

In the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START), the goal of US negotiating strategy was to strengthen the stability of mutual deterrence through "substantial, equitable and verifiable reductions in strategic forces below . . . the levels set in SALT II." Originally, in the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) negotiations, the United States had called for "the complete elimination of US and Soviet longer-range, land-based INF missiles." However, since the Soviet Union rejected that proposal, the United States had indicated a willingness to agree to equal ceilings, on a global basis, on intermediate-range nuclear forces.

The third component at the Geneva talks was the area of space-based defence systems. Ambassador Niles said that the United States was prepared to discuss the full range of issues related to space weaponry, including the "offence-defence relationship." The United States would like to move away from deterrence based exclusively on retaliation with offensive nuclear forces, and the security of both sides could be enhanced by reducing offensive weapons and increasing defensive systems.

Ambassador Niles pointed out that the US proposals in Geneva reflected a consistent set of criteria which also must be kept in mind for any evaluation of the Soviet proposals:

- 1) the stability of deterrence;
- 2) the balance of nuclear forces;
- 3) the ability of both sides to modernize arsenals;
- 4) the security of the European Allies;
- 5) the capacity to verify any new agreements.

Niles addressed each of these considerations in turn.

The stability of deterrence would be seriously undermined if either side achieved a first-strike capability. The United States had never pursued such a capability, said Niles, but the Soviet Union had. Some critics of US policy had argued that, after deployment of the D-5 missile on the Trident submarine in 1989, the US would have a first-strike capability but Niles asserted that submarine-launched nuclear missiles had too many limitations to comprise a credible first-strike force. On the other hand, US negotiators were concerned that certain aspects of the Soviet proposal would strengthen the Soviet first-strike capability.

Would the Soviet proposals lead to an equitable balance of nuclear forces between the two powers? A preliminary analysis, said Niles, suggested that the Soviet Union would retain major advantages in