

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary  
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STATEMENT BY THE PRINCIPAL DEPUTY PRESS SECRETARY

As the President meets this week with General Secretary Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, he believes it is crucial that all Americans join with him in forging a strong bipartisan consensus on a nuclear testing policy that promotes our national security interests and advances long-standing U.S. arms control objectives.

In recent weeks there has been substantial disagreement in the Congress and in the Nation over the best approach to reach the goal we all seek -- a world in which there will be no nuclear testing because the need for it has vanished. The dispute threatened to give General Secretary Gorbachev the false impression of a divided America. The President did not believe it was in the best interests of our Nation to create this impression.

United States policy on nuclear testing limitations is clear:

Our highest arms control priority in the area of nuclear testing has been and remains to seek the necessary verification improvements to the existing Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) and Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty (PNET).

Once our verification concerns have been satisfied and the treaties have been ratified, and in association with a program to reduce and ultimately eliminate all nuclear weapons, we are prepared to engage in discussions on ways to implement a step-by-step parallel program of limiting and ultimately ending nuclear testing.

We remain committed to the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear testing, but only when we do not need to depend on nuclear deterrence to ensure international security and stability, and when we have achieved broad, deep, and verifiable arms reductions, substantially improved verification capabilities, expanded confidence-building measures, and greater balance in conventional forces.

In order to make progress toward our goals, encourage the Soviet Union to negotiate verification improvements, and ensure the necessary national consensus for our objectives, the President has decided to take two new steps:

First, the President will inform General Secretary Gorbachev in Reykjavik that if the Soviet Union will, prior to the initiation of ratification proceedings in the Senate next year, agree to essential TTBT/PNET verification procedures which could be submitted to the Senate for its consideration in the form of a protocol or other appropriate codicil, the President will, as a first order of business for the 100th Congress, request the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification of the TTBT and PNET. However, if the Soviet

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Union fails to agree to the required package of verification improvements prior to the convening of the 100th Congress, the President will still seek Senate advice and consent, but with an appropriate reservation to the treaties that would ensure they would not take effect until they are effectively verifiable.

Second, the President will inform the General Secretary that, once our TTBT/PNET verification concerns have been satisfied and the treaties have been ratified, the President will propose that the United States and the Soviet Union immediately engage in negotiations on ways to implement a step-by-step parallel program -- in association with a program to reduce and ultimately eliminate all nuclear weapons -- of limiting and ultimately ending nuclear testing.

The Congressional leadership has responded to the President's decision in a bipartisan spirit and is supporting the President's proposal. The President is grateful for this show of unity. As a result, the President can make it clear to General Secretary Gorbachev that America is united in its determination to take prompt, practical steps to limit nuclear testing, that the first requirement is for him to act now to resolve the verification problems with the existing treaties, and that United States and the world are awaiting his response.

While the President believes these new steps will allow progress in this area, they must not divert us from the primary goal: elimination of the weapons themselves. Broad, deep, equitable and verifiable reductions in offensive arms remain our highest priority. Here, too, we have made significant proposals, and await a constructive Soviet response. If they are willing, the road to a safer world is open before us.

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