

OCS - 04002/85
28 October 1985
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The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I have reviewed the elements of the US counter-proposal, dated October 22, received with Bud McFarlane's October 23 request for Cabinet-level views on that document.

If you find it desirable to make a counter-proposal at this stage, I believe this is a good start. I find it better than our current START, INF, and Defense and Space positions.

The Counter-Proposal:

At the same time, banning un-MIRVed mobile ICBMs is a mistake. Single-RV mobile ICBMs are stabilizing, like SLBMs. What needs to be banned are MIRVed mobile ICBMs and "new" heavy ICBMs. ("New" means any replacement.) The important thing is that these bans would make the resulting world more stable and relatively easier to monitor and verify and would, if observed, make the tasks of intelligence and targeting for deterrence much more manageable.

I believe it important to add to the counter-proposal, as an explicit element, a concept or plan to get the USSR's excess strategic offensive systems out of their operational inventory and destroyed in a verifiable manner. The idea of reductions, and perhaps the lower levels themselves, can be a separate deal or part of a larger package. Once reductions are agreed to, in principle or in fact, removal and destruction could begin. In our current START proposal, this concept is called build-down.

Explaining the Differences:

One downside of putting out a new proposal at this stage is that although our proposal is more balanced and realistic than the Soviet proposal, the great bulk of the public will not readily appreciate the differences. The general perception is likely to be that both sides have offered large reductions. The Soviets, and those amenable to their effort to kill SDI, will argue that all that stands in the way of achieving those reductions is your agreeing to additional restrictions on SDI. The Soviets in their propaganda, and your opponents, can be counted on to play on this theme to the hilt.

To counter this, we need to work diligently to emphasize--with the Soviets and in public--the differences in the two offers in every dimension, including:



APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: AUG 2002

- Our reductions compensate fully for the Soviet reductions, without entitling them, in addition, to place restrictions on our defense against the large missile battery they would retain, particularly in the light of their long-standing and continuing monopoly on ballistic missile defense. The proposed reductions, while desirable, do not make the world sufficiently safer from nuclear weapons to justify releasing us from our obligations to our people and to posterity, and have us give up the opportunity to further minimize the continuing threat of offensive missiles by developing effective defenses.

- The Soviet proposal guts most of the US strategic modernization effort--MX, Midgetman, the D-5 SLBM, cruise missiles, and the Stealth applications. It would allow most Soviet modernization programs. (The Soviet objective here is to sap our will to compete in the offensive force arena.)

- The Soviet proposal particularly guts the US bomber force, reducing the number of such weapons well below our plans, our existing START proposal, or the draft counter-proposal. The Soviets, if they played it right, could make a big thing out of the large US bomber force in attacking us as not really reducing. If we get into a bidding war, we better be prepared to use our arguments effectively that bomber weapons are stabilizing, that the Soviets have an enormous advantage in air defense against these bombers, and that ballistic missiles--particularly land-based--are destabilizing.

- The Soviet proposal reintroduces an old, previously unacceptable idea; it lumps US aircraft carriers and other forward-based systems (e.g., in Europe) as strategic weapons, but they can easily back off on that at the appropriate point and appear to be making a big "concession."

- The US counter-proposal tries to get at ballistic missile throwweight, a big Soviet advantage, whereas the Soviets preserve their advantage here.

SDI and the ABM Treaty

I strongly believe that the US should not offer to discuss either additional limits on SDI or the "correct" interpretation of the ABM Treaty--which is an euphemism for limiting SDI further. To achieve your goals, you have to preserve SDI unfettered and push it in the Congress, in the bureaucracy, and with the Allies.

I strongly approve the proposals to seek mutual commitments to explore cooperative transition to missile defense and, as a confidence building measure therein, on-site inspection of SDI testing locations.

I strongly suggest that we consider adding to this an "open laboratories" provision which would permit visits to each others' SDI research sites. There may, on close examination, be a downside to this but right now you would be amazed at the extent to which our laboratories are open to Soviet and other foreign visitors; we, however, do not get comparable access to Soviet facilities.

Compliance:

Compliance and verification and compliance are the pacing elements in arms control today. And the Soviets seem to show some sense of knowing it.

I believe the US counter-proposal needs, as an explicit element, a statement on restoring compliance. Soviet actions--from the Krasnoyarsk radar to [redacted] and other steps--have damaged the political balance upon which real arms control has to be based. If existing accords are to be preserved, and if new ones are to be created, Soviet non-compliance--which is militarily real and politically corrosive--has to be addressed and resolved. Unilateral US compliance cannot work.

Responding to Soviet violations requires both policy and programmatic steps. Secretary Weinberger's report to you, coming in November, addressing US military responses, will be a critical step for US national security. The worst possible situation is for the Soviets to violate arms control accords, see the US object about such acts, and then not see a US response.

Verification:

In a closely related topic, any US counter-proposal and subsequent arrangement on strategic forces should be subject to satisfactory verification provisions. We are working to make our monitoring capability as strong as possible. I will send you a follow-up letter shortly providing an assessment of our monitoring capability.

One of our most important objectives at Geneva should be for you to make General Secretary Gorbachev understand that if the USSR wants progress in arms control, verification will be the key and their denial practices must be changed through their own corrective actions. If arms control is to have a future, the Soviets must go home from Geneva with this idea clearly set in their minds.

Two changes in Soviet behavior can make verification work better, and they are both easy to do and to explain:

[Redacted]

Military Sufficiency:

In addition to the work by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, we need to assess a potential, future strategic world with a very different picture, including deep offensive force reductions, probably mobile missiles on both sides, and--eventually--SDI. This future situation undoubtedly calls for a very different US strategy, and hence different technical criteria that would have a major

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impact on the military sufficiency criteria. I cannot even guess the outcome, but it will be different from today.

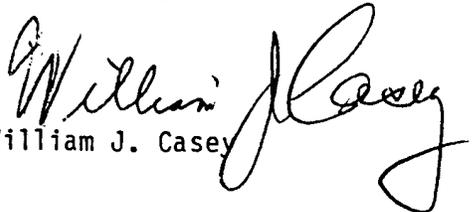
More Work:

The work so far on this counter-proposal has been done as quickly and as thoroughly as the Executive Branch can do it. But our work is not done. The counter-proposal is not complete enough for us to fully understand the ramifications for either side, but especially the US. Before full and final commitment, we should assess the military implications of the counter-proposal more fully. The link with our mutual restraint policy for SALT II is one example where further thought is needed quickly.

Tactics and Timing:

For the bargaining reasons you have indicated, and given that we have more work to do, I would not put out a general counter-proposal until the time of your meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev. The Soviets know a US response is coming; that seems to me enough for now. Whenever the counter-proposal is broached to the Soviets, I would make it subject to a balanced, comprehensive offer, including specifics on verification, to be tabled at the next session of the Geneva nuclear and space arms control talks.

Respectfully yours,


William J. Casey