

# Address to the Nation on Strategic Arms Reduction and Nuclear Deterrence

## November 22, 1982

Good evening.

The week before last was an especially moving one here in Washington. The Vietnam veterans finally came home once and for all to America's heart. They were welcomed with tears, with pride, and with a monument to their great sacrifice. Many of their names, like those of our Republic's greatest citizens, are now engraved in stone in this city that belongs to all of us. On behalf of the Nation, let me again thank the Vietnam veterans from the bottom of my heart for their courageous service to America.

Seeing those moving scenes, I know mothers of a new generation must have worried about their children and about peace. And that's what I'd like to talk to you about tonight -- the future of our children in a world where peace is made uneasy by the presence of nuclear weapons.

A year ago, I said the time was right to move forward on arms control. I outlined several proposals and said nothing would have a higher priority in this administration. Now, a year later, I want to report on those proposals and on other efforts we're making to ensure the safety of our children's future.

The prevention of conflict and the reduction of weapons are the most important public issues of our time. Yet, on no other issue are there more misconceptions and misunderstandings. You, the American people, deserve an explanation from your government on what our policy is on these issues. Too often, the experts have been content to discuss grandiose strategies among themselves and cloud the public debate in technicalities no one can understand. The result is that many Americans have become frightened. And let me say, fear of the unknown is entirely understandable. Unfortunately, much of the information emerging in this debate bears little semblance to the facts.

To begin, let's go back to what the world was like at the end of World War II. The United States was the only undamaged industrial power in the world. Our military power was at its peak, and we alone had the atomic weapon. But we didn't use this wealth and this power to bully; we used it to rebuild. We raised up the war-ravaged

economies, including the economies of those who had fought against us. At first, the peace of the world was unthreatened, because we alone were left with any real power, and we were using it for the good of our fellow man. Any potential enemy was deterred from aggression because the cost would have far outweighed the gain.

As the Soviets power grew, we still managed to maintain the peace. The United States had established a system of alliances, with NATO as the centerpiece. In addition, we grew even more respected as a world leader with a strong economy and deeply held moral values.

With our commitment to help shape a better world, the United States also pursued, and always pursued, every diplomatic channel for peace. And for at least 30 years after World War II, the United States still continued to possess a large military advantage over the Soviet Union. Our strength deterred -- that is, prevented -- aggression against us.

This nation's military objective has always been to maintain peace by preventing war. This is neither a Democratic nor a Republican policy. It's supported by our allies. And most important of all, it's worked for nearly 40 years.

What do we mean when we speak of "nuclear deterrence"? Certainly, we don't want such weapons for their own sake. We don't desire excessive forces or what some people have called "overkill." Basically, it's a matter of others knowing that starting a conflict would be more costly to them than anything they might hope to gain. And, yes, it is sadly ironic that in these modern times, it still takes weapons to prevent war. I wish it did not.

We desire peace. But peace is a goal, not a policy. Lasting peace is what we hope for at the end of our journey; it doesn't describe the steps we must take nor the paths we should follow to reach that goal.

I intend to search for peace along two parallel paths: deterrence and arms reductions. I believe these are the only paths that offer any real hope for an enduring peace.

And let me say I believe that if we follow prudent policies, the risk of nuclear conflict will be reduced. Certainly, the United States will never use its forces except in response to attack. Through the years, Soviet leaders have also expressed a sober view of nuclear war. And if we maintain a strong deterrent, they are exceedingly unlikely to launch an attack.

Now, while the policy of deterrence has stood the test of time, the things we must do in order to maintain deterrence have changed. You often hear that the United States and the Soviet Union are in an arms race. Well, the truth is that while the Soviet Union has raced, we have not. As you can see from this blue U.S. line, [At

this point and during later portions of the address, the President referred to charts which could be seen by the television audience.] in constant dollars, our defense spending in the 1960's went up because of Vietnam. And then it went downward through much of the 1970's. And now follow the red line, which is Soviet spending. It's gone up and up and up. In spite of a stagnating Soviet economy, Soviet leaders invest 12 to 14 percent of their country's gross national product in military spending -- two to three times the level we invest.

I might add that the defense share of our United States Federal budget has gone way down, too. Watch the blue line again. In 1962, when John Kennedy was President, 46 percent, almost half of the Federal budget, went to our national defense. In recent years, about one quarter of our budget has gone to defense, while the share for social programs has nearly doubled. And most of our defense budget is spent on people, not weapons.

The combination of the Soviets spending more and the United States spending proportionately less changed the military balance and weakened our deterrent. Today, in virtually every measure of military power, the Soviet Union enjoys a decided advantage.

This chart shows the changes in the total number of intercontinental missiles and bombers. You will see that in 1962 and in 1972, the United States Forces remained about the same -- even dropping some by 1982. But take a look now at the Soviet side. In 1962, at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, the Soviets could not compare with us in terms of strength. In 1972, when we signed the SALT I treaty, we were nearly equal. But in 1982 -- well, that red Soviet bar stretching above the blue American bar tells the story.

I could show you chart after chart where there's a great deal of red and a much lesser amount of U.S. blue. For example, the Soviet Union has deployed a third more land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles than we have. Believe it or not, we froze our number in 1965 and have deployed no additional missiles since then.

The Soviet Union put to sea 60 new ballistic missile submarines in the last 15 years. Until last year, we hadn't commissioned one in that same period.

The Soviet Union has built over 200 modern backfire bombers and is building 30 more a year. For 20 years, the United States has deployed no new strategic bombers. Many of our B - 52 bombers are now older than the pilots who fly them.

The Soviet Union now has 600 of the missiles considered most threatening by both sides -- the intermediate-range missiles based on land. We have none. The United States withdrew its intermediate-range land-based missiles from Europe almost 20 years ago.

The world has also witnessed unprecedented growth in the area of Soviet conventional forces. The Soviets far exceed us in the number of tanks, artillery pieces, aircraft, and ships they produce every year. What is more, when I arrived in this office, I learned that in our own forces we had planes that couldn't fly and ships that couldn't leave port mainly for lack of spare parts and crewmembers.

The Soviet military buildup must not be ignored. We've recognized the problem and, together with our allies, we've begun to correct the imbalance. Look at this chart of projected real defense spending for the next several years. Here is the Soviet line. Let us assume the Soviets rate of spending remains at the level they've followed since the 1960's. The blue line is the United States. If my defense proposals are passed, it will still take 5 years before we come close to the Soviet level. Yet, the modernization of our strategic and conventional forces will assure that deterrence works and peace prevails.

Our deployed nuclear forces were built before the age of microcircuits. It's not right to ask our young men and women in uniform to maintain and operate such antiques. Many have already given their lives to missile explosions and aircraft accidents caused by the old age of their equipment. We must replace and modernize our forces, and that's why I decided to proceed with the production and deployment of the new ICBM known as the MX.

Three earlier Presidents worked to develop this missile. Based on the best advice that I could get, I concluded that the MX is the right missile at the right time. On the other hand, when I arrived in office I felt the proposal on where and how to base the missile simply cost too much in terms of money and the impact on our citizens' lives. I've concluded, however, it's absolutely essential that we proceed to produce this missile and that we base it in a series of closely based silos at Warren Air Force Base, near Cheyenne, Wyoming.

This plan requires only half as many missiles as the earlier plan and will fit in an area of only 20 square miles. It is the product of around-the-clock research that has been underway since I directed a search for a better, cheaper way. I urge the Members of Congress who must pass this plan to listen and examine the facts before they come to their own conclusion.

Some may question what modernizing our military has to do with peace. Well, as I explained earlier, a secure force keeps others from threatening us, and that keeps the peace. And just as important, it also increases the prospects of reaching significant arms reductions with the Soviets, and that's what we really want.

The United States wants deep cuts in the world's arsenal of weapons, but unless we demonstrate the will to rebuild our strength and restore the military balance, the Soviets, since they're so far ahead, have little incentive to negotiate with us. Let me

repeat that point because it goes to the heart of our policies. Unless we demonstrate the will to rebuild our strength, the Soviets have little incentive to negotiate. If we hadn't begun to modernize, the Soviet negotiators would know we had nothing to bargain with except talk. They would know we were bluffing without a good hand, because they know what cards we hold just as we know what's in their hand.

You may recall that in 1969 the Soviets didn't want to negotiate a treaty banning antiballistic missiles. It was only after our Senate narrowly voted to fund an antiballistic missile program that the Soviets agreed to negotiate. We then reached an agreement. We also know that one-sided arms control doesn't work. We've tried time and time again to set an example by cutting our own forces in the hope that the Soviets would do likewise. The result has always been that they keep building.

I believe our strategy for peace will succeed. Never before has the United States proposed such a comprehensive program of nuclear arms control. Never in our history have we engaged in so many negotiations with the Soviets to reduce nuclear arms and to find a stable peace. What we are saying to them is this: We will modernize our military in order to keep the balance for peace, but wouldn't it be better if we both simply reduced our arsenals to a much lower level?

Let me begin with the negotiations on the intermediate-range nuclear forces that are currently underway in Geneva. As I said earlier, the most threatening of these forces are the land-based missiles which the Soviet Union now has aimed at Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

This chart shows the number of warheads on these Soviet missiles. In 1972 there were 600. The United States was at zero. In 1977 there were 600. The United States was still at zero. Then the Soviets began deploying powerful new missiles with three warheads and a reach of thousands of miles -- the SS - 20. Since then, the bar has gone through the roof -- the Soviets have added a missile with three warheads every week. Still, you see no United States blue on the chart. Although the Soviet leaders earlier this year declared they'd frozen deployment of this dangerous missile, they have in fact continued deployment.

Last year, on November 18th, I proposed the total, global elimination of all these missiles. I proposed that the United States would deploy no comparable missiles, which are scheduled for late 1983, if the Soviet Union would dismantle theirs. We would follow agreement on the land-based missiles with limits on other intermediate-range systems.

The European governments strongly support our initiative. The Soviet Union has thus far shown little inclination to take this major step to zero levels. Yet I believe, and I'm hoping, that as the talks proceed and as we approach the scheduled placement

of our new systems in Europe, the Soviet leaders will see the benefits of such a far-reaching agreement.

This summer we also began negotiations on strategic arms reductions, the proposal we call START. Here we're talking about intercontinental missiles, the weapons with a longer range than the intermediate-range ones I was just discussing. We're negotiating on the basis of deep reductions. I proposed in May that we cut the number of warheads on these missiles to an equal number, roughly one-third below current levels. I also proposed that we cut the number of missiles themselves to an equal number, about half the current U.S. level. Our proposals would eliminate some 4,700 warheads and some 2,250 missiles. I think that would be quite a service to mankind.

This chart shows the current level of United States ballistic missiles, both land- and sea-based. This is the Soviet level. We intend to convince the Soviets it would be in their own best interest to reduce these missiles. Look at the reduced numbers both sides would have under our proposal -- quite a dramatic change. We also seek to reduce the total destructive power of these missiles and other elements of United States and Soviet strategic forces.

In 1977, when the last administration proposed more limited reductions, the Soviet Union refused even to discuss them. This time their reaction has been quite different. Their opening position is a serious one, and even though it doesn't meet our objective of deep reductions, there's no question we're heading in the right direction. One reason for this change is clear. The Soviet Union knows that we are now serious about our own strategic programs and that they must be prepared to negotiate in earnest.

We also have other important arms control efforts underway. In the talks in Vienna on mutual and balanced force reductions, we've proposed cuts in military personnel to a far lower and equal level. And in the 40-nation Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, we're working to develop effective limitations on nuclear testing and chemical weapons. The whole world remains outraged by the Soviets and their allies use of biological and chemical weapons against defenseless people in Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Laos. This experience makes ironclad verification all the more essential for arms control.

There is, of course, much more that needs to be done. In an age when intercontinental missiles can span half the globe in less than half an hour, it's crucial that Soviet and American leaders have a clear understanding of each other's capabilities and intentions.

Last June in Berlin, and again at the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, I vowed that the United States would make every effort to reduce the risks of

accident and misunderstanding and thus to strengthen mutual confidence between the United States and the Soviet Union. Since then, we've been actively studying detailed measures to implement this Berlin initiative.

Today I would like to announce some of the measures which I've proposed in a special letter just sent to the Soviet leadership and which I've instructed our Ambassadors in Geneva to discuss with their Soviet counterparts. They include, but also go beyond, some of the suggestions I made in Berlin.

The first of these measures involves advance notification of all United States and Soviet test launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles. We will also seek Soviet agreement on notification of all sea-launched ballistic missiles as well as intermediate-range land-based ballistic missiles of the type we're currently negotiating. This would remove surprise and uncertainty at the sudden appearance of such missiles on the warning screens of the two countries.

In another area of potential misunderstanding, we propose to the Soviets that we provide each other with advance notification of our major military exercises. Here again, our objective is to reduce the surprise and uncertainty surrounding otherwise sudden moves by either side.

These sorts of measures are designed to deal with the immediate issues of miscalculation in time of crisis. But there are deeper, longer term problems as well. In order to clear away some of the mutual ignorance and suspicion between our two countries, I will propose that we both engage in a broad-ranging exchange of basic data about our nuclear forces. I am instructing our Ambassadors at the negotiations on both strategic and intermediate forces to seek Soviet agreement on an expanded exchange of information. The more one side knows about what the other side is doing, the less room there is for surprise and miscalculation.

Probably everyone has heard of the so-called Hotline, which enables me to communicate directly with the Soviet leadership in the event of a crisis. The existing Hotline is dependable and rapid, with both ground and satellite links. But because it's so important, I've also directed that we carefully examine any possible improvements to the existing Hotline system.

Now, although we've begun negotiations on these many proposals, this doesn't mean we've exhausted all the initiatives that could help to reduce the risk of accidental conflict. We'll leave no opportunity unexplored, and we'll consult closely with Senators Nunn, Jackson, and Warner, and other Members of the Congress who've made important suggestions in this field.

We're also making strenuous efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to additional countries. It would be tragic if we succeeded in reducing existing arsenals

only to have new threats emerge in other areas of the world.

Earlier, I spoke of America's contributions to peace following World War II, of all we did to promote peace and prosperity for our fellow man. Well, we're still those same people. We still seek peace above all else.

I want to remind our own citizens and those around the world of this tradition of American good will, because I am concerned about the effects the nuclear fear is having on our people. The most upsetting letters I receive are from schoolchildren who write to me as a class assignment. It's evident they've discussed the most nightmarish aspects of a nuclear holocaust in their classrooms. Their letters are often full of terror. Well, this should not be so.

The philosopher Spinoza said, "Peace is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice." Well, those are the qualities we want our children to inherit, not fear. They must grow up confident if they're to meet the challenges of tomorrow as we will meet the challenges of today.

I began these remarks speaking of our children. I want to close on the same theme. Our children should not grow up frightened. They should not fear the future. We're working to make it peaceful and free. I believe their future can be the brightest, most exciting of any generation. We must reassure them and let them know that their parents and the leaders of this world are seeking, above all else, to keep them safe and at peace. I consider this to be a sacred trust.

My fellow Americans, on this Thanksgiving when we have so much to be grateful for, let us give special thanks for our peace, our freedom, and our good people.

I've always believed that this land was set aside in an uncommon way, that a divine plan placed this great continent between the oceans to be found by a people from every corner of the Earth who had a special love of faith, freedom, and peace.

Let us reaffirm America's destiny of goodness and good will. Let us work for peace and, as we do, let us remember the lines of the famous old hymn: "O God of Love, O King of Peace, make wars throughout the world to cease."

Thank you. Good night, and God bless you.

Note: The President spoke at 8 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. His address was broadcast live on nationwide radio and television.