Major world events and crises of the post World War II (WWII) period were important benchmarks in the evolution of U.S. national security policies, international security and arms control agreements, bilateral and international summits and use of military force. Over time the correlation of events can get confusing and out of sequence for even the best informed readers. For this reason, the chart that follows provides a quick reference of the major events, policies and decisions (including the key decision makers) which help to explain U.S. national security policies at particular points in time since WWII.

The chart was developed by the Department of Joint and Combined Operations, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. The Institute of Land Warfare wishes to express appreciation to the college for its permission to use it here. We have updated the chart for the period 1985-1990 to reflect, from our point of view, those major events that have had the greatest significance in shaping the more recent U.S. national security decisions.
DEFENSE POLICIES SINCE WORLD WAR II

FLEXIBLE RESPONSE
(COUNTERFORCE ASSURED DESTRUCTION)

STRATEGY FOR PEACE
"REALISTIC DETERRENCE"

COUNTERVAILING STRATEGY

ESSENTIAL EQUIVALENCE

INVESTMENT

KENNEDY

JOHNSON

NIXON

FORD

CARTER

SALT I TALKS

SALT I

SALT TALKS CONTINUE

SALT II

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CARTER

SALT I TALKS

SALT I

SALT TALKS CONTINUE

SALT II
CONVENTIONAL RETALIATION

REAGAN

SCHULTZ

WEINBERGER

BUSH

BAKER

CARLUCCI

CHENEY

DEFICIT BUDGET $250 BILLION PLUS

U.S. BECOMES DEBTOR NATION

REDUCED DEFENSE BUDGETS

U.S. BECOMES DEBTOR NATION

U.S. SOVIET LEADERS HOLD FIRST SUMMIT IN OVER SIX YEARS

U.S. BEGINS ESCORTING KUWAITI TANKERS IN PERSIAN GULF

Soviets complete withdrawal from Afghanistan

BUSH CHEMICAL WEAPONS ELIMINATION PROPOSALS AT UN AND SOVIET COUNTER-PROPOSALS

U.S. INVADES PANAMA

DEMOCRATIC REFORMS IN E. EUROPE

START GENEVA CHEMICAL, TACTICAL NUCLEAR TALKS

STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE PROGRAM

SOVIET POLICIES OF PERESTROIKA AND GLASNOST

U.S. STEALTH B2 BOMBER UNVEILED

U.S. TROOP REDUCTION FROM NATO

GORBACHEV ANNOUNCES TROOP REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE

LIBYA AND CHAD RESTORE TIES

BUSH PROPOSES U.S. TROOP REDUCTION FROM NATO

INF TREATY

REAGAN-GORBACHEV ICELAND SUMMIT

U.S. SOVIET LEADERS HOLD FIRST SUMMIT IN OVER SIX YEARS

BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS ACCEPT NATO CRUISE MISSILES

START GENEVA ARMS TALKS

CONVENTIONAL AND STRATEGIC REASSESSMENT

DEBT LEVEL [MILLIONS]

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