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THE WHITE HOUSE  
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May 20, 1982

National Security Decision  
Directive Number 32

U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

I have carefully reviewed the NSSD 1-82 study in its component parts, considered the final recommendations of the National Security Council, and direct that the study serve as guidance for U.S. National Security Strategy.

Our national security requires development and integration of a set of strategies, including diplomatic, informational, economic/political, and military components. NSSD 1-82 begins that process. Part I of the study provides basic U.S. national objectives, both global and regional, and shall serve as the starting point for all components of our national security strategy.

The national security policy of the United States shall be guided by the following global objectives:

- To deter military attack by the USSR and its allies against the U.S., its allies, and other important countries across the spectrum of conflict; and to defeat such attack should deterrence fail.
- To strengthen the influence of the U.S. throughout the world by strengthening existing alliances, by improving relations with other nations, by forming and supporting coalitions of states friendly to U.S. interests, and by a full range of diplomatic, political, economic, and information efforts.
- To contain and reverse the expansion of Soviet control and military presence throughout the world, and to increase the costs of Soviet support and use of proxy, terrorist, and subversive forces.

Partially Declassified/Released on 2/26/96  
under provisions of E.O. 12958  
by D. Van Tassel, National Security Council  
F89-609

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Review May 20, 2002

Classified & Extended by William P. Clark

Reason for Extension: NSC 1-13(e)

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2

- To neutralize the efforts of the USSR to increase its influence through its use of diplomacy, arms transfers, economic pressure, political action, propaganda, and disinformation.
- To foster, if possible in concert with our allies, restraint in Soviet military spending, discourage Soviet adventurism, and weaken the Soviet alliance system by forcing the USSR to bear the brunt of its economic shortcomings, and to encourage long-term liberalizing and nationalist tendencies within the Soviet Union and allied countries.
- To limit Soviet military capabilities by strengthening the U.S. military, by pursuing equitable and verifiable arms control agreements, and by preventing the flow of militarily significant technologies and resources to the Soviet Union.
- To ensure the U.S. access to foreign markets, and to ensure the U.S. and its allies and friends access to foreign energy and mineral resources.
- To ensure U.S. access to space and the oceans.
- To discourage further proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- To encourage and strongly support aid, trade, and investment programs that promote economic development and the growth of humane social and political orders in the Third World.
- To promote a well-functioning international economic system with minimal distortions to trade and investment and broadly agreed and respected rules for managing and resolving differences.

In addition to the foregoing, U.S. national security policy will be guided by the operational objectives in specific regions as identified in Parts I and III of the study.

#### Threats to U.S. National Security

The key military threats to U.S. security during the 1980s will continue to be posed by the Soviet Union and its allies and clients. Despite increasing pressures on its economy and the growing vulnerabilities of its empire, the Soviet military will continue to expand and modernize.

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The Soviet Union remains aware of the catastrophic consequences of initiating military action directly against the U.S. or its allies. For this reason, a war with a Soviet client arising from regional tensions is more likely than a direct conflict with the USSR. In a conflict with a Soviet client, however, the risk of direct confrontation with the Soviet Union remains.

Unstable governments, weak political institutions, inefficient economies, and the persistence of traditional conflicts create opportunities for Soviet expansion in many parts of the developing world. The growing scarcity of resources, such as oil, increasing terrorism, the dangers of nuclear proliferation, uncertainties in Soviet political succession, reticence on the part of a number of Western countries, and the growing assertiveness of Soviet foreign policy all contribute to the unstable international environment. For these reasons, the decade of the eighties will likely pose the greatest challenge to our survival and well-being since World War II and our response could result in a fundamentally different East-West relationship by the end of this decade.

#### The Role of Allies and Others

Given the loss of U.S. strategic superiority and the overwhelming growth of Soviet conventional forces capabilities, together with the increased political and economic strength of the industrial democracies and the heightened importance of Third World resources, the United States must increasingly draw upon the resources and cooperation of allies and others to protect our interests and those of our friends. There is no other alternative. To meet successfully the challenges to our interests, the U.S. will require stronger and more effective collective defense arrangements. U.S. defense programs will consider the status of these arrangements in the planning process.

A strong unified NATO remains indispensable to protecting Western interests. While encouraging all our NATO Allies to maintain and increase their contributions in Europe, we should specifically encourage those Allies who can contribute outside Europe to allocate their marginal defense resources preferentially to capabilities which could support both out of area and European missions.

Outside Europe, the United States will place primary reliance on regional states to deal militarily with non-Soviet threats, providing security assistance as appropriate. If no other reasonable alternative exists, the U.S. should be prepared to intervene militarily in regional or local conflicts. In Southwest Asia, we will support the development of balanced and self-contained

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friendly regional forces and will emphasize assistance to certain key states for regional contingency roles. However, the U.S. will remain the primary military power for directly resisting the Soviet Union.

In East Asia, the Japanese should be encouraged to contribute more to their own and mutual defense efforts. We should also assist the Republic of Korea in becoming increasingly self-sufficient in its own defense capabilities.

#### Regional Military Objectives

In peacetime, our regional military objectives seek to deter military attack against the United States, our Allies and friends, and to contain and reverse the expansion of Soviet influence worldwide. The security of Europe remains vital to the defense of the United States. This means that we must achieve significant improvements in NATO's conventional defense capabilities while also improving nuclear and chemical forces. For our part, the United States will maintain its commitments for forward deployment and early reinforcement. The security of Southwest Asia is inextricably linked to the security of Europe and Japan and thus is vital to the defense of the United States. A key peacetime military objective in Southwest Asia is to enhance deterrence by sufficiently improving our global capability to deploy and sustain military forces so as to ensure that, if the Soviet Union attacks, it would be confronted with the prospect of a major conflict with the U.S. in-theater and the threat of escalation.



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Specific policies for both peacetime and wartime regional military objectives are contained in Part III, Section C of the study.

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cy 12 of 36 copies

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5

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### Nuclear Forces

The modernization of our strategic nuclear forces and the achievement of parity with the Soviet Union shall receive first priority in our efforts to rebuild the military capabilities of the United States.

Deterrence can best be achieved if our defense posture makes Soviet assessment of war outcomes, under any contingency, so dangerous and uncertain as to remove any incentive for initiating attack.

The United States will enhance its strategic nuclear deterrent by developing a capability to sustain protracted nuclear conflict in accordance with guidance provided in NSDD-12, NSDD-13, NSDD-26, PD-53, and PD-58. The strategic force modernization program set forth in NSDD-12 is reaffirmed except as may be modified by new decisions in the basing mode for M-X. The U.S. will retain a capable and credible strategic triad of land-based ballistic missiles, manned bombers, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. While each leg of this triad should be as survivable as possible, the existence of all three precludes the destruction of more than one by surprise attack and guards against technical surprise which could similarly remove one leg of the triad.

### General Purpose Forces

Our general purpose forces support U.S. national security policy in peacetime by deterring aggression, by demonstrating U.S. interests, concern, and commitment, by assisting the forces of other friendly nations, and by providing a basis to move rapidly from peace to war. In wartime, these forces would be employed to achieve our political objectives and to secure early war termination on terms favorable to the U.S. and allies.

The U.S. shall maintain a global posture and shall strive to increase its influence worldwide through the maintenance and improvement of forward deployed forces and rapidly deployable U.S.-based forces, together with periodic exercises, security assistance, and special operations.

In a conflict not involving the Soviet Union, the United States will seek to limit the scope of the conflict, avoid involvement of the Soviet Union, and ensure that U.S. objectives are met as quickly as possible.

In a conflict involving the Soviet Union, the U.S. must plan, in conjunction with allies, for a successful defense in a global war. Given our current force insufficiencies, however, we must plan to focus our military efforts in the areas of most vital concern

TOP SECRET

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~~TOP SECRET~~

6

first, undertaking lesser operations elsewhere. This sequential concept shall be a basic feature of our force applications policy. It is in the interest of the United States to limit the scope of any U.S.-Soviet conflict, but if global war with the Soviet Union ensues, counteroffensives are to be directed at places where the U.S. can affect the outcome of the war. Counteroffensives are not a substitute for the robust military capabilities necessary to protect vital interests at the point at which they are threatened in the first place.

Reserve Component forces shall be an integral part of U.S. military planning. The reserves provide major combat forces that complement and reinforce active units, and they provide the majority of the supporting forces required to sustain the total force in combat. During crises involving the potential deployment and sustained employment of sizeable combat forces, the National Command Authority will provide an early mobilization decision. Mobilization planning shall be included for all major contingencies.

In order to close the gap between strategy and capabilities, the U.S. must undertake a sustained and balanced force development program. First priority is to improve the operational capabilities of forward or early deploying forces and their associated lift. Second priority is to be accorded to U.S.-based late deploying forces and then third priority to expanding the force structure.

The capabilities of these forces are to be improved in the following general order of priority: by achieving readiness, upgrading C<sup>3</sup>, providing adequate sustainability, increasing mobility, and then by modernizing the forces.

#### Security Assistance

Security assistance is a vital, integral component of our national security strategy and is an essential complement to our own force structure in meeting our security objectives abroad. Security assistance programs are a most cost-effective means of enhancing the security of the United States. A priority effort shall be undertaken, to include the use of White House resources, to secure passage of security assistance legislative initiatives currently before Congress.

On a longer-term basis, we shall plan for steady real growth in the security assistance portion of the national security budget over the next five years; more extensive use shall be made of multiyear commitments; we will improve our anticipation of and

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cy 13 of 36 copies

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7

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planning for Foreign Military Sales (with special emphasis on the Special Defense Acquisition Fund); and an effort shall be undertaken to rewrite or substantially revise the Foreign Assistance Act and Arms Export Control Act. To implement these actions, appropriate working groups shall be established under the Arms Transfer Management Group, which will report its progress on a regular basis to the NSC.

#### Force Integration

The national security objectives of the United States can be met only if all defense resources are mutually supporting and thoroughly integrated and complement the other elements of U.S. national power.

An examination of our current and projected force capabilities reveals substantial risks that some regional objectives might not be achieved, some commitments to some allies might not be honored, and we might be forced to resort to nuclear weapons early in a conflict.

These risks are inherent in our current position. They must be recognized, allocated as best we can, and then be reduced by an orderly and consistent investment in our defense program.

Comprehensive and imaginative integration of all our capabilities is required to reduce future risks to our national security. Deterrence is dependent on both nuclear and conventional capabilities. Nuclear forces will not be viewed as a lower-cost alternative to conventional forces. At the same time, the possible use of nuclear weapons must remain an element in our overall strategy.

With the growing vulnerability of our strategic deterrent, we must enhance the survivability of our offensive forces, and complement those efforts with effective programs to provide for continuity of government, strategic connectivity, and civil defense.

Armed conflict involving the US requires that the full capabilities of all our armed Services be organized, trained, and equipped so that all can be readily deployed and employed together. Responding to any large contingency will require some level of mobilization. We must expand the scope of mobilization and industrial capabilities and frequently review manpower policies to ensure adequacy of manpower.

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8

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Reports

The Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will include, as part of their periodic reports on the state of our defenses, a discussion of progress made in implementing the provisions of this directive.

Nothing in this directive is intended to supersede or alter the provisions of PD/NSC-53, PD/NSC-58, NSDD-5, NSDD-12, NSDD-13, or NSDD-26.

PD/NSC-18 and PD/NSC-62 are superseded by this directive.

*Ronald Reagan*

Attachment

- Tab A      NSSD 1-82 Study

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