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Record of Conversation between Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs V. P. Karpov and US Secretary of State J. Baker

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Summary:

Karpov and Baker discuss negotiations for reductions to strategic arms, focusing on issues with the range for air-based cruise missiles and sea-based cruise missiles.

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RECORD OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR,
V.P. KARPOV AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE US,
J. BAKER
20 April 1990

□(After an exchange of greetings):

□J. Baker. I ask you to convey our deep thanks to E.A. Shevardnadze for contacting us on the issues which form the object of today's meeting in so short a time after the Washington meeting of the ministers.

□This morning I was shown a photograph of me that was taken some time ago; in my opinion, it was taken in the moment when I was given the Soviet side's proposals on arms verification. In my opinion, the expression on my face is very eloquent.

□V.P. Karpov. Mr. Secretary of State, I thank you for your warm words to E.A. Shevardnadze. I am pleased to hand you the text of a letter of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR with the USSR's position on a series of issues relating to the treaty being worked out on strategic offensive arms attached to it.

□J. Baker. I know that you have already met with R. Bartholomew. If you want, I am ready to present our initial reaction to your proposals to you, or, if you want, I am ready to hear out your additional thoughts.

□V.P. Karpov. My instructions consist of giving you the text of a letter and our proposals, to give you the relevant basis for our positions as needed, and to hear out carefully any thoughts which might be stated on your part.

□J. Baker. In that case, permit me to state the following preliminary comments.

□I would like to make a caveat from the very start, that, insofar as I understand, we are not conducting any negotiations at present. I think that in the near future we will have the opportunity to give you and answer in a more official capacity, and also to hear comments in reply from you.

□And so, first of all, we affirm the presence of a certain movement in the proposals which you presented to us in comparison with what was said on your side during the Washington meeting of ministers. We are talking, as far as I understand, about proposals for negotiations, and I acknowledge that.

□At the same time, I must say that your new proposals do not move us as far ahead as I had hoped. As before, difficulties remain for use with the issue of the range of air-based cruise missiles and sea-based cruise missiles, although we note a definite movement as to the differentiation between nuclear and conventional sea-based cruise missiles.

□We still have serious problems - as there were in the course of the Washington meetings - with the issue of sub-levels on air-based cruise missiles, and also as to the general overall quantitative limits on sea-based cruise missiles.

□I would also like to make the following comments.

□For us it is extremely important that the clauses on air-based cruise missiles and

sea-based cruise missiles not involve limitations on conventional missiles of that sort. I want to emphasize that the treaty on strategic offensive arms is a treaty on nuclear weapons. And we will have serious difficulties with any stipulations which would limit our capabilities in terms of the deployment of conventional arms.

□As for the issue of the range of air-based cruise missiles, we understand that this is not a simple issue for the Soviet side. I have had enough conversations with the Soviet representatives in order to be convinced of how important this issue is for you. I hope, however, that you understand its importance for the American side and the difficulties which we are encountering in this capacity - especially in the context of the fact that we made a concession of several hundreds of kilometers to the Soviet position at the same time that you have not moved in our direction even by a millimeter.

□In regard to the sublevel on air-based cruise missiles on heavy bombers; I understand that you are raising the issue in such a way as to satisfy your concern over the deployment of a large number of air-based cruise missiles on American heavy bombers. However, regardless even of the surprise which was sprung on us in that regard in the course of the Washington meeting of ministers, in your new proposals, insofar as we can judge, several points are ignored in relation to which we made concessions to you.

□I have in mind, first, the ban on the re-configuration of large-load transport planes for armament with air-based cruise missiles; furthermore, our agreement to a maximum level of 20 air-based cruise missiles for each bomber; the counting of 10 warheads for each of the US's heavy bombers within the overall level of six thousand warheads; and, finally, ignoring the fact that the treaty on strategic offensive arms does not stipulate any limitations on your ABM defenses. These defenses are very large and improved continually; at the present time, you already have more than seven thousand "air" class launchers and about two thousand interceptors.

□On the range of sea-based cruise missiles: it is not completely clear why the limit on the range of sea-based cruise missiles must be exactly the same as that on air-based cruise missiles; or why the figure of 600 km should suddenly be a magic number.

□As you know, we agreed to the establishment of a range limit for mobile-based cruise missiles to a level of 300 km, that is, we agreed to a substantial concession in comparison to the initial position, that is, from zero. We believe that this introduces an element of balance into the statements that the sides will make on their mobile-based cruise missiles, insofar as if we take a limit of 300 km as a starting point, then in relation to you, we will be talking about an acknowledgement of the superiority which you possess in your weapons of a range of from 300 to 600 km - no more nor less than an affirmation of that fact. At the same time, the adoption of a range limit of 600 km would signify an announcement, or an acknowledgement, of the fact that the US has many more mobile-based cruise missiles than the USSR does. This is understandable, insofar as a large portion of those missiles has a range of between 300 and 600 km. So in all probability, we will be able to find people who will not understand us.

□Furthermore. We are vulnerable to mobile-based cruise missiles with a range of from 300 to 600 km by dint of the circumstance that a large portion of our industrial, military, and political centers are located on our coasts - to a far greater degree than yours are.

□And finally, one observation on the issue of an overall limit on mobile-based cruise missiles. I have already told E.A. Shevardnadze what sort of a problem the adoption of juridical binding limitations which would not be verifiable would be from the point of view of the ratification of the treaty. In this regard, I want to make an additional

clarification. So, it is unclear to us what is meant by the words "by this understanding" ["pri tom ponimanie"] in the context of these limitations, and how this squares with the entirely clear resolution adopted in Moscow relative to solving this problem through politically binding statements [to be made] parallel to the treaty. I know that some of the more extreme demands relating to verification that you presented in the course of the Washington meeting are not present in these new proposals. But I also note the presence here of demands about the so-called "distinguishability" (of nuclear from conventional mobile-based cruise missiles) plus your reference to measures on the basis of cooperation which were not mentioned in Moscow.

□ And so, if you do not object, I would propose that these and some other issues be additionally discussed now between you and R. Bartholomew, who may have additional questions for you.

□ Once again, I ask you to convey to E.A. Shevardnadze that we highly value his operational response and his being in contact on these issues, as he promised. Tell him that we will give a full answer to all of your thoughts as soon as possible. I hope that we, possibly, will do this in the course of the upcoming meeting of the ministers on 4 May in the framework of the "2 + 4" formula. I am not excluding, however, that we, perhaps, will make a full reply before my meeting with him on 4 May so that you could put your replying thoughts to us and could answer our questions. I cannot, of course, guarantee that this will happen in the period I have mentioned, but we will try.

□ I would also like to mention something that I have already had the chance to say to E.A. Shevardnadze. Both sides are facing difficulties - that is a fact. But it would be a very serious mistake if we allowed the upcoming meeting of ministers in Moscow to begin in conditions where no one of these serious problems had been resolved, since literally 9 days after Moscow, the high-level meeting will begin. If we come to the Moscow meeting of ministers without resolving all of these issues, it will then be much harder to come to a final settlement of the remaining unresolved problems. And in that case, all of these as-yet unsettled issues will appear to be much bigger than if they had been solved in a timely way. And it will be harder for both sides to show flexibility if all of these issues are left until Moscow.

□ V.P. Karpov. Without taking much of your time, Mr. Secretary of State, I would like to confine myself to the following comments.

□ [The document that] I brought from E.A. Shevardnadze is the result of very serious and deep preparation in Moscow done after the meeting of ministers. It was, I will tell you frankly, difficult work, in the course of which we considered the thoughts of the American side in due course.

□ I must tell you that there are issues on which we simply cannot change our position. The limit on the range of air-based cruise missiles - 600 km, is one of those issues; here we simply have no room for concessions.

□ As for the range of mobile-based cruise missiles, the limit we are proposing - 600 km, is exactly the figure that divides anti-ship cruise missiles from those which are designed for or capable of being used against ground targets. I must say that this issue has a long history: it was discussed back in the 70s in the course of the SALT-2 negotiations; many arguments were put forth by both sides and as a result, an agreement specifically on that range limit - 600 km, was attained.

□ As for the measures on the basis of cooperation, back in Moscow we discussed the issue of the exchange of information - in the sense of an exchange of current

information. But at that time, we stated a thought about the fact that in future, the sides could work out additional measures of cooperation which would help to reassure both sides in regard to the fact that the politically binding statements by the USSR and the US would be realized, that they are real and are subject to verification, if not thought on-site inspection, then in any case, in such a way that the sides would be assured that the situation is the same as it was reflected in these statements by the sides.

□ It seems to me that we really could discuss the details of all of these issues with R. Bartholomew. Whatever the case, I will bring the content of your comments and thoughts to E.A. Shevardnadze's attention so that he has a clear understanding of how you received our proposals.

□ J. Baker. Thank you. I want to express a couple of additional thoughts. First, as to the range of mobile-based cruise missiles. You, perhaps, remember that in the course of my speech to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, one of the deputies, addressing me, said that the United States should show concern about the potential of short-range mobile-based cruise missiles in terms of damage to objects positioned on the coasts of the United States. I must say that, even if we had no such concern, then now it would certainly arise, but at the same time I want to say the following: I at least sense a definite difference in the acuity with which the issue of a 600 km limit on the range of air-based and sea-based cruise missiles is raised.

□ I don't know; maybe I am mistaken, but in this case I am saying what I think and what, insofar as I know, correctly reflects the situation. In this sense, it is entirely logical that in the context of mobile-based cruise missiles, we are simply talking about an announcement of what we have; in this sense, a side's announcement of a greater number than it possesses is not in its interests. But I am not planning to conduct negotiations here.

□ I want once again to thank you and to express the hope that you will convey our thanks to E.A. Shevardnadze for reacting quickly and for coming out with new proposals. It would be tragic, in my view, if now, when we have gone down such a long road in working out a treaty on strategic offensive arms, to suffer defeat and not complete it, at least in its basic elements, before the time when the Presidents of our countries meet. This takes on particular significance in the context of the difficulties which have arisen for use of late - in connection with the situation in Lithuania and of another sort. The achievement of a treaty on strategic offensive arms will show those who, both in your and in our countries, are not very inclined to support the development of our relations, that forward movement in the area of arms control, the continuation of joint efforts to regulate regional conflicts, and the resolution of other issues which are significant for peace and for the whole of humanity, - that all of this is very important and serious. For that reason, specifically because of the difficulties which have arisen for us of late in other areas, thanks to those factors which are putting pressure both on you and on us - now it is more necessary than ever to achieve progress on disarmament issues.

□ V.P. Karpov. Thank you, Mr. Secretary of State. As for the statements of our deputy, I ask you to take into account the fact that we now have a pluralism of opinions - and I am presenting the government's point of view.

□ J. Baker. Welcome to our club. Pluralism, you know, sometimes is a rather unpleasant thing. Here not long ago, there was a vote in the Senate - its results: 93 for, 0 against - on a proposal for more decisive measures on the part of the government of the US in response to the situation in Lithuania. So we, of course, well understand the difference in views which can take place between legislative and executive authorities.