

In response, the Soviets argued generally that the overall balance of strategic forces was essentially equal, and pointed to the US advantage in submarine and bomber forces which, they claimed, offset the larger numbers of Soviet land-based ICBMs. Their START proposal for reductions was much less dramatic than that of the US, calling for a reduction of 20% in the preponderance of their forces on land-based missiles.

In March 1985, at the beginning of the current round of talks, the US position was essentially unchanged from that of December 1983, while the Soviets offered little new in response to that position. However, in late September 1985, possibly reflecting the new style and priorities of Secretary-General Gorbachev, this desultory beginning changed dramatically when the Soviets tabled a proposal which, through various channels, was subsequently leaked to the US press and then confirmed by both Soviet and US officials. The main elements of the Soviet proposal were as follows:

- a 50% cut in strategic launchers on both sides
- a cut in warheads such that each side would retain only 6,000
- a sub-ceiling of 60% of strategic warheads (3,600) in any single leg of the triad
- a ban on SDI research and development
- a definition of 'strategic' (launchers which can hit the homeland of the other) which included the long-range theatre nuclear forces (LRTNF) of the United States but not those of the Soviet Union (since the latter cannot normally reach the United States)
- a ban on modernization possibly so defined for negotiating purposes as to allow the Soviets to continue deployments of SS-24 and SS-25 ICBMs, and the SS-N-20 SLBM, but which might not have allowed any of the following American systems: the MX, the Midgetman, the Trident D-5, the advanced technology (Stealth) bomber
- a ban on long-range cruise missiles (over 600 kilometres) which would prohibit both the present deployments of the advanced cruise missile (ACM), as well, presumably, as long-range sea-launched cruise missiles.

In certain important respects, therefore, this proposal directly addressed US concerns about the expansion of strategic forces and the lethality of Soviet SS-18 land-based ICBMs. Particularly the Soviets accepted, apparently for the first time, deep reductions in both launchers and warheads, and thus appeared to come close to the US position, the more so since they were willing also to impose a sub-ceiling on land-based ICBM warheads.

However, the Soviet proposal also contained elements which were certain to be opposed by the US, particularly since several had already been rejected in previous negotiations. Amongst these, the definition of

### Strategic Offensive Forces — Negotiating Positions Since 1980

<b>June 1982 START</b>	Reagan proposes reduction of strategic warheads to 5,000, no more than 2,500 on ICBMs. Soviets seek lesser cuts and retention of most land-based ICBMs
<b>December 1983</b>	Talks broken off
<b>March 1985 NST</b>	Talks resume, little change in positions
<b>September 1985</b>	Soviet proposal for deep reduction down to 6,000 nuclear charges but includes INF and intercontinental forces in single package
<b>October 1985</b>	US counter-proposal for deep reductions calls for warhead ceiling of 4,500 with continued emphasis on ICBMs; treats INF as separate issue, bans mobile missiles
<b>January 1986</b>	Gorbachev's wide-ranging proposal for nuclear and conventional disarmament includes offer to separate INF from strategic systems
<b>June 1986</b>	New Soviet proposal increases warhead ceiling to 8,000, drops ban on long-range ALCMs and SLCMs, and links proposal to ABM Treaty guarantee
<b>July 1986</b>	New US proposal increases warhead ceiling to 7,500, places additional constraints on ICBMs but allows possibility of mobile ICBMs; SLCMs not included
<b>Reykjavik October 1986</b>	US and Soviets agree to 50% reduction over 5-year period but disagree on next stage — Soviets seek complete elimination of all nuclear strategic weapons, US of ballistic missiles only. Soviets seek strict limits on SDI consistent with elimination of all ballistic missiles, US wants SDI deployment option as insurance.