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~~START Proposals~~

April 1984

Background: On May 9, 1982, President Reagan announced a new proposal to reduce substantially US and Soviet strategic nuclear arsenals. In subsequent Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) with the Soviets, the US has offered a number of additional proposals to achieve US-Soviet strategic equality at lower levels, thus increasing the security of both sides.

US START proposals: The original US START proposal called for:

- Reductions in deployed ballistic missile warheads by one-third to 5,000 for each side, of which no more than 2,500 would have been on intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs);
- A limit of 850 deployed ballistic missiles (roughly one-half the current US inventory);
- Sub-limits of 210 medium-sized and heavy missiles, of which no more than 110 could have been heavy missiles; and
- Equal levels of heavy bombers, including the Soviet Backfire bomber.

The two-phased US approach focused first on reducing the most destabilizing systems--land-based ballistic missiles with multiple warheads (MIRVs) that have the potential to be first-strike weapons. A second phase would have put equal ceilings on other elements of US and Soviet strategic forces, including ballistic missile throw-weight at less than current US levels and air-launched cruise missiles. The US also proposed a number of confidence-building measures aimed at reducing the risk of nuclear war by accident.

Flexibility in negotiation: In five rounds of START, the US delegation has pursued these goals with determination and flexibility. We have made clear our willingness to discuss trade-offs of Soviet advantages (for instance, ground-based ICBMs) and US advantages (for instance, air-launched cruise missiles). In response to the Soviet criticism that US proposals would force restructuring of Soviet forces, the US in Round IV offered to explore alternate ways to reduce ballistic missile throw-weight, including indirect limits such as those originally proposed by the US, direct limits if the Soviets preferred, or other serious Soviet proposals. In response to the Soviet criticism that the original US proposal was not comprehensive, the US dropped its two-phased approach and proposed a draft treaty that included equal limits on heavy bombers and held the number of air-launched cruise missiles allowed on each bomber to a level below that included in SALT II.

Build-down initiative: Following close consultation with Congress, in October 1983 the US incorporated into its START position the principle



of a mutual, guaranteed build-down of strategic forces. The build-down proposal would channel modernization of strategic forces toward less destabilizing systems, as recommended by the bipartisan Scowcroft Commission on Strategic Forces. Reductions would be accomplished in one of two ways:

- More than one ballistic missile warhead would be removed for each new one deployed until the level of 5,000 ballistic missile warheads for each side is reached. This reductions process would encourage greater strategic stability by requiring a greater reduction for each new MIRVed warhead deployed than for each new non-MIRVed warhead deployed; and
- In order to guarantee reductions even in the absence of modernization, a certain percentage reduction (about 5%) would be required of each side each year until the 5,000 level is reached.

The US also proposed a concurrent build-down of heavy bombers.

Soviet START proposal: The Soviet START proposal provides for:

- Modest reductions from the SALT II levels, from 2,250 to 1,800 strategic nuclear delivery vehicles on each side;
- Unspecified limits on the total number of nuclear weapons, including ballistic missile warheads, cruise missiles, and other bomber armament; and
- Modest reductions in the SALT II sub-limits on MIRVed ballistic missiles.

The Soviet proposal does not take adequately into account the fact that MIRVed ballistic missile systems are more destabilizing than others; indeed, the largest percentage of Soviet reductions probably would be in the less destabilizing non-MIRVed systems. The Soviet proposal does not go as far as we believe both sides should go to reduce strategic nuclear arsenals. It would perpetuate the current Soviet throw-weight advantage and might not require reductions in ballistic missile warheads. The Soviets claim their Backfire bomber is not capable of strategic attack and refuse to count it in START. Their proposal does not acknowledge sufficiently the need to go beyond national technical means to guarantee effective verification of an agreement. During the negotiations, they have clarified some elements of their initial proposal and made some adjustment on peripheral issues but have remained intransigent on the central issues.

Current status: At the end of Round V in December 1983, Moscow said that US implementation of the 1979 NATO decision to deploy intermediate range nuclear missiles in Europe, failing Soviet agreement on mutual restraint, required the Soviet Union to reexamine its START position and that it therefore could not agree to a date for Round VI. The US regrets this unjustified Soviet action and is ready to resume negotiations. The US has made a reasonable proposal that has bipartisan support in both Houses of Congress. The US will spare no time or effort in reaching a mutually acceptable START agreement.