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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 28, 1978

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Presidential Directive/NSC-36

TO: The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense

ALSO: The Director, Arms Control and
Disarmament Agency
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: US-USSR Talks on Conventional Arms Restraint (U)

The President directs that the U.S. Delegation to the US-USSR talks on conventional arms transfer in Helsinki, May 4-8, should move quickly and forcefully to engage the Soviets in discussions of specific functional and regional restraint proposals, looking to further development of these proposals in subsequent rounds. While the Delegation should seek to secure Soviet agreement to participate in further meetings, the primary objective is to determine whether they are serious about this effort.

In this context, the Delegation should reiterate the elements of our arms restraint policy.

The Chairman of the Delegation is authorized to make use of the attached Presidential statement as he deems appropriate, in order to demonstrate the commitment and support of the highest levels of the United States Government in this effort.

Zbigniew Brzezinski

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Declassify on: OADR

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by D. Van Tassel, National Security Council

F88-195

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President Carter has asked me to make this statement on his behalf:

This is an opportunity to convey my personal concern, and that of the United States Government, over the growing world trade in conventional arms, and the urgency I attach to international cooperation to reduce that trade. The unrestrained transfer of conventional weapons represents a serious and continuing threat to peace, and a diversion of resources badly needed for economic and social development.

As great powers, and as the world's leading arms suppliers, the United States and the Soviet Union have a special responsibility to curb this traffic in armaments. We have distinct but common interests in doing so. Moreover, without US-Soviet restraint, others will not alter their arms transfer practices and opportunities for meaningful multilateral restraint will be lost. And without multilateral restraint, no single supplier could be expected to sustain such a policy for very long.

Restraint does not mean an end to arms sales. Obviously, the legitimate defense needs of friends and allies must be fulfilled. Neither of us would have it otherwise. Restraint does mean that we take steps in common -- in cooperation with suppliers as well as with recipients -- to prevent sales from increasing the risk of war or inflaming regional and global tensions. Regional conflicts cannot be solved by arms transfer restraint alone. But restraint can contribute to the resolution of such problems and help avoid future conflicts.

Our common responsibilities in this area flow naturally from the basic tenets of our relations -- from the principles accepted by the leaders of our governments on May 29, 1972. These principles affirm the importance of preventing the development of situations which can lead to confrontations or aggravate problems in our relations. They also affirm our readiness to exchange views at the highest level when necessary on various problems in our relations.

I regard progress in this field as one indication of the importance we each ascribe to these principles. In particular, our governments must take clear, visible steps now, in Helsinki, to record our mutual determination to restrain arms sales, and to create machinery appropriate to this purpose.

By enlarging our arms control agenda to include restraint in transfers of conventional arms, we take one more important step away from conflict and confrontation, and toward more cooperative relations.

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