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<th>Nate Jones, Able Archer 83</th>
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<td>Elena Burger</td>
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<td>SCOPE NOTE</td>
<td>Books, article excerpts, archival documents, letters, memos regarding the Able Archer 83 War Scare. The content of the documents include a mix of military analysis, scholarly reflection, presidential diaries, declassified government memos, and interviews. These documents span in time period from 1965 to 2013, and are primarily American sources, but include Soviet, East German, British, and Bulgarian documents.</td>
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<td>Ronald Reagan, Yuri Andropov, Oleg Gordyeysky, Benjamin Fischer, Averell Harriman, Robert Gates, William Casey, George Shultz, Marshal Akhromeyev</td>
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Soviet General Secretary Yuri Andropov warned US envoy Averell Harriman that the Reagan administration's provocations were moving the two superpowers toward "the dangerous 'red line'" of nuclear war through "miscalculation" in June of 1983. Andropov delivered this warning six months before the 1983 "War Scare" reached its crux during the NATO nuclear release
exercise named Able Archer 83, according to Harriman's notes of the conversation posted.

The meeting provides important, first-hand evidence of Soviet leadership concerns about a possible US threat. But other documents included in this posting suggest that not all Soviet political and military leaders were fearful of a US preemptive first strike, but may rather have been "rattling their pots and pans" in an attempt to gain geopolitical advantages, including stopping the deployment of Pershing II and Cruise nuclear missiles in Western Europe. "This would not be the first time that Soviet leaders have used international tensions to mobilize their populations," wrote the acting CIA director John McMahon in a declassified memo from early 1984.

President Reagan zeroed in on the essence of this debate in March of 1984 when he asked his ambassador to the Soviet Union, Arthur Hartman, "Do you think Soviet leaders really fear us, or is all the huffing and puffing just part of their propaganda?" The evidence presented here, and in two forthcoming electronic briefing books in this series, suggests that the answer to the president's question was "both."

This first of three "War Scare" postings also includes KGB reports corroborating the creation of Operation RYaN, the largest peace-time intelligence gathering operation in history, to "prevent the possible sudden outbreak of war by the enemy;" a newly declassified CIA Studies in Intelligence article concluding that Soviet fears of a preemptive U.S. nuclear strike, "while exaggerated, were scarcely insane;" and declassified backchannel discussions between Reagan advisor Jack Matlock and Soviet sources who warned of "growing paranoia among Soviet officials," whom the source described as "literally obsessed by fear of war."

The documents in this series provide new information and add nuance to the ongoing debate over the significance — some even argue, the existence — of a genuine war scare in the Soviet Union. The documents come from Freedom of Information Act releases by the CIA and U.S. Defense Department, research findings from American archives, as well as formerly classified Soviet Politburo and KGB files, interviews with ex-Soviet generals, and records from other former communist states.

Talking Points for Meeting with Ambassador to the Soviet Union Arthur Hartman, March 28, 1984


Department of State memo from Frank H. Perez, Office of Strategic and General Research at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, to Leonard Weiss, Deputy Director for Functional Research at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "Subject: Thoughts on Launch–on–warning," January 29, 1971

Secretary of Defense to President Carter, "False Alerts," July 12, 1980


KGB Headquarters Moscow, to the London KGB Residency, "Permanent operational assignment to uncover NATO preparations for a nuclear missile attack on the USSR," and enclosed documents, February 17, 1983, Top Secret

"MVR Information re: Results from the work on the improvement of the System for detection of RYAN indications, 9 March 1984," and related documents

National Intelligence Officer for Warning to Director of Soviet Analysis [CIA] from, "Subject: Warsaw Pact Early Warning Indicator Project," 1 February 1985,

Notes of a Conversation with Secretary of State George Shultz, Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, and Averell Harriman, Undated (prior to Harriman's trip to the Soviet Union).

(Circa May 1983).

Memorandum of Conversation with Institute for USA and Canada Studies Director Georgy Arbatov and Averell Harriman, May 31, 1983.
Memorandum of Conversation between General Secretary Yuri Andropov and Averell Harriman, 3:00 PM, June 2 1983, CPSU Central Committee Headquarters, Moscow.

"Meeting of the Politburo," Working notes, August 4, 1983


Herbert E. Meyer, National Intelligence Council, "Subject: The View from Moscow, November 1983 Undated."

For National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane from acting Central Intelligence Agency Director John McMahon, "Subject: Andropov's Leadership Style and Strategy," February 3, 1984


October 10, 1983, Diary Entry by Ronald Reagan

PART TWO

The NATO nuclear release exercise at the heart of the 1983 War Scare included at least four new components that differed from previous "routine" exercises, according to detailed, newly declassified chronologies of Able Archer 83.

The Able Archer controversy has featured numerous descriptions of the exercise as so "routine" that it could not have alarmed the Soviet military and political leadership. Today's posting
reveals multiple non-routine elements, including: a 170-flight, radio-silent air lift of 19,000 US soldiers to Europe, the shifting of commands from "Permanent War Headquarters to the Alternate War Headquarters," the practice of "new nuclear weapons release procedures," including consultations with cells in Washington and London, and the "sensitive, political issue" of numerous "slips of the tongue" in which B-52 sorties were referred to as nuclear "strikes." These variations, seen through "the fog of nuclear exercises," did in fact match official Soviet intelligence-defined indicators for "possible operations by the USA and its allies on British territory in preparation for RYaN" — the KGB code name for a feared Western nuclear missile attack (Raketno-Yadernoye Napadenie).

This collection draws from an unpublished official NATO summary of Able Archer 83, declassified Air Force histories and after-action reports, and a previously unpublished interview with Soviet Chief of Staff Marshal Akhromeyev in which he calls European-wide NATO exercises "the most dangerous." The new material suggests that, during the dangerous year of 1983, when Soviet and US relations were at their nadir, Able Archer 83 included new quirks that made it provocative enough to increase the chance of nuclear war "through miscalculation."


"Notes of WINTEX 83 Senior Level First Impressions Conference, 22 Mar 1983" and related Documents


"Autumn Forge 83 - Final After Action Report," February 1, 1984


KGB Headquarters Moscow to the London KGB Residency, "Ref no. 1673/PR of 24.10.83," November 5, 1983,

US Air Force Military Airlift Command "Reforger 83\Crested Cap 83\Display Determination 83\Autumn Forge 83 After Act Report," December 8, 1983, Confidential

Commander in Chief, United States Army, Europe (CINCUSAREUR) "Reforger 83 After Action Report," March 6, 1984


U.S Congress, House of Representatives, Hearing before the Defense Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Department of Defense Appropriations for 1986, Ninety-Ninth Congress, First Session, March 27, 1985
PART 3

President Ronald Reagan weighed the "rather stunning array of indicators" reported by the U.S. intelligence community during the 1983 War Scare and concluded — although the intelligence community remained divided — that "maybe they [the Soviets] are scared of us & think we are a threat. I'd like to go face to face & explore this with them."

This collection examines the U.S. intelligence community's analysis and reaction to data showing that Able Archer 83 spurred "a high level of Soviet military activity, with new deployments of weapons and strike forces." This unprecedented Soviet reaction in turn created a series of introspective U.S. intelligence analyses and counter-analyses, spanning from November 15, 1983 to February 15, 1990, debating whether the U.S. intelligence had actually understood Soviet actions, perceptions, and fears — and acknowledging the danger of nuclear "miscalculation" if it had not.


November 16, 1983 and November 18 1983 Diary Entries by Ronald Reagan

Central Intelligence Agency memo for the Director and Deputy Director from Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council Herbert E. Meyer, "Subject: Why is the World So Dangerous?" November 30, 1983.

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Central Intelligence Agency, Special National Intelligence Estimate, "Implications of Recent Soviet Military-Political Activities" May 18, 1984

Department of State memo from Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research Hugh Montgomery to Secretary of State George Shultz, "Subject: SNIE 11-10-1984," May 28, 1984
Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum for The President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, from CIA Director William Casey, "US/Soviet Tension." June 19, 1984


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July 21, 1987 and August 5, 1987 Diary Entries by Ronald Reagan


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Report on the Meetings with the KGB of the USSR
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Note regarding the Meeting of Comrade Minister [Erich Mielke] with the Head of the 5th Directorate of the KGB of the USSR, Comrade Lieutenant General Abramov 26 September 1987 BStU, MfS, ZAIG 5387, p. 1-22

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Royal Netherlands Army, Reforger '83 Brandy Station Aqua Marine, Atlantic Lion

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Department of Defense: MX in Existing Military Silos and Launch-Under-Attack, June 5th 1978

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense: Presidential Briefing, June 5th 1981

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USSR: Economic Trends and Policy Developments, Office of Soviet Analysis, CIA, September 14th 1983

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History of 436th Military Airlift Wing, October – December 1983

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Dr. Oliver Bange: Comments on and Contextualization of Polish Documents Related to SOYUZ 75 and SHCHIT 88


The Reagan Reversal Excerpt

List of Library FOIA Requests

Christopher Andrew: Intelligence in the Cold War Excerpts

Vojtech Mastny: How Able Was Able Archer?

Testing and Use of Chemical and Biological Agents by the Intelligence Community

Differences Between Two Version of The 1983 War Scare in U.S. - Soviet Relations

List of Holdings in the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
BOX FOUR: UNSORTED RESEARCH FILES

FOIA Requests