Carter and Reagan on Defense: Rhetoric and Posturing Clothe Important Differences

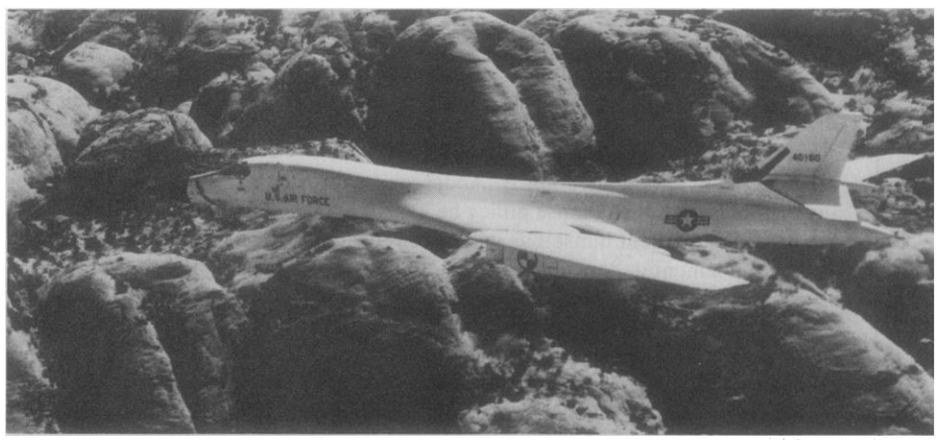
Reagan would spend more on defense, and would shelve the SALT II limitations on nuclear weapons

Although the two major candidates for president speak of their plans and convictions in the blurriest terms, they have revealed a few sharp differences of substance. Perhaps the most important involves weaponry. This fall's election will decide at least one issue. It will determine whether the United States will set out on a program of accelerated defense spending within the confines of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II), or on a course of super-accelerated spending in disregard of the SALT II treaty.

President Carter has said that he will abide by SALT's limitations even if they are not ratified by Congress. Ronald Reagan has said that he will withdraw or shelve the treaty, and his advisers have endorsed several military expansion schemes that might nullify it.

Both candidates have taken pains to surround these positions with some words of camouflage, for neither wants to be caricatured as an extremist. The diplomatic and military fiascoes in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan have made the Administration particularly vulnerable to the charge of weakness. Yet Reagan must also be cautious in advocating his remedy of a rapid arms buildup, for he is vulnerable to the charge—already circulated by his opponents—that he is trigger-happy. The public generally supports arms control. Thus the candidates have engaged in an elaborate doublespeak in which Reagan frequently stresses "peace" and "prudence," while President Carter and his appointees feed the press with tough talk suggesting that the Administration is steadily strengthening the military threat aimed at the Soviets.

It is hard to guess how campaign antics of either candidate might be translated into policy after the election. It is plain, however, that more attention will be given to capabilities for fighting a nuclear war than before. Already, under the pressure of the campaign, Carter has issued a memorandum (Presidential Directive 59) that instructs the military to aim American nuclear weapons at Soviet military targets, not at cities. The decision was leaked clumsily to reporters in Washington, D.C., in August. Carter and his defense officials also briefed the press on a new aircraft design (Stealth) which, it is hoped, will some day make American planes invisible to Soviet radar. How much further than Carter would a Reagan Administration go toward restarting the arms race?



U.S. Air Force Photo

The B-1 rises again. Carter stopped production of this long-range bomber in 1977, calling it obsolescent. Reagan says some version of the plane should be built.

One fairly crude way of examining the question is to compare the candidates' proposed defense budgets. The Carter Administration began its term with some important budget cuts and program cancellations, but it has now reversed course and is pumping up the Defense Department. Having just received a 5 percent increase, Carter's defense budget now amounts to around 5 percent of the gross national product. Reagan has said that he would immediately raise the level to nearly 6 percent of the GNP. The Central Intelligence Agency estimates that the Soviets, with an economy smaller than ours, are spending 12 to 14 percent of their GNP on defense. (This figure is the source of controversy, for until recently the CIA had pegged the Soviet defense budget at less than 10 percent of the GNP.) Gross figures like these are not informative, however, because they reveal nothing about the quality of military protection being purchased.

As this is written, Reagan's top staffers, led by foreign policy adviser Richard Allen and defense specialist William Van Cleave, are preparing a detailed defense policy statement for the candidate. It will serve as a draft fiscal 1982 budget and will give a reasonably specific description of what Reagan would do that Carter has not done. According to William Schneider, a fellow at the Hudson Institute who is helping to draw up the numbers, the first-year increase over Carter's budget for strategic weapons alone will amount to $5 billion. The increases for conventional weapons, operation, and maintenance will be larger. "The big problem," Schneider said, "is not procurement. It's operation and maintenance (O & M), because you run up big numbers pretty fast if you try to do anything." He claimed to have identified $50 billion worth of deficiencies in just two accounts—those for O & M and ammunition.

Another Reagan adviser, Lt. Gen. Edward Rowny—a member of Carter's SALT negotiating team who quit when he decided too much was being conceded to the Soviets—said that Reagan would probably want to boost the Defense budget above Carter's planned increases by at least $25 to $30 billion a year. John Lehman, who headed the Republican National Committee's defense panel, said none of Reagan's 100 advis-

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ers would counsel anything less than a $10- to $30-billion annual increase. The most extravagant of all the wish lists was put together by the Committee on the Present Danger, a group opposed to SALT II headed by Paul Nitze. Many of its members, including Nitze, are Reagan advisers and would conceivably be invited to join his administration. This committee's recommended budget would increase defense spending authority by $260 billion through 1985, or by about $50 billion a year.

Reagan's camp includes a group of defense planners with an appetite for big programs. If Reagan were elected, he would not be able to win approval for everything they seek. Some would be deferred. The most important objectives, his advisers say, are the following:

- Something would be done to remove what is perceived as the vulnerability of U.S. strategic missiles (Minuteman) to a first-strike attack. Reagan's people have decided that a solution is needed quickly, but they haven't agreed what it should be. Carter's solution was to approve the construction of a massive base for the new MX missile. But the first MX will not be in place until 1986 at the earliest. Some of Reagan's advisers would like to speed up construction; some advocate building a cheaper shelter for the MX; some would scrap the current basing concept entirely and dig new silos for the Minuteman, filling them with MX missiles when the MX is ready. The trouble with these options is that some might violate the terms of the SALT II treaty. Reagan has not decided whether, or to what extent, he wants to stir up that hornet's nest.

- Reagan wants a new strategic bomber, quickly. The Carter Administration decided in 1977 to cancel a program to build the B-1, a successor to the 20-year-old B-52 now in use. The Administration said then, as it does now, that the B-1 would have been obsolete by the time it was built. Carter chose instead to invest heavily in the cruise missile, an unmanned drone which has all the good qualities of the bomber, but is smaller and thus harder to detect with radar. The Administration also publicized the fact that it was investing in Stealth technology that could make aircraft invisible to Soviet radar. If a new bomber is to be built, the Administration argues, it should incorporate this new technology, which will not be available until the end of the decade. Reagan proposes to build a Stealth bomber, but he would also

Anderson Stresses Conventional Arms

Independent candidate John B. Anderson is not rocking any big boats with the defense policy he has outlined so far. But he does represent himself as willing to reexamine some of the fundamental concepts on which defense is now based.

Chief among these is the land-based missile system, one leg of the air-land-sea strategic nuclear triad. Anderson, in his most pointed difference with President Carter's defense policy, flatly opposes construction of the racetrack MX missile basing system planned as a successor to the Minuteman system. He prefers the notion of putting missiles in a large number of small submarines in coastal waters, as recommended by defense analysts Richard Garwin and Sidney Drell. Anderson recently told an approving audience of aerospace workers at TRW, which has a $50 million contract for research on the MX, that he wanted the money saved from scrapping the racetrack to be applied to basic research and the space program.

Anderson, like Carter, favors "essential equivalence" with Soviet military capabilities, as well as ratification of the SALT II treaty, which he maintains is "adequately verifiable" as negotiated.

The Anderson defense plan soft-pedals nuclear weapons and places emphasis on building up various aspects of the country's conventional forces. He wants to beef up the Navy and steer its shipbuilding program away from big high-technology ships to larger numbers of small ships.

This is in line with his concern over the trend toward big "gold-plated" multipurpose weapons systems. Says the position paper: "Too often . . . we forego simple, reliable, rugged weapons systems with clear missions in favor of expensive, complex systems which yield only marginal improvements."

As for Presidential Directive 59, in which it was announced that Soviet military installations and command posts would be priority targets in a defensive nuclear strike, Anderson shares concerns voiced by others, including the Federation of American Scientists, that the Russians will be hard put to limit a nuclear exchange if their command centers are knocked out. He also believes that the MX system and the presidential directive, when taken together, may constitute a disturbing signal to the Soviets that this country is moving closer to developing a first-strike capability.

Anderson has made it clear that he is as worried as anyone about the declining military competence and morale in the all-volunteer force, but he is firmly opposed to restoration of the draft or peacetime draft registration. Instead he has outlined a number of steps—acknowledgedly expensive—to attract qualified manpower, including basic pay increases, more bonuses, and improved housing, social services, and educational benefits.

An Anderson defense budget, like everyone else's, would be a rising budget. He supports the commitment of the United States and NATO allies to raise defense budgets by 3 percent a year. Dollar figures are expected to be named shortly in an overall "budget impact statement" on his platform.

Much of Anderson's defense position has been structured by his principal issues coordinator Alton Frye, an expert on strategic balance who is on leave from his post as director of the Council on Foreign Relations. But Frye says the candidate reads widely and deeply (he is a regular reader of *Foreign Policy* and *Foreign Affairs* magazines), is a rapid absorber of complicated material, and that his defense policy is very much a "personal set of positions." Other chief advisers on foreign policy and defense are Robert Bowie, former deputy director of the CIA under Stansfield Turner and before that head of policy planning at the State Department under President Eisenhower; Harvard professor Thomas Schelling; J. Robert Shaetzel, ambassador to the European Economic Community under Presidents Johnson and Nixon; and Nathaniel Samuels, an undersecretary of state under Nixon. —CONSTANCE HOLDEN

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build an interim bomber using the best technology left over from the aborted B-1 program.

• Reagan's advisers claim that the Administration has badly neglected the Navy. They would launch a massive new shipbuilding program to increase the total force from 500 to 600 ships.

• According to Reagan's advisers, something must be done immediately to attract more competent people into the armed services and keep them once they have enlisted. The candidate has endorsed the all-volunteer approach, meaning that a Republican administration would not consider using the draft unless other methods of improving the talent pool had failed. This is an expensive approach; Reagan's advisers say that salary limitations imposed in 1977 have brought about a loss in servicemen's real income of $6 billion. The Reagan camp has not yet settled on a plan for making military service attractive to "middle class people of quality," as Rowny described the desired recruits.

If these promises are carried out, the proposed increase in the nation's $160 billion annual defense budget will strain the system. The strain will be greater if Reagan wins the election, for he has promised not only to increase military spending, but to lower total federal spending, to lower federal income by enacting a large tax cut, and to balance the budget. It will be a neat trick to do all of this. Reagan's advisers concede that their accomplishments might fall short of these objectives, but they insist that the defense budget would not be compromised. Van Cleave and Alan Greenspan, one of Reagan's economic advisers, are now trying to fit together all the pieces of this puzzle. No one will say when the public may see the results.

> Reagan adviser Edward Rowny: "There's no arms control now. It would just be more of the same."

Without mentioning Reagan, Defense Secretary Harold Brown last July made a four-point attack on the Republicans' defense strategy, insofar as it is known. A campaign to make the United States superior to the Soviet Union would be wasteful and dangerous, Brown said. It would (i) bring about "the end of arms control," (ii) start an "uncontrolled, open-ended, and very expensive arms race," (iii) run afoul of "real world constraints," which would force the government to cut back on conventional forces, and (iv) channel competition into building spectacular nuclear weapons, "the most dangerous arena—the one most likely to lead to nuclear war."

Reagan and his military advisers of course reject the notion that they would start an arms race. They maintain that they only intend to catch up with the Soviets in a race already under way. Yet they are clearly less concerned than the Administration about the dangers of a weapons buildup. Rowny, for example, was asked if there would be a period of no arms control under Reagan. He gave a personal view: "There's no arms control now. It would just be more of the same. . . . It's not going to be the end of the world. There's no way that [the Soviets] could unleash whole new resources, because they don't have them. . . . To put it simply, if the United States wanted to race, there would be no contest."—ELIOT MARSHALL

Ion Generators: Old Fad, New Fashion

The ion generator is back and selling like hot cakes. But does it do more than clean the air?

On the heels of hot tubs comes another appliance from the West Coast to promote your well-being. Chico Memorial Hospital's burn unit has one. A New Wave nightclub in Berkeley has one. Even the state of California is testing one in its Los Angeles hearing chambers.

The gadget is a negative ion generator—touted in the 1960's as a miracle device to cure your every ill. It was promptly labeled quackery by the Food and Drug Administration. Twenty years later, the air ionizer has been reincarnated with a different sales pitch that stops just short of claiming any medical benefit. According to one ad, the invention cleans up the air, recreating the freshness of the countryside: "Air quality can actually affect your moods, your feelings and your sense of well-being," claims the ad.

Believers swear that the generator is a panacea for everything from surliness to insomnia, but they concede that the effect may be psychosomatic. Scientific evidence as to the power of the ionizer is scattered and uneven. Some researchers believe that the negative ions most likely improve the people's health by altering hormone levels. If nothing else, the ions help plants grow faster, they say.

The ionizer's primary function is to clean the air. It emits a shower of negative ions that collide with airborne particles and make them settle onto electrically grounded surfaces such as walls and ceilings. The ions pull out smoke, pollen, and other particles.

In nature, ions are created by waterfalls, lightning, and hot desert winds. In country or mountain air, thousands of positive and negative ions swirl around in every cubic centimeter. But an urban office may have as few as 50 ions per cubic centimeter because the ions are snatched up by pollutants.

Distributors, who promote the ionizers for all kinds of uses, have sold them to bars, beauty salons, restaurants, chicken farms, and florist shops. Some urge nonsmokers to take an ionizer to restaurants without no-smoking sections and set it up on their table. With names like "Air Alive" and "Air Energizer," the units sell for $80 to $160.

Manufacturers, enjoying the recent boom in sales that may reach roughly $10 million this year, want to avoid another run-in with the FDA. "We're selling a clean air machine, nothing more," says Thomas Michaels, a salesman for a Berkeley store, "A Breath of Fresh Air." The FDA says as long as ads don't

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