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**Memorandum for:**

The attached was prepared by  
 in response to a request  
from the Vice President for West European  
reactions to the President's 23 March  
speech.

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6 April 1983

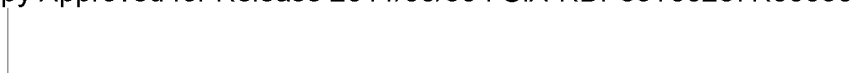
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5 April 1983

Allied Reactions to President Reagan's 23 March Speech

Allied governments have reacted coolly to the President's missile defense proposals. While they publicly welcomed the speech as a sign the US will improve its military capabilities, most have downplayed the possibility of a near-term shift in NATO strategy by emphasizing the futuristic aspects of space-based missile defenses. Allied governments believe that the 23 March speech was designed chiefly to build domestic US support for increased defense spending, and they probably will continue to refrain from airing their misgivings publicly.

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Privately, however, in major West European capitals Allied officials have expressed concern that the President's proposals were made without consulting NATO, and that they may have a negative impact on arms control, European defense, and INF deployment prospects. During the next few months West European leaders will be increasingly preoccupied with INF and almost certainly want the US to emphasize publicly its commitment to INF arms control and modernization rather than new missile defenses.

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West Germany

Defense Minister Woerner publicly cautioned on 24 March that the President's proposals would not solve the security problems facing NATO today and stressed that the Alliance will continue its current strategy for the next 10 to 15 years. The next day official press spokesman Sudhoff said that the government expected the development of anti-missile systems by the US would take Europe's legitimate defense needs into account. Both Woerner and Sudhoff took pains to note the arms control aspects of the 23 March speech and said the West will continue its efforts to achieve balanced disarmament agreements.

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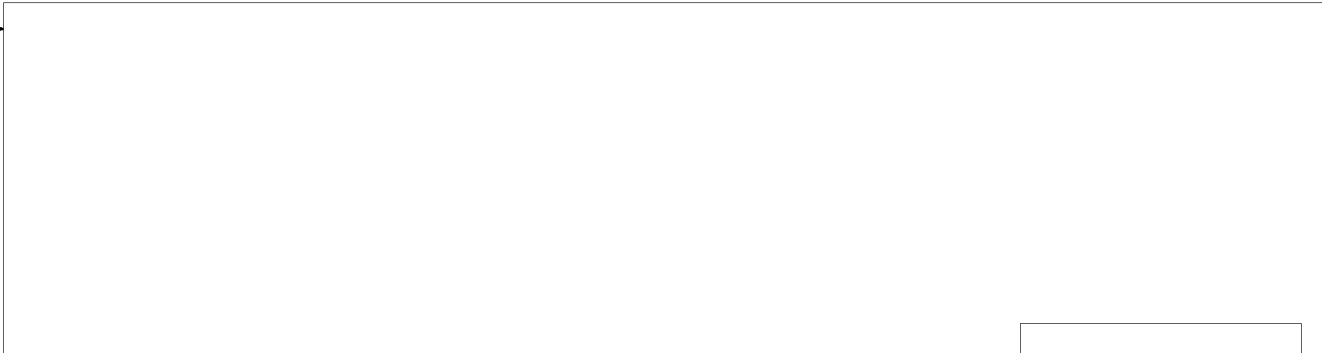
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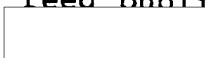


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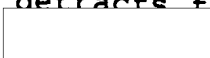
CSU Party leader Strauss has a different interpretation of the impact on European security of a "fortress America." He stated publicly that an invulnerable US would be even more willing to come to Europe's defense than it is now under the "Mutual Assured Destruction" concept. 

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#### The United Kingdom


The US Embassy in London reports that British officials have been privately skeptical of the new missile defense plan and critical about the lack of consultations. They worry that, if implemented, the President's proposals may violate the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and feed public perceptions of US indifference to arms control. 

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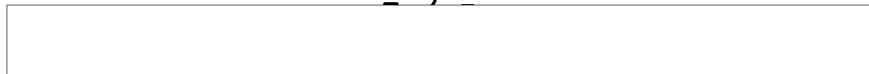
British officials share West German concerns that Washington may be adopting a "fortress America" mentality that could decouple US and West European security ties. They also fear that the development of a US anti-missile system will cause the Soviets to improve substantially their anti-missile capability. This in turn would increase the vulnerability of the UK's small deterrent force and encourage opponents of London's plans to build new Trident nuclear submarines. Finally, Foreign Office officials believe that the 23 March speech detracts from the public debate at a crucial point for INF. 

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#### France

The Embassy in Paris reports that French officials privately fear that development of new missile defenses will have a negative impact in Europe because it may be interpreted by European publics as a sign that NATO's deterrent strategy is obsolete. The French fear that this perception could lead to increased public opposition to INF basing. They share the British fear that an improved Soviet anti-missile capability would heighten the vulnerability of their independent nuclear deterrent forces. 

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Defense Minister Hernu is particularly worried that a new American focus on missile defenses would be interpreted by the public as a sign of growing American isolationism. He said this perception has already been fueled by recent articles emphasizing the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from Europe and by General Rogers' statements about the desirability of reducing NATO's reliance on the early use of these weapons. Hernu believes the US should present the missile defense project as part of a long-term attempt to strengthen the US defense posture, a move most Frenchmen would approve

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### Other Allies

The Italian NATO Affairs expert unofficially told Embassy officials in Rome that he questioned whether the USSR would now begin similar ABM programs and start a new arms race. The Norwegian State Secretary in the Ministry of Defense does not believe the West should pursue the technological research described by the President but should heed the UN Secretary General's plea that space be used only for peaceful purposes

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### Outlook

The Allies will want further discussions of anti-missile systems to be coordinated with them. They will want it made clear that such discussions do not alter NATO's deterrent strategy and that such systems are not seen as instruments for making the US invulnerable and giving it a first strike capability against the USSR. The UK and France, in particular, will continue to object to the development by the US of new technologies that call into question the survivability of their independent nuclear forces.

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