

## Administration reasserts commitment to U.S. defense

by Kathleen Klenetsky

After a months-long hiatus, certain members of the Reagan administration, including the President himself, have begun to publicly reassert their commitment to the Strategic Defense Initiative, rejecting demands by Moscow and its minions that America's one hope for maintaining the peace be sacrificed on the altar of "arms control."

With few exceptions—Reagan's national radio address on the SDI, broadcast on the day he entered the hospital for surgery; frequent pro-SDI statements by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, and SDIO director Gen. James Abrahamson—the administration has let the program lie in limbo, making it an easy shot for its enemies, and giving rise to speculation it would be used as a "bargaining chip" with the Soviets. That perception was fostered by a host of related events, not least of which reports that former Carter National Security Adviser head Zbigniew Brzezinski, a public advocate of negotiating away the SDI, was about to be named to a high-level administration post.

But in late August, beginning with National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane's public accusations that Soviet attacks on the SDI were so much "chutzpah," through the administration's decision to proceed with ASAT tests, and the President's reiteration of the importance of the SDI, the administration's tone began perceptibly to change.

Furthermore, Brzezinski did not receive the appointment he was expected to get—a position on a new, nine-member panel set up under the Pentagon's Defense Science Board to review the administration's strategic modernization program, including strategic defense.

Whether these developments are simply part of an administration counter to the anti-SDI propaganda war which the Soviets have been waging prior to the Reagan-Gorbachov summit, or whether it signals that the reality of Soviet war

preparations has sunk in sufficiently to override the "abandon the SDI" counsel of such appeasers as George Shultz, still remains to be seen.

But there's no mistaking the fact that the administration's new "tough line," and particularly the resurgence on the SDI, has already precipitated an acute case of anxiety in the liberal community, and a torrent of abuse from Moscow.

At a Republican fund-raiser in Los Angeles on Aug. 22, his sole public appearance during his three-week California vacation, Reagan told his audience that the SDI offers "a way out of the nuclear dilemma that has confounded mankind for four decades." Critics have called the project "unfeasible and a waste of money," said the President. "Well, if that's true, why are the Soviets so upset about it? As a matter of fact, why are they investing so many rubles of their own in the same technologies?"

Reagan made much the same point in a message to a scientific conference on nuclear war in Erice, Italy. The Soviet Union "today has the only existing anti-missile missile system in the world, and launched a long time ago a research program in many of the fields which the United States has just started to explore," wrote the President, adding that the SDI "does not aim at achieving superiority" over the Soviets, but is intended to make "nuclear missiles obsolete."

### ASAT tests

Reagan's defense of the SDI came just days after the administration declared it will go ahead with tests of the U.S. anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon. Reagan sent a message to Congress on Aug. 20 informing the legislature that the United States will shortly conduct the first test of its ASAT capability against a target in space.

"The Soviet Union has for many years had the world's

only operational anti-satellite system,” read the White House announcement. “The United States must develop its own ASAT capability in order to deter Soviet threats to U.S. and allied space systems, to deny any adversary advantages arising from the offensive use of space-based systems which could undermine deterrence.”

At a Western White House press conference on the same day, Larry Speakes elaborated on Soviet ASAT capabilities, telling reporters that one of the reasons U.S. progress in the program is essential was because of Soviet ground-based laser technology. “The Soviet Union also maintains a large directed energy research program that involves ground-based lasers that we assess to be capable of performing some ASAT functions,” said Speakes. “We see this program as one that could result in the launch of the first prototype of a space-based laser ASAT system in the late 1980s or 1990s. What that means is that they’re testing a system on the ground that they could put into space that would put a laser in space.”

The Soviet strategic defense program was also one of the major points raised by Robert McFarlane, in an Aug. 19 speech in Santa Barbara. McFarlane, just named by the President to co-chair, with Don Regan, a special task force on the summit, charged that while the Soviets have undertaken an “extremely large” strategic defense research program, nevertheless “in a masterpiece of chutzpah, they insist repeatedly that ours is a program designed to acquire a first-strike capability. In short, we’re having a lot of trouble establishing a real dialogue. . . . Without some changes in the Soviet approach on security issues, in fact in the thinking that underlies it, I fear that even incremental improvements will be extremely hard to reach.”

Topping it all off was the administration’s disclosure that the KGB has been systematically using a carcinogenic powder to track the movements of American embassy personnel and journalists in Russia. Speakes revealed that Regan had sent an official protest to Moscow, and that “It’s entirely likely” he will raise the issue with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and with Gorbachov. “This is a serious matter and we will treat it as such in our meetings,” said Speakes.

The story captured headlines worldwide, and had Soviet officialdom fuming about the “absurd” and “unacceptable” charges, and this attempt at “poisoning the atmosphere” between the superpowers.

That’s not all the Kremlin is angry about. The U.S. move that has provoked the most outrage from Moscow and its American admirers is the ASAT decision—not surprising, given that ASAT technology will play a crucial role in a deployable strategic defense system. Back in March, when beam-weapon scientist Evgenii Velikhov visited Britain as part of a delegation headed by Gorbachov, he explicitly warned the United States against ASAT testing, and a delay in U.S. testing was an implicit condition for Soviet agreement to the current round of arms talks in Geneva.

The Soviet media reacted swiftly to the White House

announcement, claiming that the United States was violating existing treaties, and will use the space program as a “springboard for fighting aggressive wars.” TASS says the U.S. has conceived of an anti-satellite defense from as early as 1986, contrasting the “irresponsible character of such a policy” against “the background of Soviet peace initiatives.”

Soviet assets in the West have been even more ferocious in their denunciations. “Unbelievable,” said Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.)

gan’s] notion of how to approach the talks, his notion of bargaining. He is trying to set up the summit in his terms, so that when it doesn’t produce anything, it can be blamed on the Soviets, who won’t talk because they are ahead of us.”

John Steinbrunner of the Brookings Institution assailed the decision as “a gun-to-the-head approach” that will drive both superpowers into a military space race that “will leave both sides worse off.” Controlling weaponry in space “is the linchpin for all arms-control agreements,” because the Soviets oppose the SDI.

The Union of Concerned Scientists, which is about to launch a major propaganda offensive against the SDI, claimed that the Soviet ASAT system is so “primitive,” America doesn’t need one of its own. John Pike of the Federation of American Scientists told the *New York Times* that the United States should agree to a ban on ASATs because “That would do a better job of protecting our national security interests than deploying an anti-satellite system.” And Spurgeon Keeney, head of the Arms Control Association, was part of an ominous administration pattern which is creating conditions in which “nothing will happen in Geneva. The administration is going out of its way to reemphasize its existing policies, including no negotiations on the SDI.”

*Washington Post* columnist Mary McGrory suggested what it is that has everyone so upset: a resurgence of the “old” hard-line, anti-Soviet Reagan, and with that, renewed emphasis on American defense capabilities, particularly the SDI. “The way he is acting,” shrieked McGrory in her Aug. 22 column, “you’d think that President Reagan were fighting charges that he is ‘soft on communism.’ His red-baiting in recent weeks has reached a point where it is reasonable to ask how he can bear to go to Geneva and shake hands with Gorbachov. . . . The clenched fist is, apparently, to be the logo of the second Reagan term.”

On the same day, the *Post* offered a front-page news analysis stating that “a sharp split exists between top Pentagon officials and others in the State Department and White House over a possible trade-off that would limit Reagan’s SDI in exchange for deep cuts in the Soviet offensive missile force.” If the disputes are not reconciled, it may be impossible to arrive at any agreement at the summit, it cited unnamed administration officials stating. Recent events “suggest that senior White House officials are preparing for an autumn of confrontation with the Soviets to climax at the Geneva summit, and that they are increasingly pessimistic about the prospects for an agreement to slow the arms race.”

## White House tells Congress of tests

*The following is the partial text of the White House announcement that the United States will proceed with ASAT testing.*

The President today submitted to the Congress . . . the certification required by the Congress prior to a test against an object in space of the non-nuclear miniature vehicle anti-satellite (ASAT) system. . . . In the certification, the President attests to the Congress that:

- The United States is endeavoring in good faith to negotiate with the Soviet Union a mutual and verifiable agreement with the strictest possible limitations on anti-satellite weapons consistent with the national security interests of the United States;

- Pending agreement on such strict limitations, testing against objects in space of the F-15-launched miniature homing vehicle ASAT warhead is necessary to avert clear and irrevocable harm to the national security;

- Such testing would not constitute an irreversible step that would gravely impair prospects for negotiations on anti-satellite weapons;

- Such testing is fully consistent with the rights and obligations of the United States under the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. . . .

The Soviet Union has for many years had the world's only operational anti-satellite system. There is also a growing threat from present and prospective Soviet satellites which are designed to support directly the U.S.S.R.'s terrestrial forces. The U.S. must develop its own ASAT capability in order to deter Soviet threats to U.S. and allied space systems and . . . to deny any adversary advantages arising from the offensive use of space-based systems which could undermine deterrence. Systematic continued testing is necessary for us to be able to proceed with ASAT development and finally to validate operational capability, in order to restore the necessary military balance in this area.

A number of serious problems, including definitional and monitoring difficulties plus the need to counter existing Soviet targeting satellites, contribute to the conclusion that a comprehensive ban on development, testing, deployment, and use of all means of countering satellites is not verifiable or in our national security interest. . . . No arrangements or

agreements beyond those already governing military activities in outer space have been found to date that are judged to be in the overall interest of the United States and its Allies. . . .

*Following are excerpts from National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane's Aug. 19 speech, "U.S.-Soviet Relations in the Late 20th Century."*

Finally, let me take up the military question that is in the headlines—the relation between offensive and defensive strategic systems. As you may know, in 1972, the United States and Soviet Union agreed that neither side should build a defense against ballistic missiles. The Soviet Union has since built and maintained the defensive systems around its capital allowed by the agreement; the U.S. has not. Both sides have pursued research, as the treaty permits; the Soviet research effort has been extremely large.

. . . President Reagan has proposed the Strategic Defense Initiative, to re-investigate the feasibility of defenses. Two reasons . . . produced this decision: First, the . . . enormous Soviet offensive build-up, which has put the survivability of our forces in question, and secondly, the President's desire to see whether the fragility of the nuclear balance can be reduced by moving us away from a morally unsatisfactory doctrine of nuclear retaliation. As the President has said many times, this is one of the most hopeful possibilities of our time. We believe it could contribute to both sides' security, especially if we make progress in the Geneva arms talks. . . . But what has been the Soviet response? Soviet public statements . . . simply propose something we believe is non-negotiable and non-verifiable—a ban on research even as they pursue the largest research program on earth. And in a masterpiece of chutzpah, they insist repeatedly that our's is a program designed to acquire a first-strike capability.

. . . Without some change in the Soviet approach to security issues, in fact in the thinking that underlies it, I fear that even increasing improvements will be extremely hard to reach. . . .

[McFarlane raises the issue of Soviet support for Libya.] There are few if any governments today whose policy as a whole could be better described as "the worse, the better." Colonel Qaddafi is an heir to that tradition of seeking to provoke or benefit from trouble and instability. That being the case, Americans have to ask some serious questions about Soviet support for him. A small example will suffice: With all the problems of terrorism in that part of the world, what good is served by providing Soviet submarines to Qaddafi? Or, given the war in the Persian Gulf . . . what good is served by giving missiles to . . . Qaddafi, which then find their way to Iran and finally land in downtown Baghdad. . . . Americans are entitled to ask with utmost seriousness: If Soviet policy is not "the worse, the better," then shouldn't the Soviet Union's relationship with Qaddafi be very different?