

Speaker says freeze leads to imbalance

By Michele Matassa
Of the Emerald

A bilateral nuclear freeze would put the United States at a disadvantage because it would not be balanced, mutual or verifiable, an arms race expert said Sunday.

The Soviet Union has demonstrated an "imperialistic pattern" that would prevent a successful freeze, said University of Southern California associate professor Robin Ranger.

Ranger, author of "Arms and Politics 1958-78: Arms Control in a Changing Political Context," spoke as part of Ground Zero Week, sponsored by Students for a Nuclear Free Future.

He currently assists William Van Cleave, director of Pres. Ronald Reagan's Defense Department Transition Team.

Ranger explained why a freeze would not be balanced.

He said that because U.S. strategic weapons date to the late 1950s and 1960s, depreciation would cause the U.S. military to "wither away" if production were stopped. The United States would experience a 25-percent decrease in its forces in the first five years of a freeze, Ranger added.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, would suffer only a 5-10 percent decrease because its missiles were produced as late as 1974, he said.

Ranger predicted the freeze would not be mutual because "the United States would observe it scrupulously" and the Soviets would continue to introduce new weapons systems by calling them "modifications" of old ones.

"The U.S., like its allies, has always overcomplied with arms control agreements. If there's a test ban limit of 150 kilotons, to be on the safe side we test well under that limit because we want to preserve the spirit. We want to promote arms control," Ranger said.

In the past, the Soviets have refused to cooperate with U.S. freeze proposals, choosing to "put all of their eggs in the military basket," Ranger said. It would be impossible for the United States to verify the freeze on the Soviet side, he said.

"The U.S. verification capability has to produce absolute proof of Soviet violation" to "satisfy you, the American public," Ranger said.

To do this, the administration would have to stage an intense inspection network and "it's very unlikely that Yuri Andropov would agree to that kind of intrusive verification," he said.

Because a freeze would make the United States an underdog, Ranger sees support for the freeze as a political game.

"Why have Senators Kennedy and Hatfield backed the nuclear freeze? I think quite honestly they have made a choice... to put their own political interests ahead of those of the country."

"Those senators know perfectly well that a freeze is not mutual, it's not balanced and it's not verifiable," Ranger said. "They have encouraged, and I think diluted, the American public into believing that these desirable sort of agreements are possible."



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