

Editorial

Trillion-dollar plan tainted by confusion

The race to build a sky-based defense system has taken on a new twist recently. Comments concerning the Strategic Defense Initiative, or "Star Wars," revealed a disconcerting confusion on the part of senior U.S. officials and shed light on the futility of the program as a whole.

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, during testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Thursday, said that the system is worth building no matter how much it costs, and even if the Soviets are able to develop a cheaper program to penetrate it.

And even though he addressed the possibility that the Soviets would attempt to overwhelm the system, he insisted that their efforts would be unsuccessful. His comments conflict with official Reagan administration policy which allows for deployment of the system only if analysis suggests that it would cost less than a Soviet counteroffensive effort.

Published accounts of Reagan's recent interview with Soviet journalists revealed that Reagan is at odds with members of the administration as well. Reagan's remarks that a Star Wars system would not be deployed until the Soviet Union and the United States had completely eliminated their entire nuclear arsenals sent White House aides on a mad scramble to clarify what the president "really" meant.

Aides assert that while it is naturally the president's goal to eliminate nuclear weapons, he didn't mean to make deployment of the system contingent on complete unilateral disarmament. Press Secretary Larry Speakes said that deployment of the system would overlap efforts to destroy the weapons, but he also said that if the United States had the technology, it would deploy the system regardless of whether or not the Soviets agreed to a complete disarmament.

Reagan also contradicted himself when he reiterated his intent to reveal the technology to the Soviets, but also accused the Soviets of harboring a more advanced program.

Both sets of remarks are tinged with irrationality. Weinberger's vow to support the program at any cost, even if the system fails to provide the impenetrable blanket of protection its supporters promise, indicate that he has failed to consider the program on a practical level.

Reagan's advocacy of the installation of the program only after nuclear weapons have been eliminated strikes us as ironic. It is similar to implementing a mousetrap only after all the mice are dead.

In addition, while his vision of unilateral disarmament would certainly be welcome, the scenario is unlikely at best. The threat of a U.S. blanket defense would not prompt the Soviets to destroy their nuclear weapons, but would simply encourage them to build their own sky-based defense system. Assertions by Reagan himself demonstrate that the Soviets may already be researching a similar system.

The remarks also cast a shadow of doubt on the administration's portrayal of a precise and well-orchestrated program. It is alarming that with respect to a program of this magnitude and potential impact, the president and defense secretary appear confused and in disagreement with other administration officials.

The United States is spending billions of dollars on a project with a potential trillion-dollar price tag. The essential feasibility of the program has not been demonstrated and yet officials are arguing long-range uses of the system. Ultimately, the disagreements are reflections on the overall madness of the effort to extend the arms race into space.



Letters

Ask inmates

The recent showing of "Rambo" on campus has renewed the conflict about the morality of the Vietnam War and of war in general. In 1968, I joined the Marine Corps and went to Vietnam. More than 15 years later, I still live with the effects. I now deeply despise the sort of propagandizing which sends young men off to fight and die in some ultimate test of manhood. Militarism for its own sake is an example of humanity at its worst.

Whether Vietnam was a just cause is only now becoming clearer to me. In 1978, Aleksandr Solzhenitsen spoke to the graduating class at Harvard University. In that speech, he told them, "...the most cruel mistake (was) the failure to understand the Vietnam War...members of the U.S. anti-war movement wound up being involved in the betrayal of Far Eastern nations, in a genocide and in the suffering imposed on 30 million people there. Do those convinced pacifists hear the moans...? Or do they prefer not to hear?"

"Your shortsighted politicians who signed the hasty Vietnam capitulation seemingly gave America a carefree breathing pause; however, a hundredfold Vietnam now looms over you," he said.

Is there anything worse than the massive horror and brutality of war? Perhaps we should ask

those living now under the domination of the Vietnamese, or the current dissident "inmates" of Soviet "psychiatric hospitals" or Siberian labor camps. The question is, would we listen to them?

William Moore
Music School

Paper surplus

The editorial (ODE, Oct. 30) cited the "Commentator" as a source of waste of IFC funds, claiming we have three-inch borders on all our inter-office memos. This is no longer true. Now we only use one word per page. We have to get rid of all that paper somehow.

Rob Young
Production Manager
Oregon Commentator

Let men help

The proposed ASUO shuttle program is a commendable idea for this campus so threatened by rape. But in her commentary, (ODE, Oct. 28) Debra Kester badly shorted other programs also dedicated to the prevention of this crime.

Since its inception in January 1984, the Lambda Chi Alpha escort program has operated six nights a week, every week, within the University area. The continued success of the program shows that it has already provided an alternative for women walking alone on campus.

The success of the Lambda Chi program also flies in the face of Kester's generalization that male-escort programs have "had problems with male participants abusing the systems and perpetrating crimes against women."

In the nearly two years the Lambda Chi program has run, there have been no complaints from women we have escorted and no "crimes" have been perpetrated. We have a strict screening process that requires each potential escort to undergo an annual criminal history check administered by the Eugene Police Department. Our program is directly subordinate and answerable to Campus Security.

Men suffer from rape too, when it engenders distrust and fear among women. While Lambda Chi Alpha welcomes additional rape-prevention programs to the U of O campus, we would like to see the continued means for men to take an active role in combatting the problem of violent assault. By slighting such male programs as Lambda Chi's, Ms. Kester and the Shuttle Van Committee may alienate many who are sympathetic to their cause.

Mark Hutcheson
Vice-President
Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity

Petty vendettas

It's not because Adell's got the Mrs. Folger's Blues, (ODE, Oct. 30) but that certain IFC members are overzealous in their efforts to reallocate funds. So much so that they overlook "total compensation" as opposed to the dollars and cents of pay.

Free coffee as a perk is not only prevalent among firms that institute welfarism for their staff in an effort to improve the quality of work life, but it is also part of their "total compensation."

Mr. Sliter, to stoop so low as to engage in name calling ("...Adell's cronies...") is not only immature, but is indicative of ignorance in management.

Before your next sip of "espresso," enlighten yourself to the fact that state employees at the EMU receive lower-than-market wage rates in the state of Oregon, and have only commercial blends and artificial dairy creamers provided for them. But little as it is, the coffee is still an incentive to remain in the employ of the EMU.

It is also my hope that the IFC will not abuse its powers, and focus on more macro issues, and not engage in what seems to be petty personal vendettas against the EMU administration. There is much to gain in an integrative, as opposed to the zero-sum, stance that the IFC is apparently adopting.

Harold Leong
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Wednesday, November 6, 1985

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