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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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PRESIDENTIAL REVIEW DIRECTIVE/NSC-51

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
DIRECTOR OF THE ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT
AGENCY
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY
MANAGER OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

SUBJECT: Direct Communications Links Between Washington
and Moscow (S)

Objective

The objective of this review is to develop agreed policy guidelines governing the architecture and capabilities of all government-to-government communications links between the United States and Russia. (S)

Background

Existing government-to-government communications links between Washington and Moscow include the Direct Communications Link (DCL or "Hotline"), the Direct Voice Link (DVL) and the Nuclear Risk Reduction Center (NRRC) communications network. (S)

The DCL or "Hotline" was established in 1963 between Washington and Moscow to provide a "permanent, rapid, reliable and private means" by which the two heads of government could communicate directly to reduce the risk of nuclear war and to preclude delays, misunderstandings and misinterpretations by either side which might lead to hostilities. The DCL, which provides data and facsimile transmission only, is reserved for the exclusive use of the President of the United States and others as he may designate. U.S. policy governing the DCL is set out in NSDD 186 (September 1985). (S)

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The capabilities of the DCL have been augmented in recent years by the installation of the DVL, a secure voice communications link between the White House and the Kremlin. The DVL architecture includes both a primary and alternative circuit.

(S)

The NRRCs were established between Washington and Moscow under a bilateral agreement concluded in 1987 during implementation of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty). Intended to reduce further the risk of conflict resulting from accident or miscalculation, the NRRCs transmit notifications of ballistic missile launches and notifications required by the INF Treaty and other arms control agreements; as such, the NRRCs serve as crisis prevention rather than crisis management tools. By agreement with the Russians, the communications network between the NRRCs is identical to that installed on the DCL. U.S. policy governing the NRRC is set out in NSDD 301 (February 1988). (S)

Expansion of the capabilities and functions of the NRRCs has been considered at various times. In response to a congressional tasking, the Bush Administration submitted a 1991 report to Congress that assessed other possible NRRC functions, including use of the NRRCs, inter alia, to: serve as a network to counter nuclear terrorism; transmit notifications under future arms control agreements; and facilitate activities restricting nuclear, chemical and missile proliferation. In 1992, the capabilities of the NRRC were augmented by extending direct communications to Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, linking them to the NRRC via the Government-to-Government Communications Link (GGCL -- Kazakhstan and Ukraine) and the Continuous Communications Link (CCL -- Belarus). (S)

The Russian government has recently tabled a proposal to upgrade existing government-to-government communications links between Washington and Moscow by installing a secure digital network with voice, data and teleconferencing capabilities. Significantly, the Russian proposal would integrate the existing Direct Communications Link, the secure Direct Voice Link, and the Nuclear Risk Reduction Center communications network in a manner that would permit intergovernmental communications between the U.S. and Russian presidents as well as other government officials; it would also provide the capability to convene conference communications involving Washington, Moscow and "third parties," e.g., other capitals of the Newly Independent States.

(S)

Consideration of the Russian proposal prompts a need to review the adequacy of existing policy guidance with respect to direct communications links between the two capitals. Given fundamental

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changes in the relationship between Washington and Moscow together with advances in telecommunications technology, existing policy guidance may be an inadequate basis for technical decisions regarding the future architecture of government-to-government communications links between the United States and Russia. (C)

Assessment

These fundamental changes in the U.S.-Russian relationship cause us to reexamine the purpose, function and overall architecture of direct communications networks between Washington and Moscow. (S)

1. Setting aside resource considerations and other constraints, what should be our preferred direct, government-to-government communications network between the United States and Russia? (S)

-- Is the redundancy provided by the Direct Communications Link (DCL) and two Direct Voice Links (DVL) necessary and desirable? Should the DCL be retained?

-- Is the redundancy provided by the separate but technically equivalent capabilities of the DCL and the NRRC communications network necessary and desirable?

-- Beyond direct Head of State communications links, what other government-to-government links between Washington and Moscow are necessary and desirable?

-- What functional capabilities are required on direct communications links between Washington and Moscow: voice, data, facsimile, and/or video conferencing?

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of installing multilateral head of state secure conferencing capabilities involving the United States, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine? (S)

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of continuing to segregate the crisis management communications links such as the DCL and DVL from the non-crisis management networks such as the NRRC and Government-to-Government Communications Link (GGCL)? (S)

-- Should the standards governing equipment utilized on the NRRC communications network be decoupled from those applied to the DCL?

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4. Should the functions of the NRRC communications network be expanded beyond ballistic missile launch warning and arms control treaty verification to include, inter alia, any of the possible additional functions described in the 1991 report to Congress?

(S)

5. What technology transfer constraints should be imposed on direct communications systems between Washington and Moscow and the Newly Independent States? (S)

Tasking

The NSC Senior Director for Defense Policy will convene an Interagency Working Group, task specific drafting responsibilities and set deadlines for drafts. Differences of opinion should be clearly stated rather than compromised for the sake of an agreed product. (S)

A final decision paper is due the NSC Executive Secretary not later than April 30, 1995. (S)



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