P.S. to the NEWS
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BEAM WEAPON REVERSAL

History is full of examples of individuals who had the vision to see and develop a breakthrough in science, technology or weaponry, but were pitted against an establishment which refused to recognize the possibilities.

The Wright Brothers, in their little bicycle shop in Ohio, had to oppose the prevailing scientific wisdom of their day which had decreed as a dogma of scientific "truth" that heavier-than-air flight was impossible. Fortunately, America provided a climate of freedom where the Wrights could build and fly a plane even if some highly educated and prestigious men declared it could not be done.

Another American inventor named Robert Fulton obtained an interview with Napoleon when that famous conqueror wanted to cross the English Channel. Napoleon failed to see the potential of Fulton's designs and models for the world's first steamboat -- although only a few steamboats would have enabled him to have destroyed the wind-driven British Navy.

At the beginning of World War I, the European representative of the Holt Tractor Company tried to sell German General Von Hindenberg on the idea of a revolutionary new weapon made by covering the tractor with armorplate and equipping it with machine guns. Hindenberg said no. Three years later, the Allies seized the idea and made the tank the decisive weapon of World War I.

Several years ago, when Maj. Gen. George Keegan was head of U.S. Air Force Intelligence, he discovered that the Soviets are researching and developing a particle beam weapon. If ever brought to the point of practical use, it would be as dramatic a revolution in strategic and tactical warfare as the atomic bomb.

General Keegan reported that some 2,000 topflight physicists are working in 350 Soviet laboratories on particle beam weapons. He based this on our reconnaissance satellites, his careful analysis of Soviet scientific reports, and information from our agents inside Russia.

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General Keegan concluded that the United States must explore the military feasibility of a directed beam weapon in order to safeguard our nation against any major technological surprise. In taking this position, he ran headlong into the "it can't be done" syndrome, which then dictated U.S. policy.

The Central Intelligence Agency, which has a deplorable record in discerning and evaluating Soviet weapons developments and movements (such as the shipment of offensive missiles to Cuba in 1962 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968), would not admit what Air Force Intelligence reported was going on at the Soviet research facility at Semipalatinsk.

The Livermore Laboratory nuclear physicist alumni lined up against General Keegan's conclusion for different reasons. Having tried and failed to develop charged particle beams in Project See-Saw, they smugly took the position that, "since we can't do it, the Russians can't do it either."

The result was that our official policy became "hear no beam weapon; see no beam weapon; beam weapon can't exist." Defense Secretary Harold Brown tried to debunk the whole idea as just a type of Star Wars fiction.

For three years, General Keegan, now retired, has waged a tremendous public crusade to lift the blinders from U.S. research and development. The respected journal Aviation Week & Space Technology has publised mounting evidence showing that the Soviets are years ahead of us in beam weapon research.

Finally, the Pentagon appointed a Blue Ribbon panel of 53 scientists from government laboratories, universities and industry to examine the evidence and to make recommendations. With each passing month, the evidence presented by General Keegan and Aviation Week grew more credible. The 53 scientists reported that the Soviets are five to seven years ahead of U.S. physicists in beam weapon research.

Fortunately, there has now been a fundamental reversal of U.S. policy on beam weapons. The Pentagon has now belatedly started a program to determine the military feasibility of a ~~directed~~ particle beam weapon. We hope it is not too little and too late.

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