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UNCLASSIFIED  
The White House  
Washington

*National Security Decision  
Directive Number 261*

February 18, 1987

**CONSULTATIONS ON THE SDI PROGRAM**

*Initiation of Consultations.* Having recently completed a series of discussions with my principal advisors on the future conduct of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program, I would like both the Congress and key Allies to be consulted on the substance of the decisions that I face. The material provided at the attachment to this NSDD shall be used as the basis of this consultation. The initial report on the results of this consultation should be provided to me by March 2, 1987.

*Public Diplomacy.* As we consult, we should anticipate increased public speculation about the future of the SDI program and its relationship to the ABM Treaty. It is essential that all responses to such speculation be fully coordinated in advance to the maximum extent possible.

*Related Activity in the Nuclear and Space Talks.* We should also anticipate increased Soviet interest and activity in an attempt to influence my future decisions. Therefore, the U.S. delegation to the Nuclear and Space Talks will have to take special care to continue to protect all U.S. options.

With regard to the specific issue of activities permitted and prohibited under the ABM Treaty, it is essential that we avoid giving the Soviet Union the mistaken impression that we are willing to accept additional restrictions on the conduct of the SDI program either through the process of clarifying the terms of a 15 year old treaty or by renegotiating what the ABM Treaty permits or prohibits. However, while maintaining the principal focus of the negotiations on the U.S. proposals and agenda, the Defense and Space negotiating group is authorized to respond to the Soviet pursuit of their proposals by continuing to criticize, question, and probe them (in accordance with their instructions), and by pointing out ways in which U.S. proposals respond to Soviet concerns.

Additionally, the Defense and Space negotiating group is authorized to attempt to clarify areas of agreement and disagreement. In seeking such clarification, the negotiating group has been instructed to keep in mind that it is not in the U.S. interest to accept any changes in the understanding of key terms and definitions associated with the ABM Treaty which alter that which has already been negotiated and agreed. The negotiating group is called upon to counter and reject Soviet attempts indirectly to narrow that which is permitted by the treaty. In responding to Soviet attempts to promote their proposed definitions, the negotiating group will make it clear that the U.S. will not accept additional constraints on research, development and testing beyond those established by the treaty.

*Additional Tasking.* In addition to the consultations on the above, I direct that the following be undertaken.

- a. The Department of Defense will provide to me by April 30, 1987, a plan which includes as a minimum:
  1. the specific programmatic steps that the Secretary of Defense recommends be taken if I authorize the restructuring of the SDI program;

2. a description, including dates, of the first planning activities which would require the use of the broader interpretation of the ABM Treaty,
  3. a description, including dates, of the first tests which would require the broader interpretation; and
  4. an assessment of the impact of not being permitted to take these actions.
- b. The Department of Defense, in coordination with NASA and other agencies as appropriate, will provide to me by April 30, 1987, recommendations on to increase U.S. space heavy lift capability. These recommendations should include estimates of cost. Additionally, the Department of Defense should provide its assessment of the impact of the funding requirements associated with recommended improvements to U.S. space heavy lift capability on other Defense needs.
- c. The Legal Advisor of the Department of State, working with other Departments and Agencies as appropriate, will complete work on the remaining issues associated with the interpretation of the ABM Treaty as soon as possible, but not later than April 30, 1987. He will provide a plan to accomplish this task for my approval not later than February 27, 1987. This plan should include a recommendation concerning how the results of this work would be appropriately shared with Congress and Allies.
- d. The National Security Advisor, working with Departments and Agencies as appropriate, will coordinate the consultations authorized by this NSDD with both the Congress and Allies.

**Attachment:**  
**Terms of Consultation**

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## TERMS OF CONSULTATION ON THE SDI PROGRAM

### Criteria and Technology

- When we initiated the SDI program, we recognized the importance of ensuring that advances in technology were properly channeled to carry the program into areas in which stability and security would be enhanced, not diminished.
- To accomplish this, we developed a series of criteria by which we could judge technological options as they emerged. These criteria include military effectiveness, survivability and cost effectiveness at the margin.
- And, we set for the SDI program the goal of not merely providing technologically feasible options for advanced defenses, but of finding options that meet our criteria, and doing so as expeditiously as possible while conducting our program under the terms of the ABM Treaty.
- In the almost four years since the SDI program began its work, technology has advanced at an unexpectedly fast pace, and is still accelerating. Therefore, the President asked for a review of both the program and its associated policy guidance to ensure that the policy guidance was able to stay ahead of the technology.
- The results of our review, to date, are encouraging both from the point of view of the status of the technology, and the validity of our fundamental policy.
- Based upon the progress made to date, we remain convinced that the basic goal of the SDI program is achievable. In fact, if the rate of technological progress continues as now anticipated, that goal may be reached much sooner than we had expected.
- This progress has enabled us to begin now to examine concrete, working hypotheses about the types of defensive options that may be available in the early-to-mid 1990s, and has given us new insights into the contingencies that we would face were we to move to

implement the fruits of our research

### **Early Deployment Decision**

- However, the SDI program has not yet progressed to the point that it has generated options involving advanced defenses which meet our criteria. Therefore, despite speculation to the contrary, discussion about an imminent "early deployment" decision is not appropriate at this time.

### **Concept of Incremental Capability**

- Further, it is very unlikely that we could ever deploy defenses capable of fully achieving the overall objective that the President set for the SDI program in one single step.
- It is much more likely that we will have to make future decisions on a series of defensive options, each of which provide increments of that capability.
- A fundamental issue, then, is whether we can build the overall defensive capability, we seek in "increments" while remaining true to our overall objective, while constantly maintaining the quality of stability and security we seek, and while guarding against inefficient use of limited resources

### **Incremental Capability and Criteria**

- One of the first questions to be considered is whether our previously identified criteria remain valid under such a concept.
- Since our overall objective remains unchanged, we continue to believe that the defense resulting from the various increments must be expected to meet our basic criteria.
- The criterion of military effectiveness aids us by focusing the research efforts on outcomes that support our desired goal, rendering ballistic missiles obsolete.
- We don't simply seek to complement our offensive retaliatory forces by defending them against a disarming 1st strike
- On the contrary, we seek a transition to a more stable basis for deterrence which makes use of the increased contribution of defenses which threaten no one, and an improved basis for deterrence which allows us simultaneously to move to lower overall levels of strategic offensive forces while always maintaining our security and that of our allies.
- The criterion of survivability ensures that the deployment of defenses does not increase crisis instability. If vulnerable, it could generate an incentive in a crisis for an aggressor to attack the defenses
- Defenses need not be invulnerable, but must be able to maintain a sufficient degree of effectiveness to fulfill their mission, even in the face of determined attacks against them
- By the criterion of *cost effectiveness* at the margin, we mean that any defensive system should be designed so as not to provide incentives to a potential adversary either to acquire or to retain additional offensive forces in an effort to defeat or overwhelm the effectiveness of our defense.
- Cost effectiveness at the margin is much more than an economic criterion, although it is couched in economic terms. If met, this criterion offers us the opportunity, to pursue both stabilizing defenses *and* offensive force reductions as mutually reinforcing goals.
- The criteria of survivability and cost effectiveness provide needed protection against increasing instability. Therefore, it is our view that these two criteria must be appropriately applied to all options considered.
- On the other hand, while the criteria of military effectiveness should also be applied, it certainly cannot require that an option designed to provide incremental capability be expected to achieve the full objective set for the program.
- At the same time, we must ensure that we consider the very real limitations that exist on the resources available both for the deployment of incremental capability and for the continued research into the remaining increments needed to accomplish our overall objective
- Therefore, in applying the concept of military effectiveness to options designed to provide incremental capability, we are inclined to require that any such option:

- a. clearly add an element upon which the larger, integrated system can continue to be built, and, in the process,
- b. perform a militarily useful function which contributes an increase in our security commensurate with the commitment of resources involved.

### **Promising Technologies**

- We believe that new technological options will be available that will be able to meet both our general criteria and the additional criteria identified for use in evaluating options designed to provide incremental capability
- For example, if progress continues to be made as anticipated, we may have the option in the relatively near future to consider a decision to deploy a two-layered system which could destroy enough of an attacking ballistic missile force to introduce sufficient uncertainty to enhance materially our ability to deter such an attack and, thus, increase overall stability.
- Some of the President's advisors estimate that were we to use space-based kinetic kill vehicles (SBKKVs) as a boost-phase layer in combination with some ground-based late-mid-course kill mechanisms, such a system could begin deployment by the 1993/4 time frame at reasonable cost.
- Such a system would not be able to engage all attacking ballistic missiles. Rather, it would be designed to destroy a significant portion any ballistic missile attack, and to do so in a manner that would make it impossible for the aggressor to know which ballistic missile warheads would get through our defenses to their targets.
- Deterrence would be enhanced because this major element of uncertainty would make it impossible for the aggressor to be sure he could execute a coherent attack and, thus, conduct a successful 1st strike
- Also, since the attacker could not predict which of his missiles would be destroyed, the uncertainty could not be overcome by simply adding ballistic missile warheads to the attacking force to make up for the portion of his force he can expect to be destroyed.
- This is just one example of what may be possible. It is an idea still in conceptual development. It is not yet an option which is sufficiently formulated and refined to be appropriately measured by the criteria we have cited
- However, the idea behind the example is mature enough to be used to provide additional focus for our thinking and for our research.

### **Heavy Lift Capability**

- Our programmatic review to date has also led the President to conclude that the United States should give priority to developing additional capability to lift heavy payloads into space.
- This basic capability would assist us in protecting our ability to implement some future option like the one described above in the early-to-mid 1990s at reasonable cost.
- It would also provide greater access to space for a range of both military and civilian purposes, and it would provide a prudent and needed counter-weight to the significant effort that the Soviet Union is already placing in this area.
- Therefore, the President is considering additional steps necessary to place increased priority on the development of U.S. space heavy-lift capability.

### **The ABM Treaty**

- When we embarked on our SDI research, President Reagan made the commitment that this program would be conducted in full compliance with all our legal treaty obligations. He directed, from its inception, that this program be planned to meet that commitment, and we have done so
- In October, 1985, the United States completed an extensive review of the ABM Treaty and the associated negotiating record which led President Reagan to conclude that a broader

interpretation of our authority under that treaty was fully justified.

- However, at that same time, the President carefully evaluated the price that the U.S. would be required to pay to keep our SDI program structured as it was then within the bounds of the more restrictive view of the ABM Treaty. He weighed these costs against our overall national security requirements and the requirements generated by our commitments to our Allies. Based upon this he decided that, as long as the program received the support needed to implement the plan, it was not necessary to authorize the restructuring of the U.S. SDI program so as to make full use of the broader interpretation of the ABM Treaty which the U.S. could justifiably observe.
- In taking this action, he noted that, there could be absolutely no doubt of our intentions to fully meet our treaty commitments. In sharp contrast to Soviet behavior, especially in such cases as the construction of the Krasnoyarsk radar in clear violation of the ABM Treaty, the President noted that our clear and principled restraint with respect to our own SDI program, and the price we have paid to date in exercising that restraint, demonstrates by our deeds, our sincerity towards negotiated commitments.
- Since October, 1985, we have continued to review various other records and data on this subject. Some additional work remains to be completed, and the President has asked that this be accomplished on a priority basis so that we can respond appropriately to any and all questions concerning the U.S. position.
- Based on the work completed, we remain convinced of the correctness of the conclusion that the President reached in October, 1985, that a broader interpretation of the ABM Treaty is fully justified.
- At the same time, considering the current status of the SDI program, it is clear that the conditions which the President found in 1985 have changed significantly.
- Our technical understanding of the feasibility of providing advanced defensive options, options which could meet our criteria, is growing rapidly.
- The costs of continuing our more restrictive policy with respect to the conduct of the SDI program, in terms of the expenditure of additional resources and time, and in terms of increased, unnecessary, technical uncertainty, are growing correspondingly.
- As a result, the balance is shifting between the price that the U.S. and its allies continue to pay for keeping our SDI program structured within the bounds of the more restrictive view of the ABM Treaty and our overall security requirements.
- Therefore, the President is considering the restructuring of the SDI program to take advantage of our rights under the ABM Treaty.
- However, before he makes his final decision, he would like the full benefit of the views of both the U.S. Congress and our Allies.
- The President has asked the Secretary of Defense to provide additional specific programmatic information and recommendations which will take several weeks for the Department to generate and for him to consider.
- Therefore, the President would like to use this time to complete a full and frank, confidential exchange of views on the issue of restructuring the SDI program.

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