Edward Teller on Defense From Asteroid Impact

Toward the end of his life, Nobel Prize-winning physicist Dr. Edward Teller was an advocate of experiments and international cooperation to head off the danger from Near-Earth Objects that could pose a threat to Earth. He believed that an international test project would be especially important if the options for defense included nuclear explosives, according to his co-author David Morrison of the NASA Astrobiology Center ("Defending the Earth Against Asteroids: The Case for a Global Response," *Science and Global Security*, 13:87-103, 2005).

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Edward Teller (1908-2003)

Morrison writes that Teller addressed the topic at a series of forums in the 1990s, but the only one of these talks that led to a published paper was Morrison and Teller's "The Impact Hazard: Issues for the Future," in T. Gehrels (ed.), *Hazards Due to Comets and Asteroids* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994). Here are excerpts from that paper:

"We believe that it is appropriate to advocate the application of technology to eliminate terrestrial impacts [by Near-Earth Objects]. Individuals can formulate their own answers to this question, but we cannot imagine society generally retreating from the opportunity to protect itself from such natural hazards. . . .

"[B]oth the decisions and implementation of any programs to deal with the impact hazard should be shared by the international community. All parts of the world are equally at risk from impacts, and we all share a common interest in our self-protection from such cosmic catastrophes. One of us (E.T.) urges that experimentation should not be delayed except for strong reasons, since procedures for protection need to be decided on the basis of data on comets and asteroids, part of which can be obtained only through experimentation."