

Statement by Deputy Press Secretary Speakes on United States-Soviet Union Negotiations on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Reductions

December 16, 1982

As you know, the U.S. has proposed the total elimination of U.S. and Soviet land-based, longer range INF missiles -- the zero-zero solution. As you also know from Soviet public statements, the Soviets have proposed that after 5 years, the U.S.S.R. and NATO reduce to a ceiling of 300 "medium-range" nuclear missiles and aircraft located in or intended for use in Europe, to include British and French forces. This longstanding position, which is basically unchanged, would allow them to maintain their monopoly over the U.S. in longer range INF missiles, especially their mobile, triple-warhead SS - 20 missiles in Europe and the Asian U.S.S.R. The number of deployed SS - 20's currently stands at 333 launchers.

A missile subceiling, as mentioned in recent press accounts, would at most require the reduction of some of these highly mobile systems in or intended for use in Europe, while requiring us to cancel entirely our deployments of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles planned to begin in December 1983. This would leave the Soviets with a substantial monopoly over the West in long-range, land-based INF systems, would not constrain the overall levels of Soviet systems, would draw into the bilateral negotiations the nuclear forces of other countries, and is patently inadequate as a solution to the INF issue, since it would not eliminate the political and military threat to the alliance posed by Soviet longer range INF missiles.

We will continue the negotiations on a serious basis. During these negotiations, we and the Soviets have elaborated our positions in both formal and informal contacts. We will continue to study the Soviet position, and it will be among the things we will be discussing when the next round begins on January 27.

We have kept our allies fully informed about negotiations as they have occurred. We and they have reaffirmed in three recent NATO meetings at the Foreign Minister or Defense Minister level that the zero-zero solution remains the best arms control result, since it would eliminate the systems of greatest concern to both sides. The President and his administration are fully convinced of the reasonableness of this carefully developed proposal. Nothing could be fairer to all concerned.

Note: Deputy Press Secretary Larry M. Speakes read the statement at his daily press briefing in the Briefing Room at the White House.