

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DELEGATION

for relations with  
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Background note  
on  
the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI)  
and Western Europe

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## THE STRATEGIC DEFENCE INITIATIVE AND WESTERN EUROPE

1. In March 1983 President Reagan stated: 'I call upon the scientific community - those who gave us nuclear weapons - to turn their great talents now to the cause of peace: to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete'. It was subsequently made clear that the chief objective of the proposal was to develop ways of destroying ballistic missiles targeted on the United States and Europe by attacking them at various stages of their flight path.

### Stages of development

2. According to General James Abrahamson<sup>(1)</sup> the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) has been divided by President Reagan into four phases -

- (1) The Research stage - 1983 - early 1990s. At the end of this phase, Congress and the President would have to decide whether to enter upon the subsequent phases. Cost. \$26,000 million over 5 years.
- (2) The Systems Development stage. Assuming a positive decision at the end of Phase 1, prototypes of actual defensive system components would be designed, built and tested.
- (3) The Transition stage. The period of incremental, sequential deployment of defensive systems. During this period significant reductions in nuclear ballistic missiles would be negotiated and implemented.
- (4) The Final stage: Deployments of multi-phased defensive systems would be completed, and those of ballistic missile forces would, by negotiation, be reduced to a minimum.

3. The President and the US Administration have emphasised that the defensive systems in the SDI would be non-nuclear and would include no weapons of mass destruction. It is suggested that SDI could also be effective against Soviet SS-20 and some other medium- and short-range missiles targeted on Western Europe.

4. The President and his advisers envisage a four-phase defence system, which would be fully operational by the end of the century. This system would consist of -

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(1) Statement to Congress, 9 May 1984

- (1) The destruction of ICBMs during their initial stage of flight (the 'boost phase') by space-based non-nuclear missiles or projectiles.
- (2) The destruction of ICBMs during their second flight stage ('post-boost phase') by space or ground-based kinetic or directed energy weapons.
- (3) The destruction of warheads during their third flight stage ('mid-course phase') in space.
- (4) The destruction of warheads during their fourth flight stage ('terminal phase') at about 100,000 ft. above the earth, most probably by ground-based non-nuclear missiles or projectiles.

5. The technologies for the first, and especially the fourth, phase could also be applied against medium and some short-range ballistic missiles, and against those launched from submarines. It is envisaged by President Reagan that the first and fourth phases of defence could be deployed before the other phases as an immediate response to existing Soviet missile capability. An estimate of the effectiveness of the first and fourth phases is 70% each. The cost of the research only is estimated by the US Government as \$240,000 million.

#### Reactions to the SDI

6. Four days after President Reagan's speech in March 1983, Mr Andropov, Leader of the Soviet Union, made a response -

'On the face of it, laymen may find it even attractive as the President speaks about what seem to be defensive measures. But this may seem to be so only on the face of it and only to those who are not conversant with these matters. In fact the strategic offensive forces of the United States will continue to be developed and upgraded at full tilt and along quite a definite line at that, namely that of acquiring a first nuclear strike capability. Under these conditions the intention to secure itself the possibility of destroying with the help of the ABM defenses the corresponding strategic systems of the other side, that is of rendering it unable of dealing a retaliatory strike, is a bid to disarm the Soviet Union in the face of the US nuclear threat.'

7. In December 1984, the British Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, agreed with President Reagan on a joint statement on SDI, following talks at Camp David. The statement included four policy guidelines, as follows -

- (1) The US and Western aim is not to achieve superiority but to maintain balance, taking account of Soviet developments.
- (2) SDI-related deployment would, in view of treaty obligations, have to be a matter for negotiations.
- (3) The overall aim is to enhance, and not to undermine, deterrence.
- (4) East-West negotiation should aim to achieve security with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides.<sup>(1)</sup>

8. For reactions within the USA to the SDI, the reader is referred to the documentation paper by the Directorate General for Research and Documentation, entitled 'The Strategic Defence Initiative', which contains two articles putting the case for and against the SDI<sup>(2)</sup>.

#### The Weinberger Proposal

9. In March 1985 the US Secretary of Defence, Mr Caspar Weinberger, sent a letter to all the member governments of the North Atlantic Alliance and to those of Australia, Israel and Japan, inviting them to join in cooperative research with the USA 'in areas of technology that could contribute to the SDI research programme'. Mr Weinberger stated that the cooperative programme would not reach 'ABM component level'. Mr Weinberger asked governments interested in possible participation to reply to him within 60 days, indicating the areas of research of greatest interest to them. However, the US Government has since made it clear that the 60-day limit no longer applies.

#### Reactions to the Proposal

10. Mr Weinberger's proposal was well received at a meeting of the Nuclear Planning Group of NATO in Luxembourg in March 1985. The Communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting at Bonn on 22-23 April 1985 of the Council of Western European Union included the following passage -

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(1) The Times, 24.2.85

(2) The Strategic Defence Initiative, Documentation by DG V, Luxembourg, 29.5.85

'The Ministers also examined questions associated with research efforts concerning strategic defence. They agreed to continue their collective consideration in order to achieve as far as possible a coordinated reaction of their governments to the invitation of the United States to participate in the research programme and instructed the permanent Council accordingly. In this context they underlined the importance of the continuing bilateral consultations with their partners in the Atlantic Alliance as an essential element of allied cohesion'.<sup>(1)</sup>

11. There has as yet been no coordinated response by the Ten. The President of the Commission, Mr Delors, has proposed that the Commission's budget for technology should be increased to cover certain research in relation to SDI. The European Council did not agree to this proposal however. The French Government put forward in April 1985 a proposal for a coordinated European research programme, known as EUREKA, which might include research on technologies relating to SDI. To date the French Government has declined Mr Weinberger's invitation, the British Government is favourably disposed to it, and the Dutch Government has proposed to WEU Member Governments that they should coordinate their approach so as to share in the evaluation of the SDI and its implications for security in Europe, for curbing the arms race, for the present strategy of nuclear deterrence and for relations within the Alliance. The Weinberger proposal is under study by the Belgian, German and Italian Governments.

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(1) Communiqué, Doc. 1011, Assembly of WEU.