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STATEMENT BY
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ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS

Violations of arms control agreements by any nation cannot be overlooked or excused. Any evidence of a violation should be thoroughly investigated and the suspected violator should be pressed hard to provide a satisfactory explanation and a rectification of any action that still appeared contrary to the terms of the agreement.

The SALT I and SALT II agreements through the Standing Consultative Commission (SCC) established a bilateral private mechanism for the consideration of questions concerning compliance with the provisions of these agreements. In the case of SALT I, the only agreements formally ratified, the SCC, at least until 1981, operated very satisfactorily to resolve ambiguous events and in some cases to get both the USSR and the US to halt activities that continued to give concern about non-compliance. Such consultative mechanisms should not be discarded lightly. Instead, they should be expanded, where possible, to other existing and future agreements.

Presidential public accusations of bad faith before all consultative or diplomatic avenues have been exhausted, as was done by President Reagan in his UN speech in September, only prejudice the eventual resolution of the issues and make more difficult, if not impossible, achievement of our basic security objective of reducing the risk of nuclear war. Any public pronouncement by the President that the Soviets are violating arms control agreements is irrevocable. It will certainly not induce them to change their position or to come to the negotiating table with a more positive attitude.

Any response to alleged violations must always be considered in the context of our fundamental security needs. Arms control agreements have been framed to promote these, and the significance of any violation must be carefully weighed before abandoning them. For example, we wisely did not abrogate the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963 even though our verification system showed that a Soviet test in 1965 vented radioactive debris which traveled outside the borders of the SSR. Today, the ABM Treaty and the SALT limits on offensive forces place on the Soviets real constraints. These cannot be attained by uncontrolled arms competition. None of the reported violations, as briefed to the press by Administration officials, warrant scrapping these agreements, at this time.

If President Reagan is serious about wanting to reduce nuclear arms and the risk of the outbreak of a nuclear conflict, then he must evaluate any alleged violations in the larger perspective rather than indulge in the politically attractive, but unproductive luxury of public accusations of Soviet perfidy. Such accusations can only add to the already widespread concern that President Reagan has not been truly interested in accomplishing nuclear arms control. This concern has been promoted, for example, by our failure to ratify the last three nuclear arms agreements (SALT II, the Threshold Test Ban and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaties) and the termination of negotiations on anti-satellite weapons and the Comprehensive Test Ban.

The reported violations cover a wide range of issues, all of which are better resolved through private discussions than public accusations of the type indulged in by the Reagan Administration in the past. The SCC has successfully clarified many ambiguous activities by both the USSR and the US, and even succeeded in getting both countries to change questionable procedures.

The alleged violation that raises the most troublesome questions is the construction of a large phased-array radar in the interior of Siberia instead of on the periphery of the USSR. The Soviets could never have hoped to conceal this from our national technical means of verification, and thus the issue is the purpose for which it is being built rather than catching them in a secret, forbidden program. This radar, even if it were to become part of an ABM system, would not provide the Soviet Union with a capability that could seriously downgrade our strategic deterrent with thousands of warheads capable of overwhelming the Soviet defenses. Furthermore, it will not be completed or operational until the late 1980's. Therefore, there is no urgency in publicly branding it as an example of Soviet dishonesty since there is still time to get the Soviets to stop the deployment through private negotiations in the SCC (as the US was successful in doing in the case of the operation of the SAM radar at Sary Shagan). They will never halt this deployment in the glare of an official charge of cheating. As long as the ABM Treaty is in force, there is always hope of satisfactorily resolving this issue through the SCC. There would be no hope if the ABM Treaty were abrogated.

A different case is the allegation that the Soviets have tested above the 150kt threshold set by the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT). Here the evidence itself is very tenuous and controversial since this treaty was never ratified, and its agreed provisions for reducing the uncertainty over the yield of a specific test were never put into effect. The Reagan Administration has sought even more stringent procedures than those agreed to by Presidents Ford and Nixon, claiming that it cannot adequately determine the yield. Yet the Reagan Administration's compliance report contends the Soviets have probably violated the TTBT on the basis of admittedly unsatisfactory verification capabilities. Furthermore, seismologists and other scientists in our weapons programs have pointed out that there are technical factors that raise important doubts as to whether the unratified treaty is being complied with or not. If President Reagan is serious about halting tests with yields over 150kt, then he should seek ratification of the treaty and put its improved verification procedures into effect.

In sum, we believe our national security would be better served by exploring vigorously and thoroughly all possible arms control agreement violations using all consultative and diplomatic procedures, rather than by unproductive public accusations of Soviet non-compliance made either by leaks, by statements of unidentified government spokesmen, or by the President himself.

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The views in this statement are those of Ambassadors Smith and Warnke and Dr. Scoville. This statement has not been approved by the board of directors of the Arms Control Association.
