A Diabolical Disneyland in Zion: the Mormons and the MX

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A DIABOLICAL DISNEYLAND IN ZION: 
THE MORMONS AND THE MX 

by 
Jacob W. Olmstead

A thesis submitted to the faculty of 
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Master of Arts

Department of History
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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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ABSTRACT

A DIABOLICAL DISNEYLAND IN ZION:

THE MORMONS AND THE MX

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Department of History
Master of Arts

In September 1979 President Jimmy Carter publicly announced his decision to support the deployment of the MX missile and mobile basing scheme in Utah and Nevada. Despite local opposition and the close proximity of the proposed base to its headquarters, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) remained silent until 5 May 1981, when the First Presidency issued a statement opposing the MX plans. The purpose of this work is to narrate the history of the development of the Mormon position regarding the deployment of MX missile in the Great Basin and evaluate the response to the statement both locally and nationally.

As described in this work the initial deliberations within the Mormon Church were held within the Special Affairs Committee (SAC), which gathered information on the issues concerning the MX. In the process the SAC met with scholars, politicians and
religious figures furnished by the grass-roots opposition in Utah. As argued by this thesis it was the arguments presented by both national and local religious figures who convinced the SAC that the MX presented a clear moral concern which required further discussion.

Eventually the matter was turned over to the First Presidency and later the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for further consideration. Because a consensus could not be reached, in the place of clear Mormon opposition the First Presidency issued two general denunciations of the nuclear arms race. Eventually, there was full agreement and a statement was issued on 5 May 1981. As argued in this thesis, it was likely the efforts of Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the Twelve and chairman of the SAC, who working behind the scene was able to unify the hierarchy, as opposed to Edwin B. Firmage, who has traditionally been credited with convincing the hierarchy to take a position.

As illustrated by this thesis the statement evoked a number of responses from the local and national media and religious and political leaders. The response was generally positive; however, there were a number of critical columns and editorials issued by the national media. Moreover, the statement had considerable influence moving Utah’s congressional delegation toward opposition. As argued by this thesis this was a moot point because recently elected President Ronald Reagan had latent reservations about the MX program and had been looking for an alternative basing mode prior to the statement’s release.

In conclusion this thesis argues that, although the statement had little impact on the history of the MX and the Mormon Church, the development of the First Presidency’s MX position does provide a case study illustrating the bureaucratic processes within the Church for establishing official political policy in the late-twentieth century.
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Provo, Utah
July 2005
For Marie
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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

On 7 September 1979, President Jimmy Carter formally announced his endorsement of the multiple protective shelter (MPS) or “race track” basing of the MX missile in the Great Basin. Dubbed the “largest construction project in [American] history” and eliciting comparisons with the Panama Canal and the Alaskan Pipeline, the MX/MPS was considered to be the most controversial weapons program in the history of the Cold War.\(^1\) The vision of missile-laden cars constantly barreling around a track reminiscent of a giant roller coaster, prompted some to suggest that the MX/MPS was the Air Force’s thirty billion dollar version of “Disneyland.”\(^2\) Although its size, technological feasibility, cost, and theoretical underpinnings were enough to generate heated deliberation among ranking officials in Washington D.C., perhaps the greatest contributors to the controversy of whether the MX/MPS should be built were the citizens of Utah and Nevada who fought to keep the MX out of their states. Though traditionally ultra-patriotic, these vocal citizens, who had in the past benefitted economically from the presence of the federal government, vehemently opposed the deployment of MX in the Great Basin.

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The central theme of the citizens’ objection to the MX/MPS involved land-use issues. However, there was a significant moral component to their opposition as well. Although dozens of groups released statements proffering moral arguments against the deployment of the MX/MPS in these states, the position of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church, or Mormons), which had settled much of Utah and Nevada during the nineteenth century and had significant member populations in both states, was perhaps the most controversial. The Mormon position had an impact on the populations and congressional delegations of these states, particularly Utah, and has been credited by some as the “death knell” for the proposal to construct the MX/MPS to the Great Basin. The Mormon position on the MX is the central theme of this work.

To appreciate the opposition to the MX/MPS and the position taken by the LDS Church, it is important to understand the premise upon which American nuclear defense rested, the rationale for the development of the MX/MPS and the specifics of its proposed deployment. From the beginning of the Cold War, American nuclear defense strategy was based upon the concept of deterrence. This theory suggested that the Soviet Union would be unwilling to launch a first strike because of the total decimation it would experience from a reciprocating American attack. In essence by destroying the United States, the Soviets would incur their own destruction—a scenario often called mutually assured destruction (MAD). However, it was believed that the Soviets would be deterred only if

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3Glass, *Citizens Against the MX*, xvii.

the American nuclear arsenal represented a clear threat to the Soviets. If they discovered a weakness in the American nuclear position in which retaliation could be mitigated by a first strike, it was believed the Soviets might be tempted to launch first, in a time of crisis, leaving the United States vulnerable to losing a nuclear exchange.

To ensure a position of strength capable of deterring the Soviets, the United States developed a substantial and diversified nuclear arsenal. Known as the American nuclear triad, it included land-, air- and maritime-based nuclear weapons whose strength relied upon both quantity and redundancy. The only perceived weaknesses of the American force were the land-based Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) located in silos, mostly in the Mid-western states of the United States, silos whose locations could be discovered through satellite. Hardening the silos offered some resistance to a possible attack, but a direct hit by an incoming ICBM could neutralize American silo-based weapons. And theoretically, if the accuracy of all Soviet ICBMs were increased to threaten a large percentage of American silo-based ICBMs, a Soviet attack could nullify one-third of American nuclear defenses, leading to a dangerous destabilization in the nuclear balance. By the late 1970s Air Force intelligence indicated that the increasing accuracy of the Soviets’ SS-18 and SS-19 ICBMs would render American silo-based ICBMs vulnerable by the early 1980s.5

Meanwhile, the Air Force had been developing and improving its nuclear missile technology, making America’s second-generation silo-based ICBM, the Minuteman III,

obsolete. Thus, in the early 1970s the development of the MX (Missile Experimental) began with the intent of replacing the outdated Minuteman technology. Capitalizing on multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) technology, the new missile would have far greater range and increased accuracy. More than twice the size of the Minuteman III, which contained three RVed 350-kiloton (kt) warheads, the MX was fifty feet long and, a little over seven feet wide and could contain ten or more highly accurate RVed 500-kt warheads. (The Hiroshima bomb had a single 13-kt warhead.) Due to its high yield and accuracy, the MX rivaled if not surpassed the SS-18, the Soviets' largest ICBM. However, some believed that the MX was the most deadly weapon ever conceived.

The vulnerability of silo-based ICBMs was a major issue as the Air Force began to develop the MX as a replacement for the Minuteman III. Although the MX could squeeze into the Minuteman silos, placing the MX in hardened silos left it vulnerable to a first strike attack. The discussion and evaluation of various basing modes to improve the American defense triad began as early as the 1960s based upon speculation concerning the development of Soviet missile technology. In the early 1970s, when the development of the MX was underway, this speculative dialogue gave way to serious concerns. In order to overcome vulnerability, various basing concepts were discussed, including super-

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hardening silos, concealing or creating ambiguity of missile location, and creating
defensive missile systems and mobile launchers. Employing a combination of the above
concepts, nearly three dozen basing schemes for land-, air- and maritime-deployment,
known as the “dirty thirty,” were discussed and evaluated.\(^8\) For various reasons, including
missile vulnerability and inaccuracy, communication difficulties and cost, the air- and
sea-basing schemes were deemed unfeasible.\(^9\)

By the mid-1970s the basing scheme of choice was a multiple aim point (MAP)
system, which required constructing thousands of silos to house only a few hundred
missiles on a large military base. In effect this plan would create a giant “shell game” in
which a small number of missiles were hidden among many silos, requiring the Soviets to
prognosticate which silos contained the missiles. Although it reduced the vulnerability of
the MX missiles, this scheme presented several problems. First, it required twenty-four
hours to move a missile from one silo to another. If the Soviets discovered the location of
the missiles, the missiles would be left vulnerable for a twenty-four hour period. Second,
after the 1972 ratification of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks I (SALT I) treaty with
the Soviets, it was agreed that nuclear arsenals should be independently verifiable to
reassure both sides that the other’s arsenal was within the confines of the treaty.

\(^8\) John C. Toomay, “Strategic Forces Rationale–A Lost Discipline?” *International
illustrating all the various basing concepts that had been considered for the next
generation of the ICBM. See *ICBM Options* (Washington D.C.: Office of the
Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, Space and Strategic Systems,
1980).

\(^9\) Holland and Hoover, *The MX Decision*, 67-75.
MAP system was unsuitable for verification.

Because of these flaws, another land-based scheme was favored, one, similar to the MAP system. This system, employing multiple protective shelters (MPS), was also a shell game, but it allowed for quicker mobility by placing the MX missiles on transporter-erector launchers (TEL) that could shuttle the missiles vertically between hardened launch sites. Thus, if the locations of the missiles were discovered and the Soviets launched a first strike, the missiles could be moved to another launch site before the Soviet ICBMs reached their targets. In this scheme each missile would have its own circuiting “race track” on which a number of launch sites or shelters were intermittently situated.

The number of MX missiles and launch sites per missile were based upon SALT II negotiations which had yet to be ratified. It was proposed that 200 MX missiles would be deployed, each having twenty-three launch sites on its circuit or loop, making for a total of 4,600 launch sites, spaced at a distance of at least 7,000 feet apart—a little over a mile.10 Given the projection of Soviet ICBM accuracy, the US military estimated that the Soviets’ entire ICBM force would be required to neutralize the MX, pitting American air-, maritime- and silo-based nuclear weapons against the Soviet counterpart air and maritime forces. In such a scenario the United States would have a clear advantage.

The MX/MPS also fit well with the SALT agreements. Each launch site was equipped with a set of doors which could be opened, if needed, to reveal the number and...
location of the MX missiles to Soviet satellites. Moreover, if the SALT II and III negotiations failed the MPS system could be expanded to keep ahead of Soviet ICBM deployment. It was estimated that shelters could be built at a rate of two thousand per year. This projected output was far greater than the rate at which the Soviet Union could produce ICBMs.\(^\text{11}\)

Because of the number of shelters needed for the system, requirements of land, construction and maintenance were colossal. Housing the 4,600 shelters spaced at least 7,000 feet apart necessitated 98,000 acres of land for the base. To build the needed 10,000 miles of race track and roads, the shelters and other maintenance facilities required millions of tons of cement, sand, gravel, and steel. The construction itself would necessitate a work force of over 10,000. The estimated cost for the construction of the base was conservatively estimated at thirty-three billion dollars, though some estimates were as high as 100 billion. After completion, the base would employ 35,000 employees and draw heavily upon the region’s water and electrical resources (see Appendix I).\(^\text{12}\)

Once the decision was made to proceed with the MX/MPS basing scheme, Carter announced on 8 June that full-scale development of the MX missile would begin. A few

\(^{11}\)For a good summary of the proposed MX/MPS system, see MX Missile: Statement by Dr. William J. Perry, Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, News Release from the Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 1, Folder 10, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited as State Archives). For a lengthy discussion of the relationship of the MX to arms control talks, see Janice Maureen Kroll, “Arms Control and the MX” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1985).

\(^{12}\)Untitled document listing the construction requirements of the MX/MPS, Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 2, Folder 7, State Archives.
months later, Carter made the official announcement regarding his decision to begin deployment of the MX/MPS in Utah and Nevada. The Air Force’s selection of the Great Basin of Utah and Nevada as foremost among the proposed locations for the MX/MPS is not surprising considering the awesome requirements of the base and the federal government’s relationship with these states. A significant percentage of largely underused and unpopulated land in both states was already in the control of the Bureau of Land Management. Thus, the federal government did not need to acquire the vast amounts of land necessary for the MX/MPS. Furthermore, the federal government had already established a significant presence in these states and the West in general which contributed significantly to their growth and economy since the early twentieth century. During World War II and the Cold War, the West experienced significant growth due to the build-up of the military industrial complex. Indeed, state officials from both Utah and Nevada lobbied extensively to bring federal contracts to their states. And both were prime recipients of this build-up. During the Cold War, more than twenty-five percent of Utah’s “income from out-of-state sources” was generated by military procurement and the Department of Defense (DOD) payrolls; in Nevada that income was just under twenty-five percent.13

Despite such economic benefits from the federal presence in these states there was a down-side; such presence also represented an increase in federal control. Simultaneous with events surrounding the development of the MX/MPS in Utah and Nevada, the

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farmers and ranchers of these states were warring with the federal government over the
Bureau of Land Management's control of vast tracts of land in these states, an episode
known as the "Sagebrush Rebellion." In the case of the MX/MPS, not only would the
federal government restrict the use of tens of thousands of acres of land needed for the
base, but the construction and maintenance of the base would drain the region of its most
limited and precious commodity—water.

Citizens of these states had additional reasons to be wary of the presence of the
federal government. During the 1950s the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) had
detonated over one hundred atomic devices above the ground at the Nevada Test Site, and
radioactive fallout blew east over parts of Nevada, Utah and Arizona. The complaints and
concerns of citizens down wind of the Test Site were answered with reassurances that
there was little to worry about. Over the next twenty years the effects of atomic testing
became apparent through the rising number of citizens suffering from leukemia and
thyroid cancer. After discovering that the AEC was aware of the possible risks of
releasing radioactive particles into the atmosphere, the survivors of above ground testing
filed suit against the federal government in the late 1970s.

It is within this context that the story of the MX/MPS took place. Unfortunately,
little has been written concerning the history of the MX/MPS in Utah and Nevada. Thus

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15 For a detailed discussion of the above-ground atomic testing and its effects on
down winders in Utah, Nevada and Arizona, see Howard Ball, *Justice Downwind:
far the major discussions address the history of the MX/MPS from a national perspective and its relationship to the development of American arms control policies, weapons procurement or nuclear defense. In these studies the opposition movement in Utah and Nevada, including the position taken by the LDS Church and its possible impact upon the fate of the MX/MPS, are given little or no attention. Although several histories detailing the efforts of anti-MX groups address aspects of the opposition to the MX in Utah and Nevada, the only history to critically assess the MX/MPS and the position taken by the LDS Church is *Citizens Against the MX: Public Languages in the Nuclear Age* by Matthew Glass. As the title suggests, Glass is primarily interested in the civil discourse generated by the citizens of these states and their arguments for opposing the MX/MPS. In this study the position of the LDS Church is but one of many positions discussed. Although Glass addresses some of the public pronouncements of the Church regarding the nuclear arms race and the MX/MPS, no space is devoted to a discussion of how the

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Mormon hierarchy came to take the position they did and why.

Similarly, scholars specifically studying the issues regarding the Mormons and the MX/MPS have offered little insight into the development of the Mormon position. Perhaps the most developed discussion regarding the Mormons and the MX are Steven A. Hildreth’s apologetic investigations into the theological implication of the First Presidency’s pronouncement. Likely responding to media attacks which labeled the Mormon position as “parochial,” Hildreth argues that the Mormon encyclical on the MX is in complete accord with earlier statements made by Church leaders regarding weaponry and war.¹⁸ Another study by Val Norman Edwards evaluates the Mormon position by comparing its language with the texts of the LDS statements on the Blacks and the priesthood and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). However, because Edwards’s study is not grounded in any historical perspective, his conclusions regarding the MX are mostly erroneous.¹⁹


¹⁹ Val Norman Edwards, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Three Policy Statements of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (MA Thesis., University of Utah, 1987),110-136. Perhaps the largest fundamental problem with Edwards’s analysis of the First Presidency’s MX statement is his assumption that it was primarily intended for the membership of the Church. This was clearly not the case. Because the ultimate decision regarding the deployment of the MX in Utah and Nevada lay at the executive and congressional levels of government the likely audience for which the pronouncement was intended was the Reagan Administration and perhaps the United States Congress. Moreover, Edwards argues that the increase in public support for the MX in Utah, in the months following the statement, was the result of weak or dubious language in the statement itself. Although this might have been the case, Edwards fails to account for other factors which probably influenced the increase in support, such as advertisements
As the above studies illustrate, the Mormon position on the MX missile and its basing scheme sheds light on a number of larger questions. Some of these include the Church’s relationship to politics, its theological positions on patriotism and warfare, its public image, and the bureaucratic process by which LDS political policies are decided. Although this study touches on each of these questions, its primary focus is to flesh out the development of the Mormon policy relating to the MX/MPS within the Mormon bureaucracy and events in the wake of that policy. Thus, this is a valuable case study illuminating the process by which Church political policy is made.

My approach is largely chronological. Chapter two charts the development of the grass-roots opposition movement in Utah beginning in the summer of 1979 and argues that central to that cause were efforts to convince the LDS Church to oppose the construction of the MX/MPS. That persuasion was done largely through bringing out-of-state experts to brief the Church’s Special Affairs Committee (SAC) on the issues. Particularly significant to this education were the efforts of local and national religious leaders to convince the SAC to oppose the MX on moral grounds. A limited view of the developments within the SAC is fleshed out, including the issues with which they were most concerned. The chapter concludes that the arguments of local and national religious leadership convinced the SAC to present its findings to the First Presidency for further discussion in November 1980.

Narrating the developments regarding a Mormon policy on the MX/MPS in the for the economic benefits of the MX or simply that the Church never made another statement.
upper echelons of the Mormon hierarchy from the SAC to the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles is the central thrust of chapter three. It describes the deliberations and conclusions of the Church's leadership and how they implemented those decisions. Moreover, this chapter identifies which MX issues were most significant to Church leaders in their deliberations and provides an analysis of the Mormon pronouncements made in December 1980, April 1981 and May 1981. In the process the influence and contributions of Edwin B. Firmage and his backdoor politicking are identified and compared with the influence of other key individuals, especially those in the Mormon hierarchy.

Finally, chapter four describes the aftermath of the Church's position on the MX/MPS. This section includes a discussion of the response of both local and national media, political leaders, the religious community and opposition groups. It is argued that Firmage had a significant impact on the national media's interpretation of the Mormon position. A limited discussion is given regarding the statement's impact upon Utah's congressional delegation, members of the Reagan Administration and President Ronald Reagan himself. Moreover, Firmage's continued efforts to prod the leadership toward additional pronouncement in the summer of 1981 are also described.

Because a narrative of the development of the Mormon position on the MX, prior to this study, was nonexistent, I have had to develop the narrative principally through primary source research. Compounding the difficulty of this task was my inability to gain access to the minutes and office diaries of the SAC, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency. As a result this study draws primarily upon oral history
interviews. During the research for this work I interviewed over two dozen individuals. Where possible I have tried to conduct the interviews in person. However, because many individuals had moved out-of-state, a number of the interviews were administered over the telephone. In a few cases I corresponded with individuals through email. Most of the individuals interviewed prefaced their comments by admitting that their memories of these events, which took place over twenty-five years ago, had faded. Because of this fundamental problem with oral history, I have tried to confirm information drawn from these interviews through available archived papers, newspapers or other interviews. If I have been unable to confirm information or have received conflicting accounts of the same events, I note the contradiction or weakness of the sources in a note and explain which account I have relied upon and why. In addition to oral history, in many instances, I have drawn upon the archived collections of individuals who were present at meetings in which the MX/MPS was discussed, but who were not part of the Mormon hierarchy.
CHAPTER 2.

THE GRASS-ROOTS OPPOSITION IN UTAH
AND THE SPECIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

In the late summer months of 1979, news that Utah and Nevada had been targeted for the deployment of the MX missile ignited a flurry of local activity bent on preventing the missiles and the multiple-protective-shelter base (MX/MPS) from coming to these states. These efforts were only heightened in September after President Carter made the official announcement to the nation. Bound by common interest, this movement brought together an unlikely consortium of citizens, special interest groups, and religious leaders spanning the political ideological spectrum. Involved for various reasons, they worked together by pooling their resources, making strategies, organizing and bringing in out-of-state help to form a grass-roots opposition in these states.

As scholars have grappled with the history of the MX/MPS in these states, the citizens movement has come to define the story. Unfortunately, the cardinal effort of this movement in Utah, convincing The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to join the opposition, has received scant attention along with the involvement of several major figures. In many ways the story of the opposition in Utah is the story of obtaining

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the support of the Church. For some individuals who joined the opposition these efforts consumed most of their time. Although the struggle to influence the LDS Church has not been written out of the history entirely, the prevailing narrative has been dominated by the activities of Edwin B. Firmage. Others whose efforts were equally, if not more, important have been left in obscurity. Moreover, no attempt has been made to outline the developments within the Mormon bureaucracy resulting from these efforts.21

Set within the larger context of the grass-roots efforts in Utah, this chapter illuminates the strategies and attempts of key individuals in the movement to convince the LDS Church to oppose the MX/MPS. Through oral history interviews and archived papers of persons involved, it will also bring out of obscurity several significant figures, key to the opposition, whose primary focus was the Church. In the process the die-hard contributions of Edwin B. Firmage are placed within the context of a wider community of individuals who worked with Church officials. Because of source availability, the opposition movement is the central thrust of the narrative; however, this chapter will also give a limited view of the initial deliberations within the Church’s bureaucracy. These took place primarily within the Special Affairs Committee (SAC) whose members were the primary liaisons between the hierarchy and those attempting to influence the Church.

Initially, the Air Force had garnered a great deal of support for their proposal to

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21 In addition to the numerous published accounts of Firmage’s dealings with the Church including the SAC, the major histories which detail the opposition’s efforts to influence the Church are also based on Firmage’s views. See Glass, Citizens Against the MX, 35, and Cortright, Peace Works, 135-136, 139.
bring the MX to Utah and Nevada, particularly from Governor Scott M. Matheson and other elected officials in both states. By the summer of 1979 it appeared as though the deployment of the MX in the Great Basin was a foregone conclusion. In Utah, this situation changed on 21 August 1979 when Frances Farley, a Democrat in the Utah state senate, learned the details of the Air Force’s plans for the MX at a meeting of the Federal Research Committee. On this occasion Farley and the other members of this committee were briefed by a retired Air Force general employed by Hercules, and Phil Dykstra, a senior scientist from Morton Thiokol. The group was told that each of the 200 MX missiles that were to be housed in the base would require 4,600 launch sites, necessitating 7,000 feet of distance between each sites. At the end of the presentation Farley asked how much total land the base would require. She was told by the general, “We don’t like to talk about that.” In response Farley quipped to herself, “I’ll bet you don’t,” and quickly estimated that the base would require at least 7,000 miles of road. Despite the awesome land requirements, Farley seemed to be the only member of the group dismayed or at least willing to vocalize any objections to the enormous specifications of the MX/MPS.

22Both Hercules and Morton Thiokol were to receive lucrative government contracts to construct various portions of the MX missile. The committee included Jack Dunlop, committee executive, Jack Gallivan; Barclay Gardner; Jim Hansen and Frances Farley. Frances Farley, “The MX: A Case of Citizen Involvement,” 2, unpublished manuscript, Papers of David Cortright, Folder MX Sources, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Phil Dykstra, Director, Air Force Strategic Programs for Thiokol Corporation Wasatch Division, briefed the council as a “private citizen.” Governor Matheson to Phil Dykstra, 5 September 1979, Scott M. Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 1, Folder 15, Utah State Archives (hereafter cited as State Archives).

Moreover, at the conclusion of the meeting, Farley was told by a committee member who believed the development of the MX in Utah and Nevada to be inevitable that opposition was futile, especially given the strong support it had received from Utah and Nevada’s political leadership.

Shortly after this meeting Farley contacted Chad Dobson, a close friend who was the coordinator of research for the documentary unit of KUTV, a Salt Lake City public television station, to see if he could help locate a military map documenting the MX plans. It was hoped that these plans could ultimately be made public.\footnote{Chad Dobson, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 23 December 2004. Farley believed that the map she had been shown at the meeting would illustrate to the public the magnitude of the base being considered. The map was ultimately published in The Salt Lake Tribune. See Map of Proposed MX System, The Salt Lake Tribune, 27 January 1980, B1.} Farley also contacted state legislator and mutual friend Steve Holbrook, and together the trio discussed strategies for organizing opposition in Utah. In an effort to learn more about the basing system and what opposition was being mounted on the national front they contacted the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, (SANE). Because of its concerns regarding national nuclear policy SANE held a keen interest in opposing the development of the MX/MPS. In order to facilitate the growing opposition, SANE dispatched Michael Mawby, who had aided in squelching the Air Force’s proposal for placing the MX in the northern plains of Nebraska under the Ford Administration, and Marilyn McNabb to Utah in October to meet with Farley and the small band she had assembled.\footnote{Dobson, interview; David Cortright, Peace Works: The Citizen’s Role in Ending the Cold War (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 137-138. McNabb and Mawby also supported the opposition forming in Nevada. Milton S. Katz, Ban the Bomb: A History of}
The opposition in Utah quickly gained supporters who opposed the MX/MPS for a variety of reasons, creating a little network of friends and colleagues who began to combine their resources and abilities as they met to consider strategies. In mid-October Farley and SANE contacted Dr. Herbert “Pete” Scoville, Jr., an arms control specialist and former deputy director of research and technology in the Central Intelligence Agency, whose participation and support, over the next two years, would prove significant. He was connected to a number of anti-nuclear activists and scientists who eventually came to Utah. Scoville also had deep pockets and personally helped finance the opposition in the state. At the behest of Farley and SANE, he came to Salt Lake City to meet the growing number of individuals and citizen groups opposed to the MX. An individual at the meeting recalled Scoville telling the group, “This is serious, folks, . . . [the Air Force is] going to try to do this. As crazy as it sounds, they’re going to try to do this. They think they can do it. You’ve got to put something together.” At this and subsequent meetings the MX Information Coalition (MXIC) was organized. Eventually the MXIC constituted

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*SANE, the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, 1957-1985* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 141. In addition to Nebraska the Air Force had studied the possibility of placing the MX in Kansas, but these efforts were squelched by congressional and grassroots opposition. See Holland and Hoover, *The MX Decision*, 96; and Paul N. Stockton, “Arms Development and Arms Control: The Strange Case of the MX Missile,” in *American Politics and Public Policy: Seven Case Studies*, ed. Allan P. Sindler (Washington D.C: CQ Press, 1982), 246-247.

Scoville also participated in the anti-MX movement bourgeoning in Nevada. Glass, *Citizens Against the MX*, 35-36. It is possible that the meeting with Scoville took place as early as late September 1979. Stanley Holmes, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 26 February 2005.

Holmes, interview.
over a dozen special interest groups and many concerned individuals representing a wide
spectrum of local interests with the aim of collecting and disseminating information about
the MX/MPS.\textsuperscript{28}

One of the individuals contacted by Farley who attended these early meetings was
Stanley Holmes, a recent graduate of the University of Utah and member and co-founder
of the Brine Shrimp Alliance, an anti-nuclear organization based at the University. In the
following months Holmes played a key role in setting up the headquarters of the MXIC
and became its full-time coordinator, running its office which had been set up in the
basement of the Campus Christian Center.

To many of the individuals involved, including Farley, Dobson and Holmes, the
opposition movement became a full-time endeavor, and they continued to meet regularly
to discuss and evaluate the implementation of its strategies. As part of their goal of
amassing information and building a library on the MX/MPS, Holmes and other members
of the MXIC immediately began meeting with members of Utah’s congressional
delegation, including Senators Orrin Hatch and Jake Garn and Kenneth C. Olson,
Governor Matheson’s point-man on MX issues, as well as networking with other anti-
MX organizations in Nevada and in Washington.\textsuperscript{29} In order to dispense information, the

\textsuperscript{28} Holmes, interview. Some of the organizations involved in the MXIC included
the Sierra Club, the Utah Audubon Society, Utah Senior Coalition, Utahns Against
Hunger, the Western Shoshone Sacred Lands Association and the Women International
League for Peace and Freedom. See MX Information Coalition, roster, 31 January 1980,
Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 2, Folder 6.

\textsuperscript{29} Some of these Nevada based groups included Citizen’s Alert, NOMX, and the
Great Basin MX Alliance. Holmes, interview.
MXIC initiated a number of rallies, letter writing campaigns and petitions to kindle public awareness and sought speaking engagements in a variety of venues including schools and libraries. Representatives from the MXIC were also present at the many town meetings which were held at the behest of Governor Matheson and the Air Force for the purpose of evaluating public concern regarding MX/MPS issues.\(^{30}\)

Many associated with the growing opposition to the MX/MPS believed Utah’s religious community had a potentially vital role to play. Many of the speeches given by members of the MXIC were held at the chapels of various denominations around the Salt Lake Valley. Soon a number of local churches and religious coalitions had promulgated their objection to the MX/MPS based largely on moral grounds.\(^{31}\) Although courting the local clergy was a significant aspect of building opposition there was an ulterior motive. In August one of the first objectives which Dobson, Farley and Holbrook had identified and viewed as paramount to successfully opposing the MX/MPS was obtaining the


\(^{31}\)See, the Episcopal Clergy of the Diocese of Utah to Scott M. Matheson, 13 October 1979, Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 1, Folder 3; Patricia A. Steiner, Chairperson, Shared Ministry in Utah to Scott M. Matheson, 23 January 1980, Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 1, Folder 5; Scott M. Matheson to Steve Knowles, Pastor Community Presbyterian Church, 20 February 1980, Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 1, Folder 7; Scott M. Matheson to Otis Charles, Episcopal Bishop of Utah, 19 May 1980, Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 1, Folder 8; and Holladay United Church of Christ to Francis Farley, 22 April 1981, Frances Farley Collection, Box 8, Folder 4, Special Collections, J Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited as UofU Special Collections).
support of the LDS Church. Juxtaposed to the efforts of many members of the MXIC, who were primarily interested in educating Utahns concerning the environmental issues, the initiatives of Farley, Dobson, Holbrook and former congressman Wayne Owens to bring the Church into the dialogue stemmed from their familiarity with the power structure of the state. They knew of the potentially powerful impact the Church could have upon the seventy percent of Utah’s population that were LDS and the members of Utah’s congressional delegation who were also Mormon. It was hoped that if respected members of Utah’s religious community came out in opposition, the Church would take notice and there would be an environment in which the Church could comfortably enter the dialogue surrounding the MX/MPS.

There were also some efforts to arouse the interest and obtain the help of respected members both within the Church leadership and the laity who had been affiliated with or sympathetic to the Democratic Party. Because Farley and Dobson had become well acquainted with these individuals over the years, most of them were approached informally. They included Chase N. Peterson, Vice President of the Health and Sciences Center at the University of Utah; Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy who had strong ties to the University of Utah; and Wayne Owens, who was close friends with Richard G. Hinckley, son of Gordon B. Hinckley, a member

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32 Glass has erroneously argued that the primary interest for gaining the support of Utah’s religious community was in the interest of creating a moral dialogue to which those outside of the West could relate. This may have been the case in Nevada, but not in Utah. Glass, *Citizens Against the MX*, 34.

33 Dobson, interview.
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.  

In addition, Dobson and Farley also hoped to create an awareness of the MX base within the Mormon community by enlisting the help of a recognized theologian who would question the reasoning for the construction the MX/MPS in Utah, the *civitas dei* of Mormondom, and illuminate alternative views of the base. To this end, Dobson contacted the venerable Hugh W. Nibley—Mormon scholar and sage. Dobson and Nibley discussed whether bringing the MX to Utah, meaning a significant increase of the military industrial complex, was in the best interest of the Church on the grounds that Utah—as the home of the Saints and the center of God’s kingdom upon the earth—should not also be a center of war and destruction. After Dobson had shared his ideas, Nibley told him that “there was room within his thinking and the Church’s to at least raise the question about what Zion should look like.”

The result was a speech entitled “How Firm a Foundation! What Makes It So,” delivered by Nibley at the BYU Sesquicentennial Lectures on Mormon Arts on 21 September 1979. Within his address he denounced the Saints’ willingness to exchange Utah’s beautiful landscapes for filthy lucre. Using the MX/MPS as an example he claimed, “We find that corner of ‘Zion’ which to me always recalls that moving phrase,  

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34 The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Quorum of Seventy constitute the second and third highest ecclesiastical and administrative authority in the Church.

35 Dobson had also considered contacting Sterling McMurrin, a recognized scholar at the University of Utah, who was well acquainted with the doctrines and history of the LDS Church. Dobson, interview.

36 Dobson, interview.
‘Holiness to the Lord,’ has now been set apart, ‘consecrated’ as it were, for the fantastic MX game, the ultimate in waste, futility and desecration of the land. . . . The Saints now welcome the MX after New Mexico\(^3\) has spurned it with loathing. Why? Because it brings money: 33 billion dollars spent on a trick that just might fool the Russians, and if it works it will certainly destroy us."\(^4\)

Although Farley and Dobson attempted to create an atmosphere of religiously based moral opposition, both within and outside of the Mormon Church, they also initiated a more direct and formal campaign to bring the Church on board. As early as September, Farley had contacted Richard P. Lindsay, the executive secretary of the Church’s Special Affairs Committee (SAC). This committee, organized in 1974, was assigned to monitor political issues of interest to the Church both locally and nationally.\(^5\)

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\(^3\)This may have been an erroneous reference to the Air Force’s early aborted attempts to place the MX in Nebraska and Kansas. Holland and Hoover, *The MX Decision*, 96.


Since the mid-1950s the Church had abstained, for the most part, from getting directly involved in partisan politics.\(^40\) But, like many denominations it had maintained an interest in issues with consequences which it believed could weaken the moral fabric in Utah or the nation.\(^41\) Reporting directly to the First Presidency, this group was initially composed of four general authorities who had considerable political experience including Chairman Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the Twelve Apostles; David B. Haight, an assistant to the Twelve, and Neal A. Maxwell and James E. Faust, both members of the Quorum of Seventy.\(^42\) By 1979, while retaining their duties in this committee, both Haight and Faust had advanced to the Twelve. During the early years of the committee organization they

\(^40\)Since World War II, the Church has taken a public position on partisan political issues twice. This includes the 1954 referendum to transfer Weber, Snow and Dixie Junior Colleges from the State of Utah back to the ownership of the Church and the 1954 referendum for legislative reapportionment in Utah. See Thomas G. Alexander, \textit{Utah: The Right Place} (Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith, 1996): 375; and Jedediah Smart Rogers, "'When the People Speak': Mormons and the 1954 Redistricting Campaign in Utah," \textit{Utah Historical Quarterly} 71 (Summer 2003): 233-249.

\(^41\)It has been suggested that the creation of this committee might represent the beginning of a more discreet and unified approach to the Church's involvement in politics. Croft, "Influence of the L.D.S. Church," 108-109. D. Michael Quinn speculates, "Defeating the Equal Rights Amendment was apparently the specific reason for its [the SAC's] organization." D Michael Quinn, \textit{The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power} (Salt Lake City: Signature Book, 1997), 376. Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley, however, suggest that the formation of SAC was the result of a larger movement in the LDS bureaucratic restructuring started under Harold B. Lee in 1961 known as correlation. Gottlieb and Wiley, \textit{America's Saints}, 81.

\(^42\)Richard P. Lindsay, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 23 August 2004. The First Presidency constitutes the highest ecclesiastical and administrative authority in the Church. At the time Spencer W. Kimball was president, with N. Eldon Tanner and Marion G. Romney serving as his counselors. \textit{Deseret News 1997-98 Church Almanac} (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1996), 45.
dealt with a number of issues, perhaps the most notable being the management of the
Church's successful national campaign to oppose the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).43

Because of the expanding duties and travels of the members of SAC, by 1977,
Richard P. Lindsay, a political science Ph.D. who had served in a number of government
positions in Utah including the state legislature, was hired as an executive secretary.
Lindsay's primary obligations were staff work and making the members of the committee
aware of issues in which the Church might have an interest. A short time later William S.
Evans, a colleague and friend of Lindsay's with a background in public administration
and city government, joined him as an assistant. With the help of a secretary, Lindsay and
Evans functioned as the Special Affairs Department to support the needs of the SAC.44

Beyond acting as the political watchdog, the members of the committee,
particularly Lindsay and Hinckley, the chairman of the SAC, had also come to be
recognized as the Church's touchstones when lobbyists and politicians sought to consult
or inform the Church on political matters.45 Thus, it was not unusual for Farley, a
Catholic, to approach Lindsay regarding a political topic. Prior to 1979 they had met

43 For a detailed discussion of the Church's campaign against the ERA see Quinn,
The Mormon Hierarchy, 373-402.

44 Lindsay, interview, 23 August 2004. Anonymous, interview by Jacob W.
Olmstead, 10 September 2004. (Hereafter cited as Anonymous, interview 1.) Because of
the sensitivity of the information revealed by this individual he has asked to remain
unidentified.

45 Gottlieb and Wiley, America's Saints, 81-82. Hinckley's biographer charts his
involvement in the management of the Church's position on the 1968 liquor-by-the-drink
legislation in Utah, as the origin of his "inherit[ing] responsibility for shaping the
Church's official position on challenging issues." Dew, Go Forward with Faith, 291-294.
many times to discuss political matters. Inasmuch as the MX/MPS was becoming a topic of national interest during the spring and summer of 1979, by the time Farley approached Lindsay, it is likely that the topic had already been discussed in the weekly meetings of the SAC. According to Dobson, Lindsay warmly agreed to transmit any data that Farley offered to him regarding the MX/MPS to the other members of the SAC.

Over the next two years Dobson and Farley with the aid of the MXIC embarked on a campaign to educate Utahns by bringing in well-respected scientists, retired military personnel and politicians with a variety of backgrounds and expertise to explain the hazards of the MX/MPS. It was hoped that they might promote alternate ways of thinking about the MX as well as bringing credibility to the opposition movement in Utah. Although these individuals often briefed Governor Matheson and other state officials and gave speeches in public forums and interviews to the local media, perhaps the foremost

46 Dobson, interview.

47 In an interview, Richard Lindsay could not remember the exact date the MX/MPS became a topic of discussion, but claimed it became a topic of discussion because of its growth as a national issue. Lindsay, interview, 23 August 2004. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, as early as March 1979, six months prior to Carter’s official announcement, the First Presidency had been briefed by several Air Force officials, making them aware of the intentions of the federal government to place the MX/MPS in Utah and Nevada, and it is possible that the SAC began a discussion of this issue at the behest of the First Presidency.

48 Dobson, interview.

49 In a letter of recommendation from Frances Farley to Marilyn McNabb of SANE, she credits Dobson with bringing these individuals to Utah. Frances Farley to Marilyn McNabb, 17 February 1981, Farley Collection, Box 7, Folder 7.
The purpose of these visits was to brief officials of the Church. Because of the other responsibilities of the members of the SAC, typically those visiting briefed Lindsay and his assistant. The information presented would then be reported at the committee's regular meetings. On some occasions, however, members of the SAC and others in the Twelve and First Presidency would be briefed directly. Unfortunately, due to a lack of source material the details of these meetings and in some cases the dates are not known.50

Herbert Scoville, who visited Salt Lake City in mid-October, was part of this plan. As already mentioned, he had been present for some of the initial organizational meetings regarding the MXIC. During this visit he also met with members of the SAC and Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the Twelve. During the briefings with Church officials Scoville most likely argued that the construction of the MX/MPS would escalate the instability of Soviet/American relations, increasing the possibility of a nuclear conflict; that it would not render American ICBMs invulnerable; that it would open an unlimited expansion of the arms race; and that the costs to the national budget, the region's natural resources, and the environment were far too great. Scoville was also a proponent of basing the MX in submarines which he believed would achieve the desired effect.51

50 The MX files compiled by Richard Lindsay as executive secretary of the SAC containing the materials surrounding these meetings are in the possession of the First Presidency and are unavailable for research. Lindsay, interview, 23 August 2004.

51 It is likely that Scoville delivered a similar briefing to the members of the SAC as he had to Governor Matheson. Herbert Scoville, Jr., “MX DEPLOYMENT: Summary of Remarks, Salt Lake City,” 17 October 1979, Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 2, Folder 16 (emphasis in original). Scoville later published a book representing his complete assessment of the MX project. Herbert Scoville, Jr., MX: Prescription for Disaster (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1981).
Although the members of the SAC who were briefed did not indicate their specific opinions to Farley and Scoville regarding the MX/MPS, McConkie appears to have been concerned with the possible damage to the quality of life in the desert communities that would result from the construction of the MX base.\(^52\)

In the months following Scoville’s visit, Dobson brought in two more experts to Utah to meet with members of the SAC. First, in early December 1979, retired Navy Admiral Gene LaRocque, the director of the Center for Defense Information, an organization established by retired military officials dedicated to monitoring wasteful spending of the military, met with the SAC and described the budgetary extravagance the MX/MPS project represented.\(^53\) Second, Dr. Richard Garwin, a professor at Harvard and former member of the President’s Science Advisory Board, who was part of the Federation of American Scientists, came to Salt Lake City at the end of February 1980.\(^54\) Unfortunately, there is little information available concerning Garwin’s visit with the SAC.\(^55\) Both Scoville and LaRocque returned to Utah on several occasions during 1980.

\(^{52}\) Frances Farley to Bruce R. McConkie, 2 November 1979, Farley Collection, Box 5, Folder 10.

\(^{53}\) Holmes, Appointment Calendar, 1979. It is likely that LaRocque gave the SAC a copy of the Center for Defense Information’s newsletter containing detailed information on the MX/MPS. Center for Defense Information, “MX: The Missile We Don’t Need,” The Defense Monitor 8 (October 1979).

\(^{54}\) Holmes, Appointment Calendar, 1980.

\(^{55}\) There were several other authoritative scientists who were brought before the SAC of which there is little record. These included Sydney Drell from Stanford and Kosta Tsipis from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Dobson, interview. Drell argued that using a Shallow Underwater Mobile (SUM) system was much more economically feasible and effective for addressing fixed silo vulnerability. His major
and 1981 to aid the anti-MX movement in the state and likely visited the members of the SAC on these trips as well.56

Beginning in the Spring of 1980 opposition to the MX gained a significant ally who would eventually open an additional avenue for information and communication with the SAC. After over a year of ardent support for bringing the MX to Utah, Governor Scott M. Matheson’s administration began to speak out against the basing scheme.57 Initially, Matheson believed the MX/MPS essential to American nuclear defense. Recognizing it as a potential economic boon he had actively lobbied to bring the MX to Utah. He met regularly with Air Force officials to be updated on MX developments.58 After Carter’s October 1979 announcement he continued to work closely with the Air Force to expedite possible deployment in the Great Basin. However, Matheson recognized that the impact of the “largest construction project in the Nation’s history”

arguments are detailed in Sydney Drell, “SUM,” Arms Control Today 9 (September 1979): 1-7. Refuting the belief that fixed silos were vulnerable, Tsipis had argued, among other things, that because of the numerous untestable factors, even precise Soviet ICBMs would not threaten the land based portion of the American nuclear defense triad, making the MX/MPS superfluous. Kosta Tsipis, “Precision and Accuracy,” Arms Control Today 11 (May 1981): 3-4.


57For Matheson’s recollections of his experience with the MX/MPS, see Scott M. Matheson, Out of Balance (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, 1986), 55-86.

58As early as 30 November 1978 Governor Matheson indicated support for the MX noting the limited environmental and social impact while touting the economic benefits for Utah. Later, Matheson lamented his early unqualified support for the base and viewed it as a source of embarrassment. Matheson, Out of Balance, 57-58.
would be immense.\footnote{Statement of Governor Scott M. Matheson of Utah before the Subcommittee of Military Construction of the House Committee of Appropriations, 5 November 1979, Matheson Collection, Series 4455, Box 2, Folder 12. For more detail on the development of Matheson’s position see Matheson, \textit{Out of Balance}, 60-61.} He urged all citizens of the state to take an active role in assessing the impact of the proposed base so that all concerns would be addressed.\footnote{Douglas L. Parker, “Utahn’s Views Urged on MX,” \textit{The Salt Lake Tribune}, 18 October 1979, Section B1.} Through the funding of the Four Corners Regional Commission the governor organized an MX Task Force and Coordination Office to work in collaboration with a similar organization established in Nevada.\footnote{Organized in 1966 and administered by the governors of Utah, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada, this was a federally funded agency that defined development objectives and formulated criteria by which public investments could be evaluated and administered. As such this agency funded numerous studies that collected and analyzed data regarding the demographic and economic postures of these states.} The creation of the Task Force was formally announced on 5 November 1979 in Cedar City before the Subcommittee on Military Construction of the House Committee on Appropriations, where for the first time Matheson qualified his support of the base. The Task Force, as explained by Matheson, was organized to evaluate and independently verify information provided by the Air Force. In addition, it would also assess the concerns of Utahns that would likely surface during the environmental impact study process.\footnote{The 1969 passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provided that hearings be held to evaluate the potential environmental and social implications of federal projects. For a detailed discussion of the influence of NEPA and other federal laws on the MX/MPS see Holland and Hoover, \textit{The MX Decision}, 109-119.} At the time of his announcement seventy percent of Utahns, according to a recent poll, favored the deployment of the MX/MPS in the
state. This support, Matheson believed, could be jeopardized by public perception of federal insensitivity or secrecy if the state were left out of the planning process. Thus the Task Force could act to monitor the development of the base and work with the Air Force as a “hands on” partner.  

Although officially announced on 5 November in Cedar City, the MX Task Force had already held its first meeting on 1 November. This large group included representatives of the Utah congressional delegation and officials from a number of state agencies. While Kent Briggs, Matheson’s State Planning Coordinator and Chief of Staff, chaired the organization, Kenneth C. Olson who had previously worked as a consultant for reorganizing the governor’s office, was appointed by Matheson to be the project manager. Olson ran the governor’s MX Office and coordinated the Task Force’s probe into the MX/MPS.

Because the concerns of the state of Utah involved environmental and economic matters, the Task Force was organized around these two spheres of inquiry. According to Olson the Task Force was initially neutral with regard to the MX/MPS. Within six months, however, the MX Office had come to some troubling conclusions concerning the project’s potentially large impact upon the environment and upon the small desert communities which would be at the mercy of a boom/bust economy resulting from the

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63 Statement of Governor Scott M. Matheson, 2-4.

64 Kenneth C. Olson, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 4 February 2005; Kent Briggs, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 29 December 2004. For a detailed chart of the governmental organization regarding the MX and its relation to the operations of the Four Corners Region Commission see “Utah-FCRC Planning Structure for the MX Missile Project,” Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 2, Folder 7.
construction of the base. Moreover, the MX Office was also informed by several scientists, including Richard Garwin and Sydney Drell from Stanford that the MX/MPS was not technologically feasible. These findings, in addition to the perceived indifference displayed by the Air Force for the concerns of the State of Utah, convinced Matheson to withdraw his support completely and actively oppose it. Having determined that the MX/MPS was not in Utah’s best interest, the MX Office, among other things, approached Bill Moyer’s Journal on PBS to hold a live town hall-style debate to discuss the MX issues. The debate aired on 24 April 1980 featuring representatives from the federal government, the scientific community and citizens from Utah who would be most directly affected by the location of the proposed base.

While there were many facets of the MX Office’s plan to assess and to inform the public of the issues which ought be considered in the process of bringing the MX/MPS to the state, informing or working with the LDS Church or any other religious organization

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65 For an example of some of the questions considered by the MX Task Force, see Discussion Paper For MX Task Force, Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 1, Folder 22; Matheson, Out of Balance, 73.

66 While Matheson publicly challenged the MX project in April 1980, as early as November 1979 he began to be concerned with the Air Force’s handling of the MX/MPS and believed the state of Utah was being intentionally left out of the decision-making process. Matheson, Out of Balance, 63-64. For a detailed discussion of Matheson’s concerns see Robert List and Scott Matheson to Jack H. Watson, Jr., Memorandum, 3 January 1980, Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 1, Folder 10.

67 Matheson, Out of Balance, 72-73; Olson, interview. For a transcript of the program see “The MX Debate,” Exec. Prod. Joan Konner, Bill Moyer’s Journal, 24 April 1980, Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 1, Folder 22.
was not part of the plan.\textsuperscript{68} Despite Matheson’s good working relationship with Church officials, it was not until he and the MX Office had formulated a negative opinion of the MX, just prior to the PBS debate, that the Church was contacted.\textsuperscript{69} The initial contact was made rather informally by Olson to his friend Richard Lindsay—without a formal directive from the governor.\textsuperscript{70} Olson offered to brief Lindsay or other members of the Mormon leadership. The primary motivation according to Olson was a belief that the Church should be informed of some of the concerns which had been uncovered by the Task Force without “putting [the Church] in a box.” These were concerns and information that Matheson and Olson believed would be particularly helpful if the Church was planning on taking a stance on the MX/MPS issues.\textsuperscript{71}

Lindsay accepted the invitation enthusiastically and set up a meeting for Olson to

\textsuperscript{68} For a breakdown of the MX Office’s official task list, see “Utah MX Coordination Office Second Progress Report,” Matheson Collection, Series 1646, Box 1, Folder 22. The meetings with Church officials were not recorded in Olson’s appointment schedule. Olson, interview.

\textsuperscript{69} Croft, “Influence of the L.D.S. Church on Utah Politics,” 195.

\textsuperscript{70} Olson, interview. There are some disagreements between the recollections of Governor Matheson and Kenneth Olson regarding the initial contact of the Church. In his political biography Matheson claimed the initial contact with the Church was made at his directive after discussing it with his advisors. Matheson, \textit{Out of Balance}, 83. Because Olson was Matheson’s primary liaison with the Church his memory of the events is most likely more reliable.

\textsuperscript{71} Olson believed that by April 1980 it was apparent the Church was developing their stance on MX. Olson, interview. This, however, was not the case, as will be discussed in Chapter 3. The First Presidency did not begin to discuss the MX until November 1980. It is possible that Olson confused the willingness of the SAC to receive information on the MX/MPS issues as indication that an official position was being crafted.
brief both himself and Gordon B. Hinckley at the Church headquarters. In the following year, Olson recalled five or six briefings with Lindsay, Hinckley and on occasion James E. Faust. At these meetings Olson presented an analysis of the information and research obtained by the MX Office and answered questions. Although the members of the SAC did not indicate their position on the MX, Olson recalled that their questions and concerns were centered mostly on the potential impact to the small desert communities with high LDS populations that would be located nearest to the base. More specifically, they appeared to be most interested in the quality of life and possible decline in moral fiber resulting from a staggering influx in population to cities near the project.

All of the briefings between Olson and the SAC were informal and not recorded in Olson’s appointment books.\(^\text{72}\) Still, he kept Matheson informed of his activities with the Church. Although the goal of these briefings was to inform rather than persuade, it is clear that Matheson believed the Church had the potential to be the crucial factor in whether the MX/MPS would be deployed in Utah. He told at least one individual confidentially, “If the LDS Church would take a public stand against the MX, then there would be no MX in Utah. It seems simple, and it is.”\(^\text{73}\)

In the spring of 1980, by the time the Matheson administration had shifted its position, the religiously based moral opposition, cultivated by Dobson, the MXIC and others, began to focus a part of its efforts on convincing the LDS Church to join the

\(^\text{72}\) Olson, interview.

religions community by opposing the MX. The burgeoning local religious opposition had received support from Catholic Bishop Joseph L. Federal, Unitarian Reverend Richard Henry, and Rabbi Eric Silver and others had already formally announced their objection to the MX/MPS.  

Perhaps the most important religious figure to join in terms of generating and organizing additional ecumenical support was a young United Methodist Minister, Stephen J. Sidorak, who led a forty-day prayer vigil outside the Federal Building in Salt Lake City and also helped convince Episcopal Bishop Otis Charles to join the MX campaign. This ad hoc religious opposition in Utah eventually donned the title Utah Clergy and Laity Concerned (UCALC).

Sidorak was disheartened when he pressed the Church for their position on the MX and was told by Jerry Cahill, a public relations spokesman for the Church, that after weighing the various points of view the Church would not be making a statement—a conclusion likely reached early on by the SAC. “I found that official position deeply reprehensible,” Sidorak recalled, “and I systematically took the LDS Church to task in the media for what I [have] term[ed] the lukewarm silence of institutional Mormonism.”

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74 Dobson, interview; Glass, *Citizens Against the MX*, 34-35.


76 Sidorak, interview, 28 March 2005. In addition to the Church and religious leaders mentioned, the UCALC was also supported by the Utah Commission for Ministry in Higher Education, American Baptist Churches, Christian Churches (Disciples), United Church of Christ and the Lutheran Campus Ministry. Jan Robert Bartlett to Members and Friends of U.C.A.L.C., 12 May 1981, Farley Collection, Box 8, Folder 4.

77 Sidorak, [No Title], 54.
Sidorak believed that Church participation was essential for convincing Utah’s largely LDS political leadership, who still supported the MX, to change their position.

Sidorak’s strategy was to publicly isolate the Church as the sole American religious institution not contributing to the anti-MX dialogue. He hoped that this would focus the attention of the nation’s churches on the Mormons, while showing them that they were outside the American religious mainstream—an image which the Church had been trying to overcome for several decades. In order to spotlight the Church’s silence Sidorak began speaking publicly about it and challenged them to join the local and national religious community in the opposition. On occasion some LDS members vehemently heckled Sidorak as he spoke and in one instance he was spat upon.  

Undaunted, Sidorak, with the support of UCALC, also contacted nationally recognized religious figures. Among others, he contacted Henri J. M. Nouwen, renowned and prolific scholar and Catholic priest at Yale University, and Robert McAfee Brown, international civil rights leader at the Pacific School of Religion at University of California at Berkeley and requested they write LDS President Spencer W. Kimball, encouraging the Church to join the national religious community by opposing the MX.  

Many of those contacted agreed with Sidorak’s assessment of the significance of the Mormon opposition and responded by sending President Kimball “mini” theological   

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79 Stephen J. Sidorak to Jacob W. Olmstead, 6 May 2005, email in the possession of the author.
treaties. With the help of UCALC, Sidorak also extended an invitation to several renowned national religious scholars and leaders to come to St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral in Salt Lake City to speak at a series of ecumenical conferences entitled “The Arms Race and the Human Race.” For this purpose William Sloane Coffin, noted social activist and minister of the Riverside Church in New York City, came to Salt Lake as the featured speaker at the first conference in April 1980 and he was followed by Dr. Harvey Cox from the Harvard Divinity School at the second conference in September. The series of conferences were made possible largely through contributions given to support the religiously based MX/MPS opposition. Still the key speakers participating in these conferences were magnanimous in their willingness to fund some of the expenses personally.

Although Sidorak’s efforts were lauded by Governor Matheson and had succeeded in focusing the national religious community on the Mormon Church, they had yet to produce any tangible results. Sidorak continued his campaign despite the discouraging comments of Senator Orrin Hatch, who told Sidorak privately he was convinced Sidorak’s efforts would produce no results, and others in the UCALC who supported his

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80 Sidorak [No Title], 54-55. Sidorak, interview, 28 March and 15 April 2005. It is unknown if these letters were read by Kimball or if they would have been turned over to the SAC.

81 Holmes, Appointment Calendar, 1980; Glass, Citizens Against the MX, 34-35.

82 Stephen J. Sidorak to Jacob W. Olmstead, 27 April 2005, email in the possession of the author.
efforts, but believed he was “crazy” for trying. After the third interfaith conference held on 5 November which featured noted religious scholar John C. Bennett, former dean of Union Theological Seminary, and several other noted clerics, Sidorak’s efforts were vindicated. Unlike the experts brought out by Farley and Dobson, Coffin and Cox did not meet with members of the SAC. However, after Sidorak built a relationship with Bill Evans and greased the wheels by providing a bibliography and samples of Bennett’s and a short biography, Gordon B. Hinckley, chairman of the SAC, met with Bennett during his visit.

Sidorak, who was present at this meeting, recalled, “It was a surprisingly good-spirited meeting,” considering the public haranguing he had given the Church over the past six months. According to Sidorak, at this meeting, Bennett, a scholar who was noted for his commentary on the moral implication of the nuclear arms race, articulately presented his views of the theoretical and moral problems of deterrence—the fundamental theoretical basis of the MX/MPS. It is likely Bennett argued that deterrence had limited motivational effect, resulted in military buildup, did not solve the basic tension between nations, drained the earth of its natural resources, increased poverty, diverted funds from needed social programs, and eroded the national moral sympathy toward death and

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83 A number of local religious leaders supporting the UCALC, including Sidorak, met regularly at La Parisian restaurant in Salt Lake City to discuss the opposition to the MX/MPS. Although they agreed that LDS opposition would be significant, some expressed skepticism that the Church would ever take a side. Sidorak, interview, 28 March and 15 April 2005.

84 Sidorak, [No Title], 56.
destruction. Bennett's remarks were apparently well received and gave rise to a number of questions from Hinckley. At the conclusion of the meeting Sidorak believed, for the first time, that the Church leadership had finally gotten the message and would eventually make a statement.

This and other ecumenical meetings with the SAC were made possible with the aid of University of Utah law professor and political activist Edwin B. Firmage, who had worked closely with Sidorak and others in creating the ecumenical opposition to the MX/MPS. Moreover, Firmage had helped organize and had spoken at the interfaith conferences. Firmage was a vocal opponent of the MX/MPS who had considerable background in international law and politics in Utah. Back in December 1979 Firmage had authored an op-ed piece published in The Salt Lake Tribune arguing, among other things, that the mobile basing scheme was unnecessary, considering the strength of the American defense triad and that Utah and Nevada would be destroyed in a nuclear

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85 John C. Bennett and Harvey Seifert, *U.S. Foreign Policy and Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 105-121. Although in an interview Sidorak could not remember the specific arguments made by Bennett he suggested they could be found in his work *U.S. Foreign Policy and Christian Ethics*. Sidorak, interview, 15 April 2005. In this work Bennett devotes a chapter to deterrence.

86 Sidorak, interview, 28 March 2005.


exchange. His arguments attracted the attention of the Air Force and were rebutted by the Undersecretary of the Air Force, Antonia Chayes, who suggested that Firmage’s arguments were based upon misunderstanding of American defense strategies.

Just after his article was published Firmage began to work with the MXIC and offered to speak at some of their venues, though much of his effort was independent of any anti-MX organization. In many ways Firmage was an anti-MX army unto himself. Over the next year and a half he regularly delivered speeches in a number of venues, presented workshops, hosted debates, testified at government hearings and gave interviews; many of these activities were televised or broadcast on the radio.

Firmage’s first contact with Church officials regarding the MX was in March 1980. He had been contacted by Richard Lindsay, who asked him to review some anti-arms race literature sent to the Church by the Interfaith Center to Reverse the Arms Race, based in California. Like Dobson, Sidorak and others, Firmage believed official LDS

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91 Ted Gurney to Edwin B. Firmage, 21 December 1979, Edwin B. Firmage Papers, Box 9, Folder 1, UofU Special Collections. Firmage also worked closely with the UCALC. Sidorak, interview, 15 April 2005.


93 Edwin B. Firmage, interview by Edward L. Kimball, 23 May 1986, copy in possession of the author. This information was most likely one of the responses to
support was paramount if the opposition was to succeed, and he took this opportunity to transmit his thoughts on the relationship of the Church to the arms race.\textsuperscript{94} He believed that because the Church represented such a large population in Utah and Nevada it would be nearly impossible for the Air Force to impose the MX/MPS on these states if the Church opposed it directly. Briefly commenting on the group who had sent the material, Firmage responded to Lindsay's request with an eleven-page memo in which he cited lengthy quotes by J. Reuben Clark, Jr., a former member of the First Presidency and a lawyer who had extensive experience in international diplomacy and had strong and well documented pacifist beliefs. Firmage cited passages illustrating Clark's views on the place of the United States in the international community, as well as his view that war for almost any purpose or the building up of weapons was an affront to God. Though not mentioning the MX, he suggested that a message from the Church regarding the "evils of death and war," modernizing some of the council expressed by Clark, would be "refreshing," Firmage requested that Lindsay pass the memo along to Gordon B. Hinckley.\textsuperscript{95}

This memo led to a number of meetings between Firmage and Hinckley over the Sidorak's letter writing campaign. Sidorak, interview, 15 April 2005.


next year. On occasion these meetings also included Maxwell and Faust. Although the SAC had given no indication of its position, except to say the Church was not going to take a stand, Hinckley privately applauded his efforts, and Firmage continued to provide the SAC with lengthy memoranda detailing past statements made by Mormon authorities.96 Besides helping to arrange the meeting between Hinckley and Bennett, previously Firmage also directly initiated several meetings between Hinckley and members of Utah’s religious community, who had never met with officials from the Church, in the fall of 1980. On 9 September 1980 Episcopal Bishop Otis Charles met with Hinckley. Later, Hinckley met with the newly appointed Catholic Bishop William Weigand. Both encouraged the Church to make a statement.97

Although the SAC, particularly Hinckley and Lindsay, were willing to listen to the opinions of Firmage, religious leaders such as Weigand and Charles and the other politicians, scientists and retired military who hoped to nudge the Church toward opposition, for the most part, this interaction, as described by Dobson, was a “one way flow of information.”98 Those who met with the SAC were given little indication of how

96Firmage, interview, 23 May 1986. See also Firmage, “MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law,” 34. Firmage claims Lindsay requested he provide additional readings from past Church leaders on the arms race. Edwin B. Firmage, interview by Edward L. Kimball, 6 June 1986. However, Lindsay does not recall this request or think it was likely to have been extended. Lindsay, interview, 23 August 2004. A search of Firmage’s Papers turned up no other memoranda.

97Firmage interview, 23 May and 6 June 1986. Firmage later claimed these meetings continued on a monthly basis and that they were with the First Presidency. Both assertions are unlikely. Firmage, “MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law,” 34.

98Dobson, interview. Firmage claims the Church “openly sought” many opinions. Firmage, “MX: Democracy,” 33. Although it is true the SAC was open to receive any
and if the information and opinions provided would be used within the bureaucracy of the Church. However, while not evident to those beseeching the Church, from September 1979 to November 1980 the SAC was amassing data and discussing the issues encircling the construction of the MX/MPS, including information provided by the Air Force, entities supporting the MX, reports from the media and legislative developments. It appears that the issues concerning the location of the MX/MPS, specifically its proximity to the largely LDS communities and the headquarters of the Church, were central to the SAC’s initial deliberations.

However, extrapolating from Cahill’s initial comments to Sidorak, it appears that early on the SAC was unpersuaded that it should bring this issue before the First Presidency. Although the SAC believed the Church should be concerned over the location of the MX/MPS, it is likely they still believed the issues of the MX/MPS to be largely political. The SAC was therefore not in a position to recommend further discussion of the issue. At some point, this position changed. As one individual close to the SAC described it, this was a period of “education,” requiring perhaps more information than any other information on the MX/MPS, they rarely sought information from organizations or individuals who did not first approach the Church. Firmage may have been the only exception. See Anonymous, interview 1.

In an interview, Richard Lindsay mentioned that Air Force officials and others advocating the MX met with the members of the SAC and provided information. However, he could not name any specifics. Lindsay, interview, 23 August 2004.

In an interview Richard Lindsay recalled that the location of the MX/MPS was the initial concern of the SAC. Lindsay, interview, 23 August 2004. Moreover, the questions and concerns Hinckley and others raised with Olson, during his briefings of the SAC, indicate the location of the base was the primary concern.
issue to come before the Committee.\textsuperscript{101} Beyond the insular issues regarding the base’s location, the larger moral issues regarding the MX/MPS including the effects on the environment and arms race were buried in the technicalities of the base, the MX missile itself and American nuclear defense theory. Moreover, the Church’s traditional position concerning the moral undertones of the MX/MPS was not as clear as the moral implications of other political issues such as the ERA and alcohol and pornography legislation.\textsuperscript{102} Though the information provided through Farley, Dobson and Olson provided the technical details of the MX/MPS and illustrated why it presented a boondoggle for American nuclear defense, it was likely the persuasive moral arguments presented by both local and national religious leaders that convinced the SAC that at their core the MX issues were moral—on which the Church could rightly comment. This would ultimately move the SAC to initiate a briefing of the First Presidency.

Finally on 26 November 1980, the SAC presented to the First Presidency a synthesis of the data it had accumulated on the MX/MPS.\textsuperscript{103} This presentation was led by Hinckley, with assistance from Richard Lindsay, who had gathered most of the information. They also presented the First Presidency with a document summarizing the

\textsuperscript{101}Anonymous, interview 1.

\textsuperscript{102}Lindsay, interview, 23 August 2004.

\textsuperscript{103}This date was provided through an interview with an individual who because of the delicate information provided wished to remain anonymous. Anonymous, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 30 April 2004 (hereafter cited as Anonymous, interview 2). Several factors contributed to the initiation of this meeting, which will be discussed in chapter 3.
major issues particularly apt to the Church’s interests.\textsuperscript{104} The information presented played a significant role in persuading the members of the First Presidency that the MX/MPS issues warranted further discussion including the possibility of issuing an encyclical opposing the MX/MPS.\textsuperscript{105}

In the following months as the First Presidency began to deliberate on MX/MPS issues, the SAC continued to gather information. They also continued to play an important role in the decision making process, particularly Gordon B. Hinckley who acted as an informal councilor to the First Presidency on the MX/MPS and facilitated the flow of information between these leadership bodies.\textsuperscript{106} On 9 April, as the hierarchy was on the brink of making a final decision regarding the Church’s position on the MX/MPS, the SAC was again asked to brief the First Presidency, this time in a joint meeting with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. This briefing, led by Richard Lindsay with assistance from Bill Evans, played an important role in educating the members of the Twelve.\textsuperscript{107}

Although the First Presidency and the Twelve had yet to determine whether

\textsuperscript{104}Richard Lindsay, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 27 August 2004.

\textsuperscript{105}While this was the first official presentation by the SAC to the First Presidency on this issue, it seems likely there were other informal discussions and presentations on this subject with individual members of the First Presidency.

\textsuperscript{106}As will be discussed in chapter 3, Hinckley was present at a number of the First Presidency’s meetings where the MX was discussed and was asked to perform a number of tasks in relation to the Church’s position on the MX/MPS.

\textsuperscript{107}Anonymous, interview 2; Lindsay, interview 27 August 2004; Anonymous, interview 1. Apparently Hinckley did not lead this briefing in order to take his place as a member of the Twelve.
opposing the MX/MPS was in the best interest of the Church and the nation, having convinced the SAC to view the construction of the MX/MPS primarily in terms of its technical, environmental, and moral problems, though they may not have recognized it, was a major victory for members of the opposition who worked to get the Church involved. Without this orientation, which appears to have developed and grown as the SAC met with visitors and received technical and moral information concerning the MX/MPS, it is unlikely the discussion would have moved beyond the SAC.

Identifying the significance that was placed upon obtaining Church support is paramount to understanding the development and goals of the grass-roots opposition in Utah. However, perhaps the larger significance of this episode is the efforts of local and national religious figures to convince the LDS Church to join the national religious community by opposing the MX/MPS on moral grounds. And it appears that this invitation was ultimately accepted. Over time these efforts helped the SAC to move beyond assessing the base purely in the parochial terms of preserving a vestal Zion and partisan politics to the larger moral issues besetting the MX/MPS.108

108 Though it is clear the moral arguments presented by the ecumenical opposition were significant to the development of the SAC’s position on the MX, it is unclear which arguments resonated with the members of the committee. As will be discussed in chapter 3, following the committee’s briefing of the First Presidency the statements released addressing the arms race and the MX/MPS had a strong moral component.
Since 1981, few studies have attempted to deduce why and how the Mormon hierarchy decided to oppose the MX/MPS. This is due primarily to lack of source material. Although many individuals interacted with Church leaders over the basing of the MX in Utah and Nevada, few have recounted or published their experiences. Because of this lack of documentation, the widely published experiences of anti-MX advocate Edwin B. Firmage and his perceived role in the fruition of the First Presidency's pronouncement have dominated the historical discussion of the Church and the MX.109

Drawing largely on oral history interviews, this chapter surpasses previous works

based solely upon the experiences of Firmage by attempting to flesh out the details regarding the creation of the First Presidency’s statement as it developed within the Church’s highest quorums. Moreover, this narrative corrects many misconceptions regarding who was involved in developing the statement, who authored the statement and why. Perhaps its most significant contribution is that it defines the role played by Firmage, who has in the past been unduly credited with convincing the Mormon leadership to oppose the MX/MPS, crafting their opinions and concerns regarding the MX base, and according to some rumors authoring the statement itself.

Before the Carter administration announced that the Great Basin was the primary location for the possible construction of the MX base, the Air Force contacted the First Presidency. This initial contact was part of a campaign planned by the Air Force to generate favorable opinions of local constituencies because of the foreseen socioeconomic and environmental impact the MX/MPS basing would have upon the region. The Air Force also worked to build support for the base by courting Utah’s and Nevada’s congressional delegation, local authorities and local chambers of commerce during the summer and fall of 1979. Naturally, obtaining the support of the First Presidency, and, by extrapolation, the 2.1 million members who lived in Utah and Nevada, would help to ensure sufficient local approval for the Air Force’s plans to deploy the MX in the Great Basin.  

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On 28 March 1979, a small group of high ranking Air Force personnel met with the First Presidency. The group included General Thomas P. Stafford, Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff; General Guy L. Hecker, the leading public relations figure for the MX; General John J. Murphy, commanding general of Ogden Air Logistics Center of Hill Air Force Base; and civilian Richard G. McKenzie, Murphy’s executive assistant. Through Arthur Haycock, President Kimball’s personal assistant, McKenzie, a Mormon, arranged for this meeting which was to be with the members of the First Presidency only. The Air Force had a dual purpose for this meeting. First, they wanted to brief the First Presidency of a staging possibility for the MX in the deserts of Utah and Nevada, but perhaps more importantly, they wanted to ascertain whether the Church would support the proposed plans.

The forty-five-minute meeting began with a presentation on missile throw-weight, using model rockets, illustrating how the United States lagged behind the Soviet Union in the nuclear arms race. They argued that the Soviets had a greater degree of accuracy, making American silos-based ICBMs vulnerable to attack. Thus, the Soviets were in a position to immobilize a portion of the American nuclear arsenal by launching a first strike, leaving the entire country assailable. This information was not well

111 There is a discrepancy as to whether General Murphy attended this meeting. Kimball noted in his journal the four individuals mentioned above. However, in an interview, Richard G. McKenzie claimed the meeting was attended by Generals Stafford and Hecker and himself only. Spencer W. Kimball, Journal, 28 March 1979, copy in possession of the author; and Richard G. McKenzie, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 28 April 2004.

112 Janice Maureen Kroll, “Arms Control and the MX” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1985), 1-2. Throw-weight is the equivalent of the nuclear warhead or
received. McKenzie recalled, “President Romney was alarmed to find that we were
behind and wanted to know how [the Air Force] let that happen, very vociferously. And .
. . what was going to be done about it.” Presidents Kimball and Tanner apparently sat just
nodding in tacit agreement, as Romney harangued the generals. This was perhaps the
response the Air Force hoped for, as they moved to their solution: the MX missile, which
would be replacing the Minuteman III, and more importantly its proposed MPS basing
system. During the remainder of the meeting, the generals presented the Air Force’s plan
for possibly placing the MPS in Utah and Nevada. This base was described as a set of
looping roads, which they referred to as “race tracks,” that would guide mobile launch
vehicles carrying both MX missiles and missile dummies. If needed the MX could be
launched from many launch locations on the track. It was hoped that through satellite
images, the Russians could see America’s nuclear strength. And because both the
dummies and missiles were mobile the Russians could not possibly eliminate the
American nuclear arsenal in a first strike, and therefore would be “deterred” from
attacking the United States.113 At the conclusion of the meeting no inquiries were made
from the First Presidency. The only comment was made by President Kimball. According

warheads that can be carried by a ballistic missile. Inaccuracy could be countered by
increasing throw-weight. See Holland and Hoover, *The MX Decision*, 282.

113 The concept of deterrence was a primary premise of American national nuclear
defense. It is defined as “Steps taken to prevent opponents from initiating armed actions
and to inhibit escalation if combat occurs. Threats of force predominate.” Holland and
Hoover, *The MX Decision*, 278. For a detailed discussion of the history and meaning of
deterrence in connection with nuclear defense theory see Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence*
(Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004). See also Russell Hardin, John J. Mearsheimer, Gerald
Dworkin, and Robert E. Goodin, eds., *Nuclear Deterrence: Ethics and Strategy* (Chicago:
to McKenzie he said, “Brethren, I suppose you know that we spend our lives in different pursuits than this, but we have always supported and sustained the nation in what they felt was necessary to do, and we will continue to do so.”

Although President Kimball’s comments would later be turned against him by the Air Force, it is not surprising that the First Presidency would initially support the Air Force in their operations. Since the Spanish-American War, the Church, albeit generally pacifistic and never openly promoting any military aggression as the solution to the nation’s problems, has nevertheless been patriotic and supportive of the actions of the federal government—and by extension the military. In addition, the generals couched their message in the most positive of terms, claiming there would not “be any significant impact of any kind” to the environment in which the base was to be located.

114 McKenzie, interview.


116 McKenzie, interview. It is also possible that the Air Force representatives may have mollified the First Presidency by intentionally limiting the potential impact upon the environment in their presentation of the MX/MPS. Later, this charge was leveled against the Air Force when their Environmental Impact Statement was released to the public, as some believed the facts concerning the adverse environmental effects of the MX/MPS were buried in the voluminous report. Glass, Citizens against the MX, 54-55.
The generals walked away from their meeting with the First Presidency “elated” as they had most likely done with many other meetings with state officials in Utah and Nevada.\textsuperscript{117} Later during the scoping hearings, General Hecker drew upon the First Presidency’s initial response to gain support in rural Utah, using it as evidence of Church support. Interested in the pork barrel benefits which would result from the large military contracts, Utah’s and Nevada’s governors and nearly all the congressional delegates were eager and even lobbied for the construction of the MX base in their states. Moreover, for similar reasons the public sentiment of these states also suggested overwhelming support.\textsuperscript{118} As discussed in chapter 2, this changed shortly after President Carter announced his decision that the development of the MX/MPS would proceed in the “Western deserts” in September 1979 as objections, which during the development stages had been limited, began to gain strength.\textsuperscript{119} Local and national special interest groups exploited the numerous economic, social, cultural, moral and strategic weakness of the MX and the MPS base. And eventually both governors came out in full opposition.\textsuperscript{120}

Shortly after the Air Force generals met with the First Presidency, the Church’s Special Affairs Committee (SAC) began monitoring the progress of the MX/MPS.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{117}McKenzie, interview.

\textsuperscript{118}Holland and Hoover, \textit{The MX Decision}, 160-161.

\textsuperscript{119}Press Announcement by the President on the MX Basing, Firmage Papers, Box 8, Folder 5.

\textsuperscript{120}Holland and Hoover, \textit{The MX Decision}, 187.

\textsuperscript{121}Richard P. Lindsay, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 23 August 2004. As discussed in chapter 2, the SAC’s investigation of the MX/MPS might have resulted from
During the fall of 1980, Edwin B. Firmage also began meeting regularly with members of the Church’s SAC, primarily with Gordon B. Hinckley, in an effort to convince the Church to join the anti-MX crusade. Although Firmage had been somewhat successful meeting with members of the SAC and initiating meetings between the SAC and members of the local religious community, on 19 November Firmage unabashedly called upon his uncle, President Tanner, as a backdoor to the highest level of Church leadership to encourage the Church to take a public stance against the MX.\footnote{Edwin B. Firmage, interview by Edward L. Kimball, 6 June 1986, copy in possession of the author. Firmage was also the grandson of the late Hugh B. Brown, former member of the First Presidency.}

At the next meeting of the First Presidency, on 26 November, concomitant to a briefing given by Hinckley, chairman of the SAC, providing a summary of the information collected by the SAC and the major issues, both technical and moral, which should be considered by the First Presidency, Tanner presented a letter authored by Firmage also listing several reasons why the First Presidency should oppose the MX. Among other things, Firmage noted the massive expense of the MPS base and the plausible devastation that the region would experience if the Soviets attacked. The First Presidency found Firmage’s allegations and the SAC briefing disquieting. Since the visit of the Air Force generals the MX/MPS had been only a topic of interest, but at this meeting, for the first time, the First Presidency weighed the possibility of speaking out a directive given by the First Presidency after the visit from the Air Force representatives. However, it is more likely that it started as a result of its becoming a national issue in the summer of 1979.
against the proposed base.\textsuperscript{123}

In the following weeks the First Presidency appears to have been unanimously convinced that the MPS basing of the MX should be opposed by the Church.\textsuperscript{124} Given President Kimball's track record of speaking out on issues which had significant moral overtones, opposing the MX fit easily within the larger themes of his administration.\textsuperscript{125} Indeed, he had already proclaimed his reservations about relying too heavily upon nuclear weapons for the preservation of peace in an article published in the June 1976 \textit{Ensign} entitled, "The False Gods We Worship."\textsuperscript{126} As the First Presidency and later the Twelve discussed the MX/MPS it is likely that Kimball's views, though unimposed, were a important factor in the decision making process.\textsuperscript{127}

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\textsuperscript{123}Anonymous, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 30 March 2004 (hereafter cited as anonymous, interview 2). Because of the sensitive nature of the information provided by this individual, he has requested that his contribution remain anonymous. Firmage does not mention giving a memo to Tanner to present before the First Presidency. An anonymous source indicated that the memo/letter included a draft of a statement that was to be consulted and signed by the First Presidency. Anonymous, interview 2.

\textsuperscript{124}President Kimball appears to have also been briefed on the MX on 3 December 1980, but it is unclear who presented the briefing and if other members of the First Presidency were present. It likely that this was a personal briefing by Gordon B. Hinckley. Kimball, Journal, 3 December 1980.


\textsuperscript{127}Edward L. Kimball in his unpublished biography of his father has rightly suggested that the convictions of Spencer W. Kimball were a central factor in the development of the Mormon position on the MX. Edward L. Kimball, Biography of Spencer W. Kimball (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, forthcoming).
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By 16 December the First Presidency had settled on two courses of action. At their weekly meeting, Gordon B. Hinckley was invited to read a letter he had been asked to write addressed to recently elected President Ronald Reagan. It is unlikely that the First Presidency had any intentions of influencing Reagan, who had already expressed some doubts about the necessity of building the base in the Great Basin, but more likely out of courtesy wanted to inform Reagan of their recent deliberations in the case that the Church took an official stance.\(^{128}\) Acknowledging their limited cognition of the details of the MX program and national defense and expressing unqualified patriotism, in the letter the First Presidency questioned the wisdom of placing the proposed MPS base in the Great Basin. More specifically, they noted the detrimental impact the base was likely to have upon the desert environment, social patterns and culture of the area surrounding the base. This, they argued, was too great a burden to place upon one region and pointed to other basing schemes, such as submarines and existing silos, which some MX opponents had argued would be just as effective. To convey their letter to President Reagan, the First Presidency looked to Richard B. Wirthlin, a Latter-day Saint who was Reagan’s Deputy

\(^{128}\)While in Salt Lake City on the campaign trail, at the behest of his campaign manager Nevada Senator Paul Laxalt, Reagan pledged his support to the MX missile while expressing skepticism of the MPS basing method. Edwards, *Superweapon*, 210. In an interview, Kenneth C. Olson claimed that Reagan met with the First Presidency during his stop in Salt Lake, and speculated that they expressed their reservations about the MX/MPS. Kenneth C. Olson interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 4 February 2005. Attempting to directly influence politicians, even in the state of Utah, was not the typical *modus operandi* of the First Presidency in the second half of the twentieth century. Q. Michael Croft, “Influence of the L.D.S. Church on Utah Politics, 1945-1985” (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1985), 180-182.
Director of Strategy and Planning during the 1980 campaign and later his pollster.\textsuperscript{129}

The second action originating at this meeting was the decision to address the burgeoning nuclear arms race publicly within the venue of the First Presidency's Christmas message.\textsuperscript{130} It is unclear who specifically authored the message, but Hinckley is a likely candidate considering he was asked to author the Reagan letter and in view of the subsequent assignments he was given by the First Presidency and the Twelve. Released on 19 December, the message gave only an obligatory nod to the season of Christmas and the birth of Christ, while the balance of the text focused upon their consternation over the continued building up of "huge and threatening nuclear weaponry," which if deployed "spares no living thing within the perimeter of its initial destructive force" (see Appendix II).\textsuperscript{131}

These efforts seemed to have had a limited impact on the opinions of decision makers in Washington and produced no tangible results. It is known that Reagan received the First Presidency's letter, but, despite his admiration for the Church, it most likely had little impact on his position.\textsuperscript{132} In the first months of 1981 the Reagan administration

\textsuperscript{129}Anonymous, interview 2; Richard B. Wirthlin, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 17 August 2004.

\textsuperscript{130}Firmage claims that on 3 December the First Presidency and the Twelve discussed the MX and the First Presidency's Christmas message at their weekly meeting, but there is no evidence of this. It is not likely that the Christmas message would be discussed this early or with the Quorum of the Twelve. Firmage, interview, 6 June 1986.

\textsuperscript{131}"Christmas Message from the First Presidency," \textit{Deseret News}, Salt Lake City, 20 December 1980, Church News section, 3.

\textsuperscript{132}Richard Wirthlin was unwilling to divulge Reagan's response or subsequent discussions he might have had with Reagan regarding the First Presidency's letter.
continued to stall, saying only that they strongly supported the MX, but remained undecided as to the fate of the MPS base. And as to the Christmas message, because it did not specifically mention the MX base by name, it appeared to have had little news appeal outside the membership of the Church.\textsuperscript{133} Moreover, though the First Presidency’s Christmas message was not a typical encyclical for Church policy because the denunciation of the nuclear arms race was so general, its contents simply blended with previous statements made by President Kimball and others.\textsuperscript{134} The \textit{Ogden Standard-Examiner} did, however, link the message to the MX/MPS, noting that it was issued the day after the Air Force released its draft of the Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).\textsuperscript{135} This release marked the beginning of the federally required review period, where citizens of the region who would be affected by the MX/MPS could express concerns with the projected impact the base would inflict upon the culture and environment of the region. The proximity of the releases of the DEIS and the First Presidency’s Christmas message, however, were purely coincidental.\textsuperscript{136} Although the First

\begin{flushright}
Wirthlin, interview.
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\textsuperscript{133}The First Presidency’s Christmas message was not considered front-page news in Utah. Moreover, the major dailies in Salt Lake City and Ogden published only small excerpts from the message. See “1st Presidency Issues Yule Message to LDS,” \textit{The Salt Lake Tribune}, 21 December 1980, 2B; “LDS President Firmly Opposed to Nuclear Arms,” \textit{Ogden Standard-Examiner}, 20 December 1980, 8A.

\textsuperscript{134}For an example, see Kimball, “The False Gods We Worship,” 3-6.

\textsuperscript{135}“LDS President Firmly Opposed to Nuclear Arms,” \textit{Ogden Standard-Examiner}, 20 December 1980, 8A.

\textsuperscript{136}Holland and Hoover, \textit{The MX Decision}, 109-110; Anonymous, interview, 2.
Presidency's first efforts to lobby against the MX seem to have failed, it appears that this was as far as the members of the Presidency were prepared to go without consulting the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Over the next few months there seems to have been little discussion or action on the part of the First Presidency regarding the basing of the MX, although they appear to have been following the national developments and maneuvering regarding the MX/MPS. In addition the SAC and the individual members of the First Presidency appear to have been continually beseeched by visiting dignitaries to oppose the MX. One of these visiting dignitaries was California representative Ronald V. Dellums. In December 1980, Chad Dobson, a central figure in the Utah-based MX opposition, had gone to Washington D.C. to head the office of the National Campaign to Stop MX. While in Washington, Dobson became acquainted with Dellums, a maverick who had been trying to build an anti-MX coalition in Congress and pass anti-MX legislation with little success. Dobson ultimately convinced Dellums of the significance of Mormon opposition to the outcome of the MX/MPS in the Great Basin, and Dellums agreed to meet with Mormon officials.

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137 For example, on 9 March 1981 the First Presidency discussed the recent statements of Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger regarding possible alternatives for the basing of the MX and theories regarding national defense. Anonymous, interview, 2.

138 Francis Farley to Maya Miller, 13 April 1981, Francis Farley Collection, Box 8, Folder 3, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited as UofU Special Collections); Chad Dobson, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 23 December 2004.

139 Holland and Hoover, The MX Decision, 1162, 176; Dobson, interview.
On 27 February Dellums was granted an audience with President Kimball. Urging the Church to take an official stance, he argued that the MX/MPS was unnecessary because the “synergy” of the air- and maritime-based weapons in the American nuclear triad were of themselves enough to deter any Soviet first strike. He also suggested that the MX/MPS might be viewed as a first strike weapon, which could tempt the Soviet Union to launch a preemptive strike. Attempting to bring the argument closer to home, Dellums claimed, “The Soviets will know that it is in Utah—but maybe not exactly where—and any attack they make on the country will surely target the state.” In response President Kimball said, speaking of his missionary travels which took him to Hiroshima, “I know the awful devastation that nuclear weapons can inflict.” President Kimball thanked Dellums for coming and said, “I’m impressed by the arguments you’ve made; you’ve brought me a lot of important information today, a lot of food for thought.”

On 13 March Gordon B. Hinckley met Spencer W. Kimball in Washington D.C. to visit President Reagan. Although this was a courtesy visit to give Reagan a book containing his genealogy, it seems likely that they would have discussed the placing of the MX in the Great Basin. Perhaps resulting from Dellums’s visit with President Kimball and his recent trip to Washington D.C., for the first time the issue of the MX/MPS was discussed in a meeting of both the First Presidency and the Twelve at their

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weekly joint meeting on 26 March in the Salt Lake Temple. There is no doubt that the members of the Twelve were aware of the actions taken by the First Presidency, especially those who were members of the SAC, but because the SAC reported directly to the First Presidency, the Twelve appears to have not discussed the MX/MPS officially in any of their meetings. At this meeting the leadership’s position developed to a point that open verbal opposition was discussed.

Again the MX basing issues were discussed at the 2 April temple meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve. This time the debate intensified and occupied the entire meeting. The opinions seem to have fallen into three camps. The first group, led by Tanner, expressed the concern that the construction of the MX/MPS would result in a flooding of men, money and materials which he believed would damage the environment and change the character of the nearby Mormon communities, destroying Mormon culture in those areas. A second group believed the MX/MPS as a weapon capable of monumental destructive power represented a clear moral issue, wherever located. In contrast, a third group argued there was nothing inherently immoral in its construction, but claimed it was only objectionable if it was used in a first strike. Having failed to reach a consensus it was decided that a “special fast” would be held for “imploring God for direction of what they should do.”

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142 Rulen G. Craven, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 24 August 2004. Craven, who was the secretary to the Twelve, did not recall any meetings in which the MX missile was a major topic of discussion.

143 Anonymous, interview, 2.

144 Anonymous, interview, 2.
On the day of the fast, the First Presidency and the Twelve met again in the temple. Once again the entire meeting was devoted to the discussion of the MX. And again individual members expressed their views with little or no change. On this occasion Richard Lindsay, executive secretary of the SAC, and his assistant were also present to brief both the First Presidency and the Twelve on the SAC’s findings regarding the MX issues. In addition, Hinckley was asked, most likely by a member of the First Presidency, to read a memo he and another member of the SAC prepared outlining the major issues. He also read the letter sent to President Reagan. Perhaps he was asked to do this to illustrate what a possible statement might read like. Despite these efforts and the fast, it does not appear that the Twelve and the First Presidency arrived at a consensus. Opposition might have come from a member of the Twelve who was on the Church’s Military Relations Committee and was concerned that antagonizing the military through a statement might result in a loss of military deferrals for Mormon missionaries, although there was not an active draft at the time.\textsuperscript{145} The outcome of this meeting, however, was an agreement that the Church would take a stronger opposition to the nuclear arms race and

\textsuperscript{145}Firmage claims Hinckley “inferred” this in a discussion of why the Church had not made a stronger statement. Edwin B. Firmage, interview by Edward L. Kimball, 23 May 1986. See also Firmage, “MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law,” 38. Firmage incorrectly referred to this group as the Military Affairs Committee. This organization, originally called the Servicemen’s Committee, was formed in 1941 with Hugh B. Brown serving as coordinator and reported directly to the First Presidency. In 1969 the name was changed to Military Relations Committee. The committee was comprised mostly of members of the Twelve until 1976 when it came under the direction of the Melchizedek Priesthood Department. In addition to David B. Haight, who served as managing director of the committee, it is unclear which other members of the Twelve were on this committee in 1980 and 1981. Military Relations Committee, “Administrative History,” unpublished manuscript, in the possession of the author; Lucile C. Tate, David B. Haight: The Life Story of a Disciple (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 240.
by implication the MX/MPS. It was decided that the Church would take a stance in the First Presidency’s annual Easter Message. Hinckley was assigned to prepare a draft.146

A week later, at the 16 April meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve, Hinckley’s draft was presented and approved for publication. The next day excerpts from this Easter message were printed on the front page of the Deseret News and were picked up by the other Utah dailies in the following days (see Appendix III).147 In celebration of the resurrection, the central theme of the message was a declaration that it is only through adhering to the teachings of Jesus Christ that lasting peace would be achieved. Moving from a general admonition to all men, however, it narrowed in scope addressing the leadership of all nations—especially those in the United States—enjoining them that obedience to the Lord was the only true means of securing international peace and not the creation of nuclear weaponry. While acknowledging the need for strength in national defense, the message claimed that the First Presidency “[felt] a deep and growing concern” of the “building of huge arsenals of nuclear weaponry in our own land.” Concluding with their prayers for the “leaders of America and all nations that they may be granted divine wisdom as they seek inspiration from Almighty God,” they hoped these men would “reason together,” while seeking solutions to their impasses.

Beyond expressing the Church’s continued opposition to the escalation of the nuclear arms build-up, the message was intentionally unclear in relation to its stance on

146Anonymous, interview, 2.

the MX/MPS. Although the reference to the “building of huge arsenals of nuclear weaponry in our own land” might have been an allusion to the construction of the MX base in the Great Basin, the “name” of MX was missing from the text. This move was calculated to firmly place the Church in opposition to the building up of nuclear weaponry of any kind, but was meant only to imply their disapproval of the MX/MPS in Utah and Nevada.¹⁴⁸ Though the message marked a step forward in the development of Church policy toward the base, this minor evolution was most likely unclear to members and non-members alike.¹⁴⁹

On the day that his draft of the Easter message was approved, Hinckley met with Firmage to discuss the content of the message. Undoubtedly frustrated, as he had been with the Christmas message, Firmage told Hinckley that while he was generally pleased with its contents, in his opinion, the announcement was politically impotent by not targeting the MX specifically. Hinckley explained to Firmage, “We’ve said as much as we could,” implying that the matter had been before the Twelve and there was still some opposition to the Church officially offering definite criticism of the MX/MPS proposal.¹⁵⁰

Now more than ever, Firmage believed the Church was in a position to influence the MX debate. President Reagan was in a difficult position over the MX/MPS question.

¹⁴⁸ Anonymous, interview, 2.

¹⁴⁹ According to an anonymous interview conducted by Steven A. Hildreth, “various discrete inquires were made to Washington D.C.” in an effort to assess how both the Christmas and the Easter messages were received. Hildreth, “Mormon Concern over MX,” 248.

¹⁵⁰ Firmage, interview, 23 May and 6 June 1986.
The Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and several key senators respected for their opinions on strategic issues agreed the MX and multiple shelter scheme was essential to national security, while opposition was growing in Congress. Among the Senators opposed to the MX/MPS was Nevada Senator Paul Laxalt, a close and trusted friend of the president. To gain a fresh perspective regarding the MX base, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger appointed Charles Townes, professor of physics at Berkeley, to lead a "blue ribbon" panel to reevaluate the MPS basing scheme and its necessity to national security. In March Weinberger and Townes began assembling the panel, which consisted of academics, former defense officials, and generals who were well acquainted with the issues of nuclear defense. After assembling the panel, Townes planned to have an evaluation for President Reagan by the end of July.151

Perhaps out of both a hope that an official Mormon statement could influence the Townes panel and a belief that Hinckley was not passing along the sense of urgency inherent in the MX/MPS problem to the First Presidency, the day after Firmage learned of the contents of the Easter message, he once again contacted Tanner in an attempt to generate a sense of urgency within the First Presidency. On this occasion, Firmage produced a lengthy, scripture-laden memorandum beseeching Tanner to influence the First Presidency to take a stand on MX, "formally, publicly, unequivocally, and immediately."152 Submitting many of the same quotations and arguments that he had sent

151Edwards, Superweapon, 227-229.

152Edwin B. Firmage to N. Eldon Tanner, Memorandum, 17 April 1981, 1, Box 9, Folder 41, Firmage Papers (emphasis in original).
to Richard P. Lindsay in his memorandum nearly a year earlier, this document was calculated to goad the First Presidency into action. It identified three major characteristics of the MX which, he believed, the Church should find objectionable and therefore feel obligated to oppose. First, he argued that the sheer destructive power of the MX missile itself ran contrary to Christian ethics of war and by extension the Mormon doctrine on war. Second, he claimed that the escalation in the arms race, if unbridled, would result in nuclear war. And finally addressing the location of the base, he suggested that the base would become a primary target for the Soviets and that the damage its construction would pose to the environment and society were morally objectionable. Firmage strengthened his position by incorporating the comments of Brigham Young, J. Reuben Clark, and other Church leaders who took vocal positions on matters of war, in spite of possible negative repercussions. Firmage also included lengthy sections of a First Presidency Message published in the Ensign and authored by Kimball, which decried American reliance upon the nuclear arsenal for protection.153 Claiming the Church was in a unique position to influence President Ronald Reagan and the Townes committee appointed to investigate the propriety of deploying the MX in the Great Basin, he also warned that making no public statement specifically opposing the MX could be seen as a position of indifference or support. Firmage concluded by asking Tanner “if he consider[ed] it appropriate, to put this case before the First Presidency and . . . before the Twelve.”154


154Firmage to Tanner, Memorandum, 17 April 1981, 13, Box 9, Folder 41, Firmage Papers. When Firmage gave this memo to Tanner he likely asked if he could address the First Presidency personally. Firmage, interview, 23 May 1986. Firmage’s
The memo had the desired results, and Hinckley, acting at the behest of Tanner, invited Firmage to the 22 April morning meeting of the First Presidency. At this time Firmage was invited to explain why he believed the Church should issue a stronger statement. Having given copies to the members of the presidency, he began by reading the lengthy memo he had prepared for Tanner.\textsuperscript{155} According to Firmage, he switched to an unscripted presentation due to the poor vision of the members of the presidency and the frequent inquiries and lively participation of Kimball, who he claimed was sitting next to him and on the edge of his seat. If Firmage’s description of this meeting is correct, Kimball’s demeanor is markedly different from the descriptions of other meetings regarding the MX, where Kimball was mostly silent while his counselors dominated the discussion.\textsuperscript{156} Firmage’s presentation was undoubtably passionate and indicative of his pressuring the First Presidency, who were already opposed to the MX, to make a statement was a fundamental flaw in his approach and understanding of the nature of the President Kimball who prized consensus and would not force his views or those of the presidency on the members of the Twelve.

\textsuperscript{155}Firmage, interview, 6 June 1986. Anonymous, interview 2.

\textsuperscript{156}Firmage, interview, 23 May 1986. Firmage, “MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law,”\textsuperscript{43}. One individual who worked closely with Kimball on a daily basis claimed it was not his style to carry the discussion on any topic. Rather, he described Kimball as a “sphinx” who typically looked to his counselors to inquire and debate the issues. Anonymous, interview, 2. See also McKenzie, interview. Recently, describing this meeting, Firmage claimed President Kimball said, “Take whatever time was necessary to explain these issues to [us].” Considering the many briefings and meetings which the members of the First Presidency had attended with the Twelve, the SAC and others outside the Mormon bureaucracy, it is not likely they would have needed the issues explained again and were simply graciously engaging Firmage’s zealous presentation. Firmage, “MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law,”\textsuperscript{43}. Commenting on his meeting with Kimball, Ronald V. Dellums claimed that Kimball had a good grasp of the issues and did not need a tutorial on the MX/MPS issues. Dellums, interview.
feeling that the MX would destabilize the already tenuous relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, whom he believed were on the brink of nuclear war. Moreover, Firmage was a convincing and charismatic orator who had given many speeches on the subject and whose ideas were well developed and polished. Firmage’s presentation most likely strongly resonated with the members of the First Presidency.\textsuperscript{157} And it was probably this aspect of his presentation which President Kimball believed would convince the dissenting members of the Twelve of the need to oppose the MX/MPS.

At some point during this eighty-minute meeting, Firmage presented a draft of a statement he had authored suggesting possible elements which he believed should appear in a statement endorsed by the First Presidency, which he might have suggested they sign.\textsuperscript{158} It called specifically upon the Congress and president of the United States to abandon the maturation of the MX missile on the basis of its destructive power, which could not be categorized as a weapon of self defense. The draft also asserted that the “multiple protective shelter” which was the proposed basing mode for the MX missile was unacceptable. Perhaps the most defining feature of the document was its reference to a number of Old and New Testament passages providing authority for the call for peace (see Appendix IV).\textsuperscript{159}

Immediately after Firmage departed the meeting, Hinckley was asked to meet with

\textsuperscript{157} Kimball noted in his journal Firmage’s presentation to the First Presidency and later the Twelve. Kimball, Journal, 22 April 1981.

\textsuperscript{158} Anonymous, interview, 2.

\textsuperscript{159} Edwin B. Firmage, Draft of First Presidency Statement on the MX, Box 9, Folder 4, Firmage Papers.
the First Presidency to discuss the proposed statement drafted by Firmage.

Understandably, Hinckley as chairman of the SAC viewed Firmage as a gadfly and did not appreciate his meddling. Hinckley pointed out with some annoyance that he and the members of the SAC were well aware of the MX/MPS issues. Indeed, the SAC had already delivered two presentations about the MX/MPS to the First Presidency and the Twelve in previous weeks, and the members of the First Presidency and several members of the Twelve not in the SAC had met with scientists and politicians lobbying against the MX. Furthermore, Hinckley, who strongly opposed the construction of the MX/MPS in Utah, was most likely working behind the scenes with the members of the First Presidency and the Twelve in an effort to make information concerning the MX/MPS issues available.\footnote{William B. Smart, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 2 December 2004. Although it is unknown if Gordon B. Hinckley was working behind the scenes to produce unanimity among the Twelve, it is not outside the realm of possibility. There is at least one instance documented by D. Michael Quinn in which Hinckley lobbied outside a quorum meeting to secure unanimity in the Quorum. Quinn, \textit{The Mormon Hierarchy}, 10-11.} Also finding Firmage’s presumption in authoring a draft nettlesome, Hinckley feared it was his intent to promulgate himself as the author.\footnote{Anonymous, interview, 2.} Despite Hinckley’s response, later that day Tanner asked Firmage to postpone his flight to Washington to present his sentiments that afternoon before the First Presidency and the Twelve. According to Firmage this was done at the behest of President Kimball.\footnote{Firmage, “MX: A Personal Essay,” 29.} Evidently, the members of the First Presidency held similar beliefs with regard to
Firmage's proposed statement and Tanner suggested Firmage not mention his draft during his presentation to the Twelve. 163

That afternoon Firmage met with the First Presidency and the Twelve in the Twelve's meeting room in the Church Administration Building. After being introduced to the Quorum by Gordon B. Hinckley, Firmage formally presented his views about the MX for forty-five minutes, never alluding to his proposed statement. Apparently there was no reaction from the members of the Twelve and there were no questions at the conclusion of his presentation. 164 Although it is not known what response the members of the Twelve had to Firmage's remarks after his departure, it appears that the result of the meeting was a greater consensus toward open opposition of the MX/MPS, wherever it was located. 165

There is no doubt that the members of the Twelve were well acquainted with the issues presented by Firmage, but perhaps it was his impassioned presentation which illustrated to the members of the Twelve the necessity and the urgency for the Church to take a stand. Unity within the Twelve upon the MX/MPS issue, however, might have also been the result of Hinckley's efforts to unify the Quorum behind the scenes.

During the next week a statement opposing the MX/MPS was drafted by the Twelve. Though it is not known who authored the statement, Hinckley is the likely

163 Anonymous, interview, 2.

164 Firmage, interview, 6 June 1986, 23 May 1986; Anonymous interview, 2. In one of Firmage's published accounts of this meeting he claimed that when leaving the meeting Ezra Taft Benson told him, "Brother Firmage, the Lord will bless you in this important work." Firmage, "MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law," 43.

165 Anonymous, interview, 2.
candidate. Hinckley had become a respected and trusted confidant to the First Presidency regarding the MX/MPS. As chairman of the SAC he was the most intimately acquainted with the issues and controversy surrounding the MX/MPS. Moreover, he had already been entrusted with writing the letter to President Reagan, the First Presidency’s Easter message and most likely the Christmas message. And as will be discussed later, Hinckley attended the First Presidency’s meeting when the MX/MPS statement was ultimately approved.

At their 30 April meeting, the First Presidency was confronted with an unsettling situation regarding the MX/MPS. Though earlier Firmage had told Hinckely that no one would read the Church’s opposition to the MX/MPS into the Easter message because it did not specifically mention the MX, this was apparently not the case. A letter addressed

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166 Anonymous, interview, 2. A short biographical sketch authored by Francis M. Gibbons, the executive secretary of the First Presidency at the time of the MX episode, also claims that Gordon B. Hinckley and the SAC were the authors of the statement. Francis M. Gibbons, Dynamic Disciples, Prophets of God: Life Stories of the Presidents of the Church (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 334.

167 John Heinerman and Anson Shupe offer some dubious insight into the authorship of the statement through an anonymous interview of “a high-ranking member in the Department of Defense” who was also a Regional Representative of the Church. This informant claimed he was invited to Salt Lake City to be informed on the Church’s position regarding the MX/MPS because of his perceived ability to influence the decision making process regarding the MX in Washington. The informant claims that he met with members of the Twelve and the First Presidency who showed him the statement and allowed him to make minor recommendations on its language. Heinerman and Shupe, The Mormon Corporate Empire, 175-176. Because there is no corroborating evidence of these events, if they are correct, they did not take place within the First Presidency’s or the Twelve’s regular weekly meetings. It is also unclear at what point after the draft was written these events took place.

168 Anonymous, interview, 2.
to Spencer W. Kimball was read in the meeting reportedly authored by Richard McKenzie detailing the contents of their March 1979 meeting with Generals Stafford, Murphy, Hecker and McKenzie, who represented the Air Force. McKenzie claimed that Kimball had originally offered his support for the MX. This, Kimball angrily denied. As already mentioned, Kimball had offered his general support to the federal government and indicated his trust of the Air Force’s role in defending the United States. Although the Air Force representatives offered a cogent presentation for why the MX and the base was necessary for the defense of the nation, they most likely neglected to explain the numerous caveats to its construction which had been publicly exploited by anti-MX advocates since March 1979. This, however, left President Kimball in an embarrassing

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169 Anonymous, interview, 2. There are several discrepancies in McKenzie’s account concerning his contacting the First Presidency after the March 1979 meeting. First, according to McKenzie’s memory he contacted Arthur Haycock, Kimball’s personal assistant, by phone rather than letter after learning of the First Presidency’s opposition to the MX. Second, he took this action as a result of a newspaper report in the days just after the original meeting in 1979. McKenzie believed that false information about the meeting had been leaked to the media. Since only the members of the First Presidency were in attendance and not their secretary this does not seem likely. Furthermore, a thorough search of the Salt Lake City dailies turned up no such report. Since McKenzie’s letter was received by the First Presidency prior to the publication of the MX statement, the only two public indications of the Church’s possible stance on MX came in the form of the Christmas or Easter messages. Because the Easter message was the more specific of the two and because McKenzie’s letter was received in the weeks following the publication of Easter message in the newspapers, the Easter message was likely the trigger which caused McKenzie to write the letter. McKenzie recalled that this reversal of Church support provoked General Murphy to ridicule President Kimball, saying, “Old Spence must have really lost his mind.” However, McKenzie chastised him and told him he would take care of the problem by contacting the Church officials. Murphy objected, believing that McKenzie would be excommunicated for confronting the First Presidency regarding their position on the MX. McKenzie claimed that after discussing the matter with Arthur Haycock, who “apologized . . . very profusely,” they agreed to table the discussion until the plans had been finalized to construct the MX/MPS in Utah and Nevada. McKenzie, interview.
position. Later that day, the McKenzie letter was discussed at the temple meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve. While several unnamed members of the Twelve spoke accusingly of McKenzie, others gave the impression that he might be telling the truth about the March 1979 meeting. Perhaps unsure how to respond to these attacks, President Kimball was unwilling to approve the First Presidency’s statement proposed by the Twelve.  

By the next meeting of the First Presidency on 1 May, President Kimball had apparently come to terms with the McKenzie confrontation, and the MX/MPS statement was finally approved and signed. Believing the statement would cause the end of the MX/MPS project, the First Presidency recognized it would generate both good and bad publicity for the Church. Hinckley, who was in attendance, possibly to make final adjustments to the statement at the time of its approval, noted that arrangements had been made to publish the statement on 5 May. On 5 May a press release containing the statement was sent to the Reagan administration, significant military personnel, and national and local political leaders. The statement also made front page news in all the Utah dailies and several major national papers.

170 Anonymous, interview, 2.

171 Anonymous, interview, 2.

172 For a copy of the actual press release, see Jerry P. Cahill, First Presidency Statement on Basing of the MX Missile, 5 May 1981, Farley Papers, Box 8, Folder 4.

The First Presidency’s MX/MPS statement was a unique blend of the opinions expressed by members of the First Presidency and the Twelve. Though couched in moralistic terms the statement focused heavily upon problems resulting from the location of the base supported by technological data accumulated by the SAC. It warned against the continued building up of the national nuclear arsenal, but it moved beyond the general statements of the Christmas and the Easter messages, listing specific concerns with the construction of the MX/MPS in the deserts of Utah and Nevada. It warned that the massive construction of the MX base would generate sociological and ecological problems, which were to surely follow the large influx of construction workers and their families. Besides damage to the environment and the economy after the completion of the base, the message argued that the project would be a substantial drain on the inadequate water and power supply in the desert regions of Utah and Nevada.

The statement also asserted that, should a nuclear war ensue, the MX base would be a primary target. Thus, the First Presidency argued, “One segment of the population would bear a highly disproportionate share of the burden, in lives and property.” The First Presidency found irony in that the Mormon pioneers had established a center in Utah to disseminate the gospel of peace; if the MX base were built, it would become a center “capable of destroying much of civilization.” In conclusion the First Presidency hoped the “genius of the nation” would find “viable alternatives” to defend the country against the threat of nuclear war (see Appendix V).

At the time the statement was released Firmage was on a national speaking tour sponsored by the anti-MX groups Clergy and Laity Concerned and the Great Basin MX
Alliance. During the month of May, Firmage spoke on a panel with three other individuals, each representing several interest groups in the West including the Mormon, the Native American, the rancher and the military points of view. During this tour Firmage made several television and radio appearances and gave a number of interviews with local media throughout the United States. Advertised as an authority in the Church, with the designation of former bishop, high priest, fifth-generation Mormon and great-great-grandson of Brigham Young, Firmage was placed by the tour in a position to take upon himself the role of unofficial spokesmen for the Church, publicizing and interpreting the First Presidency’s statement.\textsuperscript{174} It is perhaps at this time that Firmage’s name became permanently linked to the First Presidency’s statement, a connection that has only been strengthened by the many interviews and published accounts he has given of his dealings with the Mormon hierarchy.\textsuperscript{175} Firmage’s association with the Church’s opposition to the MX/MPS was so great that after the statement was released, he was apparently bombarded with inquiries from the media asking if he was in fact the author of the statement, which he denied. Still, because Firmage had taken and been granted a

\textsuperscript{174}Firmage, “MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law,” 44. For a lengthier discussion of the speaking tour, see Glass, \textit{Citizens against the MX}, 68-72. In some instances, he was labeled a “Mormon leader,” and “one who had advised the Mormon Church on MX.” It appears that Firmage was aware of the inaccurate images of authority these titles would conjure in the minds of non-Mormons, but believed it was necessary to create popular interest in the tour. Edwin B. Firmage to unknown, MX Speaking Tour - May 1-23, 1981, 3 June1981, Firmage Papers, Box 5, Folder 6.

\textsuperscript{175}Firmage’s place in the history of the development of the MX statement was also hardened through the delivery of speeches describing the development of the statement. See “The Background of the First Presidency’s Statements on Nuclear Armament and the MX Missile,” Institute announcement, 15 January 1982, Firmage Papers, Box 12, Folder 2.
lion’s share of the credit for spurring the Church toward its eventual position on the MX/MPS, some have wondered if future issues on which the Church takes a stand would rest largely upon “who has been able to gain the ear and confidence of the [Mormon] leadership.”

As illustrated in the above narrative, Firmage’s efforts probably factored into the development of the First Presidency’s statement, though his influence was not as essential or as influential as he has suggested in his published and unpublished statements. The primary facets of his story which tend to increase the appearance of his significance are that his views were courted by the Church and that his opinions played an appreciable role in shaping the contents of the First Presidency’s statement. First, the First Presidency and the members of the Twelve did not actively seek out Firmage’s opinion, as they did not seek out the opinions of other special interest groups. Second, many individuals including Firmage contributed to the Mormon leadership’s understanding of the MX/MPS issues. Perhaps Firmage had a unique opportunity to address both the First Presidency and the Twelve as a whole, but, as previously mentioned, the First Presidency was already opposed to the MX/MPS before Firmage became directly involved, and the basic tenets of their objections, which were described in the Reagan letter, were also incorporated in the official May statement. Moreover, the major objections described in the First Presidency’s statement were not the significant concerns mentioned in his

proposed draft. The First Presidency's concern with the MX/MPS base far outweighed their objections to the MX missile itself, which appeared to have been Firmage's major objection. As to the Twelve, Firmage's presentation to this group was most likely convincing, but it cannot be known that it was his arguments that persuaded the objecting members to join the others in opposing the MX/MPS and not the efforts of others such as Gordon B. Hinckley, who were working behind the scene to unify the Quorum.
CHAPTER 4.
FIRMAGE, REAGAN AND AFTERMATH

In the days following the release of the First Presidency's statement, news of the event made the front page of a number of prominent newspapers such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times. Though most of the reporting was neutral, several newspapers and syndicated columnists took positions either praising the LDS Church for its courage in speaking out on a moral issue of grave importance or criticizing the Church for masking its parochial interests in a shroud of pretended morality. Whether lauding or censuring the Church, all seemed to agree the Mormon position would have a significant impact on the fate of the MX/MPS. Some went so far as to claim the statement was the "death knell" of the project in Utah and Nevada. The media was not alone in this sentiment; members of the opposition movement in both states also believed this to be the case. Within a few weeks, however, the Mormon position fell out of the spotlight.

President Ronald Reagan did not formally announce his position on the MX/MPS for another five months. During the interim Congress continued to hotly debate the issues, while MX advocates worked to convince Reagan of the necessity of the MX/MPS to America's strategic defense. Likewise, antagonists in the Congress worked to discredit the program and tried to force the president to make a decision. Watching the details of

the debate unfold, Edwin B. Firmage believed the Church was still in a position to shift
the debate, and he continued to communicate with Church officials urging them to make
a stronger statement specifically opposing the MX missile and the MPS base wherever
located.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, this chapter analyzes the general
response to the First Presidency’s statement. This includes a discussion of the comments
made by religious and government leaders, members of the MX/MPS opposition and the
national media. The efforts of Firmage to influence the media while on a national anti-
MX speaking tour are also discussed. Second, this chapter details the efforts of Firmage
to encourage Mormon leaders to issue another statement. Finally, to a lesser extent, this
chapter discusses the impact of the First Presidency’s statement upon Reagan’s decision
regarding the fate of the MX/MPS.

On 4 May 1981 Firmage received a call from Richard Lindsay informing him that
the First Presidency would be issuing a statement the next day. At the time Firmage was
in Los Angeles on the first stop in a month-long national speaking tour sponsored by
Clergy and Laity Concerned and the Great Basin MX Alliance addressing the MX. The
coincidental timing of the promulgation of the statement and the beginning of the tour
generated significant interest in its numerous coming venues, due to front page coverage
of the statement in many of the nation’s leading newspapers and Firmage’s advertised

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association with the Church.\footnote{There is no evidence to suggest that the First Presidency consulted Firmage about the timing of the statement.}

As Firmage and his speaking companions toured the nation, they held press conferences, made many television and radio appearances and spoke before dozens of organizations, churches, and universities. Although it is likely he mentioned the First Presidency’s statement at every venue, in some cases he was invited specifically to comment on the Mormon position.\footnote{For a detailed account of Firmage’s activities during the tour see Edwin B. Firmage, “MX Speaking Tour – May 1-23, 1981,” 3 June 1981, 5, Edwin B. Firmage Papers, Box 5, Folder 6, 4-10, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited as UofU Special Collections).} Not only did such invitations create an opportunity for Firmage to comment on the statement while speaking, he was also able to discuss the statement with the media. Thus, as discussed in the previous chapter, Firmage filled the role of an unauthorized public relations officer of the Church.

During the tour Firmage also commented on positions taken by newspapers and syndicated columnists. Although most of the reports, editorials and syndicated columns addressing the Mormon position on the MX/MPS had come out in the days following the statement, in several instances Firmage was in a position to influence the positions taken by notable media personnel. Indeed, Firmage’s presence on the tour and the saturation of the East with his views may have had an impact on the media beyond those reporters with whom he met directly.\footnote{The majority of stops made by the tour were cities in the East. These included Atlanta, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Rochester, Buffalo, New York, Washington D.C., and Chicago. See Travel itinerary of Edwin B. Firmage, Firmage Papers, Box 12, Folder 2.}
The very afternoon he learned of the statement Firmage privately briefed Los Angeles Times religious editor John Dart on the MX issues. During the meeting, Firmage discussed the statement with Dart emphasizing the sections which spoke to the Church’s “nation-wide” concerns over the MX and the arms race. Firmage later claimed that it was this interview which resulted in a front-page editorial by Dart rather than a brief report provided by a wire service.\(^{182}\) The editorial emphasized those issues iterated by Firmage including the statement’s discussion of the wider nuclear issues and the Church’s patriotism.\(^{183}\)

Later, while the tour was in Washington D.C., Firmage was also interviewed by the Washington Post’s nationally syndicated columnist Colman McCarthy. Initially, McCarthy was very cool toward Firmage and the Mormon position on the MX/MPS. He bluntly told Firmage, “Since you folks send back unmitigated hawks with absolutely no visible social conscience to vote for every defense bill, regardless of its individual merit, and against every act of compassionate social legislation, a lot of people across the country simply think you’re getting, in the MX, exactly what you deserve.” After discussing the issues and presenting copies of the Christmas and Easter messages Firmage found in McCarthy a sympathetic ear.\(^{184}\) However, this may have been due to Firmage’s broad interpretation of the statement: when McCarthy, asked if a statement


\(^{183}\)Dart, “Top Mormons Oppose MX Missile System.”

would have been made if the base had been proposed for Central Park Firmage implied that it would have eventually happened. As a result of this interview McCarthy’s column labeled the Mormon statement and arguments it contained as “unexpectedly progressive.” Moreover McCarthy challenged “eastern critics” most notably the *New York Times,* whom he argued did not read the statement carefully “in their rush to uncover hypocrisy.”

While on the tour Firmage also responded to several negative editorials and syndicated columns challenging the propriety of the First Presidency’s statement. Criticism of the statement typically decried the fact that the Church leaders claimed that they were morally opposed to the MX/MPS but did not express opposition to the MX missile specifically or the MPS basing aside from its location. After speaking at the Riverside Church in New York City, a speech which was covered by CBS and the Christian Broadcasting Network, Firmage was invited by CBS to be interviewed regarding the Mormon position on the MX. During the interview an individual with the local media who was present began challenging Firmage with questions regarding the “selfish” nature of the statement. This gave Firmage an opportunity to publicly examine several negative assessments of the statement by the press including the stances of the *New York Times* and columnist Carl Rowan.  

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On 9 May the New York Times had published perhaps the most potent negative editorial in the nation. Although it claimed the Mormon statement was a “significant political blow” to the proposed MX/MPS, the Times charged, “The Church [had] found its way to a sound conclusion for mostly wrong reasons.” Castigating the Church for not relying solely on arguments of self-interest or national security, the Times contended that making its opposition on moral grounds “was disturbingly sanctimonious” and inherently weak because the Church did not denounce the MX missile itself or the MPS basing scheme regardless of its location. The Times was also quick to point out the apparent inconsistency of the people of Utah, Nevada and, by implication, the members of the Church, who were apparently willing to profit from the many military installations in these states but who now spurned the MX/MPS.¹⁸⁷

Firmage also had the opportunity to counter syndicated columnist Carl Rowan. At the time Firmage learned of the negative column, prior to its release, he contacted the Church in order to alert them and give them an opportunity to respond. The Church, however, remained silent. Rowan, like the Times, did not support the MX, but objected to the Church’s use of morality and religion as a cloak for what appeared to be a parochial interest. “Does a Mormon in Utah,” Rowan asked, “have a greater exemption from the problems and perils of national defense than a Methodist in Michigan or a Catholic in Maine?” He found the statement all the more “phony” considering the hawkish reputation of Utah’s entire congressional delegation. “I would applaud Kimball,” Rowan concluded,
“if he had . . . said, ‘God tells me that it is wrong to build the MX ANY WHERE.’”\(^\text{188}\)

Firmage and McCarthy were not alone in their belief that negative editorials or syndicated columns had twisted the contents and message of the First Presidency’s MX statement. In an letter to the editor, a *New York Times* reader berated the author of the *Times* editorial claiming the author had failed to read the statement and arguing that the very criticism the editorial leveled at the Church was contradicted by the statement itself.\(^\text{189}\) Moreover, several readers who initially agreed with these negative assessments felt they had been deceived after reading the statement in its entirety. *The Washington Star* printed a letter sent in by a woman from Bethesda, Maryland, who harangued Rowan for leading readers to believe “the Mormon position [was] based on the self-centered fear that the MX missile might disrupt their dream of a ‘Mormon Shangri-La.’” She agreed with Rowan’s assessment that the statement focused on the potential impact the MX/MPS could have on Utah, but believed that the Church had a right to be concerned with these matters. Pointing to the effects that above-ground nuclear testing had upon the downwind residents of southern Utah, she asked, “Why doesn’t Rowan ask *them* about a ‘morality of convenience?’”\(^\text{190}\) After reading the report on the Mormon statement provided by the

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Associated Press and the editorial stance taken in *The Nation*, which argued that the pith of the First Presidency's statement was "This is *not* the place," a man from El Centro, California, had believed that these critical reports were accurate. Upon reading the statement in its entirety, though, he discovered that "President Kimball made a more forthright and comprehensive statement than was reported in the press." 191

Meanwhile back in Utah the statement was, for the most part, celebrated by the media as well as members of the opposition, religious leadership, and local government. This enthusiasm was also echoed by individuals outside the state. "Without doubt," the *Salt Lake Tribune* editorialized, "the LDS statement is a timely and significant stroke for the opposition." 192 Noting that the statement was "well phrased and directly to the point," the *Ogden Standard Examiner* joined the *Tribune*, claiming the statement "pos[ed] the most formidable opposition yet" to the MX/MPS. 193 Although these papers were often a foil to the Church in Utah, considering their generally negative editorial position on the MX/MPS and its possible impact on the state it is not surprising that these papers lauded the statement. 194 Unlike these papers, the Church-owned *Deseret News* did not take a position on the MX. However, the *Deseret News* was quick to report that the local


193 "LDS Church Opposes MX Sites," *Ogden Standard Examiner*, 6 May 1981, 4A.

reaction to the statement was “mostly positive.”  

Although some individuals, such as Edwin B. Firma and Governor Scott M. Matheson, had received courtesy calls from the Church advising them that a statement was about to be released opposing the MX, most were taken aback by this unexpected announcement. To those who had worked to oppose the MX this was marvelous news. “I think most the people were ebullient with joy,” Stan Holmes of the MXIC recalled, “It was like putting us over the top. . . . I felt that we didn’t need it to win but if we didn’t have that for the opposition it was going to be a long struggle and it might have come down to civil disobedience.”  

Retired Vice Admiral John Marshall Lee, who was touring with Firmage, wrote Spencer W. Kimball, describing the message as “powerful and inspiring,” and claimed, “The nation is in the Church’s debt.” Later, the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) in Washington D.C. published the text of the

195 The only citizens group reported to have been critical of the statement in the major Utah newspapers was the Utah-Nevada Citizens for MX. Spokesman John C. Maxey, the leader of this organization, argued the “concerns in the statement [were] not based in facts.” Moreover, he claimed the Church’s stance on the MX base itself was not a strong one and lumped its warning against “nuclear proliferation and war” with all other religions who had taken similar stances. “Reaction to MX Stand Is Mostly Positive,” Deseret News, Salt Lake City, 5 May 1981, A1.


Just prior to the statement's release President Kimball was already receiving kudos from various religious leaders for the Church's anti-arms race stance taken in the Christmas and Easter messages from various religious leaders. Fred P. Register, conference minister of the Southern California Conference of the United Church of Christ, praised Kimball for the Christmas and Easter messages, writing, "I am heartened when religious leaders are willing to speak clearly to such a critical issue." Register also hoped that Kimball would be amenable to making another statement which would "clearly and directly" oppose the MX on moral grounds. Kimball also received a letter from Reverend Wesley Frensdorff of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Los Angeles also urging the Church to "call upon our national leaders to abandon this project."

After the statement was released President Kimball continued to receive letters expressing approval for the Church's position from the local religious community. Jan Bartlett, pastor at the Campus Christian Center at the University of Utah, sent a letter to members of the Utah Clergy and Laity Concerned (UCALC) praising them for their efforts with the Church which he rightly believed had played a role in the Church's decision to issue the statement. With empathy Bartlett continued, "As we know, when

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199 SANE, A Statement from the Mormon Church on Basing of the MX Missile, Firmage Papers, Box 12, Folder 2.

200 Fred P. Register to Spencer W. Kimball, 27 April 1981, Firmage Papers, Box 9, Folder 4.

201 Wesley Frensdorff to Spencer W. Kimball, 27 April 1981, Firmage Papers, Box 9, Folder 4.

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people of faith take a stand on something viewed as a ‘political’ issue, they are frequently subject to disapproval.” Providing readers with the First Presidency’s mailing address, he concluded, “Let us be quick to commend them for their courage.”

Reverend Steve Sidorak, perhaps the most vocal member of the religious community to impeach the Church for not taking a stand earlier went on record saying, “God is not now without witness in Utah. This is a profound step forward in things which make for peace, not war, in our world.”

He also hoped “the two Mormon senators, Jake Garn and Orrin Hatch [would] now face the painful obligation of self-examination for their advocacy of the immoral and suicidal insanity of the arms race.”

Not all religious leaders, however, reacted positively. In response to an invitation extended by the Ogden Standard Examiner to comment on the statement several religious leaders voiced their opinions. Although most were positive, Reverend Robert Vance, pastor of Washington Heights Baptist Church, questioned the grounds upon which the Mormon leadership believed they were well enough versed in national nuclear defense issues to comment on the propriety of the base. Additionally, Reverend Harley D. Hunt, pastor of the Clearfield Community Church, took issue with the statement’s apparent

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203 “Reaction to MX Stand is Mostly Positive.”

“moral myopia and parochial principles.” Moreover, during the speaking tour, Firmage encountered some religious leaders who criticized the statement because of its focus on the base rather than on the MX missile. In one instance a Methodist minister who was also the religious editor of the *New York Times* editorialized this interpretation in largely negative terms.

Perhaps one significant result of the First Presidency’s MX statement, however, was that it convinced at least one religious leader that the Church was indeed interested in national issues of moral concern such as the arms race. Prior to the MX statement, Lutheran Reverend John Nelson of the Campus Christian Ministry of Seattle thought the leadership of the LDS Church, “lacked interest in some of the great contemporary issues such as war and peace.” His opinion of the Church shifted after the statement was released. Nelson, however, came to this realization after speaking with Firmage.

The First Presidency’s statement also aroused positive responses, not surprisingly, from Utah State Senator Frances Farley, but also Utah’s governor and Salt Lake City’s mayor. On the day the statement was released Farley jubilantly passed out copies of the statement to state politicians on the floor of the Senate at the Utah State Capitol.

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206 Edwin B. Firmage to Richard Lindsay, 3 June 1981, 7-8, Firmage Papers, Box 5, Folder 6.

Building. Governor Matheson, who had been a strong opponent of the MX since the Spring of 1980, claimed he was “gratified” that the Church was taking a moralistic stance on the MX and said that it was the “most important statement that has come out of the state in a long time.” He also hoped it would have great sway with the citizens of the state and “a very strong influence” on Utah Republican Senator Jake Garn, Nevada Republican Senator Paul Laxalt, and the Reagan administration. And looking back Matheson believed “the victory was won” after the Church issued its statement. Salt Lake City’s Mayor Ted L. Wilson believed that it was “very appropriate for the church to speak out.” He hoped “the statement [would] have a moderating influence on the MX ‘railroading job’ I see taking place in Washington.”

Not surprisingly, the statement provoked a number of unenthusiastic responses from military officials almost immediately. Air Force Lieutenant-General Kelly H. Burke told the press that he shared the concerns of the First Presidency and claimed the concerns of all groups, including the Mormons, would be taken into consideration before a final decision on MX was made. However, he objected to the statement’s description of the Great Basin as a probable target in the case of a Soviet nuclear attack or that the citizens of Utah and Nevada would carry any greater burden than the rest of the nation.

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209 Raine, “LDS First Presidency Rejects MX Plan.”

210 Matheson, Out of Balance, 84.

211 Raine, “LDS First Presidency Rejects MX Plan.”
Perhaps the most negative response to the statement coming from a government official was the commentary of General Richard H. Ellis, commander of the Air Force Strategic Air Command. Although he believed most Americans would agree with the statement, Ellis castigated the Church for not including a discussion of the responsibilities of its members, as citizens of the United States, to pledge their support to national defense.\textsuperscript{212} This comment angered Don LeFevre, from the Church’s press relations office; although the Church had declined to comment on critiques of other Washington officials, he told the press that Ellis had either misread or overlooked portions of the statement. LeFevre claimed, “I don’t think you can read a lack of patriotism in the church’s MX statement.”\textsuperscript{213}

When considering the influence of the First Presidency’s MX statement upon the fate of the MX, perhaps the most significant responses are those of Utah’s congressional delegation and members of the Reagan administration. Considering their hawkish track record and lobbying efforts to bring the MX/MPS to Utah and Nevada it is not surprising that Utah’s congressional delegation hedged in response to the statement. In order to avoid the appearance of waffling in the face of the LDS pronouncement, the all Mormon congressional delegation, was quick to agree with aspects of the statement by pointing out their latent reservations with the MPS basing modes. However, most Utahns took note of

\textsuperscript{212}“Reaction to MX Stand Is Mostly Positive;” “Military Shares LDS Concerns But Says the MX Is Necessary.”

the subtle shift in position.\textsuperscript{214} “I agree that we need to look at alternative basing modes,” said Republican Representative Dan Marriott, “one that will ultimately be best for Utah and the nation and lead to our goal of world peace.” Similarly, Republican Representative James V. Hansen said, “I take great credence in what [the Church] say[s],” but was quick to note that he was waiting for the recommendation of the Townes Panel before taking a position.

Perhaps more significant was the response of Utah’s two Republican senators Orrin Hatch and Jake Garn. Hatch told the \textsl{Deseret News}:

> While I have always advocated a strong defense for our country, including support of the development of the MX, I have always stressed these three points: The development of the MX system is essential to our national security; I am not satisfied with the present explanation of the basing mode and will continue to examine alternative basing modes; I am going to have to be personally satisfied that the impacts on our state will be resolved satisfactory. If these problems are not resolved favorably to our state and to our satisfaction, then I will work to prevent its deployment in Utah.\textsuperscript{215}

Privately Senator Garn was a little less congenial. According to Governor Matheson when Garn learned of statement he “was extremely unhappy that the Church had not consulted him . . . viewing himself as the defense expert in the state.”\textsuperscript{216} Although initially Garn was unwilling to comment on the statement, he eventually went on record saying, “I agree with much of what it says.” However, he added, “In the final analysis, I will make an

\textsuperscript{214}Firmage noted that the Utah congressional delegation “danced the Mormon shuffle,” after learning of the Mormon statement. Firmage, “MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law,” 47. See also “MX Fallout in Zion,” \textsl{The Sunstone Review} 1 no. 1(1981):1, 36-37.

\textsuperscript{215}“Reaction to MX Stand Is Mostly positive.”

\textsuperscript{216}Matheson, \textsl{Out of Balance}, 84.
independent judgment based on all the information and evidence available to the Senate and to me."\textsuperscript{217} Despite the initial equivocation of Utah’s congressional delegation, the First Presidency’s statement and the strong public opposition in the polls which followed precipitated their eventual opposition to the MX/MPS.\textsuperscript{218} This was ultimately a significant development because, as will be discussed later, members of the delegation eventually played pivotal roles in a congressional coalition opposed to the MX/MPS, bringing further evidence to Washington officials that deploying the MX in Utah and Nevada or anywhere in the West faced stiff opposition. Thus, it is unlikely that the MX/MPS plan would have passed the Congress if Reagan endorsed placing the MX/MPS in the Great Basin.\textsuperscript{219}

There is little doubt that the First Presidency’s statement also had an impact in the White House. At the time of its release Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger was at a United Press International (UPI) luncheon in Chicago. After reading the statement, he told the press that the statement was “very interesting,” but claimed the MX was still

\textsuperscript{217}“Military Shares LDS Concerns But Says the MX Is Necessary.”


"necessary and essential" to national defense.\textsuperscript{220} He claimed the Reagan administration was waiting for the Townes Panel he had appointed in March to make a decision.\textsuperscript{221} Still, Weinberger had never fully supported the MPS system and the Mormon position which provided an important ally for the President's friend from Nevada, Senator Paul Laxalt, proved to Weinberger that the MX/MPS faced insurmountable opposition in Utah and Nevada.\textsuperscript{222}

It appears that to President Ronald Reagan the LDS statement was far less instructive or influential. As discussed in chapter 3, Reagan was aware a Mormon position was being developed in Utah and had even discussed the matter with his pollster Richard Wirthlin.\textsuperscript{223} However, when Reagan was presented with the statement, according to an anonymous White House source, "he swore and became angry." This reaction was not because he was surprised, but because he apparently had already made up his mind to scrap the MPS system and the First Presidency had "taken the thunder out of his [not yet announced] decision."\textsuperscript{224} The Reagan administration had been stalling while their


\textsuperscript{221}For a discussion of the origin of the Townes Panel see chapter 3.


\textsuperscript{223}In an interview, Richard Wirthlin acknowledged that he had had discussions with Reagan regarding a letter he had delivered to him in December 1980 from the First Presidency detailing a number of concerns they had with the basing of the MX in Utah and Nevada. Unfortunately, Wirthlin was unwilling to divulge the details of these discussions. Richard B. Wirthlin, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 17 August 2004.

\textsuperscript{224}The quote is taken from an interview conducted by Steven A. Hildreth published in Steven A. Hildreth, "Mormon Concern over MX: Parochialism or Enduring
economic plan had been worked out and an alternate system could be suggested replacing the MX/MPS. This had been the primary reason for the appointment of the Townes Panel. Now, if Reagan opposed the MX/MPS it would appear that he had been unduly influenced by a substantial Republican constituency—the Mormon Church.225

Upon his return home Firmage continued his crusade against the MX. Believing the First Presidency’s statement to be the final word in the debate in Utah, his efforts were mostly out-of-state.226 However, Firmage continued to be the public defender and interpreter of the First Presidency’s statement in the absence of official Church commentary. In early June syndicated columnist William F. Buckley Jr. authored a caustic treatment of the statement. Leveling the usual criticisms, Buckley called the Mormon pronouncement “solipsistic” and argued that the MX base would be no more hazardous than other military installations and that it would not be a primary target for the Soviets. His most provocative critique was an insinuation that there was a connection between the First Presidency’s opposition to the MX and American foreign relations with Western Europe. In particular, what made the statement so “mischievous,” he argued, was that the Mormon opposition on the MX was likely to strengthen public opposition in

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225 The classified and unsearchable nature of the materials related to the MX/MPS in the Reagan Papers at his presidential library made a search of these materials for a discussion of Reagan’s position on the Mormon statement and its influence on his decision to scrap the MX/MPS unprofitable. Moreover, when pressed for information regarding his discussions with Reagan concerning the First Presidency’s statement, Richard Wirthlin declined to offer any details. Wirthlin, interview.

Western Europe to American efforts to deploy nuclear weapons in the Western European theater.227

Perhaps it was this allegation that prompted Firmage to respond with an unusually salty jab at Buckley, published in the Deseret News. After dismissing Buckley’s claims of the innocuousness of deploying the MX/MPS in the Great Basin, Firmage reminded readers that the base was not a “great big postoffice.” Moreover, Firmage answered Buckley’s claim that the intent of the Mormon statement was “solipsistic,” by reminding him that Salt Lake City Bishop William Weigand from his own faith, the Catholic Church, had also issued a statement opposing the MX. In response to Buckley’s arguments tying the Mormons and the MX/MPS to the situation in Western Europe, Firmage went on the offensive. “I have ambled around the White House just a bit in days past,” Firmage wrote, “and I think I smell a rat.” Arguing that no one but the Air Force, concerned with losing the MX/MPS, would make this connection Firmage asked, “Who . . . stand[s] to make a few bucks (100 billion or more) on the MX? The butcher? the baker? Or the missile maker?” Addressing Buckley directly, Firmage wondered why his column was so belated in that the statement was issued almost a month earlier and had already had its fifteen minutes in the media. Firmage also questioned why Buckley had shifted his position on the MX/MPS. At the time President Carter announced the plan for the MX, Buckley had lampooned the base. This line of questioning clearly implied Firmage’s belief that Buckley did not write as an objective observer, but as a ghost writer

for the Air Force and its contractors who were concern that political support for the MX was slipping away.²²⁸

It is clear that Firmage’s confidence in the demise of the MX/MPS, displayed in his rebuttal of Buckley, was overstated. While in Washington D.C. during the tour he had the opportunity to discuss the MX/MPS with “administrative and legislative assistants of all Senators and Representatives who by committee assignment would have anything to do with MX.” Apparently during this interaction Firmage learned that less than twenty senators supported the MX/MPS.²²⁹ However, Firmage still had misgivings about Reagan’s ultimate position. And because Reagan had yet to declare the fate of the MX/MPS project, he believed the Church still had a potentially vital role to play. And although Firmage had defended the statement to the media, he still believed a stronger position could be taken by the Church.

Toward this end he sent another lengthy, seventeen page memo likely to Richard P. Lindsay, executive secretary of the Special Affair Committee (SAC). After giving an account of his activities while on tour and explaining away why he had been billed as a Mormon leader or an advisor to the Church on the MX, he proffered a number of “Observations and Recommendations,” of which he felt the Church leadership should be


advised. Although he was optimistic that Reagan would squelch the MPS basing scheme he warned that victory was not guaranteed and that the Air Force and the businesses contracted to build the MX/MPS would stop at nothing to secure its construction.

Firmage claimed there was a “systematic effort . . . being made to diminish the profound impact of the First Presidency’s statement.” Offering no tangible evidence to support this belief, he nevertheless argued that these efforts to roll back the influence of the statement should be resisted by the Church and could come in several forms. First, he believed the “prophylactic” value of the statement might be weakened if supporters of the MX were able to convince the president or members of Congress that the Church would patriotically support any decision reached by the federal government. Second, he was “disturbed” by the use of the term “concentration” in the First Presidency’s statement. He suggested some might argue that the proposal for “split basing”—dividing the MX/MPS base between three or more states—would lessen the concentration and therefore be supported by the Church. Finally, he argued that members of the Reagan administration might try to “finesse” the Church with a phone call from the president to Spencer W. Kimball.

The perception that the strength of the Church’s position could be manipulated by MX advocates stemmed, according to Firmage, from the “pained silence of the Church

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230It is possible this letter was given to members of the First Presidency. His tone, when speaking about the tour billing him as a Mormon leader, appears to be apologetic.
and its inactivity." He argued that the Reagan administration would view the contrast between the Church's solitary MX statement and its vigorous campaign to oppose the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and conclude that the Church was not fully committed to its stance on the MX. Firmage's solution and reason for writing was clear; he wanted the Church to make another statement, this time objecting specifically to the MX missile. Moreover, it was apparent that Firmage hoped the Church would also initiate an expansive campaign drawing upon the full political power of the Church and its membership similar to its efforts to oppose the ERA. He suggested that Church leaders could transmit their objections through private communication with the Reagan administration, begin collecting petitions and start a letter-writing campaign to the president, Secretary of State Weinberger and the Townes Panel, and publish in the *Ensign* and other Church periodicals articles opposing the MX including past declarations on war and weaponry.232

There is little evidence to substantiate Firmage’s description of a clandestine scheme on the part of Air Force officials to strip the First Presidency’s statement of its political weight. The Air Force was, however, losing the upper hand in the MX debate.233 This loss may have been the reason why Richard McKenzie, General John J. Murphy’s

231 Although this is clearly a reference to the Church not making subsequent statements concerning the MX/MPS, Firmage’s use of the language “pained silence” might be in relation to the numerous MX related media assaults which the Church chose to ignore.


executive assistant, sent another letter to the First Presidency. Once again McKenzie claimed that in March 1979 the First Presidency had expressed unqualified support for the construction of the MX base in Utah and Nevada. This letter, however, went beyond the previous letter by claiming that President Kimball had offered to influence Utah’s congressional delegation in favor of the MX/MPS. 234

The Air Force had been losing ground to an ever growing coalition of senators and congressmen opposed to the MX, led by Paul Laxalt and Jake Garn, who believed the MX missile was essential to American security but favored an ulterior basing mode. Soon others joined for various reasons including the complexity of the MX/MPS scheme and budgetary concerns. Ultimately, Senators Orrin Hatch and Howard Cannon from Utah and Nevada also joined the coalition. Moreover, in July the Townes Panel reported its review of American nuclear defense and the MX/MPS to Secretary Weinberger. The panel, which had been deliberating since March, had allowed the Reagan administration to delay making a decision regarding the MX/MPS—a scheme which Reagan had criticized before coming to office but had no alternatives to suggest in its stead. 235 Unfortunately, the panel did not offer an alternative to the MPS basing mode. It did, however, argue that the MX/MPS would not solve America’s strategic needs. This

234 Anonymous, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 30 April 2004, (hereafter cited as Anonymous, interview 2). Because of the sensitivity of the information divulged during the interview this individual has asked to remain unidentified.

235 Holland and Hoover, The MX Decision, 172-173.
statement was apparently enough for Weinberger to forestall the Air Force. Ultimately, it was Congress that forced the president to make a decision by withholding funds for the MX/MPS from the 1982 budget until the president made a decision and submitted a plan to Congress.

In August President Reagan went to California for a month-long vacation. Because of the pressure being brought to bear by both the Congress and the Air Force it was believed that it would be during this holiday that he would make his final decision regarding the MX/MPS. Because of this timing, on 20 August Firmage sent another memo to Richard P. Lindsay in an attempt to convince the Church to make a second statement. Firmage rightly claimed that “there is now a raging battle within the administration to influence the President's decision.” Detailing the latest developments in the national MX debate, which he believed to be at a stalemate, Firmage argued that “the perception of the level of commitment to opposing MX here by the Church might well be the decisive factor in this decision.” Reiterating the suggestion that the Church reaffirm its earlier opposition to the MX, Firmage believed a statement might come in a number of forms including an informal comment made by a member of the First Presidency or joining in an ecumenical statement with the religious leadership of Utah. Firmage followed this letter up with yet another four days later. Although in his last memo he

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236 Edwards, Super Weapon, 236.

237 Holland and Hoover, The MX Decision, 176-179.

238 Edwin B. Firmage to Richard Lindsay, 20 August 1981, Firmage Papers, Box 9, Folder 3 (emphasis in original).
vowed that he would not write Lindsay again on the subject of MX, Firmage “sense[d] that the tide has turned against us in the last 10 days.” Claiming that recent news articles seemed to indicate that, now more than ever, the Air Force is trying to convince Reagan that the Church could be “finessed, neutralized or overcome with relative ease and at little political cost.” Firmage again pleaded that the Church make another public statement.²³⁹

In reality the situation was not as dire as Firmage described. Unbeknownst to him Reagan had already met with the National Security Council and others on 17 August in Los Angeles. At this meeting the president was once again briefed by Charles Townes, who argued that the MPS system did not solve vulnerability issues entirely and suggested that an antiballistic missile system (ABM) protecting an MPS base would ensure invulnerability. He also suggested that more research needed to be done on such technology as air- and maritime-based mobile missiles and on survivable communications with such modes. The Air Force was represented at this meeting by General Lew Allen, Chief of Staff, who, when given the floor, tried to convince the president of the necessity of the MX/MPS, but failed. On 22 August Texas Senator John G. Tower of the Senate Arms Services Committee unsuccessfully led another attempt to convince the president to compromise with a smaller MPS system called “one hundred in one thousand,” expressing reservations about air-basing, which Secretary Weinberger apparently favored.²⁴⁰

²³⁹Edwin B. Firmage to Richard Lindsay, 24 August 1981, Firmage Papers, Box 9, Folder 3.

Although in the White House the MX/MPS basing scheme in any form was quite dead, leaving the Reagan administration with the task of proffering a strategic replacement, Firmage erroneously believed the Church still had a role to play in the putative MX/MPS debate. On 21 September Firmage sent another letter, this time to the First Presidency, arguing it was a “most critical time” for the Church to restate its position on the MX. Briefly rehearsing the arguments presented in his past three letters to Richard Lindsay, Firmage depicted the struggle to oppose the MX/MPS as if it rested upon the shoulders of the Church. “If we falter now,” he wrote, “or simply appear to falter, the battle may be lost.” This time Firmage pointed to a recent poll in the *Deseret News*. Just after the statement public support had dropped to an all-time low. The later poll, however, showed that sixty-nine percent of Utahns would support whatever the president decided. Firmage regarded this poll as evidence that the influence of the First Presidency’s message was slipping. Firmage suggested the First Presidency should use the upcoming general conference as the venue for another Church statement. He believed “sophisticated ‘Mormon watchers’ would expect” a message to come from the conference. If the Mormon position was not reiterated, Firmage speculated, the silence would indicate the Mormon leadership had been “effectively silenced.”

Despite this letter and the other memos submitted by Firmage to Richard Lindsay, no additional discussions of the MX/MPS occurred in the regular meetings of the First

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241 Edwin B. Firmage to the First Presidency, 21 September 1981, Edwin B. Firmage Papers, Box 9, Folder 3; “MX: Most Utahns Will Go Along with Reagan.”
Presidency. It is unknown why the First Presidency chose not to make another statement. However, this was ultimately an astute decision as the excitable Firmage, who was swept up in the daily MX/MPS debate, was often misinformed of developments at the presidential level. McKenzie's recollection of his conversation with Arthur Haycock offers some insight into the silence of the Church. After discussing the Church's shift from support to opposition, it was agreed that the discussion would be tabled until the decision to place the MX/MPS was finalized by the president. Extrapolating from these comments and Firmage's inability to generate further discussion within the hierarchy, it is likely that the First Presidency was waiting until Reagan had decided to base the MX/MPS in Utah and Nevada before considering additional Church action.

Although Firmage's efforts to convince the First Presidency to reaffirm or strengthen their previous statement on the MX/MPS were largely acarpous, his efforts to generate positive and refined reporting from the media were highly successful. In his evaluation of the national media's coverage of Mormonism in the 1970s and early 1980s, Stephen W. Stathis concluded that "the Church [was] being treated with far greater and more subtle perception than before." Evaluating the media's response to a number of Mormon-related issues which attracted the media's attention Stathis's study included among other events President Kimball's revelation regarding Blacks and the Priesthood, the Mormon opposition to the ERA and the First Presidency's statement on the MX. Regarding the First Presidency's MX statement Stathis's conclusions appear to have been

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242 Anonymous, interview 2.

243 McKenzie, interview.
correct. However, had Firmage not actively sought opportunities to promote the Mormon position, it is likely the media’s handling of the statement would have been much different.

On 2 October Reagan announced his decision to terminate the plans for deploying the MX/MPS in Utah and Nevada. Although he did not have an alternative to the MPS basing scheme, Reagan announced that 100 MX missiles would be developed and temporarily placed in hardened Minuteman silos, while his administration sought a possible deployment scheme. This was apparently enough for the president to claim the “window of vulnerability” that was to come by the mid-1980s had been closed. Among the possibilities the administration suggested were air-based and deep silo-based options as well as an ABM system to protect possible silo-based MX missiles.

As Matthew Glass has rightly pointed out it is difficult to assess the “causal threads” which led to Reagan’s abandonment of the MX/MPS in the Great Basin. Glass argues that there were two significant factors coming from the Great Basin: the First Presidency’s statement and the legal entanglements over public use of federal lands. Still, those closely associated with the opposition including Firmage, Sidorak and others in the media argued that the First Presidency’s statement was the single most important factor in Reagan’s decision regarding the MX basing scheme, particularly because the

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244Cannon, Reagan, 391.

245Holland and Hoover, The MX Decision, 176-179.

246Glass, Citizens Against the MX, 105.
statement had shifted the positions taken by Utah’s congressional delegation. And that shift appears to have been a significant factor in developing a strong anti-MX coalition in Congress. However, the histories discussing the development of Reagan’s position on the MX suggest that congressional opposition to the placement of the MX/MPS in the Great Basin was only one of a number of factors leading to his decision. Perhaps none was greater than the Townes Panel report that the MX/MPS would still require an ABM system to limit its vulnerability. Favoring an ABM system was, as a recent study has shown, in line with Reagan’s belief that an ABM system was the future of nuclear defense and ending the arms race.

Although the First Presidency’s statement probably did not have a direct influence on Reagan’s decision, according to some it did have an impact on future attempts during the 1980s to place the MX in other locations in the West. By 1982 anti-MX advocates had succeeded in unifying fifty anti-MX groups with as many as 50,000 members from eight western states. This coalition, known as Western Solidarity, worked to oppose the placement of the MX in Nebraska and Wyoming. Though the LDS Church was not a part

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of this coalition, Reverend Stephen Sidorak, who was significant in convincing the SAC that the MX/MPS presented a clear moral issue and involved in the organization of Western Solidarity, claimed the First Presidency’s statement was the “hinge upon which this Western Solidarity swung,” playing a large role in gaining supporters.²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰Holland and Hoover, *The MX Decision*, 257; Sidorak, interview, 15 April 2005.
Throughout the course of my research, knowing that I would like to comment on the significance of the MX episode in Mormon history, I kept in the back of my mind questions concerning its influence upon future LDS developments. Thus at the end of nearly every interview I conducted, my concluding question was: “In your opinion what is the legacy of the MX upon Mormon history?” More often than not, the response was silence or a blank stare. In one interview an individual, who was quite close to the development of the Mormon MX policy, stated that the MX episode essentially had no legacy.  

Perhaps this perception is why the historiography of the First Presidency’s MX statement is so lean. The MX typically gets a nod when authors address the twentieth century Church’s involvement in politics, but even recent works have neglected the MX in favor of more alluring and possibly relevant topics such as the Church’s positions on ERA and homosexuality.  

251 Anonymous, interview conducted by Jacob W. Olmstead, 30 April 2004 (hereafter cited as Anonymous, interview 2). Because of the sensitivity revealed during the interview this individual asked to be unnamed.  

debate sparked by the statement over the Church’s relationship to politics was quite limited. Moreover, the MX statement issued by the First Presidency has been neglected by every biographer of the General Authorities who were the major participants, including all three members of the First Presidency and the Special Affairs Committee (SAC). At least part of this neglect is due to the other events which took place during the administration of President Kimball which have overshadowed the statement. Events such as the 1978 priesthood revelation, the Church’s efforts to squelch the Equal Rights Act, and the MX issue all received significant attention in the media. While the MX issue was discussed in Sunstone, the journal of the LDS Church, it was not given the same level of attention as other events. For example, the MX issue was mentioned in the lecture sponsored by the B. H. Roberts Society, where J. D. Williams and Edwin B. Firmage spoke on the Church’s relationship to politics. Interestingly, they agreed upon little. Their papers were later published in Sunstone. See J. D. Williams, “In a Democracy, Church Interference in Politics Is Dangerous,” Sunstone 6 (July/August 1981): 36, 40-44; Edwin B. Firmage, “A Church Cannot Stand Silent in the Midst of Moral Decay,” Sunstone 6 (July/August 1981): 37-39. Firmage was also given an opportunity to publish a response to Williams. See Edwin B. Firmage, “The Church in Politics?” Sunstone 6 (July/August 1981): 45-46. There was also some discussion of the future of the LDS Church in politics in LDS popular magazines. See Fred C. Esplin, “Missiles, Motherhood and Moral Issues,” Utah Holiday 10 (June 1981): 46.

Fortuitously several weeks following the MX statement, on 28 May 1981, the B. H. Roberts Society sponsored a lecture on the topic of “The Institutional Church and the Individual,” at the University of Utah. On this occasion both J. D. Williams, a professor of political science at the University of Utah, and Edwin B. Firmage spoke on the Church’s relationship to politics. Interestingly, they agreed upon little. Their papers were later published in Sunstone. See J. D. Williams, “In a Democracy, Church Interference in Politics Is Dangerous,” Sunstone 6 (July/August 1981): 36, 40-44; Edwin B. Firmage, “A Church Cannot Stand Silent in the Midst of Moral Decay,” Sunstone 6 (July/August 1981): 37-39. Firmage was also given an opportunity to publish a response to Williams. See Edwin B. Firmage, “The Church in Politics?” Sunstone 6 (July/August 1981): 45-46. There was also some discussion of the future of the LDS Church in politics in LDS popular magazines. See Fred C. Esplin, “Missiles, Motherhood and Moral Issues,” Utah Holiday 10 (June 1981): 46.

See Francis M. Gibbons, Spencer W. Kimball: Resolute Disciple, Prophet of God (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995); F. Burton Howard, Marion G. Romney: His Life and Faith (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988); G. Homer Durham, N. Eldon Tanner: His Life and Service (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982). Although Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr. Spencer W. Kimball: Twelfth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977) was published before the MX episode Edward L. Kimball's forthcoming biography of Spencer W. Kimball contains a section on the MX. Particularly troubling is the omission of the MX in Sheri L. Dew, Gordon B. Hinckley: Go Forward with Faith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996). For the biographies of the other members of the Special Affairs Committee, see James P. Bell, In the Strength of the Lord: The Life and Teachings of James E. Faust (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999); Lucile C. Tate, David B. Haight: The Life Story of a Disciple (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987); and Bruce C. Hafen, A Disciple's Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002).
Amendment (ERA), the opening of new countries for proselytizing, the construction of new temples and the growing membership of the Church appear to have had a larger and more fundamental impact on the Church today than the MX statement.\textsuperscript{255}

Can a comparison even be drawn with the doctrinal content of the MX statement and President Kimball's revelation on priesthood, which radically altered LDS theology? The initial scholarly work addressing the MX statement attempted to situate the statement within a larger historical discussion of past theological pronouncements on war and weaponry. Although he did not intend to do so, ironically, the author Steven A. Hildreth ultimately proved that the MX statement essentially added nothing to what had been said before.\textsuperscript{256} This is likely why references to the MX statement by General Authorities have been nonexistent.\textsuperscript{257} My own research has led me to conclude that even the MX statement is not as well recognized by the membership of the Church as President Kimball's thought-provoking article, "The False Gods We Worship," published in the Ensign in 1976, which argued, in part, that American society relied too heavily upon weapons of

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\textsuperscript{257}In an article published only two and a half years after the First Presidency's statement, Marion G. Romney did not mention it in his discussion of the Cold War, communism and the global search for peace. Marion G. Romney, "The Price of Peace," Ensign 13 (October 1983): 3-7.
war to preserve peace. Juxtaposed to the MX statement which focused upon the specifics of the missile system, it is not difficult to see why Kimball’s article, which drew upon a broader religious theme to couch a discussion on the arms race, has resonated strongly with Mormons.

And so we are still left with the question, is there a legacy of the MX statement? If there is one, it is certainly not a legacy relevant to the entire international Church today. Several years after the statement was released, Scott Davidson, commenting on the Cold War in Utah, argued that although most members viewed the MX/MPS as a commercial opportunity when it was originally proposed for deployment in Utah and Nevada, many had private objections to its construction. When the First Presidency spoke, however, “those objections achieved a legitimacy that allowed for more confident public expression.” Previous to the MX statement, because of the ultra-patriotic tradition established by Church leaders in the early twentieth century, the membership of the Church was taught that protesting the federal government was taboo. For example, in southern Utah during the above ground tests at the Nevada Test Site Church leaders discouraged protesting these tests. Moreover, those groups outside the Mormon


community who did protest were labeled as pro-Communist. Once the horrific results of
above ground testing upon "downwinders" were discovered, individuals did attack the
federal government in court. However, no Mormon groups had yet participated in
protesting the Nevada Test Site.261

After the First Presidency's statement and perhaps concomitant with it, Utah-
based groups such as Utahns United against Nuclear Arms Race, composed largely of
Mormons, were organized. The relationship of the MX statement to the origin of
Mormon-based protest groups, though beyond the scope of this study, could be a
fascinating and important addition to the history and significance of the First Presidency's
MX statement. In one instance, however, there is a direct relationship. As recently as
1993, rhetoric from the First Presidency's MX statement was drawn upon in support of
the propriety of anti-government protest. This occurred at the Mormon Peace Gathering
protest of the Nevada Test Site—the first LDS based protest of the site. Led by Brigham
Young University Professor of Sociology Lawrence A. Young, the group read scripture,
prayed, bore testimony and sang prior to disobeying the law by crossing into the test site
in nonviolent protest.262

261 Tom Domingues, "'An Unusual Event': A Look at Mormon Communities'
Protest of Nuclear Testing at the Nevada Test Site," (Unpublished manuscript, 1995), 1-
18. Copy in the possession of the author.

262 Mormon Peace Gathering, Mormon Peace Gathering: Answers to Some
Commonly Asked Questions about the Nevada Desert Experience 1993 Mormon
Weekend, 1993, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham
Young University, Provo, Utah; Lawrence A. Young, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead,
15 April 2004. For a brief recounting of the Mormon Peace Gathering see Lawrence A.
Young, "Journey into the Desert: The Faith-Based Witness against Nuclear Weapons,"
Ironically, another group of Latter-day Saints have not forgotten the First Presidency's statement either. At the time of the MX episode Kerry M. Kartchner, a member of the LDS Church, was a graduate student at the University of Southern California, studying nuclear strategic theory. Naturally, the MX issues were great fodder for debate in the classroom. When the First Presidency issued the statement Kartchner was concerned that the Church would be viewed as unpatriotic by the federal government. He felt that this was a poor issue for the Church to get involved in because he believed that the MX/MPS was likely to implode on its own. Several years after the MX episode Kartchner again encountered the MX in an article whose contents angered him.\textsuperscript{263} He believed the author's interpretation was amateurish and based largely upon a misunderstanding of defense theory and the facts of the nuclear arms race. Believing Edwin B. Firmage had been the sole advisor to the First Presidency regarding their position on the MX and that the statement had been based upon Firmage's recommendations, Kartchner felt more certain than ever that the Church had been misinformed and misinstructed.\textsuperscript{264}

As a result of these beliefs, Kartchner developed an interest in organizing a group of Latter-day Saints who worked for the Department of Defense (DOD). Although he

\textsuperscript{263}Kerry M. Kartchner, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 25 February 2005. Kartchner could not remember the name of the article, but knew it had been published in \textit{Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought}. Because of the date and topic it is likely Kartchner was referring to Edwin B. Firmage, “Allegiance and Stewardship: Holy War, Just War, and the Mormon Tradition in the Nuclear Age,” \textit{Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought} 16 (Spring 1983): 47-61.

\textsuperscript{264}Kartchner, interview.
thought there would be a number of benefits from such a group including the promotion of national security as a profession for Latter-day Saints, Kartchner also wanted to establish a group of professionals to whom the First Presidency could turn to for advice if a situation similar to the MX arose in the future. This interest eventually resulted in the organization of a symposium in the fall of 1993 sponsored by Religious Education and the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies at Brigham Young University. The event provided Mormon scholars associated with the DOD with a platform to present research on national security from an LDS perspective.  

This conference was followed by another in 2003 with another scheduled for 2013.  

Although the legacy of the MX statement in Mormon history is rather modest to this point, the narrative of the evolution of the Church’s MX position offers some fascinating insights into the creation of Church political policy. The primary difficulty with making any definitive conclusions regarding this general process in the post-World War II LDS Church is that, to date, there are no other studies sufficiently detailed with which to compare the development of the Mormon position on the MX. A comparative study, however, might be of little value anyway because of the variations in personalities, leadership styles, policy topics, and changes in the process which take place over time.  

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266 Kartchner, interview.

267 A comparison of policies developed under different Presidents of the Church might not be conclusive. For example, President Spencer W. Kimball placed a premium
The latter is particularly significant before the restructuring influence of correlation which took place between 1960 and 1973.

Even if the development of the Church’s position on the MX is not a typical case, at the very least it is a very clear example of how bureaucracy is supposed to function in the highest councils of the Church. That is, the SAC deliberated over the issues until it concluded to place the matter before the First Presidency. The members of the First Presidency discussed the issue and came to a conclusion that it would be in the best interest of the Church and the nation to take an official position. At this point the members of the Twelve were invited into the discussion and were also educated on the issues by the SAC. The two bodies considered the issue until they came to a unanimous conclusion. Despite the apparent smoothness of this process there were several peculiarities unique to the MX. These include the Air Force’s initial briefing of the First

on harmony and consensus between the governing bodies of the Church while others have not. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 57.

268 The close relationship of the SAC to the First Presidency is quite clear in the case of the MX. However, speaking of the ERA which was being deliberated simultaneously to the MX, Quinn writes, “Apparently no one in the First Presidency’s office knew details of the church’s ERA campaign until Hinckley moved from the Special Affairs Committee to become a special counselor to the First Presidency in July 1981.” Quinn statement is based on a “candid” interview with Rodney P. Foster who was the assistant secretary to the First Presidency. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 398. In my own research Foster communicated he had little knowledge of the particular details of the development of official First Presidency statements. Therefore Quinn’s description of this relationship might be inaccurate. Rodney P. Foster to Jacob W. Olmstead, email, 4 May 2004. Copy in the possession of the author.

269 D. Michael Quinn convincingly argues that one of the “twin charges” of the Mormon Apostleship is unanimity with the other Apostles. See Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 6-20.
Presidency, the quantity of research required to competently deliberate over the morality of the MX/MPS and the penetrating influence of Firmage and other lobbyists.

That individuals outside the Mormon hierarchy had a significant influence on the early stages of the development of the Mormon position on the MX is fascinating. In fact, without the efforts and persistence of outsiders it is likely the Church would not have made the statement. Does this mean that the Church's political positions can be molded by lobbyists if enough pressure is applied? This does not appear to be the case. The creation of the SAC was for the purpose of investigation and deliberation upon political topics. In most cases it seems likely that the SAC would not require any outside help with their evaluation of the moral nature of a political issue. Because of the highly technical nature of national defense policy and complexity of the base itself, the case of the MX was unique.

In addition to revealing the ideal process for the development of Mormon political policy this episode also illustrates something of the nature of recent Church deliberations. There is a stark contrast between the zeal with which individuals such as Edwin B. Firmage and Steve Sidorak approached the moral issues surrounding the MX and the cool and collected meetings of the SAC. According to Richard P. Lindsay, the executive secretary of the SAC, there was no individual in that body championing the case for a Mormon encyclical of the MX. This pattern appears to be continued in the deliberations of the First Presidency and the Twelve. Although it is possible that there could have been emotions displayed at these meetings not detailed in the historical record, the only real

\[270\text{Richard P. Lindsay, interview by Jacob W. Olmstead, 23 August 2004.}\]
emotion, I discovered, was displayed by Marion G. Romney when representatives of the Air Force told the First Presidency that the United States was lagging behind the Soviet Union in the arms race.

Does this mean that the Mormon leadership have no zeal or passion when it comes to speaking out in matters of moral significance? Their immediate reaction to the MX/MPS appears to have been motivated by local self-interest. Did it really require the broader religious community to give the Church its moral courage on this issue? A partial answer to these questions might be found in the process itself and the requirements of unanimity. In the case of the MX, it would not be difficult to convince the members of the SAC, the First Presidency, and the Twelve that the deployment of the MX in the Great Basin put the headquarters of the Church and a large percent of its members at risk—physically and perhaps spiritually. However, getting the same fifteen individuals to see the MX primarily as a fundamental moral issue that the Church should engage is a much more difficult and time-consuming task. Add to the puzzle the various political backgrounds of the leadership and a strong tradition of patriotism, and establishing unanimity especially in matters related to national defense policy would be nearly impossible.

Perhaps under such circumstances, it is not that Church leaders have no passion, but that it tends to not be expressed because of its ineffectiveness. A case in point is Ezra Taft Benson’s advocacy of the John Birch Society during the 1960s. In this instance heated debates and side-taking only served to lengthen the conflict and generate bad
feelings among the members of the First Presidency and the Twelve. As such, congeniality has come to play an important role in the Mormon bureaucratic process of consensus, and the development of the Mormon position on the MX is a good example of this tradition.

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APPENDIX I.

MATERIAL AND FISCAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MX/MPS

THE MX SYSTEM WOULD CONSIST OF:

- 4600 missile shelters
- 180 radar installations
- 70 security facilities
- 193 cluster maintenance facilities
- 7 assembly areas
- 260 time delay barriers
- 1 test training site
- 110 power transformer stations
- 9000 miles road
- 1000 miles secondary road
- 900 miles main railroad
- 1000 miles support railroad
- 98,000 acres land

RAW MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- cement: 2.7 million tons
- sand: 5.8 million tons
- gravel: 86.9 million tons
- fly ash: 0.8 million tons
- concrete (made from above): 8.9 million cubic yards
- reinforcing steel: 1.5 million tons
- steel plates: 11,600 tons
- rail steel: 1.4 million tons
- petroleum: 22 million tons
- electrical power: 180 megawatts

COSTS:

Construction: $33 billion 1980 dollars
  - missiles: $10.00 billion
  - heavy construction: $7.0 billion
  - missile transporters: $4.5 billion
  - missile launchers: $3.0 billion
  - communications: $3.0 billion
  - other: $3.5 billion
APPENDIX II.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY’S 1980 CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

At this holy season we extend our love and a special greeting to all people everywhere. Christmas means a solemn mood and a sacred feeling blending with an air of joyful celebration, to elevate the spirit and promote good will.

The reason for such warmth of emotion is the spirit of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth we commemorate at this season. He came to earth as the Son of God, the Prince of Peace. To the degree that men have put his gospel into their lives they have partaken of the peace which he came to bring.

But as we contemplate his birth, and reflect on the words of the angelic chorus, we are dismayed by the growing tensions among the nations, and the unrestricted building of arsenals of war, including huge and threatening nuclear weaponry. Nuclear war, when unleashed on a scale for which the nations are preparing, spares no living thing within the perimeter of its initial destructive force, and sears and maims and kills wherever its pervasive cloud reaches.

While recognizing the need for strength to repel any aggressor, we are enjoining by the word of God to “renounce war and proclaim peace.” We call upon the heads of nations to sit down and reason together in good faith to resolve their differences. If men of good will can bring themselves to do so, they may save the world from a holocaust, the depth and breadth of which can scarcely be imagined. We are confident that when there is enough of a will to bring it about, it is not beyond the possibility of attainment.

Not only do we urge renewed effort to resolve international difficulties, but also those of a domestic nature in communities and families. Ours is a diverse society, but we are persuaded that most men and women long for peace as they hunger for bread. Again, where there is a strong enough desire to bring it about, it may be achieved. The application of the Golden Rule laid down by the Savior of mankind will bring a resolution of almost any disagreement. This applies in the home, in the neighborhood, in the marketplace, the state, the nation and the world.

We wish for all people everywhere the peace that may come into the heart by exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, applying the principle of the Golden Rule in all of our relationships and by adhering to the whisperings which come through the Holy Spirit.
May the true spirit of Christmas rest upon the people and nations of the earth, and may we all re-dedicate ourselves to knowing and following the divine principles taught by the Savior of mankind. May we demonstrate our concern for others not merely with gifts or messages, but with love and kindness and daily deeds of good will. And may these expressions be expanded to our personal relationships with Jesus Christ, our Savior, the Son of God.

Spencer W. Kimball
N. Eldon Tanner
Marion G. Romney
THE FIRST PRESIDENCY’S 1981 EASTER MESSAGE

At this sacred Easter season we contemplate the life, the sacrifice, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We bear solemn testimony of His divinity. He came to earth the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Prince of Peace. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Only as we hearken to His teachings and follow His precepts may we expect to overcome the hatred, the avarice and the contentions that afflict mankind.

So also it is with nations. As we witness the increasing tensions among the peoples of the earth, with a consequent escalation of arms, including the building of huge arsenals of nuclear weaponry in our own land, we feel a deep and growing concern. We deplore the use of nuclear weapons with their terrible potential for the destruction of life, property, and even of civilization itself.

We realize that such weaponry exists in a number of nations and we understand the responsibility of our military leaders who are charged with the defense of the nation, to prepare measures to repel any aggression.

But while recognizing the need for strength, we are enjoined by the word of the Lord “to renounce war and proclaim peace.” The basis for the real security of America was set forth long ago by the Lord through His prophet who declared:

“And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity . . .

Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ.” (Book of Mormon, Ether 2:9,12.)

Our greatest strength will come of the righteousness of the people. There is a power in the universe over and above the arms of war. That power is available to those who in a spirit of humility and brotherhood seek it. Hence the need to turn our hearts to God.

At this season of Easter, in the name of Him by whom came the gift of eternal life, we call upon the leaders of this and all nations to sit down and reason together, seeking with earnestness and faith a resolution of their differences. We are confident that when there exists a sincere and widespread will for peace, it will become possible of attainment.

We pray for the leaders of America and all nations that they may be granted divine wisdom as they seek inspiration from Almighty God concerning the perplexing problems which confront them in a world which longs for peace.

Spencer W. Kimball
N. Eldon Tanner
Marion G. Romney
We call upon the President and the Congress of the United States to terminate the development of MX. This missile will be of such destructive power that upon no condition can it be considered as an instrument of self-defense. As followers of Christ we cannot countenance weapons of mass destruction which have the capacity to destroy entire nations of our Heavenly Father’s children.

We recognize that other nations possess weapons of mass destruction, particularly so called “heavy ICBMs.” We call upon the governments of all nations to reach accommodation upon the elimination from the earth, of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

We deplore the suggestion that MX be based in the so-called “multiple protective shelter” mode, located upon any populated part of this planet. If deterrence should fail and war commence, no part of this nation, or any other nation, should be subjected to attack in scope thousands of times beyond the numbers of legitimate military targets.

We call upon people of good will of all nations to join in demanding of governments that weapons of mass destruction be limited, and then eliminated, from earth. Restraints of law and morality must be brought to bear upon the arms race or God’s children will be wasted from the earth.

Jesus said, “all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” (Matt. 26:52) God Almighty commanded “thou shalt have no other gods before me.” (Exo. 20:3) Weapons of mass destruction have become the arm of flesh upon which nations have falsely placed their hope of salvation. Truly we have come to serve false gods, “the work of men’s hands . . . which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.” (Deut. 4:28) Our treasure has been poured into weapons by which we kill our brothers and sisters. And our hearts have followed.

The injunction of Jehovah upon Mount Sinai has not been repealed. “Thou shalt not kill.” (Exo 20:13) The Master from the Mount of the Beatitudes told us to “love enemies;” (Matt. 5:44) and that “with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” (Matt. 7:2) The arms race, if allowed to continue, will surely end with war, carnage and death beyond anything the world has ever seen.

Those of us now living in the valleys of the mountains of the Great Basin, particularly, appreciate the words of the prophet Isaiah: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace.” (Isa. 52:7) And in the words of the great Apostle to the Gentiles: “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace.” (Romans 10:15)

Let all our Heavenly Father’s children join in practicing and preaching the gospel of love. Jesus said: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (Jn. 13:34-35)
And again, "as the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue in my love.

"If you keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love . . . . This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." (Jn. 15:9-10, 12)

In this age the injunction of the Christ that we love - love our selves, our neighbor, our enemy - becomes the imperative of our time. Without this love we cannot survive. The continuation of our earth life and our attainment of eternal life demand no less.
APPENDIX V.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY'S MX STATEMENT

We have received many inquiries concerning our feelings on the proposed basing of the MX missile system in Utah and Nevada. After assessing in great detail information recently available, and after the most careful and prayerful consideration we make the following statement, aware of the response our words are likely to evoke from both proponents and opponents of the system.

First, by way of general observation we repeat our warnings against the terrifying arms race in which the nations of the earth are presently engaged. We deplore in particular the building of vast arsenals of nuclear weaponry. We are advised that there is already enough such weaponry to destroy in large measure our civilization, with consequent suffering and misery of incalculable extent.

Secondly, with reference to the presently proposed MX basing in Utah and Nevada, we are told that if this goes forward as planned, it will involve the construction of thousands of miles of heavy duty roads, with the building of some 4600 shelters in which will be hidden some 200 missiles, each armed with ten warheads. Each one of these ten nuclear warheads will have far greater destructive potential than did the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We understand that this concept is based on the provisions of a treaty which has never been ratified, and that absent such a treaty, the proposed installation could be expanded indefinitely. Its planners state that the system is strictly defensive in concept, and that the chances are extremely remote that it will ever actually be employed. However, history indicates that men have seldom created armaments that eventually were not put to use.

We are most gravely concerned over the proposed concentration in a relatively restricted area of the West. Our feelings would be the same about concentration in any part of the nation, just as we assume those in any other area so selected would have similar feelings. With such concentrations, one segment of the population would bear a highly disproportionate share of the burden, in lives lost and property destroyed, in case of an attack, particularly if such were to be a saturation attack.

Such concentration, we are informed, may even invite attack under a first-strike strategy on the part of an aggressor. If such occurred the result would be near annihilation of most of what we have striven to build since our pioneer forebears first came to the western valleys.

Furthermore, we are told that in the event of a first-strike attack, deadly fallout would be carried by prevailing winds across much of the nation, maiming and destroying wherever its pervasive cloud touched.

Inevitably so large a construction project would have an adverse impact on water resources, as well as sociological and ecological factors in the area. Water has always been woefully short in the West. We might expect that in meeting this additional demand for water there would be serious long term consequences.
We are not adverse to consistent and stable population growth, but the influx of tens of thousands of temporary workers and their families, together with those involved in support services, would create grave sociological problems, particularly when coupled with an influx incident to the anticipated emphasis on energy development.

Published studies indicate that the fragile ecology of the area would likewise be adversely affected.

We may predict that with so many billions of dollars at stake we will hear much talk designed to minimize the problems that might be expected and to maximize the economic benefits that might accrue. The reasons for such portrayals will be obvious.

Our fathers came to this western area to establish a base from which to carry the gospel of peace to the peoples of the earth. It is ironic, and a denial of the very essence of that gospel, that in this same general area there should be constructed a mammoth weapons system potentially capable of destroying much of civilization.

With the most serious concern over the pressing moral questions of possible nuclear conflict, we plead with our national leaders to marshal the genius of the nation to find viable alternatives which will secure at an earlier date and with fewer hazards the protection from possible enemy aggression which is our common concern.

Spencer W. Kimball
Church President

N. Eldon Tanner
First Counselor

Marion G. Romney
Second Counselor
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