

Radio Address to the Nation on Soviet Strategic Defense Programs

October 12, 1985

Last week our State and Defense Departments released the most comprehensive report yet on the strategic defense programs of the Soviet Union. You can obtain a copy of it's called "Soviet Strategic Defense Programs" --by writing the Department of Defense in Washington, DC. This report shows that the Soviets not only continue to build up their offensive nuclear forces at an unprecedented rate, they're also spending almost as much on strategic defense.

For years, we have deterred aggression through the threat of nuclear retaliation, but we virtually ignored our defensive needs. While the Soviets were expanding their own involvement in strategic defense, we were virtually standing still. At this point, their buildup of offensive weapons combined with their very extensive strategic defense programs is threatening the security of the West. We must respond in three ways: first, by modernizing our own strategic forces, the forces on which deterrence depends; second, by doing our part to get an agreement with the Soviets in Geneva for equitable and verifiable reductions in offensive nuclear forces; and third, by investigating the possibilities of nonnuclear defenses to help protect the United States and our allies from attack.

It's our hope that this research and testing under our Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI, may, in fact, point the way to advanced defenses that could protect millions of people. We've got to restore military balance between the United States and the Soviet Union, and we need your support for both a strong defense and a strong deterrent against aggression. In a democracy, no policy can be sustained without such public support, but the Soviet Union is not a democracy. We see this in its internal structure, in its treatment of the individual, and in the way it conducts its foreign affairs. The Soviets refuse to admit they have any strategic defense program at all. This is not only deception, its dangerous deception, for without a full picture of what is going on, the people of the world cannot know what they need to know to keep the peace.

Let me give you just a few details about Soviet strategic defense programs. First of all, unlike our own,

Soviet activities go well beyond research. The Soviet Union today has the world's only operational antiballistic missile system. The Soviet Union also has the world's only operational antisatellite system and the world's most extensive strategic air defense network. Beyond that, the Soviets are engaged in a number of activities that raise questions about their commitment to the antiballistic missile treaty of 1972, including the construction of a new radar in central Siberia, which is an out-and-out violation of the treaty. But that's not all. The Soviets have for a long time been doing advanced research on their version of SDI. They don't talk about that; all they say about SDI is that the United States shouldn't have it, but as many as 10,000 Soviet scientists and engineers are believed to be working on research related to SDI. They're doing so well, our experts say they may be able to put an advanced technology defensive system in space by the end of the century.

When you look at what the Soviets are doing in both strategic offense and defense, you realize that our SDI research program is crucial to maintain the military balance and protect the liberty and freedom of the West. America's research and testing is being conducted within the terms of the ABM treaty. I want to make it clear that we welcome the day when the Soviet Union can shoot down any incoming missile, so long as the United States can shoot down any incoming missile, too. Our SDI research offers the hope that we can enhance U.S. and allied security through greater reliance on defenses which threaten no one, rather than on offensive nuclear weapons which could kill millions. What I'm speaking of is a balance of safety, as opposed to a balance of terror. This is not only morally preferable, but it may result in getting rid of nuclear weapons altogether. It would be irresponsible and dangerous on our part to deny this promise to the world.

And so, we're dealing with the real issue of peace, with the real issue of how to free the entire world from the nuclear threat. And this is why we want the Soviets to join us now in agreeing to equitable and verifiable reductions, and I mean significant reductions in

offensive nuclear arms. And it's why we're seeking to discuss with the Soviet Union, even now in Geneva, our hopes for the creation of a world with more defense and less and less offense. The sooner the Soviet Union comes clean about its own strategic defense programs and joins with us in a real dialog to reduce

the risk of war, the better it will be for the world. Write the Defense Department and ask for the "Soviet Strategic Defense Programs."

Until next week, thanks for listening, and God bless you.