

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 22, 1982

Dear Paul:

For many years, U.S. strategic forces have helped protect our Nation and the Free World by providing a capable and effective deterrent. Maintenance of these forces has historically enjoyed broad bipartisan support.

In recent years, our deterrent has become increasingly vulnerable in the face of a relentless Soviet military buildup. As part of our program to modernize the U.S. deterrent, I asked last year that you support improving the capability and survivability of the land-based component of our strategic forces by authorizing development and deployment of the MX intercontinental ballistic missile. I also agreed earlier this year to provide you with a permanent basing decision by December 1.

In response to this requirement, the Department of Defense forwarded to me a series of basing options, with associated analyses of technical, environmental, arms control, and other factors. I have also received the counsel of my senior advisers, former Presidents and Administration officials, and Members of Congress. After careful study, I have decided to emplace 100 MX missiles, now known as "Peacekeeper," in superhard silos in a closely-spaced basing mode at Francis E. Warren Air Force Base near Cheyenne, Wyoming. Given Congressional support, these missiles will have an initial operational capability late in 1986. I am prepared also to consider deception and possibly ballistic missile defense, which are options if the Soviet Union continues its military buildup.

We all hope, however, that the Soviets will join us in seeking meaningful progress in arms control negotiations. This MX decision supports and complements the U.S. approach to arms control. While the U.S. must and will improve its forces to maintain a credible deterrent, we remain fully committed to our standing proposals for significant reductions in both sides' nuclear arsenals. We seek to reduce ballistic missiles by about one-half and ballistic missile warheads by about one-third.

Under separate cover, I am sending you a copy of my full statement on the decision outlined above. I ask that you keep an open mind on this complex and important question and permit the Administration to make its case for the decision. We are prepared to respond, at your convenience, to formal and informal requests for additional information that you may desire. I look forward to receiving your counsel and assistance as we work toward our common goal of improving the security of our Nation.

Sincerely,

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

The Honorable Paul Laxalt
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510