



Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

November 8, 1985

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

Dear Secretary Weinberger:

Let me thank you for your strong, consistent and remarkable effort in leading SDL. Without you, this cornerstone of our defense would not exist. I consider you as the one man who can bring about needed changes.

In the last weeks, as expected, pressure on the President has continued to increase. More and more people are urging him to accept limitations on the American military posture, particularly including a moratorium on nuclear explosions. An advertisement that appeared recently in the New York Times and Los Angeles Times, and signed by more than 150 people including many prominent ones, is one example.

A recent event in this campaign is a pervasively untruthful publication by R. Jeffrey Smith in the current issue of Science attacking the x-ray laser. For anyone to contradict him in an effective way would necessarily involve secrecy violations.

We should publish in an abbreviated yet clear form the great and essential progress we have made in x-ray laser research. It is almost certain that the Soviet Union is already in possession of this information, due to their own R&D program of long standing in this particular area. We are not taking the small risk of giving the Soviet Union more information than they already possess, even though the President has said that in the long term we shall do so. Instead, we accept the damaging alternatives: either we accept the nuclear testing moratorium and stop our effort to catch up with the Soviets, or we take unpopular action which will decrease the power of the President and his colleagues in government to stabilize peace through reasonable action, or else we proceed further on the dangerous ground of deep arms reductions which no one can check.

Nearly a half-century of participating in U.S. R&D related to national security persuades me that the risk of such disclosures is truly small, and I fear that the damage which may ensue by failing to publish may be great.

I have used the x-ray laser as an example, but I believe that we are facing a problem in many fields. More openness would speed up our progress and would be of great value in cooperation with our allies. I appreciate the added information that your office published recently on Soviet defense efforts. I continue to believe that much more should be made available, particularly including photographic evidence. If you feel that I would be useful in working out details of disclosures, I should be delighted to serve.

Your past attention to this problem encourages me to put my continuing deep concerns before you. I believe that the present situation calls for prompt and decisive action.

Sincerely,

Edward Teller

cc: The Honorable William Casey
The Honorable George A. Keyworth