

Statement on Senate Action on Production of the MX Missile and Announcing the Formation of a Bipartisan Commission To Study Basing Options

December 17, 1982

The action taken early this morning by the Senate with regard to the MX missile program is both welcome and wise. It expresses solid understanding and support for the need to modernize the land-based leg of the triad. As the Senate recognizes, it is only through this triad approach that we can hope to preserve an effective deterrent and go forward with negotiations toward real arms reductions.

Beyond that, the Senate was also expressing some rather serious concerns which I take very much to heart. Foremost among these was uncertainty with respect to the approach for basing the missile. This concern is reasonable, since the survivability of this system must be assured and an effective basing plan plays the central role. This extremely complex problem deserves very careful and deliberate consideration, and I am pleased that this will be allowed to take place early in the new Congress.

Between now and the time the final decision must be taken next spring, it is essential that every Member of Congress and, indeed, as many as possible of the American people gain a full appreciation of alternative solutions to this problem. Toward that end I pledge to the Congress and to all Americans the most exhaustive, renewed analysis possible of every apparent option. To assist in this effort, I am today announcing my intention to appoint a bipartisan commission, comprised of senior officials from previous administrations as well as technical experts. I will ask the members to work with the Department of Defense and join together in a bipartisan effort to forge a consensus as to the plan which will best assure the national security interests of our country in the years ahead.

The contributions of this panel of distinguished Americans will be extremely important. In addition, I pledge to the Congress the fullest possible coordination of the work of this commission with Senators and Members. It is essential that if we are to reach our common goals within the time required by last night's vote, the Congress play a central role in shaping this, the most important strategic modernization decision of the postwar period. Again, I would like to express my appreciation for the responsible position taken by the Senate and ask that this wisdom be reflected in the House, as together we join in this important undertaking.

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