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March 25, 1983

Eliminating The Threat From Ballistic Missiles

It is my policy to take every opportunity to reduce world tensions and enhance stability. Our efforts to achieve significant reductions in strategic offensive forces and to eliminate LRINF land based missiles are one approach to that aim. However, it is my long range goal to go beyond this. I would like to decrease our reliance on the threat of retaliation by offensive nuclear weapons and to increase the contribution of defensive systems to our security and that of our allies. To begin to move us toward that goal, I have concluded that we should explore the possibility of using defensive capabilities to counter the threat posed by nuclear ballistic missiles.

I direct the development of an intensive effort to define a long term research and development program aimed at an ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by nuclear ballistic missiles. These actions will be carried out in a manner consistent with our obligations under the ABM Treaty and recognizing the need for close consultations with our allies.

In order to provide the necessary basis for this effort, I further direct a study be completed on a priority basis to assess the roles that ballistic missile defense could play in future security strategy of the United States and our allies. Among other items, the study will provide guidance necessary to develop research and development funding commitments for the FY 85 Departmental budgets and the accompanying Five-Year Defense Program (FYDP).

The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs is assigned the responsibility to formulate detailed instructions for implementing this NSDD including organization, assignment of responsibilities, and completion dates.

Full Text of
NSDD 85

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White House Announcement on the Development of a Defensive System Against Nuclear Ballistic Missiles

March 25, 1983

Today the President issued a National Security Decision Directive addressing his intent to direct the development of an intensive effort to define a long-term research and development program aimed at an ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by nuclear ballistic missiles as announced in his speech of March 23, 1983.

The document directs the following:

It is my policy to take every opportunity to reduce world tensions and enhance stability. Our efforts to achieve significant reductions in strategic offensive forces and to eliminate LRINF land-based missiles are one approach to that aim. However, it is my long-range goal to go beyond this. I would like to decrease our reliance on the threat of retaliation by offensive nuclear weapons and to increase the contribution of defensive systems to our security and that of our allies. To begin to move us toward that goal, I have concluded that we should explore the possibility of using defensive capabilities to counter the threat posed by nuclear ballistic missiles.

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