

EYES ONLY

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SYSTEM II

THE WHITE HOUSE

91507

WASHINGTON

12/20

Mr. Secretary,

The President has approved the attached draft. The bracketed language on page 3 should be included only if Amb. Hartman is permitted to deliver the letter directly to Andropov.

John Poindexter

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12/19/83

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~BY *anf*  
Draft Presidential Letter  
to Andropov *10/22/79**OK*  
*82*

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On his recent return to Moscow, Ambassador Hartman conveyed to Foreign Minister Gromyko some of my thoughts on the current direction of relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. I continue to believe that despite the profound differences between our two nations, there are opportunities--indeed a necessity--for us to work together to prevent conflicts, to expand our dialogue, and to place our relationship on a more stable and constructive footing. Though we will be vigorous in protecting our interests and those of our friends and allies, we do not seek to challenge the security of the Soviet Union and its people. We are ready to deal seriously and positively with you and your government in an effort to reach mutually acceptable and beneficial solutions to the problems in our relationship. I will be stressing these themes in my public statements over the coming weeks, and hope that my desire to build a more stable relationship will be reciprocated on your part.

In considering the issues now confronting our nations, I especially regret the decision of the Soviet Union not to continue in serious negotiation toward the reduction and elimination of intermediate-range nuclear forces. Since your August 27 letter to me, both our governments made new proposals. For our part, we have sought to address particular Soviet concerns, but have not yet seen a comparable readiness on the Soviet side. The negotiations have reached a stage which suggests the potential for forward movement in some areas; clearly, however, much more needs to be done. Thus, I see no justification for an interruption of

these talks, particularly since for two years we were willing to negotiate while you deployed new missiles.

As I have pledged, both publicly and privately, the United States seeks and will accept any equitable, verifiable agreement that stabilizes forces at lower levels than now exist. We are, of course, prepared to continue the search for such an agreement. It is only through serious negotiations that the reduction and eventual elimination of the weapons over which the Soviet Union has voiced such public concern can be achieved.

This also is true as regards reductions in our respective strategic nuclear arsenals. As you are aware, over recent months we have made significant modifications to our position in the Strategic Arms Reductions Talks. We will continue to insist that any START agreement be meaningful--that it lead to real reductions in the most destabilizing categories of ballistic missile systems, as measured by their warheads, and in the overall destructive power of our two strategic forces. In seeking a lower and more stable strategic balance, however, we do not insist on identical force structures.

Any successful negotiation must eventually embody a balance between the interests and advantages of both sides. If the Soviet Union is prepared to agree to meaningful reductions in ballistic missile warheads and destructive power, where it holds the advantage, the United States is prepared to accept more stringent limits on heavy bombers and air-launched cruise missiles, where it possesses certain advantages. If we could achieve a balance of capabilities in this manner, we would be

able to develop a common framework for carrying out strategic arms reductions. Thus far, however, our efforts to explore what types of reciprocal concessions might bring our interests into balance have been rebuffed. I urge you to reconsider carefully our latest proposals, for I believe they offer an approach which could be fruitful. I would welcome your own thoughts in this regard. We are prepared for a serious and confidential dialogue on this issue.

[If you would find it helpful, I am prepared to send to Moscow a personal emissary who is thoroughly familiar with my thinking on this issue. He could explore the possibilities of this approach--or others you might wish to suggest--with you and your advisers in private, on a totally confidential and unofficial basis.]

Efforts to achieve bilateral arms control, however, constitute only one part of our relationship, and their benefits can be undercut by actions and events in other areas. I must particularly note the dangers posed by an escalation of tensions in any of the world's troubled regions. The Middle East is one of these, and I am sure you appreciate the dangers inherent in the turmoil in Lebanon. Though we may not be able to agree on the causes of this tragic situation, or on the steps necessary to restore peace to the region, I believe it is incumbent on both our governments to use our influence to urge restraint on all the parties and to curb the resort to violence. This, also, is one of the topics which might benefit from a more detailed private discussion.

These are only a few of the issues that divide us, but all of them underscore the need for a meaningful dialogue between us. Events seem to have forced us both to communicate largely through the public media, which obviously undermines our ability to reach practical solutions. While I am under no illusions as to the difficulty of the problems we now face, I nonetheless believe that serious and forthright exchanges could open up avenues to mutually beneficial arrangements. In this connection, I hope that Foreign Minister Gromyko will be able to meet with Secretary Shultz in Stockholm in January, and that we can establish a pattern of regular high-level consultations, along with confidential exchanges of views at other levels.

You have pledged to me your commitment to peace and I have made a similar and heartfelt pledge. In your letter of August 27, you wrote of "the need for a broad, considered approach and for taking bold political decisions looking to the future." If you are indeed prepared to take such an approach and to make far-reaching decisions and, by doing so, to address in a tangible way some of the basic causes for divisions between our two nations, then you will not find the United States lacking for a positive response comparable in scope.

I await your thoughts on these matters, and on any others which you feel we should address in a joint search for ways to move relations between our countries in a more positive direction.

Sincerely,

Ronald Reagan