

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

FROM: G. A. KEYWORTH/HERBERT E. MEYER
SUBJECT: JOINT OPERATION OF SDI

OBJECTIVES:

1. To protect and secure SDI
2. To shift the arms-control process off its present, destructive track and onto a track that leads toward genuine stability.

BACKGROUND:

The President has publicly offered to share SDI technology with the Soviets. This offer shows our intention that SDI be defensive and threaten no one, and that SDI is not to be a means of achieving U.S. nuclear superiority.

The offer has not attained the support it deserves, partly because some do not believe it, and partly because we don't know how to implement it. A plan to share technology to develop strategic defense systems would be complex, difficult to codify and likely to lead to differences of interpretation. A plan to share technology to jointly operate strategic defense systems moves beyond these difficulties, while offering several advantages.

WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED:

This memo proposes that the President offer to work with our allies, as well as our adversaries, to establish a mechanism for all countries to participate in joint operation of future strategic defenses so that no country need be threatened by nuclear ballistic missiles. With joint operation, any participating country could "enable" the entire strategic defense system, and by doing so to activate a sort of global shield. To lay the groundwork for such a mechanism, the President could further propose that the U.S. and the Soviet Union--perhaps with NATO and Warsaw Pact participation--establish a new arms-control forum to focus on the political and technical issues necessary to prepare for a world in which strategic defense is a reality.

WHAT DOES JOINT OPERATION MEAN?

This concept rests on the fact that we are moving toward an era in which strategic defense systems will one day be operable. We have our SDI program; the Soviets have a far more extensive program underway to develop and deploy strategic defense systems. Moreover, defense is fundamentally different from offense in that an offensive system is triggered while a defensive system is enabled. To press the "offensive" button is to commit an act of aggression; to press the "defensive" button is a passive act that hurts no one but only makes whoever presses the button feel more secure.

Let us accept the looming reality of a world in which at least two countries will have some form of strategic defense-- and move to enhance the value of these separate systems by literally joining them together. The mechanism of joint operation is neither technically nor administratively complex. Joint operation of strategic defense systems would be analogous to international exchange of smallpox vaccine: all missiles, regardless of the nation of origin, would like the smallpox virus be deemed undesirable, and would be destroyed in flight. Thus any one country participating in joint control would be able separately to enable operation of the entire system. Since a turned-on defense could harm nothing other than weapons in flight, no nation or people would be endangered. Prior notification procedures would be established to ensure that peaceful space missions would not be harmed. Confidence in the effectiveness of the jointly operated strategic defense system could be preserved by occasional tests against limited numbers of missile launches (with non-functional weapons).

Sovereign based terminal defense systems would remain under the control of that sovereign nation.

WHY IS JOINT CONTROL A GOOD IDEA?

It would underscore U.S. commitment to SDI as a deployed system, not just a research project. Further, it would emphasize that SDI is an alliance defense, not just a U.S. territorial defense. It would also undercut Soviet arguments that a strategic defense is part of a strategy to achieve U.S. superiority. In this sense, it would show that strategic

defense could not be used by either side to limit damage following a first strike because a successful first strike would become impossible for either side.

Moreover, by launching a new arms-control forum to consider the political and technical issues necessary to prepare for a world in which strategic defense is a reality, we can begin to shift the entire arms-control process onto a new, more useful course. Such a forum would enhance stability by reducing the likelihood of unpredicted advances in defensive deployments.

Most important, a U.S. proposal for joint operation of strategic defense systems would expose the phony argument that SDI is merely another dangerous weapon. After all, one does not propose to jointly operate a weapon with one's adversary. But SDI is not a weapon; it is an anti-weapon. Thus joint operation is not only possible, but desirable.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS/DRAWBACKS IN MAKING A JOINT CONTROL PROPOSAL TO GORBACHEV?

The idea of joint control is new, dramatic, and wholly unprecedented. Consequently, some will speculate on wildly ridiculous situations, hoping to put us on the defensive. We will be criticized by some interest groups for giving up U.S. sovereignty, while others will call it a propaganda play.

In addition, there are some specific risks and issues that can be readily identified. We would lose the possibility of conducting a first strike (as would the Soviets). The possibility of sharing components so as to bring about nearly simultaneous deployment may involve a technology transfer not in the best interests of the United States. Moreover, non-simultaneous deployment could lead to crisis instability. An adversary could use the test feature of the system to develop countermeasures that would enable him to defeat the system.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSAL:

The value of proposing joint control of strategic defense systems is that it underscores our commitment to mutual damage denial and proves that SDI is not a part of a search for

unilateral superiority. Since the proposal would further stabilize the moral high ground on which SDI sits, it is imperative that the timing and drama of the proposal's public announcement be electric. Consequently, the proposal should be announced at the November Summit meeting with Secretary General Gorbachev. As part of the proposal, we would call for follow-up discussions, either through the arms-control negotiations process currently underway or through a special negotiating group that could include our NATO allies and perhaps Warsaw Pact countries. It is essential that the Allies be consulted ahead of time, yet it must be done under the strictest secrecy.