

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library  
Digital Library Collections

---

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

---

**Collection:** Media Relations, Office of: Records

**Folder Title:** “The Day After”

**Box:** 23

---

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digitized-textual-material>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library inventories visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/white-house-inventories>

Contact a reference archivist at: **reagan.library@nara.gov**

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/research-support/citation-guide>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

# WHITE HOUSE TALKING POINTS

---

November 16, 1983

## ABC's "THE DAY AFTER"

"We are a people of peace. We understand the terrible trauma of human suffering... A nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought."

President Reagan  
Address to Japanese Diet  
November 11, 1983

### Nuclear Catastrophe

- o While the ABC film has already drawn a great deal of criticism -- much of it justified -- there is one point upon which all agree: nuclear war is a horror, almost too awful to comprehend.
- o The film is powerful and graphic in presenting the horrors of a nuclear holocaust, but it leaves unanswered the central question: how do we prevent this catastrophe from ever happening?

### How to Prevent It

- o For nearly 40 years -- spanning 7 Presidencies, Republican and Democratic -- the United States has pursued a two-track policy to keep the nuclear peace:
  - (1) Deterrence
  - (2) Arms Control

And we have kept the peace! As columnist David Broder wrote on November 16, 1983:

"... it is accurate to say that the single most effective creation of the postwar world has been the system of nuclear deterrence enforced by the United States and the Soviet Union against each other and, implicitly, against all other nuclear powers in the world. That system was designed to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war. As we approach the end of the fourth decade of the nuclear age, a period in which there have been hundreds of other wars, it has worked to perfection. That is a statement that can be made about few other institutions or arrangements."

### Peace Through Strength

- o The greatest threat to nuclear peace began to appear in the 1970s as the Soviet Union engaged in the most massive buildup of arms that the world has ever known. They were challenging the system of deterrence. The Soviet build-up, had it continued unchecked, would have upset the balance of power.
- o President Reagan has sought to restore that balance -- and thus strengthened the prospects for peace. Today, with our military preparedness improved and our alliances cemented, the world is safer than it was three years ago.
- o The President has also presented a bold, far-reaching plan for the future that would lift the nuclear Sword of Damocles once and for all. On March 23, 1983, the President proposed a system of nuclear strategic defense -- as opposed to current offensive weapons -- intended to stop war before it starts. This system would destroy any attacking weapon before it reached us. Scientists and others are currently working to put the plan into place.

### Arms Reductions on Both Sides

- o While working to strengthen U.S. deterrence on one hand, President Reagan has also been making vigorous efforts to end the arms race on the other.
- o In fact, this President is the first who has gone beyond arms control -- he is seeking arms reductions. "Our current goal," the President told the nation this July, "must be reduction of nuclear arsenals -- and I for one believe we must never depart from the ultimate goal of banning them from the face of the Earth."
- o Over the past 3 years, the United States has engaged the Soviets in more arms negotiations than ever before:
  - (1) START talks in Geneva -- The Reagan Administration has proposed to cut the number of strategic missile warheads by 1/3.
  - (2) INF talks in Geneva -- The President first proposed the "zero-zero" option, which would mean that neither the Soviets nor the U.S. would deploy intermediate range missiles. In view of Soviet intransigence, the President has since made a series of offers that would make a balanced reduction

in such missiles. Should the Soviets walk out of the INF talks, as they have threatened, the U.S. will remain at the table, eager to negotiate.

(3) MBFR talks in Vienna -- These negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions are aimed at reducing each side's military manpower in Central Europe. The West put a new draft treaty on the table in July, 1982, but the East has not yet responded constructively.

(4) Chemical weapons talks in Geneva -- In the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, the U.S. and its allies are seeking a complete and verifiable ban on chemical weapons production and stockpiling. The U.S. has also drawn attention to violations of existing accords by the Soviets and their allies, who have employed chemical and toxin weapons in Afghanistan, Kampuchea and Laos.

Note: In addition to these formal talks, the U.S. under President Reagan has proposed to the Soviets to begin negotiations on nuclear testing and on a range of new confidence-building measures (including prior notification of ballistic missile launches, prior notification of major military exercises, and expanded exchange of forces data).

#### Other Points of Interest

- o There are federal plans for civil defense and the Reagan administration is working to improve them, but no one in this country believes that any plan -- no matter how comprehensive and well-thought-out -- can fully prepare for nuclear attack.
- o U.S. policies of deterrence are supported overseas and by both parties here at home. This fall, for example, the U.S. is deploying intermediate range missiles to Europe at the request of NATO and under an agreement reached by the Carter administration. Most of the current Democratic contenders for President, including Messrs. Mondale and Glenn, favor the deployment.
- o Critics frequently -- and mistakenly -- charge that the U.S. is blindly building up stockpiles of weapons. In

fact, the U.S. has consistently tried to maintain the lowest possible number of nuclear weapons. Today, the U.S. has 1/3 fewer nuclear weapons than in 1965, and the total yield (or megatonnage) is only 1/4 of what it was in 1960.

- o Nuclear freeze advocates are citing the ABC film as support for their view. What they fail to say is that a freeze on the number of weapons at present levels would freeze the risk at present levels. President Reagan is committed to going beyond a freeze, reducing both the numbers of weapons and the risks of war.

\* \* \*

"The Day After"

596 telephone calls received between 8:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. Sunday evening

When the telephone bank volunteer spoke with the caller, he/she would try to ask the following question:

Do you think President Reagan is on the right track in trying to reduce nuclear weapons?

299 responded YES  
14 " NO

In the regular course of the telephone calls, the following numbers were tallied.

161 support the President and are opposed to nuclear war  
97 do not support the President are opposed to nuclear war

The President saw an ealier viewing of the film last week and responded

"This is the type of thing our Administration is trying to prevent"

The President watched the film again last evening and responded with the same response he had after viewing it the first time.

"This is the type of thing our Administration is trying to prevent"