

Letter to Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole on the Nuclear Testing Limitations Bill

March 7, 1986

Dear Bob:

As you know, on February 26 the House of Representatives passed H.J. Res. 3, "To Prevent Nuclear Testing," and this issue is now before the United States Senate. The resolution calls for the immediate ratification, without needed verification improvements, of both the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty (PNET). It also calls for the resumption of negotiations with the Soviet Union toward a Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB), despite the fact that the U.S. Government has made clear its very serious reservations in taking such a step under present conditions.

Any limitations on nuclear testing must be compatible with our security interests and must be effectively verifiable. Because of the *continuing threat* that we face now and for the foreseeable future, the security of the United States, its friends and its Allies must rely upon a credible and effective nuclear deterrent. A limited level of testing assures that our weapons are safe, effective, reliable and survivable and assures our capability to respond to the continued Soviet nuclear arms buildup. Such testing, which is conducted underground, is permitted under the existing agreements on nuclear test limitations, all of which the United States fully complies with—the TTBT, the PNET, and the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT).

A CTB remains a long-term goal of the U.S. However, it must be viewed in the context of achieving broad, deep and verifiable nuclear arms reductions, substantially improved verification capabilities, a greater balance in conventional forces and at a time when a nuclear deterrent is no longer as essential an element as currently for international security and stability.

A first, priority step toward this goal is the pursuit

of equitable and verifiable arms reductions in the current negotiations in Geneva on nuclear and space arms. We are, at the same time, seeking Soviet agreement to enhanced verification measures for the TTBT and PNET and are discussing verification problems of a CTB at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Our concerns are heightened by the pattern of Soviet noncompliance with its arms control obligations, including current agreements on limiting nuclear testing.

Our efforts to achieve essential verification improvements include three approaches to the Soviets in 1983 to engage in discussion. In 1984 I proposed an exchange of Soviet and U.S. experts to measure directly the yields of tests of nuclear weapons at each other's test sites. In mid-1985, I unconditionally invited Soviet experts to measure such a test at the Nevada Test Site, bringing with them any instrumentation devices they deemed necessary. In December, 1985, I proposed to Secretary General Gorbachev that U.S. and Soviet experts on nuclear testing limitations meet in February, 1986, to discuss our respective verification approaches and to address initial tangible steps to resolve this issue.

Regrettably, the Soviet Union has thus far not responded either to the serious U.S. concerns in this area or to any of our initiatives to address these concerns in a constructive manner.

The actions called for by H.J. Res. 3 do not serve the interests of the United States, our Allies and our friends. They would undercut the initiatives I have proposed to make progress on nuclear test limitations issues, and they would set back prospects on a broad range of arms control efforts, including the achievement of deep, stabilizing, and verifiable arms reductions. Sincerely,

/s/ RONALD REAGAN