upcoming meeting of the small group focusing on implementation of Presidential Nuclear Initiatives. The focus of the paper is "US policy toward Soviet nuclear weapons in the context of the rapidly changing center-republic relationship." It suggests prioritizing the issue of tactical weapons in terms of "Gorbachev's proposal to go to further significant cuts." The paper underlines the importance of a single command-and-control center for all nuclear weapons on the territory of Soviet Union in order to ensure their safety.



### [Document 19](#)

**Central Intelligence Agency, Director of Central Intelligence, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, "Soviet Tactical Nuclear Forces and Gorbachev's Nuclear Pledges: Impact, Motivations, and Next Steps," Secret, November 1991**

**Source:** CIA Freedom of Information Act release to the National Security Archive

This CIA analysis notes the groundbreaking scope of Soviet response to the President's Nuclear Initiative. If fully implemented, the unilateral Soviet steps will lead to the destruction of between 4,000 and 9,000 nuclear warheads and from 1,300 to 2,800 naval nuclear warheads would be moved to central storage. The analysis concludes that "a unilateral reduction on this scale will eliminate the nuclear capability of Soviet Ground Forces." These reductions will take several years and therefore the new Union will probably retain tactical nuclear forces for some period of time, according to the authors. The CIA analysts note the high priority that the Soviet side places on nuclear security and conclude that "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." This proved to be an accurate prediction for the 1990s.



### [Document 20](#)

**Office of Secretary of Defense. "Nuclear Command & Control: President's Nuclear Initiative -Task 4 (Third Draft)," Secret, November 8, 1991**

**Source:** Freedom of Information Release to the National Security Archive

This paper was written in support of Bush's nuclear initiative. It "outlines the possible scope, objectives and modalities of potential discussions with representatives of the current Soviet government and appropriate republic officials on nuclear command and control." The authors suggest that, even though senior Soviet officials should participate in the discussion, "they have more to learn than they have to contribute." The paper looks at

the possible discussions as a window of opportunity to enhance US security, but warns against seeing them as potentially a major breakthrough. Proposed topics for the discussions include: a lexicon on command and control terminology, an overview of U.S. and Soviet command structures, command-and-control oversight, command-and-control assessment, use control policies and standards, and coalition command-and-control.



### [Document 21](#)

#### **Department of Energy, Memorandum for John Gordon, "Nuclear Warhead Dismantlement/ Destruction," Secret, November 8, 1991**

**Source:** Freedom of Information Release to the National Security Archive

The paper attached to this memorandum "outlines topics that might be included in the warhead dismantlement and destruction area and addresses how the US should organize efforts to pursue bilateral discussions." The document is closely related to the paper on "Implementation of Initiative on Safety and Security" prepared jointly by DOE/DOD (see Document 14). Among suggested topics for discussion are nuclear weapons management, warhead dismantlement or destruction operations, and follow-on steps. Contrary to the DOE/DOD report, this paper suggests freer exchange of information and warns against assuming that the "Soviets have nothing of technical value for the US."



### [Document 22](#)

#### **Susan J. Koch, The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991-1992, Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction Case Study 5, National Defense University Press, September 2012**

**Source:** National Defense University Press

This detailed case study of the Bush nuclear initiatives includes the full texts of the announcements by President Bush (September 27) and by President Gorbachev (October 5), as well as the follow up presentations by Bush in his State of the Union address in January 1992 and by Russia's new president, Boris Yeltsin (January 29, 1992). Written by one of the most experienced non-proliferation experts in the U.S. government (Susan Koch worked for four presidents on nuclear issues from 1982 to 2007), the case study adds new detail to the high-level account by President Bush and his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, in their memoir, *A World Transformed*. Koch's account describes the behind-the-scenes work by a remarkably small group of military and civilian officials in the Defense Department to develop the specific proposals in only three weeks - from the NSC meeting

of September 5 to the prime-time presidential speech on September 27 - with practically no inter-agency consultation. Koch also characterizes the Soviet response as "faster, wider-ranging, and more positive than even the most optimistic U.S. official would have predicted;" but the prior Gorbachev overtures from 1987 on, such as the proposal to eliminate naval tactical nuclear weapons, fall outside the scope of Koch's study.

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