

Strategic Defense Initiative

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example of solid friendship, based on mutual respect and whose objective is nothing more noble than strengthening the cause of peace in our part of the world. We both share an irreversible commitment to bring total peace to an area whose peoples have long suffered from conflicts and violence. Nothing is more worthwhile than an investment in peace. In the interdependent world in which we live, such an investment becomes even more precious, if not indispensable. It is in that sense that the American-Egyptian partnership is a partnership for peace in the Middle East and, as such, offers the greatest contribution to the world peace.

Let me once again congratulate you on the fact that you have been reelected the President of the great Nation by such an impressive majority of the American people. What stands behind that are great American values: faith in God, faith in human ingenuity, courage, and enlightened patriotism.

Let me also express our admiration for Vice President George Bush, who I know did all the best and planned his travels in such a way that he would have made it possible for us to meet with him here during the trip. But, as the saying goes in Arabic, "Man plans and God determines."

Dear President and dear friends, may I wish you to rise in a tribute of admiration and respect for the President of the United States, President Ronald Reagan, and for his great country, the United States, and the great American people.

¹Text from Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents of Mar. 18, 1985.

²Made to news correspondents assembled at the South Portico of the White House.

³Made in the Thomas Jefferson Room at the Department of State (opening remarks omitted here). ■

No issue is of greater importance to mankind today than strategic stability. A world awaits, with asperity, the reconvening of nuclear arms control negotiations on March 12. The Soviet Union has returned to the bargaining table, and we welcome them back. Ahead of us stretches a difficult path. The United States seeks equitable and verifiable agreements which significantly reduce the size of both U.S. and Soviet nuclear arsenals. We hope the Soviet Union will join us in a constructive search for necessary solutions to our differences.

A Historical Perspective

These differences are profound. To see this best, it is useful to take a historical perspective. We live in a world of change. As in social and scientific areas, the strategic picture too has changed greatly since the early 1970s when the ABM [Anti-Ballistic Missile] Treaty was signed. Certain hopes and assumptions underlying that treaty, and the accompanying SALT I [strategic arms limitation talks] Interim Agreement, have been altered substantially.

One of these underlying assumptions was that the two agreements would lead to real reductions in offensive nuclear systems. That didn't happen. In negotiations, the Soviet Union has consistently refused to accept meaningful and verifiable reductions in offensive nuclear arsenals. SALT II did no more than set caps on already high levels of strategic arms. It is clear now that the Soviet Union never intended to settle for the rough equivalence of offensive strategic forces foreshadowed in the SALT I agreements.

Since SALT I was signed, the Soviet Union has deployed eight new strategic ballistic missiles, five new ballistic missile submarine classes, and a new strategic bomber. In comparison, the United States has fielded only one new missile system, one submarine class, and has delayed deployment of the B-1 bomber. This buildup by the Soviet Union has altered the balance between

opposing forces so necessary to maintaining stable deterrence. We are very concerned about the qualities of new Soviet ballistic missile systems. In time of crisis, these weapons are the most destabilizing; they are swift, carry a big payload, are mobile, and are accurate. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the Soviet Union is acquiring a survivable, first-strike capability which will be far less easy to deter.

The second assumption was that there would be mutual restraints on strategic defense. This was based on the hope that the Soviets would come to accept, in doctrine and in practice, that this mutual vulnerability to each other's offensive nuclear forces was in our common interest. This innocent expectation did not materialize either. While the United States stopped deployment of strategic defenses, the Soviet Union continued to develop and deploy successive generations of antiballistic missiles, tracking radars, interceptor aircraft, and surface-to-air missiles. In fact, spending on strategic defense has been equal to or greater than that on strategic offense. They have deployed around Moscow the world's only ballistic missile defensive system. Soviet research and development of more advanced technologies, including sophisticated directed energy weapons, proceeded throughout the 1970s into the mid-1980s at a pace far in excess of our own efforts. Furthermore, along with already deployed phased-array radars, construction continues on one in central Siberia apparently capable of battle management, in clear violation of the ABM Treaty. They have constructed numerous hardened leadership bunkers and continue expansion of their extensive network of civil defense. Altogether, these efforts increase the possibility of sudden Soviet abandonment of the ABM Treaty and rapid nationwide expansion of their antiballistic defenses.

We could say that a third assumption, not surprisingly, was an expectation in the West that these and other arms control agreements would be fully observed. Here, too, we have been disappointed. The Soviet record on compliance overall is, at best, disappointing. And it is particularly disturbing in the strategic area, where they have committed serious violations of both offensive and defensive agreements. Although we

have pursued resolution of these violations with the Soviet Union in diplomatic channels, we have received little satisfaction to date.

There is one more change I would like to mention. The assumptions made by the American negotiators in 1972 also had a technological premise. It was not feasible then to develop an effective defense against ballistic missiles. But technology does not stand still. Just as we have observed the qualitative advance in strategic offensive arms, new breakthroughs in the past few years offer the promise that a militarily sound and cost-effective defense may be possible.

The Pattern Since 1972

The pattern since 1972 is clear and disturbing. Soviet actions have disproved our assumptions and thwarted real arms reductions. The balances between offensive forces, which have for years maintained deterrence between the nuclear powers, are being upset by the Soviet Union. Restraint on our part since SALT I in the deployment of offensive strategic weapons has gone unmatched by the Soviets. Instead, they have continued to increase the size, mobility, and accuracy of their offensive nuclear arsenals.

No less alarming, in both size and scope, is their investment in strategic defense over the last 20 years. As they develop antiballistic missiles capable of being moved and widely deployed in relatively little time, we must ask, for what purpose? When they harden an expanding system of command and control, we must ask the question, why? As they shield their leadership, harden their missile silos, and spend vast sums on civil defense, we must ask, to what end? The West simply has not posed a growing threat that would warrant such Soviet actions. But faced with Soviet unwillingness to date to agree to mutual, verifiable reductions in offensive arsenals, the West has no choice. We have to examine restoring the balance and alternative means for preserving a stable deterrence. We face three inter-related options in our efforts to restore and maintain the balance.

First, we can attempt, through negotiations, to get the Soviets to reduce offensive systems to equal levels. This will be our priority task in Geneva. But, if the past is any guide, our job will be difficult. We are prepared to be open, flexible, and constructive and will work diligently with the Soviet Union to

negotiate effective, verifiable arms reductions. Remember, though, it will take two to make these negotiations work.

Second, we can try to reverse the trends by simply attempting to match the Soviet activity and maintain an offensive nuclear balance. In the short run, we certainly have to restore and maintain that balance until other options are available. Our strategic modernization program and NATO's LRINF [longer range intermediate-range nuclear forces] missile modernization programs do this.

Finally, we can devote our energies to see if there is a better way to provide for the security of both the United States and our allies by strengthening deterrence through greater reliance on defensive systems—systems that threaten no one.

We will pursue all three options in the necessary and appropriate ways.

- We will press on in pursuit of equitable and verifiable arms reductions. But this must be a two-way street, and it will take time.
- We will maintain the nuclear balance until other alternatives are available. Peacekeeper and the NATO LRINF modernization program are essential in this regard.
- Finally, we must explore the growing potential of the new defensive technologies.

The Need To Explore Strategic Defenses

Let me concentrate on the need to explore strategic defenses, and give you three concrete arguments why we have made the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) a central point of our defense programs.

The first argument revolves around deterrence. We have ignored one basic fact about a world in which there are no defenses. Without defenses, it is extremely easy for an attacker to plan his first strike. Once an attacker launches his ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile], he knows, within a certain range, just what damage he will do because there is nothing to interfere with his attack. He can plan and calculate just what forces he needs to destroy the forces on the other side. If he has the money and the inclination, he can then buy those forces. It is basically an engineering problem. Well, the Soviets have done their calculations, and they have had the time and money to buy their forces.

But when you introduce defenses, even defenses that are less than perfect, the problem is entirely different. An attacker will not be able to launch a missile and destroy a target. He has no real idea of whether his attack plan will work or, if he succeeds partially, which targets he will miss because he cannot know how good our defenses will be. The defender will also be uncertain. But he is not deciding whether to attack. With defenses, suddenly what was an engineering problem becomes a much tougher, more expensive military problem. Even defenses that are imperfect strengthen deterrence because they create enormous headaches and uncertainties for anyone contemplating an attack. That is a good thing to do.

The second point involves saving lives. Very bluntly, we can deter an attack by defeating that attack or by threatening to kill enemy civilians in retaliation. There is no question in my mind that it is far better to be able to defeat the attack and thus deter it from occurring in the first place. SDI, for the reasons I have just discussed, can help us make that judgment, without defenses, we must continue to rely on retaliation in order to deter a nuclear attack.

Many of those who oppose SDI advocate reliance on assured destruction in order to keep the peace. Let me point out something about assured destruction. There has been much discussion about nuclear winter recently. While there are many uncertainties, one thing is clear. Nuclear winter is most likely to be caused by the smoke and dust from burning cities that have been attacked by nuclear weapons. Everything in our Administration's strategic weapons policy, including SDI, is designed to move us away from that kind of attack. Those who disagree with us and who continue to support the discredited policy of assured destruction must face the following fact: the kind of war that could occur if their policies were adopted is precisely the kind of war most likely to cause nuclear winter.

Finally, I would like to address a problem less massive but perhaps more urgent than deterring a Soviet attack. Our efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation have had a good deal of success. Certainly there are fewer countries today with nuclear weapons than anyone would have predicted 20 years ago. But many countries continue to seek nuclear weapons. We know that many of them also seek ballistic missile technology. We will not reduce our nonproliferation work. But I believe it is an act of simple

prudence to investigate defenses that could defeat limited nuclear attacks or accidental nuclear attacks.

The Strategic Defense Initiative

For these reasons, President Reagan has asked this nation to undertake a program of vigorous research, the Strategic Defense Initiative. It will focus on advanced defensive technologies with the aim of finding ways to provide a better basis for deterring aggression, strengthening stability, and increasing the security of the United States and our allies. Our efforts will be in full compliance with the ABM Treaty.

In practical terms, a strategic defensive option must be cost effective. That is, it must be cheaper and easier to add defensive capability than offensive capability. Otherwise, there would be incentive to expand the offensive arms we seek to reduce. In addition, any defensive system must be survivable in the face of attack or else it could invite an effort to overwhelm it regardless of cost. The goal of strategic stability demands such high performance standards.

In our relations with other nations, strategic defensive options must satisfy not only our own security concerns but also those of our allies and the Soviet Union. The United States is actively consulting our allies to respond to their concerns and questions regarding SDI. Since this is a research program, their thoughts are essential as we examine the capabilities and set performance criteria for the defensive technology. Further, no step away from an offensive deterrent structure which has so effectively kept the peace in Europe can or will ignore the voice of our allies. Our own national survival depends on our allies' security from attack and safety from all wars.

In the new negotiations in Geneva and in other talks, we hope to develop with the Soviet Union mutual understanding of each other's security concerns. The United States does not seek superiority. This is difficult for the Soviet Union to comprehend since they judge us by their own ambitions. But, the facts of history are clear in this regard. No nation in history has acted so responsibly while possessing so superior a position in weaponry as the United States after World War II, when we were the only nation with nuclear arms. We are ready, if the technology proves feasible and cost effective, to consider integration of defensive systems into the mix of forces of both sides. This would

be in the context of a cooperative, balanced, and verifiable environment that reflects a balance of offensive and defensive forces in ways that reduce existing nuclear arsenals while enhancing security and stability. If our research proves the feasibility of the concepts, a negotiated transition period of many years with assurance of stability and security throughout will be essential.

Finally, there are at least four myths about SDI which I wish to dispel.

- The first myth is that the United States is attempting to "militarize space." This is a Soviet propaganda line, and it is grievously misleading. Activities in space generally fall into three categories: commercial, scientific, and military. Orbiting overhead are over 800 Soviet satellites, compared to some 400 satellites of the West. That is a ratio of 2 to 1, and unlike in the West, the vast majority of Soviet satellites are military. These military satellites travel overhead in a space the Soviets threaten with the only antisatellite weapons now in existence. Further, it was the Soviet Union which first developed, in 1957, the ICBMs which travel through space and which now carry far more warheads in total than U.S. systems. What space is there left which the Soviet Union has not already militarized? Space has long been used for military purposes. When the Soviet Union speaks of "preventing the militarization of space" and of an ASAT [antisatellite weapon] moratorium, they are being extremely disingenuous by ignoring 15 years of their determined effort in this domain.

- The next myth is that the United States is upsetting an agreed philosophy of "mutual assured destruction," upon which strategic stability allegedly rests. I hope I have exploded that myth already today by describing the destabilizing march of the Soviet strategic buildup and the ever-expanding shielding of their forces and leadership from "assured destruction." A U.S.-Soviet comparison of the investment in so-called passive defense of the shielding of populations and economic base from nuclear attack is simply not possible. So large is the Soviet effort and so minimal is our own that the ratio approaches absurdity. Their civil defense preparations are enormous. Our own small efforts show we in the West have great difficulty even conceiving of life after a nuclear war.

- Third, the Soviet Union contends that SDI will be destabilizing. Their stated apprehension over the demise of a stable deterrent is ironic. The United States is heavily involved in diplomatic and private consultations as it ponders the accelerating developments in strategic defense which hold promise for strengthening deterrence in the future. As I stated earlier, strategic defensive options must also strengthen stability, or they will not be considered. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, continues to develop and deploy a new generation of strategic offensive ballistic missiles and expand their already considerable defensive capabilities. They have consulted with no one and feel they should answer to no one, as they further upset a stable balance in pursuit of their own internal needs.

- The last myth is that the Strategic Defense Initiative will complicate the arms control process. The truth is that it was the Strategic Defense Initiative, combined with the demonstrated resolve of the Western allies to modernize their strategic deterrent, which brought the Soviet Union back to the negotiating table. There is mounting evidence that defensive technologies offer real hope of reducing the need for offensive nuclear arsenals in the future. To engage in talks aimed at controlling arms without discussing what may prove to be the best tool to aid the effort is to trivialize the whole process. President Reagan is committed to serious and substantive progress in reducing the size of existing nuclear arsenals and enhancing security and stability. His acceptance of the moral challenge to explore all means available to achieve this end is essential.

To close, let me say once again that the Strategic Defense Initiative is a prudent and moral response to continuing Soviet actions which threaten world stability and security. SDI is a research program wholly within the limits of the ABM Treaty. This research is designed to explore the feasibility of strategic defense, given new technologies now available to the defense community. SDI seeks answers to those questions that peaceful nations must ask. If we are to keep the balance which guarantees peace, we can do no less. ■