

THE WHITE HOUSE

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BRIEFING BY
ROBERT MCFARLANE ON SALT II COMPLIANCE

The Briefing Room

2:31 P.M.

MR. MCFARLANE: Good afternoon. This is a statement by the President. I think that Bob also mentioned there will be a five-page fact sheet which will have all of the background rationale for the decision being announced today.

“In 1982 on the eve of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, I decided that the United States would not undercut the expired SALT I agreement or the unratified SALT II agreement, as long as the Soviet Union exercised equal restraint. To cite my serious reservations about the inequities of the SALT I agreement and the serious flaws of the SALT II agreement, I took this action in order to foster an atmosphere of mutual restraint conducive to serious negotiation as we entered START.

“Since then, the United States has not taken any action which would undercut existing arms control agreements. The United States has fully kept its part of the bargain. However, the Soviets have not. They have failed to comply with several provisions of SALT II, and we have serious concerns regarding their compliance with the provisions of other accords.

“The pattern of Soviet violations, if left uncorrected, undercuts the integrity and viability of arms control as an instrument to assist in ensuring a secure and stable future world. The United States will continue to pursue vigorously with the Soviets the resolution of our concerns over Soviet noncompliance. We cannot impose upon ourselves a double standard that amounts to unilateral treaty compliance.

“We remain determined to pursue a productive dialogue with the Soviet Union aimed at reducing the risk of war through the adoption of meaningful measures which improve security, stability and predictability. Therefore, I have reached the judgement that despite the Soviet record over the last years, it remains in our interest to establish an interim framework of truly mutual restraint on strategic offensive arms as we pursue with renewed vigor our goal of real reductions in the size of existing nuclear arsenals and the ongoing treaty negotiations in Geneva.

“Obtaining such reductions remains my highest priority. The U.S. cannot establish such a framework alone; it will require the Soviet Union to take the positive concrete steps to correct its noncompliance to resolve our other compliance concerns, and to reverse its unparalleled and unwarranted military buildup.

“So far, the Soviet Union has not chosen to move in this direction. However, in the interest of assuring that every opportunity to establish the secure, stable future that we seek is fully explored, I am prepared to go the extra mile to seek an interim framework of truly mutual restraint.

“Therefore, to provide the Soviets the opportunity to join us in establishing such a framework, a framework which could support ongoing negotiations, I have decided that the United States will continue to refrain from undercutting existing strategic arms agreements to the extent that the Soviet Union exercises comparable restraint, and provided that the Soviet Union actively pursues arms reduction agreements in the currently ongoing nuclear and space arms

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talks in Geneva.

“As an integral part of this policy, we will also take those steps required to assure that the national security of the United States and our Allies which were made necessary by Soviet *noncompliance* will be preserved.

“Appropriate and proportionate responses to Soviet noncompliance are called for to ensure our security, to provide incentives to the Soviets to correct their noncompliance, and to make it clear to Moscow that violations of arms control obligations entail real costs.

“Certain Soviet violations are, by their very nature, irreversible. Such is the case, for example, with respect to the Soviet Union’s flight testing and steps toward deployment of the SSX-25 missile, a second new type of ICBM prohibited by the unratified SALT II Agreement.

“Since the noncompliance associated with the development of this missile cannot be corrected by the Soviet Union, the United States reserves the right to respond in a proportionate manner at the appropriate time. The Midgetman small ICBM program is particularly relevant in this regard.

“Other Soviet activities involving noncompliance may be reversible, can be corrected by Soviet action. In these instances, we will provide the Soviet Union additional time to take such required corrective action.

“As we monitor Soviet actions for evidence of the positive, concrete steps that are needed on their part to correct these activities, I have directed the Department of Defense to conduct a comprehensive assessment aimed at identifying specific actions which the United States could take to augment, as necessary, the U.S. Strategic Modernization Program as a proportionate response to and as a hedge against the military consequences of those Soviet violations of existing arms agreements, which the Soviets fail to correct.

“To provide adequate time for the Soviets to demonstrate by their actions a commitment to join us in an interim framework of true mutual restraint, we will plan to deactivate and dismantle according to agreed procedures an existing Poseidon SSBN as the seventh U.S. Ohio-class submarine puts to sea later this year.

“However, the United States will keep open all programmatic actions for handling such milestones as they occur in the future. As these later milestones are reached, I will assess the overall situation in light of Soviet actions, correcting their noncompliance and promoting progress in Geneva and make a final determination of the U.S. course of action on a case-by-case basis.

“I firmly believe that if we are to put the arms reduction process on a firm and lasting foundation and obtain real reductions our firm focus must remain on making best use of the promise provided by the ongoing negotiations in Geneva.

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“Our policy involving the establishment of an interim framework for truly mutual restraint and proportionate U.S. response to uncorrected Soviet noncompliance is specifically designed to go the extra mile so as to give the Soviet Union the opportunity to join us in this endeavor.

“My hope is that if the Soviets will do so, we will be able, jointly, to make progress in framing equitable and verifiable agreements involving real reductions in the size of existing nuclear arsenals. Such an achievement would not only provide the best and most permanent constraint on the growth of nuclear arsenals, but it would take a major step toward reducing the size of these arsenals in creating a safer future for all nations.”

That’s the end of the statement, I have one comment to make, and take your questions. With regard to the President’s decision concerning the activation and dismantlement of the Poseidon submarine on the occasion of the Alaska going to sea this summer, I wish to point out that that dismantlement will be in accordance with arrangements provided for in the agreement. Those arrangements do not foreclose the reconfiguration of that submarine in some other mode.

I draw your attention to the fact that the Soviet Union, in the past ten years, has deactivated, dismantled 12 submarines. The United States has correspondingly deactivated and dismantled 8.

There is an example on the part of the Soviet Union of their having taken one of their Yankee-class boats out of action, cut it up, but reconfigured it with cruise missiles on board.

This departs from the spirit, if not the letter, of the agreement to take what is in arrangement for taking weapons out of service and in fact, on their side, putting them back in, in another military mode.

The President will proceed with the Poseidon dismantlement in accordance with the terms of the agreement. That does provide, however, for its reconfiguration. In the case of the United States, that new configuration could be one of many. It could be a training boat; it could be some other kind of boat. That will be for later decision.

I’d be glad to take your questions.

Q Could you give us some examples of some of the flagrant violations that you see -- that the Soviets are conducting now of treaties, how they can cure them, and the time frame in which they have to do so?

MR. MCFARLANE: In the way of violations, the reports that went up in ’84 and 185 pretty well list these exhaustively. They include the development and testing of a second new type of ICBM, the encryption of information that’s necessary for monitoring Soviet compliance.

In the ABM context, they include the construction of the Krasnoyarsk radar, and questions raised concerning concurrent operations of ABM and air defense radars, the development of mobile ABM systems, and so forth, that pose the possibility of Soviet intention to deploy a country-wide area defense.

Apart from strategic arms control agreements, these reports also note Soviet violations of chemical warfare conventions, biological warfare conventions, the Helsinki Pact and other agreements.

Q I suppose what I’m really asking is, what can they do to cure -- just pick out two or three. The radar, for instance. Are you asking for them to dismantle that? The new SSX-25 -- are you

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asking that they dismantle those?

MR. MCFARLANE: In the category of which are reversible and which are not, those that are irreversible, there's little that can be done in terms of walking back the existing violation. Chemical weapons have been used, innocent people have died. In the case of the 25, which you mentioned, they have tested it, they've gained knowledge. You cannot eradicate the useful information that has already been gained from that action.

On the other hand, there are things that are reversible.

Q How about the radar?

MR. MCFARLANE: The radar. Were they to stop construction and to dismantle that radar, that would be a corrective action that would be effective and quite welcome.

Q Bud?

Q Bud, can I follow that up, please?

Q What reason do you have for believing that the Soviets, who have disputed our account of this every time, that they will correct any of this? And is there some time limit attached, either in the President's mind or in this statement's construction, at the end of which, if the Soviets are still doing the same things, the United States will no longer observe the interim restraints?

MR. MCFARLANE: The President believes that the Soviet Union ought to have an interest in arms control, even if it is a self-serving wish to constrain the growth of U.S. programs. If that is true, it is essential that they understand there cannot be a future regime of arms control without compliance. There can be little hope that this country -people, the Congress -- will have any confidence in a process in which they don't comply. And so compliance is at the heart of the very viability of arms control as a policy instrument.

So we believe they do have an interest because they want to constrain our systems -- in arms control. They'd better show it by taking corrective action. And if they don't, they have to acknowledge by this decision that the United States reserves the right to take compensating military action to account for their violations, and that these will be appropriate and proportionate.

Q Is there some kind of time limit?

MR. MCFARLANE: There is no time limit. The sooner, the better. Obviously, we're ready in Geneva to make some headway. The sooner that they get serious about this, the better off we'll be.

Barry?

Q Apart from the Midgetman reservation. in other words, I look at this

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different from the way the two previous questioners. Isn't it true that the President has decided to live up to the agreement, wish the Soviets correct themselves, say if they don't, it's hard to get another agreement. But our continued compliance with the SALT II treaty is not conditional on any Soviet action. Isn't that correct?

MR. MCFARLANE: Our continued policy of continuing not to undercut has the important proviso that we will respond appropriately and proportionately to Soviet violations, both past and future. And he is tasking the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs, with examining the affect of past violations and reporting to him by November of this year with those measures that ought to be taken in the way of accelerating or adding to the Strategic Modernization Program, to assure that our security requirements are met.

Q All right, but you've accused them of a series of violations from reports to Congress, you have an advisory committee here that accused them of every *in under the sun. But the decision -- isn't it correct -- the decision doesn't require them to reverse anything in order to have the United States to continue to not undercut the treaty?

MR. MCFARLANE: The decision requires that unless they do correct those that they can correct, they can anticipate a U.S. response, whether or not it is within the terms of the treaties, to compensate for what they have done. So it is, I think, a distortion of reality to say that there's no cost here. That is the very purpose of this -- to say that cost -- that compliance non-compliance does entail costs.

Helen.

Q You have thrown in everything but the kitchen sink, except for Afghanistan and Sakharov. I mean, you are not sticking to violations of SALT alone, you're running the gamut, aren't you? Why have you injected all of these other horrors into the situation?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, Helen, I gave that list in response to a question that said what had they not complied with.

Q Chemical warfare, and so forth -- that doesn't really -- aren't you limited really by violations of SALT II in your further actions?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, two points. First of all, non-compliance with treaties generally expresses a Soviet state of mind about treaties. Now, to the extent that they violate something, whatever it may be, it reflects bad faith in adhering to treaties once concluded. So it expresses a Soviet stratagem that is not irrelevant, *whether it* is chemical warfare or Helsinki Pact.

But I take your point. And we will examine our continuing policy of not undercutting the SALT regime as a function of Soviet behavior in strategic programs. Both that and the negotiations in Geneva, their compliance record in the future.

Q Well, you're not holding the feet to the fire only on SALT then.

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, our behavior and our strategic forces is conditioned upon their behavior and their strategic forces. In a large sense, of course, we care about whether they comply with treaties generally or not. But that is the context of this decision today.

Jerry?

Q if you're so concerned -- the President is so

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concerned about Soviet behavior, why didn't he just throw the- treaty out all together?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, there are a lot of good reasons for doing that. The SALT II regime -- the President has said, in '79 and '80 and since, was fundamentally flawed in several respects - codified a significant Soviet advantage in warheads, failed to take account actively or adequately of the backfire bomber. It also allowed a number of ambiguities in verification. And it provided, most importantly, for a significant expansion in the level of strategic forces. That's really why the President doesn't like the SALT regime.

He believed in '81 and today that it can provide a framework for restraint if it is observed. It hasn't been by the other side. It has by ours. Today he is saying, get back in compliance or you can expect compensating measures to be taken.

Andrea.

Q But that wasn't the question. If I may, that wasn't the question. You answered the opposite of the question he asked.

MR. MCFARLANE: Why don't we throw it out? And I said that as flawed as it may be, there are some useful provisions that can exercise or establish restraint if they are observed.

Q Our allies had no part in it? Their view had no part in it?

MR. MCFARLANE: Of course, it did. The context or the climate for conducting security policies in Europe throughout the world, as viewed by our allies and us, can be improved if there is, over time, a record of compliance and viability of arms control agreements. Our allies feel strongly about that. So does the President.

We consulted with the allies, we consulted with the Congress. It involves, obviously, whether or not the Congress would be more or less inclined to support the defense budget with or without a SALT regime. These considerations were all taken into account.

Andrea.

Q Can you explain -- again, in response to Jerry's question -- why, if the President believes that SALT II's interim restraints should be -- should not be undercut if their is compliance, why, given the alleged Soviet record of non-compliance, he feels at this time it's appropriate to continue the policy? And, secondly, can you tell us which, under the SALT II regime, which of the alleged violations are reversible?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, first of all, the President believed that as poor as the record of compliance has been, that we must seek arms reduction and to establish that in written conventions and that the Soviets have an interest in that. This is a milestone at which he has said that won't be possible unless the record of compliance improves. But if it does, there can be hope that we can still maintain arms control as a policy instrument.

He is going the extra mile. This is not an open-ended commitment in perpetuity. And he makes clear in his report that we will evaluate Soviet compliance, Soviet building programs, their performance in Geneva -- all of these things. And as milestones are reached in the future, the decision may be different.

Q Well, according to reports today, the Soviets are building new missiles systems faster than we had even expected -according to our own estimates.

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MR. MCFARLANE: That's a true. There has been, clearly, an increase in both the pace and quality of Soviet building programs. This is extremely worrisome. It underscores the need to put some constraints on them. And that's why some kind of negotiated reduction is essential.

Hank?

Q And can you answer the question -- I'm sorry -- what is reversible? Is it the encryption that's reversible? Could you explain that a little?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, encryption -- what they have encrypted already has prevented us from knowing quite a lot about existing systems. And so that's really not reversible. Some of these test programs are nearly complete, and so there's nothing, really, that they could do that would give us much confidence on the encryption scale that we would know what we need to know about these past systems. A change going back to sensible compliance on encryption, the terms of the agreements, would be welcome. But it wouldn't undo what they've already done.

The Krasnoyarsk Radar is a came where they could

Q So it's not the SALT II regime.

Q Right.

MR. MCFARLANE: It's the ARM Treaty. It is in the SALT framework. The -- not building sore new systems in another way that they could avoid stressing the-limits of the treaty.

Q In the general sense, the heart of the SALT II treaty is the numerical limits, correct? Would you -- how long would the United States be willing, as you've announced the program, to observe those numerical limits if the Soviets don't respond in a positive way to this announcement you've made today?

MR. MCFARLANE: It's a judgment call. As additional violations occur, if they do, they will be met with compensating U.S. action. Now, there may come a time -- there surely could -- when the scope and number of violations clearly relieve the agreement of any meaning. The President is saying today, that hasn't happened yet. We will continue not to undercut, but we will take action to account for what they've already done in violation.

Q Can I -

MR. MCFARLANE: Hank.

Q I think I just heard you say that there was not a great deal of hope for additional negotiations unless the Soviet record of compliance improves. Does that have implications for U.S. willingness to continue in the START negotiations?

MR. MCFARLANE: Perhaps I should have said there is very little hope for a successful outcome. The President has our delegations in Geneva, and they're going to stay there. Part of his caveat today was that we would take appropriate and proportionate responses and that we would not undercut for as long as the Soviets show corresponding restraint and negotiate in good faith in Geneva.

Jerry?

Q Bud, as a practical matter, is the Poseidon going to be cut up into small pieces or is it going to be tied up and dry-docked -

MR. MCFARLANE: It will be dismantled in accordance with the agreed SALT procedures. Basically, it involves taking out the missile bay. And it is an open question. You could

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put it back together. You could make a training platform out of it. You could do a number of things that are also within the scope of the SALT agreement.

Q Could I follow that?

MR. MCFARLANE: Yes, Barry.

Q Is it possible -- you criticized the Soviets for reconfiguring an SSBN, I believe, to a cruise missile. Is that not correct?

MR. MCFARLANE: Yes.

Q Is it possible, under the description you just made for this Poseidon, for it to be reconfigured to a cruise missile?

MR. MCFARLANE: It is conceivable.

Q And why would you do that?

MR. MCFARLANE: We have had, in the past, no intentions of doing that and no program for doing that. It is possible that the Navy will recommend that it be made a training platform. It could be a number of other things.

My point was that in doing what they've done, the Soviets have circumvented the intent of the treaty by making it a weapons platform. And that requires some kind of compensating action.- That's what the President has asked the Secretary to define.

Q Would you rule out reconfiguring this Poseidon that is going to be dismantled as an SSBN to a cruise platform?

MR. MCFARLANE: I wouldn't rule it out. That is a decision that will depend on Pentagon analysis. I noted, I think, just now that we have had, historically, no plans for that kind of thing.

Q But, this interim arrangement -

MR. MCFARLANE: Charlie.

Q -- that you talked about, the interim arrangement -where do you expect to pursue that? In the Geneva talks, in the consultative committee? Have you addressed the Soviets on that question and have they been willing?

MR. MCFARLANE: We have in Geneva and bilaterally ever since the non-compliance was identified. The President has advised Mr. Gorbachev of this decision today, stressing that Soviet compliance -- or renewed compliance is at the heart of any hope for a successful outcome in Geneva, calling upon him to do that.

Q Are there any ground rules for inspection?

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Q You mentioned some milestones in which the policy might be reviewed? I presume you're referring to the eighth Trident submarine and perhaps the deployment of air launched cruise missiles. When did these milestones occur and do we conduct an entire new review at this point and time? And, a second part, if Congress doesn't go along with the recommended acceleration of the strategic program, do you then review your compliance policy and recommend departures from the SALT treaty?

MR. MCFARLANE: At bottom, the basic criterion must be assuring the security of the United States. We believe that that can be served both by defense building programs and by arms control. Theoretically if arms control by extraordinary Soviet violation were to lose its meaning we would have to build more systems clearly.

We don't expect that will be necessary but the President's asking the Secretary now to say what has been the effect up until now of their noncompliance. And, to answer your question, as we reach later milestones -- after the November report, with next summer's deployment of the eighth Trident boat and next summer's deployment of the 121st ALCOM carrier, what ought we do then?

Again, basing the recommendation upon what has been the Soviet record of compliance, what is their pace and quality of new building programs, what are they doing in Geneva, these kinds of things.

Q Bud, on that

Mr. McFarlane

MR. SIMS: -- appointment with the President

Q Mr. McFarlane, what's the difference -

Q On that -- on that

Q Mr. McFarlane -

MR. MCFARLANE: Yes?

Q What's the difference between compliance and inspection? I haven't heard that word "inspection." Are they the same?

Q Question -

MR. MCFARLANE: Monitoring or inspection is identifying whether or not there is a violation of the treaty.

Q Are there any ground rules for that?

MR. MCFARLANE: Oh, they're exhaustive. They go into several books.

MR. SIMS: Thank you.

MR. MCFARLANE: Thank you very much.

Q On that -

Sir -

Q Is next summer the first -- the next time that the President will have to make a decision on activities that would be constrained by those terms of the treaty?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, he will no doubt -

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Q Microphone

Q Microphone

MR. MCFARLANE: reach some decisions. He will reach some decisions based upon the Secretary's report to him in November. These would probably be reflected in the budget submission in January. Beyond that, we'll continue as a constant matter all the time to review Soviet compliance and determine its effect. The next time where you come up against a milestone, per se, would be at the eight Trident boat, 121st ALCOM carrier, both now planned for next summer or any major Soviet breakout that they might choose to make between now and then.

Q Sir?

Q -- why take out the Poseidon? Why not take out a more vulnerable--

MR. MCFARLANE: We might.

Q -- a more vulnerable system like the Trident?

MR. MCFARLANE: We might -- do that.

Q Sir, Midgetman missile -- are you going to go ahead with Midgetman or is Midgetman decision contingent on the SALT regime in anyway?

Q In the--

MR. MCFARLANE: We're going ahead with it.

Q You're going ahead with it?

Q Any Soviet response yet?

Q Ask Vladimir.

Q Bob, what was his last answer?

Q We're going ahead with it.

MR. SIMS: The question was are we going ahead with Midgetman. As you know we have a program -- we're going ahead with that.

END

3-00 P.m. EDT