

SDI 17

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

October 1, 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR JAY KEYWORTH

FROM: BURGESS LAIRD *BL*  
THROUGH: SID SINGER *SS*  
SUBJECT: Fighting Semantic Confusion/Manipulation

In an effort to make the truth about SDI known, it ought to be suggested to the President that he refuse to answer any questions from reporters which make reference to "Star Wars." He should say, for example, "I'm sorry, Sam, but I don't understand your question, I have no such program." [Later] "Oh, yes, SDI. Well, in regard to that program ..."

If pressed for being so exact, the President should become contentious: "SDI is about defense, not offense; it is not about war, etc. ... 'Star Wars' is a loaded, pejorative phrase that has been attached to a serious undertaking. It is a phrase, moreover, which, I am forced to conclude, must proceed either from an unfortunate ignorance of the program or from a willful attempt to sow confusion into the minds of American citizens through semantic manipulation. Because the media are in constant contact with almost every aspect of the SDI program and certainly with the members of my Administration who deal with the issue, its insistence on labeling SDI as "Star Wars" is a reflection not of any lack of information but of ulterior motives."