

SDI scientists under fire from the FBI

by Paul Gallagher

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, as if on Soviet orders, has hit the U.S. military-science community with a new and deadly manufactured scandal, escalating an attack on Lawrence Livermore Laboratory and its x-ray laser program, and forcing the resignation of Livermore's director of Nuclear Weapons Programs, Dr. Roy Woodruff.

In a bizarre case with profound ramifications for U.S. national security, the FBI has been shown to be directly at the center of a campaign to suppress the x-ray laser program, and cut it off from President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). When this dirty work surfaced Nov. 1 in articles in the *New York Times* and *Science* magazine, the nuclear-freezeniks from the Federation of American Scientists immediately demanded that Reagan sign a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty with the Russians, banning our x-ray laser program. The Soviet command has long demanded the suppression of the x-ray laser program in particular among SDI projects, calling it a "first-strike space weapon." Yet the Soviets' own x-ray laser program, centered at the Lebedev Institute of Physics, has been under way since 1975, predating the U.S. program known as "Excalibur."

Woodruff, under whose division Dr. Lowell Wood and the entire x-ray laser team at Livermore operate, resigned Oct. 31, when the contents of an article about the program in the Nov. 8 issue of *Science* first became known. Several sources confirmed that the two events were both directly connected to higher pressures on the program.

The *Science* article, citing no sources, claims that May 1985 underground tests to prove new focusing methods for the x-ray laser were a failure. Reporters for both *Science* and the *New York Times*, which repeated the story the next day, claim that their secret sources came from the lab itself. They are presumably part of a well-known group of Livermore physicists who do not think x-ray laser ABM weapons can, or should, be developed.

The kicker is that Livermore scientists who earlier reported the success of the focusing tests, both to the *New York Times* and to *Fusion* magazine, have been under intensive FBI investigation ever since. The Sept. 23 *Los Angeles Times* gloatingly reported that "advisors to the President" were determined that the Livermore scientists would not be allowed to "change government program priorities" by giving favorable reports of their own project to the press. In other words, the most lethal anti-missile shield and the only one with a

nuclear power source, was to be squeezed out of SDI planning as a concession to Soviet demands, allowing a nuclear test ban treaty on Soviet terms. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the FBI was "intensively" investigating the lab and those responsible for the favorable reports.

The latest events clearly show that the FBI pressure is escalating, and reaching high into the federal bureaucracy in Washington. The *Science* article showed that opponents of the x-ray laser program in the national labs were given the go-ahead to leak attacks on the program to the national media, leading to Woodruff's resignation, while Livermore physicists working directly on the x-ray laser were afraid to say a word.

Budget cuts for the SDI

Meanwhile the Strategic Defense Initiative as a whole is under continued fire from the budget-cutters in Washington. Lt.-Gen. James Abrahamson, the SDIO director, told the Senate Armed Services Committee Oct. 31 that the SDI is growing at a much slower pace than the comparable Soviet program or the United States' own previous successful crash programs, the Apollo and Manhattan Projects.

Behind the public battle over the ABM Treaty congressional promoters of Soviet "peace policies" have been imposing the most restrictive interpretation of the SDI by the threat of further budget cuts.

While Kennedyites in the House, led by Kerry of Massachusetts and Joseph Addabbo of New York, tried to cut the SDI budget once again, to \$2 billion, Abrahamson told the Senate that its own \$2.75 billion figure is not adequate either. Directly comparable Soviet expenditures are estimated to be \$7-10 billion. The American Manhattan Project of World War II, by contrast to the SDI, spent (in 1985 dollars) \$3.1 billion in 1943, its first full year as a research program. It jumped 156% to \$8 billion in 1944, as it became a large-scale engineering and development program; then another 74% to \$14 billion in 1945.

Discussing these figures, Abrahamson warned that "in the face of these reductions, we simply cannot afford to conduct the comprehensive, complete program of research that had been structured. . . . Budget cuts have caused major revisions in our program. At the current level, the program has been severely effected and considerable changes have been forced. The result has been that the program has had to make premature 'down-selection' of certain key technologies."

The SDIO director warned the Senate, in effect, that the development of beam weapons for anti-missile defense is simply being held up by the shriveled size of the SDI budgets, aside from the extraordinary progress in ground-based laser system demonstrations. These are resulting not from any major engineering or testing programs, but from technological breakthroughs in Free Electron Lasers and large flexible mirrors and lenses.