

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

9 September 1985

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Senior Soviet analysts in the Intelligence Community believe that the Soviets may be laying a political trap for you in the run up to the November meeting with Gorbachev. [redacted] substantial reductions in offensive missiles are available in return for a "compromise" on SDI which permits laboratory research while more firmly blocking development, testing and deployment through "strengthening" the ABM Treaty.

Prior to your November meeting, perhaps in the Shevardnadze visit, more likely in the Gorbachev visit to Paris, the Soviets can be expected to make this deal more specific and politically inviting. The purpose would be to oblige a post-Reagan administration to seek Soviet approval under the ABM treaty for any development beyond laboratory research and to persuade Congress and others that any SDI progress beyond research will require abrogation of a "just," improved ABM treaty and that SDI research is therefore a waste of money.

I see a need to somehow reaffirm your position on SDI now to blunt or deflate a propaganda blitz, backed by tempting missile reductions, which will make it even more politically costly to stick to your guns on SDI. Two developments seem to present the opportunity as well as the need for this:

1. Sam Nunn in Moscow put his finger on the Soviets' thus far ignoring the agreement at Geneva in January to examine possible improvements in the relationship between offensive and defensive strategic weapons.

2. It is important that Shevardnadze report to Gorbachev on his meeting with you that you are clear in your basic objectives and in your commitment to the long-term purposes of SDI and not about to give them up for any short-term gains.

A lot of thought is needed on exactly how to handle this and much work is going on. My purpose now is to suggest a few ideas and words that may help you mull over the kind of a formulation you will feel most comfortable with.

The basic facts are:

1. Technologically missile defense is feasible. Like nuclear weapons, that genie is out of the bottle.

2. There is an obligation to people everywhere, and to future generations, to explore and determine its capability to make the world safer.

3. It offers the best hope of eliminating offensive nuclear weapons by reducing their value.

Approved for Release by CIA
Date Jan 2011

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4. For these reasons, we could not make them a bargaining chip or otherwise limit whatever possibilities they offer.

5. What we can do is continue our efforts to reduce offensive missiles, hoping that success in developing defenses will make that course become increasingly sensible, and being open to share technology or make defensive capabilities available, as appropriate, to encourage and induce the elimination of offensive weapons.

It will be necessary to develop words and formulations to counter what seems likely to become an enormous propaganda barrage here and abroad. Here's one possibility:

In some quarters, we hear SDI talked about as though it were a new kind of danger. To use a medical analogy, we must not lose the distinction between the virus and the vaccine that prevents it. Nuclear war is the virus. SDI is the vaccine. For several years now, we Americans have been spending more than \$1 billion annually to reduce the scourge of cancer. The good news is that we're making a lot of progress. We're developing what we might call a "layered defense," made up of preventative medicine such as good dietary habits and regular check-ups, surgery, chemotherapy, and a variety of new, very promising high-technology treatments such as bone marrow transplants. Today cancer is no longer the sure killer that it used to be, and there's every reason to hope that the final barriers to success can be cleared.

Our national attack on cancer is a non-partisan, purely management project. We give our experts as much money as they believe they can prudently spend--not a dollar more, and not a dollar less. Naturally there are differences of opinion or judgment among experts, and frequent debates by program managers over whether to put a few dollars more in this project or that one, or whether one line of research is likely to offer a bigger payoff than another.

The one thing that never enters this issue is politics. No Member of Congress has ever suggested that he'd offer his support on some bill or another if we'd adjust the attack on cancer to suit his preferences. No one has ever suggested that he'd support us on some issue if, in return, we would slow down or otherwise impede our attack on cancer. No one ever will.

Nuclear war, should it come, would kill more people than cancer and all other illnesses combined. Missile defense is a variety of technologies and systems all working together to reduce the possibility of missiles ever being launched, offers a way to make ourselves safer which we cannot afford to develop as fully as we can. We've got to move forward by giving our scientists as much money as they can prudently spend--not a dollar more, not a dollar less. Of course we expect disagreements about how best to manage SDI. And of course we're willing to negotiate with anyone

over how to do it--as we are doing now with our key allies. You'll recall that during the 1984 Presidential campaign, we offered to share SDI technology with the Soviets once we've worked it out. At Geneva we have offered to discuss SDI with the Soviets. Certainly, I am looking forward to talking with the Soviet leaders about how our two countries can best make the strategic transition from the purely offensive arsenals we have now to a more stable balance including a mixture of offense and defense.

But giving up or limiting a protection against nuclear missiles which appears to be increasingly feasible is something we could not justify to our people or our posterity.

After writing this, I read Henry Kissinger's article in Sunday's Washington Post which spells out clearly the nature and some specific dangers of the trap we see developing for your historic strategic defense initiative. I consider it must reading and attach a copy in case you haven't read it.

Respectfully yours,

William J. Casey

Enclosure