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ABLE ARCHER was an annual NATO exercise that had taken place for years. However, the exercise revolution conducted in November 1983 by the U.S. and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies received the most notoriety. It appeared so realistic that the Russians believed that a nuclear strike on its nation was a strong possibility. However, due to a combination of Operation RYaN, historical correlations, and other circumstances taking place before initiating this annual exercise and the culmination of the exercise itself. Many Scholars view the miscalculation and misinterpretation of the series of events as the closest the U.S. and the Soviet Union came to nuclear war since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. However, as a historical event, ABLE ARCHER 83 is still less researched and written about by scholars. Some declassified documents, many of them above Top Secret from both sides at the Cold War's height, were released under the Freedom of Information Act, such as memos and briefing papers. Much of the intelligence from the fall of 1983, both American and Soviet, remains classified.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**Educational Wargaming: Historical/Case-based Research**  
*Exercise ABLE ARCHER 83*

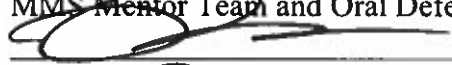
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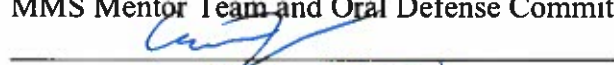
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## **Exercise ABLE ARCHER 83**

*This scenario takes place in early 1983, after an unexpected leadership change in the Kremlin, aimed to reverse recent Western geopolitical and economic gains by asserting greater Soviet power in the petroleum-rich Gulf States. By March, Moscow was fighting proxy wars against the United States (U.S.) in the Middle East by providing political support and weapons to Iran, Syria, and South Yemen. By June, the conflict spread from the Middle East to Europe. The fledgling Soviet leadership could not continue providing its usual aid to its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Despite Moscow's desperate efforts to utilize local communist parties, pressure groups, and propaganda campaigns to quell dissatisfaction and unrest throughout its Eastern European satellites, the region's economic situation continued to worsen. The Eastern Europe's military preparedness, however, improved. Warsaw Pact forces conducted frequent training exercises, stockpiled equipment, and increased activity in naval dockyards, while factories producing material went on round-the-clock schedules.*

*In August, a non-aligned Yugoslavia leaned toward the West, formally requesting economic and military assistance from several NATO countries. Moscow, fearing Yugoslavia's shift could herald the defection of its Eastern European allies and client states, dooming the worldwide communist movement, chose to invade. After a month of mobilization exercises and forward deployments, Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces entered Yugoslavia. On October 31, the ground war broadened. Soviet forces invaded Finland and, the next day, Norway. The Soviets commenced massive air and naval attacks against NATO's European forces and bases. In southern Europe, Soviet ground forces invaded Greece while its Navy carried out attacks in the Adriatic, Mediterranean, and Black Seas. By November 4, Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces crossed through the Fulda Gap while bombarding the entire eastern border of West Germany*

*with air attacks. Because NATO forces provided strong resistance to these Soviet invasions, the conventional war turned unconventional; by November 6, Soviet forces had launched chemical attacks. The next day, NATO forces responded in kind. The war soon spread to the United Kingdom. On November 10, "attacks on U.K. airfields disrupted B-52 and KC-135 operations as well as destroyed some aircraft." Eight KC-135 Stratotankers in the United Kingdom were "launched for survival" they would later be available to refuel nuclear bombers. Under attack, NATO headquarters had to relocate its Mons, Belgium, headquarters to an Alternate War Headquarters at the Heinrich Hertz Kaserne in Birkenfeld.*

*Unable to repel the Soviets' ground advance, NATO attempted to send a message to the Warsaw Pact via nuclear signaling—the nuclear destruction of one city in the hope of averting total nuclear war. On November 8, NATO requested permission from its members for "initial limited use of nuclear weapons against pre-selected fixed targets." On November 9, the Western capitals granted NATO permission to destroy Eastern European cities with nuclear attacks. However, this did not stop the Warsaw Pact. As a result, the next day, the leader of NATO's military, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), requested a "follow-on use of nuclear weapons." Washington—and the other capitals— approved this request within twenty-four hours, and on November 11, the follow-on attack was executed. A full-scale nuclear war had broken out. Then, with nothing left to destroy, ABLE ARCHER 83, a NATO war-gaming exercise designed to practice nuclear weapons release during wartime conditions, came to an end.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Nate Jones and Thomas S. Blanton, *ABLE ARCHER 83: The Secret History of the NATO Exercise That Almost Triggered Nuclear War* (New York: The New Press, 2016) pages 1-2.

## **The Actual Exercise ABLE ARCHER 83**

ABLE ARCHER was an annual NATO exercise that had taken place for years. However, the exercise revolution conducted in November 1983 by the U.S. and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies received the most notoriety. It appeared so realistic that the Russians believed that a nuclear strike on its nation was a strong possibility. However, due to a combination of Operation RYaN, historical correlations, and other circumstances taking place before initiating this annual exercise and the culmination of the exercise itself. Many Scholars view the miscalculation and misinterpretation of the series of events as the closest the U.S. and the Soviet Union came to nuclear war since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. However, as a historical event, ABLE ARCHER 83 is still less researched and written about by scholars. Some declassified documents, many of them above Top Secret from both sides at the Cold War's height, were released under the Freedom of Information Act, such as memos and briefing papers. Much of the intelligence from the fall of 1983, both American and Soviet, remains classified. However, one scholar of declassified writings titled his conference paper "The ABLE ARCHER Non-Crisis."<sup>2</sup> At the time, U.S. officials were not aware of how seriously the Soviets took ABLE ARCHER 83. A U.S. intelligence report later concluded, "ABLE ARCHER sounded no alarm bells in the U.S. Indications and Warning System." U.S. commanders on the scene were not aware of any pronounced superpower tension, and the Soviet activities were not known in their totality until long after the exercise was over. The extent of the potential for war became more apparent after the 1985 defection of Oleg Gordievsky. During ABLE ARCHER 83, he passed

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<sup>2</sup> Jones and Blanton, *ABLE ARCHER 83* page x.

information to British intelligence but had not yet left the K.G.B. Many American officials dismissed the talk as Soviet propaganda.

In the late 1960s, NATO began annual military exercises in Europe designed to train its forces and test combat readiness. Under NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), the exercises usually took place from September to November and were known as AUTUMN FORGE. The ABLE ARCHER 83 scare was a result of the end of AUTUMN FORGE 83. Autumn Forge 83 was comprised of six exercises involving approximately 100,000 troops. The largest was REFORGER 83 (*REturn of U.S. FORces to GERmany*), in which NATO forces had to defend against the Warsaw Pact. The REFORGER exercise involved the airlift of over 16,000 American troops to Europe. AUTUMN FORGE always culminated with ABLE ARCHER, which tested the command and control procedures for conventional mass destruction weapons. SHAPE historian Gregory Pedlow described ABLE ARCHER as follows:

It was an annual Command Post Exercise only (thus involving headquarters, not troops on the ground) of NATO Allied Command Europe (A.C.E.), and it was designed to practice command and staff procedures, with particular emphasis on the transition from conventional to non-conventional operations, including the use of nuclear weapons.

Leading up to Autumn Forge 83, Soviet officials grew paranoid that the West would launch a nuclear attack under cover of a war game like ABLE ARCHER. This paranoia was fueled by the fact that ABLE ARCHER 83 differed in several ways from its previous variations.<sup>3</sup> First, this exercise evolution was planned for the participation of numerous senior military officials. Second, according to Robert Gates, who was working for the C.I.A., "The procedures and message formats used in the transition from conventional to nuclear war were different from

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<sup>3</sup> The National Museum of Nuclear Science and History/Atomic Heritage Foundation "*Nuclear Close Calls: ABLE ARCHER 83*" Cold War History June 15, 2018

those used before." Third, although no actual troops were used in ABLE ARCHER, the exercise moved its imaginary forces to high alert.<sup>4</sup>

A sudden change in Russian leadership in 1982 led the Russians to fight other proxy wars by March 1983 against the United States in the Middle East by providing political support and arms to Iran, Syria, and South Yemen. On June 8, 1982, President Reagan gave a speech to the British House of Commons and declared, "freedom and democracy will leave Marxism and Leninism on the ash heap of history."<sup>5</sup> President Reagan extended the Carter administration's trend of increased military spending. Reagan implemented and oversaw the most significant peacetime military buildup in American history. He proposed a \$2.7 trillion defense budget for 1982–1989, with an 18.1 percent increase for military spending in 1983 alone. Reagan's decision to continue the deployment of Pershing II and long-range cruise missiles in Western Europe was a key pillar of his early policy toward the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> On March 23, 1983, Reagan announced the most ambitious and controversial component to this strategy, the Strategic Defense Initiative, which was nicknamed "Star Wars" by critics and the media.<sup>7</sup> While the Soviets feared that Strategic Defense Initiative reflected a clear, long-term plan to disrupt nuclear parity, it was the imminent deployment of Gryphon and Pershing II missiles that played the most considerable role in shaping the Soviet response during the 1983 war scare. Even though the range of the Pershing IIs was classified, the U.S. publicly announced their range as 1,800 kilometers, long enough to

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<sup>4</sup> Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996 page 271.

<sup>5</sup> Jones and Blanton, *ABLE ARCHER* 83 page 15.

<sup>6</sup> Jones and Blanton, *ABLE ARCHER* 83 page 9.

<sup>7</sup> Norman A. Bailey, William P. Clark, Francis M. Marlo and Douglas E. Streusand: *The grand strategy that won the cold war, Architecture of Triumph*, Lexington Books. 2016 pages 74, 92.

reach eastern Russia and its forward-deployed forces from West Germany in less than ten minutes. However, Soviet specialists feared that the missiles were even more dangerous, estimating that they had a range of 2,500 kilometers, posing a direct threat to Soviet leadership. In 1979, the Institute for Intelligence Problems, coordinated by the K.G.B.'s Chief Directorate, was tasked with "the development of new intelligence concepts" at the direction of K.G.B. chairman Yuri Andropov that could provide preliminary warning of Western preparations for a first strike. This work resulted in the creation of Operation RYaN, which was announced in May of 1981. RYaN used Soviet military and political intelligence to put the U.S.S.R.'s nuclear arsenal on high alert. Reagan's aggressive buildup placed the Soviet Union in a "hyper-defensive" state, and Soviet agents tasked with detecting a nonexistent nuclear attack to preempt.<sup>8</sup>

At the time, Operation RYaN was the most comprehensive intelligence collection platform in Soviet history. Intelligence officers surveilled and monitored individuals who would decide to launch a nuclear attack, the personnel that would implement the attack, and facilities from which the attack would originate. Senior K.G.B. officers and Soviet leaders announced that the U.S. was preparing a secret nuclear attack on the U.S.S.R. Andropov defended the establishment of Operation RYaN due to claims the U.S. was actively preparing for nuclear war against the Soviet Union and its allies. RYaN took a greater significance after the announcement of plans to deploy Pershing II nuclear-armed missiles to West Germany. These were missiles designed to be launched from mobile vehicles, making the launch sites hard to locate. The flight time from West Germany to European Russia was only four to six minutes, giving the Soviets

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<sup>8</sup> Jones and Blanton, *ABLE ARCHER* 83 page 15.

little or no warning. Paired with the announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative would render the U.S. protected from Soviet attack allowing the U.S. to launch a missile attack against the Soviet Union without fear of retaliation. The concern of a surprise attack prompted the immediate expansion of the RYaN program. Andropov died in February 1984. However, RYaN continued to be developed under the direction of Victor Chebrikov. Operation RYaN continued to be maintained until April 1989.<sup>9</sup>

### **Things That Made the Russians Fear A Surprise Attack And Increased Tensions**

The Soviet Union had adequate cause to always be on high alert for a possible surprise attack by its enemies as it had previously been the victim of a surprise attack during Germany's largest military operation in World War II. Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, in Operation Barbarossa. During the two years before the invasion, the Soviet Union and Germany agreed to strategic economic and political pacts. However, the German High Command began planning a Soviet invasion in July 1940. In April 1941, the Germans had begun setting Operations to establish claims that Britain was the real target. These simulated preparations in Norway and the English Channel coast included naval concentrations, reconnaissance flights, and training exercises.<sup>10</sup>

The 1973 Arab Israeli War served as another more recent historical precursor for justification for Soviet paranoia and fear as the U.S. and NATO conducted joint military exercises near its territories. The Arab Israeli War began when an Arab states coalition led by

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<sup>9</sup> Benjamin B. Fisher, *A Cold War Conundrum: The 1983 Soviet War Scare* C.I.A. library, Historical Document, Posted: Mar 19, 2007 pages 4-37.

<sup>10</sup> Jones and Blanton, *ABLE ARCHER* 83 pages 34-35.

Syria and Egypt launched a joint surprise joint attack on Israeli positions under the ruse of a joint military training exercise. The attack took place on the holiest day of the year in Judaism, Yom Kippur, which was also during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan that year. Syrian and Egyptian forces crossed ceasefire lines to enter the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights, respectively. During the week of Yom Kippur, the Egyptian army staged a training exercise near the Suez Canal. Israeli intelligence detected large troop movements near the canal, dismissed them as training exercises. The Israelis detected Syrian troop border movements and noticed the Syrian army reserves' call-up cancellation. These activities were strange but not considered a threat because they believed that without Egypt, they would not attack, and Egypt would not attack until the weaponry they wanted to arrive. During September 27-30, reservists were called up by the Egyptian army to participate in these exercises. On October 1, an Aman researcher submitted an assessment that the Egyptian exercises along the Suez Canal appeared to cover an actual canal crossing. The researcher sent a more comprehensive assessment on October 3, and his superiors ignored both. On October 4, the Egyptian command publicly announced the demobilization of reservists mobilized during September 27 to ease Israeli suspicions two days before the attack. Approximately 20,000 troops were demobilized and troops placed on leave to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. Military colleges cadets were instructed to resume their college courses on October 9. The United States and Soviet Union both executed resupply efforts to their respective allies, almost leading to a confrontation between the two superpowers during the conflict.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> C.I.A., *President Nixon and the Role of Intelligence in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War* (C.I.A. Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2013) pages 30-48

The Soviet Union added to its fear and anxiety as its military resources were scattered throughout the world due to being engaged in several Cold War-era conflicts that coincided with ABLE ARCHER 83. From December 24, 1979 – February 15, 1989, the U.S.S.R. was engaged in the Soviet-Afghan War wherein Mujahedeen insurgent groups used unconventional warfare against the Soviet Army. This conflict was considered a proxy war because the Mujahedeen was backed primarily by China, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, further adding to the tension between the U.S. and Soviet Union. Estimates are that approximately 562,000-2,000,000 civilians were killed, and millions of Afghans fled as refugees, primarily to Pakistan and Iran. The war caused grave destruction in Afghanistan and is believed to have contributed to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 27, 1979, the international community broadly condemned it. Advisors to Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev claimed that the intervention would be quick and uncontested and suggested that U.S. President Jimmy Carter was too engrossed in the ongoing hostage crisis in Iran to respond to the situation in Kabul. In reality, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan led to an extended conflict in Central Asia, and Carter reacted with a series of measures designed to place pressure on the Soviets to withdraw. These measures included the threat of a grain embargo, the withdrawal of the SALT II agreement from Senate consideration, and a possible boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics, scheduled to be hosted by Moscow.<sup>12</sup>

A second proxy war in which the Soviets were engaged was the Angolan Civil War. Approximately 11,000 soviet troops were engaged from the wars beginning in 1975 until the

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of State Archive, "*The Olympic Boycott, 1980*" released online from January 20, 2001 to January 20, 2009

collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The war began after Angola gained independence from Portugal in November 1975. The war resulted from a power struggle between the two former anti-colonial groups, the communist People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (M.P.L.A.) and the anti-communist National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (U.N.I.T.A.). This conflict served as another Cold War proxy conflict by competitors Cuba, the Soviet Union, South Africa, and the U.S.

A third proxy conflict was the Eritrean War of Independence involving the U.S. and the Soviet Union, which was fought between Eritrean independence fighters and successive Ethiopian governments from 1 September 1961 to 24 May 1991. Following the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, the Derg (Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia) established a Marxist-Leninist communist state and abolished the Ethiopian Empire. The Derg supported the Soviet Union and other communist nations fighting against the Eritreans supported by the U.S. and various nations. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (E.P.R.D.F.), with the help of the E.P.L.F., defeated the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (P.D.R.E.) when a month later it took control of the capital Addis Ababa. In April 1993, the Eritrean people voted almost unanimously in favor of independence in the Eritrean independence referendum, with formal international recognition of an independent, sovereign Eritrea in the same year.<sup>13</sup>

The United States led a boycott of the Summer Olympic Games in Moscow to protest the late 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Sixty-five nations refused to participate in the games, whereas 80 countries sent athletes to compete. In organizing the boycott and rallying support

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<sup>13</sup> Terrence Lyons, *Eritrea: The Independence Struggle and the Struggles of Independence*, Center for Strategic and International Studies pages 36-46

behind it, the Carter Administration wanted to express the extent of international displeasure with the invasion of Afghanistan and pressure the Soviets to pull their armies out of the conflict. However, the idea gained popularity when Russian dissident Andrei Sakharov called for a boycott in early January. On January 14, 1980, the Carter Administration joined Sakharov by setting a deadline by which the Soviet Union must pull out of Afghanistan or face the consequences, including an international boycott of the games. When the deadline passed a month later without any change to Central Asia's situation, Carter pushed U.S. allies to pull their Olympic teams from the upcoming games. The Soviets reacted to the boycott by retaliating and leading a communist-bloc boycott of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles. These Olympic boycotts were just one manifestation of the increasing tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1980s, the Solidarity movement emerged when the communist government of Poland signed the agreement allowing for its existence. It became the first independent labor union in a Soviet-bloc country. Its result was a broad anti-bureaucratic non-violent anti-communist social movement, using civil resistance methods to advance the causes of workers' rights and social change. Government attempts in the early 1980s to destroy the union through the imposition of martial law in Poland and political repression failed. It has been considered to have contributed significantly to the fall of communism. The U.S. supported the Solidarity movement in waged a public relations campaign to deter what the Carter administration felt was "an imminent move by large Soviet military forces into Poland." However, when the Polish government launched a crackdown of its own in 1981, Solidarity was not alerted. Potential

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of State Archive, "*The Olympic Boycott, 1980*"

explanations for this vary, while others suggest that American policy-makers viewed an internal crackdown as preferable to an inevitable Soviet intervention.<sup>15</sup>

In February 1981, the United States began what was considered psychological warfare consisting of propaganda against an enemy, supported by military, economic, or political measures as required. The intention of propaganda is to demoralize the enemy, break their will to fight or resist, and sometimes render them aware of an enemy's position. The use of propaganda is to strengthen the resolve of allies or resistance fighters. The twisting of personality and manipulating beliefs in prisoners of war by brainwashing and related techniques can also be regarded as psychological warfare. However, during the cold war, the Navy operations were designed to test Soviet radar vulnerability and demonstrate U.S. nuclear capabilities. Which included a series of naval operations that covertly accessed waters near the Greenland, Iceland, and United Kingdom gap, and the Barents, Norwegian, Black, and Baltic seas, demonstrating the proximity NATO ships could be within critical Soviet military bases. NATO bombers also flew directly towards Soviet airspace, turning at the last moment, sometimes several times per week.

In April 1983, the U.S. Navy conducted FleetEx 83-1, the largest fleet exercise in the North Pacific. The formation of approximately 40 ships, 23,000 service members, and 300 aircraft attempted to provoke the Soviets into reacting, allowing U.S. Naval Intelligence to study Soviet radar characteristics, aircraft capabilities, and tactical maneuvers. On September 1, 1983, Korean Air Lines Flight 007 was shot down by a Soviet Su-15 interceptor over the Sea of Japan while flying over Soviet airspace. All 269 crew and passengers were killed,

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<sup>15</sup> Douglas J. MacEachin, US Intelligence and the Polish Crisis 1980-1981, Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency 2001 pages 1-5.

including Congressman Larry McDonald, a sitting member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Georgia.<sup>16</sup>

On the evening of September 26, 1983, a Soviet early missile warning system reported multiple false alarms, an initial report of a single intercontinental ballistic missile launch from a U.S. territory. Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov, who was on duty, dismissed the warning as a computer error when ground early warning radars did not detect a launch. Part of his reasoning was that the system was new and known to have previously malfunctioned; also, he theorized that a full-scale nuclear attack from the U.S. would involve thousands of simultaneous launches, not a single missile. Later, the system reported four more launches headed to the Soviet Union, but Petrov again dismissed the reports. An investigation that followed revealed that the system had malfunctioned, and false alarms resulted from a solar flare.<sup>17</sup> At the time, the U.S. and Soviet Union's relationship had deteriorated to the point where the Soviet Union as a system – not only the Kremlin but also Soviet Premier Yuri Andropov and the K.G.B. —expected an attack and to retaliate to it quickly. The system itself was on high alert, very nervous, and prone to mistakes. The false alarm that happened on Petrov's watch could not have come at a more intense and dangerous phase in U.S.–Soviet relations. Petrov is credited as having prevented a retaliatory nuclear attack against the U.S. or its NATO allies, which would likely have resulted in a full-scale nuclear war.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Richard William Johnson, *Shootdown: Flight 007 and the American Connection*. Viking, 1986 pages 19-20.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Vincent Pry, *War Scare: Russia and America on the Nuclear Brink*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999 page 37

<sup>18</sup> EWA Pieta. "*The Red Button & the Man Who Saved the World.*" logtv.com. Archived from the original on 16 October 2006

## **The Nuclear Arms Race and Broken Treaties**

Key historical moments often take place as a result of unlikely events. Secretary of State Shultz attributes the beginning of the end of the Cold War partially to a snowstorm on February 12, 1983, that blanketed Washington, D.C. and shutdown of the National Capital Region. The snowstorm forced the President and First Lady to cancel their planned trip to Camp David; instead, they invited the Secretary of State and his wife to the White House for dinner. The president quizzed Shultz about the secretary's recent trip to China and asked about his meetings with the Chinese leader, encouraged by the first lady asking how he was able to arrange his own trips to China and the Soviet Union. Shultz responded that it could be "a great idea if it comes about in the right way." In the meantime, he suggested, Reagan should meet with Ambassador Dobrynin. Three days later, the ambassador arrived at the White House for his first meeting with the president. During the meeting, which spanned two hours, the two spoke about arms control, the plight of seven Pentecostal Christians from Siberia who had been barred from leaving the U.S.S.R., and other human rights issues, along with the general state of relations between the U.S. and Soviet Union. The president also asked Dobrynin the key recurring question of the era of renewed confrontation: did "the Soviet Union believe the U.S. pose a threat to the Soviet Union and the U.S. would attack the Soviet Union and start a nuclear war?" President Reagan continued to privately maintain his aspirations for improved relations with the Soviet Union after his speeches to the British Parliament and the National Association of Evangelicals. On April 6, he wrote in his diary of his anger at members of the National Security Council whom he believed were "undercutting on plans he & I discussed for quiet diplomacy approach to the Soviets. . . . Some of the N.S.C. staff are too hard-line and don't think any approach should be made to the

Soviets. I think I'm hard-line and will never appease.”<sup>19</sup> Months later, when Mikhail Gorbachev, then Soviet Minister of Agriculture, went to Canada, Aleksandr Yakovlev, then the Soviet Ambassador to Canada, connected Gorbachev with Eugene Whelan, the Canadian Minister of Agriculture, who arranged a three-week tour across Canada for both Soviet officials, accompanied by Whelan. At the end of the tour, Whelan hosted a farewell reception for Gorbachev at his home on the evening of May 19, 1983. Whelan arrived late and in what has since been called "the walk that changed the world," Yakovlev and Gorbachev walked in a nearby orchard and had a frank discussion and concluded that the old ways in the U.S.S.R. had to end. These events are both considered factors in being the beginning of the end of the cold war.<sup>20</sup>

On June 1, 1983, a Soviet “Charlie” class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine sank somewhere east of the Soviet naval base of Petropavlosk, near the southern tip of the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Pacific. U.S. intelligence services reported that most or all of the 90-person crew were lost. The accident's cause is unknown, but the lack of radioactive contamination indicates that the accident was possibly due to mechanical failure, not a nuclear power plant accident. The Soviet Navy could not salvage the submarine in early August 1983.

Months later, on October 31, 1983, the U.S.S. *McCloy* is towing a sonar array west of Bermuda when suddenly the cable goes slack. The next day a Soviet Victor III class nuclear-powered attack submarine is sighted motionless on the surface 282 miles west of Bermuda and 470 miles east of Charleston, South Carolina U.S. P-3 Orion patrol aircraft. U.S. Navy officials believe that while the submarine was following the *McCloy*, the sonar array caught in the submarine's propeller. There is no indication of leaking radiation, according to a Navy

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<sup>19</sup> *Ronald Reagan Diary, April 06, 1983*

<sup>20</sup> Jones and Blanton, *ABLE ARCHER 83* page 310

spokesman. On 5 November, the submarine is taken under tow by a Soviet salvage ship in the direction of Cienfuegos' Cuban port. Further observation while the submarine is under tow leads the Navy to believe the damage is relatively minor and relates to the submarine's propeller.

On November 17, 1983: The Soviet *Krivak* I class frigate *Razyaschy* collides with the U.S.S. *Fife* (DD-991) in the North Arabian Sea, causing minor damage to the *Fife* but no casualties. Reportedly the *Razyaschy* attempted to approach the U.S.S. *Ranger*. When the *Fife* attempted to head off the Soviet ship, the two ships grazed hulls, leaving two 15-foot scrapes in the *Fife's* paint. Reports say the Soviet ship earlier narrowly had missed a collision with another U.S. warship.<sup>21</sup>

Besides the United States, the Soviet Union feared NATO, and signs of that fear showed when what would be later known as the Warsaw pact started to take shape during the final years of World War II. As a result of the establishment of the Warsaw Pact, a Soviet counterweight to NATO, West Germany joined NATO in 1955. After the World War II, Stalin was determined that the U.S.S.R. would maintain control of Eastern Europe, which would become a buffer zone between Western Europe and the Soviet Union. A communist government was established for each state and pledged its loyalty and economy tied to the economy of the Soviet Union. At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union occupied Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, and eastern Germany. Great Britain, the United States, France, and the Soviet Union divided Germany and Berlin into four occupation zones to be administered by the four countries. The Soviet Union was determined to establish governments in Eastern Europe that were friendly to the Soviet Union. While the war was still taking place, Soviet occupation troops assisted local

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<sup>21</sup> William M. Arkin and Joshua Handler: *Neptune Papers Naval Accidents 1945- 1988* Greenpeace/Institute for Policy Studies June 1989 pages 64-65

communists in putting Communist dictatorships in Romania and Bulgaria in power. Yugoslavia and Albania supported the rise of communist dictatorships in their countries; however, both countries remained outside of the Soviet sphere of influence. In 1949 the Communist German Democratic Republic was established in the Soviet, German occupation zone. The East European satellite regimes depended on Soviet military power to maintain control of their communist governments. Over one million Red Army soldiers remained stationed in Eastern Europe. On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill, speaking at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri with President Harry S. Truman on the stage with him, summed up the situation in Europe with what is known as the "Iron Curtain" speech in which he observed that "from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent." Churchill's speech may have been the first shot fired in the Cold War, which would last until December 1991 when the Soviet Union Collapsed.<sup>22</sup>

The Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) were successors to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks of the 1970s. Arms control negotiations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, aimed to reduce the two countries' arsenals of nuclear warheads and missiles and bombers capable of delivering such weapons resumed in 1982. In resuming strategic-arms negotiations with the Soviet Union in 1982, U.S. President Ronald Reagan renamed the talks START and proposed radical reductions, rather than merely limitations, in each superpower's existing stocks of missiles and warheads. In 1983 the Soviet Union abandoned arms control talks in protest against the U.S. deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Western Europe.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *"Formation of NATO and Warsaw Pact"* History Channel, Archived from the original on 23 December 2015

<sup>23</sup> *Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I): Executive Summary*. The Office of Treaty Compliance. Archived from the original on 6 January 2011

On January 19, 1983, Secretary of State Shultz summarized in a memo to President Reagan, 1983 will be a year of new challenges and opportunities in our relations with the Soviet Union. We have in place a sound policy, which gives us the foundation for an intensified dialogue with Moscow. Such a dialogue would protect our security interests while giving the Soviets incentives to address our concerns—as long as we do not waiver on the essentials of the policy approach we have established over the past two years. The Soviets may ultimately prove unwilling to satisfy our criteria for an improvement in the relationship. If so, we will nonetheless have done our part, and the responsibility for continued tensions will rest squarely with Moscow.<sup>24</sup>

However, The U.S. embassy in Russia was more optimistic and sent a telegram to the State Department stating that the Andropov approach is not marked by significant experimentation or initiative.

Internally, Andropov makes significant efforts to make the economy run better, but he uses traditional and conservative methods to emphasize discipline and an anti-corruption drive. In foreign policy, he has departed in no way from the Brezhnev policy. He seems to be going out of his way to knock down speculation that he will be more flexible on Afghanistan or Poland, and even on issues of less importance to the Soviet Union, like Southern Africa, there appears to be no relaxation of the hard-line. If anything, the best candidate for change, at least in the near term, would seem to be an acceleration of Soviet overtures to China—a development that is not in our interests. I remain nevertheless convinced that a priority item in Soviet policy under Andropov is their relationship with us. In short, we are confronting a regime that will be every bit as hard to deal with as the Brezhnev regime, which is more vigorous and probably more intelligent, but which has a specific dependency on its relations with the U.S.<sup>25</sup>

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (I.N.F. Treat) negotiations started in 1981- 1983. On 18 November 1981, shortly before the beginning of formal talks, Reagan made the Zero Option or "zero-zero" proposal. It called for a hold on U.S. deployment of G.L.C.M. and Pershing II systems, reciprocated by Soviet elimination of its SS-4, SS-5, and SS-20 missiles. There appeared to be little chance of the Zero Option being adopted, but the gesture

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<sup>24</sup> *Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Europe and Soviet Union, USSR (01/28/1983–02/02/1983)*

<sup>25</sup> *Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Europe and Soviet Union, USSR*

was well received by the European public. In February 1982, U.S. negotiators put forth a draft treaty containing the Zero Option and a global prohibition on intermediate- and short-range missiles, with compliance ensured via astringent, though unspecified, verification program. Formal talks began on 30 November 1981, with the U.S. negotiators led by Reagan and those of the Soviet Union by General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev. The core of the U.S. negotiating position reflected the principles put forth under Carter: any limits placed on US INF capabilities, both in terms of "ceilings" and "rights," must be reciprocated with limits on Soviet systems.<sup>26</sup>

Additionally, the United States insisted that a good verification regime was needed and there was little convergence between the two sides over the two years. A US effort to separate the question of nuclear-capable aircraft from that of intermediate-range missiles successfully focused attention on the latter, but little clear progress on the subject was made. In the summer of 1982, Nitze and Kvitsinsky took a "walk in the woods" in the Jura Mountains, away from formal negotiations in Geneva, in an independent attempt to bypass bureaucratic procedures and break the negotiating deadlock. Nitze later said that his and Kvitsinsky's goal was to agree to certain concessions that would allow for a summit meeting between Brezhnev and Reagan later in 1982. The deal ultimately found little traction in either capital. In the U.S., the Office of the Secretary of Defense opposed Nitze's proposal, as it opposed any proposal that would allow the Soviet Union to deploy missiles to Europe while blocking U.S. deployments. In early 1983, U.S. negotiators indicated that they would support a plan beyond the Zero Option if the plan established equal rights and limits for the U.S. and Soviet Union, with such limits valid worldwide excluded British and French missile systems. As a temporary measure, the U.S.

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<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of State, *"Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty)"*

negotiators also proposed a cap of 450 deployed IRBM warheads worldwide for both the U.S. and Soviet Union. In response, Soviet negotiators proposed that a plan would have to block all US INF deployments in Europe, covering both missiles and aircraft, including third parties, and focusing primarily on Europe to gain Soviet backing. In the fall of 1983, just ahead of the scheduled deployment of US Pershing IIs and GLCM., the U.S. lowered its proposed limit on global INF deployments to 420 missiles, while the Soviet Union proposed "equal reductions": if the U.S. canceled the planned deployment of Pershing II and GLCM systems, the Soviet Union would reduce its INF deployment by 572 warheads. In November 1983, after the first Pershing IIs arrived in West Germany, the Soviet Union walked out of negotiations, as it had warned it would do should the U.S. missile deployments occur.<sup>27</sup>

These are just a few in a series of events before and simultaneously with Exercise ABLE ARCHER 83. Evaluation of the Soviet and American reactions reveal how each nation misinterpreted or misunderstood the other's actions at the time. Some actions meant as political posturing and would be taken seriously and viewed as antagonizing acts of aggression by the other. Most scholars and historians agree on most of the facts leading up to the exercise but differ on whether they believe it was on the verge of nuclear war. Some scholars and analysts did not believe that the conflict was close will be researched further. Research of circumstances thought to be surrounding exercise ABLE ARCHER will address any additional gaps. These findings will demonstrate why a real-life war game like ABLE ARCHER 83 would make a commensurate tabletop war game.

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<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of State Archive Information released online from January 20, 2001, to January 20, 2009

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