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WHY AMERICA'S MILITARY SERVICES BALK AT THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE

INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) holds out the promise of providing the United States with the means to deter war not by threatening revenge through nuclear retaliation against Soviet population centers, but by defending America from nuclear attack. Yet, this extraordinary promise of SDI could go unfulfilled because of the lack of firm backing for SDI from America's military leadership. Indeed, it was reported recently that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) recommended that George Bush abandon an arms control negotiating position held by the Reagan Administration that has preserved the option of the United States to deploy strategic defenses.¹ The JCS reportedly said that they no longer were willing to insist on the right to deploy strategic defenses if the U.S. reached an arms control agreement with the Soviets.

Reluctant to Embrace New Approaches. The position taken by the JCS concerning the right to deploy strategic defenses in the future is disappointing but not surprising. The Joint Chiefs' coolness to SDI has been well known — and predictable. Military leaders historically have been reluctant to embrace new approaches to military problems. Whether it be applying the new technology of the tank between World War I and World War II or understanding the importance of air power during World War II, senior officers have been slow to grasp the implications of innovation and have been loath to alter or even question their thinking. This attitude applies to the question of strategic defenses. Throughout the 1960s the military, along

1 R. Jeffrey Smith, "No Shift on Missile Defense Foreseen," *The Washington Post*, June 9, 1989.

with civilian leaders, was reluctant to employ strategic defenses to protect the U.S. and ultimately abandoned the effort.

There are several reasons why the military has not backed SDI:

◆ ◆ The military is uncertain that SDI has adequate support from Congress and civilians in the executive branch; lacking this support, the military fears being given a military mission it cannot fulfill.

◆ ◆ The JCS tend to support the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, a major obstacle to SDI development and deployment, because they fear that the Soviets could build defenses faster than the U.S.

◆ ◆ The military services traditionally have equated security in the nuclear age with developing and deploying offensive weapons, such as the B-1 bomber, the B-2 Stealth bomber, and the MX missile. It is difficult for the military to break with this traditional view because it has worked in the past and because the current strategic force is made up exclusively of offensive nuclear weapons.

◆ ◆ The services are concerned that, in an era of declining defense budgets, money for strategic defenses would have to come out of funding for other offensive weapons systems.

To overcome the reticence of the military toward SDI, George Bush should provide the leadership and direction the military services need to proceed vigorously with SDI. Specifically, Bush should:

1) Reassure the military leadership that he strongly backs the deployment of strategic defenses.

This includes the assurance that he will strive to provide the military with the funds to ensure that the U.S. does not fall behind the Soviets in developing and deploying strategic defenses.

2) Inform the JCS that he intends to pursue a policy that will result in either the modification or the abrogation of the ABM Treaty.

This will make it absolutely clear to the military that the ABM Treaty will not be an obstacle to the deployment of strategic defenses. Bush then should instruct the JCS to establish a realistic development and testing program for SDI that is not driven by the restrictions of the ABM Treaty on the testing of certain SDI components, such as interceptor weapons. And Bush should instruct the JCS to refer questions from Congress about the future of the ABM Treaty to him. The decision on whether to continue adherence to the ABM Treaty should be made by the President, not the JCS. Military men should not be asked to decide the fate of a treaty involving not just military matters but political issues and international foreign policy commitments.

3) Give the military services clear mission requirements for strategic defenses.

This requires the assigning of specific tasks to specific units in the military. As the military is reluctant to take on responsibilities absent clear mission requirements, these instructions will help convince the military leadership

that SDI is a permanent element of U.S. security policy and that they will have role in it.

4) Protect the SDI budget by resisting congressional efforts to reduce SDI funding to levels significantly below the \$4.6 billion Bush requested on April 23, 1989.

This will reassure the JCS that the SDI program will survive.

5) Make it clear how strategic defenses complement existing strategic modernization plans and missions.

These include increasing the survivability of the U.S. land-based missile force and improving the overall security posture of the U.S.

6) Emphasize to the military how SDI serves the special interests of the services.

These include expediting the development of an antisatellite (ASAT) system, which the Navy and Army want to protect their ships and ground forces against Soviet surveillance satellites in the event of war, and improving command, control, and communications capabilities for ground, sea, and air forces, which the Air Force particularly wants, to improve the effectiveness of its missile and bomber force.

HISTORY'S LESSON: MILITARY LEADERS SHUN INNOVATION

The key to military victory often has been how well armies incorporate technological advances into their strategy and doctrines. The ancient Greeks under Alexander the Great were able to conquer vast territories because they applied the new strategy of phalanx warfare, an innovative battlefield formation of overlapping shields and long spears allowing Greek soldiers to penetrate enemy lines, and they improved on this strategy by using tactics based on the precision drilling of troops. The English were able to slaughter huge numbers of French mounted knights at the 1415 Battle of Agincourt because they used the then revolutionary longbow. The Germans were able to defeat the French quickly in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 not only because they used railways to move troops rapidly to the battlefield, but also because they used the new technology of breech-loading cannon.

Despite these and many more lessons of history, military leaders resist innovation. They are by nature conservative, not in their politics, but in their approach to military strategy and doctrine. Tradition and continuity are valued much more highly than innovation and change. Like all institutions steeped in tradition and history, the military looks to its historic achievements when developing strategies and weapons for the future, as it considers continuity a way to reduce risks. Military leaders are cautious because they know far better than the average citizen the price paid for mistakes in battles. This conservative approach often leads them to believe, in some cases rightly so, that it is better to rely on what has worked than on an untested weapon or technology.

The Revolution of Armor

In this century, the failure to grasp adequately the potential of new weapon systems has led to military failure. Although the French and British developed the tank in the closing days of World War I, they did not comprehend how it would alter the nature of modern battle. They envisioned tanks as weapons for supporting infantry. Using this approach, tanks were evenly spread out over a front and used to attack machine gun nests, overcome barbed wire and other defensive positions, and allow foot soldiers to advance on enemy lines.

The vast majority of senior German General Staff officers after World War I agreed with their British and French counterparts about the tank. They were opposed, however, by a few junior officers and the German political leadership, most notably Adolf Hitler, who envisioned a new, very offensive role for the tank. Using the new approach, the tank was a well armored, powerfully armed, highly mobile vehicle designed to operate independently of the infantry. Tanks were to act as a rapid attack force, concentrating the bulk of their numbers on specific soft spots in the enemy line, piercing that line, pursuing the enemy, disrupting his plans and lines of communications, and holding forward positions against possible counterattacks.

The entire nature of warfare thus was changed. Gone were static, slowly moving fronts; this gave way to the new tactic of breaking through enemy lines and encircling them through great pincer movements. This strategy of *blitzkrieg* (lightning war), based on the rapid movement of tanks, was perfected by the Germans in World War II, and was responsible for Hitler's spectacular German victories in Poland, France, and Russia.

The Rise of Air Power

Similarly, the revolutionary impact of the airplane was at first fervently denied, and then only grudgingly accepted, by most military leaders between the World Wars. It was the German and Italian military strategists who first realized the bomber's military potential. They correctly surmised that if in future wars troops were brought to a standstill by defensive formations, as they were in World War I, then the airplane could leapfrog ground forces and either drop bombs directly on the enemy front lines or weaken an enemy's will to resist by attacking troop reinforcements and supply lines behind the front. There was also the possibility of air attacks on the enemy's political leadership and industrial base. It was not until after World War II had begun that Allied military leaders began to grasp that bombers and fighter-bombers could support ground forces, weaken an enemy's morale, and reduce the capacity of a nation to wage war by attacking factories, bridges, and railroads.

Early Advocates. The differences over the use of air forces in the American military is best exemplified by the resistance to the development of aircraft carriers by the Navy and in the dismissal of Billy Mitchell from the Army. While Eugene Ely, a civilian pilot, proved the feasibility of taking off and landing airplanes on boats in 1910 and 1911, Navy leaders continued to believe that battleships would dominate naval warfare for the foreseeable

future. The result was that the U.S. did not commission its first fully designed aircraft carrier until 1934. The aircraft carrier, of course, served as the backbone of U.S. operations in the Pacific in World War II. Billy Mitchell, the highly decorated pilot of World War I, became a strong advocate of air power in the Army following the War. Army leaders strongly resisted the positions advocated by Mitchell, believing that airplanes would play only a peripheral role in warfare. Mitchell ultimately was court-martialed for insubordination because of his advocacy, but the use of air power in World War II proved him correct in his assessments about the central role of air power in modern warfare.

A Preoccupation with Offensive Weapons

The military strategist of today is no less mesmerized by traditional notions of warfare than his prewar predecessor. In the immediate post-World War II era, the U.S. threatened to retaliate with nuclear weapons against Soviet civilian populations if the Soviets attacked the U.S. or its allies. This strategy led the military to equate security with the development and deployment of offensive, retaliatory strategic weapons, such as heavy bombers and eventually long-range ballistic missiles. For four decades, the emphasis has been solely on offensive weapons. It continues so, as American military leaders continue to demand such offensive strategic weapons as the MX missile and the B-1 bomber.

This strategy of relying exclusively on retaliatory forces for U.S. security is no longer appropriate. Soviet missiles today are so accurate that they can destroy U.S. missiles in their silos. This means that the U.S. capability to retaliate for a Soviet attack has been weakened. The U.S. can no longer be sure that its missiles will survive a Soviet first strike with nuclear weapons. Currently, the Soviets realistically can expect to destroy 90 percent of U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and a significant number of bombers and missile submarines in a coordinated first strike and still maintain reserve forces equal to or better than the remaining American forces.²

The upshot of these developments is that the exclusive reliance on offensive systems carries huge risks. Whereas before the U.S. used to be certain of its capability to deliver a devastating counterattack against the Soviets, this capability is now no longer guaranteed.

HOW THE SERVICES IMPEDE PROGRESS ON SDI

U.S. military leaders have used a variety of means to impede progress on the Strategic Defense Initiative. While military leaders have not opposed SDI activities in every instance, they have generally shown little enthusiasm for the SDI program. Moreover, some military services are more supportive of

² Angelo Codevilla, *While Others Build* (New York: Free Press, 1988), p. 29.

SDI than others. The Army, for example, is more supportive than the Air Force. The means military leaders have employed to slow SDI progress are:

◆ ◆ **Assigning SDI a low priority in the budget.** The military services do not view SDI as a high budget priority. In fact, Senator Malcolm Wallop, the Wyoming Republican, reported that, in a 1987 public statement shortly before his appointment, General Larry Welch, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, excluded SDI from his list of budget priorities. Wallop said that Welch listed the B-2 Stealth bomber (then known as the Advanced Technology bomber), the B-1 bomber, the MX ballistic missile, the Advanced Technology Fighter, and the C-17 transport plane as the Air Force's top priorities.³

Another example of placing SDI low on the military's budget list occurred during the course of the budget review conducted for the Bush Administration earlier this year. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Administration cut \$20 billion from the \$40 billion five-year SDI budget and that the SDI program be restricted to research only. Civilian authorities in the Department of Defense successfully thwarted the JCS proposal to cut the SDI budget, convincing George Bush to maintain the five-year funding for SDI at \$33 billion.

◆ ◆ **Restricting SDI to a research program.** The existing mandate for the SDI program extends to research only. The military supports this restrictive mandate because it keeps the SDI program from competing directly with other weapon systems favored by the military services. As long as the SDI mandate extends only to research, and not deployment, SDI poses no threat to the procurement or development of other weapon systems. When the Pentagon begins building SDI hardware, military planners may be forced to purchase fewer bombers, missiles, or tanks because of the need to spend a larger portion of the budget on strategic defense systems. Military leaders want to avoid the intensified competition for procurement dollars that would be brought about by SDI deployment plans.

◆ ◆ **Maintaining control over military personnel assigned to the SDI mission.** While the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDIO) is a civilian agency run through the Office of the Secretary of Defense, military personnel are assigned to SDIO to fill many of its most important positions. Since the services themselves are responsible for the future careers of these assigned personnel, they control them and seek to ensure their loyalty to their individual services. The parochial interests of the services, including protecting funding for existing weapons programs and concentrating on fulfilling traditionally defined missions, often run counter to the interests of developing strategic defenses. Thus, military personnel assigned to SDIO are often under extraordinary pressure to put the interests of their service ahead of the SDI mission.

3 Malcolm Wallop, "Star Wars and the Military," *The American Spectator*, July 1987, p.22.

Among the best examples of an individual furthering the interests of his parent service while at SDIO is SDIO's current Director, Air Force General George L. Monahan. Monahan is widely known to be the choice of Air Force Chief of Staff Larry Welch for Director of SDIO. Welch is skeptical about the SDI program. He generally favors the existing offense-only nuclear strategy and views SDI as a threat to such Air Force offensive programs as the MX ballistic missile or B-2 bomber. Monahan has dutifully reflected the views of his parent service toward the SDI program by stating that as Director of SDIO he will not be an advocate for SDI. Further, he has stated that he does not have a lifetime invested in space weapons and that he is not pinning hopes of winning a fourth star on his performance at SDIO.⁴ Finally, he recently tried to turn over administrative control of the "Brilliant Pebbles" program to the Air Force. Brilliant Pebbles is a proposal to deploy thousands of autonomous antiballistic missile weapons in orbit, and it is not enthusiastically supported by the Air Force. Vice President Dan Quayle recently announced that the effort to give the Air Force control of the Brilliant Pebbles program had been defeated.⁵ The transfer of managerial responsibility would have given the Air Force the ability to control, and possibly kill, Brilliant Pebbles. At a minimum, the transfer would have allowed the Air Force to use the program's resources and technologies, such as Brilliant Pebbles' sophisticated space-based surveillance and tracking technology, to further other Air Force interests, such as developing more sophisticated early warning systems for the nation's offensive nuclear force.

◆ ◆ **Undermining SDI in the course of policy deliberations.** The military services have also used the executive branch's interagency process to impede progress on SDI. The interagency process is the bureaucratic machinery used to resolve policy differences between federal departments and agencies. For example, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., reportedly recommended in a recent National Security Council (NSC) meeting that the U.S. reverse course and accept the basic Soviet position in the ongoing U.S.-Soviet Defense and Space negotiations.⁶ The NSC is the most senior of the interagency committees for resolving national security issues. Moscow wants the U.S. to commit itself not to deploy SDI for a number of years and to remain bound by the 1972 ABM Treaty, which bans most missile defenses. Bush, however, decided to stick to the Reagan negotiating position, by which the U.S. might accept a brief nondeployment period, but would be free to deploy SDI once it had expired.

◆ ◆ **Lobbying against SDI in Congress.** There is also evidence that military leaders have gone to members of Congress behind the backs of civilian authorities in the executive branch to lobby against SDI. Senator

4 John M. Broder, "New 'Star Wars' Chief: The Right Man for the Job — at the Right Time," *The Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 1989, p. 18.

5 "Monahan Rebuffed on Interceptor," *The Defense News*, July 3, 1989, p. 2.

6 See Smith, *op.cit.*

Wallop, writing in the *American Spectator*, states that former National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane, when speaking before a government-sponsored seminar, accused a group of Air Force generals of disloyalty for undertaking such an effort in 1984.⁷ Military leaders lobbying Congress in this fashion is nothing new. It took a direct reprimand from newly appointed Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, earlier this year, to stop Air Force Chief of Staff Larry Welch from "free-lancing" on issues related to the modernization of the land-based missile force.

WHY THE SERVICES ARE RELUCTANT TO SUPPORT SDI

As history reveals, it is sometimes difficult to persuade tradition-conscious military leaders to accept innovation and change, even if they can mean the difference between winning or losing on the battlefield.

In addition to their general hesitancy to embrace the sweeping changes inherent in the SDI program, there are a number of specific reasons why today's military leaders have been reluctant to support SDI. These include:

◆ ◆ **The lack of a clear commitment to strategic defenses on the part of the civilian leadership.**

The services will not aggressively support SDI until the civilian leadership gives the military very clear guidance. For the military to pursue an important military program absent such civilian leadership would mean exceeding its authority. Any program that involves such important changes in strategy and doctrine as those associated with the deployment of SDI requires the civilian leadership to move ahead of the military. The Pentagon's civilian leadership in the Reagan Administration, and now as well, has not been clear about when strategic defenses will be deployed.

Nowhere has the lack of civilian leadership been more evident than in the question of addressing the restrictions on the testing of SDI imposed by the 1972 U.S.-Soviet ABM Treaty. Efforts by the Reagan Administration to determine what sorts of SDI technology tests are permissible under the ABM Treaty triggered the debate over what came to be known as the "broad" versus the "narrow" interpretation of the Treaty. The broad interpretation of the Treaty allows a wider range of more realistic tests of SDI components. The "narrow" interpretation of Treaty prohibits specific kinds of more advanced tests.

Confused Policy. In October 1985, Ronald Reagan signed a White House order, requiring that the U.S. unilaterally refrain from certain kinds of SDI testing ostensibly barred by the ABM Treaty.⁸ This order was the result of an effort to resolve the debate between the Administration and Congress over the interpretation of the Treaty. In essence, the order leaned toward the

7 See Malcolm Wallop, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

8 See Codevilla, *op.cit.*, pp. 186-87.

narrow interpretation, but actually did little to clarify U.S. policy toward the ABM Treaty. This policy remains confused. There is still no clear indication of what activities the U.S. regards as prohibited by the Treaty.

Nor have civilian leaders provided adequate guidance in establishing the goals, structure, and timetable for the SDI program. Example: Civilian leaders have been debating the near-term deployment of more mature technologies, like kinetic energy weapons, versus later deployments of more technologically advanced weapons, like laser or neutral particle beam weapons. The result has been endless haggling about the design of an SDI architecture and the timing of the system's deployment. These questions could be quickly resolved if the civilian leaders simply asked the military to provide the best means of defense possible in the near term and to consider improvements for the system later.

Raising Questions. Fiscal guidance for the SDI program also has been inadequate. Congress has cut the Pentagon's SDI funding by over 25 percent from 1985 through 1989.⁹ Congressional budget cuts of this magnitude can only raise questions in the minds of the military about the civilian commitment to the SDI program.

The military services are now using the conflicting signals on the part of the civilian leadership to avoid a commitment to strategic defenses. Again, this avoidance on the part of the military is most evident in the debate over the ABM Treaty. The unilateral statement of the Reagan Administration concerning restrictions on SDI testing allowed the military to declare a policy of support for the ABM Treaty and for limited SDI testing because, absent clear support for SDI, the military would prefer to use the Treaty to avoid a race with Soviets in deploying strategic defenses.

Depending on the ABM Treaty. The JCS fears that without the restrictions of the ABM Treaty the Soviets will move quickly to deploy a nationwide system of strategic defenses. The result would be a competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union to deploy extensive strategic defenses, which the JCS is not confident of winning, particularly in the near term. Thus, the JCS finds it safer to depend on the ABM Treaty to restrict the Soviet program and avoid a competition with Soviets in the area of strategic defenses. General Robert T. Herres, Vice Chairman of the JCS, stated last October: "Our [JCS] view is that we should continue to abide by the ABM Treaty until it is clear that we should withdraw, and for what purpose we should withdraw."¹⁰

Herres's view reportedly was echoed last month by JCS Chairman Admiral Crowe when he said that the U.S. ought to abandon its position in arms control negotiations of explicitly allowing both the Soviet Union and the U.S.

9 John D. Moteff, "The Strategic Defense Initiative: Program Description and Major Issues" (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1988), p. 48.

10 "Beyond the Campaign, More Tests Await Star Wars," *The New York Times*, October 16, 1988.

to deploy strategic defenses after the expiration of a period during which both agreed to prohibit deployment.¹¹ These statements by Herres and Crowe probably reflect an attempt by the JCS to hide behind the ABM Treaty and hedge their bets on SDI until the civilian leadership makes a clear decision about the program.

◆ ◆ The military services favor offensive strategic weapons over strategic defenses.

American military planners, particularly in the Air Force, expend their energies almost exclusively on insuring that U.S. offensive nuclear missiles and bombers will be capable of destroying a certain number of targets in the Soviet Union. Thus, the Air Force dedicates countless man hours and tens of billions of dollars to the development of systems such as the B-1 bomber, the Stealth bomber, and the MX missile and gives relatively little attention to questions of strategic defenses.

This is a reflection of the military's traditional strategic nuclear doctrine, which holds that deterrence is best preserved by offensive nuclear forces. Some in the military adhere to this traditional view even to the point of asserting that strategic defenses are destabilizing. Lt. General Harley A. Hughes, a former Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff, has stated, "I submit [that] the most dangerous period of time that we'll encounter in the next 20 years will be the period [in which] we begin to put a space defense system in orbit and it becomes effective."¹²

The military's commitment to offensive strategic weapons is a reflection of the doctrine of massive retaliation first developed in the 1950s. It will take some prodding before the military rethinks this strategic doctrine. In the interim, the expansion of offensive programs will proceed because of bureaucratic momentum and funding.

◆ ◆ The services view SDI as a budgetary threat to favorite programs.

Annual real reductions in the defense budget contribute to the military's reluctance to support SDI. These reductions cause heated competition for the remaining resources. Given the proclivity of the military services, and the Air Force in particular, to protect big-ticket offensive programs, SDI is likely to be without advocates in the Pentagon. The signal from Congress that it is willing to cut the SDI budget only serves to encourage those in the Pentagon who want to reduce funding for SDI and transfer the money to other programs. Unless the civilian leadership clearly states its intention to fund SDI regardless of other budget considerations, the services will tend to push other programs at the expense of SDI.

11 See Smith, *op.cit.*

12 "SDI Plan Draws Military Critics," *The Washington Post*, June 28, 1987.

HOW THE SERVICES CAN BENEFIT FROM SDI

The services apparently are blind to SDI's possible benefits. SDI creates new missions for each of the three services: a space-based missile defense mission for the Air Force; a ground-based missile defense mission for the Army; and a possibly expanded sea-based missile surveillance role for the Navy.

The SDI program, moreover, is exploring technologies that should interest all three services for maintaining the survivability of the offensive missile force, protecting Western Europe against tactical missiles, and protecting sea lines of communication. These technologies include such things as antisatellite (ASAT) systems, improved early warning capabilities, improved command, control, and communications systems for all forces, and defenses against tactical nuclear and conventional missiles.

Air Force

The Air Force perhaps has the most to gain from the SDI program, since the Air Force is likely to assume the mission for managing the space-based elements of SDI's Phase I system, which is the existing plan for using space-based and ground-based kinetic energy weapons to destroy Soviet missiles.

SDI research is likely to uncover new technologies that will benefit the Air Force. The Pentagon, for example, is studying advanced command, control, and communication systems to manage the overall defense system. The Air Force is constantly seeking new ways to improve the command, control, and communications system for its nuclear forces. SDI could make a significant contribution to the Air Force by providing new laser communications systems for fighter planes and bombers. One of SDI's most important functions, moreover, is detecting and tracking enemy ballistic missiles. SDI is certain to improve the U.S. early warning system. SDI's Kinetic Energy Weapons Technology Program, meanwhile, which examines ways of destroying ballistic missiles by ramming into them, is working to develop sophisticated rocket interceptors. The technology being explored in this area could lead to more accurate air-to-air missiles for the Air Force's tactical fighters.

Army

If SDI is deployed, the Army could become the manager of its ground-based systems, such as the Exoatmospheric Reentry Vehicle Interceptor Subsystem (ERIS). ERIS is a ground-based interceptor missile designed to destroy enemy ballistic missile reentry vehicles during the midcourse portion of their flight.

SDI technologies are likely to make other important contributions to the Army. This service, for example, has just been given the lead role in the antisatellite mission. SDI technology can be used by the Army to develop and deploy more accurate ground surface-to-air missiles to defend the U.S. against the new generation of Soviet strategic bombers. SDI also can develop

a defense against shorter-range tactical ballistic missiles, something that would help the Army defend Western Europe from a Soviet conventional attack.

Navy

SDI technologies could destroy Soviet surveillance satellites intended to track U.S. Navy ships during a war. SDI also could help the Navy develop a defense against conventional antiship missiles by producing new types of very accurate missile defenses.

The Navy also could obtain a new responsibility and mission to make strategic defenses more effective. For example, the Navy could help fulfill the surveillance requirements for SDI by placing SDI sensor systems on ships. This could provide the SDI system with forward-based sensors, close to Soviet territory.

GETTING THE SERVICES TO SUPPORT SDI

Given the reluctance of military leaders to support strategic defenses, America's political leadership must assert itself and establish a mandate for the military to proceed with plans to develop and deploy strategic defenses. To do this the President should:

◆◆ Reassure the military that he is strongly committed to the deployment of strategic defenses. As long as there is any doubt about civilian support for SDI, military leaders will be reluctant to support the program. They do not want to enter into a competition with the Soviets in strategic defenses unless they are given adequate resources to perform a clearly understood military mission once the U.S. withdraws from the ABM Treaty. Recent statements by JCS Chairman Admiral Crowe make it clear that the military does not want to end up behind the Soviets in strategic defenses. This implies strongly that the Joint Chiefs may be ready to back SDI — under the right conditions. Bush should make it clear that he will work to ensure that the military has the means to compete successfully with the Soviets in strategic defenses.

The likelihood of further reductions in the defense budget exacerbates the military's concerns about competing with the Soviets. The JCS, the Air Force in particular, will not want to reduce funding for strategic offensive systems in order to fund strategic defenses. This is predictable and understandable. Strong support from Bush for strategic defense deployment will make it clear to the military that the American civilian leadership views some defense as a needed improvement over the existing situation, which provides no defense at all.

◆◆ Inform the JCS that he intends to pursue a policy that will result in either the modification or the abrogation of the ABM Treaty. The future of the ABM Treaty is not only a military question; it is also one of foreign policy. It is not appropriate for the JCS to defend or criticize the ABM Treaty in public, as they often are asked to do during congressional hearings. Expressing views on a treaty is matter that should be left to civilians. Bush

should instruct the JCS to establish a development and testing program for SDI that does not have to conform to the restrictions of the ABM Treaty. While this will require Bush to consider alternative plans for withdrawing from the ABM Treaty, it will relieve the military of the burden of trying to balance the requirements of the SDI program with the restrictions of the ABM Treaty and make it clear that the U.S. plans to deploy strategic defenses.

Treaty Alternatives. Bush further should inform the military that while he will review all SDI tests that involve questions about compliance with the ABM Treaty case by case, all SDI tests will be authorized under one of several alternative policies regarding the future of the Treaty. An immediate announcement that the U.S. will withdraw from the ABM Treaty in six months, as allowed under the terms of the Treaty, may not be in the interests of the U.S. It is extremely important that Bush protect U.S. interests by controlling both the timing and the circumstances of U.S. withdrawal from the Treaty. Under international law, the President has three alternatives for justifying SDI tests that under other circumstances would violate the terms of the ABM Treaty. These alternatives are: 1) The test is justified under a policy of responding to Soviet violations of the ABM Treaty. 2) The test is justified under a policy that amends the ABM Treaty. 3) The test is justified by an action of invoking the supreme interest clause under the Treaty and planned U.S. withdrawal from the Treaty's terms. Of course, Bush can determine that a proposed SDI test is allowed under the ABM Treaty without resorting to any of the alternatives just described, and he should do this to the fullest extent allowed by the Treaty.

Each of these three alternatives has its advantages and disadvantages under different circumstances. If, for example, the SDI program has advanced to the point that the U.S. will be ahead of the Soviets in the deployment of strategic defenses, then invoking the supreme interest clause is preferable. On the other hand, if the Soviets are more advanced in strategic defenses it might be best to authorize a specific test as a response to Soviet violations of the Treaty, of which there are several, while continuing to observe the Treaty in more general terms.

Giving the President Flexibility. The instructions to the military should not imply a commitment to an immediate withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, but should allow the military to proceed under the assumption that at some time in the future the ABM Treaty's restrictions will cease to apply. The President should inform the military that, in the interim period between now and the termination of the ABM Treaty, whenever that is, it is expected that the development of SDI will proceed as quickly as possible so that the U.S. will be in an advantageous position. This will give the President maximum flexibility for addressing the timing and circumstances of altering U.S. policy toward the Treaty to suit the national interest. The President should further instruct the military to refer to him any questions from Congress and the press about the future of the ABM Treaty.

◆ ◆ Instruct the military to start developing clear mission requirements for strategic defenses as soon as such missions can be defined. The military, by tradition and necessity, establishes responsibilities through precisely defined missions. The military leadership is certain to be leery about any program that does not contain clear mission responsibilities, such as what is to be defended, the specific means by which the mission is to be accomplished, and who is to perform the mission.

In the case of SDI, this means defining a list of priorities of what should be defended, developing the means of defense, and assigning specific strategic defense missions to the services (such as giving the space-based interceptor mission to the Air Force). Defining the requirements for specific missions will demonstrate how strategic defenses will help fulfill existing offensive strategic missions. Strategic defenses, for example, could improve the survivability of offensive forces, defend against antisatellite weapons, and improve early warning systems. When the SDI program is given precisely defined mission requirements, the military probably will feel much more comfortable with it.

◆ ◆ Be prepared to fight for adequate levels of funding for SDI, specifically the \$4.6 billion requested for fiscal year 1990. Given the annual real declines in the defense budget in recent years and the prospect of tight defense budgets in the future, it is critically important that the Administration move to protect SDI from budget cuts. The military leadership is scrambling to find resources to support other programs. Without clear directions from the White House that SDI is to be funded at adequate levels, Pentagon planners will be tempted to shift funds to other military programs and away from SDI. Reagan vetoed the fiscal 1989 Defense Authorization Bill in large measure because Congress restricted funding for SDI. Bush should be prepared to be just as firm with Congress, because the military services will continue to be reluctant to support SDI if they see Congress undermining the program through budget cuts.

◆ ◆ Establish new policy guidelines that reconcile strategic defense plans with existing security requirements and defense programs. Bush should issue guidelines that define the SDI mission and other strategic missions so that SDI is compatible with these other missions. The military is concerned that SDI may be incompatible with other strategic modernization plans. In specific cases, this may be true. For example, SDI's contribution to improving the survivability of offensive forces may reduce the need for larger numbers of bombers or missiles.

In most cases, however, SDI should be compatible with existing missions. New roles for SDI could include using strategic defenses to reduce the vulnerability of U.S. offensive forces to Soviet attack, improving the command, control, and communication system of nuclear and conventional forces, and providing a hedge against a Soviet "break out" of arms control agreements by providing a defense against an illegal, covert Soviet missile force. When it is understood that strategic defenses are being planned to complement strategic modernization plans and other service interests, including such important matters as improving the nation's early warning

system, developing an ASAT weapon, and improving air defense capabilities, many of the military's reservations are likely to be diminished.

CONCLUSION

The military services, particularly the Air Force, are not very comfortable with idea of strategic defenses and the SDI program. This is not surprising. SDI breaks significantly with past policies and runs counter to certain parochial interests among the military. The skepticism of the military services is only reinforced by the confusing and contradictory signals about SDI that have come from civilians in the executive branch and Congress.

Pressing for the Military's Support. The time has come for the political leadership to set clear guidelines for developing and deploying strategic defenses. As they have in the past, the President and Congress should press the military to accept new ways of thinking about national security problems, even though the military reflexively balks at new approaches. This can be done by:

- ◆ ◆ Reassuring the military that it has a clear mandate to perform the strategic defense mission.
- ◆ ◆ Removing the ABM Treaty as an obstacle to further progress on SDI.
- ◆ ◆ Providing the military clear mission guidelines.
- ◆ ◆ Resisting efforts to cut the SDI budget.
- ◆ ◆ Incorporating SDI into future strategic modernization plans.

History demonstrates that, with a clear commitment from the political leadership, the military will bring strong support to policies that it was initially reluctant to support. With proper leadership, the military will come to support SDI.

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