

The United States took action today that places the number of U.S. strategic nuclear delivery vehicles in excess of a specific limit of the SALT II Agreement. President Reagan had announced last May that the USA would no longer be bound by the unratified SALT II agreement and would no longer, as it proceeded with its modernization programme, dismantle older systems to stay within SALT II limits.

The Government viewed with serious concern the Administration's announced intention in the spring and deplors the implementation of that decision today. Our views have repeatedly been conveyed to the US Administration. We have most recently made our case in a letter from the Prime Minister to the President this week, and in my discussions with Secretary George Shultz last week. The Government recognizes that SALT II is not a perfect agreement and acknowledges that the USSR has not satisfactorily responded to charges of its own non-compliance with provisions of SALT II. At the same time, we believe that even an imperfect regime of restraint on the strategic arms race is better than no restraint at all. We have taken note of stated U.S. intentions to exercise restraint and not to exceed the levels of Soviet strategic delivery vehicles. I call on both sides to exercise restraint.

Our hope remains that the USA and USSR will agree, in the Geneva negotiations, on a new arms control accord that will radically reduce, and not merely put a cap on, the level of their strategic arsenals. Until such an accord is attained, however, we consider the interests of nuclear arms control and strategic stability are best served by both the USA and USSR continuing to abide by the provisions of the SALT II agreement.