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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

BACKGROUND BRIEFING
BY SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL
ON UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS

September 20, 1984

The Roosevelt Room

4:08 P.M. EDT

MS. SMALL: You all are invited here on the basis that you are columnists, not front-page reporters, and so we would hope that you would respect that, that whatever you write is on the basis of a column and not for a front-page tomorrow morning's story. Also, it is on background, senior administration official, and there will be a transcript only for your use and reference, but it won't be ready, probably, until tomorrow morning. If you want to give my office a call to check on the time -- otherwise, we'll put it in Room 45 with each of your names. In Room 45 you can pick it up tomorrow morning -- it will be mid-morning.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Hi. I propose, unless you have a strong preference to the contrary, that I briefly talk to two areas of policy interest; the first, the U.S.-Soviet meetings of next week and then, the second, the President's speech to the United Nations. And I'll try to be brief and then take your questions. Anybody that doesn't like that?

First of all, on the preparations for the meetings with Gromyko next week, the President sees the meetings in New York and here as an opportunity to renew high-level dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union oriented toward the resolution of problems, problems across the board, bilateral issues, regional disagreements, arms control, importantly. Clearly, they will also include, from our side, a treatment of our concern over individual rights and liberties in the Soviet Union.

The President goes into this after quite a long review of U.S.-Soviet relations in the post-war period, but focused mostly upon the last fifteen years. And from that review, he believes that a number of conclusions can be drawn and a number of estimates of how the Russians may view that same history. In the latter context, he believes that it is likely that the Soviets have seen this period of the last fifteen years, particularly in the latter part of the seventies, as a period of substantial decline in the West generally, and in the United States.

The President, however, believes that the American people have or are emerging from that period and, in a fundamental sense, are acknowledging as a society that the United States has important interests overseas, that these can best be promoted by strong association with like-minded states, can also -- that they have also concluded that we have an interest and a determined effort to foster, in developing countries, their stable economic development and should be willing to assist in that effort, that we and the Soviet Union differ in our purposes internationally, that the Soviet Union has and will continue to seek to establish a prevailing influence beyond its borders in states where it can, in short, that we face, as a country, a sustained period of competition with the Soviet Union and that our responsibility is to assure that this is a peaceful competition.

And in this session, his central purpose will be to see how we can establish promptly the means, the fora, for the resolution of disagreements which exist, again, bilaterally, regionally, and in arms control. He has several ideas for how that joint effort can be established. He imagines that the Soviets have gone through a time in the last year or so of examination of this same history and has

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reached its own conclusions.

If, as he thinks, they have observed this period of decline and, in his judgment, a period of substantial renewal following on this decline, that there are probably doubts in the Soviet Union about whether this renewal can be sustained. He imagines that they probably look at that history and have identified several significant events as documenting their judgments of decline: the outcome of the Vietnam war, questions that it raised about the reliability of the United States, its staying power, its ability to define a problem, define a strategy, and pursue it to a successful conclusion.

He imagines that their appreciation of the significant change in the strategic military balance which resulted by about the mid-seventies in a condition of rough parity between us is an important factor in their thinking; at least it appears so, to the extent that it has provided an increased willingness to take risks in the latter half of that last decade. He expects that they probably attribute some importance to economic decline in this country in the latter half of the seventies. But it is his judgment that, from that, the United States as a society, as a people, in part, owing to a recognition of our significant overseas interests, the benefits that can come from overseas markets, our reliance upon overseas resources, requires that we put behind us this persistent isolationist strain and be prepared to take an active role, a positive role, in international affairs for an extended period of time; that this will require a certain sustained investment, both in foreign assistance and security assistance and preserving our own deterrent, and an activist role not only in promoting development but in the resolution of disputes.

That said, there is probably some uncertainty in the Soviet Union about whether or not this renewal, as we -- that has occurred can be sustained. Four years ago, the President thinks it likely that the Soviet Union believed it could afford a period of seeking to prevent renewal or to alter it, to alter the policies which were responsible for it, and that the means that they have chosen to use in preventing that renewal are to play upon the vulnerabilities of democracies, and those are fairly well-known, vulnerabilities such as fear of intimidation, fear of violence, fear that is brought on by expanding numbers of weapons on the landscape in Europe and elsewhere, and that shrill rhetoric and this ever-greater level of armaments could lead to a change in U.S. policy, a diminished support for defense spending, a move for unilateral concessions in arms control context, but that, in short, it was worth, and they could afford, a period of intimidation and confrontation in an effort to alter or prevent this renewal and to change our policies.

At the same time, however, to the extent that the renewal succeeds and that there is greater political cohesion in the West, economic recovery in the West, military strength in the West, there is an inexorability that has its own internal logic for the Soviet Union to re-engage and try seriously to solve problems. That is, that the maturing, for example, of our defense program provides a natural incentive for not only, well, Soviet military leaders to seek to re-engage so as to put caps on those systems and that it may be feasible to re-engage and do so at the same time you seek to alter the pace of the renewal and the policies for arms controls and other issues; that is, that you may be able to have it both ways.

So the President enters these talks believing that he has a responsibility to try to re-engage with the Soviet Union on the resolution of problems, having several ideas on how this can be done, and confident of our ability to make progress, that confidence born out of having taken advantage in the last year of the period of impasse to re-think our positions in several different areas. We have gone through an exhaustive analysis of our START position, which has led us to conclusions which are involved with great flexibility. We have done the same thing at great length in INF and have come out of it, similarly, with flexible ideas.

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In the last four-and-a-half months we've been involved in a detailed analysis of anti-satellite systems and have concluded those -- that effort with positions we believe provide the basis for progress; in short, that we are ready.

He looks forward to hearing what the Soviet ideas are for resuming the discourse and bilateral arms control and regional issues. He expects that an important reason for Mr. Gromyko's coming is that if self-interest has led them to re-engage, they undoubtedly want to know, and Mr. Gromyko personally, this man better, so as to better shape their own strategy for how to deal with the United States in the months and years ahead, and that probably that purpose alone, understanding the priorities and motivations and conviction of this President, is a central purpose in their coming.

Let me turn for just a moment to the speech at the United Nations on Monday. The speech is expressive of the President's optimism that we are at a moment in history when the opportunity exists to re-invigorate efforts to solve problems, peacemaking, and the improvement of the human condition. It is a speech in which the central theme is that we have demonstrated and can demonstrate in many more areas our ability to solve problems, and that he is optimistic toward the future.

He will focus, importantly, on the basis for this being greater economic and political freedom, and he believes that the criteria for achieving that is best expressed in the universal declaration of human rights, and that the performance or adherence by countries to it provides the basis for getting ahead.

He then goes into what the main lines of U.S. policy will be for promoting and achieving economic and political freedom, and he focuses on, first, our enduring commitment to our alliances, NATO, Asia. He also states that the United States will continue to seek to improve its relationship with countries with which we are not allied, and those who have political -- politically different systems, such as China. He expresses his strong support for true nonalignment and our wish to help nonaligned countries in their economic development and his renewed commitment to the universality of the United Nations system.

He then treats, seriatim, regional problems that exist in the world. He covers Southern Africa, Central America, the Middle East, Lebanon, in particular, the Persian Gulf, Kampuchea, Afghanistan, and makes clear that, in each case, he will lend United States effort to the peaceful resolution of these disputes. He is supportive of United Nations efforts in the Afghanistan context, in Iran-Iraq, in Cyprus, and, at bottom, the central theme of this part of the speech is a call for all parties to these disputes as well as those outside with influence to renew their commitment to a negotiating process as opposed to violence.

He cites examples, such as between Israel and Egypt, where negotiation has produced tangible results. He goes into other examples of where negotiation, not violence, has produced calm -- the Berlin Treaty, the agreement for the Austrian State Treaty -- he cites these as models and believes there can be others in the months ahead.

The last half of his speech is devoted specifically to U.S.-Soviet relations. He states at the outset the firm and enduring commitment of the United States to constructive negotiation with the Soviet Union for resolution of problems. He states we have three objectives in this relationship in the short term, and that is to engender a comprehensive political dialogue about regional issues. He goes specifically to our interest in talks with them at expert or higher level of the situation in Afghanistan, Southern Africa, and Central America.

Secondly, he states that we must pursue promptly and vigorously a serious reduction in the level of armaments, not only nuclear but non-nuclear, reductions in NATO and Warsaw Pact forces, and the achievement of practical, confidence-building measures, improvements in nuclear-testing verification, and improved cooperation among

supplier states to establish an effective nonproliferation regime.

He gladly accepts the Soviet proposal to open talks on anti-satellite systems and believes that at such talks the United States ought to be ready to discuss the relationship between offensive and defensive forces. He believes that any agreement must reflect an understanding that stability can only come from a serious reduction in the level of offensive forces as well.

Finally, he says in our relationship that we have to broaden areas of cooperation with the Soviet Union. We have to go beyond the hot line improvements to encompass better economic cooperation, consular cooperation, cultural exchange, trade, and a number of other joint research efforts that have prospered and waned in the past that should be the early subject of renewal.

He closes with a call for a renewed determination by all member states of the United Nations to the peaceful settlement of disputes and to a focus, in the late 20th century, on the importance of that peaceful resolution as well as enhancement of individual liberties.

I would be glad to take your questions.

Q You suggested that there might be some attempt to find a formal mechanism for resolving U.S.-Soviet disputes. Did you have that in mind?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The President believes that there are several fora, with each having its own agenda that suggest themselves, and he will convey those to the Soviet Union. He expects they will have some ideas. His point is that while we believe there are many, he's not given to exclusive reliance on any particular one and is flexible about how we do this.

Q This will be in the Gromyko meeting?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes.

Q Are you prepared to say publicly what these fora are?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No.

Q Secretary Shulz said this week that the administration wants to get across to Gromyko a positive message that the U.S. attitude toward the Soviet Union is not threatening. Does the President have any gestures or specific actions in mind to get that message across?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That is probably the most persistent recurring theme in the President's reflections on the Soviet Union, and it's clear that he will convey his appreciation of United States' concept of its role in the world and how, by that, a manifestation of that concept in the post-war period, we have been unthreatening. And he will make clear his view of how, although we may have had the power to have been threatening, we never exercised it and, at the same time, I would expect him to go over to his own appreciation of why we worry about Soviet intentions and the evidence that we see of their own hostility to us, and look for -- invite -- Soviet comment on why we are not justified in that view.

But, yes, he has his own portrayal of post-war history which he believes documents a non-aggressive posture, specifically vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.

Q What is the administration reaction to the fact of the Mondale-Gromyko meeting, and is it better that Mondale go first?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't have any real comment on the timing. The President welcomed Vice President Mondale's

comments about the United States is united in its commitment to the resolution of problems as well as the maintenance of its strength and believes that such a meeting poses no problem and is worthwhile.

Q Is there any question about who initiated the Gromyko-Mondale get-together? Are you completely satisfied it was the Soviets?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't know.

Q I ask the question -- I know the explanation that comes out of the Mondale camp, but I just heard another story today.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I have no basis for challenging it.

Q Or knowing that it is so?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I would have not reason to disagree with it.

Q What is your view of why the Soviets wanted to have a meeting with Mondale?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't know.

Q Going back to the meeting Friday, is there time enough and is the format right, really, to take care of all that you've outlined? How are they going to work it? Does the President just talk at Gromyko and is he going to listen? Is there any plan at all for this? How long is it? We don't even know at this point.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, that's a very good point. I think I probably implied too detailed a level of discourse at the President's level. I ought to divide kind of the baskets or the level of treatment between the Secretary's meetings and the President's. The Secretary will have, I expect, four hours, and probably eight or more -- historically, that has been about what it is with Secretary Haig and Secretary Shulz.

Q Does he still demand translation?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's the pattern, yes. And in those long sessions, they treat specifically the situation in regional problems and in bilateral issues, from consular problems to fishermen and maritime issues in a very detailed fashion. The President's level of treatment will be to seek an exchange in which both sides present their view of their interests and their objectives of, in our case, solving problems, and to look at how we can get busy doing that. And I would expect that the earlier point regarding our own attitudes vis-a-vis the Soviets, our lack of offensive intentions or hostility, would be the foundation for then going to the President's commitment to solve problems and specific ideas on how this might happen, and that that will be the level of these --

Q Has there been any --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Go ahead.

Q Well, how much time in all? I gather --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, it looks to me like --

Q -- there's going to be a meeting, then a lunch, and --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It seems to me it's likely to be three-and-a-half to four hours.

Q At the Presidential level?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes, at the President's level. Martin?

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Q Gromyko is not the President's peer. Is he regarded as speaking for Chernenko and for the Soviet Union? Has there been any question about that? Have the Russians said anything about it? Has there been any effort to establish a Reagan-Chernenko meeting before?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The President has felt for as long as I've been here that there are disagreements, that disagreements are best overcome with high-level dialogue, that that ought to start with the Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister and that if there's good faith on both sides, it warrants meetings at the head-of-state level, too, and that, in this case, he's confident that the Foreign Minister expresses the views authoritatively of the Soviet Union. So he believes this can be worthwhile.

Q In June, the President spoke about the Kremlin leadership being in a period of hibernation. Does this meeting change that assessment?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, we think that the agreement to hold the meeting at all reflects a value judgment on the part of the Soviet Union that it is in their interest to hear, at the highest level, what is on the mind of the President of the United States and, yes, it does express an opening on their part, I think.

Q You spoke of the President having some specific ideas. Would this be on mechanisms to try to move the dialogue forward in the various areas you've cited, or might it be to give some glimpse into some of the specific ideas we have, say, in arms control, in order to try to encourage them to come to the table?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think more the former than the latter. And in that context of fora or formats or ways of starting up again, I don't intend to imply that the President's going to say we will take X, Y issue out of this arms control discourse and Y and Z out of this one and we'll put them together and it's got to be in Stockholm. No. The President's purpose will say -- will be that we have a family of issues in which we disagree. We want to renew our efforts to come to agreement and we are open to any of several ways of doing it.

Now, we need, first, to hear that you have a corresponding interest, and if you do, then perhaps we can come to terms on either further meetings or immediately to move on some of these issues to a high-level meeting or specifics.

Q How high a high-level meeting? Summit?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, the President feels, still, that ministerial level meetings have a lot of value in preparing the groundwork that warrant a summit-level meeting. And I think that you see him proposing ministerial level meetings.

Q If we were to assume or say, in our own voices, that what seems in prospect here is the President indicating, to some extent, that we will go along with the ASAT negotiations if they come back to the table on START, say, would that be going too far or is that more or less what's in prospect?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That implies a much more strict linkage or quid pro quo approach to the talks, Larry. The President believes that the strategic balance depends upon a number of factors and systems and that it is intellectually infeasible to focus exclusively on anti-satellite systems without immediately raising questions about strategic offensive systems and, consequently, he thinks that to get around this impasse perhaps an umbrella discussion would -- is necessary, first, to come to terms on that principle, if you will, that strategic deterrence and strategic stability encompass a family of systems which we ought to talk about.

Q That sounds like, in effect, a kind of preface or preamble discussion to see what will then be discussed in detail where.

Is that what's envisaged?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I can't tell until they get together and start talking. I would be rather more optimistic that there could be a more discrete bounding of arms controls problems in a particular format and of bilateral issues in another, and in regional issues in another, because we have been thinking a lot about this in the last year. And we've got, I guess, half-a-dozen notions of how you can treat the whole family of issues, but you might do it more than one way. We are not wedded to one given way.

We're coming in here saying that we have a lot of flexibility in every aspect of arms control. Now, let's you and us find a way for you to listen.

Q Could you clarify one thing you've alluded to? Are you talking about institutionalizing a new mechanism of high level -- I mean people talk about institutionalizing summits. Obviously, that isn't possible, I suppose, in the current circumstance, but institutionalizing twice-a-year foreign ministers' meetings, or three times a year -- are you talking about creating new mechanisms or using existing mechanisms that already exist?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We're not taking, I guess I'd say, a mechanistic approach that we're going to propose that there be X meetings per year, for example. We are going to say that we need to establish a habit of ministerial level exchanges and that this will, hopefully, at periodic intervals warrant summits and the point, however, is that let's get that habit started right away.

Q But not necessarily with a summit?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No.

Q Let me just follow up, if I may. On the regional issue, the Soviets, in the past, have said that the United States only wants to talk to them about getting the Soviets out of Afghanistan, that they don't want to talk to the Russians about the Middle East, about Central America, about our so-called spheres of influence, I suppose.

Does the President intend, in this discussion, to provide an opportunity, if the Soviets are willing to play a constructive role in areas they consider of importance to them, such as the Middle East?

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SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, first of all, we have said before that we would talk to the Soviets about the Middle East. That goes back, I think, even to Secretary Haig's exchanges with Gromyko.

So, we've never foreclosed that. We have been pessimistic that the Soviets bring much to the table on that issue. But, we haven't resisted -- well, we haven't that.

The President does highlight Afghanistan, Southern Africa, Central America; but he doesn't rule out anything.

Q Your analysis of why the Russians are doing what they're doing seems to be based very, very heavily on their perception of American politics. Is it your view that there's no Kremlin politics involved in the recent ups and downs there? If so, what Kremlin politics have been going on as you see it, and how does it figure into what's been happening?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, first of all, I didn't intend, and I erred if I gave you the impression that I think their judgments are importantly conditioned on American politics in this short term -- short term American politics. I don't -- I think they are more enduring than that.

That is, that they would like to change our policy over time. And doubt that this window of renewal, if you will, can be sustained. But that it's not focused upon achieving something on November 6. I don't really think that it's centrally related to that.

The other side of your question, I tend to discount as well, Joe. I think that there are certain enduring Soviet interests and certain enduring Soviet strategies for achieving those interests, vis a vis, the United States, that are espoused by Gromyko, and by the other members of the Kremlin right now. And that he comes, speaking authoritatively, for the Soviet leadership and not significantly influenced by recent events in the Kremlin, or of -- whatever may be the personal relationships with others in the leadership hierarchy.

Q Second question: do you see a symmetry between now, and let's say, '69, where the Russians are very, very eager to arrest an anti-satellite development on our part, and we are fairly eager to put caps on some of their offensive weapons. Does that -- is that similar to what happened in '69 with the ABM on the one hand, and offensive weapons on the other?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think that may be their notion of how to approach certain aspects of arms control. I think beyond that narrow area, though, that the relationship generally, is different in important ways from the political relationship in 1969. And, importantly -- by importantly, I mean, that this country is in a period of renewal of considerable strength politically, economically, militarily, and with regard to its allies. And that there is a more fundamental change that has occurred in the American people that is quite different from '69, and that is, an elevated sense of the requirement for an activist U.S. role overseas. I wouldn't make more of that than it deserves -- isn't to say that every American citizen has become an enthusiastic internationalist. But, you see expressions of this acknowledgement of a U.S. role in the world, and their willingness to invest a baseline in National security, and other ways. And that's different. And I think that will be an important part of what the President wants to convey. That this is a different society from one that they have known in the past.

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Q You said the President's conducted a review of Soviet policies in the history. How is he doing that, is he reading original sources, transcripts of previous negotiations? Is he being briefed by people who have met Gromyko?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Those things. Also, he asked for, last year, and got, pieces of literature that -- by people who are considered experts on Soviet culture. Separately, he's asked for, and gotten, some fairly turgid pieces on the Soviet leadership, institutionally, that is, how does it -- how has it operated in terms of a decision making system? What it values, has it expressed? What negotiating style has it espoused? He has more recently gotten a piece on contemporary relationships within the Soviet hierarchy.

I guess what I'm saying is, by quite alot of reading, and periodic visits, visits in the context of some of the authors, for example, who have written on Soviet culture.

Q Could you give us some names or give us a little more specifics on that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I hate to put them in a box, and get them all full of phone calls on a given day. Last year, for example, Bill Cohen brought to his attention a woman who with her husband has been writing on the Soviet Union for a long, long, time -- really Russia, not the Soviet Union -- but, Susan Massey, Land of the Firebird, Nicholas and Alexandra, other works like that. And Susan's visits have been very, very worthwhile.

Q When was the last one of those? Recently?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't recall. It's been three or four months ago. But that was one of others that -- I don't want to go beyond that answer.

Q What do you look at as sort of the best case scenario at the end of next week? Is it possible that after Gromyko finishes up with the President next Friday, he will have announced a series of subsequent ministerial meetings? Is that sort of the optimal result? Or is that too elaborate?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think that's too elaborate. Bear in mind that we're coming into this after a period of impasse, and, as a consequence, to achieve results, it's going to take first, an exchange of ideas then some reflection on the ideas put forward on each side. And then, probably, another discussion that would lead to specific meetings coming at that point. I guess I sound like a bureaucrat. But I don't think that's illogical. I think that when the President of the United States first meets the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, there's going to be a clearing of the air and a discussion of fundamentals and of ideas. And that will deserve some pondering.

That would lead, before long I hope, to agreement on specific aggregation of issues in a given format for prompt negotiations.

Q Are you ruling out -- I'm trying to find my way through these details -- are you ruling out the possibility that this could set the stage for an actual summit early next year?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No. I wouldn't rule it out, but I think that implies that we're coming into this looking for a specific event, as opposed to an outcome. And we're looking to solve problems. When that happens, I would think that there would be acknowledgement and conclusion of those -- of that at a meeting.

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Q Maybe this is too simplistic, but the President has wanted a summit, hasn't he, for quite a while? And wouldn't it be logical to use this as a device to get there? Is this much too simplistic, this kind of thinking?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The President wants the outcome of solved problems. And, yes, that is formalized at a summit meeting. But it is the outcome, more than the summit, that has to occupy us. Because that involves the day to day thinking about how to solve the problem. Maybe we're saying the same thing, that the summit, yes, it wants a summit because it reflects agreement and that -- that will happen. But the President hasn't said: All right, let's shoot for a summit by "X" date.

Q Summits are the conclusion to the problem -- to the solving of the problems, not a means to that end.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: They can play a role, but for them to play a role, there has to be a significant advance toward resolution of the given issue.

Q Even though -- just a second -- in your thinking, could you envision actual negotiations taking place at a summit toward an agreement, or do you envision a summit the ceiling of an agreement that has already been made at lower levels?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Either. Historically they have been both, where a lot of ground work results in unresolved issues which can be concluded at a summit. But -- and other times where everything is already finished and tied up and all you do is sign it. Frankly, we haven't thought about that, because that's a long way off.

Q What about a Vladivostok -- what about a Vladivostok type summit, which really clears the way for negotiation, rather than capping negotiation?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I would think that that experience is the sort of thing that might come up. But -- on which there is no prearranged agreement as of now, I mean, that is one approach to signaling commitment toward solving a problem. And we would be glad to entertain their ideas on that score, if we're not given to that as opposed to some other format. I'm saying, we're open to a lot of ideas here, and we have several of our own.

Q Is this the President's most important personal diplomatic foray since he took office?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes.

Q Can we wrap this up? Thank you all very much for coming. We appreciate your time.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

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