Inside the Pentagon by Tecumseh

The bureaucracy vs. a crash SDI

Complaining about the "defense bureaucracy" is one thing, but to do something about it, put the SDI on a crash basis.

It has become a recognized fact throughout the Pentagon that the situation on Capitol Hill is now going "out of control." Escalating attacks, from both sides of the aisle, have been directed at every element of U.S. strategic capabilities. What is not being acknowledged and dealt with is the fact that what Congress is now doing has been made possible by the Pentagon bureaucracy itself. Until this is faced squarely by the advocates of the Strategic Defense Initiative, there will be no way to defeat what Congress is successfully doing.

The common denominator of the congressional maneuverings from the beginning of this session has been the effort to prevent the SDI from becoming in any way, a "crash program."

In a speech delivered to aerospace executives at the Fort Meyer Officers' Club, presidential science advisor George Keyworth bemoaned the difficulties besetting the SDI program, and continued sabotage by what he termed the "defense bureaucracy." But then, he emphasized that there is no need to accelerate the SDI program using "Manhattan Project" methods.

Keyworth uses the vague term "defense bureaucracy," because the specific people he is referring to in the Defense Department share his hostility to "Manhattan Project" methods of military mobilization.

As the war-time Manhattan Project exemplifies, a "crash program" is one in which the research, engineering, and production phase of a developing technology are carried out si-multaneously, with the knowledge gained from successes and failures in one stage used to accelerate other stages of development.

Lt.-General Abrahamson and the Strategic Defense Initiative Office initially proposed just such an approach to the SDI. Opposition to the proposal was immediate from many quarters, with the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force (principal contracting agency for the SDI) being joined by a multitude of congressional staff aides and other "defense professionals" in quashing the approach. Dr. Tom Cooper, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Research, Development, and Logistics), eventually announced that the program would adhere to the Federal Aquisition Regulations (FAR guidelines), and thus, be treated just like any other military acquisition program—research, proto-type development, cost-effectiveness analysis, competitive bidding, *ad nauseam*.

From that moment on, the SDI program was handcuffed, and opened up to the sabotage operations now being conducted by Congress.

Dr. Cooper is typical of those tenured civilians who exercise enormous power in the DoD and the offices of the service secretaries. This apparatus, (Keyworth's "defense bureaucracy") is a product of the post-World War II reorganization of the War Department, and consolidated its present authority under Robert McNamara and his systems analysts.

The step-by-step process by which this apparatus was created will be the subject of future studies in *EIR*. In the case of the SDI, it is sufficient to point out that the inertia of this bureaucracy, combined with congressional management of details of individual defense programs, represents a power which is now threatening to strangle the leading edge of U.S. defense capabilities.

It is impossible to run an effective research and development effort of the Manhattan Project type under existing guidelines. No "crash program" worthy of the name passes neatly through research, to prototype development, and finally, to competitive bidding for a contract to produce the "perfected system" at least cost. Military engineers who may have conceptualized the initial weapons system or technology have little or no control over the final product, which frequently emerges as quite a different animal than the one originally specified.

One could change the old saying, and describe the platypus as a duck, designed under FAR guidelines.

Any crash program approach to the SDI would threaten to bypass this deadly arrangement and reestablish the traditional dynamic relationship among military engineers, national research laboratories, and defense contractors which characterized the old Navy Yards and Army Ordnance facilities. Engineering teams familiar with prototype design and development—not auditors and "beltway bandits"—supervised the contractors doing the actual production and efficiently kept waste and fraud to a minimum.

Complaining about "the defense bureaucracy" will never substitute for a real mobilization. A "Peenemünde" or Manhattan Project approach to the SDI will pave the way for an effective attack on the bottlenecks and inefficiencies of the defense establishment.