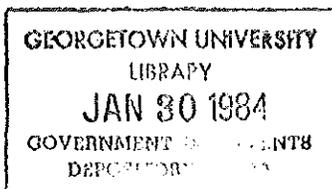


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INF: Where We Stand

December 1983

Background: On November 23, 1983, the Soviet Union unilaterally discontinued the sixth round of negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF), stating that it would set no date for the resumption of the talks. The Soviets' stated reasons were "the appearance of new US missiles in Europe" and recent votes in the parliaments of Great Britain, Italy, and the Federal Republic of Germany, all of which endorsed continued adherence to NATO's "dual-track" decision of 1979. The US and the allies expressed their regret at the Soviet action and called for the resumption of talks without preconditions.

Soviet achievement of strategic nuclear parity with the US in the mid-1970s raised concerns about the INF imbalance in Europe, which was exacerbated by Soviet deployment of triple-warhead SS-20s beginning in 1977. NATO became concerned that such an imbalance, if not redressed, could call into question its strategy of deterrence and flexible response, which has preserved the peace in Europe. NATO's response to this unprovoked Soviet buildup was the December 1979 "dual-track" decision on INF modernization and arms control: to deploy US longer range INF missiles in Europe--108 Pershing II ballistic missiles and 464 ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs)--while at the same time offering US-Soviet arms control negotiations on INF. As was then publicly announced, the deployment would begin at the end of 1983 and proceed through 1988, with GLCMs to be deployed in Belgium, Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK, and Pershing IIs to be deployed in Germany.

The negotiations: The Soviets initially insisted that they would negotiate only if the West renounced the 1979 decision. In the face of alliance solidarity, however, they abandoned this position in 1980; following preliminary exchanges that year, formal talks began in Geneva in November 1981. The US position, developed in close consultation with the NATO allies and Japan, has evolved considerably during the course of the negotiations.

The initial US position--which remains the West's preferred outcome--was President Reagan's "zero-zero" option: the complete elimination of US and Soviet longer range INF missiles on a global basis. In March 1983, when it became clear that the Soviets were not yet ready to accept so far-reaching an outcome, the US proposed an interim agreement, offering to scale down NATO's planned deployment if the Soviets would agree to reduce their longer range INF missile warheads to an equal global level.

In September 1983, President Reagan announced three elaborations of this proposal, in areas of apparent Soviet concern. The elaborations covered the geographic allocation of US deployments, specific reductions of the Pershing II, and limits on longer range INF

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aircraft. In November, the US specifically suggested an equal global warhead number (420) that corresponded to a number the Soviets had suggested for their SS-20 deployments in the western USSR.

The Soviet position on the central issue did not essentially change in 2 years of negotiations: they would retain a substantial SS-20 force in Europe, with no deployments on the US side. In an October 1983 interview, General Secretary Andropov suggested some positive movement on the geographic and aircraft issues, although he offered no binding arms control limitations on deployments of SS-20s in the eastern USSR, from whence they can still threaten the security of NATO Europe as well as Asian nations. The Soviets originally justified their retention of a longer range INF monopoly by asserting that an INF "balance" already existed, but this argument was undercut by continuing SS-20 deployments: more than 100 were deployed during the talks, and a new base became operational within 2 weeks of the Soviet walkout, raising the total of SS-20s deployed to 369, with 1,107 warheads. Increasingly, the Soviets have tried to rationalize the unequal outcome they seek by a contrived claim for "compensation" for the independent national deterrent forces of Britain and France. NATO has consistently rejected this demand.

Deployments: As agreed in 1979, initial NATO deployments-- involving Pershing IIs in the Federal Republic of Germany, and GLCMs in the UK and Italy--have begun. Deployments will proceed on schedule in the absence of concrete negotiating results. In a November 24, 1983 statement, General Secretary Andropov indicated that the Soviet Union would take various military steps as "countermeasures" to US deployments. Some of these--such as accelerating long-planned modernization of shorter range nuclear systems in Eastern Europe--were clearly programmed to occur irrespective of US deployments. At least one measure--suspension of a so-called "moratorium" on SS-20 deployments--was essentially meaningless, since deployments in fact had never stopped.

Prospects: As NATO's Special Consultative Group reported in December 1983, "At the time the Soviet Union suspended the negotiations, all the elements for an equitable agreement were on the table in Geneva," and progress had been made on a number of major issues. The current Soviet position is that they will not negotiate on INF until US deployments are reversed, while the US wants negotiations to resume as soon as possible and to continue until agreement is reached. NATO remains committed to implementation of the 1979 decision.