

Eye on Washington by Nicholas Benton

State briefing on Soviet strategic defense

In a stunning briefing at the State Department here last week, former arms control negotiator Paul Nitze, Assistant Defense Secretary Richard Perle, and Defense Intelligence Agency Analyst Jim McCrery documented 30 years of Soviet efforts to build a strategic defense capability.

The briefing was the occasion for the release of a 27-page report, "Soviet Strategic Defense Programs," issued jointly by the Departments of State and Defense, which is the administration's answer to Moscow's cynical challenge to engage in "star peace, not star wars."

The succinct briefing documented Soviet efforts since 1955—totally undeterred by the ABM treaty—to develop a multi-faceted strategic defense capability, combined with "superior offensive forces capable of executing a successful first strike."

Of course, this report comes more than two months after the release of the 367-page *EIR* Special Report, *Global Showdown*, documented all the same material—plus much more. But having it come officially from the administration makes this a major development leading up to next month's summit.

Although Nitze confirmed that he, personally, believed the Soviet strategic defense capabilities were aimed at achieving a first-strike capability, he would not answer this reporter's question on when such a first-strike capability might be in place.

"That is a very complicated question and I choose not to answer," Nitze

responded. "The Global Showdown report of the *EIR* says 1988," I said. "I don't want to comment," Nitze replied.

The anti-SDI jackals of the press were stunned into silence by the briefing. A few limp impromptu attempts at critical questions were destroyed by factual responses. One reporter attempted to argue that the Soviet program "does not look as menacing as the U.S. program." However, when the Soviet offensive program was linked with the defensive effort, its "menacing" nature was more than clarified.

Don Regan credited with Heckler's head

The White House Chief of Staff was given most of the credit for the ouster of Health and Human Services Director Margaret Heckler here at the end of September.

There was little attempt on anyone's part to pretend that the "offer" of the ambassadorship to Ireland was anything but a polite way of giving Heckler her walking papers.

The only thing really interesting about the development is the timing. It comes as the hottest political issue to hit this country in years—the AIDS epidemic and the coverup by, among other agencies, Heckler's own—begins to break out.

Heckler bears formal responsibility for everything the administration has done to date in maintaining the AIDS coverup. The most extreme expression of this came in the form of the official HHS gameplan for dealing with the AIDS crisis, that was published the same day as the announcement that Heckler was "leaving." That gameplan, shockingly enough, looked to reducing the rate of the AIDS con-

tagion some time beyond the year 2000, and had the gall to add, that all programs had to be screened for their "cost effectiveness."

It is generally understood in Washington that Margaret Heckler, in reality, is more of a bubblehead than anything else, and not really responsible for any of the major policy decisions of her agency.

She has, however, been duplicitous in her eagerness to appear the penultimate Reagan "team player" on issues of budget-cutting, in an agency that can ill afford to be talking about spending less when the nation is faced with perhaps its greatest public health crisis in history.

But the fact that Regan is credited with orchestrating her ouster does not mean the administration intends to mend its ways on this question. Regrettably, the Trilateralist and Wall Street CEO Regan probably wants a replacement even better at wielding the budget ax than Heckler.

This was further confirmed by reports that Regan's reasons for his move lay in Heckler's inability to be an "effective administrator," i.e., that she flinched at the sound of human suffering resulting from draconian measures to "reduce the deficit."

However, Regan may not have the last word on this question. As Congress is now beginning to blow sky high on the AIDS issue—with Rep. William E. Dannemayer (R-Calif.) among those leading the charge—the administration is going to have to present its choice of a replacement for Heckler to the Senate for approval.

This just could become a golden opportunity for some senators to call the administration AIDS cover-up policy onto the carpet, and, if the ferment is strong enough, Don Regan just could wind up being the victim of his own rotten palace intrigues.