

Statement by the President on Soviet-United States Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Reduction Negotiations

March 27, 1987

Yesterday marked the close of the special extended session of negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF), a part of the nuclear and space talks in Geneva. We extended this session beyond the March 6 closure of the other NST negotiating groups in order to make further progress toward our long-held goal of deep, equitable and effectively verifiable reductions in U.S. and Soviet longer range INF (LRINF) missiles, with the ultimate objective of their complete global elimination.

On March 4, at my direction, our U.S. negotiators tabled a draft INF treaty text which follows the formula that General Secretary Gorbachev and I agreed upon at our meeting in Iceland in October 1986. We have now presented and explained in detail to the Soviets our draft treaty text, which calls for reductions to an interim global ceiling of 100 warheads each on U.S. and Soviet longer range INF missiles, with none in Europe, along with constraints on shorter range INF missiles and provisions for effective verifications.

United States and Soviet negotiators have established working groups to facilitate discussion of the draft treaty which we put forward, and they are working to develop a joint text. These discussions with the Soviets have been businesslike and productive. I want to emphasize that our position on these negotiations is based on very close consultations with our friends and allies in Europe and Asia, whose security is most directly affected by the Soviet INF buildup. Our allies, moreover, made substantial contributions to our proposals.

We and our allies have made clear to the Soviets that an INF agreement must be effectively verifiable. As I have pointed out previously, of the issues remaining to be resolved, none is more important than verification. Our draft treaty text, therefore, includes a comprehensive verification regime to ensure compliance with the treaty. We have three key objectives in seeking such verification provisions:

-- to enhance confidence in the agreement, which in itself will contribute to greater

security and stability in Europe and Asia;

-- to deter violations by increasing the risk of detection; and

-- to permit quick detection of any troublesome activities, thereby providing timely warning of a potential or real threat to allied security.

On-site inspection will be an important element of any effective verification regime. Such inspections will assist in verifying the initial exchange of data on INF systems and the subsequent destruction, dismantlement and conversion of LRINF systems, and will play an important role in ensuring continued compliance with treaty limitations. Another key provision of our draft text concerns shorter range INF (SRINF) missiles. We and our allies have made clear since 1981 that constraints on SRINF are essential in an initial INF agreement so that the Soviet Union cannot undercut LRINF limitations through a buildup in shorter range INF missiles. These constraints, therefore, must provide the United States with a right to equality with the global level of deployed Soviet SRINF systems.

At Reykjavik, General Secretary Gorbachev and I reaffirmed the important principle agreed by our negotiators during the INF negotiations of 1981 - 1983. Namely, that an interim INF agreement must include constraints on SRINF systems in order to "ensure the viability and effectiveness of an agreement on longer range missiles." In recent weeks, however, the Soviets have backtracked from this position and are now saying that the question of shorter range INF missiles should be taken out of the current INF negotiations and be dealt with instead in separate negotiations. This new Soviet position on shorter range missiles would allow the Soviet Union a continued monopoly of these systems and would leave them free to increase their existing force. This clearly is not acceptable to us or our allies.

The crucial issue now is whether the Soviet Union is prepared to accept equal constraints on SRINF missiles in the context of an initial INF agreement, or whether it will insist on maintaining superiority over us in this important area and, with this superiority, the ability to undercut any INF agreement. Since the United States obviously cannot permit such an outcome, we will continue to insist that equal constraints on shorter range INF missiles must be an integral element of an initial INF treaty. I remain fully committed to achieving an equitable and verifiable INF reductions agreement. For this reason, I welcomed Mr. Gorbachev's recent statement on INF, which removed an obstacle to progress that the Soviets had imposed at Reykjavik. The United States then put forth a comprehensive, realistic draft treaty for Soviet consideration. Now is the time, therefore, for the Soviet Union to live up

to its previous commitments on INF and to come to terms on an equitable agreement.

Finally, let me say a word about the strength and unity of our alliances. It was, above all, NATO's cohesion in carrying out its 1979 two-track decision on INF that helped to bring the Soviets back to the negotiating table and persuaded them to negotiate seriously. Our own commitment to the security of our friends and allies in both Europe and Asia, all of whom have been threatened by Soviet INF missile deployments, remains as strong as ever. We will continue to work closely with them, as we seek Soviet agreement to equitable and verifiable INF reductions.

The United States and the Soviet Union have agreed to begin round eight of the NST negotiations on April 23. Thus, the INF negotiating group, along with the strategic arms and defense and space negotiating groups, will resume their work on that date. The U.S. and the Soviet Union have agreed at the same time, however, that this date could be adjusted when Secretary Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze meet in Moscow on April 13 - 15 to discuss these and other issues on the broad U.S.-Soviet agenda.