

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON  
March 20, 1985

OSTP  
(Keyworth)

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ROBERT C. McFARLANE *rcm*  
SUBJECT: SDI's Second Anniversary

Attached at Tab A is a letter Jay Keyworth has asked that I forward to you providing his recommendations concerning reinvigorating the basic rationale underlying your Strategic Defense Initiative. I am in total agreement with Jay's points and believe that now is the appropriate time for you to make them.

You are scheduled to speak at the National Space Club luncheon on March 29, 1985 at the Shoreham Hotel. At this luncheon, you will also be presented the Club's Goddard Memorial Trophy for your outstanding leadership and contributions to the United States Space Program. Obviously this would be the appropriate setting for a very strong statement on SDI along with other space-related initiatives. We are in the process of preparing the speech on the theme "Space for Peace" and will incorporate Jay's outstanding points in it.

Attachment  
Tab A Letter from G. A. Keyworth,  
dated February 27, 1985

*I agree - argument for S.D.I. is  
that it can make possible the elimination  
of nuclear missiles.  
I agree with Jay's letter.*

*RR  
3/25/85*

cc: Vice President

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 27, 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR BUD MCFARLANE

FROM: JAY KEYWORTH *Jay Keyworth*

SUBJECT: SDI; Recommended Presidential Actions

As Congressional testimony has swung into high gear, the confusion -- ambiguity -- of the President's SDI program is becoming one of the main topics. With the notable exception of yourself and Cap Weinberger, relatively senior Administration officials have left a trail of confusion within Congress and the American people. In a few cases, officials are simply not sufficiently familiar with either the President's commitment or his program. In other cases it is intentional, to provide "something for everyone", maneuvering room, and time. Still others have used it as a vehicle to attack the 1972 ABM Treaty and propose that SDI's primary purpose is to get on with defending our deterrent.

The result has become a serious threat to not only the SDI program, but the Strategic Modernization Program as well. Even worse is the damage to the President's credibility. At issue is whether we really have a grand strategy that leads us through a period of great change with a realistic prospect of success. And success to the American people means dramatic nuclear disarmament while maintaining hardnosed realism in the face of an untrustworthy adversary. That realism also requires a strategy in which America and her allies are stronger after disarmament than before: a seeming paradox.

As you and I have discussed, it needn't be a paradox. But the United States must make the decision to make use of her greatest asset, technical leverage, and completely change the rules of the game. This is in fact exactly what the President proposed, and is exactly what the bureaucracy is resisting with all its might. The issue isn't so much Star Wars then. It is change -- across the board -- and whether we really mean it, and whether we really have the national means to manage it.

For this reason I ask you to transmit the attached letter to the President. In it we ask once again for his leadership on the anniversary of the March 23rd speech, and that he clearly commit us to serious consideration of a change in course. In all of this I, of course, remain completely at his disposal -- and yours -- for any assistance I can provide.

Attachment: Letter for transmittal to the President

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 27, 1985

Dear Cap,

Because of our shared belief that the President's credibility is our most precious asset, I'm providing you with a copy of a letter I've just sent to him. In it we ask him -- as he had to do on tax reform -- to unequivocately "lay down the law," so to speak, on his agenda for the SDI. I fear we otherwise risk not only the SDI, but the Strategic Modernization Program as well.

The real issue, of course, is actually much larger than SDI. It is commitment to change. This is what the President actually proposed on March 23rd two years ago, and what the bureaucracy is resisting with all its might. This change, which requires across-the-board commitment, is at the heart of the "national strategy" that Congress keeps asking for, and that we keep avoiding. With few exceptions -- the most notable being yourself, Bud McFarlane, and lately Paul Nitze -- the Administration has confused the situation further at every turn.

Cap, please note I've said "Administration" here, not DoD. This prospect of change has brought every sector of the Executive Branch, past and present, out of the woodwork and onto the playing field. The noise is deafening. For this reason I believe the President's credibility is needed to set us back on course, and I do not consider such a request lightly.

In all of this you may, of course, be assured of my continuing confidence and support, and any assistance I or my staff can provide.



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 27, 1985

Dear Mr. President:

As March approaches and, with it, the second anniversary of the speech that began the SDI, we face a subtle but critical test. A "nudge" forward can leave us firmly moving upon a path that represents change in our strategic doctrine. But without that nudge, we are likely to settle for a quiet return to present policy; and with it, return to the eroding nuclear stability that confronted you in 1981. The traps are subtle. And time is short to avoid them.

Trap Number 1 lies in an apparent ambiguity of purpose: Is the SDI to explore the means to protect people or protect weapons? Protecting weapons represents no change in present policy. It simply strengthens -- entrenches -- the doctrine of MAD. Protecting people, on the other hand, holds out the promise of dramatic change.

In spite of the clear sense of purpose that you have often stated, and which Cap Weinberger, Bud McFarlane and I have repeated time and time again, the ambiguity of SDI's real goal is growing. It is fostered by three main tenets:

1. The assertion (embraced by those anxious to protect both past strategic doctrine and future nuclear systems) that "strengthening deterrence" must be the primary goal for SDI;
2. Protecting weapons, especially ICBM silos, is the nearer-term and most likely goal for SDI; and
3. ATBM (Anti-tactical ballistic missile) defense of military targets, but this time in Europe, is the most politically attractive near-term goal for SDI.

Mr. President, if these arguments continue to be used as the basis to achieve Congressional and allied support, then I believe the opportunity for strategic change is lost.

Trap Number 2 lies in an apparent ambiguity of means: Is SDI proposing technologies which really induce dramatic change, or technologies which merely fortify the status quo? Strategic change can occur only by destroying the missiles themselves -- in their entirety -- not just the warheads they carry.

The traditional last-ditch "point" or "terminal defense" is one which addresses only warheads, and can only defend very specific targets. In the very last seconds prior to impact it must try and cope with what can be dozens of warheads and hundreds of decoys from each attacking ICBM. This situation only makes bigger, heavier, and more numerous missiles a very attractive option to the attacker. And despite many arguments to the contrary, effective terminal defense of even these limited targets is extremely difficult. Modern decoys, or "penetration aids," are cheap, readily-available, and effective countermeasures which both sides have had under development for more than a decade.

Attempts at terminal defense therefore accomplish nothing except to open the 1968-1972 ABM debates all over again, and prove we have learned nothing in the intervening fifteen years. Worse, these terminal defenses can only attempt to protect hardened military targets -- silos -- insuring that in the event of a mistake, miscalculation, or madman:

- Weapons survive
- People don't

.....a precise definition of Deterrence through the threat of Mutual Assured Destruction.

Mr. President, it doesn't have to be this way. Unlike fifteen years ago, actually destroying the complete missile in its initial "boost" phase is now an entirely reasonable objective. In fact the technology has become even more feasible since the Fletcher Committee endorsed it in 1983.

Boost-phase defense destroys any number of boosters, aimed at any target, before they can disgorge any warheads. At the same time, lasers that kill through sledgehammer blows (instead of burning), or particle beams that kill by penetrating all the way through the missile, cannot be countered by any "hardening" methods we can now foresee. And attempting to decoy a large ballistic missile -- the size of a ten-story building spouting a flaming exhaust -- is well nigh impossible. Even initial demonstrations of such boost-phase defenses leave the ICBM seriously compromised as a useful military weapon. In Soviet eyes, as well as ours, it is boost-phase defenses that make ICBMs truly negotiable.

These types of defense place the advantage squarely on the side of technical ingenuity. And it is this ingenuity, that thrives in a free society, that can reverse the eroding stability of the nuclear balance and restore military leverage to the West.

Mr. President, I fear the otherwise esoteric argument of whether SDI is to be "terminal" vs "boost-phase" will not be lost on the common man. Many mid-level Administration officials are already pushing very hard, both in public and in Congress, for terminal defense as the "near-term" means to "strengthen deterrence." They are also selling this as SDI.

When SDI was first proposed, it was offered with the hope that our children might someday be able to use it to rid themselves of nuclear weapons. By arguments that SDI means first-and-foremost terminal defense, of ICBMs, to strengthen deterrence, we find where both Traps Number 1 and Number 2 eventually lead. Right or wrong, to the man-on-the-street "Deterrence" implies nuclear deterrence -- MAD.

For the moment, Congress and the American people are merely confused. As spring testimony accelerates, however, I believe confusion will quickly be replaced by disillusion.

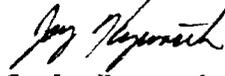
Mr. President, I recommend two actions:

- o A major speech should mark the second anniversary of your SDI direction of March 23, 1983. It should clearly articulate and emphasize the strategic concept whereby Western technological leverage is the means by which to develop our change in strategy -- and keep the peace. This leverage would encompass not only tools for defense against ballistic missiles, but also tools to dramatically rebalance our Allied conventional capability against that of the Soviet Union.
- o Just as it required your own personal opposition to tax hikes to clarify tax reform, I believe an equally visible personal commitment to protecting people, not just weapons, can refocus the SDI toward developing the means for a new national security strategy -- a winning strategy. And I am confident that you will meet little opposition among the members of the Cabinet and White House staff.

The presence of the Soviet Union at Geneva now presents a unique opportunity to focus upon such a "strategic concept". More important, this concept can be an enduring basis for real and continuing negotiations; and strengthen our position against the forthcoming Soviet propaganda campaign that will challenge NATO and our friends. But the central focus of these actions should be the need for -- and feasibility of -- change. For it is this change that offers a new sense of hope.

Mr. President, the present climate for the SDI is both positive and improving. I am more optimistic than at any time since March 23, 1983. But the change you have proposed is monumental. And, as you know better than anyone, the mechanisms to resist change are many and mighty. I believe we have progressed far towards winning, but these recommended steps are, I believe, essential to continuing the uphill trend.

Sincerely,



G. A. Keyworth  
Science Advisor to the President

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

25 March 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: /Jay Keyworth  
Herb Meyer

SUBJECT: The President's Defense Strategy

Following up on our conversation yesterday, I would insert after the first paragraph of Jay's memo something like this:

The opposition on both sides of the Iron Curtain is working to limit and undercut the full scope of the President's objectives. To deal with this, it is essential to redefine and clarify the President's proposals to bring out more clearly and forcefully these aspects:

1. The President is striving for a strategy which will establish defense as not only less threatening, but as cheaper and more effective than offense.
2. We have technology which makes this strategy feasible with respect to conventional as well as strategic arms.
3. We are ready to discuss the timing and method of integrating strategic defensive capabilities into the force structure but not to give anyone a veto over the deployment of capabilities which will spend billions to develop if they will protect the safety and interests of the United States and its allies and contribute to strategic stability.
4. We can deploy at an early date conventional capabilities which can significantly raise the nuclear threshold. Conveying this to our allies and the world can greatly strengthen the strategic initiative by broadening the area of debate and highlighting the value of our technological prospects. We will be in deep trouble with our allies if they learn about these capabilities after they base their defenses on obsolete weapons which are more expensive and less effective.

  
William J. Casey