

On the other hand, the Washington communiqué alluded to, but passed rather lightly over, significant disagreements between the two sides. With respect to ballistic missile limits, there were three important points. First, the United States proposed to ban mobile missiles. However, the Soviets have already deployed two new types of mobile missiles — the single-warhead SS-25, and the ten-warhead SS-24 — which are designed to reduce the vulnerability of their large, fixed, land-based ICBMs. It seemed unlikely that the Soviets would agree at any point to a ban on these weapons.

Second, the communiqué instructed the negotiators to determine concrete counting rules governing the number of long-range, nuclear-armed air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) to be attributed to each accountable heavy bomber. The negotiators had previously agreed that heavy bombers armed with gravity nuclear bombs and short-range attack missiles (SRAMs) would count as one delivery vehicle and one warhead, but they had not reached agreement on ALCMs, which count as individual warheads in the 6,000 ceiling. Reportedly, the United States had proposed that six ALCMs be “attributed” to each ALCM-carrying heavy bomber, whereas the Soviets were pressing for a much higher number.

Third, whereas previously the United States had been reluctant to accept limits on long-range, nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs), the communiqué committed the sides to establishing ceilings on SLCMs, but outside the 6,000-warhead ceiling. They appeared to be far apart on what those ceilings might be, or how to verify them.

Finally, the issue which had dogged the START talks from the outset — the future of the ABM Treaty and the prospect of strategic defence deployments — was left ambiguous at the summit, thus allowing the draft treaty to be pursued while leaving for further discussion the key question of the relationship between reductions in strategic offensive forces and strategic defence.

Verification: Building on the INF Treaty

In the Washington communiqué extensive reference was also made to the verification requirements of a future START treaty. The verification provisions of the INF Treaty were evident. As with INF, the parties agreed to a data exchange identifying the numbers, location and support facilities of the weapons to be limited by the treaty. The parties agreed in principle to on-site inspections to include a one-time inspection of the bases identified in the data exchange, on-site observation of the elimination of weapons, and short-notice challenge inspections of remaining missile sites permitted by the treaty, and of missile sites previously dismantled in accordance with the treaty. The communiqué also called for cooperative measures more far-reaching than the INF Treaty to facilitate surveillance by national technical means. Finally, and remembering that

production facilities for missiles covered by the treaty would remain after the agreement, the parties agreed to continuous monitoring of critical production facilities, suggesting factory monitoring considerably more intrusive than was called for in the INF Treaty.

Non-Accountable Weapons

Although spokesmen for both sides referred to the cuts as 50 percent reductions in strategic nuclear delivery vehicles, considerations regarding manned bombers and SLCMs suggest that, in effect, the cuts would be far less deep.

Gravity Bombs and SRAMs. Since manned bombers equipped with gravity bombs and SRAMs count as one in the warhead total as well as the delivery vehicle total, both sides left themselves with the opportunity to add greatly to their warhead total. 100 manned bombers each loaded with twenty bombs and SRAMs, for example, would add 1,900 strategic nuclear charges to the strategic inventory over the 6,000 ceiling. The United States has plans to build over 1,600 SRAM IIs, none of which are accountable weapons in the START negotiations.

ALCM Counting Rules. The number of ALCMs “attributed” to an ALCM-carrying bomber seemed likely to significantly understate the actual numbers that could be carried. The initial US position in START was to attribute six ALCMs per bomber, sometimes modified to “six-to-eight.” However, the B-52 carries twelve, and can be fitted to carry twenty, while the B-1B has a larger payload and is able to operate with 24 ALCMs. The Soviets argued that the Americans had chosen a number which conformed to the standard Soviet payload, thereby allowing themselves considerably greater flexibility. The Soviets countered by arguing that each type of heavy bomber should be identified, together with its cruise missile-carrying payload. Although some progress was made on this issue through the negotiations in the spring of 1988 (the United States appeared willing to accept ten ALCMs for each heavy bomber), the issue was still unresolved at the end of the summer.

The importance of this issue is readily understood when placed within the context of the constraints imposed by the 6,000-warhead ceiling. With a sub-ceiling of 4,900 on ballistic missile warheads, the implied complement would be 1,100 ALCMs. Of these, 100 might be taken up by the residual force of heavy bombers without ALCMs, each of which count as one delivery vehicle and one warhead. With a nominal counting rule of six ALCMs per bomber, the United States could then deploy about 160 declared ALCM carriers counting for 1,000 warheads under START, but easily able to carry 2,000 in practice.

It is not immediately clear whether, in a START agreement, every deployed ALCM would be counted within the 6,000 warhead total, or whether the number would be derived from the number of ALCM bombers combined