

# Joint Chiefs See ABM As a Crisis Deterrent

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The United States must build a missile defense to keep the kind of strategic edge that won the Cuban missile crisis, the Joint Chiefs of

Staff argue in a still secret position paper.

This view conflicts with that of Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, who favors foregoing an ABM (anti-ballistic-missile) system and relying on offensive missiles for "deterrence" the strategy of making nuclear war so unthinkable that it will not occur.

"Deterrence is a combination of forces in being and state of mind," the Chiefs state. "Should the Soviets come to believe that their ballistic missile defense, coupled with a nuclear attack on the United States, would limit damage to the Soviet Union to a level acceptable to them — whatever that level is—our forces would no longer deter, and the first principle of our security policy is gone."

The Chiefs agree with McNamara that the ability to destroy an attacker with offensive missiles is basic to deterrence. But they argue that the opposite is also true—that deterrence decreases in proportion to how much the enemy figures it could blunt a retaliatory attack. The blunting ABM system therefore cannot be separated out in figuring deterrent value, they maintain.

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now, the Chiefs state, that Russia has not been able to get its way in the world. But this could change, they warn, if the United States does not keep up with Russia in defensive missiles.

Deploying the Nike X anti-missile system around the United States, the Chiefs unanimously contend, would help "continue the Cuba power environment in the world... At the time of Cuba, the strategic nuclear balance was such that the Soviets did not have an exploitable capability because of our vastly superior nuclear strength."

Assuming the United States and Russia cannot negotiate an agreement under which neither would build an ABM system, the Chiefs recommend putting defensive missiles around 25 cities and military bases at first and another 25 cities later.

The first defense, called Posture A, would cost \$9.9 billion. The second defense—Posture B—would cost an estimated \$19.4 billion.

The Chiefs contend that the costs of a U.S. anti-missile system would be heavy on Russia, too. The Soviets would have to allocate money, man-



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power and technology to keep up with the Nike X defense.

Also, the Chiefs argue, the Soviets' nuclear warheads would have to be spread thin. This is because the Soviets would have to build multiple nuclear warheads to be sure of penetrating U.S. defenses.

Besides the prospect of deterring war and saving lives if it does come, the Chiefs see other advantages in building a Nike X missile defense. It would, they argue:

- Reduce the chance of an accidentally fired missile—which could be intercepted by Nike X—from triggering a nuclear war.
- Avoid a "strategic imbalance" within U.S. forces and between the United States and Soviet forces.
- Show the world that the United States is interested in defense as well as offense, thus reducing suspicions that it is building a "first strike" force.
- Stabilize the nuclear balance, with the United States well ahead of Russia.