

'Star Wars' debated on suburban campuses

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Debate over President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative — alias "Star Wars" — has moved to suburban college campuses.

An opponent, speaking at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College, ridiculed SDI as unworkable.

"It's like setting up a machine gun on the top of the Empire State Building in New York and shooting at tennis balls in Wimbledon, England," said retired Air Force Col. Robert M. Bowman, who once directed advanced space programs development.

An advocate, speaking at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, predicted SDI would have scientific spin-off benefits that would be an economic boon.

"People underestimate technological growth," said Dr. James A. Ineson, one-time Troy resident who is director of the government's Innovative Science and Technology Office.

Bowman's speech last week was made under sponsorship of the Nuclear Freeze Movement. Ineson spoke Monday in a high-tech lecture series co-sponsored by UM-D and Ford Motor Co.

INSON, WHO who has two degrees in math, physics and astronomy from the U-M and a doctorate from the University of Maryland, said that even if "it's imperfect, SDI could be an effective deterrent to war."

"An aggressor's confidence level would be eroded below the thresh-

'The Soviets won't allow us that superiority (Star Wars). They will go to war before they allow us to deploy such weapons.'

— Air Force Col. Robert M. Bowman, Ret., who once directed advanced space programs development

hold" of a desire to attack, Ineson said. "SDI systems are not designed to destroy human life."

The government is in the second year of a five-year program of research on SDI. A former NASA official, Ineson is one of six top technical directors of research.

As visualized, SDI would use ground bases to shoot laser beams to space-station mirrors, which would reflect them to destroy Soviet attack missiles. If adopted by Congress and a future president, Ineson said, SDI would destroy enemy weapons without destroying people or cities.

Among spin-off benefits could be use of laser technology in welding, signal processing and the medical operating, he said, likening a laser beam to a surgeon's scalpel.

BOWMAN, PUSHING his book opposing SDI, called it the ultimate offensive weapon, not a defensive weapon.

"It sounds like a first strike. It is. The only use of 'Star Wars' is in the hands of an aggressor — to get the missiles he didn't get in a first strike," Bowman said.

"The Soviets won't allow us that superiority. They will go to war before they allow us to deploy such

weapons.

"Star Wars can perform other military tasks. It can destroy (enemy) satellites. It can incinerate cities in minutes. The true mission of Star Wars is to seize military control of space."

Reagan and the 1980 Republican platform think in terms of "absolute military superiority," Bowman said, offering his opposing view: "In the nuclear age, there is no national security — just common security. The enemy is not the Soviet Union but nuclear war itself."

He urged Reagan to "cash in" his SDI chip at the Geneva bargaining

table and "become the greatest peacemaker in history."

BOWMAN RIDICULED the idea that American-sent laser beams could destroy Soviet missiles launched against the U.S. Items:

- Heat-detection devices would have to warn the U.S. of the launching of Soviet missiles. American lasers would have to do their work during the brief "boost phase," when Soviet rockets are boosting their missiles. He put the accuracy rate at 0-10 percent.
- The Soviets could develop rock-

ets that would burn more briefly and afford American lasers a prohibitively short time to hit them. "This means a laser could destroy only one or two missiles instead of 35," he said.

• American space stations with mirrors would be vulnerable to explosions or even grains of sand dumped in space. "If you (Soviets) disable any part, we wind up with a couple of trillion dollars of useless junk," he said.

Fred Miller of the Nuclear Freeze Movement in Detroit commented on the backers of SDI: "Corporations have a lot of money to make."

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