

The potential economic benefits of the Strategic Defense Initiative

by Paul Gallagher

The following statement by Paul Gallagher, director of the Fusion Energy Foundation, was issued following the election.

From the second televised presidential campaign debate onward, President Reagan's landslide victory turned on the overwhelming and optimistic support of the so-called "Star Wars" program among the American citizenry. By rejecting, in that second debate, the official Republican Party election strategy of silence about the Strategic Defense Initiative, President Reagan found the short path from near disaster to his election-night mandate.

Had President Reagan stuck with the Republican National Committee's stated policy of election-year silence about the anti-missile defense program in the face of Mondale's wild attack on that policy, the President would have suffered the fate of his party nationally, which hardly held its own in Congress despite the President's landslide. The energy-beam defense program of the Strategic Defense Initiative was the one crucial policy on which the President was completely alone—for which no other prominent Republican spoke out or campaigned—and which was totally and wildly opposed by Mondale and the entire "official" Democratic National Committee leadership. The election was a mandate for the Strategic Defense Initiative, and an overwhelming rejection by the American people of the pessimism of the Mutually Assured Destruction doctrine.

All polls on the subject of military policies and programs for years have shown that an overwhelming majority of American citizens support development of anti-missile defense technologies over the MAD doctrine. When the sentiments of those Americans honestly drawn to "peace movement" orientations are taken into account, the vast majority of Americans actively reject the Mutual and Assured Destruction doctrine of Henry Kissinger and of Walter Mondale.

Lies about the cost

There are exceptions—they control the national networks and metropolitan media and the Eastern Liberal Establishment think-tanks. The "Committee to Save the ABM Treaty" of McGeorge Bundy and Robert McNamara has taken the lead in fraudulent attacks on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) on behalf of the deterrence doctrine and of their back-

channel "deals" with the Russians, who are violating the ABM Treaty wholesale.

These opponents are making wild claims concerning the cost of developing beam weapons for anti-missile defense. Bundy has claimed the SDI will cost \$800 billion to \$1 trillion. On Oct. 27, the Council of Economic Priorities and Herbert Scoville of the Arms Control Association held a New York press conference to claim that their "study" showed the SDI would cost one-half trillion dollars.

These opponents are engaged in conscious lying; current spending for anti-missile defenses is a ridiculously low \$1.4 billion per year—a fraction of Soviet efforts, which are already far more mature.

These absurd cost "projections" are arrived at by the simple fraud of assuming that anti-missile defenses will take 40 years to build, and that research will stay within the politically imposed constraints of Henry Kissinger's ABM Treaty for years to come. Just as a nuclear plant costs ten times as much to build when the construction time is tripled or quadrupled by political constraints, so one can derive massive "budget costs" for the SDI.

The facts are these:

- Leading national laboratory beam-weapons scientists have insisted that, if a Manhattan Project approach to all-out development of anti-missile defenses is adopted, a multilayer anti-missile shield can be deployed in a decade, then qualitatively improved over a second decade to counter any conceivable offensive countermeasures.

- Such a politically unconstrained crash program would require \$5-10 billion per year immediately, and might rise over a decade to \$20 billion per year, developing, testing, and deploying beam-weapon systems while supporting advanced related research in plasma and beam technologies in university, private, and corporate laboratories.

- Such a program can deploy effective defenses against nuclear missile attack within a decade, at a total cost in the range of \$150 billion to \$200 billion.

Thus, by spending 4-5% of our defense budget on the Strategic Defense Initiative over the next decade, we can build the anti-missile defenses which the vast majority of American citizens enthusiastically support. That pace in de-

veloping anti-missile defense systems must be at least equal to that of the Soviet program, which is currently "breaking out" into the early deployment stages—we are far behind.

A revolution in technology

No such estimates can be exact. The U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, if given that goal, will have a characteristic the Soviet program lacks. It will generate the breakthroughs in general capital goods and in productivity of labor, which can revive U.S. industry and exports from near-total collapse, and help to save millions of lives otherwise now being lost in Third World nations wrecked by austerity imposed by the IMF. The beam technologies of the SDI can raise the "scientific content" of medical, biological, and chemical technologies and lead to plasma power and processing industries through a generalized "controlled-radiation revolution" in technology. The SDI can spread food-irradiation technologies into critically food-short areas of the world where 30-40% of all food spoils, create new power-transmission and water-reclamation technologies, and revolutionize metal-

working and processing of materials.

Such an across-the-board productivity leap was the proven effect of the U.S. industrial mobilization which ended the depression and won World War II. Our postwar industrial export capabilities, unparalleled in history, were directly created by that mobilization.

Nothing less than such a productivity revolution today can save the U.S. economy and those of its allies from "post-industrial" wreckage, export collapse, famine abroad, and even food-shortages here. Contrary to the absurd claims of its opponents, the cost of such a crash program for beam-weapons anti-missile defenses cannot be "calculated" in advance. But that military spending will obey the "laws" of the World War II industrial mobilization, the Manhattan Project, and the Apollo Project. The more we spend at these frontiers of military technology, the greater the massive payback to economic productivity will be. The real cost of the Strategic Defense Initiative will be negative. We should now launch a serious "Star Wars" mobilization at once, fulfilling the clear electoral mandate of the American people.

The Soviet advantage in nuclear warheads

Why the United States needs a strategic defense program against Soviet missile attack was dramatically shown in a recent study by the Congressional Research Service. The study demonstrates that the Soviet Union now has the capability to target five nuclear warheads against each of the 1,000-plus U.S. Minuteman and Titan ICBM missile silos. Since the Soviet Union has also considerably improved the accuracy of its missiles, experts currently estimate that two Soviet warheads targeted on one U.S. silo would be sufficient to achieve an assured "kill."

While this does not mean the Soviet Union has already achieved a first-strike war-winning capability, the Congressional Research Service study points out that the U.S.A. is capable of targetting *less* than one warhead on each Soviet ICBM silo. Though the United States has more warheads, far fewer are capable of knocking out an

enemy missile silo. The comparison of U.S. and Soviet nuclear warhead strengths at the end of 1983 is shown in Table 1.

If both sides develop their nuclear missile capabilities to the extent formally permitted under the SALT agreements, then the United States could target 3.7 silo-killing warheads against each Soviet ICBM silo by 1994, but by that time the Soviets will be able to target 7.41 warheads against each U.S. silo.

Furthermore, the Soviets, according to the Congressional study, are reaching those SALT limits in the area of strategic ICBMs far faster than the United States. The study estimates that the United States and the Soviet Union would reach those limits in the years demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 1

	U.S.A.	U.S.S.R.
Number of strategic nuclear warheads	10,700	9,771
Number of warheads on mobile ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers	8,560	3,246
Ratio of silo-killing warheads to opposing ICBM silos	0.64	5.04

Table 2
Date SALT II Limits Will Be Reached

	U.S.A.	U.S.S.R.
SALT II limit of 820 MIRVed ICBMs	1993	1985
SALT II limit of 1,200 MIRVed ICBM/SLBM launchers	1985	1985
SALT II combined limit of 1320 MIRVed ICBM, SLBM, and bombers with cruise missiles	1986	1986
SALT I limit on modern SLBM launchers (U.S. = 710, USSR = 950)	1988	1989
SALT I limit on modern ballistic missile submarines (U.S. = 44, USSR = 62)	1991	1990