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THE WHITE HOUSE

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August 10, 1982

NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION  
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 51

U.S. NUCLEAR TESTING LIMITATIONS POLICY

As a result of the National Security Council meeting of July 19, 1982, on nuclear testing limitations, it has been decided that a Comprehensive Test Ban remains a long-term U.S. objective, but that in the near term, our priority efforts must be directed toward achieving effective verification measures for the Threshold Test Ban and Peaceful Nuclear Explosions treaties. (S)

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Nuclear testing is indispensable to a credible nuclear deterrent. The security of the United States and our Allies depends upon a nuclear deterrent and the need to maintain a reliable stockpile and robust technology base. At the same time, there are concerns regarding our ability to monitor Soviet compliance with a Comprehensive Test Ban, and even assuming Soviet compliance, there are reasons to believe that a Comprehensive Test Ban could create asymmetries in the Soviet Union's favor. Therefore, at this time the United States should neither attempt to conclude a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty nor resume negotiations with the U.S.S.R. and the United Kingdom on a Comprehensive Test Ban. (S)

U.S. policy continues to endorse a Comprehensive Test Ban as a long-term objective. This is to be achieved in the context of broad, deep, and verifiable arms reductions, expanded confidence building measures, improved verification capabilities that would justify confidence in Soviet compliance with a Comprehensive Test Ban; and at a time when a nuclear deterrent is no longer as essential an element, as currently, for international security and stability. We will continue to discuss issues of verification and compliance in the nuclear test ban working group of the Committee on Disarmament. (S)

Threshold Test Ban and Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaties

Our security requires that we not agree to an unverifiable treaty. Since we cannot at present effectively verify the Threshold Test Ban and Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaties, we should not, at

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this time, seek their ratification. While continuing observance of the 150-kiloton threshold of these treaties, we should, therefore, seek Soviet agreement to negotiate effective verification measures in new protocols to the Threshold Test Ban and Peaceful Nuclear Explosions treaties. (S)

Over the long term, high yield tests may be necessary to maintain the U.S. nuclear deterrent. Should an urgent national security need for tests above 150 kilotons be identified in the future, appropriate recommendations should be forwarded to the President for decision. (S)

Interdepartmental Group Work Program

The Interdepartmental Group should complete a study of specific negotiation proposals on verification procedures designed to improve significantly our verification capabilities. This study should be forwarded to the National Security Council by October 1, 1982. (S)

The Interdepartmental Group should prepare an up-to-date net assessment of the effects of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty on the United States/Soviet Union nuclear balance. This assessment should be forwarded to the National Security Council by December 10, 1982. (S)

Ronald Reagan

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