P.S. to the NEWS
by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

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LASER WEAPONS AND PARTICLE BEAMS

What if the Russians build a marvelous new weapon which can destroy all U.S. missiles and aircraft before they reach Soviet soil? That would completely nullify the U.S. national grand strategy which is based on our supposed ability to retaliate, that is, to strike back at the Russians with nuclear weapons if they ever have the audacity to attack us.

Recent evidence proves that the Russians are indeed working on such a weapon called the directed-energy weapon. It would open up a whole new era of warfare in which beams of powerful energy, traveling at nearly the speed of light, would be used to destroy targets almost instantaneously.

Directed-energy is a generic term which includes both particle-beam and high-energy laser weapons. If perfected, directed-energy weapons might so revolutionize warfare that whichever nation builds them first will be able to control the world.

The nation which first develops and builds directed-energy weapons will have a near-total defense against incoming enemy missiles and aircraft. The defensive weapons will send out beams of energy which will incinerate offensive weapons before they hit their targets.

If the Russians place a single high-energy laser in space orbit, they could disable U.S. satellites without warning. A Soviet high-energy laser weapon would be capable of damaging any U.S. spacecraft in low earth orbit.

When Maj. Gen. George J. Keegan retired as head of U.S. Air Force Intelligence in protest because the Pentagon hierarchy refused to face up to the fact that the Russians are working on directed-energy weapons, he was considered very controversial. A high-level Defense Department official, however, recently admitted to Aviation Week & Space Technology that new intelligence information about what the Soviets are doing at Saryshagan "pretty well vindicates George. He was about 90% correct in his assessment."

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The argument of two years ago as to whether the Soviets are developing charged-particle beam weapons has switched dramatically. There is no longer any doubt among informed observers that the Russians are building a directed-energy weapon. The differences of opinion are only over what kind of a beam weapon it is.

The Russians are constructing directed-energy weapons at Saryshagan, a ballistic missile range near the Sino-Soviet bordern in southern Russia. It really doesn't matter whether the Russians are working on a particle-beam or a laser weapon; either one uses an awesome amount of energy and has a movable nozzle to aim and control a beam.

High-energy laser weapons would have many uses, including destruction of enemy satellites and ballistic missiles. A Los Alamos study concluded that laser and particle beam weapons have the potential for extraordinarily effective defense of all national assets against both ICBMs and SLBMs, but are now in a very early stage of development.

With only four laser battle stations in space, the Soviets could shoot down our entire fleet of high altitude bombers. On the other hand, if a B-52 were armed with laser weapons, it could burn up any attacking aircraft or missiles.

Unfortunately, Defense Secretary Harold Brown is delaying development of U.S. directed-energy weapons. Brown is ignoring the recommendation of a Defense Science Board high-energy laser task force headed by the eminent Dr. John S. Foster, which urged that emphasis be placed on near-term application of laser weapons for missions like shipboard air defense.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) wants to invest about $200 million a year in high-energy laser weapons technology. That's not so much when we remember that the United States spent more than $1 billion to develop over-the-horizon radar which gives us immediate information about foreign missile launchings.

Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-Wy.) has criticized the "few, half-hearted steps toward laser weapons" taken by the Carter Administration. He said that none of these steps even "try to match the Soviet schedule of deployment." He is spearheading the fight in the Senate to add funds to the Defense Department FY 1981 budget in order to force faster high-energy laser weapons development.

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