

Weinberger counters anti-SDI lobby

The secretary of defense likens President Reagan's vision of strategic defense to President Kennedy's space exploration dream.

On June 23, the U.S. Space Foundation was addressed by Dr. Edward Teller and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger. Both endorsed a broad approach to the U.S. space program, supporting the ambitious goals of the National Commission on Space, and both warned of the grave danger of congressional moves to reduce, to below the rate of inflation, the monies made available for development of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Teller warned that even the Reagan administration's original request for the program, \$5.4 billion, was far too low.

In answer to a question about the state of the Soviet program, Teller said: "The CIA hasn't told me, and what's worse, the CIA doesn't know." He then described the major laser laboratory facility which the Soviets have at Tyuratam, calling it "the kind we cannot have for another few years." "I hope we will have one like it before the end of the decade," he added, "unless the Senate and the House cut back the budget." Teller quipped that we should really call our program the Strategic Defense Response, since it was the Soviets who had initiated the program.

Secretary Weinberger warned, when asked about the effects of a threatened \$3 billion cap on the program, that such a cut "would stimulate a very much larger activity in the Soviet Union, which we would not be able to monitor or measure. They would be quite encouraged by the fact that we were slowing down. . . . It would delay undesirably the time in which we would be able to determine whether and when we can deploy."

The following are excerpts from Secretary Weinberger's speech at the U.S. Space Foundation on June 23:

It's just hard to realize that it is just a little over 20 years ago, that President Kennedy seized the imagination of the nation. . . . He didn't really do very much more actually than recognize the obvious, but it did seize the imagination of the nation and the world. And, he said the exploration of space will go ahead whether we join in it or not. We choose to go to the Moon in this decade, and to do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard. And it

seemed so clear to that young President that any effort to chain men forever to the Earth, to deny them access to the vast oceans of space, would surely be doomed.

Man is an explorer, is an adventurer. He is, to put it quite simply, as he should be: very curious. Curious men and women have always looked toward the stars and wondered. They have always asked questions about that infinity. And they have always reflected on their place in the universe. And what made President Kennedy's challenge so compelling was that it really struck so purely at the very core of our nature, as thinking men and women.

America could sit back and debate budgets and question feasibility, and defer decisions, and refer things to expert committees, but you couldn't just spend that time, you couldn't just spend all of our strengths calculating possible commercial spin-offs, or things of that kind. We couldn't really refuse to explore vigorously the unknown reaches of space, and, by definition, to explore them before they were safe to explore, before all of the possible arguments for and against had been exhausted.

Kennedy's message was, don't delude yourself. Others will not hold back. Others will take the risks. Others will spend the money. Others, therefore, will enjoy their rewards, and yes, it will be necessary occasionally to accept the pain of failure in trying to do those things.

Today, we really have another vast challenge set before us. This President is older in years, but he's as young and imaginative in spirit as anyone in this country. President Reagan has challenged us now to find a way to transcend the threat of mutual suicide that is the consequence of the deterrence based on offensive nuclear weapons. He has challenged us to devise a way to rest our security on defense rather than revenge. And he has asked, in short, that through our ingenuity and our technological genius and skills, that we relegate nuclear missiles to the dustbin of history. As in the case of President Kennedy's call to send a man to the Moon, President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative will, of course, demand sacrifice. It will, of course, occasionally have failures, as we proceed along the road to success.

But what other alternatives really do exist for us? That's



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Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger

what we should ask, as President Kennedy asked in connection with the original challenge of space. And very much like the challenge of reaching the Moon, President Reagan's challenge to all of us to defend people from nuclear missiles has encountered an endless array of critics and skeptics. . . .

In the aftermath of that Shuttle disaster, a most important and a very little-appreciated thing happened. . . . The American people made clear that they wanted us to continue, and a large factor in that was the President's magnificent and eloquent address the night of that tragedy. On Jan. 30 of this year, which was just shortly after the death of the seven astronauts, polls revealed that 85% of those questioned said they wanted the Shuttle program to continue. In fact, more people consider the Shuttle a good investment today than did in 1981. And a sizeable number of men and women would still volunteer to fly on the Space Shuttle.

This program has very wide and very deep support. And of course I take a personal interest in it, since I was at OMB [the Office of Management and Budget] at one time, and at the time I was there, the Space Shuttle program came up for consideration. This was all the way back in 1971 and '72—in that range. And I think it's fair to say that the staff of OMB was unanimously against the Shuttle program. And we heard all of the arguments that we've heard about so many other

programs and they were all by perfectly reasonable people who had no axe to grind. They didn't want to just kill the program, but were just quite sure that this was something that American should not embark on. And it was overriding those arguments, that I take great pride in now. . . .

So long as we have a space program, the American spirit has a living symbol. And there's no question that the loss of the Challenger has resulted in very significant setbacks in civilian and the defense components of our space program, and we've never tried to hide that and we shouldn't. . . .

One set of reactions to the Space Shuttle tragedy, of course, was completely predictable. . . . what I think was a most unseemly haste, a rush to point out the Challenger failure as an argument that a reliable defense against Soviet missiles is unobtainable. The logic, of course, should be and was lost on many, and they belabored a most obvious truth, that advanced technologies are indeed complicated.

But their criticisms are no more compelling than the array of charges—many of them contradictory—that we have been hearing since March 1983 about the Strategic Defense Initiative, when the President first announced it. Strategic defense, we are told, will be impossible to build, prohibitively expensive, easily overcome by Soviet countermeasures, and destabilizing, and it will create an arms race in space. But I have not yet figured out how it is possible for a technologically infeasible, economically disastrous, easily neutralized military system also to be destabilizing. If it is so unobtainable, why have the Soviets been working so desperately on it for 17 years?

Indeed, you hear very little about the Soviet strategic defense program from our critics. They prefer to ignore it. And what leads them to their "destabilizing" argument is the fact that they don't seem to realize that the Soviets are very well advanced toward achieving what we must achieve, and what I'm confident we can achieve.

Our strategic defense critics have set out on a new course, one that avoids contradictory arguments by avoiding argumentation altogether. We now simply hear that the funding levels are too high and must be cut. I think we should be quite clear about what's going on.

The effort to slash the SDI budget request is nothing more or less than an attempt to strangle the program in its cradle. And the same is true of efforts to define what we may continue to do with respect to SDI. . . . But even with the increases that we think the program requires, even with a budget, as the President submitted it, strategic defense would represent about 1.5% of the total defense budget. The Soviets seem not to heed the cries of skeptics, if cries of skeptics are permitted there, for they spend just as much on strategic defense—including air defense—as they do on strategic offense.

The fact is that the assault on the strategic defense budget is an excuse, really, I think, for avoiding serious thought concerning the strategic problems of our time. It's so much easier not to have to bring any new concept in. And indeed,

one of the problems with strategic defense, is that it repeats the education of so many people who have committed themselves to only one kind of strategic concept. And with the failure of the SALT II accord to do anything but allow a large growth of the Soviet strategic arsenal, and with even that accord regularly violated by the Soviets, we have to consider how we might transform the basis on which we construct and maintain a nuclear balance.

Arms reduction talks must remain a part of our overall strategy for dealing with a very aggressive Soviet Union. We really need arms reduction and we need it very badly, and we have not had agreements that brought it in the past. And negotiations must be integrated into a larger framework that includes our own strategic modernization, conventional deterrence, and vigorous research into strategic defense, with nothing done to ban our ultimate ability to use strategic defense.

We must understand that the SALT II variety of arms control is both obsolete and undesirable. President Reagan has said that we want treaties that result in real reductions in nuclear arms, and not agreements that allow or codify massive Soviet growth. . . .

And now I'd like to deal with another attempt to defeat and ridicule the strategic defense—and that is the claim that there is no unanimous agreement as to its objectives, as to its goals. . . . We believe that a very fundamental part of a more stable nuclear balance, and a far more durable policy of deterrence, will be the advanced technologies that compromise strategic defense. And if our research into this proves fruitful, as I believe that will—stability will be achieved, I think, rather than the systems that we have had to rely on now. And even a partially effective defense of the nation and of the allies would be a powerful deterrent to the Soviet Union, as well as from the maverick nations which also have—and more that will have—nuclear missiles.

Such a system of strategic defense would so complicate Soviet first-strike planning and introduce so much more uncertainty into their calculations, that they would, I think, be deterred from the target. At least, they would have a great deal more to take into consideration. Moreover, it's essential that strategic nuclear deterrence not be based only on the threat of retaliation, which is what we have to do now—a mutual suicide pact of Mutually Assured Destruction. Of course, we continue with that now, because we have nothing else. But that should not prevent creative, inquiring minds, and minds—such as the President's—fully willing to accept challenges to the conventional wisdom, from trying to get something better. And that's what he's doing.

A totally new concept

The objective is very simple: to destroy enemy missiles, and to destroy them as far away from any targets on any point on Earth—preferably outside the Earth's atmosphere—as we can. Ideally, of course, before the warheads have even been

separated from the boosters. The purpose of the President's initiative is not to return to some idea of Mutually Assured Destruction. It is not merely to protect our defensive missiles, or anything of the kind. It is not to protect those, so we can better threaten retaliation. It is a totally new concept; and part, at least, of the confusion that our opponents pretend to find, arises from the fact that it is a new concept, and that people still may talk in terms of targets that would be protected and the missiles that would be protected. But that is not the goal of the system in any sense.

If we can, as we seek to, destroy Soviet missiles before they get into the Earth's atmosphere, then, yes, we can protect our people. And if we can do that, yes, we can protect some other things. But more than that, we can make the missiles obsolete and impotent. It isn't a matter of protecting the sites or protecting points or protecting missiles or protecting a retaliatory capability. It is a matter of destroying Soviet missiles outside the atmosphere of the Earth, before they get near any target. And there is not the slightest confusion about that in the administration; and there is not the slightest misunderstanding about it. And I'm sure that most of our opponents who talk about that—that being a reason for reducing funding—know it perfectly well. . . .

As with the American space program, for which all of you have done so very much, the President's dream of defense against missile attack, his dream that we can someday protect our citizens from the threat of nuclear holocaust, is compelling to those capable of looking behind the narrow confines of the commonplace and the mundane. And it is only those, I think, disposed to dream of the future, who can build space stations, launch probes beyond our solar system, send Americans to distant planets, bring them home, and, yes, create a reliable defense against the horrible weapons of war, a defense that involves destroying them outside the atmosphere of the Earth before they get near any target, and is not designed to protect any retaliatory capability, but is designed to protect people. . . .

Q: When the Shuttle comes back on line in the next couple of years, there will be a backlog of both defense as well as commercial ventures trying to get onboard. Do you see the commercial ventures being bumped in favor of national security?

Weinberger: We would have to find out how many resources were available, what was our capability and our capacity. It is, I think, quite risky for us to allow very much time to go by without replacing, in one way or another, the ability of the military payloads to be carried aloft. And I think that a great deal of the answer to whatever continued commercial activity we could have would depend on the total number of resources and the ability to satisfy the very urgent military requirements that will flow from the backing-up you describe.

Meanwhile, I am basically a great advocate of the private

sector and privatization, and I think we ought to explore and try to develop as many ways of supplementing whatever capabilities the government has with private initiatives.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you spoke of the importance of the East-West relationship of arms control. How, in your view, will SDI contribute to arms control and the reduction of Soviet weapons? Do you feel that, on the one hand, the prospects of a successful SDI will so intimidate the Soviets that they will voluntarily or through negotiations reduce their levels? Or do you see the SDI program itself as a negotiable element in these talks with the Soviets, i.e., will you negotiate certain elements of the SDI program?

Weinberger: I don't think we should do anything at all that would hamper our ability to do the necessary research at the best level we can, the most consistent with the necessities and the realities of the situation, that is, nothing should hamper the research program and certainly nothing should hamper or delay in any way our ability to deploy a strategic defense system, should the research prove, as I believe it will, feasible.

That said, I don't see any reason at all why we can't have very effective agreements to bring about substantial reductions in offensive systems and arms, if, indeed, the Soviets want them. We urgently want them. We want them to be real reductions. We want them to be thoroughly verifiable. And it would seem to me that, since the Soviets are working very vigorously on strategic defense, and I'm sure haven't the slightest intention of slowing down their work on it, no matter what they might sign, it would appeal to them that, if there can be a Strategic Defense Initiative developed in the United States, that it would be very clear and underline the lack of necessity, not only for an ever-increasing number of offensive weapons, but be a strong, impelling argument for the reduction of many of those offensive weapons; and that, therefore, I think the two go hand-in-hand, that is, the ability to continue working on strategic defense—not with some ineffective or narrowly defined research that basically is designed to persuade the Congress that they shouldn't fund anything, but would permit full-scale development as soon as possible, and deployment. . . .

Q: I wanted to know if you see a point of convergence where SDI, as a defense initiative, and the Space Act, stately for peace and the benefit of all mankind, can publicly improve the perspective of both supporters and adversaries?

Weinberger: Yes. It seems to me that, inevitably, there will be a very great deal of major benefits, totally aside from the strategic benefits of having a much larger number of people protected and safe, that will flow from the program itself. Just as there is an inevitable large amount of commercial and quasi-public fallout from research on this scale, and particularly research that delves into so many new technologies that can have uses that many of us can't even perceive or conceive

at the moment. With any effort of this kind, there's bound to be a very substantial improvement in the quality of life of millions of people, hundreds of millions of people, really, just as has followed from the space program.

I think this is why so many European countries, after their political leadership initially reacted the same way many people here did with respect to strategic defense, because of its novelty and because it does represent a total departure from conventional wisdom. But as they see more about it, as they are now, more and more they want to be part of the program. And it is very important that they do. I will be welcoming the defense minister of the United Kingdom tomorrow for his first visit here, and we certainly are going to discuss at very great length the commercial benefits, as well as the strategic benefits from our both working on this program together, as we have now signed to do.

Q: Mr. Secretary, do you see any possibility of the SDI becoming a bargaining chip?

Weinberger: No sir, I do not. I think that the President is too firmly committed to it. It has much too high a priority in his mind. He is not putting it forward as something to be given away. In the first place, what you would get for it would be promises that would ultimately have to be proved to be faithfully kept. And you would also be giving up the ability to finance a program of this kind, while conceding to the Soviets, because of the differences in their system and the closed nature of their society and ability to keep on working on it by themselves, as indeed they have now for 17 years. They wanted urgently to maintain their monopoly, and that would be what they would be bargaining for. And I don't believe the President would have any real desire to help them in that process, particularly in view of the importance he attaches to protecting them, rather than just getting a better or a larger way of destroying them.

Q: Mr. Secretary, if the SDI budget is cut to the \$3 billion level as the senators are now saying it should be, what would be the implications of this as far as the ability to affect a program and the future for the United States?

Weinberger: Two or three things. I think it would stimulate a very much larger activity in the Soviet Union, which we would not be able to monitor or measure because of the nature of their society. They would be quite encouraged by the fact that we were slowing down. It would slow us down and it would, I think, delay undesirably the time in which we would be able to determine whether and when we can deploy it. And it is, I think, very important that we not have that slowing down process. It will also make the whole process more expensive because we can always, with larger initial investments, do more at a time when prices will inevitably be lower than they will be in the future. I think the main worry, however, is the fact that it will slow down and distort the planned research in a way that can delay us in a very undesirable way.