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THE PEOPLE PROTECTION ACT

The People Protection Act is a brilliant use of contemporary semantics. Who could be against protecting people? The ABC film "The Day After" certainly dramatized the fact that the American people need protection against nuclear attack.

"People protection" is the brainchild of Ken Kramer, the Colorado Congressman whose district includes NORAD and the Air Force Academy. It's a plan to implement President Reagan's vision of the future announced a year ago -- a future in which space technology would make nuclear war obsolete and the world would be safe for us and our children.

That's a vision as high as the sky. But, after all, President John F. Kennedy in 1961 made a sky-high national commitment to put a man on the moon -- and 8 years later our scientists and engineers fulfilled his promise.

If you are planning a trip to the moon, or even across country, you need a vehicle to get there and its driver needs a map to stay on course. President Reagan's plans for a defensive system are handicapped because he has no agency or contingent of engineers ready and able to take on this project.

Kramer's People Protection Act is designed to provide the organizational vehicle to carry us where the Reagan vision leads us. It would create a new Directed-Energy Systems Agency dedicated to research and develop lasers, particle beams, and microwave technologies. No such agency exists today, despite our immense military establishment; current research and development efforts in this field are fragmented, uncoordinated, and underfunded.

Kramer's bill would restructure the Air Force Space Command into a multi-service Unified Space Command which would ultimately be responsible for the deployment and operation of all strategic defensive systems. At the same time, the bill would create a new Army Command (under the Unified Space Command) responsible for the ground-based air and missile defense tier of the program.

The bill calls for a complete overhaul of the U.S. strategic policy-making process in

order to develop new conceptual approaches for the nuclear-space age. The bill would transfer to the Department of Defense the space shuttles which are used for national security missions.

When the first anniversary of President Reagan's historic speech passed on March 23, the naysayers unleashed a new round of criticisms of his space-based defensive system. They argue that "it won't work." Just try asking them the question, "Would you support it if it does work?" Their answer, inexplicably, still is "No."

Kramer points out that, at the time that President Kennedy made his dramatic commitment to land a man on the moon, the United States did not possess the high-powered rocket engines needed to lift a multi-thousand-ton moon rocket off the ground. Nor did we have any cryogenic upper stages to provide sufficient power to escape from the earth's orbit.

The man-on-the-moon project required overcoming technical problems in nearly every area -- rocket propulsion, guidance, the lightweight lunar landing craft, navigation, safety measures, launching and recovery techinques, and re-entry heat shield designs.

Manifesting the unique American can-do attitude, NASA achieved breakthrough after breakthrough. Its mandate was completed on time and within original cost estimates, despite the challenge of dozens of major unknowns.

The lesson is clear. Americans can do whatever we set our minds to do. We can achieve remarkable and totally unanticipated technological breakthroughs <u>if</u> there is a driving commitment to achieve a national goal.

The need for "people protection" has never in our history been more urgent than it is today. Pointing out the unparalleled Soviet build-up of nuclear and space weapons since 1972 -- the most awesome in the history of mankind -- Kramer says that the SALT I agreements, including the ABM Treaty, represent "a freeze that failed."

How can we any longer, Kramer asks, rely exclusively on nuclear retaliation -- the strategy known as Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD)? The time has come to get our act together, to reject MAD, and to build Congressional bipartisan support for a space agency that can devise ways and means of saving lives, rather than merely avenging them.