

Statement to the Outer Space Committee  
of the Conference on Disarmament  
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by

Ambassador David J. Smith  
Chief United States Negotiator  
for the Defense and Space Talks

Mr. Chairman,

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When I last had the privilege of addressing the Conference on Disarmament on the status of the Defense and Space Talks, I began by stressing President George Bush's words of 7 February 1990: "In the 1990s, strategic defenses make more sense than ever before." I begin this way again today because so many of the events of the 16 months since those words were spoken have proven them all the more valid.

The President was speaking at the mid-point of a two-year review of the United States Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) at a time when many rapid changes were occurring in the world. These changes diminished our concern over the possibility of a strategic first strike with ballistic missiles against the United States relative to our growing concern over ballistic missile proliferation and accidental or unauthorized launches. Therefore, in his 29 January 1991, State of the Union Address, President Bush ordered redirection of the SDI programme to "protection from limited ballistic missile strikes, whatever their source".

Though backed by two years of study which began long before anyone imagined there would be a Persian Gulf War, the President's announcement could not be heard but through the thunder of the War. From that perspective, the results of our study and the President's decision were prescient.

President Bush recently summed it all up in a few sentences addressed to the graduating class of the United States Air Force Academy on 29 May 1991:

"We learned that missile defense works and that it promotes peace and security. In the Gulf we had the technologies of defense to pick up where theories of deterrence left off. The Patriot saved lives and helped keep the coalition together.

And while the Patriot worked well in the Gulf, we must prepare for the missiles more likely to be used by future aggressors. We cannot build a defense system that simply responds to the threats of the past."