
Part 1: Verification — A Survey of Key Proposals (1985-89)

Chronology

On 14 February 1985, the WTO tabled a proposal at the MBFR negotiations calling for reductions in Soviet and American forces stationed in Central Europe as a first stage leading to a comprehensive force reduction agreement. This plan proposed reciprocal withdrawals of 20 000 Soviet and 13 000 American troops and their equipment within a one-year period. Associated measures for verification included the designation of three to four observation points to monitor departing units. Beyond this, Soviet spokespersons claimed that satellite surveillance would be sufficient to monitor compliance.¹

The West responded in December 1985 with a counterproposal presented by the head of the United Kingdom delegation, Ambassador Michael Alexander, in the 413th plenary session of the negotiations. In a press conference following the session, Alexander publicly described the proposal. Although the Eastern interim proposal suffered from many serious flaws, including the lack of a prior data exchange, Alexander indicated that NATO had no objections to a limited first-stage reduction, having itself proposed a similar measure in 1979. Consequently, NATO proposed reductions of 11 500 Soviet and 5 000 American troops over a one-year period (with removal of equipment left to each side's discretion), followed by a three-year "no-increase" commitment on all direct participants' ground and combined ground/air forces in the reduction area.

Along with the proposed reductions, NATO included a detailed verification package. The package included four elements:

- (1) conversion of observation points into permanent entry/exit points through which all forces leaving or entering the reductions area would pass;
- (2) the exchange of disaggregated information down to battalion level after the completion of the initial reductions, thereby providing a data base for verifying compliance with the no-increase commitment;
- (3) on-site inspections to verify withdrawals as well as post-withdrawal force levels, including the right to 30 inspections per year in each of the three years following completion of initial reductions; and,
- (4) creation of a Consultative Commission to clarify ambiguities and settle disputes.