

Panel blasts 'Star Wars' idea

By Michele Matassa
Of the Emerald

Pres. Ronald Reagan's recent "Star Wars" proposal — a request for study on a space-based defense against nuclear attack — came under the gun Wednesday as three University experts reviewed its feasibility and cost-effectiveness.

Physics professor Rudolph Hwa pointed to problems with the systems implementation.

The defense system under consideration involves 50 space stations. Eight to ten of these would be placed over the Soviet Union, and would be responsible for blocking 1000 Soviet nuclear missiles, Hwa said.

The missiles would have to be destroyed above the Earth's hemisphere so air particles wouldn't interfere with the combat.

Because the stations could only fire at missiles within a certain time period, each station would have to destroy one missile every half-second, Hwa said.

A particle-beam defense would not be feasible because the particles would either spread too thin or bend off course, missing the targeted missiles, Hwa said.

Because it would need to detect an object, identify it as a missile, track it, aim and fire in pulses to gather momentum, a laser system would be difficult to implement, he said.

The pulses would require 700 tons of fuel on each space station. Since space shuttles can carry only 30 tons of fuel in one trip, Hwa

estimated "you would need 50 years to transport all the fuel you need to those stations. That's a long time.

"You can quibble with the numbers I'm giving you, but if anything I'm giving underestimates," Hwa said.

Dave Soper, also a physics professor, said even if some space defense could be developed, the Soviets could deploy a number of countermeasures.

Soper referred to Hwa's sample defense system:

"I'm willing to say that's possible. But remember, we're not talking about something simple like going to the moon, here. We're talking about war, where people are generally trying to stop what you're doing."

He said the Russians could easily build more missiles, make decoy missiles, or send up "confusing" radar signals to disturb the U.S. tracking device.

Alternate deployment methods also would serve the Soviets' purpose of avoiding the American defense system.

The missiles could be deployed on submarines, cruise missiles that fly low to the ground.

"They could send the bombs in boxes marked 'TV,'" Soper joked.

Steve Johnson, a doctoral candidate in sociology, said the actual implementation of a space-based defense system would devastate the 1972 anti-ballistic missile (ABM) Treaty.

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Historic house given breathing spell

The Eugene city historic review board bought a little time for the former Alpha Tau Omega house Wednesday night, deciding to try for city funding sources to save the historic house from demolition.

During a special meeting, the board voted 3-0 to recommend the city consider appropriating \$125,000 in various city and federal loans available this year for development projects.

Possible funding sources include \$20,000 from the city's historic restoration loan fund, \$50,000 from the federally-

supported commercial redevelopment loan program and \$55,000 in community development block grant funds.

The motion delayed for 60 days a permit granting demolition of the 73-year-old house, located on Oak Street between 11th and 12th Avenues in downtown Eugene. However, the board noted the 60-day period began two weeks ago when a public hearing was held on the house issue.

The house owners, Eugene residents Julius and Marian Hessel, recently applied to the

board for a demolition permit because they have been unable to find a feasible use or a buyer for the house. They owe \$47,000 in back taxes and have not received any income from the property in three years.

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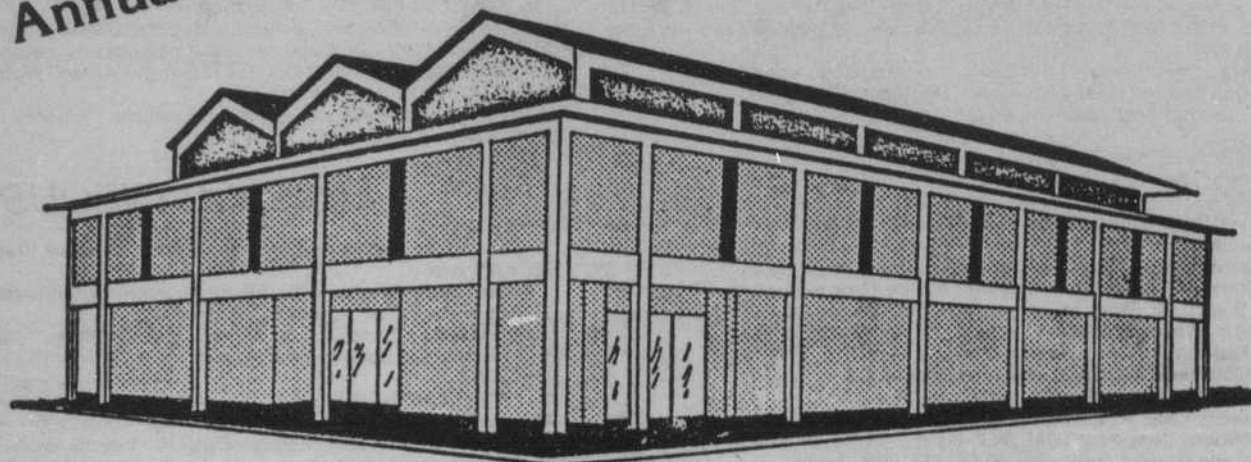
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