

Statement by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Speakes on the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Negotiations

May 21, 1985

Today the President met with Ambassador Robert Blackwill, who will serve as the new U.S. Representative to the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) talks in Vienna, which reconvene this week. The U.S. delegation in Vienna together with those of our NATO allies are seeking to reach an equitable and verifiable agreement with the Warsaw Pact on the reduction to equal levels of conventional force manpower in central Europe. Such an agreement would enhance stability and security, reduce the risk of war, and promote mutual confidence in Europe. The President expressed his continuing interest in and support for efforts in the MBFR negotiations.

Ambassador Blackwill's work in Vienna will go hand in hand with U.S. participation in other negotiations that seek to promote security and stability. In Geneva, the United States next week will return for a second round of negotiations with the Soviet Union on nuclear and space arms in an effort to enhance stability and eliminate entirely the risk of nuclear war. Also in Geneva, the United States has submitted to the 40-nation Disarmament Conference a draft treaty for the complete and verifiable prohibition of chemical weapons. And in Stockholm at the Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (CDE), the NATO alliance is actively seeking agreement on concrete measures to reduce the risks of surprise attack in Europe.

The President urged Ambassador Blackwill, together with his Western colleagues in Vienna, to probe for all possible areas of agreement in order to achieve concrete results, noting that if the Soviet Union and its partners show a similar degree of willingness to find mutually acceptable solutions to the difficult issues on the table, progress in MBFR will be possible.