

Mr. Paul Nitze, Special Advisor to President Reagan on arms control, visited Ottawa today as part of continuing consultations within the Alliance on the question of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Strategic Defence Initiative. These consultations are part of a comprehensive analysis of this issue by the USA Administration that will include discussions with the Congress and a further re-examination of the ABM Treaty confidential negotiating record and Senate ratification process. We have been assured by the USA that no decision to move to a broad interpretation has yet been taken, nor will be taken before this process is completed.

The Canadian government has consistently supported the USA in its adherence to the strict interpretation of the ABM Treaty. Any move to a broader interpretation could have significant political and strategic ramifications for international stability and security, and these require close scrutiny and considered analysis. Any unilateral action by either party to the Treaty that could have a negative impact on the current strategic balance would be regarded by Canada with profound concern. Furthermore, the potentially negative implications for the summit process, arms control and East/West relations generally need to be carefully examined before any such action is undertaken. In particular, the Government would greatly regret the implementation of any policy, by either party, with regard to the ABM Treaty that might adversely affect the Geneva negotiations; especially in view of recent developments on intermediate-range nuclear forces. We are sure that the United States is clearly aware of all of these possible consequences and will reflect upon them carefully in the context of its current considerations on this question. Canada's commitment to the pursuit of arms control and the maintenance of the existing arms control regime has been reiterated on many occasions. We are particularly aware and appreciative of the Reagan Administration's sincere and determined commitment to consultation with Canada and other Allies.

Canada has expressed its support for the Strategic Defence Initiative research program as a prudent measure in light of significant similar Soviet activity in the field of ballistic missile defence. We believe, however, that any transition to a greater dependence on strategic defences should be undertaken on a mutually agreed basis by both superpowers and should be combined with significant reductions in strategic offensive forces. We would urge the USA to continue its efforts at the Geneva negotiations to accomplish this latter goal in seeking an agreement with the USSR on the basis of the latest American proposal. At the same time the SDI program should continue to be pursued within the current restrictive interpretation of the ABM Treaty. We welcome the assurance by Secretary of State Shultz that the USA Administration considers premature any decision on deployment of a ballistic missile defence at this point.