

The SDI's foes gather momentum in Washington

by Leo Scanlon

At the end of April, the enemies of the Strategic Defense Initiative in Washington began a legislative and publicity offensive which aims to usurp Defense Department control of the SDI and gut the program's directed-energy research, now on the verge of major breakthroughs. The Reagan administration, reeling under the most intense Soviet propaganda offensive in years, and having squandered political resources in its Nicaragua lobbying campaign, has yet to respond to this frontal assault on the heart of the defense budget.

The attack on the SDI program was signaled by the introduction of legislation by a bipartisan group of senators (see *EIR*, April 30, 1985, page 60) which called for the suppression of the elements of the SDI research program which involve directed-energy research. In addition, the bill proposes congressional control over the program.

Speaking for the arms-control mafia, Adm. Stansfield Turner, former chief of the CIA, declared, "We should bargain away at Geneva right now the right to deploy an SDI to defend ICBMs. . . . We ought to be able to get something for nothing, in effect." Assuredly, "something for nothing" is what the United States will get under these circumstances, the "something" being the imminent deployment of Soviet SS-24 and SS-25 missiles.

Britain's International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) also produced a report carrying a similar theme, labeling the SDI "destabilizing to the arms-control process," and MADmen Clark Clifford and Robert McNamara were brought before congressional committees to warn of the danger posed by the program.

These various sophistries, which could have been presented on behalf of the Soviet negotiating position at Geneva,

were the rationale for the very serious attack on the defense budget, including SDI funding, which dominated the legislature throughout the week of April 29.

Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, opened the defense budget debate by boasting that the Democrats had forced the Reagan administration to accept a defense spending increase of only 3%, lower than the 4% proposed by candidate Walter Mondale and rejected overwhelmingly by the electorate! Had Aspin waited until the end of the legislative session on May 3, he would have had a much bigger laugh at the expense of the administration, as Republican senators introduced and approved a resolution limiting defense spending to *zero* increase in FY 1986!

The "freeze" amendment was introduced in the course of debate on the budget resolution, and given support by Senate Republicans, including Robert Dole. Caspar Weinberger lobbied against the passage of the amendment, reminding Senators that defense cutbacks would force closing of installations in their states. His warnings were highlighted by the layoff of 3,100 shipyard workers at General Dynamics facilities.

Weinberger's failure in this effort is due primarily to the domestic austerity measures which the administration has otherwise made the centerpiece of its budget. As the General Dynamics layoffs illustrate, there is no room in the collapsed economy for any parliamentary bargaining. Faced with demands for social security cuts, etc., the Congress is being stampeded in a predictable fashion, and is holding the defense budget hostage.

The administration, for its part, has failed to rally any effective response to the Congress. In the week leading into

the budget debate, President Reagan directed his energies at the biggest lobbying campaign ever undertaken by the administration—on behalf of aid to the Contra forces in Nicaragua. In addition to the normal variety of staged political events, Reagan cajoled and threatened the Congress, and brought a veritable galaxy of international political figures, military leaders, World War II resistance figures, and others into Washington. Congress handed him a humiliating defeat.

In reaction, President Reagan announced from Bonn that he would use emergency powers to embargo trade with Nicaragua—thus committing one of his most powerful weapons to a fight which the Soviets consider, and he ought to consider, a secondary battle.

Dobrynin's boys at the Soviet embassy, arguably the most effective lobbyists on Capitol Hill, had hardly stopped laughing before the administration further compounded the problem by seeming to say that the SDI was "on the back burner" for the time being, refusing to indicate what role the SDI would play in the President's discussions in Bonn. Richard Burt, for his part, went so far as to say that it would not be a priority of the administration in the discussions. The depth of the retreat was indicated by a speech given by Defense Department hardliner Richard Perle, who outlined the administration's strategic defense program, and omitted mention of the SDI until questioned from the floor!

Now the SDI. . .

The stage had been set for the next phase of attack on the SDI, which took place in the House Armed Services Committee. A subcommittee staff brought in a proposal, subsequently approved, which cut \$1.2 billion of the \$3.7 billion requested for the SDI by the administration, cuts aimed primarily at the ASAT program, allegedly because these tests bring the ABM treaty into question.

Other actions by the Congress, and responses by the Pentagon, indicate that the attack against ASAT testing will be repeated with increasing ferocity as each element of a layered defense system is brought into the experimental phase. Information revealed by SDI officials shows that Soviet anxiety over the progress of the SDI, in spite of the congressional roadblocks, is well founded. Furthermore, one high-level administration official has indicated that the program will, within three years, demonstrate a shoot-down by laser of an ICBM in flight from a distance of 6,000 kilometers.

Paul Warnke, former Carter arms-control negotiator, and IBM scientist Richard Garwin signaled the strategy to be used to crush the program with a report issued by the Council on Economic Priorities. Warnke and Garwin used FOIA information garnered from the Pentagon and other sources to fabricate the following lies: The SDIO is not spending the money authorized by Congress for the program; the SDIO is concentrating on conventional missile technologies and not directed-energy research(!); and, the industries receiving the contracts have control over the direction of the program. They then propose that the congressional Office of Technol-

ogy Assessment (which recently authored a scientifically incompetent attack on the program) should take over management review.

Lt.-General James Abrahamson, director of the program, was quick to point out that the proposal itself is illegal, as it is the responsibility of the Defense Department to direct such programs, not the Congress. The Pentagon then scheduled a background briefing to respond to the other charges made in the report.

This briefing became the stage for a petty power play by a group of Pentagon reporters who demanded that the briefing go "on the record," thereby forcing the Pentagon to engage in a "pissing contest" with Warnke and legitimize congressional claims to oversight of the program. The bickering continued until a public affairs officer told the reporters, "There's the door if you don't like it," at which time reporters for UPI, the *Washington Times*, and others, left the room in a pique.

SDI officials went on to refute the premises of the CEP report, indicating that the spending for the SDI is proceeding at a pace greater than for any comparable defense program, having obligated 50% of FY85 funds, against the norm of 30-40%, and expended 9% of that, against a norm of 5-7% for other service programs.

The structure of the research program is such that the national labs, not the industry teams, are leading the actual research proposals, and it is in the interest of the industry teams to produce the best and cheapest proposal for production. Therefore, oversight is built into the program, and there is no room for pork-barrelling as alleged by Warnke and Garwin.

Finally, the breakthroughs imminent were enumerated:

- **Sensors:** Large, light-weight mirrors, 10 times larger than previous mirrors, have been successfully constructed; rapid fabrication techniques have also been developed. High-performance signal-processors, 5-10 times faster than current technology, has been successfully tested, and been designed to reconfigure if hit in battle.

- **Laser/directed energy:** There has been successful loading of large-aperture, multimirror segmented-focusing systems on the ground—crucial to future space basing of laser/mirror systems.

- **Kinetic energy:** Electromagnetic launchers have accelerated plasmoids to velocities in excess of 10 kilometers per second, a significant breakthrough, and rapid-fire techniques with larger-mass projectiles have brought velocities up to the maximum attainable with chemical propulsion. Electrical components have been ground-tested to withstand accelerations of over 100,000 Gs.

President Reagan, who used emergency powers on the diversionary Nicaragua issue, now faces a situation in which congressional behavior poses a severe threat to national security; he should use those powers to declare the SDI a crash program, and the core of an emergency mobilization to revive America's entire economy.