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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSETEXT OF A LETTER FROM THE
PRESIDENT TO THE SPEAKER OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

January 17, 1977

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Arms control as a means of maintaining peace and security has been a principal objective of my Administration. In this nuclear era our arms control policy and defense efforts must be complementary. We must seek to influence policies of possible adversaries by maintaining strong military forces and by pursuing negotiations to enhance stability, not by encouraging an arms race which would increase the risk of nuclear war.

SALT is a proven means of furthering the essential dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union on arms control. Our goal is to promote stability by mutual restraint in strategic nuclear competition, to limit growth of the nuclear forces of both sides, and to reduce them through verifiable agreements. This effort, I am confident, will succeed.

As a part of our efforts to restrain strategic nuclear competition with the Soviet Union, we have also negotiated two treaties which limit the yield of nuclear explosive tests: the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and the related Nuclear Explosions for Peaceful Purposes Treaty. Both of these treaties represent genuine progress. They contain precedent-setting provisions which will enhance the prospects for further progress in this area. These treaties have been submitted to the Senate, and I urge that it provide its advice and consent to ratification.

Complementing the resolution of nuclear rivalry with the Soviet Union is another imperative in our dialogue for survival: Preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons. If nuclear arsenals proliferate in the world, the likelihood of a nuclear conflict is vastly increased. The worldwide need for peaceful nuclear energy complicates this problem, since the same technology that produces such energy can be diverted to the development and production of nuclear weapons.

To emphasize more strongly our commitment to the objective of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, I announced a new, comprehensive United States nuclear energy policy last October which harmonizes our non-proliferation objectives with our domestic energy policy. We have tightened controls on American exports of sensitive

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nuclear materials and technology. Our sustained diplomatic initiatives with other suppliers of nuclear technology have also resulted in improved international comprehension of the risks of proliferation, as well as cooperation to prevent it.

Non-proliferation is only one example of our pursuit of arms control through multilateral forums and arrangements. With our Western allies we are engaged in negotiations to reduce military forces in Central Europe. Our goal is to obtain a more stable military balance in Central Europe at lower levels of force. We also participate in the activities of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD), which recently approved a convention outlawing the use of environmental modification techniques for hostile purposes. This Convention will soon be open to all nations for ratification. The CCD is also continuing its work on a convention to limit chemical weapons, and will soon be considering a U.S. initiative to ban radiological warfare.

This 16th annual report on the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency completes the record of activities and developments in the arms control field for calendar year 1976. But it is more than a backward look at the record. It also reflects the need for forward planning. In an age of rapidly advancing technologies, arms control must look at the future as well as the present. Arms control must be pursued vigorously and imaginatively, based upon balanced agreements and buttressed by mechanisms to preserve confidence in the viability of those agreements.

It is particularly important to realize that arms control is a complex matter and success can be attained only through diligent and sustained attention. Problems will persist, but we must remain dedicated to continued and determined efforts for the control and balanced reduction of armaments.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD

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