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Authority NND 969021
By PW NARA Date 8-25-06

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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
August 6, 2007

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TELEGRAM



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SUBJ: SOVIET STATEMENT ON FIVE-POWER NUCLEAR
DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

REF: (A) STATE 110111
(B) STATE 111581
(C) STATE 115687

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1.) FOLLOWING IS LINE WE INTEND TO TAKE IN CONSULTATIONS WITH THE UK AND FRENCH EMBASSIES IN PRESENTING INITIAL US COMMENTS ON SOVIET PROPOSAL FOR FIVE-POWER NUCLEAR CONFERENCE. YOU SHOULD BE GUIDED ACCORDINGLY IN ANY CONVERSATIONS YOU MAY HAVE WITH FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS.

2.) WE ARE STILL STUDYING SOVIET PROPOSAL AND MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE STUDY IS COMPLETE. FINAL US RESPONSE WILL DEPEND UPON EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH UK AND FRANCE, AND INDICATIONS OF CHINESE VIEWS. FURTHERMORE, WE WILL WISH TO DEVELOP OUR EVENTUAL RESPONSE TO THE SOVIET STATEMENT IN CONSULTATION WITH ALL NATO ALLIES, SINCE WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE SOLIDARITY OF THE ALLIANCE THAT WE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE VIEWS OF THE NON-NUCLEAR POWERS IN NATO. FOLLOWING SHOULD THEREFORE BE REGARDED AS PRELIMINARY INPUT INTO PROCESS OF CONSULTATION AND STUDY.

3.) OUR TENTATIVE VIEW IS THAT OUR REACTION TO SOVIET PROPOSAL SHOULD BE CAUTIOUSLY POSITIVE, THOUGH CONDITIONED ON RESPONSE OF OTHER NUCLEAR STATES. WE DO NOT KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHAT THE MIX OF MOTIVATIONS BEHIND SOVIET PROPOSAL IS. WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO DISMISS IT AS SIMPLY PROPAGANDISTIC, THOUGH THIS IS UNDOUBTEDLY AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT.

4.) IN VIEW THIS ASSESSMENT, AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT FACTORS CITED PARAGRAPH TWO, WE ARE CONSIDERING GIVING TO SOVIETS AN INITIAL ORAL REPLY ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: QUOTE THE US GOVERNMENT IS STUDYING THE PROPOSAL OF JUNE 15 OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT TO CONVENE A FIVE-POWER CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND WILL BE PREPARED AT A LATER DATE TO GIVE ITS FORMAL REPLY TO THE PROPOSAL. AT THIS TIME, IT CAN BE STATED THAT THE UNITED STATES CONSIDERS THE SUBJECT RAISED BY THE USSR AS WORTHY OF SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. SUCH A CONFERENCE WOULD REQUIRE CAREFUL PREPARATION AND A CONSENSUS AMONG ALL FIVE POWERS ON WHAT MEASURES WERE FEASIBLE FOR DISCUSSION. SUCH A

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CONFERENCE, IF IT WERE HELD, SHOULD IN NO WAY PREJUDICE THE CURRENT BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND USSR ON LIMITING THE STRATEGIC ARMS OF TWO COUNTRIES. THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PRESUPPOSES THAT ALL FIVE POWERS WOULD BE WILLING TO ATTEND SUCH A CONFERENCE. UNQUOTE IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS PROPOSED INITIAL REPLY DOES NOT COMMIT US TO ANY GIVEN COURSE OF ACTION, BUT DOES INDICATE ESSENTIAL PRECONDITIONS: THE NEED FOR CAREFUL PREPARATION, AND PARTICIPATION OF ALL FIVE POWERS IN ANY EVENTUAL CONFERENCE.

5.) IN MAKING THIS PROPOSED REPLY, WE WOULD NOT OFFER AGENDA SUGGESTIONS OF OUR OWN, NOR WOULD WE OFFER COMMENTS ON THE VENUE AND PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE AS REQUESTED IN THE SOVIET STATEMENT.

6.) WHILE OUR ANALYSIS OF SOVIET PROPOSAL IS NOT YET COMPLETE, FOLLOWING ARE OUR PRELIMINARY VIEWS ON PROS AND CONS OF SOVIET PROPOSAL. SOVIETS MAY ANTICIPATE THAT CHINESE WILL BE NEGATIVE TOWARDS IT AND HAVE ADVANCED IT FOR THAT REASON. THEY MAY SEE IN SUGGESTION A WAY TO MANOEUVER CHINESE INTO ISOLATED POSITION WHICH LATTER WOULD INTERPRET AS COLLUSION BETWEEN US AND USSR. WE BELIEVE BEST WAY TO HANDLE THIS AT THIS TIME WOULD BE TO MAKE LOW-KEY CONDITIONAL RESPONSE ALONG LINES INDICATED.

7.) ANOTHER DISADVANTAGE OF PROPOSAL IS THAT SOME OF OUR MAJOR ALLIES (E.G., ITALY, GERMANY, JAPAN) MAY BE SUSPICIOUS OF PROPOSAL AND FEEL THAT ALTHOUGH THEY ARE NOT NUCLEAR POWERS, THEY HAVE DEEP SECURITY INTERESTS IN MATTERS OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT. THIS IS ONE REASON WE ATTACH PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO CONSULTATIONS IN NAC (THOUGH CONSULTATIONS IN NAC ON PROPOSED INITIAL, CONDITIONAL, REPLY NEED NOT BE IN DEPTH).

8.) FURTHERMORE, SOVIET PROPOSAL IS VAGUE ABOUT WHAT IT IS INTENDED THAT FORUM SHOULD TAKE UP OR ACCOMPLISH. FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO FIND COMMON GROUND AMONG ALL FIVE POWERS. BRITISH

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AND FRENCH VIEWS ON WHAT MIGHT USEFULLY BE DISCUSSED WOULD BE WELCOMED. WE ARE STILL STUDYING THIS MATTER, BUT HOPE TO CRYSTALLIZE OUR VIEWS BEFORE TOO LONG.

9.) NEVERTHELESS, IN OUR PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS, WE SEE SOME VIRTUES IN SOVIET PROPOSAL IF ALL POWERS AGREE TO IT AND SOMETHING RESEMBLING A REASONABLE AGENDA COULD BE WORKED OUT:

~~1st~~ IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE A FORUM IN WHICH ALL NUCLEAR POWERS ARE PARTICIPANTS. SALT CANNOT DEAL WITH THIRD-COUNTRY NUCLEAR INTERESTS, AND CCD HAS TOO MANY MEMBERS TO BE USEFUL FOR CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS RELATING TO CENTRAL NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF FRENCH AND CHINESE NON-PARTICIPATION.

~~2nd~~ IT IS IN OUR LONG-TERM INTERESTS TO ENGAGE COMMUNIST CHINA, TO THE EXTENT THIS IS POSSIBLE. IN SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF ARMS CONTROL. AT SOME POINT CHINA WILL HAVE TO BE BROUGHT INTO PROCESS AND THERE MAY WELL BE MERIT IN ATTEMPTING TO BEGIN THIS EARLIER RATHER THAN LATER. CHINESE HAVE SAID THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE PARTY TO ANY AGREEMENT IN WHICH THEY DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN DRAFTING.

10.) KEY ELEMENT IS, OF COURSE, ATTITUDE OF PRC TOWARDS SOVIET PROPOSAL. THERE COULD BE NO FIVE-POWER CONFERENCE IF ONE OF FIVE REFUSES TO PARTICIPATE. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN INFORMAL INDICATIONS OF NEGATIVE CHINESE REACTION, PRC HAS YET TO TAKE A FORMAL POSITION.

11.) BALANCING OUT THESE NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE CONSIDERATIONS HAS LED US TO BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD GIVE AN INITIAL, CONDITIONAL RESPONSE ALONG LINES SET FORTH IN PARAGRAPH FOUR ABOVE, BUT WE WOULD WELCOME VIEWS OF FRENCH AND BRITISH ON THIS AS WELL AS ON HOW CONSULTATIONS IN NAC SHOULD BE HANDLED.

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