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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

O/NIC CHRONO

National Intelligence Council

SP - 54/84
12 March 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH: Chairman, National Intelligence Council
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council HEM

FROM: National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs

SUBJECT: Testimony to the SASC on the US Strategic Defense Initiative and Press Coverage of It

1. On Thursday, 8 March, I briefed the Senate Armed Services Committee in a closed session on Soviet ballistic missile defense programs. Fred Ikle, Dick DeLauer and Bob Cooper, all of DoD, briefed in a subsequent open session on the US strategic defense initiative (SDI). Senators Goldwater, Nunn, Warner, Kennedy, Cohen, Quayle, Bingaman, Wilson, and Dixon attended.

2. My presentation seemed to go quite smoothly; it generated some good questions and a fairly informal discussion. It covered:

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4. The Washington Post article of 9 March (attached) on the hearing makes two incorrect statements:

--It falsely states that the "Reagan administration said yesterday that the Soviet Union is a decade ahead of the United States in developing a high-technology defense against strategic missiles." DoD spokesmen (Ikle, DeLauer and Cooper) did not say this either in their prepared statements or during discussions. They did say that it would take about a decade for the US to catch up with the Soviets, but the length of the Soviet lead was not specified. The confusion arose during the question and answer period when Senator mistakenly referred to the decade required for the US to catch up, as the Soviets' being "a decade ahead of us." Unfortunately, neither DeLauer or Ikle corrected him and the press reported it as DoD testimony.

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5. The New York Times' story (attached) also reported the testimony to have said the Soviets are ten years ahead--although its presentation is a little less glaring.

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for Lawrence K. Gershwin

Attachments

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Soviet Union Is Rated Decade Ahead of U.S. On Missile Defenses

Associated Press

The [illegible] administration said yesterday that the Soviet Union is a decade ahead of the United States in developing a high-technology defense against strategic missiles.

But despite hearing secret intelligence data behind that claim, members of the Senate Armed Services Committee expressed reservations about whether Congress should approve President Reagan's fledgling program to develop America's missile shield.

Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) said the "Strategic Defense Initiative" sought by Reagan, for which an estimated $26 billion would be spent on preliminary research through 1989, could prove to be "the biggest project this country has ever been asked to fund."

"We're facing a threat far more destructive than anything the Soviets might throw at us—the deficit," said Goldwater, who could succeed Sen. John G. Tower (R-Tex.) as chairman of the committee next year. "I've always believed the best defense is a good offense, and it's going to be that way for a hell of a long time."

Goldwater said the program will "never be approved," but if it has any chance, "you people better come up with some cost ideas, and come up with them fast."

Fred C. Ikle and Richard D. DeLauer, under secretaries of defense, conceded that it would be years before researchers might know whether an effective strategic missile defense was possible, and well into the 21st century before it could be deployed. Meanwhile, DeLauer said, "it is impossible to estimate now . . . the full costs."

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 1984

Pentagon Backs Advanced Defense Despite Flaws

By CHARLES MOHR
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 8 — Pentagon officials said today that they could not be sure a costly research program would result in a high degree of protection against nuclear missiles for the American civilian population.

At a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, however, the officials contended that the groundwork for a high-technology defense was needed because the Soviet Union was about 10 years ahead in some aspects of such a system.

The Defense Department's witnesses also argued that a defense assuring the survival of a significant number of American nuclear weapons would greatly add to deterrence against Soviet attack and thus add a "bonus" form of population protection.

The chief witnesses were Fred C. Iklé, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; Richard D. DeLauer, Under Secretary for Research and Engineering, and Robert S. Cooper, director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. Accompanied by intelligence and technical specialists they testified first in secret and then in public.

The Administration is requesting that Congress appropriate $1.98 billion in the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1 on research in advanced technologies that might permit development of a defense against nuclear missiles.

However, this is only about $250 million more than had already been planned for such purposes before President Reagan gave a speech last March 23 suggesting a national effort to achieve such a defense.

The officials contemplate appropriations of about $24 billion over a five-year period. The technologies include directed-energy weapons such as lasers and particle beams, optical and other means of pointing the beams accurately, high-speed data processing for battle control, methods of placing such equipment in space or employing space-based mirrors to reflect ground lasers, and ways to defend the system.

In answer to a question from Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, Mr. DeLauer suggested one problem might be that the Soviet Union could simply prevent a space-based defense of "large magnitude" from being placed in orbit.

Mr. Iklé, however, expressed the opinion that such preventive action seemed unlikely because of the "confrontational" consequences.

Asked to elaborate on the military-related technologies in which the Soviet Union enjoyed a 10-year lead, Mr. DeLauer cited only large rockets to lift very heavy loads into space, saying that in such fields as high-speed data processing the United States had more "elegant" solutions than the Soviets and that in a field such as lasers both sides were about equal.

Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, the highest-ranking Democrat on the committee, questioned the witnesses closely on their expectations about the feasibility of "population protection," noting that he could not find the concept in their written or oral testimony. Mr. Nunn said that in the March 23 speech President Reagan had seemed to hold forth the possibility of a defense so effective that it would eventually make offensive nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete."

If the "American people wake up and find out" that the protection of missile silos and not people is the goal, Senator Nunn said, "they may have a change of heart" about supporting the program.

Senator Kennedy raised the problem posed by subsonic flying torpedos that move at very low altitudes.

Mr. DeLauer said the "kill mechanism is well in hand" to protect against such cruise missiles and that American jet fighters could shoot them down. This assertion has not been made in public in the past. In answer to a question, Mr. DeLauer said that Soviet fighters might be able to destroy about 10 percent of American cruise missiles. That figure, too, seemed to be previously undisclosed.

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