

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 16, 1985

Dear Bob:

This coming week the Senate will vote on two resolutions to release FY 85 funds for 21 MX missiles. As a leader in the Senate, your support and assistance will be critical in obtaining approval of these resolutions, and I appreciate the fact that you have been supportive of this program in previous years.

Four Presidents and six Congresses have supported the MX/Peacekeeper missile, and this support was based on repeated scrutiny of the program's technical capabilities, its role as a component of our overall strategy for nuclear deterrence, and the implications for nuclear arms reduction. In addition, I appointed a bipartisan commission of defense and foreign policy leaders headed by General Brent Scowcroft to review this program. That commission concluded that the MX should be "promptly" deployed as a part of our ICBM modernization program.

The MX provides major advances in ICBM technology and capabilities, adding greater payload, more accuracy, more flexibility in range and targeting, and more protection against nuclear effects. It also provides the only near-term response to the current imbalance between U.S. and Soviet forces. The MX will replace our aging and outmoded ICBM missiles while we continue to work on developing our small missile system.

The MX will also play a vital role in our TRIAD of strategic weapons -- the combination of land, sea, and air based forces that has successfully preserved peace for a generation. We are making advances in our land and air based programs, and we cannot afford to let a gap in our land based program threaten our Nation's longstanding strategy for deterring nuclear confrontation.

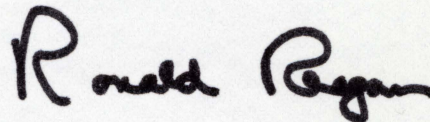
Finally, I believe we must consider the implications of this vote in terms of our efforts with the Soviets to seek arms reduction. I am pleased that you have agreed to serve as

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a Senate observer to the arms talks, and that you were able to be in Geneva last week. I have great confidence in our negotiators, and my greatest desire is to reach an acceptable agreement. As you and many of your colleagues have pointed out, we must all exercise great patience in this undertaking, and we must work together in a bipartisan effort to achieve meaningful reductions. I believe that we must also continue our resolve to strengthen our own deterrent forces; otherwise, we will reduce any incentive the Soviets may have to agree to real arms reduction.

Your continued support and your leadership efforts in behalf of the MX program are extremely important to me, and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald Reagan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Honorable Robert Dole
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510