

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

December 9, 1983

Dear Cap:

As we've gone through the last six-eight weeks, I've been struck by a singularly consistent audience reaction to the President's Defense Initiative: skepticism. I want you and Bill to know it isn't felt only within the Congress and the press. It's expressed by many who are otherwise Administration supporters as well. The arguments always center on discussions of eventual system cost, eventual system feasibility, and eventual system effectiveness.

Always the "eventual" and always the "system."

For the most part, the criticism stems from those who are putting words in the President's mouth. Neither the President, nor anyone on his team, has ever discussed an "eventual system." No one can; and no one should. But this has left a vacuum into which both the Left and Right have enthusiastically poured with their own notions of what the President proposed. Each has conjured up a program image for its audience: the sublimely ridiculous for the critics; and the do-it-now for the advocates. What's worse is our own people seem to be missing the point just as badly.

This was brought home to me rather dramatically in just the last 3-4 days. Last Friday, our nation's most influential group of scientists, the JASONS, met to discuss the President's Initiative. Instead of being presented a coherent picture of the very worrisome strategic future foreseen by the President (as he considered the March 23rd speech), they were hit with visions of battle-stations in the sky. Instead of being shown a top line rationale for defense & stability, they were given views of how the U.S. could impose unilateral control of space. Instead of being challenged to constructively discuss their role in developing the technical and doctrinal solution, they were faced with salesmen who were themselves not-too-sure of what they were selling. Of even greater concern, Brent Scowcroft then wrapped up the session expressing severe reservations about what he'd heard of the President's Program. The JASON audience could not have agreed more.

As a result, I spent two and a half hours Sunday morning with the JASONS; and two hours with Brent Scowcroft this Wednesday. In neither instance did we discuss any great amount of technical issue. Rather, we carefully went back to the first principles of:

- o What the future circumstances were that caused the President to give the extraordinary challenge he did;
- o Why emerging technologies made this decade vastly different from the decade of the 1968-1972 ABM Debate;
- o How these technology developments were keyed to the President's vision of effective arms-reduction and increased stability and finally;
- o Where could they (the JASONS or Scowcroft) contribute to defining a responsible effort to provide a legacy of better options to our future leaders.

The positive reactions of both Brent and the JASONS could not have been more dramatic. Both expressed a great sense of appreciation of the President acting in a responsible, thoughtful fashion. Both felt relief that what was really proposed was not a hairbrained premature commitment to development of immature systems. Both expressed a desire to now help carry, and help us transmit, the real objectives of the President's vision. I need not tell you how critical it is to have the positive support of both JASONS within the technical community, and Brent's Strategic Forces Commission within the Congress and Arms Control community. We must work very hard to ensure their continued understanding of our objectives.

Both, however, also had absolutely fundamental criticisms:

- o "Starwars" is perceived as being sold as simplistic perfection; rather than a fundamental player in producing a stable environment of Modernization/-Reduction/Defense.
- o We're not getting the President's story across.

This last point is especially disturbing to me, for in the end it is the President's credibility at stake. As we've discussed before, this situation is a direct result of the standard way we seem to do business in this town. We have

a set methodology of "briefing" programs to Congress and the people. We have the same tired sets of "Q&A"s in response to every question on strategic deterrence, no matter what the issue. We always seem to send the same sets of expert tree-surgeons to sell the challenge of considering a new forest. What we really need are overall Foresters who can understand, and explain, the critical Presidential-level logic, and approach, of the Defense Initiative.

I therefore believe we must avoid the highly detailed technical descriptions, projections, and simplistic promises. Instead I recommend we adopt the approach it seems we know the most about---the Presidential-level arguments which emphasize the future need for options, the framework within which these options are developed, their flexibility, and the logical process by which these options can produce stability---not the specific gizmos and gadgets. They'll come in good time.

We have a critical need to develop the leadership to carry this message. Brent Scowcroft and I agree, and I believe you do also, that it is the President himself who sets the tone of this leadership. For this reason Brent and I would recommend the President fold in these topline arguments on the Defense Initiative in his upcoming speech on Future U.S./Soviet relations. These arguments would key on looking at our future options to restabilize the East-West balance, reestablish a legitimate basis for genuine hope, and reclarify the challenges we face as we move towards the end of the century.

I therefore ask both your counsel and participation in preparing such a position for the President to consider. I've included a quick expansion of the "first principles" we discussed earlier as just a place to start. In this time of frenzied media hype, his calming manner and logical presentation of the need for stabilizing options will be essential.

Sincerely,



G.A. Keyworth
Science Advisor to the President

Attachment: Preliminary Talking Points

The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger
Secretary of Defense
Washington, D.C. 20301

cc: The Honorable William J. Casey

POINT PAPER
ON
THE PRESIDENT'S DEFENSE INITIATIVE

- o What the future circumstances were that caused the President to give the extraordinary challenge he did
- The degrading stability of our strategic TRIAD
 - Land-based ICBMs now compromised
 - Submarines (our ace-in-the-hole), while now safe, subject to advances in technology; especially data processing
 - The difficulty this President encountered in considering Strategic Modernization, without any real options left to him by past national leadership
 - The realization that the Soviets essentially reached overall strategic parity in the 1980-1981, and have continued relentless growth since then
 - The assessment that Soviet techno-industrial capability has, in many areas, closely approached or matched our own
 - Submarines (Ex: titanium hulls & quieting)
 - Tanks (Ex: T-80 vs M-1)
 - ICBMs & IRBMs (Ex: SS-18/19/20 vs MM/M-X/Pershing)
 - BMD Technology (Ex: Mod Gölash/SA-12 vs SPRINT/LOADS)
 - The projection that the rate of Soviet systems improvement, while not revolutionary, is steady and continuous
 - And in some areas, such as advanced defenses & directed energy, the Soviets have dedicated tremendous resources whose payoff could be sudden and dramatic
 - The fact that, for the most part, the United States has not played its strong suit -- revolutionary technology -- in as much as a decade-and-a-half
 - The realization that future generations of strategic and tactical plans have addressed no other way of dealing with the Soviets (or the emerging third world) except by continuing the policies of the past 20 years
 - Perceived buildup
 - The facts that the American people sense these imbalances; are justifiably dissatisfied with lack of our ability to deal with them; and will no longer support buildup
 - And are scared

- o Why present circumstances and emerging technologies made this decade vastly different from that of the 1968-72 ABM debates

Circumstances

- U.S./Soviet comparative capabilities were reversed
 - U.S. had unquestioned lead in all areas which sustained our survivable, massive retaliatory deterrent
 - Little credible Soviet submarine threat
 - Little intercontinental Soviet airbreather threat
 - Little/no credible Soviet hard-target-kill threat
- MIRVing technology immature, but retained almost exclusively by the United states
- SALT I mentality prevailed, wherein Soviets would reach parity slowly, in an environment of "mutual MAD"
 - Then stop
- The Soviets weren't slow
- The Soviets have caught up
- The Soviets haven't stopped
- We have

Technology

- Former technical arguments centered on:
 - Inability to process information and retarget quickly enough, even from large ground stations
 - Which were totally vulnerable
 - Warhead proliferation projected to be far easier than defensive ability to handle them and "would play right into inciting the Soviets to MIRV"
 - Soviets MIRV'd anyway
 - Nuclear Warhead requirement fatal, from both weapons-release and public acceptance viewpoints
 - Effects of our own weapons made it more difficult
 - Advanced defensive technologies (e.g., beam weapons and space-based capabilities) still in the toy stage

Today's Capability (Cont'd)

- Today's situation keys on:

- Explosion of data processing capability
 - 1960's-technology computers filled most of a room
 - Same civilian capacity today fits in shoe box
 - Same military capacity smaller than deck of cards
 - 16-thousand "bit" hardware scoffed at decade ago
 - 4 million bit RAM due to hit civil market in 3-4 years
 - Makes real-time calculations possible
 - Makes ground-based radars/control-centers obsolete
 - Makes real surveillance/aquisition/track possible
 - Makes Non-Nuclear hit-to-kill possible
 - Makes extremely small space-based systems possible
- Rapid advances in directed-energy technology
 - Airborne Laser Lab demonstrated laser support, aiming/-pointing/tracking, and performance in military environment
 - and its lethality
 - Newer Free-electron lasers, Eximer lasers, short-wave Chemical lasers may permit small mirrors
 - Small mirrors critical to real-world manufacturing, space basing, and aiming/pointing/tracking
 - Compensating for laser transmission through air demonstrated
 - Potential for basing the biggest and most expensive piece of the system (the laser) on the ground
- Rapid advances in particle-beam technology
 - Beam lethality demonstrated
 - Ability to aim beam demonstrated
 - "Folding" beam accelerators into small pkgs demonstrated
 - (By the Russians)
 - Production of heavy-lift space vehicles a reality
 - (Especially by the Russians)
- Rapid advances in reducing detectability crucial to survivability
 - And demonstrated

o How these technology developments were keyed to the President's vision of effective arms control and increased stability

- Concern that present path did not even pretend to offer hope of anything better than "more of the same"
- Soviets had little incentive to truly enter into arms control-arms reduction
 - Were continuing to build
 - Were continuing to cheat on existing agreements
 - Were continuing to steadily improve their weapons quality
- Soviets especially had very little incentive to change their attitude towards ICBMs
 - ICBMs are:
 - Cheap
 - Simple
 - Heavy-lift
 - Accurate
 - Flexible
 - Intimidating
 - Fast
 - Impossible to stop

-- And with today's capabilities:

Destabilizing

-- Worse yet, the Third-World is emerging into the arena

--- Without the discipline, experience, or national unity characteristic of the present superpowers

-- Under present planning, the United States is apparently locked into an offensive arms spiral that could not change

Analogous to being in a two-boat race in a raging rapids. It's getting faster and deeper. (And you can hear the waterfall ahead)

- You're gunnels-deep from overload
- Already unstable; kept up only by the experience of the other crews
 - And agreement not to interfere because both could sink
- You'll swamp in the other boats' wakes, so you must paddle as hard as they do
 - Toward the sound of the waterfall
- None can simply stop, the river still carries you on
- You perceive one crew is always fixing up their boat
 - The same crew is also apparently preparing outriggers
- Everybody's still headed for the same waterfall
- Other boats are entering, with inexperienced crews
- Ballast is being thrown overboard by friends and foes alike
- Your crew is tired, arguing among themselves, and ready to quit

Future Vision (Cont'd)

- The President would like to change this course
 - Using our nation's strongest suit --- technology
 - And has asked the nation's technical & strategic experts for advice and tools, before he changes course
- He does not intend to commit to action, unless and until, he has both the tools and the doctrine to do so
 - He is not considering deployment in the near future
 - He is not considering near-term Treaty renegotiation
 - He is not crashing into a massively expensive program
 - He is not abandoning present doctrines, nor our allies
 - He is not advertising perfect or simple solutions
 - He is not advocating we confine our efforts to ICBMs (Although he views the ICBM as clearest present danger)
 - He is advising that a change is needed; and may be possible
- The President expressed concern within two views:
 - Optimistic: Wherein the United States gains the capability to defend herself (For example, against ICBMs)
 - And can approach the USSR w/ a strong hand, offering options for drastic mutual reductions in these weapons (or)
 - Pessimistic: Wherein the Soviets gain unilateral advantage in defense (For example, against ICBMs)
 - The President has no illusions as to how the Soviets would use this advantage to intimidate the U.S.
 - The President is aware the Soviets have already committed immense resources towards this capability
- o Strategic Defense is, and must be advertised to be, in concert with:
 - Mutual Modernization; shifting to other more stable systems
 - Mutual Overall Arms Reduction
- The President fully appreciates that nuclear weapons (particularly the ICBM) can never be completely stuffed back into the bottle
 - But there is reason to believe, that eventually, their value as premier instruments of strategic war could be so severely blunted as to make their utility marginal
 - And provide strong basis for mutual phase-down

Future Vision (Cont'd)

- In the absence of defense, modernization and/or reduction by themselves do not necessarily lead to the degree of stability that produces future hope
 - Even were drastic reductions accomplished, (e.g., 9 of 10 weapons scrapped) there would still be 1,000's of weapons on each side
 - Enough to continue feeding the public's (and some scientists') view of a future without hope
 - Third-world entry as nuclear powers further aggravates this issue

- Introduction of effective defensive technologies, as a third element of a TRIAD of National Defense Policy:
 - Modernization
Reduction
Defense
 - Serves as a continual stabilizer in times of crisis
 - In the long-term, provides the strongest bases for:
 - o Preliminary ICBM de-MIRVING, and eventual phase down
 - o Shifts to other, more stable, weapons systems
 - o Reductions in overall systems
 - o Dealing with Third-World nuclear crises
 - o Mitigating the effects of an eventual mistake

- More than any other factor, it will provide future Presidents the tools and options with which to deal with future crises.
 - Tools and options this President found he did not have

- The President has not promised we can produce perfection
 - He has promised reason to hope