

The President's initial desire to seek a leak-proof shield to defend the entire population of the United States and its allies had been reshaped, though officials maintained that total defence remained the ultimate objective. Yet the change did reflect some sensitivity to the barrage of criticism which had greeted the President's proposal from its announcement. Various critiques had been published including an April 1984 report for the U.S. Congressional Office of Technology Assessment which concluded that even a nearly perfect defence "is so remote that it should not serve as the basis of public expectation or national policy."⁴

In the medium-term, therefore, the emphasis shifted to limited measures intended to defend against limited nuclear attacks or to limit damage from a full-size nuclear attack. Paul Nitze, the President's chief arms control adviser, referred to a new kind of deterrence based on mutual assured security—the ability of the defence to deny success to a potential aggressor's attack. Nitze added two criteria: the new defences must be reasonably capable of surviving or their vulnerability might invite a first strike, and they must be cost-effective at the margin—that is, "cheap enough to add additional defence capability so that the other side has no incentive to add additional offensive capability to overcome the defence."⁵

These considerations aside, the administration did not waver from its determination to reexamine strategic defence for three fundamental reasons which Nitze outlined:

1. the perception of Soviet superiority in the "crucial indices of strategic power" and the failure of the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitations Talks) process to promote an equitable and stable balance in offensive nuclear arms;
2. the President's belief that "while deterrence based on the threat of offensive nuclear retaliation must form the basis of U.S. national security policy for the foreseeable future, the United States should not be content to confine itself to that in perpetuity";
3. the great advances that have been made in the last decade in many areas relevant to ballistic missile defence such as sensors, micro-electronics and data-processing.⁶

INITIAL CANADIAN REACTIONS

SDI from its conception was a divisive factor in Canadian politics. The Mulroney government, which assumed office in September, 1984, appeared to be of two minds. While External Affairs Minister Joe Clark expressed serious reservations, Robert

Coates, the Minister of National Defence, was enthusiastic about the potential industrial benefits of Canadian participation, and the Prime Minister kept his own counsel.

The government's first formal statement on the issue was made by Joe Clark in the House of Commons on January 21, 1985.⁷ He described Western research on the feasibility of defensive systems as "prudent" in the light of recent Soviet research advances, but welcomed their inclusion in upcoming U.S.-Soviet arms negotiations. He also warned that the development and deployment of space-based systems "would transgress" the limits of the ABM Treaty as currently constituted," a treaty which Canada strongly supported. In this regard, the government welcomed "President Reagan's affirmation that the U.S.A. would not proceed beyond research without discussion and negotiation." In the extensive debate which followed in the Commons that day, Liberal and NDP members made clear their opposition to any form of militarization in outer space and questioned the government's intentions.

The overriding issue for the opposition parties was whether a link existed between SDI and the planned updating of NORAD's radar warning system. Similar concerns were expressed in the report of the Senate Special Committee on National Defence, entitled "Canada's Territorial Air Defence," which was released on January 23. When the Standing Committee of the House on External Affairs and National Defence held a hearing in mid-February on the proposed air defence modernization, discussion again centred on the potential linkage between the proposed North Warning System and SDI.⁸ Government ministers repeatedly denied any such linkages. But concerns surfaced once more during the visit to Ottawa on March 6 of Paul Nitze who refused to rule out the possibility that the North Warning System could become part of SDI.⁹ One week later (March 13) the newly-appointed Defence Minister Erik Nielsen announced in the House that the government had approved the North Warning System and that the agreement would be signed at the summit meeting of President Reagan and Prime Minister Mulroney in Quebec City on March 18.

THE INVITATION

The Quebec City summit set the stage for the formal invitation to Canada to participate in the SDI program. A few days later the Prime Minister made his first public statement on the question when he remarked off-handedly that he would consider involvement if it meant 10,000 new jobs in Winnipeg.¹⁰ The formal invitation from U.S. Secretary