

# **Statement by Assistant to the President for Press Relations Fitzwater on the Soviet-United States Strategic Ballistic Missile Launch Notification Agreement**

*May 31, 1988*

The agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on notification of launches of strategic ballistic missiles is a practical new step designed to reduce the risk of misinterpretation, miscalculation, or accident.

In the START negotiations, both sides have proposed that there be notification of launches of ICBM's and SLBM's. Both sides launch such missiles from time to time for purposes of testing, training, and maintaining their reliability. The sides have very similar language to implement such notifications in the joint draft text of the START agreement in Geneva. Given this common approach to launch notification, the United States proposed at the meeting of Foreign Ministers in mid-May in Geneva that we separate this provision

from the START treaty and reach an agreement on this subject now. Our START negotiator subsequently gave his counterpart in Geneva a draft text of an agreement. On Sunday the Soviets agreed to this concept and gave us a draft very similar to ours. Our START negotiators have completed the text, and it was signed today by Secretary Shultz and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze.

The agreement requires notification of all ICBM and SLBM launches at least 24 hours in advance. The notification would include the planned date of launch, the launch area, and the impact area. The notifications will be made through the Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers.