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Senators Want Inquiry on Report Of Official SDI 'Disinformation'

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Four U.S. senators asked the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence yesterday to investigate reports that the Reagan administration has provided classified information to the Soviet Union on the "Star Wars" missile defense program while channeling "disinformation" on the program to Congress and the U.S. public.

Lt. Col. Simon P. Worden, special assistant to the director of the Star Wars program, formally known as the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), said in a public forum earlier this week that U.S. officials provided a "classified briefing" on SDI to the Soviets.

A spokesman for the SDI Organization, Lt. Col. Lee DeLorme, said yesterday that Worden "misspoke." DeLorme said that Lt. Gen. James A. Abrahamson gave the Soviets an unclassified briefing at the arms control talks in Geneva, which became secret only because all details of negotiations must be kept secret.

But according to a transcript of his remarks, Worden went on to explain why some classified information would be provided to the Soviets but still kept secret in the United States.

"In some cases, it is useful for the U.S. to tell the Soviets what we know about them and it is not useful to tell, to have the debate publicly [on] how we get that information," Worden said.

The alleged disinformation campaign was reported this week in Aviation Week and Space Technology magazine, which said that the CIA and Defense Department have initiated a "disinformation program that it is applying to a number of its aircraft and weapons development



SEN. WILLIAM PROXMIRE



SEN. DALE BUMPERS

Two Democratic lawmakers among those seeking investigation of disclosures.

projects," including SDI, in order to confuse the Soviets.

The article said that some disinformation might be transmitted in congressional hearings.

Democratic Sens. William Proxmire (Wis.), J. Bennett Johnston (La.), Dale Bumpers (Ark.) and Lawton Chiles (Fla.), all members of the Appropriations Committee, asked the intelligence committee to investigate both "disturbing reports." An intelligence committee staff member said an inquiry will be conducted.

Worden's remarks came in response to questions during a forum at the American Jewish Congress convention here Monday. In response to a question about sharing SDI technology with the Soviets, as President Reagan has suggested, Worden said "we have given them a classified briefing on the SDI."

"Indeed, we have some complaints from Congress that we gave the Soviets the same one we gave Congress," Worden added.

Worden was then asked why information given the Soviets would remain classified.

"That's a good question," he responded. "I argue that it shouldn't be. The point is that we have an agreement with the Soviets that all details of the proceedings in Geneva other than just general progress is at a secret level."

Worden then went on to say that there are "two key areas" that cannot be fully disclosed in public, "intelligence sources and methods" being the first.

"The second one is a more complex one," Worden said. "There is only one official secrets act in the United States and that was the Atomic Energy Act of 1955. Because the SDI deals with nuclear weapons and defenses against them, that comes under an entirely different set of rules and regulations, and Congress has mandated that certain of that information must remain classified at that level."