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Narrative

In accordance with Article VII of the Interim Agreement, in which the sides committed themselves to continue active negotiations on strategic offensive arms, the SALT II negotiations began in November 1972. The primary goal of SALT II was to replace the Interim Agreement with a long-term comprehensive Treaty providing broad limits on strategic offensive weapons systems. The principal U.S. objectives as the SALT II negotiations began were to provide for equal numbers of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles for the sides, to begin the process of reduction of these delivery vehicles, and to impose restraints on qualitative developments which could threaten future stability.

Early discussion between the sides focused on the weapon systems to be included, factors involved in providing for equality in numbers of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles, taking into account the important differences between the forces of the two sides, bans on new systems, qualitative limits, and a Soviet proposal to include U.S. forward-based systems. The positions of the sides differed widely on many of these issues.

A major breakthrough occurred at the Vladivostok meeting in November 1974, between President Ford and General Secretary Brezhnev. At this meeting, the sides agreed to a basic framework for the SALT II agreement. Basic elements of the Aide-Memoire, which recorded this agreement, included:

- 2,400 equal aggregate limit on strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers) of the sides;
- 1,320 equal aggregate limit on MIRV systems;
- ban on construction of new land-based ICBM launchers;
- limits on deployment of new types of strategic offensive arms; and
- important elements of the Interim Agreement (e.g., relating to verification) would be incorporated in the new agreement.

In addition, the Aide-Memoire stated that the duration of the new agreement would be through 1985.

In early 1975, the delegations in Geneva resumed negotiations, working toward an agreement based on this general framework. It was during this time that a Joint Draft Text was first prepared and many limitations were agreed. During the negotiations, however, it became clear that there was fundamental disagreement between the two sides on two major issues: how cruise missiles were to be addressed, and whether the new Soviet bomber known to the United States as Backfire would be considered a heavy bomber and therefore counted in the 2,400 aggregate. While there was disagreement on

other issues such as MIRV verification provisions, restrictions on new systems, and missile throw-weight ceilings, progress was made in these areas. However, the issues of cruise missiles and Backfire remained unresolved.

When the new Administration took office in 1977, renewed emphasis was placed on the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. A comprehensive interagency review of SALT was undertaken. Building on the work of the previous Administration, particularly the Vladivostok accord and the subsequent agreement on many issues in Geneva, the United States made a comprehensive proposal which was presented to the Soviets by Secretary of State Vance in March 1977. This proposal would have added significant reductions and qualitative constraints to the ceilings which were agreed to at Vladivostok. At the same time, the United States also presented an alternative proposal for a SALT II agreement similar to the framework agreed to at Vladivostok, with the Backfire and cruise missile issues deferred until SALT III.

Both proposals were rejected by the Soviets as inconsistent with their understandings of the Vladivostok accord.

In subsequent negotiations, the sides agreed on a general framework for SALT II which accommodated both the Soviet desire to retain the Vladivostok framework for an agreement, and the U.S. desire for more comprehensive limitations in SALT II.

The agreement would consist of three parts:

- A Treaty which would be in force through 1985 based on the Vladivostok accord;
- A Protocol of about three-years duration which would cover certain issues such as cruise missile constraints, mobile ICBM limits, and qualitative constraints on ICBMs, while deferring further negotiations on these issues to SALT III;
- A Joint Statement of Principles which would be an agreed set of guidelines for future negotiations.

Within this framework, negotiations to resolve the remaining differences continued on several levels. President Carter, Secretary Vance, and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko met in Washington in September 1977. Further high-level meetings were held in Washington, Moscow, and Geneva during 1978 and 1979. In addition, the SALT delegations of the United States and Soviet Union in Geneva were in session nearly continuously following the 1974 Vladivostok meeting to work out agreed Treaty language on those issues where agreement in principle had been reached at the ministerial level.

The completed SALT II agreement was signed by President Carter and General Secretary Brezhnev in Vienna on June 18, 1979. President Carter transmitted it to the Senate on June 22 for its advice and consent to ratification.

On January 3, 1980, however, President Carter requested the Senate majority leader to delay consideration of the Treaty on the Senate floor in view of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Although the Treaty remained unratified, each Party was individually bound under the terms of international law to refrain from acts which would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty, until it had made its intentions clear not to become a party to the Treaty.

In 1980, President Carter announced the United States would comply with the provisions of the Treaty as long as the Soviet Union reciprocated. Brezhnev made a similar statement regarding Soviet intentions.

In May 1982, President Reagan stated he would do nothing to undercut the SALT agreements as long as the Soviet Union showed equal restraint. The Soviet Union again agreed to abide by the unratified Treaty.

Subsequently, in 1984 and 1985, President Reagan declared that the Soviet Union had violated its political commitment to observe the SALT II Treaty. President Reagan decided, however, that an interim framework of mutual restraint remained in the U.S. interest and, in June 1985, declared that the United States would continue to refrain from undercutting existing strategic arms agreements to the extent that the Soviet Union exercised comparable restraint and provided that the Soviet Union actively pursued arms reductions agreements in the Nuclear and Space Talks in Geneva.

On May 26, 1986, President Reagan stated that he had reviewed again the status of U.S. interim restraint policy and that, as he had documented in three detailed reports to the Congress, the Soviet Union had not complied with its political commitment to observe the SALT agreements, including the SALT II Treaty, nor had the Soviet Union indicated its readiness to join in a framework of truly mutual restraint. He declared that, "Given this situation, ... in the future, the United States must base decisions regarding its strategic force structure on the nature and magnitude of the threat posed by Soviet strategic forces and not on standards contained in the SALT structure...." In his statement, President Reagan said that he did not anticipate any appreciable numerical growth in U.S. strategic offensive forces and that, assuming no significant change in the threat, the United States would not deploy more strategic nuclear delivery vehicles or strategic ballistic missile warheads than the Soviets. The United States would, in sum, "...continue to exercise the utmost restraint, while protecting strategic deterrence, in order to help foster the necessary atmosphere for significant reductions in the strategic arsenals of both sides." He again called upon the Soviet Union to join the United States "...in establishing an interim framework of truly mutual restraint."

The SALT II Treaty would have provided for:

-- an equal aggregate limit on the number of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles -- ICBM and SLBM launchers, heavy bombers, and air-to-surface ballistic missiles (ASBMs). Initially, this ceiling would have been 2,400 as agreed at Vladivostok. The ceiling would have been lowered to 2,250 at the end of 1981;

- an equal aggregate limit of 1,320 on the total number of launchers of MIRVed ballistic missiles and heavy bombers with long-range cruise missiles;
- an equal aggregate limit of 1,200 on the total number of launchers of MIRVed ballistic missiles; and
- an equal aggregate limit of 820 on launchers of MIRVed ICBMs.

In addition to these numerical limits, the agreement would have included:

- a ban on construction of additional fixed ICBM launchers, and on increases in the number of fixed heavy ICBM launchers;
- a ban on heavy mobile ICBM launchers, and on launchers of heavy submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and air-to-surface ballistic missiles (ASBMs);
- a ban on flight-testing or deployment of new types of ICBMs, with an exception of one new type of light ICBM for each side;
- a ban on increasing the numbers of warheads on existing types of ICBMs, and a limit of 10 warheads on the one new type of ICBM permitted to each Party, a limit of 14 warheads on SLBMs, and 10 warheads on ASBMs. The number of long-range cruise missiles per heavy bomber would have been limited to an average of 28; and the number of long-range cruise missiles per heavy bomber of existing types would have been limited to 20;
- ceilings on the launch-weight and throw-weight of strategic ballistic missiles and a ban on the conversion of light ICBM launchers to launchers of heavy ICBMs;
- a ban on the Soviet SS-16 ICBM;
- a ban on rapid reload ICBM systems;
- a ban on certain new types of strategic offensive systems which were technologically feasible, but which had not yet been deployed. Such systems included long-range ballistic missiles on surface ships, and ballistic and cruise missile launchers on the seabeds;
- advance notification of certain ICBM test launches; and
- an agreed data base for systems included in various SALT-limited categories.

The Treaty also included detailed definitions of limited systems, provisions to enhance verification, a ban on circumvention of the provisions of the agreement, and a provision

outlining the duties of the SCC in connection with the SALT II Treaty. The duration of the Treaty was to have been through 1985.

Verification of the SALT II Treaty would have been by national technical means (NTM) of verification, including photo-reconnaissance satellites. The sides had agreed not to interfere with each others national technical means of verification, and not to use deliberate concealment measures which would have impeded verification by NTM of compliance with the provisions of the agreement. Because specific characteristics of some SALT-limited systems become apparent during the testing phase, monitoring of testing programs was an important aspect of SALT verification. Such monitoring might have involved collection of electronic signals known as telemetry which are used during tests to transmit information about systems while they are being tested. Therefore, the sides had agreed not to engage in deliberate denial of telemetric information such as through the use of telemetry encryption whenever such denial would have impeded verification of compliance with the provisions of the Treaty.

In addition to these provisions of the Treaty which directly addressed the question of verification, counting and distinguishability rules, as well as some constraints on specific systems, were incorporated into the agreement specifically for verification purposes.

To facilitate verification of the MIRV limits, the sides agreed that once a missile had been tested with MIRVs, then all missiles of that type were to be considered to have been equipped with MIRVs, even if that missile type had also been tested with a non-MIRV payload. Additionally, the sides agreed that once a launcher contained or launched a MIRVed missile, then all launchers of that type would be considered to be launchers of MIRVed missiles and included in the 1,320 limit. Similar counting rules were adopted for cruise missiles and for heavy bombers.

A constraint included for verification purposes was a ban on production, testing, and deployment of the Soviet SS-16 ICBM. The missile appeared to share a number of components with the Soviet SS-20, an intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM). As the Parties had agreed that land-based launchers of ballistic missiles which are not ICBMs should not be converted into launchers of ICBMs, the United States sought this ban on the SS-16 in order to prevent verification problems which might have arisen if the SS-16 program had gone forward, since in that case distinguishing between SS-16 and SS-20 deployments would have been very difficult.

Pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding, the sides exchanged data on the numbers of weapons in SALT-limited categories, and agreed to maintain this agreed data base through regular updates at each session of the Standing Consultative Commission. Although the United States did not require (and did not rely upon) this data for verification purposes, maintenance of the agreed data base would have insured that both parties applied the provisions of the Treaty in a consistent manner.

The protocol to the Treaty was to have remained in force until December 31, 1981. In the protocol the sides agreed to ban deployment of mobile ICBM launchers and flight-testing

of ICBMs from such launchers. Development of such systems short of flight-testing would have been permitted. (After the protocol period, the Treaty specifically permitted the deployment of mobile ICBM launchers.)

Additionally, the protocol banned deployment, but not testing, of cruise missiles capable of ranges in excess of 600 kilometers on ground- and sea-based launchers. (The protocol would not have limited deployment of such systems after its expiration in 1981.)

Finally, the protocol included a ban on flight testing and deployment of ASBMs.

The Joint Statement of Principles, the third element of the SALT II agreement, would have established a basic framework for the next stage of SALT negotiations, SALT III. The sides agreed on the following general goals to be achieved in the next round of talks:

- significant and substantial reductions in the number of strategic offensive arms;
- further qualitative limitations on strategic offensive arms; and -- resolution of the issues included in the protocol.

The sides would also have considered other steps to enhance strategic stability, and either side could have brought up any other topic relevant to the limitation of strategic arms.

The Joint Statement of Principles also established the principle that cooperative measures might be used to ensure adequate verification of a SALT III agreement, raising the possibility of thus going beyond reliance on national technical means of verification alone.