

White House Statement on the First Anniversary of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

December 8, 1988

One year ago today, on December 8, 1987, in the East Room of the White House, President Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev signed a historic document, the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, commonly referred to as the INF treaty. Under this agreement, for the first time in history an entire class of U.S. and Soviet nuclear missiles will be eliminated, based on the zero-option proposal first put forward by President Reagan in 1981. This achievement is a direct consequence of the President's steadfast commitment to real arms reductions that strengthen U.S. and allied security rather than merely limiting increases as in previous treaties. It is also the result of allied solidarity in responding to the threat posed by Soviet deployment of SS-20 missiles.

The INF treaty provides for the elimination of all U.S. and Soviet missiles with ranges of 500-5,500 kilometers (about 300-3,400 miles), along with their launchers, support equipment, and support structures by June 1, 1991, 3 years after the treaty entered into force. The treaty also bans all production and flight testing of these missiles immediately upon entry into force. Once the missiles are eliminated, the treaty prohibits either party from possessing any INF missiles, launchers, support equipment, or support structures.

From the beginning of the INF negotiations, President Reagan emphasized that it would be better to have no treaty rather than one that could not be effectively verified. The INF treaty contains the most stringent verification provisions in the history of arms control, including extensive data exchanges, on-site inspections, resident inspectors at a key missile facility in each country, and prohibitions on interference with

national technical means of verification.

The elimination of U.S. and Soviet INF missile systems is well underway: the Soviets have eliminated about 433 missiles, while the U.S. has eliminated about 108, in the presence of inspectors from the other side, since eliminations began in August of this year. In addition to monitoring the destruction of missiles, U.S. and Soviet inspectors have also conducted inspections at 130 Soviet facilities and 31 U.S. INF facilities, and each side has established a continuous monitoring presence at a key missile facility in the other's territory.

The signing of the INF treaty last December was a remarkable success for U.S. foreign policy and for the NATO alliance as a whole, a success made possible by allied unity and 'Perseverance. NATO demonstrated that it has the political will to make and stand by the tough decisions necessary to ensure its security. Our common objectives were achieved: the elimination of both longer-range and shorter-range Soviet INF missiles-limitations that are global in order to prevent transfer of the INF threat from one region to another-and agreement that INF limits apply only to the forces of the U.S. and the USSR. The treaty also affirmed the principle of asymmetrical reductions to achieve equal U.S. and Soviet levels, an important precedent for future arms negotiations.

Since the signing of the INF treaty, the U.S. has continued its efforts to achieve a safer world, including through negotiations for deep, equitable, and verifiable reductions in strategic arsenals, a stable balance in conventional forces in Europe, an effectively verifiable global ban on chemical weapons, and effective and verifiable agreements on nuclear testing limitations. The signing of the INF treaty 1 year ago today was a good first step.