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SALT Agreement Announcement Likely Next Week

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Agreement on the main points of a strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT) probably will be announced next week, the State Department said yesterday, although the accord will require further work before it is signed by U.S. and Soviet leaders.

That was revealed by department spokesman Hodding Carter after a meeting between Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance and Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy F. Dobrynin. Carter said the two, who are in charge of negotiating the substantive issues in the SALT II talks, will meet again early next week to try to complete their work.

He added that Vance and Dobrynin also began discussing briefly the date and place for a treaty-signing summit between President Carter and Soviet President Leonid I. Brezhnev. Because of Brezhnev's health problems, the summit is expected to be in a neutral European capital such as Stockholm, Geneva or Vienna.

The spokesman gave no further details. But U.S. officials are understood to be working on the assumption that the drive for a SALT II agreement will follow this rough timetable:

- Conclusion by Vance and Dobrynin of negotiations on the remaining major issues by the middle of next week, or, failing that, during the following week.

- Referral of their agreements to the U.S. and Soviet SALT delegations in Geneva for the ironing out of the treaty text and other technical details, a process expected to take approximately two weeks.

- Consultations with the Soviets, while the Geneva technical talks are in progress, on setting up the summit, with the expectation that it will take place sometime in June.

- Forwarding of the treaty to the Senate after the summit in hopes that the Senate will be able to conclude its SALT debate and vote on approving the treaty during the fall.

On Tuesday, a senior U.S. official told reporters that the United States and the Soviets had agreed that all

major SALT issues should be resolved before the summit. Yesterday, though, it was made known that, while all the main points will be agreed to in principle, some specific aspects of them will be left for a final decision by Carter and Brezhnev when they meet.

The United States is known to hope that the summit will provide an opportunity for wide-ranging talks between the two leaders in three general areas: further arms-control initiatives by the superpowers, trade between the two countries and the U.S.-Soviet political relationship, with emphasis on how it affects regional problems such as the Middle East situation.

However, detailed talks on a summit agenda have not yet been held, and the final shape of the meeting will be determined by such factors as how much time has to be spent on SALT issues and whether Brezhnev's health will permit extensive discussions on other subjects.

SALT questions still awaiting resolution are understood to include limits on cruise missiles, definitions of intercontinental ballistics missiles and questions dealing with testing of strategic weapons and of how many warheads will be allowed on missiles.

This last issue, in particular, is known to have occupied much of the time in recent Vance-Dobrynin meetings. Limits on warheads already have been agreed in principle, but the United States became concerned by the capability shown by the Soviet test firing of an SS18 land-based missile in December.

Although the missile carried only 10 warheads, U.S. intelligence analysis indicated that it could have fired more warheads, and the United States wants treaty language dealing with each side's potential to exceed the warhead limits through such testing.

At yesterday's meeting, Vance is understood to have accepted the most recent Soviet proposal on this point, with certain minor modifications. Although the requested U.S. changes were described as very minor, Dobrynin said he couldn't agree to them on his own authority and would have to refer them to Moscow for a decision.