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INTERVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT
BY SOVIET NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

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The Oval Office

2:05 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: May I welcome you all -- it's a pleasure here. And I appreciate very much the opportunity to be able to speak, in a sense, to the people of your country. I've always believed that a lot of the ills of the world would disappear if people talked more to each other instead of about each other. So I look forward to this meeting and welcome your questions.

Q Mr. President, we appreciate greatly this opportunity to ask to you personally questions after you kindly answered our written questions. We hope that they will be instructive and -- well, facilitate success for your forthcoming meeting with our leader.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm looking forward to that meeting. I'm hopeful and optimistic that maybe we can make some concrete achievements there.

Q We are planning to ask our questions in Russian. I don't think -- I think you don't mind.

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, we have become acquainted with the answers which you furnished to our written questions. They basically reflect the old U.S. proposals. They have been evaluated -- which have been evaluated by the Soviet side as being unbalanced and one-sided in favor of the U.S. side. And you have not answered concerning the new Soviet proposal. And this reply to the new Soviet proposal is what is of greatest interest before the meeting in Geneva.

THE PRESIDENT: When this interview is over, later this afternoon at 3:00 p.m., I will be making a statement to our own press -- well, to all the press -- to the effect that we have been studying the Soviet proposal and tomorrow in Geneva, our team at the disarmament conference will be presenting our reply which will be a proposal that reflects the thinking of the original proposal that we had, but also of this latest. Indeed, it will show that we are accepting some of the figures that were in this counter-proposal by the Secretary General.

There are some points in which we have offered compromises between some figures of theirs and some of ours. But that will all be -- all those figures will be available tomorrow, and I will simply be stating today that we have -- that that is going to take place tomorrow in Geneva. But it is a detailed counter-proposal that -- to a counter-proposal, as is proper in negotiations, that will reflect, as I say, the acceptance on our part of some of this latest proposal as well as compromises with earlier figures that we'd proposed.

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Q I would like to have another question for you, Mr. President. According to a survey taken by The Washington Post and ABC on Tuesday it was found that 74 percent of the American people as compared to 20 percent said that they would like the U.S. and the Soviet Union to reduce their nuclear arsenals and not to have the U.S. develop space weapons. This seems to be the choice which the American people have made. It seems clear that without stopping the development of weapons in space there can be no reduction of nuclear weapons. This is the position of the Soviet side. So how then will you react, Mr. President, to this opinion expressed by the American public?

THE PRESIDENT: For one thing, it is based on a misconception. The use of the term "Star Wars" came about when one political figure in America used that to describe what it is we are researching and studying, and then our press picked it up and it has been world-wide. We're not talking about Star Wars at all. We are talking about seeing if there isn't a defensive weapon that does not kill people, but that simply makes it impossible for nuclear missiles, once fired out of their silos, to reach their objective -- to intercept those weapons.

Now it is also true that, to show that this is a misconception on the part of the people when you use the wrong terms, not too long ago there was a survey taken, a poll of our people, and they asked them about Star Wars. And similar to the reaction in this poll, only about 30 percent of the people in our country favored it, and the rest didn't. But in the same poll they then described, as I have tried to describe, what it is we are researching -- a strategic defensive shield that doesn't kill people, but would allow us one day -- all of us -- to reduce -- get rid of nuclear weapons. And over 90 percent of the American people favored our going forward with such a program.

Now this is one of the things that we will discuss. We are for, and have for several years now, been advocating a reduction in the number of nuclear weapons. It is uncivilized on the part of all of us to be sitting here with the only deterrent to war -- offensive nuclear weapons that in such numbers that both of us could threaten the other with the death and the annihilation of millions and millions of each other's people.

And so that is the deterrent that is supposed to keep us from firing these missiles at each other. Wouldn't it make a lot more sense if we could find -- that as there has been in history for every weapon a defensive weapon. Weapon isn't the term to use for what we are researching. We are researching for something that could make it, as I say, virtually impossible for these missiles to reach their targets. And if we find such a thing, my proposal is that we make it available to all the world. We don't just keep it for our own advantage.

Q Mr. President, with the situation as it stands today in the international arena, attempts to create such a space shield will inevitably lead to suspicion on the other side that the country creating such a space shield will be in a position to make a first strike. This is a type of statement whose truth is agreed to by many people. Now, it's apparent that the American people have indicated their choice, that if it comes down to a choice between the creation of such a space system and the decrease in nuclear arms, they prefer a decrease in nuclear arms. So, it seems to be a realistic evaluation on the part of the American people. And I would like to ask how the American government would react to the feelings of the American people in this regard.

THE PRESIDENT: In the first place, yes, if someone was developing such a defensive system and going to couple it with their own nuclear weapons -- offensive weapons -- yes, that could put them in a position where they might be more likely to dare a first strike. But your country, your government has been working on this same kind of a plan beginning years before we ever started working on it, which, I think, would indicate that maybe we should be a little suspicious that they want it for themselves.

But I have said, and am prepared to say at the summit, that if such a weapon is possible, and our research reveals that, then, our move would be to say to all the world, "Here, it is available." We won't put this weapon -- or this system in place, this defensive system, until we do away with our nuclear missiles, our offensive missiles. But we will make it available to other countries, including the Soviet Union, to do the same thing.

Now, just what -- whichever one of us comes up first with that defensive system, the Soviet Union or us or anyone else -- what a picture if we say no one will claim a monopoly on it. And we make that offer now. It will be available for the Soviet Union, as well as ourselves.

And if the Soviet Union and the United States both say we will eliminate our offensive weapons, we will put in this defensive thing in case some place in the world a madman some day tries to create these weapons again -- nuclear weapons -- because, remember, we all know how to make them now. So, you can't do away with that information. But we would all be safe knowing that if such a madman project is ever attempted there isn't any of us that couldn't defend ourselves against it.

So, I can assure you now we are not going to try and monopolize this, if such a weapon is developed, for a first-strike capability.

Q Mr. President, I would like to ask you about some of the matters which concern mutual suspicion and distrust. And you indicated at your speech at the United Nations that the U.S. does not extend -- does not have troops in other countries -- but there are -- has not occupied other countries. But there are 550,000 troops -- military personnel outside of the United States; In 32 countries, there are 1,500 military bases. So, one can see in this way which country it is that has become surrounded. And you have agreed that the Soviet Union has the right to look-out for the interest of its security. And it is inevitable that the Soviet Union must worry about these bases which have -- which are around it.

The Soviet Union, in turn, has not done the same. So, how do you in this respect anticipate to create this balance of security which you have spoken about?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I can't respond to your exact numbers there that you've given. I don't have them right at my fingertips as to what they are. But we're talking about two different things -- we're talking about occupying a country with foreign troops, such as we see the Soviet Union doing in Afghanistan, and there are other places, too -- Angola, South Yemen, Ethiopia.

Yes, we have troops in bases. The bulk of those would be in the NATO forces -- the alliance in Europe along the NATO line -- there in response to even superior numbers of Warsaw pact troops that are aligned against them. And the United States, as one of the members of the alliance, contributes troops to that NATO force.

Vietnam? Yes, when Vietnam -- or let's say, French Indochina -- was given up as a colony, an international forum in Geneva, meeting in Geneva, established a North Vietnam and a South Vietnam. The North Vietnam was already governed by a communist group and had a government in place during the Japanese occupation of French Indochina. South Vietnam had to start and create a government.

We were invited into -- with instructors, to help them establish something they had never had before, which was a military. And our instructors went in in civilian clothes. Their families went with them. And they started with a country that didn't have any military schools or things of this kind to create an armed force for the government of South Vietnam.

They were harrassed by terrorists from the very beginning. Finally, it was necessary to send the families home. Schools were being bombed. There was even a practice of rolling bombs down the aisles of movie theaters and killing countless people that were simply enjoying a movie. And finally, changes were made that our people were allowed to arm themselves for their own protection.

And then, it is true, that President Kennedy sent in a unit of troops to provide protection. This grew into the war of Vietnam. At no time did the allied force -- and it was allied. There were more in there than just American troops. -- At no time did we try for victory. Maybe that's what was wrong. We simply tried to maintain a demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam. And we know the result that has occurred now.

And it is all one state of Vietnam. It was conquered in violation of a treaty that was signed in Paris between North and South Vietnam. We left South Vietnam, and North Vietnam swept down, conquered the country, as I say, in violation of a treaty.

But this is true of almost any of the other places that you mentioned. We -- I've talked so long I've forgotten some of the other examples that you used.

Q Grenada.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Grenada.

THE PRESIDENT: Grenada. Ah. We had some several hundred young American medical students there. Our intelligence revealed that they were threatened as potential hostages and the government of Grenada requested help, military help, not only from the United States, but from the other Commonwealth nations -- island nations in the Caribbean -- from Jamaica, from Dominica, a number of these others. They in turn relayed the request to us because they did not have armed forces in sufficient strength.

And, yes, we landed. And we found warehouses filled with weapons, and they were of Soviet manufacture. We found hundreds of Cubans there. There was a brief engagement. We freed the island. And in a very short time, our troops came home, after rescuing our students, rescuing the island. There are no American troops there now. Grenada has set up a democracy and is ruling itself by virtue of an election that was held shortly thereafter among the people, and of which we played no part.

And there is the contrast: The Soviet troops have been in Afghanistan for six years now, fighting all that time. We did what we were asked to do -- the request of the government of Grenada -- and came home.

Q Mr. President, with relation to the ABM Treaty, which was signed in 1972, Article V of that treaty indicates, and I quote, "that each side will not develop a test or deploy anti-ballistic missile components or systems which are sea-based, air-based, space-based or mobile land-based. Now, some administration representatives say that the Treaty is such that it permits all of these things -- the development, the testing, and deployment of ABM systems. Such an interpretation of that treaty certainly cannot help achieve agreement.

What is the true position of the American administration with regard to the interpretation of this treaty? Will the U.S. abide by the Treaty of not? And certainly the results of your meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev will depend a great deal on that fact.

THE PRESIDENT: There are two varying interpretations of the treaty. There is an additional clause in the treaty that would seem to be more liberal than that paragraph 5 -- or clause 5. The other hand, we have made it plain that we are going to stay within a strict definition of the treaty. And what we are doing with regard to research -- and that would include testing -- is within the treaty.

Now, with regard to deployment, as I said earlier, no, we are doing what is within the treaty and which the Soviet Union has already been doing for quite some time, same kind of research and development. But, when it comes to deployment, I don't know what the Soviet Union was going to do when and if their research developed such a weapon, or still if it does. But I do know what we're going to do and I have stated it already. We would not deploy -- my -- it is not my purpose for deployment -- until we sit down with the other nations of the world, and those that have nuclear arsenals, and see if we cannot come to an agreement on which there will be deployment only if there is elimination of the nuclear weapons.

Now, you might say if we're going to eliminate the nuclear weapons, then why do we need the defense? Well, I repeat what I said earlier. We all know how to make them -- the weapons, so it is possible that some day a madman could arise in the world -- we were both allies in a war that came about because of such a madman -- and therefore, it would be like, in Geneva after World War I when the nations all got together and said no more poison gas, but we all kept our gasmasks. Well, this weapon, if such can be developed, would be today's gasmask. But we would want it for everyone and the terms for getting it, and the terms for our own deployment would be the elimination of the offensive weapons -- a switch to maintain trust and peace between us of having defense systems that gave us security, not the threat of annihilation -- that one or the other of us would annihilate the other with nuclear weapons.

So, we will not be violating this treaty at any time, because, as I say, it is not our purpose to go forward with deployment if and when such a weapon proved practical.

Q Mr. President, we've about run out of time unless you had something in conclusion you wanted to state.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I -- we haven't covered -- I guess I've filibustered on too many of these questions here with lengthy answers. I know you have more questions there. I'm sorry that we haven't time for them.

But I would just like to say that the Soviet Union and the United States -- well, not the Soviet Union, let us say Russia and the United States have been allies in two wars. The Soviet Union and the United States, allies in one, the last and greatest war, World War II. Americans and Russians died side by side, fighting the same enemy.

There are Americans buried on Soviet soil. And it just seems to me -- and what I look forward to in this meeting with the General Secretary -- is that people don't start wars, governments do. And I have a little thing here that I copied out of an article the other day and the author of the article uttered a very great truth. "Nations do not distrust each other because they are armed. They arm themselves because they distrust each other." Well, I hope that in the summit maybe we can find ways that we can prove by deed -- not just words, but by deeds -- that there is no need for distrust between us. And then we can stop punishing our people by using our wherewithal to build these arsenals of weapons instead of doing more things for the comfort of the people.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President, and --

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

(end of formal interview)

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(start of informal comments)

Q -- it's a pity, sir, too, that there can't be enough time to have your answers for all our questions --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, all right. Okay.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

Q Unfortunately, Mr. President, we cannot discuss with you the history of questions which we just asked already because we have sometimes a very different attitude of that. But no time.

Q As you know, the world is sort of different.

THE PRESIDENT: I was waiting for a question that would allow me to point out that, under the detente that we had for a few years, during which we signed the SALT I and the SALT II Treaties, the Soviet Union added over 7,000 warheads to its arsenal. And we have fewer than we had in 1969. And 3,800 of those were added to the arsenal after the signing of SALT II. So --

Q But --

Q But still you have more warheads --

THE PRESIDENT: No, we don't.

Q -- Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no we don't.

Q Yes, you have -- well, to 12,000 --

Q You know, it's an interesting phenomenon because in '79, after seven years of very severe -- I would say the -- researching in -- SALT II, the -- President Carter and other specialists told that there was a parity in strategic and military. And then you came to the power and they said -- you said it sounded that the Soviet Union is much ahead. Then, recently, in September, you said almost the same, though the Joint Chiefs of Staffs told this year that there is a parity. What is the contradiction?

THE PRESIDENT: No, there really isn't. Somebody might say that with the sense of that we have sufficient for a deterrent, that, in other words, we would have enough to make it uncomfortable if someone attacked us. But, no, your arsenal does out-count ours by a great number.

Q People say that -- (inaudible.) (Laughter.) The generals -- your generals say that they wouldn't --

Q Okay.

Q -- switch, you know, with our generals, your arsenal.

Q I would like to tell you also that those stories about dolls in Afghanistan. I was in Afghanistan there a little bit --

MR. SPEAKES: He's -- maybe we'll have another opportunity --

Q Yes, we hope so.

MR. SPEAKES: And he's got to go down and tell the General Secretary, through our press, what he's going to do.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President, and we wish you certainly success and good achievements in your meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. We hope for this.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

END 2:47 P.M. EST

RESPONSES TO PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED
WRITTEN QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE

Q: The forthcoming meeting between General Secretary Gorbachev and you, Mr. President, is for obvious reasons looked upon as an event of special importance. Both sides have stated their intention to make an effort to improve relations between our two countries, to better the overall international situation. The Soviet Union has, over a period of time, put forward a whole set of concrete proposals and has unilaterally taken steps in various areas directly aimed at achieving this goal. What is the U.S. for its part going to do?

THE PRESIDENT: I fully agree that my meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev has special significance, and I am personally looking forward to it very much. I sincerely hope that we will be able to put relations between our two countries on a safer and more secure course. I, for my part, will certainly do all I can to make that possible...

We of course study every Soviet proposal carefully and when we find them promising we are happy to say so. If, on the other hand, we find them one-sided in their effect, we explain why we feel as we do. At the same time we, too, have made concrete proposals -- dozens of them -- which also cover every sphere of our relationship, from the elimination of chemical weapons and resolution of regional conflicts to the expansion of contacts and exchanges, and we hope these receive the same careful attention that we give to Soviet proposals.

Let me give you a few examples. One thing that has created enormous tension in U.S.-Soviet relations over the last few years has been attempts to settle problems around the world by using military force. The resort to arms, whether it be in Afghanistan, Cambodia, or in Africa, has contributed nothing to the prospects for peace or the resolution of indigenous problems, and has only brought additional suffering to the peoples of these regions. This is also dangerous, and we need to find a way to stop attempts to solve problems by force. So I have proposed that both our countries encourage parties to these conflicts to lay down their arms and negotiate solutions -- and if they are willing to do that our countries should find a way to agree to support a peaceful solution and refrain from providing military support to the warring parties. And if peace can be achieved, the United States will contribute generously to an international effort to restore war-ravaged economies -- just as we did after the second world war, contributing to the recovery of friends and erstwhile foes alike, and as we have done on countless other occasions.

Both of our governments agree that our nuclear arsenals are much too large. We are both committed to radical arms reductions. So the United States has made concrete proposals for such reductions: to bring ballistic missile warheads down to 5,000 on each side, and to eliminate a whole category of intermediate-range missiles from our arsenals altogether. These have not been "take-it-or-leave-it" proposals. We are prepared to negotiate, since we know that negotiation is necessary if we are to reach a solution under which neither side feels threatened. We are willing to eliminate our advantages if you will agree to eliminate yours. The important thing is to begin reducing these terrible weapons in a way that both sides will feel secure, and to continue that process until we have eliminated them altogether.

Events of the past ten to fifteen years have greatly increased mistrust between our countries. If we are to solve the key problems in our relationship, we have to do something to restore confidence in dealing with each other. This requires better communication, more contact, and close attention to make sure that both parties fulfill agreements reached. That is why we have made literally 40 to 50 proposals to improve our working relationship, expand communication and build confidence. For example, we have proposed an agreement to cooperate on the peaceful use of space. The Apollo-Soyuz joint mission was a great success in 1975, and we should try to renew that sort of cooperation. We have also made several proposals for more direct contact by our military people. If they talked to each other more, they might find that at least some of their fears are unfounded. But most of all, ordinary people in both countries should have more contact, particularly our young people. The future, after all, belongs to them. I'd like to see us sending thousands of students to each other's country every year, to get to know each other, to learn from each other and -- most of all -- to come to understand that, even with our different philosophies, we can and must live in peace.

Obviously we are not going to solve all the differences between us at one meeting, but we would like to take some concrete steps forward. Above all, I hope that our meeting will give momentum to a genuine process of problem solving, and that we can agree on a course to take us toward a safer world for all - and growing cooperation between our countries.

QUESTION TWO

Q: The Soviet Union stands for peaceful coexistence with countries which have different social systems, including the U.S. In some of your statements, the point has been made that in spite of differences between our countries, it is necessary to avoid a military confrontation. In other words, we must learn how to live in peace. Thus, both sides recognize the fact that the issue of arms limitation and reduction is and will be determining in these relations. The special responsibility of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. for the fate of the world is an objective fact. What in your opinion can be achieved in the area of security in your meeting with Gorbachev?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I would say that we think all countries should live together in peace, whether they have the same or different social systems. Even if social systems are similar, this shouldn't give a country the right to use force against another.

But you are absolutely right when you say that we must learn to live in peace. As I have said many times, a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. And this means that our countries must not fight any type of war.

You are also right when you say that our countries bear a special responsibility before the world. This is the case not only because we possess enormous nuclear arsenals, but because as great powers, whether we like it or not, our example and actions affect all those around us.

Our relations involve not only negotiating new agreements, but abiding by past agreements as well. Often we are accused by your country of interfering in your "internal" affairs on such questions as human rights, but this is a case in point. Ten years ago we both became participants in the Helsinki Accords and committed ourselves to certain standards of conduct. We are living up to those commitments and expect others to do so also. Soviet-American relations affect as well regional conflicts, political relations among our friends and allies, and many other areas.

The fact that our countries have the largest and most destructive nuclear arsenals obliges us not only to make sure they are never used, but to lead the world toward the elimination of these awesome weapons.

I think that my meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev can start us on the road toward the goal our countries have set: the radical reduction of nuclear weapons and steps to achieve their complete elimination. We can do this by finding concrete ways to overcome roadblocks in the negotiating process and thus give a real impetus to our negotiators. Of course, we will also have to deal with other problems, because it will be very hard to make great progress in arms control unless we can also act to lower tensions, reduce the use and threat of force, and build confidence in our ability to deal constructively with each other.

QUESTION THREE

Q: As is well known, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. reached an understanding last January in Geneva that the top priority of the new negotiations must be the prevention of the arms race in space. But now, the American delegation in Geneva is trying to limit the discussion to consideration of the question of nuclear arms and is refusing to talk about the prevention of the arms race in space. How should we interpret this American position?

THE PRESIDENT: You have misstated the January agreement. Actually, our Foreign Ministers agreed to "work out effective agreements aimed at preventing an arms race in space and terminating it on earth, at limiting and reducing nuclear arms, and at strengthening strategic stability." Further, they agreed that the "subject of negotiations will be a complex of questions concerning space and nuclear arms--both strategic and medium range--with all these questions considered and resolved in their interrelationship."

Since your question reflects a misunderstanding of the United States position, let me review it for you:

First, we believe that the most threatening weapons facing mankind today are nuclear weapons of mass destruction. These are offensive weapons, and they exist today--in numbers that are much too high. Our most urgent task therefore is to begin to reduce them radically and to create conditions so that they can eventually be eliminated. Since most of these weapons pass through space to reach their targets, reducing them is as important to prevent an arms race in space as it is to terminate an arms race on earth.

As I noted earlier, we have made concrete, specific proposals to achieve this. Recently, your government finally made some counterproposals, and we will be responding in a genuine spirit of give-and-take in an effort to move toward practical solutions both countries can agree on.

Second, we believe that offensive and defensive systems are closely interrelated, and that these issues should be treated, as our Foreign Ministers agreed, as interrelated. Our proposals are fully consistent with this understanding. We are seeking right now with Soviet negotiators in Geneva a thorough discussion of how a balance of offensive and defensive systems could be achieved, and how -- if scientists are able to develop effective defenses in the future -- we might both use them to protect our countries and allies without threatening the other. And if we ever succeed in eliminating nuclear weapons, countries are going to require a defense against them, in case some madman gets his hands on some and tries to blackmail other countries.

Specifically, we have proposed:

--On strategic nuclear arms, a reduction of each side's nuclear forces down to 5,000 warheads on ballistic missiles. That would be a very dramatic lowering of force levels, in a way that would greatly enhance strategic stability. We have also offered to negotiate strict limits on other kinds of weapons. Because our force structures are different, and because the Soviet Union has complained about having to reconfigure its forces, we have offered to seek agreements which would balance these differing areas of American and Soviet strength.

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--On intermediate-range nuclear forces, we believe the best course is to eliminate that entire category of forces, which includes the 441 SS-20 missiles the Soviet Union has deployed, and our Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles. If this is not immediately acceptable, we have also offered an interim agreement which would establish an equal number of warheads on U.S. and Soviet missiles in this category, at the lowest possible level.

--In the area of space and defense, we are seeking to discuss with Soviet negotiators the possibility that new technology might allow both sides to carry out a transition to greater reliance on defensive weapons, rather than basing security on offensive nuclear forces.

So that there would be no misunderstandings about our research program on new defensive systems which is being carried out in full compliance with the ABM Treaty, I sent the director of our Strategic Defense research program to Geneva to brief Soviet negotiators. Unfortuntely, we have not had a comparable description of your research in this area, which we know is long-standing and quite extensive.

Frankly, I have difficulty understanding why some people have misunderstood and misinterpreted our position. The research we are conducting in the United States regarding strategic defense is in precisely the same areas as the research being conducted in the Soviet Union. There are only two differences: first the Soviet Union has been conducting research in many of these areas longer than we have, and is ahead in some. Second, we are openly discussing our program, because our political system requires open debate before such decisions are made. But these differences in approaches to policy decisions should not lead to erroneous conclusions. Both sides are involved in similar research, and there is nothing wrong in that.

However, this does make it rather hard for us to understand why we should be accused of all sorts of aggressive intentions when we are doing nothing more than you are. The important thing is for us to discuss these issues candidly.

In sum, what we are seeking is a balanced, fair, verifiable agreement -- or series of agreements -- that will permit us to do what was agreed in Geneva in January: to terminate the arms race on earth and prevent it in space. The United States has no "tricks" up its sleeve, and we have no desire to threaten the Soviet Union in any way. Frankly, if the Soviet Union would take a comparable attitude, we would be able to make very rapid progress toward an agreement.

QUESTION FOUR

Q: Mr. President, officials of your Administration claim that the U.S., in its international relations, stands for the forces of democracy. How can one reconcile statements of this kind with the actual deeds of the U.S.? If you take any current example, it seems that when a particular country wants to exercise its right to independent development -- whether it be in the Middle East, in Southern Africa, in Central America in Asia -- it is the U.S. in particular, which supports those who stand against the majority of the people, against legitimate governments.

THE PRESIDENT: Your assertion about U.S. actions is totally unfounded. From your question, one might think that the United States was engaged in a war in some other country and in so doing had set itself against the majority of the people who want self determination. I can assure you that this is not the case. I am proud, as are all Americans, that not a single American soldier is in combat anywhere in the world. If every country could say the same, we would truly live in a world of less tension and danger.

Yes, we are very supportive of democracy. It is the basis of our political system and our whole philosophy. Our nation was not founded on the basis of one ethnic group or culture, as are many other countries, but on the basis of the democratic ideal. For example we believe that governments are legitimate only if they are created by the people, and that they are subordinate to the people, who select in free elections those who govern them. But democracy is more than elections in which all who wish can compete. In our view there are many things that even properly elected governments have no right to do. No American government can restrict freedom of speech, or of religion, and no American government can tell its people where they must live or whether they can leave the country or not. These and the other individual freedoms enshrined in our Constitution are the most precious gift our forefathers bequeathed us and we will defend them so long as we exist as a nation.

Now this doesn't mean that we think we are perfect. Of course we are not. We have spent over 200 years trying to live up to our ideals and correct faults in our society, and we're still at it. It also doesn't mean that we think we have a right to impose our system on others. We don't, because we believe that every nation should have the right to determine its own way of life. But when we see other nations threatened from the outside by forces which would destroy their liberties and impose the rule of a minority by force of arms, we will help them resist that whenever we can. We would not be true to our democratic ideals if we did not.

We respond with force only as a last resort, and only when we or our Allies are the victims of aggression. For example, in World War II, we took a full and vigorous part in the successful fight against Hitlerism, even though our country was not invaded by the Nazis. We still remember our wartime alliance and the heroism the peoples of the Soviet Union displayed in that struggle. And we also remember that we never used our position as one of the victors to add territory or to attempt to dominate others. Rather we helped rebuild the devastated countries, friends and erstwhile foes alike, and helped foster democracy where there was once totalitarianism. Have we not all benefitted from the fact that Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany are today flourishing democracies, and strong pillars of a stable and humane world order? Well, the German and Japanese people deserve the most credit for this, but we believe we helped along the way.

In the areas you mention, we are heartened by trends we see, although there are still many troubling areas. In the southern part of Africa, Angola is torn by civil war, yet we have determined not to supply arms to either side, and to urge a peaceful settlement. In South Africa, the system of apartheid is repugnant to all Americans, but here as well we seek a peaceful solution and for many years we have refused to supply arms or police equipment to the South African Government. In Latin America, great progress in the transition from authoritarian to democratic societies has been made, and now on that continent there exist only four countries that do not have democratically elected governments. Since 1979 seven Latin American countries have made major strides from authoritarian to democratic systems. Over the years, we have been a leading voice for decolonization and have used our influence with our closest friends and allies to hasten this process. We are gratified by the nearly completed process of decolonization, and take pride in our role.

I should emphasize that our aim has been to encourage the process of democratization through peaceful means. And not just the American government, but the American people as a whole have supported this process with actions and deeds.

American society has long been characterized by its spirit of volunteerism and by its compassion for the less fortunate. At home, we are proud of our record of support for those who cannot manage for themselves. It is not simply that the government, but the American people, through a host of voluntary organizations, who bring help to the needy--the victims of floods and fires, the old, the infirm and the handicapped. Americans have been no less generous in giving to other peoples. I remember the efforts of Herbert Hoover in organizing the American Relief effort to feed Soviet victims of famine in the 1920's, and these efforts continue to this day, whether it be food for the victims of famine in Ethiopia, or of earthquakes in Mexico.

QUESTION FIVE

Q: The Soviet Union has unilaterally taken a series of major steps. It has pledged not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. It has undertaken a moratorium on any kind of nuclear tests. It has stopped deployment of intermediate-range missiles in the European part of its territory and has even reduced their number. Why hasn't the U.S. done anything comparable?

THE PRESIDENT: Actually, we have frequently taken steps intended to lower tension and to show our good will, though these were rarely reciprocated. Immediately after World War II, when we were the only country with nuclear weapons, we proposed giving them up altogether to an international authority, so that no country would have such destructive power at its disposal. What a pity that this idea was not accepted!

Not only did we not use our nuclear monopoly against others, we signalled our peaceful intent by demobilizing our armed forces in an extraordinarily rapid way. At the end of the war in 1945, we had 12 million men under arms, but by the beginning of 1948 we had reduced our forces to one-tenth of that number, 1.2 million. Since the 1960's we have unilaterally cut back our own nuclear arsenal: we now have considerably fewer weapons than in 1969, and only one third of the destructive power which we had at that time.

The United States and the NATO allies have repeatedly said that we will never use our arms, conventional or nuclear, unless we are attacked.

Let me add something that might not be widely known in the Soviet Union. In agreement with the NATO countries, the United States since 1979 has removed from Europe well over 1,000 nuclear warheads. When all of our withdrawals have been completed, the total number of warheads withdrawn will be over 2,400. That's a withdrawal of about 5 nuclear weapons for every intermediate-range missile we plan to deploy. It will bring our nuclear forces in Europe to the lowest level in some twenty years. We have seen no comparable Soviet restraint.

If the Soviet Union is now reducing its intermediate range missiles in Europe, that's a long overdue step. The Soviet Union has now deployed 441 SS-20 missiles, each with three warheads--that is 1323 warheads. I don't have to remind you that this Soviet deployment began when NATO had no comparable systems in Europe. We first attempted to negotiate an end to these systems, but when we could not reach agreement, NATO proceeded with a limited response which will take place gradually. Today, the Soviet Union commands an advantage in warheads of 7 to 1 on missiles already deployed. Our position remains as it has always been, that it would be better to negotiate an end to all of these types of missiles. But even if our hopes for an agreement are disappointed and NATO has to go to full deployment, this will only be a maximum of 572 single-warhead missiles.

Moreover, President Carter cancelled both the enhanced-radiation warhead and the B-1 bomber in 1978, and the Soviet Union made no corresponding move. In fact, when asked what the Soviet Union would reduce in response, one of your officials said, "We are not philanthropists." In 1977 and 1978 the United States also tried to negotiate a ban on developing anti-satellite weapons. The Soviet Union refused a ban, and proceeded to develop and test an anti-satellite weapon. Having already established an operational anti-satellite system, the Soviet Union now proposes a "freeze" before the U.S. can test its own system. Obviously, that sort of "freeze" does not look very fair to us; if the shoe were on the other foot, it wouldn't look very fair to you either.

The issues between our two countries are of such importance that the positions of each government should be communicated accurately to the people of both countries. In this process, the media of both countries have an important role to play. We should not attempt to "score points" against each other. And the media should not distort our positions. We are committed to examining every Soviet proposal with care, seeking to find areas of agreement. It is important that the Soviet government do the same in regard to our proposals.

The important thing is that we both deal seriously with each other's proposals, and make a genuine effort to bridge our differences in a way which serves the interests of both countries and the world as a whole. It is in this spirit that I will be approaching my meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev.

END

#9252

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release Monday, November 4, 1985

INTERVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT
BY SOVIET NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

October 31, 1985

The Oval Office

2:05 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: May I welcome you all -- it's a pleasure here. And I appreciate very much the opportunity to be able to speak, in a sense, to the people of your country. I've always believed that a lot of the ills of the world would disappear if people talked more to each other instead of about each other. So I look forward to this meeting and welcome your questions.

Q Mr. President, we appreciate greatly this opportunity to ask to you personally questions after you kindly answered our written questions. We hope that they will be instructive and -- well, facilitate success for your forthcoming meeting with our leader.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm looking forward to that meeting. I'm hopeful and optimistic that maybe we can make some concrete achievements there.

Q We are planning to ask our questions in Russian. I don't think -- I think you don't mind.

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q Mr. President, we have become acquainted with the answers which you furnished to our written questions. They basically reflect the old U.S. proposals. They have been evaluated -- which have been evaluated by the Soviet side as being unbalanced and one-sided in favor of the U.S. side. And you have not answered concerning the new Soviet proposal. And this reply to the new Soviet proposal is what is of greatest interest before the meeting in Geneva.

THE PRESIDENT: When this interview is over, later this afternoon at 3:00 p.m., I will be making a statement to our own press -- well, to all the press -- to the effect that we have been studying the Soviet proposal and tomorrow in Geneva, our team at the disarmament conference will be presenting our reply which will be a proposal that reflects the thinking of the original proposal that we had, but also of this latest. Indeed, it will show that we are accepting some of the figures that were in this counter-proposal by the Secretary General.

There are some points in which we have offered compromises between some figures of theirs and some of ours. But that will all be -- all those figures will be available tomorrow, and I will simply be stating today that we have -- that that is going to take place tomorrow in Geneva. But it is a detailed counter-proposal that -- to a counter-proposal, as is proper in negotiations, that will reflect, as I say, the acceptance on our part of some of this latest proposal as well as compromises with earlier figures that we'd proposed.

MORE

Q I would like to have another question for you, Mr. President. According to a survey taken by The Washington Post and ABC on Tuesday it was found that 74 percent of the American people as compared to 20 percent said that they would like the U.S. and the Soviet Union to reduce their nuclear arsenals and not to have the U.S. develop space weapons. This seems to be the choice which the American people have made. It seems clear that without stopping the development of weapons in space there can be no reduction of nuclear weapons. This is the position of the Soviet side. So how then will you react, Mr. President, to this opinion expressed by the American public?

THE PRESIDENT: For one thing, it is based on a misconception. The use of the term "Star Wars" came about when one political figure in America used that to describe what it is we are researching and studying, and then our press picked it up and it has been world-wide. We're not talking about Star Wars at all. We are talking about seeing if there isn't a defensive weapon that does not kill people, but that simply makes it impossible for nuclear missiles, once fired out of their silos, to reach their objective -- to intercept those weapons.

Now it is also true that, to show that this is a misconception on the part of the people when you use the wrong terms, not too long ago there was a survey taken, a poll of our people, and they asked them about Star Wars. And similar to the reaction in this poll, only about 30 percent of the people in our country favored it, and the rest didn't. But in the same poll they then described, as I have tried to describe, what it is we are researching -- a strategic defensive shield that doesn't kill people, but would allow us one day -- all of us -- to reduce -- get rid of nuclear weapons. And over 90 percent of the American people favored our going forward with such a program.

Now this is one of the things that we will discuss. We are for, and have for several years now, been advocating a reduction in the number of nuclear weapons. It is uncivilized on the part of all of us to be sitting here with the only deterrent to war -- offensive nuclear weapons that in such numbers that both of us could threaten the other with the death and the annihilation of millions and millions of each other's people.

And so that is the deterrent that is supposed to keep us from firing these missiles at each other. Wouldn't it make a lot more sense if we could find -- that as there has been in history for every weapon a defensive weapon. Weapon isn't the term to use for what we are researching. We are researching for something that could make it, as I say, virtually impossible for these missiles to reach their targets. And if we find such a thing, my proposal is that we make it available to all the world. We don't just keep it for our own advantage.

Q Mr. President, with the situation as it stands today in the international arena, attempts to create such a space shield will inevitably lead to suspicion on the other side that the country creating such a space shield will be in a position to make a first strike. This is a type of statement whose truth is agreed to by many people. Now, it's apparent that the American people have indicated their choice, that if it comes down to a choice between the creation of such a space system and the decrease in nuclear arms, they prefer a decrease in nuclear arms. So, it seems to be a realistic evaluation on the part of the American people. And I would like to ask how the American government would react to the feelings of the American people in this regard.

THE PRESIDENT: In the first place, yes, if someone was developing such a defensive system and going to couple it with their own nuclear weapons -- offensive weapons -- yes, that could put them in a position where they might be more likely to dare a first strike. But your country, your government has been working on this same kind of a plan beginning years before we ever started working on it, which, I think, would indicate that maybe we should be a little suspicious that they want it for themselves.

But I have said, and am prepared to say at the summit, that if such a weapon is possible, and our research reveals that, then, our move would be to say to all the world, "Here, it is available." We won't put this weapon -- or this system in place, this defensive system, until we do away with our nuclear missiles, our offensive missiles. But we will make it available to other countries, including the Soviet Union, to do the same thing.

Now, just what -- whichever one of us comes up first with that defensive system, the Soviet Union or us or anyone else -- what a picture if we say no one will claim a monopoly on it. And we make that offer now. It will be available for the Soviet Union, as well as ourselves.

And if the Soviet Union and the United States both say we will eliminate our offensive weapons, we will put in this defensive thing in case some place in the world a madman some day tries to create these weapons again -- nuclear weapons -- because, remember, we all know how to make them now. So, you can't do away with that information. But we would all be safe knowing that if such a madman project is ever attempted there isn't any of us that couldn't defend ourselves against it.

So, I can assure you now we are not going to try and monopolize this, if such a weapon is developed, for a first-strike capability.

Q Mr. President, I would like to ask you about some of the matters which concern mutual suspicion and distrust. And you indicated at your speech at the United Nations that the U.S. does not extend -- does not have troops in other countries -- but there are -- has not occupied other countries. But there are 550,000 troops -- military personnel outside of the United States. In 32 countries, there are 1,500 military bases. So, one can see in this way which country it is that has become surrounded. And you have agreed that the Soviet Union has the right to look-out for the interest of its security. And it is inevitable that the Soviet Union must worry about these bases which have -- which are around it.

The Soviet Union, in turn, has not done the same. So, how do you in this respect anticipate to create this balance of security which you have spoken about?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I can't respond to your exact numbers there that you've given. I don't have them right at my fingertips as to what they are. But we're talking about two different things -- we're talking about occupying a country with foreign troops, such as we see the Soviet Union doing in Afghanistan, and there are other places, too -- Angola, South Yemen, Ethiopia.

Yes, we have troops in bases. The bulk of those would be in the NATO forces -- the alliance in Europe along the NATO line -- there in response to even superior numbers of Warsaw pact troops that are aligned against them. And the United States, as one of the members of the alliance, contributes troops to that NATO force.

The same is true in Korea in which, at the invitation of the South Korean government, we have troops to help them there because of the demilitarized zone and the threatening nature of North Korea, which attacked them without warning. And that was not an American war, even though we provided the most of the men. That war was fought under the flag of the United Nations. The United Nations found North Korea guilty of aggression in violation of the Charter of the U.N. And, finally, South Korea was defended and the North Koreans were defeated. But they still have maintained a sizeable, threatening offensive force.

Other places -- we have bases in the far Pacific; we've had them for many years in the Philippines. We lease those -- those are bases we rent. In fact, we even have a base that is leased on Cuba that was there long before there was a Castro in Cuba -- a naval base. But this, I think, is a far cry from occupying other countries, including the nations in the Warsaw pact. They never were allowed the self-determination that was agreed to in the Yalta Treaty -- the end of World War II.

So, I think my statement still goes -- that there is a difference in occupation and a difference in having bases where they are there in a noncombat situation, and many where they are requested by the parent country.

Q If there's a referendum and the Cuban people decide that the base at Guantanamo should be evacuated, would it be evacuated?

THE PRESIDENT: No, because the lease for that was made many years ago and it still has many years to run, and we're perfectly legal in our right to be there. It is fenced off. There is no contact with the people or the main island of Cuba at all.

Q Mr. President, you have mentioned Afghanistan. I would like to say that in Afghanistan Soviet troops are there at the invitation of the Afghan government to defend the Afghan revolution against the incursions of forces from abroad that are funded and supported by the United States.

In the United Nations, and in your written replies to our questions, you have indicated that the United States has not attempted to use force, but has fostered the process of democracy by peaceful means. How does this reply fit in with the use of force by the United States in many countries abroad, beginning with Vietnam, where seven million tons of weapons were dropped -- seven million tons more than were in the Second World War, and, also, Grenada? I ask this not to dwell on the past, but simply to clarify this issue.

THE PRESIDENT: And it can be clarified, yes.

First, of all, with regard to Afghanistan, the government which invited the Soviet troops in didn't have any choice because the government was put there by the Soviet Union and put there with the force of arms to guarantee. And, in fact, the man who was the head of that government is the second choice. The first one wasn't satisfactory to the Soviet Union and they came in with armed forces and threw him out and installed their second choice, who continues to be the governor.

Now, there are no outside forces fighting in there. But, as a matter of fact, I think there are some things that, if they were more widely known, would shock everyone worldwide. For example, one of the weapons being used against the people of Afghanistan consists of toys -- dolls, little toy trucks, things that are appealing to children. They're scattered in the air. But when the children pick them up, their hands are blown off. They are what we call booby-traps. They're like land mines. This is hardly consistent with the kind of armed warfare that has occurred between nations.

Vietnam? Yes, when Vietnam -- or let's say, French Indochina -- was given up as a colony, an international forum in Geneva, meeting in Geneva, established a North Vietnam and a South Vietnam. The North Vietnam was already governed by a communist group and had a government in place during the Japanese occupation of French Indochina. South Vietnam had to start and create a government.

We were invited into -- with instructors, to help them establish something they had never had before, which was a military. And our instructors went in in civilian clothes. Their families went with them. And they started with a country that didn't have any military schools or things of this kind to create an armed force for the government of South Vietnam.

They were harrassed by terrorists from the very beginning. Finally, it was necessary to send the families home. Schools were being bombed. There was even a practice of rolling bombs down the aisles of movie theaters and killing countless people that were simply enjoying a movie. And finally, changes were made that our people were allowed to arm themselves for their own protection.

And then, it is true, that President Kennedy sent in a unit of troops to provide protection. This grew into the war of Vietnam. At no time did the allied force -- and it was allied. There were more in there than just American troops. -- At no time did we try for victory. Maybe that's what was wrong. We simply tried to maintain a demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam. And we know the result that has occurred now.

And it is all one state of Vietnam. It was conquered in violation of a treaty that was signed in Paris between North and South Vietnam. We left South Vietnam, and North Vietnam swept down, conquered the country, as I say, in violation of a treaty.

But this is true of almost any of the other places that you mentioned. We -- I've talked so long I've forgotten some of the other examples that you used.

Q Grenada.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q Grenada.

THE PRESIDENT: Grenada. Ah. We had some several hundred young American medical students there. Our intelligence revealed that they were threatened as potential hostages and the government of Grenada requested help, military help, not only from the United States, but from the other Commonwealth nations -- island nations in the Caribbean -- from Jamaica, from Dominica, a number of these others. They in turn relayed the request to us because they did not have armed forces in sufficient strength.

And, yes, we landed. And we found warehouses filled with weapons, and they were of Soviet manufacture. We found hundreds of Cubans there. There was a brief engagement. We freed the island. And in a very short time, our troops came home, after rescuing our students, rescuing the island. There are no American troops there now. Grenada has set up a democracy and is ruling itself by virtue of an election that was held shortly thereafter among the people, and of which we played no part.

And there is the contrast: The Soviet troops have been in Afghanistan for six years now, fighting all that time. We did what we were asked to do -- the request of the government of Grenada -- and came home.

Q Mr. President, with relation to the ABM Treaty, which was signed in 1972, Article V of that treaty indicates, and I quote, "that each side will not develop a test or deploy anti-ballistic missile components or systems which are sea-based, air-based, space-based or mobile land-based. Now, some administration representatives say that the Treaty is such that it permits all of these things -- the development, the testing, and deployment of ABM systems. Such an interpretation of that treaty certainly cannot help achieve agreement.

What is the true position of the American administration with regard to the interpretation of this treaty? Will the U.S. abide by the Treaty of not? And certainly the results of your meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev will depend a great deal on that fact.

THE PRESIDENT: There are two varying interpretations of the treaty. There is an additional clause in the treaty that would seem to be more liberal than that paragraph 5 -- or clause 5. The other hand, we have made it plain that we are going to stay within a strict definition of the treaty. And what we are doing with regard to research -- and that would include testing -- is within the treaty.

Now, with regard to deployment, as I said earlier, no, we are doing what is within the treaty and which the Soviet Union has already been doing for quite some time, same kind of research and development. But, when it comes to deployment, I don't know what the Soviet Union was going to do when and if their research developed such a weapon, or still if it does. But I do know what we're going to do and I have stated it already. We would not deploy -- my -- it is not my purpose for deployment -- until we sit down with the other nations of the world, and those that have nuclear arsenals, and see if we cannot come to an agreement on which there will be deployment only if there is elimination of the nuclear weapons.

Now, you might say if we're going to eliminate the nuclear weapons, then why do we need the defense? Well, I repeat what I said earlier. We all know how to make them -- the weapons, so it is possible that some day a madman could arise in the world -- we were both allies in a war that came about because of such a madman -- and therefore, it would be like, in Geneva after World War I when the nations all got together and said no more poison gas, but we all kept our gasmasks. Well, this weapon, if such can be developed, would be today's gasmask. But we would want it for everyone and the terms for getting it, and the terms for our own deployment would be the elimination of the offensive weapons -- a switch to maintain trust and peace between us of having defense systems that gave us security, not the threat of annihilation -- that one or the other of us would annihilate the other with nuclear weapons.

So, we will not be violating this treaty at any time, because, as I say, it is not our purpose to go forward with deployment if and when such a weapon proved practical.

Q Mr. President, we've about run out of time unless you had something in conclusion you wanted to state.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I -- we haven't covered -- I guess I've filibustered on too many of these questions here with lengthy answers. I know you have more questions there. I'm sorry that we haven't time for them.

But I would just like to say that the Soviet Union and the United States -- well, not the Soviet Union, let us say Russia and the United States have been allies in two wars. The Soviet Union and the United States, allies in one, the last and greatest war, World War II. Americans and Russians died side by side, fighting the same enemy.

There are Americans buried on Soviet soil. And it just seems to me -- and what I look forward to in this meeting with the General Secretary -- is that people don't start wars, governments do. And I have a little thing here that I copied out of an article the other day and the author of the article uttered a very great truth. "Nations do not distrust each other because they are armed. They arm themselves because they distrust each other." Well, I hope that in the summit maybe we can find ways that we can prove by deed -- not just words, but by deeds -- that there is no need for distrust between us. And then we can stop punishing our people by using our wherewithal to build these arsenals of weapons instead of doing more things for the comfort of the people.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President, and --

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

(end of formal interview)

*****

(start of informal comments)

Q -- it's a pity, sir, too, that there can't be enough time to have your answers for all our questions --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, all right. Okay.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

Q Unfortunately, Mr. President, we cannot discuss with you the history of questions which we just asked already because we have sometimes a very different attitude of that. But no time.

Q As you know, the world is sort of different.

THE PRESIDENT: I was waiting for a question that would allow me to point out that, under the detente that we had for a few years, during which we signed the SALT I and the SALT II Treaties, the Soviet Union added over 7,000 warheads to its arsenal. And we have fewer than we had in 1969. And 3,800 of those were added to the arsenal after the signing of SALT II. So --

Q But --

Q But still you have more warheads --

THE PRESIDENT: No, we don't.

Q -- Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, no we don't.

Q Yes, you have -- well, to 12,000 --

Q You know, it's an interesting phenomenon because in '79, after seven years of very severe -- I would say the -- researching in -- SALT II, the -- President Carter and other specialists told that there was a parity in strategic and military. And then you came to the power and they said -- you said it sounded that the Soviet Union is much ahead. Then, recently, in September, you said almost the same, though the Joint Chiefs of Staffs told this year that there is a parity. What is the contradiction?

THE PRESIDENT: No, there really isn't. Somebody might say that with the sense of that we have sufficient for a deterrent, that, in other words, we would have enough to make it uncomfortable if someone attacked us. But, no, your arsenal does out-count ours by a great number.

Q People say that -- (inaudible.) (Laughter.) The generals -- your generals say that they wouldn't --

Q Okay.

Q -- switch, you know, with our generals, your arsenal.

Q I would like to tell you also that those stories about dolls in Afghanistan. I was in Afghanistan there a little bit --

MR. SPEAKES: He's -- maybe we'll have another opportunity --

Q Yes, we hope so.

MR. SPEAKES: And he's got to go down and tell the General Secretary, through our press, what he's going to do.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President, and we wish you certainly success and good achievements in your meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. We hope for this.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

END 2:47 P.M. EST

RESPONSES TO PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED
WRITTEN QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE

Q: The forthcoming meeting between General Secretary Gorbachev and you, Mr. President, is for obvious reasons looked upon as an event of special importance. Both sides have stated their intention to make an effort to improve relations between our two countries, to better the overall international situation. The Soviet Union has, over a period of time, put forward a whole set of concrete proposals and has unilaterally taken steps in various areas directly aimed at achieving this goal. What is the U.S. for its part going to do?

THE PRESIDENT: I fully agree that my meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev has special significance, and I am personally looking forward to it very much. I sincerely hope that we will be able to put relations between our two countries on a safer and more secure course. I, for my part, will certainly do all I can to make that possible...

We of course study every Soviet proposal carefully and when we find them promising we are happy to say so. If, on the other hand, we find them one-sided in their effect, we explain why we feel as we do. At the same time we, too, have made concrete proposals -- dozens of them -- which also cover every sphere of our relationship, from the elimination of chemical weapons and resolution of regional conflicts to the expansion of contacts and exchanges, and we hope these receive the same careful attention that we give to Soviet proposals.

Let me give you a few examples. One thing that has created enormous tension in U.S.-Soviet relations over the last few years has been attempts to settle problems around the world by using military force. The resort to arms, whether it be in Afghanistan, Cambodia, or in Africa, has contributed nothing to the prospects for peace or the resolution of indigenous problems, and has only brought additional suffering to the peoples of these regions. This is also dangerous, and we need to find a way to stop attempts to solve problems by force. So I have proposed that both our countries encourage parties to these conflicts to lay down their arms and negotiate solutions -- and if they are willing to do that our countries should find a way to agree to support a peaceful solution and refrain from providing military support to the warring parties. And if peace can be achieved, the United States will contribute generously to an international effort to restore war-ravaged economies -- just as we did after the second world war, contributing to the recovery of friends and erstwhile foes alike, and as we have done on countless other occasions.

Both of our governments agree that our nuclear arsenals are much too large. We are both committed to radical arms reductions. So the United States has made concrete proposals for such reductions: to bring ballistic missile warheads down to 5,000 on each side, and to eliminate a whole category of intermediate-range missiles from our arsenals altogether. These have not been "take-it-or-leave-it" proposals. We are prepared to negotiate, since we know that negotiation is necessary if we are to reach a solution under which neither side feels threatened. We are willing to eliminate our advantages if you will agree to eliminate yours. The important thing is to begin reducing these terrible weapons in a way that both sides will feel secure, and to continue that process until we have eliminated them altogether.

Events of the past ten to fifteen years have greatly increased mistrust between our countries. If we are to solve the key problems in our relationship, we have to do something to restore confidence in dealing with each other. This requires better communication, more contact, and close attention to make sure that both parties fulfill agreements reached. That is why we have made literally 40 to 50 proposals to improve our working relationship, expand communication and build confidence. For example, we have proposed an agreement to cooperate on the peaceful use of space. The Apollo-Soyuz joint mission was a great success in 1975, and we should try to renew that sort of cooperation. We have also made several proposals for more direct contact by our military people. If they talked to each other more, they might find that at least some of their fears are unfounded. But most of all, ordinary people in both countries should have more contact, particularly our young people. The future, after all, belongs to them. I'd like to see us sending thousands of students to each other's country every year, to get to know each other, to learn from each other and -- most of all -- to come to understand that, even with our different philosophies, we can and must live in peace.

Obviously we are not going to solve all the differences between us at one meeting, but we would like to take some concrete steps forward. Above all, I hope that our meeting will give momentum to a genuine process of problem solving, and that we can agree on a course to take us toward a safer world for all - and growing cooperation between our countries.

QUESTION TWO

Q: The Soviet Union stands for peaceful coexistence with countries which have different social systems, including the U.S. In some of your statements, the point has been made that in spite of differences between our countries, it is necessary to avoid a military confrontation. In other words, we must learn how to live in peace. Thus, both sides recognize the fact that the issue of arms limitation and reduction is and will be determining in these relations. The special responsibility of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. for the fate of the world is an objective fact. What in your opinion can be achieved in the area of security in your meeting with Gorbachev?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I would say that we think all countries should live together in peace, whether they have the same or different social systems. Even if social systems are similar, this shouldn't give a country the right to use force against another.

But you are absolutely right when you say that we must learn to live in peace. As I have said many times, a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. And this means that our countries must not fight any type of war.

You are also right when you say that our countries bear a special responsibility before the world. This is the case not only because we possess enormous nuclear arsenals, but because as great powers, whether we like it or not, our example and actions affect all those around us.

Our relations involve not only negotiating new agreements, but abiding by past agreements as well. Often we are accused by your country of interfering in your "internal" affairs on such questions as human rights, but this is a case in point. Ten years ago we both became participants in the Helsinki Accords and committed ourselves to certain standards of conduct. We are living up to those commitments and expect others to do so also. Soviet-American relations affect as well regional conflicts, political relations among our friends and allies, and many other areas.

The fact that our countries have the largest and most destructive nuclear arsenals obliges us not only to make sure they are never used, but to lead the world toward the elimination of these awesome weapons.

I think that my meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev can start us on the road toward the goal our countries have set: the radical reduction of nuclear weapons and steps to achieve their complete elimination. We can do this by finding concrete ways to overcome roadblocks in the negotiating process and thus give a real impetus to our negotiators. Of course, we will also have to deal with other problems, because it will be very hard to make great progress in arms control unless we can also act to lower tensions, reduce the use and threat of force, and build confidence in our ability to deal constructively with each other.

QUESTION THREE

Q: As is well known, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. reached an understanding last January in Geneva that the top priority of the new negotiations must be the prevention of the arms race in space. But now, the American delegation in Geneva is trying to limit the discussion to consideration of the question of nuclear arms and is refusing to talk about the prevention of the arms race in space. How should we interpret this American position?

THE PRESIDENT: You have misstated the January agreement. Actually, our Foreign Ministers agreed to "work out effective agreements aimed at preventing an arms race in space and terminating it on earth, at limiting and reducing nuclear arms, and at strengthening strategic stability." Further, they agreed that the "subject of negotiations will be a complex of questions concerning space and nuclear arms--both strategic and medium range--with all these questions considered and resolved in their interrelationship."

Since your question reflects a misunderstanding of the United States position, let me review it for you:

First, we believe that the most threatening weapons facing mankind today are nuclear weapons of mass destruction. These are offensive weapons, and they exist today--in numbers that are much too high. Our most urgent task therefore is to begin to reduce them radically and to create conditions so that they can eventually be eliminated. Since most of these weapons pass through space to reach their targets, reducing them is as important to prevent an arms race in space as it is to terminate an arms race on earth.

As I noted earlier, we have made concrete, specific proposals to achieve this. Recently, your government finally made some counterproposals, and we will be responding in a genuine spirit of give-and-take in an effort to move toward practical solutions both countries can agree on.

Second, we believe that offensive and defensive systems are closely interrelated, and that these issues should be treated, as our Foreign Ministers agreed, as interrelated. Our proposals are fully consistent with this understanding. We are seeking right now with Soviet negotiators in Geneva a thorough discussion of how a balance of offensive and defensive systems could be achieved, and how -- if scientists are able to develop effective defenses in the future -- we might both use them to protect our countries and allies without threatening the other. And if we ever succeed in eliminating nuclear weapons, countries are going to require a defense against them, in case some madman gets his hands on some and tries to blackmail other countries.

Specifically, we have proposed:

--On strategic nuclear arms, a reduction of each side's nuclear forces down to 5,000 warheads on ballistic missiles. That would be a very dramatic lowering of force levels, in a way that would greatly enhance strategic stability. We have also offered to negotiate strict limits on other kinds of weapons. Because our force structures are different, and because the Soviet Union has complained about having to reconfigure its forces, we have offered to seek agreements which would balance these differing areas of American and Soviet strength.

--On intermediate-range nuclear forces, we believe the best course is to eliminate that entire category of forces, which includes the 441 SS-20 missiles the Soviet Union has deployed, and our Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles. If this is not immediately acceptable, we have also offered an interim agreement which would establish an equal number of warheads on U.S. and Soviet missiles in this category, at the lowest possible level.

--In the area of space and defense, we are seeking to discuss with Soviet negotiators the possibility that new technology might allow both sides to carry out a transition to greater reliance on defensive weapons, rather than basing security on offensive nuclear forces.

So that there would be no misunderstandings about our research program on new defensive systems which is being carried out in full compliance with the ABM Treaty, I sent the director of our Strategic Defense research program to Geneva to brief Soviet negotiators. Unfortuntely, we have not had a comparable description of your research in this area, which we know is long-standing and quite extensive.

Frankly, I have difficulty understanding why some people have misunderstood and misinterpreted our position. The research we are conducting in the United States regarding strategic defense is in precisely the same areas as the research being conducted in the Soviet Union. There are only two differences: first the Soviet Union has been conducting research in many of these areas longer than we have, and is ahead in some. Second, we are openly discussing our program, because our political system requires open debate before such decisions are made. But these differences in approaches to policy decisions should not lead to erroneous conclusions. Both sides are involved in similar research, and there is nothing wrong in that.

However, this does make it rather hard for us to understand why we should be accused of all sorts of aggressive intentions when we are doing nothing more than you are. The important thing is for us to discuss these issues candidly.

In sum, what we are seeking is a balanced, fair, verifiable agreement -- or series of agreements -- that will permit us to do what was agreed in Geneva in January: to terminate the arms race on earth and prevent it in space. The United States has no "tricks" up its sleeve, and we have no desire to threaten the Soviet Union in any way. Frankly, if the Soviet Union would take a comparable attitude, we would be able to make very rapid progress toward an agreement.

QUESTION FOUR

Q: Mr. President, officials of your Administration claim that the U.S., in its international relations, stands for the forces of democracy. How can one reconcile statements of this kind with the actual deeds of the U.S.? If you take any current example, it seems that when a particular country wants to exercise its right to independent development -- whether it be in the Middle East, in Southern Africa, in Central America in Asia -- it is the U.S. in particular, which supports those who stand against the majority of the people, against legitimate governments.

THE PRESIDENT: Your assertion about U.S. actions is totally unfounded. From your question, one might think that the United States was engaged in a war in some other country and in so doing had set itself against the majority of the people who want self determination. I can assure you that this is not the case. I am proud, as are all Americans, that not a single American soldier is in combat anywhere in the world. If every country could say the same, we would truly live in a world of less tension and danger.

Yes, we are very supportive of democracy. It is the basis of our political system and our whole philosophy. Our nation was not founded on the basis of one ethnic group or culture, as are many other countries, but on the basis of the democratic ideal. For example we believe that governments are legitimate only if they are created by the people, and that they are subordinate to the people, who select in free elections those who govern them. But democracy is more than elections in which all who wish can compete. In our view there are many things that even properly elected governments have no right to do. No American government can restrict freedom of speech, or of religion, and no American government can tell its people where they must live or whether they can leave the country or not. These and the other individual freedoms enshrined in our Constitution are the most precious gift our forefathers bequeathed us and we will defend them so long as we exist as a nation.

Now this doesn't mean that we think we are perfect. Of course we are not. We have spent over 200 years trying to live up to our ideals and correct faults in our society, and we're still at it. It also doesn't mean that we think we have a right to impose our system on others. We don't, because we believe that every nation should have the right to determine its own way of life. But when we see other nations threatened from the outside by forces which would destroy their liberties and impose the rule of a minority by force of arms, we will help them resist that whenever we can. We would not be true to our democratic ideals if we did not.

We respond with force only as a last resort, and only when we or our Allies are the victims of aggression. For example, in World War II, we took a full and vigorous part in the successful fight against Hitlerism, even though our country was not invaded by the Nazis. We still remember our wartime alliance and the heroism the peoples of the Soviet Union displayed in that struggle. And we also remember that we never used our position as one of the victors to add territory or to attempt to dominate others. Rather we helped rebuild the devastated countries, friends and erstwhile foes alike, and helped foster democracy where there was once totalitarianism. Have we not all benefitted from the fact that Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany are today flourishing democracies, and strong pillars of a stable and humane world order? Well, the German and Japanese people deserve the most credit for this, but we believe we helped along the way.

In the areas you mention, we are heartened by trends we see, although there are still many troubling areas. In the southern part of Africa, Angola is torn by civil war, yet we have determined not to supply arms to either side, and to urge a peaceful settlement. In South Africa, the system of apartheid is repugnant to all Americans, but here as well we seek a peaceful solution and for many years we have refused to supply arms or police equipment to the South African Government. In Latin America, great progress in the transition from authoritarian to democratic societies has been made, and now on that continent there exist only four countries that do not have democratically elected governments. Since 1979 seven Latin American countries have made major strides from authoritarian to democratic systems. Over the years, we have been a leading voice for decolonization and have used our influence with our closest friends and allies to hasten this process. We are gratified by the nearly completed process of decolonization, and take pride in our role.

I should emphasize that our aim has been to encourage the process of democratization through peaceful means. And not just the American government, but the American people as a whole have supported this process with actions and deeds.

American society has long been characterized by its spirit of volunteerism and by its compassion for the less fortunate. At home, we are proud of our record of support for those who cannot manage for themselves. It is not simply that the government, but the American people, through a host of voluntary organizations, who bring help to the needy--the victims of floods and fires, the old, the infirm and the handicapped. Americans have been no less generous in giving to other peoples. I remember the efforts of Herbert Hoover in organizing the American Relief effort to feed Soviet victims of famine in the 1920's, and these efforts continue to this day, whether it be food for the victims of famine in Ethiopia, or of earthquakes in Mexico.

QUESTION FIVE

Q: The Soviet Union has unilaterally taken a series of major steps. It has pledged not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. It has undertaken a moratorium on any kind of nuclear tests. It has stopped deployment of intermediate-range missiles in the European part of its territory and has even reduced their number. Why hasn't the U.S. done anything comparable?

THE PRESIDENT: Actually, we have frequently taken steps intended to lower tension and to show our good will, though these were rarely reciprocated. Immediately after World War II, when we were the only country with nuclear weapons, we proposed giving them up altogether to an international authority, so that no country would have such destructive power at its disposal. What a pity that this idea was not accepted!

Not only did we not use our nuclear monopoly against others, we signalled our peaceful intent by demobilizing our armed forces in an extraordinarily rapid way. At the end of the war in 1945, we had 12 million men under arms, but by the beginning of 1948 we had reduced our forces to one-tenth of that number, 1.2 million. Since the 1960's we have unilaterally cut back our own nuclear arsenal: we now have considerably fewer weapons than in 1969, and only one third of the destructive power which we had at that time.

The United States and the NATO allies have repeatedly said that we will never use our arms, conventional or nuclear, unless we are attacked.

Let me add something that might not be widely known in the Soviet Union. In agreement with the NATO countries, the United States since 1979 has removed from Europe well over 1,000 nuclear warheads. When all of our withdrawals have been completed, the total number of warheads withdrawn will be over 2,400. That's a withdrawal of about 5 nuclear weapons for every intermediate-range missile we plan to deploy. It will bring our nuclear forces in Europe to the lowest level in some twenty years. We have seen no comparable Soviet restraint.

If the Soviet Union is now reducing its intermediate range missiles in Europe, that's a long overdue step. The Soviet Union has now deployed 441 SS-20 missiles, each with three warheads--that is 1323 warheads. I don't have to remind you that this Soviet deployment began when NATO had no comparable systems in Europe. We first attempted to negotiate an end to these systems, but when we could not reach agreement, NATO proceeded with a limited response which will take place gradually. Today, the Soviet Union commands an advantage in warheads of 7 to 1 on missiles already deployed. Our position remains as it has always been, that it would be better to negotiate an end to all of these types of missiles. But even if our hopes for an agreement are disappointed and NATO has to go to full deployment, this will only be a maximum of 572 single-warhead missiles.

Moreover, President Carter cancelled both the enhanced-radiation warhead and the B-1 bomber in 1978, and the Soviet Union made no corresponding move. In fact, when asked what the Soviet Union would reduce in response, one of your officials said, "We are not philanthropists." In 1977 and 1978 the United States also tried to negotiate a ban on developing anti-satellite weapons. The Soviet Union refused a ban, and proceeded to develop and test an anti-satellite weapon. Having already established an operational anti-satellite system, the Soviet Union now proposes a "freeze" before the U.S. can test its own system. Obviously, that sort of "freeze" does not look very fair to us; if the shoe were on the other foot, it wouldn't look very fair to you either.

The issues between our two countries are of such importance that the positions of each government should be communicated accurately to the people of both countries. In this process, the media of both countries have an important role to play. We should not attempt to "score points" against each other. And the media should not distort our positions. We are committed to examining every Soviet proposal with care, seeking to find areas of agreement. It is important that the Soviet government do the same in regard to our proposals.

The important thing is that we both deal seriously with each other's proposals, and make a genuine effort to bridge our differences in a way which serves the interests of both countries and the world as a whole. It is in this spirit that I will be approaching my meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev.

END