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CHAIRMAN'S PRESS STATEMENT

James F. Dobbins
Chairman
NATO Special Consultative Group
Brussels, January 11, 1984

The SCG today held its first meeting of the new year and will continue to meet regularly in furtherance of the close consultative process that has characterized the Alliance's INF approach.

Among the major points covered by the SCG today:

-- The demand for arms control remains a crucial issue on the international agenda. This fact cannot be altered by the unfortunate Soviet action of last November to discontinue the negotiations. In blocking negotiations, the Soviet Union is working against the common interest of peoples in East and West in the reduction and limitation of INF systems.

-- Since the last meeting of the group in December, the Soviets have completed another SS-20 base in the eastern USSR, bringing the total number of operational SS-20 launchers to 378 with 1134 warheads. In light of this buildup -- which continued throughout the first six rounds of the INF negotiations -- it is particularly difficult to understand the Soviet contention that the beginning of NATO deployments in any way justified their discontinuing the negotiations.

-- NATO INF deployments are underway in accordance with the December 1979 decision. As has been made clear repeatedly, these deployments can be halted, modified or reversed at any time as a result of a concrete arms control agreement. It is the purpose of the SCG to work toward such an agreement.

-- In discussing the implications of the Soviet walkout from the INF talks, members of the SCG underscored the readiness and desire of their governments for the negotiations on INF to resume at the earliest possible moment. All the elements of an equitable and verifiable agreement were on the table when the Soviets discontinued the INF negotiations, and they remain there. As NATO Foreign Ministers stated in Brussels last month, the Allies believe that the Soviet Union shares an interest with the United States in reducing nuclear weapons through a negotiated agreement and therefore call for bilateral negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces to resume as soon as possible.