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TOWARD CONVENTIONAL STABILITY

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I. INTRODUCTION

As we approach year-end, it is time to take stock of the past year, and look ahead to the next. Today, I'm able to be upbeat on both. Accomplishments of the past year include:

- ratification of the INF treaty, followed by the first stages of withdrawal and destruction of intermediate-range land-based nuclear missiles;
- reaffirmation of NATO's strategy of deterrence by heads of state at the NATO summit last March, accompanied by a challenge to the East to significantly reduce its conventional weapons;
- confirmation at October's NPG ministerial of NATO's step-by-step approach to ensure that nuclear weapons are kept up to date;
- completion and issuance of an East-West conventional force comparison paper late last month: "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts";
- adoption, two weeks ago, of a far-reaching blueprint for the future, entitled "Enhancing Alliance Collective Security: Shared Roles, risks and Responsibilities in the Alliance";
- public issuance, last week, of the Alliance negotiating position for the Conventional Stability Talks;
- finally, progress within NATO councils on the "further development of a comprehensive concept of arms control and disarmament" – a key document which will be completed before the Spring meeting of the North Atlantic Council in ministerial session.

That is, we sixteen countries have made progress on each of these seven issues this year, for what may be an unprecedented record of accomplishment. As we approach 1989 and our 40th, anniversary, you should not be surprised to find us sustaining, or even exceeding, this remarkable pace.

Today, I'll address four challenges of the year ahead, which we can place in two categories: West-West and East-West. In the first category, I would place *transatlantic relations* and public skepticism toward our *nuclear deterrent*. In the second category – East-West – I would include our relations with the *Soviet Union*, and with *Eastern Europe*. Finally, I will look ahead to the Conventional Stability Talks, in which we face all four challenges.

II. CHALLENGES

A. The Transatlantic Relation

The *first* challenge – the product of past NATO success – is to adapt to the economic and political realities of Western Europe. In simpler terms, the challenge is one of managing the transatlantic relationship.

US policy in the post-war era has been to support West European unity and defense cooperation. The policy remains manifest today, as President Reagan emphasized in February of this year:

“We in America welcome multilateral and bilateral defense cooperation among our European partners, of the sort that the Western European Union, and the Germans and the French, and other governments have demonstrated within the overall framework of the alliance.

Such cooperation and coordination are essential to strengthening the European pillar of the alliance and thereby the alliance as a whole.”

So, where’s the challenge? There is the challenge of striving to achieve a more equitable sharing of roles, risks, and responsibilities – commonly called burdensharing – made more urgent, in part by political and economic strains evident in the US. As a corollary, there is the challenge of recognizing and accepting an increased European political influence.

That West Europeans, whose economies and homelands were ravaged by the war, should have depended on the United States was understandable and even unavoidable when NATO was founded. Such is not the case today. Both Europeans and Americans are thus questioning the relationship.

Moreover, our perception is that many Europeans are increasingly aware of, and agitated by, the burden imposed by American and other NATO stationed forces – despite the acknowledged absence of any feasible alternative.

The time is ripe to assist and encourage the establishment of what some have called a true European pillar in NATO – *within* the Alliance. And, in return, Europeans will expect increased influence in Western security decision-making. Thus, what we must seek is not simply more equitable burdensharing, but a more equitable partnership.

It gives me some pride that the Alliance stepped up to this challenge with the issuance of its burdensharing report in early December and its commitment to fund the transfer of the 401st tactical fighter wing from Spain to Italy.

B. Nuclear Weapons

The *second* challenge is that of nuclear weapons – or, more precisely, the attitudes of our citizens toward them. The problem, concisely, is the growing tension between the Alliance’s need for these weapons, and the distaste with which many people in our societies regard them.

One can easily understand that aversion – that yearning to be delivered from the political dilemmas and the moral quandries that attend our reliance on such weapons, not to say the threat of our destruction posed by the weapons of the Soviet Union.

Indeed, it is precisely because of the Alliance's acute appreciation of these risks and burdens that it has, with such patience and firmness, sought better relations with the East. And it is due to that same recognition that the Alliance has committed itself to maintain only such forces as stability requires.

The substantial unilateral reductions in NATO's nuclear arsenal during the past ten years, and its pursuit of genuinely stabilizing arms control agreements both testify to that commitment.

Subject to our security requirements and the test of stability, we must continue to lower the number and to reduce the salience of NATO's nuclear weapons.

We have no illusions, however, about how far either unilateral or negotiated reductions can take us. We must acknowledge that the Alliance will, as a matter of inescapable strategic fact, require a large number, and a diverse array, of nuclear weapons for the foreseeable future.

This means in turn that NATO will need to ensure the effectiveness of its nuclear weapons over time – in the face of both the inevitable obsolescence of our systems, and the no-less-certain improvements to the nuclear forces of the Warsaw Pact.

This tension between strategic necessity for, and public aversion to, nuclear weapons will remain a central element of Alliance politics for years to come. We must do what we can to confront the differences between Alliance requirements and public perceptions. Being candid with our publics, we must explain the actual – that is, the limited – contribution arms control can make to Western security. Similarly, we should resist further equivocation about the need to maintain the Alliance's nuclear arsenal and keep it up-to-date.

This is a challenge the alliance addressed as recently as last October, when defense ministers confirmed our step-by-step approach to the maintenance of a modern nuclear force.

C. The Soviet Union

The *third* among our challenges is the Soviet Union.

What is the "Gorbachev factor"? When considering our policies for the future, the crucial question is, *why* is this Soviet leader changing Soviet policies? Has the Soviet leader decided to move toward Western values and institutions? Has Mr. Gorbachev concluded

that the ideological struggle between two very different value structures is no longer worth the fight? Does this explain why he:

- has accepted NATO proposals for the worldwide elimination of ground-based intermediate-range nuclear forces;
- is withdrawing from Afghanistan; has pressured Vietnam to leave Cambodia; has been willing to see Cuba leave Angola.
- has announced the reduction of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe and the restructuring of forces to a defensive posture;
- has promised the withdrawal of six Soviet tank divisions from Eastern Europe.

Were these changes driven solely by internal reform in Soviet policy? Has the new Soviet leader recognized the fundamental error of influencing neighbors through military means, and of controlling its citizens through repression? Alternatively, has the Soviet leader merely retrenched in the face of Western resolve?

As is often the case with such questions, the truth may lie somewhere in between. But aren't these changes in Soviet policy in large part the result of NATO's commitment to defense and dialogue? Can one really argue, for example, that Mr Gorbachev would have begun destroying his SS-20 missiles had the West not begun to deploy its Pershings and cruise missiles? Do we think his decision to withdraw 6 divisions from Eastern Europe would have been made if we had not steadfastly defended Western Europe?

Our approach to the Soviet Union *has* changed. Recall our relations in the early NATO years when the Soviet Union was ruled by one of the most ruthless dictators in history. Then we exhorted ourselves to build our military forces to defend against a massive and growing Soviet threat. Today we are seeking ways to reduce ground forces in Europe. The times and our tactics have changed, but our goals and strategy have not.

Have Soviet goals yet changed? Has the threat from the East diminished? Maybe "threat" is the wrong word. A better way to phrase the question – "Does the Soviet Union still maintain the capability for large scale offensive action against Western Europe?"

Let me return to this question in a moment.

D. Eastern Europe

The fourth challenge arises from an examination of how far we have come toward accomplishing one of America's post-war policy goals: in the words of George Kennen, "a united and free Europe." Have we achieved this goal? Is Europe united and free? If we really believe what we say, then we cannot ignore the other half of this divided continent.

President-elect George Bush, speaking in Vienna five years ago, described a visit to the Berlin wall in these words:

“As I looked out to the East, I had the momentary impression that I was standing in a lonely outpost on the edge of Western civilization”. Given the harsh reality of the wall, the impression is perhaps understandable, but how true is it?

“Historically, of course,” the Vice president continued, “it couldn’t have been more false. The wall, which in one form or another spans the breadth of the continent, runs not along the edge, but cuts through the very heart of Europe.”

As NATO leaders observed at their Summit last March, “the military confrontation in Europe is the result, not the cause of the painful division which burdens this continent.”

Our vision must remain a united, free Europe. Even as we recognize that its pursuit is not risk free, we must renew ourselves to this goal. The Conventional Stability Talks will provide a means to address the military aspects of this task. Just as important, we must continue to insist on economic, political, and humanitarian changes.

The status quo cannot be acceptable just because it is comfortable and safe. As an American, I represent a nation founded to preserve Western values of democracy and freedom. This is why we joined our fortunes with Europe nearly forty years ago. Europeans, usually on the forefront of advocating freedom and democracy around the world, must see clearly that this continent has no dynamic future without self-determination for all its citizens.

Our task then is to encourage change in East Europe. The challenge is to stimulate that change without undermining stability.

III. CONVENTIONAL STABILITY

Last week the world saw two important steps toward stability in conventional arms in Europe. Mr. Gorbachev at the UN announced his intention to reduce unilaterally some Soviet forces from Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, NATO in Brussels presented its opening position for the upcoming conventional stability negotiations.

Both actions seem to reflect recognition of the main problem for conventional stability in Europe: the large asymmetries between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces and, specifically, the large number of Soviet tanks deployed close to the inner-German border. Without commenting on the starkly different political purposes these forces serve, the US has four divisions in Western Europe, the Soviet Union has thirty-one in Eastern Europe.

Of these thirty-one Soviet divisions, twenty are in East Germany; eleven are tank divisions. Since this Soviet force is so close to NATO and so tank dense – offensively capable, that is – it is the most serious threat to stability in all of Europe.

In addition, there are five Soviet divisions in Czechoslovakia (including two tank divisions), four divisions in Hungary; (two of which are tank divisions) and two divisions in Poland (one a tank division). But there is no doubt: the greatest threat to stability in Europe is the tank-dense Soviet divisions in East Germany.

Mr. Gorbachev has taken a major step toward fixing this problem; he has promised to withdraw and disband six tank divisions from Eastern Europe. The next measure of how serious Mr. Gorbachev is in enhancing stability will be whether he takes most – at least four – of these divisions from East Germany.

The NATO proposal – the result of particularly intensive Alliance deliberations over the last 12 months – also addresses the problem of the instability caused by the large asymmetries and concentrations of Soviet tanks and other mobile armored weapons in Eastern Europe.

We have proposed that the number of tanks currently in the whole of Europe should be cut in half – a cut from about 80,000 today to about 40,000. And we have proposed common equal ceilings – that is, a limit of 20,000 tanks on each side. We have also proposed common equal ceilings on artillery and of armored troop carriers. These weapons, with the tanks, are used offensively to seize and hold territory.

But parity alone is not enough to ensure that no one country can dominate the continent by force of arms. We think it is reasonable, therefore, that no single country have more than about a third of all the tanks remaining in Europe.

And, if stability is the goal, it would seem reasonable to suggest that national forces stationed on other nations' soil be limited. For example, of the 37,000 Soviet tanks in the Atlantic to the Urals area, nearly 11,000 are currently stationed in units on other nations' soil. (By contrast the US has only 1,800 tanks in units on the soil of its allies, again without discussing the different moral justifications). This large Soviet military presence outside its borders does contribute to stability.

Mr. Gorbachev apparently agrees. He has promised to reduce the number of his tanks on East European countries' soil by 5,000. This would appear to leave fewer than 6,000 of his tanks in Eastern Europe. Clearly a step in the right direction. And it suggests that his analysis and our analysis of how to increase stability in Europe may be consistent.

The next measure of Mr. Gorbachev's motives will be whether the 5,000 Soviet tanks are truly withdrawn, or simply transferred to Eastern European forces to replace older, less effective systems which would, in turn, be withdrawn.

If the Warsaw Pact and the NATO nations agree on several means of enhancing stability in Europe, we also appear to agree on the end point for the force reductions: parity. In speech after speech for the last two years Warsaw Pact leaders have said that their goal was parity of conventional forces in Europe. We agree. Our proposal, unveiled in Brussels last week,

will leave us with parity. Mr. Gorbachev's announcement in New York last week is a step in the direction of parity.

Now the task before us is to negotiate internationally binding commitments to parity – to equality – as well as the stability-enhancing limitations described in the NATO proposal. Mr. Gorbachev's bold, imaginative steps are welcome and warmly applauded. But skeptics will be forgiven if they point out that what can be done unilaterally can be undone unilaterally. Indeed, several of Mr. Gorbachev's predecessors have announced unilateral withdrawals of Soviet forces from East Europe only to have their less enlightened successors reintroduce them surreptitiously back into the theater.

Mr. Gorbachev's announcement was silent on the issues of openness and verification. These measures are crucially important to stability. Our proposal contains a rigorous and reliable regime of monitoring and verification – including data exchange and on-site inspections. We have proposed a comprehensive annual exchange of information concerning military organization, manpower, equipment and weapon deployment programs. We have suggested a random evaluation system. We have suggested more detailed information be given when military exercises are announced; improvements in observations of military activities; greater openness and predictability about military activities; and vastly improved contacts between the militaries and media of both sides. We have proposed an organized exchange of views on military doctrine and force structures.

In short, we are committed to verification, predictability and transparency – important components of stability. After Mr. Gorbachev's speech last week, one daily called it the "70 minutes that shook the world." Whether the world is shaken depends not on what he has said – but on what remains to be said, and on what remains to be done.

IV. CONCLUSION

I began this address listing our accomplishments – ranging from the implementation of the INF treaty to the promise of conventional stability in Europe. It is a record of which we are proud, but still the press reports the "world... yawned" when we presented our proposal last week.

Let us not begrudge the Soviet leader the credit he warrants for his bold actions. When the aggressor announces a reform, we should all take notice. But it does not follow that the aggrieved party should respond in kind.

Don't expect *us* to announce the unilateral reduction of conventional arms by NATO – not so long as the advantages of the Warsaw Pact remain at 2 or 3 to 1.

Don't expect *us* to announce a change from an offensive to a defensive posture. Our posture has been defensive for 40 years.

Don't expect *us* to announce adoption of market economies. We have been perfecting them for 400 years.

Don't expect *us* to pledge to respect human rights. Our respect for human rights is bound in traditions that go back at least 4000 years.

NATO will continue on a path rooted in our traditions and described in our charter of 1949: "to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area."

In short, don't expect any pyrotechnics – not when the Soviet Union is responding to our agenda. If Soviet leaders have begun to share our vision, so much the better. But let's not forget to extend our appreciation to the many in the East who have shared this vision for years, ranging from a retired forestry official in Czechoslovakia to a shipyard worker in Poland.

Twenty years ago, Soviet tanks put a brutal end to the Prague Spring. Less than a decade ago, the same hand dashed the hopes of Solidarity. So today, when Alexander Dubcek is being honored in Bologna and Lech Walesa is feted in Paris, let us not forget the vision that motivated these men.

What is this vision? It is one that Western leaders endorsed at the NATO summit last March with these words:

"We seek the elimination of the conventional imbalances which so threaten stability and security in Europe. We also seek enhanced respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms on which lasting security and stability ultimately depend."

Allow me to conclude by inviting your careful study of the NATO agenda for the Conventional Stability Talks, and your appreciation of the Western vision that underlies it.