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Remarks Announcing a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Test Ban

August 11, 1995

Good afternoon. Today I am announcing my decision to negotiate a true zero yield comprehensive test ban. This is an historic milestone in our efforts to reduce the nuclear threat to build a safer world. The United States will now insist on a test ban that prohibits any nuclear weapons test explosion or any other nuclear explosion. I am convinced this decision will speed the negotiations so that we can achieve our goal of signing a comprehensive test ban next year.

As a central part of this decision, I am establishing concrete, specific safeguards that define the conditions under which the United States will enter into a comprehensive test ban. These safeguards will strengthen our commitments in the areas of intelligence monitoring and verification, stockpile stewardship, maintenance of our nuclear laboratories, and test readiness.

They also specify the circumstances under which I would be prepared, in consultation with Congress, to exercise our supreme national interest rights under a comprehensive test ban to conduct necessary testing if the safety or reliability of our nuclear deterrent could no longer be certified.

As a part of this arrangement I am today directing the establishment of a new annual reporting and certification requirement that will ensure that our nuclear weapons remain safe and reliable under a comprehensive test ban.

I appreciate the time, the energy, and the wisdom that the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Energy; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Directors of Central Intelligence and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency have all devoted to the review of this crucial national security issue over the last several months.

American leaders since Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy have believed a comprehensive test ban would be a major stride toward stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Now, as then, such a treaty would greatly strengthen the security of the United States and nations throughout the world. But now, unlike then, such a treaty is within our reach.

It would build upon the successes we have achieved so far: Securing a permanent extension of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty; freezing North Korea's nuclear program; cutting existing nuclear arsenals by putting the START I Treaty into force; persuading Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan to give up their nuclear weapons and to reach agreements with Russia that now mean that both our nations no longer target our missiles at each other.

A comprehensive test ban is the right step as we continue pulling back from the nuclear precipice, a precipice which we began to live with 50 years ago this week. It moves us one step closer to the day when no nuclear weapons are detonated anywhere on the face of the Earth.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m., in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Statement on a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Test Ban

August 11, 1995

One of my administration's highest priorities is to negotiate a comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT) to reduce the danger posed by nuclear weapons proliferation. To advance that goal and secure the strongest possible treaty, I am announcing today my decision to seek a zero yield CTBT. A zero yield CTBT would ban any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion immediately upon entry into force. I hope it will lead to an early consensus among all states at the negotiating table.

Achieving a CTBT was a goal of both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. Now, as then, such a treaty would greatly strengthen U.S. and global security and create another barrier to nuclear proliferation and nuclear weapons development. At the conclusion of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in May, all parties to that treaty agreed to work to complete a CTBT no later than 1996. Today, I want to reaffirm our commitment to do everything possible to conclude the CTBT negotiations as soon

as possible so that a treaty can be signed next year.

As part of our national security strategy, the United States must and will retain strategic nuclear forces sufficient to deter any future hostile foreign leadership with access to strategic nuclear forces from acting against our vital interests and to convince it that seeking a nuclear advantage would be futile. In this regard, I consider the maintenance of a safe and reliable nuclear stockpile to be a supreme national interest of the United States.

I am assured by the Secretary of Energy and the Directors of our nuclear weapons labs that we can meet the challenge of maintaining our nuclear deterrent under a CTBT through a Science Based Stockpile Stewardship program without nuclear testing. I directed the implementation of such a program almost 2 years ago, and it is being developed with the support of the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This program will now be tied to a new certification procedure. In order for this program to succeed, both the administration and the Congress must provide sustained bipartisan support for the stockpile stewardship program over the next decade and beyond. I am committed to working with the Congress to ensure this support.

While I am optimistic that the stockpile stewardship program will be successful, as President I cannot dismiss the possibility, however unlikely, that the program will fall short of its objectives. Therefore, in addition to the new annual certification procedure for our nuclear weapons stockpile, I am also establishing concrete, specific safeguards that define the conditions under which the United States can enter into a CTBT.

In the event that I were informed by the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Energy—advised by the Nuclear Weapons Council, the Directors of DOE's nuclear weapons laboratories, and the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command—that a high level of confidence in the safety or reliability of a nuclear weapons type which the two Secretaries consider to be critical to our nuclear deterrent could no longer be certified, I would be prepared, in consultation with Congress, to exercise our "supreme national interests" rights under the CTBT in order to conduct whatever testing might be required. Exercising this right, however, is a decision I believe I or any future President will not have to make. The nuclear weapons in the United States arsenal are safe and reliable, and I am determined our stockpile stewardship program will ensure they remain so in the absence of nuclear testing.

I recognize that our present monitoring systems will not detect with high confidence very low yield tests. Therefore, I am committed to pursuing a comprehensive research and development program to improve our treaty monitoring capabilities and operations.

Thirty-two years ago, President Kennedy called the completion of the Limited Test Ban Treaty in Moscow a "shaft of light cut into the darkness" of the cold war. With it, he said, the Nation could "step back from the shadows of war and seek out the way of peace." We did, and the world is a safer place because of it. I believe that we are ready to take the next step and lead the world to a comprehensive test ban. This would be a fitting tribute to all those, Republicans and Democrats, who have worked for a CTBT over the past four decades.

NOTE: A fact sheet on arms control and nonproliferation and a fact sheet on comprehensive test ban treaty safeguards were attached to the statement.

Statement on Vetoing Legislation To Lift the Arms Embargo Against Bosnia

August 11, 1995

I am announcing today my decision to veto legislation that would unilaterally lift the arms embargo against Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I know that Members of Congress share my goals of reducing the violence in Bosnia and working to end the war. But their vote to unilaterally lift the arms embargo is the wrong step at the wrong time. The American people should understand the consequences of such action for our Nation and for the people of Bosnia.

- First, our allies have made clear that they will withdraw their troops from