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RELEASE: AUGUST 11, 1981

A REAGAN WEAPONS STRATEGY NEEDED

"The man who makes the first bad move always loses the game," says a Japanese proverb. In 1967 the United States made the first bad move in the nuclear arms game, and we've been losing ever since.

The year 1967 was when the United States froze the number of its strategic nuclear delivery vehicles, and we've been in retreat ever since. Since then, we have reduced our 1967 number by more than 410.

In contrast, during the same period of time, the Soviet Union has added 1,000 strategic missile launchers and 300 intercontinental Backfire bombers. Since 1974 the Soviets have been adding nuclear warheads at the alarming rate of more than 1,000 nuclear warheads per year.

The Soviet missile force has many important advantages in addition to numbers. More than half of its warheads are extremely accurate, have a tremendous megatonnage superiority, and can be delivered by modern "heavy" ICBMs. More than half of U.S. warheads are deployed on submarines and have low accuracy and low yield.

In addition to the freeze on building additional nuclear weapons which has been in effect since 1967, our government has deliberately and unilaterally reduced our nuclear striking power. A partial list of the American weapons systems cancelled or scrapped since 1967 includes: 1,400 B-47 bombers, 70 B-58 bombers, the B-70 bomber, (which still holds all airplane speed records), 250 B-1 bombers, 100 Jupiter/Thor IRBMs, the Skybolt, 160 Polaris SLBMs, and our single U.S. ABM site.

Other strategic weapons have been deliberately delayed beyond all reasonable expectations: the MX ICBM, the Trident submarine, the Trident II missile, the Minuteman III, the ALCM, the laser and the particle beam weapons. The Soviets haven't scrapped or delayed anything; they've been building weapons as fast as they can.

The result of this awesome disparity in weapons building programs is what strategists call "the window of vulnerability." That's an extraordinary euphemism to conceal the

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horror of the fact that the Soviets have the power to wipe us out during the next five years, and there is nothing we can do about it because of the long lead-time it takes to build any weapons.

Half of the first year of the Reagan Administration has passed and, unfortunately, the only movement we detect in the Defense Department is more studies. In the words of the old popular song, "a little less talk and a little more action, please."

In the years when Robert McNamara and Henry Kissinger controlled our defense policy, "studying the options" on new weapons was a deliberate device for delaying decisions and postponing production. It was the principal ploy by which those two put us in a nuclear weapons freeze and carried on unilateral disarmament.

The Reagan Administration's slow movement in rebuilding our nuclear superiority is no doubt due to its preoccupation with economic issues. But there is no more time to waste in getting started because, after all, providing for the common defense is the first and foremost responsibility of government.

The first step in developing a new strategy for America is to get us out of the straitjacket of complying with the unratified SALT II Treaty. Many of our current weapons problems, such as the useless debate over the basing of the MX missile in Utah and Nevada, would evaporate if we would stop trying to tailor our weapons to meet the specifications of the non-treaty.

The second shackle the Reagan Administration should shed is MAD -- the theory of Mutual Assured Destruction. That is the discredited McNamara theory which supposedly ensures that we can inflict as much "assured destruction" on the Soviets as they can on us. We can't -- and it is foolish to be bound by a theory that pretends we can.

The Reagan Defense Department needs a new strategic doctrine immediately which can credibly assure our safety against the Soviet missile force. It should start with a reaffirmation of former Secretary of State Christian Herter's statement: "The threat of surprise attack ... presents a constant danger. It is unacceptable that the Soviet political system should be given the opportunity to make secret preparations to face the Free World with the choice of abject surrender or nuclear destruction."

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