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OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN  
THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20301

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25 August 1985

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CJCS Diary  
August 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: The Sergeant York Air Defense System (U)

1. (S) As you approach your decision on the DIVAD Air Defense system, I am concerned that with the press of investment and programming considerations, the warfighting aspects of the matter may not have been adequately illuminated for you. As you have said many times, the requirement for division-level air defense improvement is undisputed. The question, it seems to me, is whether the Sergeant York gun system meets those needs to a degree which justifies the expenditure of public funds in the amount required for the equipment.

2. (S) I recognize and appreciate the concerns over the technical difficulties that the Army has had in the development of the Sergeant York. As you make your decision, some operational points should be weighed. The first is that fundamental to success on the modern battlefield is the ability to operate without undue interference from enemy air. We put an extraordinary amount of effort into making that come true -- from attacks on enemy airfields, use of our own fighters against theirs, missile defenses over the battle area, and close-in defenses of the forces. Our armored and mechanized forces are the jewels in the air-land battle crown. The Soviets know that and will go to extraordinary efforts to stop them -- particularly when we are executing our battle doctrine successfully. Those armored and mechanized forces must be protected! Close-in protection for them when they are on the move will be a key ingredient in making our battle doctrine succeed.

Some other points:

a. Our present short-range air defense systems are not equal to the Soviet threat including the HAVOC standoff helicopter.

b. The Vulcan gun system with its 1.2 km range, visual pointing system, and exposed gunner is simply inadequate.

c. The Chaparral missile system cannot keep up with maneuver forces, nor can it shoot on the move.

d. The Sergeant York has a 4 km range -- almost four times the range of the Vulcan. It has an all-weather radar and it can shoot while moving. The Sergeant York has significant

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lethality against the Soviet HAVOC helicopter at a 4 km range and with product improvement, will be even more effective. As General Gabriel pointed out to you at the SPR, a gun like the Sergeant York will make fighter bomber attacks on our armored forces far more difficult than present systems. Conversely the Vulcan gun system is so disadvantaged in that circumstance as to be virtually not effective.

3. (S) Our experience tells us that effective air defense requires a combination of missile and gun systems. Absent the Sergeant York, our country's armored forces will have virtually no capability in the low altitude/gun envelop for the foreseeable future.

4. (S) Although it may be reasonable and proper to stop the Sergeant York buy at 263 as proposed by the Army in their Option 3, it seems to me that any lesser number provides inadequate air defense support even as a stopgap measure and far too few units for a supportable warfighting base. We need the Sergeant York, and we need to fix it and field it as soon as possible. I can conceive of no reason why the Sergeant York cannot be made to be extremely effective. If we can solve the software problems of SDI, we can surely fix the Sergeant York's software problems. I strongly recommend Option 3.

  
JOHN W. VESSEY, JR.  
Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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