

# Statement Announcing a Major United States Initiative in the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions Negotiations

**April 19, 1984**

I am very pleased to announce another major initiative in arms control. Earlier today in Vienna, the U.S. and our NATO allies tabled a new proposal aimed at breaking the impasse that has long stalled the negotiations between NATO and the Warsaw Pact on reducing conventional forces in Europe. This important initiative in the talks on mutual and balanced force reductions, known as MBFR, was developed in close consultations with our allies, and it reflects their significant contributions.

Since the MBFR talks began in 1973, we have sought an agreement to reduce to equal, verifiable levels the conventional force personnel of the two sides which face each other in Central Europe. Although the Warsaw Pact has a significant manpower advantage in Europe, it has been unwilling to acknowledge the imbalance. Without agreement on the total number of forces on each side, there can be no agreement on the number that must be reduced to obtain equal levels.

This data issue is one major unresolved problem in the MBFR negotiations. The other issue is the continuing unwillingness of the Eastern side to agree on effective verification provisions. Today's proposal is designed to move the talks forward in both areas.

This new proposal in the MBFR negotiations comes just a day after the American initiative for a comprehensive, worldwide ban on chemical weapons. This was presented personally by Vice President Bush yesterday in Geneva to the 40-nation Conference on Disarmament. I hope these twin initiatives will lead to real progress in both negotiations.

We are bargaining in good faith. With equal willingness on the other side, real progress can be achieved quickly. I have no higher priority than reducing arms to equal and more stable levels and, where we can, banning them altogether.

Having made these significant new moves this week in chemical and conventional arms control, I want to emphasize once again my strong desire to get on with the urgent business of reducing nuclear arms. We call upon the Soviet Union to respond to the repeatedly expressed desire of the world community by returning to the two nuclear negotiating tables, START and INF, which they left 5 months ago. When they do this, they will find the United States to be an accommodating and creative partner in seeking nuclear reductions, just as we and our allies have shown ourselves to be in the negotiations on chemical and conventional forces.

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/41984c.htm>