

President of the Russian Federation

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No. Pr-638

Moscow

Dear Leonid Makarovich!

I have closely familiarized myself with your message from the 5th of April on the issue of the implementation of the START-I Treaty and the accession of Ukraine to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Factually, on the issues you raised I can advise the following.

I very attentively follow the progress of the negotiations on the implementation of the START-I Treaty, about which we agreed over the course of meetings in Moscow on January 15th of this year. These negotiations were designed to further the resolution between Russia and Ukraine of all issues connected to implementation of the START-I Treaty, including the package of the Lisbon Protocol, and thus advance the process of real nuclear disarmament.

Frankly, Ukraine's procrastination on the issue of ratification of the START-I Treaty and accession to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear state is alarming.

We are ready to render assistance to Ukraine for the fastest resolution of its problems to the extent that this depends on Russia. The respective provisions of international law and the mutual obligations already existing in our countries allow me, according to our beliefs, to do this quickly, effectively, and conclusively not only for the public opinion of our countries, but also for all of the international community.

On July 6, 1992, we, with you and the heads of state of the other countries of the CIS, signed an agreement committing for Russia the role as the only state of the former USSR possessing nuclear weapons, with the execution in this role of the function of a depositary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

This concerns something raised earlier. Thus, in the framework of the Lisbon Protocol, Ukraine directly put into writing that, "...the right and the burden of ownership of the nuclear weapons of the former USSR with the directly expressed consent of Ukraine and all the other

successor states of the former USSR was left only for the Russian Federation.” The agreement on the removal of the nuclear ammunition of both tactical and strategic nuclear weapons to Russia was built on the same legal basis.

It is by no means unimportant that all these agreements were reached by not only us, but also were implemented with regard to the warheads of tactical nuclear weapons located on Ukrainian territory.

It is abundantly clear that in the context of all of this, Russia could not recognize Ukraine’s right of ownership of the nuclear weapons located on Ukrainian territory, in whatever verbal shell this right was wrapped in. Such an acknowledgement would have meant a violation by Russia of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in particular of the crucial commitment not to transfer to anyone any form of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive device, as well as control over such weapons or explosive devices either directly or indirectly. For the same reasons, we cannot agree to the so-called administrative management on the part of Ukraine of the strategic nuclear forces that are situated on their territory.

In the message, you speak about the use of CIS structures for the control of strategic nuclear forces. But we will be absolutely frank: Ukraine did not ratify any of the foundational agreements pertaining to this issue. At the very least, this creates ambiguity in regards to Ukraine’s commitments in respect to the CIS on the matter at hand. Not to mention the fact that the CIS is not a state, which has been repeatedly emphasized, including by you, and thus cannot possess nuclear weapons.

This is the fundamental side of the matter. Alongside this, Russia, taking into account the unfolding situation, is ready to make, by way of a gesture of goodwill, a conciliatory gesture towards Ukraine in practical terms with regard to the utilization of the nuclear warheads of strategic nuclear weapons, located on the territory of Ukraine, and the utilization of released nuclear materials as fuel for Ukrainian nuclear power plants. We passed everything related to this estimation and the draft of the corresponding agreement to the Ukrainian side. I see no obstacles to an early resolution of this issue.

We certainly agree with your stated thoughts on the importance of quickly finding agreements, as recorded in Article 2 of the Lisbon Protocol, on limits and restrictions established by the START-I Treaty. That being said, we proceed from your commitment in the letter given to President of the United States George Bush to ensure the elimination of all strategic offensive

weapons on the territory of Ukraine within a seven-year period of time, as is stipulated by the START-I Treaty and in general all of the total mutual commitments in place on this topic in the Lisbon packet of agreements. The specific corresponding proposals were sent by us in November of 1992 to the Ukrainian Side, however, the delegation from Ukraine thus far is deflecting from the subject of discussions of the submitted documents and for its part did not offer anything concrete.

In an effort to quickly remove all concerns, including both the ecological approach toward nuclear weapons in Ukraine, I offer you the following plan of action.

-Shut down the deployment of strategic nuclear power on the territory of Ukraine from the centralized combat control system of the strategic nuclear forces. In the shortest possible time (within the period of 2-4 months) remove the mission impact data from all nuclear weapon delivery vehicles.

-During the course of a year to a year and a half, undock all the re-entry systems of the intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) located on the territory of Ukraine, and before the end of 1994 the re-entry vehicles of the ICBMs and their warheads will be removed as agreed by the Ukrainian side for the timetable for the central pre-factory facilities of the Russian Federation for the purpose of the subsequent dismantlement and disposal.

-Transfer to lower combat readiness and remove to central pre-factory facilities of the Russia Federation in 1993 long-range nuclear cruise missiles for heavy bombers, deployed on the territory of Ukraine, for the purpose of their subsequent dismantlement.

On this occasion, I would like to also say that if Ukraine has any difficulties on the issue of eliminating nuclear delivery vehicles (regarding them, we have with you, it seems to me, in general no discrepancies), then we are prepared, on the basis of bilateral arrangements, to provide the most effective assistance in resolving of this problem, such as the approach of the withdrawal of both heavy bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles from Russian territory.

In addition, I would also like to direct your attention to that circumstance that I have already approved, the "Agreement between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the procedure of the actualization of guarantees and site monitoring of the operations of strategic missile complexes of the Strategic Forces located on their territories," which was compiled by our delegations. The agreement, in the event of a favorable decision with your side, could be signed either at our level or at the level of Prime Ministers.

Last but not least. In relation to the issue you raised about the level of the negotiations. I want to note that the Russian delegation works based on my directives and reports on all moments of development of the negotiation process. In a word, we see no reason to change the level of the Russian delegation.

I am directing the Russian delegation to continue negotiations in line with the principles set forth above. We would like it if the negotiations were continued as soon as possible, if, of course, you agree with this. It would be desirable if before the next round the Russian Side received in writing the Ukrainian version of the proposals for all our draft agreements

Accept, respected Leonid Makarovych, the assurances of my highest consideration.

B. Yeltsin

Translated by Sarah Dunn for the National Security Archive