

Statement by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Speakes on the MX Missile Report

March 4, 1985

The President has submitted to the Congress his report on continuing the acquisition of the Peacekeeper missiles as mandated in the fiscal year 1985 defense appropriation and authorization acts.

The report strongly emphasizes the need for continued congressional funding of the MX/Peacekeeper missile, especially the 21 missiles from the FY 85 Defense Department request to be considered by Congress later this month. Congress already approved funding for production of 21 missiles in FY 84, and these missiles are in production, at this time, in preparation for deployment at F.E. Warren AFB in Wyoming beginning in 1986. The full complement of 100 missiles is scheduled to be operational by December 1989. Total cost of the program is \$21.5 billion, with approximately half of the funding approved at this time.

The report describes Peacekeeper as "... a necessary part of our concerted effort both to improve deterrence and strategic stability and to enhance our ability to achieve deep meaningful arms reductions."

The report also details the buildup in new Soviet strategic weapons, including two new ICBM's, three new bombers, and additions to its submarine missile force. The pace of the Soviet strategic force improvements has given no indication of slackening over the past year.

The President is concerned that a perception may develop in the minds of the Soviets that the United States is unable or unwilling to take the steps necessary to offset their growing strategic power, giving the Soviet leadership confidence it can use its political and military leverage to exert influence against other nations in the world. Furthermore, a growing risk of direct confrontation with the Soviet Union could cause regional powers to become more inclined to accept a greater level of Soviet interference in their affairs. And most dangerously, this perception, the President believes, could over time suggest to the Soviet leadership that the threat or actual use of military force, including nuclear weapons, against the United States or its allies could result in significant military advantages for them.

The report describes all facets of the President's strategic modernization program: the deployment of B - 52 bombers with the air-launched cruise missile, continued production of the B - 1B strategic bomber, operational deployment of new Trident submarines, initial deployment of the sea-launched cruise missile, new communication systems, preliminary research and development efforts for the new small ICBM, and the successful flight test for the MX/Peacekeeper ICBM.

This final and cornerstone system of the President's strategic program is described as being on cost, on schedule, and as meeting or exceeding every performance goal set for it. The Peacekeeper's superior performance has been verified by seven consecutive successful flight tests of the missile, during which it met or exceeded performance goals. The report points out, however, that a strong modern triad and maintaining deterrence requires more than Peacekeeper flight testing; continued production and deployment of this missile is essential.

The President makes clear the vital role of the Peacekeeper in the forthcoming arms reduction negotiations in Geneva with the Soviet Union. He believes continued procurement and deployment of Peacekeeper is necessary to show U.S. national resolve to modernize the strategic forces, which underpin our national policy of deterrence. The President points out that if we fail, on the eve of these new negotiations in Geneva, to proceed with Peacekeeper production and deployment, the impact of

our lack of resolve may not be limited to failure of the strategic negotiations, but may affect the broader East-West relationship as well.

In this respect, the President believes a cancellation or slowdown of Peacekeeper deployment in existing Minuteman silos would give the unmistakable appearance of a lack of national resolve on the part of the United States. There would be little reason for the Soviets to engage in meaningful arms reduction initiatives without Peacekeeper because they will have achieved their desired goal with no concessions on their part whatsoever.

The President believes the strategic modernization program to be vital for the defense of the United States, necessary for meaningful arms reductions negotiations, and vital to our continued deterrent posture. He urges the Congress to continue funding the Peacekeeper missile system, the cornerstone of the strategic modernization program.

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1985/30485b.htm>