

UPDATE

BUSH SHOULD MOVE FULL SPEED ON CONVENTIONAL ARMS LIMITS, SLOW ON NUCLEAR

(Updating *Backgrounder* No. 725, "A U.S. Agenda for the Conventional Forces Reduction Talks," September 1, 1989, and *Backgrounder* No. 684, "In Nuclear Arms Talks, Go Slow on START," January 11, 1989.)

Secretary of State James Baker this week heads for Moscow for talks with his counterpart, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. At the top of their agenda is to determine how the improved climate of East-West relations will affect U.S. and Soviet arsenals. What Baker should tell his host is that the United States is ready to move quickly on reducing conventional forces but is determined to proceed more cautiously on nuclear weapons.

This, of course, was the message of George Bush's State of the Union speech last week, when he said "the Soviet military threat in Europe is diminishing but we see little change in Soviet strategic modernization." Bush then added substance to this general assessment by proposing deep cuts in Soviet and U.S. forces in Europe and by saying that "the time is right to move forward on a conventional arms control agreement." He was referring to the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations underway in Vienna. Bush's new plan would cut American and Soviet forces in central Europe to at most 195,000. The U.S. now has close to 300,000 troops in this region, and Moscow close to 600,000. Bush's proposed reductions ultimately would save Americans close to \$10 billion per year if eliminated forces are demobilized.¹

Reducing A Military Threat. Conventional forces reductions now should have higher priority than the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, known as START, for a number of reasons. For one thing, although Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev decided at their December Malta summit to set a June negotiating deadline for a START treaty, tough issues remain. Even some of Bush's top arms control advisors are saying that a solid START treaty will take at least another year and a half to work out. For another thing, only CFE can help eliminate the greatest remaining military threat to NATO and to the survival of the European Revolutions of 1989 – the heavy concentration of Soviet forces in the heart of Europe.

Late last week, meanwhile, another issue emerged that will demand Baker's and Shevardnadze's prime time: the sudden and massive communist offensive, backed by Soviet weapons and helped by Soviet advisors, in Angola. Ostensibly, Gorbachev's "new thinking" in

¹ Extrapolated from Congressional Budget Office, *Budgetary and Military Effects of a Treaty Limiting Conventional Forces in Europe*, January 1990, pp. 20-23.

foreign affairs is supposed to end meddling in Angola and other regional conflicts. Baker thus should ask the Russians: "If you don't keep your word on Angola, how can you be trusted on arms reduction matters?"

START talks, of course, are important. The point is, in fact, they are too important to be rushed. This would yield a sloppy treaty which then would encounter fierce opposition in the Senate. Key problems remain on START. Among them:

Verification. Procedures for verifying a START accord will be particularly difficult to work out since the agreement is likely to allow mobile missiles, like the Soviet SS-24 and SS-25 and proposed U.S. *Midgetman*. These are more difficult to find and count than missiles stationed in fixed silos. Procedures still must be worked out also for counting and monitoring how many missiles are manufactured in Soviet and American factories. If the U.S. rushes for an agreement on verification by the June START deadline, the treaty could contain loopholes and ambiguities that Moscow could exploit.

Strategic Defenses. Recent Soviet statements on whether the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) does or does not impede a START agreement are ~~ambiguous and even contradictory~~. At his September meeting with Baker in Wyoming, for example, Shevardnadze said that Moscow no longer would insist on a separate treaty limiting SDI as a precondition for a START Treaty. Then he turned around and said that Moscow would insist on a "common understanding" allowing the Soviet Union to repudiate a START Treaty if the U.S. moved to deploy SDI. The Bush Administration wisely refuses to accept Moscow's new position. Bush told Congress in his State of the Union address that "we must sustain...the Strategic Defense Initiative."

Sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs). While Moscow officially has dropped its demand to count SLCMs under START limits, it is insisting on a separate agreement to ban SLCMs, which it says must be signed along with START. This Washington opposes, primarily because it does not believe that SLCMs adequately can be verified.

Mobile missile ban. The two sides still remain far apart on how many mobile missiles and mobile missile warheads will be allowed under a START treaty, and on procedures for verifying how many mobile missiles each side has. To further complicate matters, it was reported on January 15 that National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft is trying to change the U.S. position on mobile missiles to allow only single-warhead mobile missiles like the Soviet SS-25 or U.S. *Midgetman*, while banning those with multiple-warheads including the Soviet SS-24 and U.S. rail-based MX.

Other unresolved START issues include how to count such planes as the B-2 "Stealth" bomber, designed to carry about sixteen nuclear bombs, and how to count planes equipped with Air Launched Cruise Missiles (ALCMs), which can be launched outside Soviet territory at targets in the Soviet Union. The two sides also have not worked out the details of how to define "new types" of so-called "heavy" missiles like the Soviet SS-18, which can carry huge payloads, or the issue of what information on missile and warhead performance each side can "encrypt," or code, during missile tests. Given time, these issues probably can be worked out to the satisfaction of the American people and the Senate, which must ratify a START treaty. However, if Bush tries to resolve them all under the pressures of a self-imposed four-and-a-half-month negotiating deadline, he is liable to make costly mistakes.

Unlike the START negotiations, which have been bogged down over many of the same issues for years, CFE negotiations have been progressing at a speed unprecedented in arms control

history. It is important to maintain this momentum. By staying ahead of the tumultuous events in Europe, CFE can ensure that these events help drive Soviet forces from Eastern Europe and back to Soviet territory.

When negotiations got underway last March in Vienna, CFE looked like the West's only chance of eliminating Soviet military advantages over NATO in Europe in tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery, and aircraft, and of forcing the Soviet Union to withdraw large numbers of forces from Eastern Europe. Since then, however, the revolution sweeping through Eastern Europe promises to push back Soviet troops altogether without the aid of arms control. Already Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland have asked Moscow to take its forces off their territory. And surely a freely-elected East German government would follow suit.²

Framework for Withdrawal. Change driven by CFE is better than allowing events in Europe to run their course. A good CFE agreement will enable the West to monitor and verify Soviet troop reductions and the destruction of roughly 100,000 major Soviet weapons; it can "lock in" Soviet reductions as a hedge against a possible reversal of policy in Moscow; and it will provide a framework for the orderly withdrawal of tens or perhaps hundreds of thousands of U.S. forces from Europe.

Bush's new proposal thus moves CFE in the right direction. It would set U.S. and Soviet troop levels in Central Europe – basically in Germany and most of the East European countries – at 195,000; exempted from this ceiling are the 30,000 U.S. troops in Britain, Italy, and Turkey. This tells Moscow that the U.S. reserves the right to continue stationing some, limited, forces in Europe as long as NATO allies want them there and even if Moscow withdraws its troops to within its own territory. Said Bush in his State of the Union Address: "I agree with our European allies that an American military presence in Europe is essential – and that it should not be tied solely to the Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe."

Drawing A Distinction. The one major problem with the Bush proposal, and with CFE in general, is that limits set on Soviet forces in Eastern Europe could be construed as implicit recognition that these forces have a right to be stationed there. As Bush moves forward on CFE, he will have to dispel this notion by supporting the sovereign rights of all European countries to determine whose troops can and can not be stationed on their territory. In this context, Bush should draw a clear distinction between the status of U.S. and Soviet forces in Europe. U.S. forces legitimately are in Europe at the invitation of democratically elected allied governments. Soviet forces are in Europe at the invitation of now-deposed and discredited Soviet-backed regimes. They have no legitimacy and will gain none through CFE as long as the U.S. and its allies make this case strongly.

Instead of spending his time in Moscow this week trying to meet an impossible START deadline, Baker should follow up on the President's promising new CFE proposal, ensuring that CFE continues to be a force for rapid change in Europe. Baker should carry the following arms control messages to Shevardnadze:

² See Jim Hoagland, "Soviets to Negotiate Troop Withdrawal from Hungary, Budapest Official Says," *Washington Post*, January 23, 1989, p. 21, for the status of Soviet talks with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland.

◆ ◆ **The U.S. is lifting its June START deadline.** A START Treaty concluded by June is sure to contain loopholes that Moscow could exploit and which the Senate surely will expose during the ratification process. There is no reason to rush for a bad START agreement in June when an acceptable agreement might be had next year.

◆ ◆ **Bush's ceilings on American and Soviet forces in Europe in no way sanctions the presence of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe against the will of East Europeans.** The U.S. should insist on a CFE Treaty preamble that includes a declaration that the treaty imposes no obligation on any country to accept the stationing of foreign forces on its territory against its will. This will put America squarely on the side of Czechs, Hungarians, and Poles who through their governments have demanded the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from their territories.

◆ ◆ **The U.S. is open to cuts in U.S. and Soviet forces in Central Europe even deeper than those proposed by Bush so far.** Pentagon and State Department officials privately report that Moscow is talking about cutting American and Soviet forces in Europe as low as 150,000. As long as Moscow is willing to accept Bush's distinction between U.S. forces in the central region and its forces on the periphery in Europe, Bush should be open to these deeper cuts.

Historical change in Europe is running in favor of the West, sweeping communist regimes and Soviet troops out of Europe in its wake. Through CFE the U.S. and its allies have an opportunity to help remove the major military threat to NATO and to the survival of the European Revolutions of 1989 — Russian forces in Europe. CFE can serve the cause of change if Baker moves quickly, seeking a treaty that cuts Soviet forces deeply and enshrines the right of Czechs, Hungarians, Poles, Germans, and all Europeans to decide whose forces will or will not be stationed on their territory. For the time being, START should take a back seat to these objectives.

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