

Statement by Deputy Press Secretary Speakes on the Soviet Announcement Concerning Missile Deployment

March 16, 1982

Upon examination, the “unilateral moratorium” offered by President Brezhnev is neither unilateral, nor a moratorium.

The offer, President Brezhnev makes clear, is limited to the European Soviet Union, thus leaving the U.S.S.R. free to continue its SS-20 buildup east of the Urals, well within range of Western Europe. As we have noted on many occasions, given its range and mobility, an SS-20 is a threat to NATO wherever located.

President Brezhnev clearly links his “unilateral” offer to the condition that Western preparations for the deployment of ground launch cruise, missiles (GLCM) and Pershing II, agreed upon in December 1979, do not proceed. This condition, plus the fact that the Soviets have already prepared sites for new SS-20’s west as well as east of the Urals, demonstrate that this is a propaganda gesture and that the Soviets do not really intend to stop their SS-20 buildup.

The Soviet SS-20 force already exceeds the dimensions of the expected threat when NATO took its decision of December 1979 to deploy U.S. GLCM and Pershing II missiles in Europe and to seek, through arms control, to reduce planned levels of long-range intermediate nuclear force (INF) missiles on both sides. The Soviets now have 300 SS-20 missiles deployed, with 900 warheads. Brezhnev’s freeze proposal is designed, like previous Soviet statements over the past 3 years, to direct attention away from the enormous growth of Soviet capabilities that has already taken place and the enormous preponderance that the Soviet Union has thereby acquired.

It is unfortunate that the Soviets did not choose to exercise real restraint before their SS-20 buildup began. NATO, for its part, has been observing restraint on INF missiles for well over a decade, which the Soviets simply exploited.

In sum, President Brezhnev’s offer is neither evidence of Soviet restraint, nor is it designed to foster an arms control agreement. Like previous such Soviet

freeze proposals, this one seeks to legitimize Soviet superiority, to leave the Soviet Union free to continue its buildup, to divide the NATO Alliance, to stop U.S. deployments, and thus to secure for the Soviet Union unchallenged hegemony over Europe.

The United States has put forward concrete proposals in Geneva for the complete elimination of missiles on both sides, cited by Brezhnev in his remarks of today. We regret the Soviet Union apparently prefers propaganda gestures to concentrating on serious negotiations in Geneva. For its part, the United States, with the full support of its allies, will continue to implement both tracks of the December 1979 decision on the deployment of new systems to Europe and the pursuit of genuine arms control, which we hope will make those deployments unnecessary.

President Brezhnev’s proposal to place limits on the operations of missile submarines is also not a serious proposal. U.S. submarines, by deploying to extensive ocean areas, are able to remain invulnerable to Soviet attack, and thus constitute a stable deterrent force. Reducing their area of operations in the world’s oceans would increase their vulnerability and erode our confidence in their deterrent capability. The Soviet proposal, therefore, is entirely self-serving. Having made a large fraction of our land-based ICBM force vulnerable through their large ICBM buildup, the Soviets in this proposal are attempting to reduce the confidence we have in the sea-based leg of our deterrent.

The proposal for a ban on the deployment of ground-based, long-range cruise missiles is yet another transparent effort to disrupt NATO’s 1979 two-track decision. Moreover, in focusing on sea-based as well as land-based, long-range cruise missiles, the proposal ignores the hundreds of shorter-range cruise missiles that the Soviet Union currently deploys aboard its warships.

Finally, we want to reiterate the four principles underlying the Reagan administration’s approach to arms control. These are to seek agreements that:

1. produce significant reductions in the arsenals of both sides;

2. are equal, since an unequal agreement, like an unequal balance of forces, can encourage coercion or aggression;

3. are verifiable, because when our national security is at stake, agreements cannot be based simply upon trust; and

4. enhance U.S. and Allied security, because arms control is not an end in itself, but an important means toward securing peace and international stability.

These four principles were highlighted by the President in his speech of November 18, 1981. They underlie our position in the current Geneva negotiations on the elimination of U.S. and Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missile forces. They also form the basis for our approach to negotiations with the Soviet Union on the reduction of strategic arms-the START talks.