

Statement on United States Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy July 16, 1981

Our nation faces major challenges in international affairs. One of the most critical is the need to prevent the spread of nuclear explosives to additional countries. Further proliferation would pose a severe threat to international peace, regional and global stability, and the security interests of the United States and other countries. Our nation has been committed on a bipartisan basis to preventing the spread of nuclear explosives from the birth of the atomic age over 35 years ago. This commitment is shared by the vast majority of other countries. The urgency of this task has been highlighted by the ominous events in the Middle East.

The problem of reducing the risks of nuclear proliferation has many aspects, and we need an integrated approach to deal with it effectively. In the final analysis, the success of our efforts depends on our ability to improve regional and global stability and reduce those motivations that can drive countries toward nuclear explosives. This calls for a strong and dependable United States, vibrant alliances and improved relations with others, and a dedication to those tasks that are vital for a stable world order.

I am announcing today a policy framework that reinforces the longstanding objectives of our nation in nonproliferation and includes a number of basic guidelines.

The United States will:

- seek to prevent the spread of nuclear explosives to additional countries as a fundamental national security and foreign policy objective;
- strive to reduce the motivation for acquiring nuclear explosives by working to improve regional and global stability and to promote understanding of the legitimate security concerns of other states;
- continue to support adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco) by countries that have not accepted those treaties;

To attain this objective, I am:

- instructing the executive branch agencies to undertake immediate efforts to ensure expeditious action on export requests and approval requests under agreements for peaceful nuclear cooperation where the necessary statutory requirements are met;
- requesting that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission act expeditiously on these matters.

The administration will also not inhibit or set back civil reprocessing and breeder reactor development abroad in nations with advanced nuclear power programs where it does not constitute a proliferation risk.

- view a material violation of these treaties or an international safeguards agreement as having profound consequences for international order and United States bilateral relations, and also view any nuclear explosion by a nonnuclear-weapon state with grave concern;

- strongly support and continue to work with other nations to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency to provide for an improved international safeguards regime;

- seek to work more effectively with other countries to forge agreement on measures for combating the risks of proliferation;

- continue to inhibit the transfer of sensitive nuclear material, equipment and technology, particularly where the danger of proliferation demands, and to seek agreement on requiring IAEA safeguards on all nuclear activities in a nonnuclear-weapon state as a condition for any significant new nuclear supply commitment.

I am also announcing that I will promptly seek the Senate's advice and consent to ratification of Protocol I of the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

The United States will cooperate with other nations in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including civil nuclear programs to meet their energy security needs, under a regime of adequate safeguards and controls. Many friends and allies of the United States have a strong interest in nuclear power and have, during recent years, lost confidence in the ability of our nation to recognize their needs.

We must reestablish this Nation as a predictable and reliable partner for peaceful nuclear cooperation under adequate safeguards. This is essential to our nonproliferation goals. If we are not such a partner, other countries will tend to go their own ways, and our influence will diminish. This would reduce our effectiveness in gaining the support we need to deal with proliferation problems.

The United States will support IAEA programs and other international cooperative efforts in the areas of nuclear safety and environmentally sound nuclear waste management.

To carry out these policies, I am instructing the Secretary of State, working with the other responsible agencies, to give priority attention to efforts to reduce proliferation risks, to enhance the international nonproliferation regime and, consistent with United States security interests, to reestablish a leadership role for the United States in international nuclear affairs.

