

Arms Control and the Nuclear Freeze Proposal



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This publication has been prepared to respond to many of the questions and suggestions we have received about the proposal for a nuclear freeze.

In recent months, a proposal for a U.S.-Soviet nuclear weapons freeze has attracted widespread attention. A resolution supporting such a freeze has been submitted to Congress, and versions have been placed on the November ballot in several states. While the wording of different versions varies, and some call for eventual reductions in arms levels, the basic idea is this:

The President should immediately propose that the United States and the Soviet Union adopt a mutual freeze on the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons and missiles and new aircraft designed primarily to deliver nuclear weapons, subject to strict verification.

The U.S. Government recognizes that the proposal represents the best of intentions: to reduce the likelihood of nuclear war and encourage more rapid progress in a critical and exceptionally complex area of arms control. We all share these objectives. But, after carefully reviewing the proposal, we have concluded that a freeze at existing nuclear levels would have adverse implications for international security and stability and would frustrate attempts to achieve the goal on which we all agree: the negotiation of substantial reductions in the nuclear arsenals of both sides.

What Kind of Arms Control Agreements Do We Seek?

Four principles underlie the U.S. approach to arms control. We seek agreements that:

- *Produce significant reductions in the arsenals of both sides;*
- *Result in equal levels of arms on both sides, since an unequal agreement, like an unequal balance of forces, can encourage coercion or aggression;*
- *Are verifiable, because when our national security is at stake, agreements cannot be based upon trust alone; and*
- *Enhance U.S. and allied security and reduce the risk of war, because arms control is not an end in itself but an important means toward securing peace and international stability.*

These four principles were highlighted by the President in his speech of November 18, 1981. They are the foundation for the U.S. position in the current Geneva negotiations between the United States and the U.S.S.R. on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF). They also form the basis for our approach to strategic arms negotiations with the Soviet Union, negotiations we will call START—*Strategic Arms Reduction Talks*.

What Are the Drawbacks of a Freeze Proposal?

While the Administration shares the genuine and deeply felt convictions that have given rise to the freeze proposal, we believe the proposal does not constitute sound defense or effective arms control policy, and thus we cannot support the freeze itself. A freeze would be dangerous to security, stability, and the cause of peace for the following reasons:

- *A freeze at existing levels would lock the United States and our allies into a position of military disadvantage and vulnerability.* The freeze would prevent us from correcting existing dangerous deficiencies in our nuclear forces caused by the sustained Soviet buildup. The substantial improvements in the Soviet force of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), for example, have given the Soviet Union the means to destroy a large part of our ICBM force. In addition, there are about 600 Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles capable of striking our NATO allies. These missiles are not offset by any comparable U.S. systems. In this case, a freeze would prevent us from restoring the balance.

- *A freeze is not good enough.* We do not want to cap deployments at current levels; we want significant reductions in the nuclear arms of both sides, reductions that will lead to a stable military balance. The United States has already offered a bold new arms control initiative at the negotiations in Geneva on land-based intermediate-range nuclear missiles. We proposed a "zero option" under which the United States would cancel the planned deployment of Pershing II missiles and ground-launched cruise missiles in exchange for the elimination of comparable Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles. Our objective in negotiating strategic arms control agreements is also to achieve significant reductions.

- *A freeze would make significant arms control more difficult.* The Soviets would have little incentive to agree to reductions in strategic and intermediate-range nuclear arms if they knew they could simply freeze the existing military situation. This has already been demonstrated in the area of intermediate-range forces, where the U.S.S.R. initially refused our offers to negotiate while steadily deploying some 300 SS-20 missile systems. The Soviets agreed to come to the negotiating table only when it became clear that we and our NATO allies were determined to take steps to counter those SS-20 deployments.

- *A freeze would cast serious doubt on American leadership of the NATO alliance.* In 1979, in the face of continuing Soviet deployments, the members of the alliance agreed to begin deployment in 1983 of U.S. Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles and to seek a U.S.-U.S.S.R. arms control agreement to reduce intermediate-range nuclear forces. A freeze now would, in effect, be a unilateral decision by the United States to withdraw from this joint allied undertaking.

- *A freeze on all testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons would include important elements that cannot be verified.* The practical result is that the United States would live up to a freeze in all its aspects, while there would be considerable doubt that the Soviets would also live up to it. We simply cannot afford to base our national security on trust of the Soviets.

A Freeze and the Soviet Buildup

During the past decade, the Soviet Union has mounted a sustained buildup across the entire range of its nuclear forces. Soviet modernization efforts have far outstripped ours, particularly in the development and deployment of intercontinental ballistic missiles, which now pose a major threat to a large part of our land-based ICBM force. In the last 10 years, the Soviets introduced an unprecedented array of new strategic weapons into their arsenals, including the SS-17, SS-18, and SS-19 ICBMs, the Typhoon and Delta submarines and several new types of submarine-launched missiles, and the Backfire bomber. During this same period, the United States exercised restraint and only introduced the Trident missile and submarine and the cruise missile.

This trend has been harmful to the security interests of the United States and its allies and to global stability. It is not just a question of numbers. As their military capability has grown, the Soviets have increasingly resorted to the use of military force directly, or through proxies such as Cuba, to intervene in areas farther and farther from their borders. The increased assertiveness of Soviet behavior—the invasion of Afghanistan, pressure on Poland, support for insurgency in Central America—reflects growing Soviet confidence in their military capabilities.

ICBMs. Since 1972, the Soviets have developed and deployed at least 10 different variants of three new types of ICBMs. In the same period, the United States deployed no new types of ICBMs and only one variant of the existing Minuteman. In 1986, we plan to begin deployment of the MX, the first new U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile in 16 years.

Sea-Based Forces. The commissioning of the first U.S. Trident submarine in 1982 marked the end of a 15-year period during which the United States did not build any new ballistic missile-firing submarines. In this same period, the U.S.S.R. added over 60 missile-firing submarines in four new or improved classes. The Soviets are now deploying two new types of missile submarines—the Typhoon and the Delta III—while we are building only the Trident.

Bombers. When the first B-1 bomber becomes operational in 1985, it will have been nearly a quarter of a century since the last U.S. heavy bomber was produced. In contrast, the Soviets have produced more than 250 modern Backfire bombers that have inherent intercontinental capabilities. The Soviets also have improved their large air defense system designed to counter our bomber force. A freeze would not constrain these Soviet air defenses.

The following chart compares the introduction of new strategic weapons by the United States and the U.S.S.R. and shows the momentum of the Soviet buildup over the last decade. As the chart shows, the Soviets introduced twelve new or improved nuclear weapons systems, while the United States only introduced three, and they upgraded or expanded every area of their nuclear arsenal.

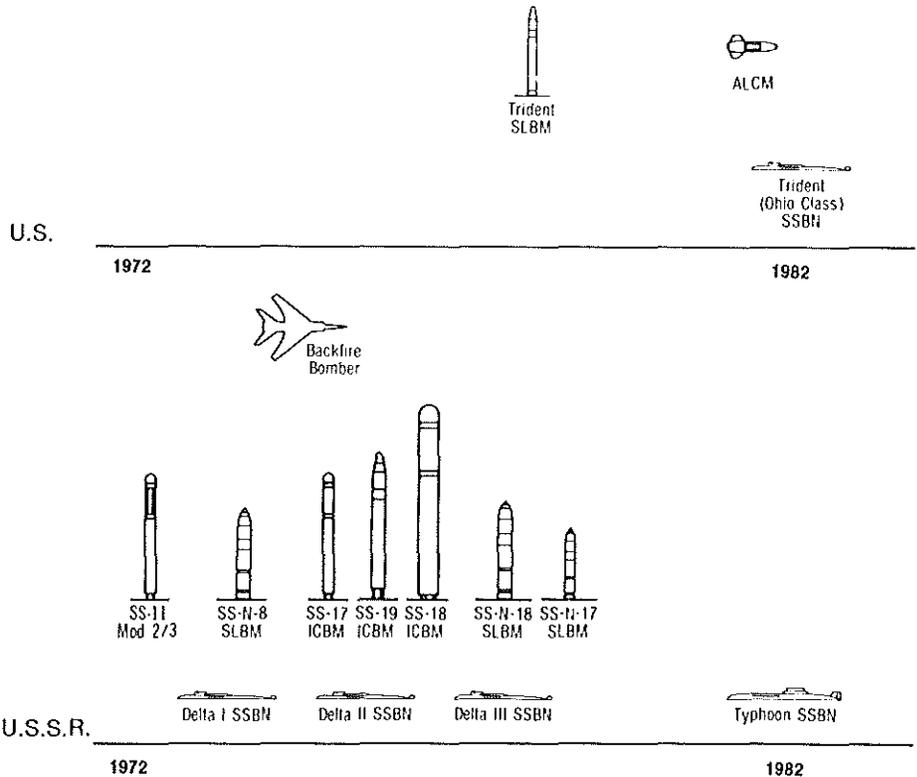
Moreover, in most significant measures used to judge strategic forces—total number of systems, total number of ballistic missiles, total destructive potential—the Soviets now surpass the United States. Soon they could equal and surpass us in number of warheads, the one area where the United States has traditionally had an advantage.

The President entered office with a mandate to correct these trends. The modernization program he announced in October 1981 is designed to restore the strategic balance and prevent nuclear war. In so doing, it will give the Soviet Union a strong incentive to negotiate with us to achieve genuine arms reductions.

Conclusion

The Reagan Administration is committed to equitable and verifiable arms control aimed at substantial reductions in military forces. While the freeze proposal reflects the desire of people everywhere to reduce the threat of nuclear war, it would not promote reductions, equality, or verifiability. Rather, it would accomplish the opposite. A freeze at existing levels would lock in existing nuclear inequalities while making further progress in arms control difficult, if not impossible. For these reasons, our goal in arms control must be the negotiation of substantial reductions in the nuclear arsenals of both sides. We can do better than a freeze.

Introduction of Strategic Weapons by the U.S. and U.S.S.R. 1972-1982



ICBM—Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
 SLBM—Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
 SSBN—Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine
 ALCM—Air-Launched Cruise Missile