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NEW JERSEY

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DCI

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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March 27, 1987

Honorable Robert M. Gates
Deputy Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

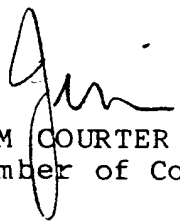
Dear Bob:

I thought you would like to see the enclosed essay from The Boston Herald, in the last paragraph of which I cite your recent speech on the Soviet SDI program.

I still think that your speech to the Northern California World Affairs Council was one of the most valuable contributions to the cause of strategic defenses ever made by a U.S. government official. It is my considered opinion that we must continue to call attention to Soviet activities in the strategic defense area. The recent edition of Soviet Military Power was somewhat disappointing in this regard, as it contained little new information on the Soviet SDI program. I understand the constraints under which you operate in this area, but it would be very helpful if you could do your utmost to release additional examples of Soviet SDI activity.

Once again, I hope you enjoy the essay. Please let me know when we could get together and discuss the many issues in which we both have an interest. I will look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



JIM COURTER
Member of Congress

JC/jr
Enclosure

The Boston Herald, Thursday, March 26, 1987

Here comes Soviet 'Star Wars'

REP. JIM COURTER

HERE are three "Trivial Pursuit" questions for inquisitive Bostonians: Which country, the United States or the Soviet Union, had the first "Star Wars," or Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) Program? Which country has spent \$150 billion on strategic defense in the last ten years? Which country has the only deployed strategic defense system? The answer to all three questions: The Soviet Union.

If you answered "The United States," you are to be excused. Since President Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative program almost exactly four years ago, the program's critics have promoted the erroneous impression that only the United States was pursuing defenses against ballistic missiles. For its part, the Reagan Administration has not done enough to expose the Soviet strategic defense program to public scrutiny.

The fact is that the Soviet Union has had its own "Star Wars" program since the early 1950s, predating even the introduction of U.S. ballistic missiles capable of striking the Soviet Union.

After more than 30 years of effort, the Soviet Union now has the world's only operational strategic defense system, deployed around the Soviet capital city of Moscow.

In addition to the Moscow ABM system, there are thousands of very fast interceptor missiles deployed elsewhere around the Soviet Union, which

reportedly have some capability to intercept U.S. ballistic missile warheads. The Defense Department estimates that there are also 10,000 Soviet scientists and technicians working on high-technology strategic defense systems involving lasers, particle beams and microwaves.

After a careful evaluation of these activities, the Reagan Administration reported to the Congress on March 10, 1987, "that the Soviet Union may be preparing an ABM defense of its national territory," in violation of the 1972 ABM Treaty.

But is the Soviet SDI system a perfect, impenetrable leak-proof "astrodome" against U.S. ballistic missiles? No, it is not. There have never been, nor will there ever be, any "perfect" offensive or defensive weapons systems.

The Soviets know this, yet according to the Defense Department, over the past ten years they have spent an estimated \$150 billion on their SDI program, or more than ten times the amount the United States spent on similar technologies. Why?

Soviet war plans envision the use of a strategic "sword" and "shield" to achieve military objectives. The "sword" is the 1400 land-based ballistic missiles and the "shield" is the Soviet SDI system. It is estimated that a Soviet missile attack on the U.S. missile force could destroy 90% of our 1000 land-based missiles. The U.S. would naturally retaliate against such an attack with all our remaining weapons, but this dramatically smaller, uncoordinated retaliatory attack could be effectively

‘There are 10,000 Soviet scientists working on strategic defense systems.’

blunted by the partially effective Soviet SDI system. Thus the Soviet leadership could rationally threaten, without actually carrying out, a nuclear missile attack on the United States.

The total absence of strategic defenses also leaves us vulnerable to accidental or unauthorized ballistic missile attack. Consider this scenario: The Pave Paws radar at Otis Air Force Base on the Cape detects a submarine-launched ballistic missile heading for Boston. Its estimated flight time is just a few minutes. We assume that the missile was launched by a Soviet submarine, but we also know that the Chinese have ballistic missile submarines. The President has no alternative to letting the missile detonate over Boston and then contemplating retaliation against the Soviet Union with our missiles. Millions of innocent Americans and Russians would die as a result.

But even if we all agree that some initial strategic defenses for the U.S. would be a good idea, wouldn't it take at least until the mid-1990s to deploy some SDI systems? Not necessarily. If the right decisions were made and funding provid-

ed in 1987, the U.S. could begin deployment of a partial strategic defense system in 1993. As the technology advances, more effective strategic defense systems could be added to the initial system.

This is known as "pre-planned product improvement," and it is the same approach we use for many other weapons systems. It is, by the way, the same approach that the Soviet Union has used in its strategic defense program.

But in spite of the vigorous Soviet strategic defense program, Soviet spokesmen continue to attack our SDI program in the harshest possible language. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev recently denounced the SDI program as a "voracious monster" derived from a "fundamentally inhumane" concept. But what could be more humane than President Reagan's goal of saving lives with SDI rather than avenging them with nuclear weapons?

Soviet opposition to the U.S. SDI program was best explained by Deputy CIA Director Robert Gates in a recent speech. "There is one person in the world who believes nearly as strongly as Ronald Reagan that SDI will work and that America can build it if it decides to do so," Gates said. "And that person is Mikhail Gorbachev." Isn't this reason enough to start defending America against nuclear missile attack, the sooner the better?

U.S. Rep. Jim Courter, R-N.J., is a member of the House Armed Services Committee and a leading expert on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).