

EIR Science & Technology

The grounding of the space program

The United States lacks not the capacity to overtake the Soviets, but the political will to force through the necessary spending.

Twenty-five years after President Kennedy announced the Apollo program, the U.S. space program is grounded. This merely underscores the depth of this nation's national security emergency. This is a crisis of far graver dimensions than that represented by Sputnik, not because the United States lacks the capacity to overtake the Soviets, but because of failure of political will to force through the necessary level of defense spending, and additionally, money to NASA.

The level of defense cuts being mooted by the House and Senate present an unacceptable forced choice to President Reagan: Either cut U.S. forces in Europe or gut the Strategic Defense Initiative. The House Budget Committee May 8 approved a budget for fiscal year 1987 that slashes the President's military budget below this year's level; in these circumstances, allocation of the money needed to launch a successful crash effort on the SDI on the scale of the Manhattan or Apollo programs seems pie in the sky.

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger denounced the House Budget Committee's action, warning that it would represent a 6% real *decline* from the FY1986 level and would represent a threat to U.S. military preparedness.

W. T. Lee, a Defense Intelligence Agency analyst, took issue with DIA-CIA estimates that the Soviet Union is maintaining a steady rate of defense spending. Writing in the May issue of *National Security Record*, he stated that on the basis of an analysis of the Soviet economy, he estimates that the Soviets have increased their defense spending by 8.5%, compared to a 3% rate of increase by the United States.

He considers this to be a conservative figure, because of the difficulty of setting a value to the ruble, and because it does not account for areas of expenditure such as civil defense. Based upon overall figures for production released by the Soviets, and netting out the consumer economy, he believes that 38% of their total budget is allocated to the military.

Such a figure accords with estimates of the Soviet military

buildup otherwise published by *EIR*, and documented in the *EIR Special Report*, "Global Showdown: The Soviet Imperial War Plan for 1988."

A new defense weekly, *Tech Trends*, edited by Clarence Robinson, formerly of *Aviation Week*, reports on intelligence sightings which indicate Soviet testing and or deployment of x-ray laser defense weapons. Ironically, the very success of Livermore Laboratory's recent tests of the x-ray laser, indicate the potentialities already being exploited by the Soviets, according to the best estimates of intelligence experts.

As reported to Congress by Edward Teller, Livermore Laboratory tests of the x-ray laser, have shown results which are three orders of magnitude better than those predicted. It is now established that a nuclear bomb-pumped X-ray laser beam can be projected a distance of one thousand miles, with a divergence of no more than five feet.

On May 25, 1961, President Kennedy announced the Apollo program. His words at that time are just as relevant today. He said:

"If we are to win the battle that is going on around the world between freedom and tyranny, if we are to win the battle for men's minds . . . now is the time to take longer strides—time for a great new American enterprise—time for this Nation to take a clearly leading role in space achievements which in many ways may hold the key to our future on Earth.

"I believe we possess all the resources and all the talent necessary. . . . Recognizing the head start obtained by the Soviets . . . and recognizing the likelihood that they will exploit this lead for some time to come in still more impressive successes, we nevertheless are required to make new efforts on our own. For while we cannot guarantee that we shall one day be first, we can guarantee that any failure to make this effort will find us last. . . . We go into space because whatever mankind must undertake, free men must fully share."