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The Revival of the Cold War

In the early 1980s under the presidency of republican president Ronald Reagan the Cold War with the Soviet Union was restarted due to several reasons. Three main events led to the revival of the Cold War in the early 1980s: the restarting of the arms race by the United States of America, the Soviet Union shooting down a passenger airliner carrying American Citizens, and the USSR boycotting the Olympics; however, President Ronald Reagan was able to turn the war into an American advantage.

When President Ronald Reagan was elected in 1981 he made military spending a top priority and also heavily criticized the Soviet Union by calling it the axis of evil. In 1983 President Reagan started a new space-based anti-ballistic missile system called the Strategic Defense Initiative or SDI. To the public this program was popularly called Star Wars. The program was abandoned after the US spent more than \$80 billion on it while making almost no progress. Ronald Reagan used this program as a bluff. He knew that the Soviet Union's economy could not support another arms race. Ronald Reagan turned this to a United States advantage by meeting with the Soviet Union leader Mikael Gorbachev and negotiating with him to end the arms race. Gorbachev began to implement perestroika and glasnost, or restructuring and openness in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev began to divert the Soviet Union's spending from the military and more towards rebuilding the Soviet economy. He also began to lead the Soviet

Union more toward a democracy as well as negotiating a treaty with the United States which reduced both country's nuclear stockpiles.

Another reason for the revival of the Cold War in the early 1980s was when a Korean passenger airliner was shot down after intruding on restricted Soviet Union airspace. In September 1983 a Korean passenger jet flying from New York to Seoul went off course and into Russian airspace. The airliner was attacked and destroyed by Soviet jets, and all 269 people on board were killed. One of the many passengers on the airliner was Larry McDonald, a current member of the US Congress at the time of the event. This caused outrage in the West, Reagan described it as a "massacre", "a crime against humanity" and "an act of barbarism." (**The Cold War Rebooted**) The Soviet Union claimed the jet was hundreds of miles off course, deep in Soviet territory, and had not answered numerous radio challenges. Furthermore, Three weeks later, the Soviet Union's nuclear warning computers detected an incoming ballistic missile, which they thought was launched from the US. The only thing that prevented retaliation by the Soviet Union was a Soviet officer, Stanislav Petrov. A similar situation happened in November when NATO forces launched Able Archer, a simulated launch of strategic nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union didn't know that Able Archer was an exercise, and some officials in Moscow interpreted it as a first strike against the USSR. Soviet missiles, bombers and nuclear submarines were placed on high alert.

The third reason that contributed to the revival of the cold war was the Soviet Union's boycott of the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. The Soviet Union issued a statement a few months before the games that stated that "It is known from the very first days of preparations for the present Olympics the American administration has sought to set course at using the Games for its political aims. Chauvinistic sentiments and anti-Soviet hysteria are being whipped up in

this country.” (**Soviets Announce Boycott of 1984 Olympics**) Russian officials then said that protests against the Soviet athletes were likely to break out in Los Angeles and that they doubted whether American officials would try to contain them. The administration of President Ronald Reagan responded by declaring that the Soviet boycott was “a blatant political decision for which there was no real justification.” (**Soviets Announce Boycott of 1984 Olympics**) The real reason for the boycott, however, was in retaliation for the US boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games that were held in Moscow. Thirteen communist nations also issued similar statements after the Soviet Union. Without the competition from these other countries the US went on to make an Olympic record of 83 gold medals.

In the early 1980s the three reasons for the rekindling of the Cold War were the renewed arms race, the passenger airliner shot down by the USSR, and the 1984 Olympic boycott. However, the president of the United States at the time was able to turn these things to an American advantage. The revival of the arms race, which the Soviet economy was unable to keep up with caused the Soviet leader Gorbachev to negotiate arms reduction treaties with the US. Reagan used the outrage at the Soviet Union for shooting down the Korean passenger airliner as fuel for his anti-communism campaigning. Finally, the 1984 Soviet boycott of the Olympics was turned to an American advantage when the US went on to set an Olympic record by winning 83 gold medals.