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STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
Department of Genetics

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Mr. Robert Hotz  
Editor  
Aviation Week  
c/o McGraw Hill Book Co. 330 W 42  
~~6171 Redwood Highway~~ NY 10036  
~~Novato, California 94947~~  
Dear Sir:

Your editorial "The coming crunch in defense" (Oct. 12) refers to the "overwhelming superiority of U.S. strategic forces" in 1962. This is regarded as having compelled Khrushchev to retreat from his Cuban gambit, in a way that contemporary "parity" presumably cannot.

I have long been puzzled by the meaning of "strategic superiority" within the framework of mutual deterrence. If that superiority can have compelled the Soviet withdrawal, does it not imply that "superiority" means first-strike capability? If not, what does it mean in terms of the utility of a large excess of nuclear arms?

But let us then consider whether the threat of U.S. first strike capability did not force the Soviets into 1) the desperate Cuban gambit, as a way to balance the deterrent with IRBMs, and 2) their subsequent investment in major new systems like the SS-9s. Can we say that these developments, in their totality, have enhanced the security of the U.S.?

I would by no means advocate a posture of U.S. inferiority that would unbalance the deterrent the other way. But it is time we reached the maturity to understand that we share the planet with suspicious competitors. Our security therefore depends as much on the reactions of the other side, as on our own primary actions.

In the same editorial you made a number of other comments on the deterioration of naval tactical forces with which it is impossible to disagree.

Yours sincerely,