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THE MYTH OF A "DESTABILIZING" DEFENSE

"The best offense is a good defense" would be a better slogan in the nuclear age than the version that is customarily heard in sports and war. In any event, it surely never occurred to anyone who uses "the best defense is a good offense" version that defense might be completely omitted.

Any intelligent plan for winning a campaign includes both a strategy for defending your own goal line (the defense) plus a strategy for carrying the ball over your opponent's goal line (the offense). Football teams even use a different set of players depending on whether or not they have possession of the ball.

The number-one problem between the United States and the Soviet Union is that, although we have an offense, we have no defense at all. We have weapons that can kill millions of Russians, but we have no means of preventing Russians from killing Americans.

A remarkable piece of jargon was devised to describe our defenseless condition: "Mutual Assured Destruction." Very few people ask why we are not instead trying to achieve "Mutual Assured Survival" instead.

Lt. Gen. Daniel O. Graham heads a group of engineers, scientists, and military men who are talking about "survival" instead of "destruction." They have developed a defensive system to protect Americans called "High Frontier," and they are trying to get the President, Congress, and the Pentagon to support it.

High Frontier is a system of 432 satellites placed on 300-mile, 65-degree circular orbits which are capable of sensing and tracking Soviet long-range missiles (land or sea-based). After detection, High Frontier can direct on-board interceptor vehicles to kill the hostile missiles within the first seven minutes of their trajectory (before they ever arrive over U.S. territory).

High Frontier can't kill a single human being, Russian or American; so there is nothing for the pacifists to be agitated about. High Frontier is non-nuclear; so there is nothing for the environmentalists to be agitated about.

You would think that the people who are worrying about the terrible danger to life and the environment from nuclear weapons would jump up and down with joy at the news of a non-nuclear system which can prevent Russian nukes from landing on Americans with the full force of their fireblast and fallout. But that's not happening. Instead, the anti-nuke activists are accusing General Graham's plan of being "destabilizing."

As explained by Jeremy Stone, director of the Federation of American Scientists, High Frontier would be "the most destabilizing development imaginable" because, if we could shoot down Soviet-launched ICBMs, then the Soviets would have no defense against our ICBMs; and <u>that</u> would frighten them to death -- or to rashness; so the Russians might decide to launch a preemptive strike against us and hit us first.

Over the years the liberals have come up with many illogical arguments, but that one takes the prize. According to this line of argument, we don't need to worry about the tremendous arsenal of weapons of mass-destruction possessed by the Russians, including their more than 300 "heavy" ICBMs. But, say the liberals, it would be "destabilizing" for the United States to build a system to prevent those ICBMs from killing Americans.

If the Russians aren't planning on launching their missiles at us, they can say "ho hum" while we spend our money on a means to shoot them down. If the Russians are planning on launching their missiles, then we jolly well better hurry up and develop a system to defend ourselves.

Will High Frontier work? This type of system was deemed technically feasible by a Defense Department team of scientists and technicians 20 years ago. If there are some bugs in the system, let's go to work and clean them out.

Can we afford it? The High Frontier team says that this system can be deployed in five or six years at a cost of about $15 billion. Some Pentagon officials think it would cost several times that amount; and it would IF the Pentagon stretches the building program out over 10-12 years.

But America, the great can-do society, can achieve remarkable results very rapidly IF we want to. We landed on the moon in seven years from the go-ahead; the Polaris submarine (which had as many technical risks as High Frontier) was accomplished in 4 years; and the SR-71 was achieved in 2-1/2 years.