

News from Congressman Les AuCoin

2446 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

(202) 225-0855

November 18, 1983

FOR RELEASE SUNDAY, NOV. 20 AND AFTER:

NUCLEAR 'BUILD-DOWN': MORE FIRST-STRIKE WEAPONS, NOT LESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The nuclear weapons "build-down" plan backed by the Reagan Administration will increase rather than decrease the first-strike nuclear array the United States and the Soviet Union are aiming at each other, a leading congressional opponent of the plan said today.

Congressman Les AuCoin (D-Ore.), a member of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, said an analysis shows that under build-down, "the Soviets will gain a significantly greater capability than they have today to conduct a first-strike against us, and will have more incentive to use it."

Generally under the build-down idea, two nuclear warheads would have to be destroyed by each side for each new warhead deployed.

In effect, build-down allows the United States and the Soviet Union to continue developing and deploying increasingly accurate weapons capable of destroying the other's missiles in hardened silos. AuCoin said that capability is "the essence of the first-strike threat we'll face in the next decade.

"Because of that, build-down is Hollywood arms control. It amounts to trading in two spears for a magnum rifle."

Unlike the nuclear freeze, which would halt the weapons race and prohibit flight testing of all nuclear ballistic missiles by both sides, the build-down encourages new weapons, AuCoin said.

"The net thrust of the new weapons we'll be bringing on line over the next 20 years is not be toward deterrence and stability; it's toward first-strike, mutual vulnerability, and the heightened risk of nuclear conflagration."

The most dramatic change in the Soviet arsenal will occur in increasing the accuracy of submarine-launched ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, AuCoin said, because those weapons can strike with less warning.

He said a "radical increase" in Soviet swift-strike accuracy is projected under the build-down, increasing the threat of a first strike on U.S. land-based missiles and bombers.

###

(PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER)



11