



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS

In terms of atmospheric and past-Soviet conduct, U.S.-Soviet relations are in the worst state since at least the late 1960s. The immediate causes for this downturn are: (1) the unrestrained Soviet military buildup of the past two decades; and (2) the increasing Soviet tendency to rely on force and violence to resolve international issues -- a tendency encouraged by temporary American weakness following Vietnam and Watergate. However, we believe the Soviet leadership may be reassessing its assumptions about the level of American tolerance for such activities and our will to respond. In this sense, we are not pessimistic about the future.

Our dialogue with the Soviets has been designed to convey a consistent message to Moscow: that we seek a more stable and constructive relationship with the USSR on the basis of reciprocity and responsibility in its international behavior. While avoiding a mechanistic linkage to arms control and other issues, the Administration has made clear that no aspect of U.S.-Soviet relations can be insulated from the impact of irresponsible Soviet international behavior.

Specific Issues:

1. U.S.-Soviet Summit: In response to the President's proposal for an informal summit-level meeting during the SSOD, Brezhnev called for a full-fledged summit in Europe in the fall. Both sides, however, have stressed that a summit should be well prepared and have the prospect of producing positive results; no planning for a summit meeting is underway. Over the long term, the summit issue will have to be handled carefully if we are to avoid either a detente-era summit that is long on rhetoric but short on substantive achievements, or a sterile, confrontational meeting.

2. Regional Issues:

a. Poland: In response to the imposition of martial law in Poland and the Soviets' obvious role, the President announced a number of limited sanctions against the USSR on December 29. These sanctions were designed to convey to Moscow U.S. indignation at Soviet actions to precipitate the crackdown, and to encourage the Soviets to bring about an end to the repression. On June 18, the President announced the extension of the sanctions on oil and gas equipment to cover foreign subsidiaries and licensees of U.S. firms, because of the lack of improvement in the Polish situation, and with the aim of delaying construction of the Siberian Gas Pipeline. On July 30, he announced U.S. readiness to extend the existing grains LTA for one year, while continuing to defer negotiations of a new

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agreement because of the Polish situation; the Soviets accepted the offer three weeks later. The situation in Poland remains unstable as demonstrated by large scale civil disorders on August 31 and following the recent de-legalization of Solidarity. The potential for future such disorders is high in the weeks ahead.

b. Afghanistan: Our strategy for dealing with Afghanistan has emphasized a public relations campaign to focus world attention on the Soviet occupation; cooperation with Pakistan and others to maximize political and other costs to the USSR; and diplomatic efforts to keep Afghanistan active on the international agenda and to probe for Soviet interest in a negotiated settlement. The Soviets have recently shown greater interest in the U.N. organized indirect talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan, but there is at yet no evidence to suggest that Moscow is seriously considering a negotiated solution.

c. Middle East: While we have proceeded with our efforts to help area parties find political solutions to the region's problems, the Soviets have suffered a major setback with the successful implementation of the U.S.-sponsored plan for the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut and the announcement of the President's Mideast initiative on September 1. With few opportunities to influence events, the Soviets have been placing primary emphasis on next steps to achieve an overall Mideast peace settlement. The Soviets have denounced the new U.S. Mideast initiative as a ploy to create the appearance of U.S.-Israeli differences in Arab eyes, have criticized the Camp David process as unworkable, and have focused instead on their longstanding proposal for an international conference of all parties, including the USSR. Although Brezhnev has announced his own proposal for a Mideast settlement and attempted to identify it with the Arab position, his initiative was essentially a repackaging of long familiar Soviet ideas.

d. Namibia: The Soviets are not an active party in the diplomatic effort to achieve a Namibia settlement and withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. We have pressed Moscow privately to use its influence responsibly by supporting African cooperation with the Contact Group, but the evidence suggests that the Soviets have not to date played a constructive role.

e. Cuba, Nicaragua, and Central America: In our diplomatic exchanges with the Soviets, we have placed great stress on the threat to U.S. security interests and to U.S.-Soviet relations posed by Cuba's military build-up and by Soviet and Cuban military support to left-wing insurgencies in Central America. Moscow has rejected our concerns about Cuba, taking the standard line that the root of the problem is the U.S. threat to Cuban security, and that the solution lies in U.S.-Cuban normalization.

f. Sino-Soviet Relations: The first high-level Sino-Soviet talks since Afghanistan have recently recessed in Beijing. Although no breakthroughs were achieved, both Moscow and Beijing want to continue the dialogue, and discussions are scheduled to resume in Moscow later this year. Furthermore, recent statements by leaders of both sides have made clear their mutual interest in normalizing contacts, while the mutual criticisms of recent years have been muted in the interests of improving the atmosphere for the talks. The Soviets have good reason to push the consultations for, even if they make no concessions, they stand to reduce Chinese criticism and dispell the image of a solid Western-Chinese front against Moscow's interests. For their part, the Chinese probably have several motivations: to demonstrate their foreign policy freedom of action; to reduce the possibility of an unwanted military clash with the USSR; to probe for the possibility of Soviet concessions, especially during the Soviet succession; and to complete the process of "regularizing" their diplomatic contacts with the outside world.

Despite this initiative, Chinese suspicion of Soviet motives in deep, and many substantive differences (Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Soviet troop deployments on China's borders) separate the two countries. We expect Beijing to continue to work to preserve its more important ties to the West, upon which its long-term security and economic development depend. It is beneficial to U.S. interests, therefore, to react calmly to a certain degree of Sino-Soviet contact and to avoid an over-reaction which would suggest to both Moscow and Beijing that we value China only as a "card" against the USSR.