FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 (618) 462-5415

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SEIZING THE HIGH FRONTIER

The maiden voyage of Space Shuttle Columbia last April marked the advent of a new era of human activity, even more momentous for the future than were the completion of the transcontinental railway, the Suez and Panama Canals, or the first flight of the Wright Brothers. It provides us with a historic opportunity to take the high ground of space.

When history presents such opportunities, the nations that have the wit to seize the military and commercial capabilities in the new arena are able to reap enormous strategic advantages. For example, the Vikings, although never a very numerous people, became such masters of the coastal seas that their power spread over all the coasts of Europe.

In the 16th century, the nations that seized the frontier of the high seas became the dominant nations — first Spain (after the epic voyages of Columbus and Magellan) and then Great Britain (with its unsurpassed fleet of merchantmen and fighting ships). When the frontier moved to the air, the fact the United States made rapid and effective use of this new arena for commerce and defense was a vital factor in the world dominance we achieved.

Today, the high seas of space are the strategic high ground of the future. History teaches us that those nations that become preeminent on the high ground will gain the decisive advantage. Will it be America or Russia?

A group of leading strategists and planners who have been working for many months under the name "High Frontier" and under the leadership of Lt. Gen. Daniel Graham, USA (Ret.), former chief of Army Intelligence, have come to the conclusion that the United States must seize this high ground in order to maintain our continued freedom, independence, and prosperity.

Essentially, the High Frontier concept means the use of American technological advantages to provide an effective defense against nuclear attack for our country and our Allies. The High Frontier concept will give us great economic and commercial advantages.

The "high frontier" strategy would resurrect a long-neglected aspect of our security: protective strategic defense. It would consign to the dustbin of history the

long-discredited doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD).

The doctrine of MAD is based on eliminating defensive weapons, leaving our population undefended against attack, and maximizing damage and deaths from enemy offensive weapons in event of war. High Frontier is based on saving American lives instead of killing people, so its morality cannot be questioned.

High Frontier recommends a layered strategic defense. The first layer would be a space-borne defense (that could be non-nuclear) which would effectively filter a Soviet missile attack in the early stages of flight. The second layer would use advanced beam weaponry to further reduce the effectiveness of a missile attack and to defend other space assets from a variety of attacks. The third layer would be a ground-based point defense system backed up by a strong civil defense.

High Frontier would achieve the principal purpose of deterrence which is to keep a potential aggressor at least uncertain of success and possibly certain of failure. At the present time, the Kremlin planners have a straightforward arithmetic problem in planning an attack. They need only deliver two warheads of current size and accuracy against each U.S. target in order to carry out a preemptive first-strike.

High Frontier, on the other hand, would give the Kremlin planners a problem full of uncertainties. They would never know how many warheads would reach their targets, or which ones. Such uncertainties are the essence of deterrence.

The space-based plans of High Frontier are made almost essential by the current vulnerability of U.S. space assets (intelligence and communications satellites and the Shuttle). We simply must protect all our communications materials located up in space.

Time is critical in any commitment to the High Frontier, especially with regard to the military systems. If we cannot change the adverse trends in the military balance quickly, we may not be able to change them at all.

General Graham and his group are to be commended for their vision and dedication in developing this plan which would move America from an unstable balance of terror to Assured Survival. It would open the way for America to solve its military problems at an attractive cost figure. The Reagan Administration and the Congress should implement High Frontier in 1982 in order to close our window of vulnerability and open up a new era of hope and progress for the Free World.