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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 31, 1985

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT
ARMS CONTROL PROPOSAL

The Briefing Room

3:00 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: I have instructed our negotiators in Geneva at the nuclear and space talks to present a new United States proposal designed to advance the prospects for achieving real reductions in nuclear arms, enhancing stability, and addressing the legitimate concerns of the United States and our allies as well as of the Soviet Union.

I have also asked our negotiators to seek Soviet agreement to extend this round of the negotiations into next week so that our negotiating team can make a full presentation of our proposal and have a real give-and-take with the Soviets on its details.

Finally, I have written to the leaders of allied nations and have transmitted a personal letter to General Secretary Gorbachev on this subject.

History has shown that progress is more surely made through confidential negotiations. Therefore, I'm not going into any details about our proposal. Suffice to say that our proposal is serious, it is detailed, and it addresses all three areas of the negotiations. It builds upon the very concrete reductions proposals which our negotiators had tabled earlier as well as the Soviet counter-proposal.

The Soviet counter-proposal was first presented to me by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze at our White House meeting in September, following which it was tabled at Geneva by the Soviet negotiators. Since that time, our arms control experts have analyzed the Soviet counter-proposal extremely carefully. This analysis now completed, I have met with my senior advisors, decided on our response, and have instructed our negotiators to make this move.

During our careful review, we measured the Soviet counter-proposal against our concrete proposals for deep, equitable, and verifiable reductions which we already had on the table, and against the criteria which we have long held for attaining effective arms control agreements. We have made clear that, measured against these criteria, the Soviet counter-proposal unfortunately fell significantly short in several key areas.

At the same time, as I indicated in my address to the United Nations General Assembly last week, the counter-proposal also had certain positive seeds which we wish to nurture.

Our new proposal builds upon these positive elements and calls for very significant balanced reductions of comparable nuclear systems, particularly those that are the most destabilizing. It's my hope that our new proposal will enable both of our nations to start moving away from ever-larger arsenals of offensive forces. At the same time, we seek in Geneva

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to undertake with the Soviets a serious examination of the important relationship between offensive and defensive forces, and how people everywhere can benefit from exploring the potential of non-nuclear defenses which threaten no one.

I'm pleased that we seem to have made a successful start on this long process. The Soviet response to our earlier proposals and the new proposal which we're making are important milestones in moving these negotiations forward.

Additionally, I hope we can achieve progress in the other key areas of the broad agenda which Mr. Gorbachev and I will discuss in Geneva -- human rights, regional issues, and bilateral matters.

Strengthening the peace and building a more constructive, long-term U.S.-Soviet relationship requires that we move ahead in all of these areas. I believe progress is, indeed, possible if the Soviet leadership is willing to match our own commitment to a better relationship.

Now, I'm going to leave here because I can't discuss the details or answer any questions on it since it will be introduced tomorrow, and then all of those things will be available.

Q What about a general question --

THE PRESIDENT: Just let me just sum up. What I wanted to say is that I would characterize our arms control position as deep cuts, no first-strike advantage, defensive research -- because defense is safer than offense -- and no cheating.

Q Let me ask you a question that is -- sir, could we ask you a question that is general?

Q Mr. President, do you think anything can be accomplished in time for the Geneva summit?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Do you think anything can be accomplished on arms control on this new counter-proposal in time for a broad statement of principles at the Geneva summit?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, now, this is all I'm going to respond to and simply say -- because it touches on something I said here and explains.

Since they were scheduled -- the negotiations -- to recess, they will do that, but hopefully a week late. Naturally, both sides are going to have to agree to that. We're asking our people to extend it by a week. But it will give them time to table this and at least be able to see back and forth. After all, it isn't that deep a document, but the figures and where they are. And then they will find the relationship between the counter-proposal and our original proposal.

Q -- the Soviet journalists --

Q -- no give on Star Wars, sir -- no give on Star Wars, sir?

Q -- in time for the Geneva summit -- which was the question -- in time for you and Mr. Gorbachev to actually announce something?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't -- they may say something about it, but you'll have all the facts and figures --

Q Sir, you told the --

Q Are you going to -- are you going to ask --

Q -- no give on Star Wars, Mr. President?

Q -- you told the Soviet journalists, Mr. President --

Q No give on Star Wars, Mr. President?

Q Sir, if I may ask --

THE PRESIDENT: In my statement, I said that defense and -- I hope that we can arrive at a discussion of defensive weapons.

Q Mr. President, do you intend to go ahead with Star Wars?

Q You told the Soviet journalists that you hoped for concrete achievements at Geneva. Just a couple of days ago you told a BBC interviewer that perhaps the hope was that the paranoia might be lessened. It sounds like you're more optimistic about actually coming out with something?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm always optimistic, Sam.

Q Yes, but do you hope for concrete results, meaning some sort of broad framework, at least in principles?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I was answering I think that some of you have misinterpreted the answer that I gave in that BBC interview.

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The question had been what was my hope -- what did I thought -- felt would come out and so forth. And I was simply putting in place that arms control is a result; that first, you've got to eliminate the suspicions and the paranoia between us and so forth, and then you find out that arms control can come easily. But to just simply dwell on arms control -- if both of you are sitting there suspiciously saying how can we keep an advantage -- each side saying the same thing to itself, well, then, it doesn't really matter how many missiles you've counted.

Q Is Shultz going to ask for regular summit meetings when he goes to Moscow?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't speak for him of what's going to be --

Q Will you be actually negotiating with Mr. Gorbachev when you meet with him -- arms control negotiations?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, yes, of course. That's one of the main features.

Q You mean you'll be talking figures?

THE PRESIDENT: -- will be negotiated at Geneva, but I'm quite sure that there will be -- they'll want to discuss this and why they've taken certain positions and so forth.

END

3:08 P.M. EST