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President Defers Star Wars

by Bennett Ramberg

On September 2nd President Clinton announced that the United States would defer deployment of a National Missile Defense system (NMD). The President has thus placed the decision on whether to deploy a new missile defense with his successor.

Beginning in the Reagan years, Republicans have advocated deploying Star Wars-like technology to defend against in-coming missiles. In the 1990's missile defense was even part of the Republican *Contract with America*. The testing of intermediate range missiles by North Korea and Iran compelled Clinton to contemplate deploying such a system. Some believe that these smaller "nations of concern," or "rogue states" as they were formerly known, could acquire ICBMs by as early as 2005. These states, conservatives argue, are not governed by the current laws of nuclear deterrence—where the threat of massive retaliation dissuades a nation from attack.

At first blush, a Star Wars system has merit. Who can argue with defending America soil from nuclear war? However, the missile defense system being contemplated makes bold promises it cannot deliver. Simply, the system under development does not work. Several failed tests suggest that considerable research and development remains to be done. Furthermore, the artificial testing environment used to date - which excludes realistic decoys and multiple warheads—is unsettling.

Then there is the Russian problem. The deferred Clinton plan calls for the deployment of up to 200 interceptors capable of destroying missiles from North Korea, Iran, or Iraq and errant missiles launched "acci-

dentally" by China or Russia. Because of the limited deployment, the Administration hoped to allay Moscow's fears that the system was directed against it. Yet fewer than 150 of Russia's 2000 deployed warheads are invulnerable to a US first strike. Russia fears that NMD is intended to mop-up after a counterforce attack. (China, with 20 ICBM's, also believes that NMD can be used to nullify their deterrent.)

Russia also objects to the fact that on the nuclear plane, the Cold War has yet to end. Indeed both countries justify large nuclear arsenals because the other maintains them. President Clinton rationalizes this posture arguing that "while we are no longer adversaries we are not yet real allies." Under the circumstances, Moscow fears that an American NMD, which violates the ABM treaty, could be enhanced in time. The Kremlin's proposed response—an enhancement of its own offensive arsenal—would result in a nuclear arms race that would compromise the security of both countries. Unless Russian fears are allayed—unless both Washington and Moscow take bolder measures to reduce suspicion—the Russian challenge to NMD will remain.

Ballistic missile defense has long been a dream of American strategic planners. Given the inadequacy of the technology and the lingering climate of suspicion between Moscow and Washington, the Star Wars system as proposed is a dangerous project that fails to defend, and may inadvertently provoke a horrible conflict.

Dr. Ramberg served in the State Department, 1989-90, and is currently Vice-President of the Southern California Federation of Scientists.

VICTORY! HEALTHY SCHOOLS SIGNED BY GOVERNOR DAVIS

We did it. In a ceremony September 25, at Balboa Magnet School in Van Nuys, Governor Davis signed The Healthy Schools Act of 2000. Over the past two years PSR-LA, CALPIRG, Californians for Pesticide Reform and other groups pushed for a new policy to protect schoolchildren from harmful pesticides. The new law has these provisions:

- A notice will be sent home at the beginning of the school year to all parents and staff with the list of pesticides the district may use.
- Parents may register at each school to receive pre-notification of spraying.
- Posting at all entry points to a treated area for 72 hours after the application.
- School districts will maintain publicly available records of pesticide use.
- The state will train school districts in less-toxic means of pest management.

Unfortunately, the bill does not include a ban on the worst pesticides, nor mandate non-toxic controls. Nonetheless this bill will help parents get the information they need when researching the environmental practices of their child's school. School districts regularly use pesticides linked to cancer, reproductive and developmental harm, acute illness, nervous system damage and hormone system disruption.

"With the passage of this bill, we recognize that pesticides pose a significant threat to children," said Martha Arguello, PSR-LA's Environmental Health Coordinator. "California has now given parents and children an important tool for protecting their health."

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

One of America's finest speakers on nuclear threats, **Dr. Bruce Blair**, President of the Center for Defense Information, spoke at a variety of PSR-LA sponsored events, September 28-30. Venues included UCLA's Burkle Center for International Relations, Los Angeles World Affairs Council and Saint Joseph Center in Santa Ana. The final event was a terrific breakfast briefing at the home of PSR board member **Shirley Magidson**.

PSR-LA director **Jonathan Parfrey** was appointed to Governor Davis' advisory committee on radioactive waste. On August 24, University of California president Richard Atkinson released the report, "Management and Disposal of California's Low-Level Radioactive Waste" (available at <http://www.llrw.org>), which definitively states that no new radioactive waste is necessary. Mr. Parfrey regards his accomplishments on the committee as being among his finest work.

Ted Schettler M.D., M.P.H., one of the nation's leading investigators in environmental disease, spoke on behalf of PSR-LA and the national Health Care Without Harm campaign at the medical schools of UCLA, USC and Drew Universities, October 17-18. Dr. Schettler serves as science director of the Science and Environmental Health Network and is coauthor of PSR-LA's landmark studies, *Generations at Risk: How Environmental Toxicants May Affect Reproductive Health in California*, and *In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development*.

PSR-LA, California's Department of Health Services, and UCLA's Office of Environment, Health and Safety, hosted a conference on elimination of the toxin mercury from clinical practice, June 22 at UCLA. **Dr. James Greenwood**, director of the UCLA office, served as host.

Over the past half-year PSR-LA physicians and supporters—including **Drs. Quentin James** and **Richard Saxon**, **Shel Plotkin** and **Ted Williams**—met with U.S. Representatives Waxman, Berman, Dixon, and staff members of Reps. Napolitano, Roybal-Allard, and Sanchez. Our office sought to educate Representatives on the dangers of radioactive pollution and the need to remove the nuclear arsenal from high-level alert.

The PSR-LA exhibit, *Atomic City: Los Angeles in the Nuclear Era*, a collection of photographs and artifacts highlighting the role the region has played in nuclear weapons development and culture, showed at the Orange County Historical Museum in Santa Ana for three months. A special program at the Old Courthouse Museum, September 17, saw reporter **Michael Collins** recount his investigations of local military installations, Cal State professor **Dan Brown** reflect on ways to make peace, and Irvine Valley College instructor **Tim Carpenter** discuss plans to expand disarmament activities in Orange County.

PSR-LA helped to release the report, "Crude Reckoning: The Impact of Petroleum on California's Public Health and Environment," authored by the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies, on August 22.

A national day of protest against the ballistic missile system, October 7, was staged at both Los Angeles Air Force Base and Edwards Air Force Base. PSR-LA assisted the events by giving organizers tools for reaching the public, and providing authoritative data on both facilities and the nuclear war-fighting weapon systems they test and develop. Mr. Parfrey addressed the group at LA-AFB.

On August 18, PSR-LA director Jonathan Parfrey was featured speaker with **Rep. Dennis Kucinich** (D-OH) at a press conference during the Democratic national convention. He persuasively addressed members of the international media corps about the dangers posed to global security by the national missile defense system.

On September 19, PSR-LA helped **CALPIRG** with its press release highlighting Taco Bell's illegal use of genetically-altered corn in taco shells.

On October 6, **San Diego Superior Court Judge Wickersham** permitted PSR-LA to become an intervenor with the State of California in a lawsuit regarding the proposed Ward Valley lawsuit. The judge further decided that U.S. Ecology, the site licensee who filed the suit, had made no valid contract with the State. PSR-LA anticipates that the San Diego ruling will be appealed. Two additional suits filed by U.S. Ecology are currently before U.S. appellate courts; oral arguments, in one case, have already taken place.



Jonathan Parfrey has joined the EPA Workgroup on the Santa Susana Field Laboratory. Of recent concern are potential fires at the Rocketdyne site—radionuclides, having migrated into surrounding shrubs and plants, may then be released downwind. In an October 23 letter to Governor Davis, **Committee to Bridge the Gap** cited PSR-LA's efforts to brief the San Bernardino fire marshal on potential hazards of the fire at the Aerojet General ordnance facility in Chino Hills.

A Great Celebration, Seriously

"This is a some intense group," observed a PSR member attending PSR-LA's 20th anniversary celebration last May 31st at the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

For an awards ceremony, the evening tackled serious subjects.



Bill Joy, chief scientist and co-founder of Sun Microsystems

Keynote speaker, Bill Joy, chief scientist and co-founder of Sun Microsystems, spoke prophetically about threats arising from new advances in genetics, robotics, and computer technologies. "We should have learned a lesson from the making of

the first atomic bomb and the resulting arms race," Mr. Joy said. "We didn't do well then, and the parallels to today's emerging technologies are troubling."

Another award recipient, Dr. Brad Edgerton, a philanthropist of national stature, spoke eloquently on the funding



Dr. Brad Edgerton

director of the Brachial Plexus Team of Southern California Permanente Medical Group was introduced by Kaiser medical director, Oliver Goldsmith M.D.

Marjorie Fasman delivered a remarkable reminiscence of her dear friend and award recipient, Eleanor Wasson. The "Lifetime Achievement" award was given to Ms. Wasson for her many years of volunteer leadership; she was founder of the International Association of Volunteer Effort, and a leader within the peace and justice community for over three decades.

Norman Corwin, activist, poet and playwright, was also honored. Introduced by the jocose Ray Bradbury, Mr. Corwin read a magnificent poem, illuminating the still corrosive effect of nuclear weapons on America.

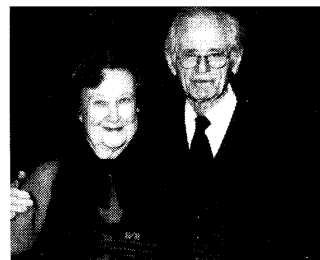
Dr. Helen Caldicott, mistress of ceremonies, echoed the prophetic tone of the

community's obligation to support diversity to keep American democracy strong. Dr. Edgerton,

evening, citing current military strategies that frightfully resemble Cold War era plans. "It's not logical nor reasonable that the United States and Russia now place some five thousand nuclear arms on top of missiles, ready to fire at a moment's notice," Dr. Caldicott said. Specifically addressing physicians, she implored, "Never forget your first mission: be healers of humanity."

The evening was magnificently organized by Maria Hall, PSR-LA's former director of development. PSR-LA misses Ms. Hall multitudinous abilities as she is now pursuing a law degree at University of Southern California.

A heartfelt congratulations to this year's PSR-LA award-winners. Their life's work remains a lasting inspiration: bearing witness against threats to life on earth!



Dr. Helen Caldicott and Norman Corwin

MEMBER PROFILE: LESLIE BROTHERS, M.D.

Dr. Leslie Brothers is not merely a renowned psychiatrist, an accomplished physician, skilled researcher and writer—she is now the new chair of PSR-LA's "Firearm Violence Committee," and has developed an informative program to train physicians in identifying individuals potentially at-risk from firearm injury.



Dr. Brothers is Associate Research Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the UCLA School of Medicine. In addition,

Dr. Brothers works in private practice as a managing partner of Practice Dimensions.

Dr. Brothers received degrees from Harvard and Duke Universities. Dr. Brothers performed research at Sepulveda VAMC, Cal Tech, and the Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis. She has pub-

lished numerous articles in neuroscience journals and books.

A recent book, "Friday's Footprint: How Society Shapes the Human Mind," (Oxford University, 1997), is Dr. Brothers' contribution to the debate on sociological factors influencing behavior. She is now developing a project with Dr. Walter Jacobson to teach doctors how to discuss spiritual issues with patients.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Brothers' scientific and literary talents extend themselves in her other activities. A master in Aikido and an aerobics enthusiast, she is also developing a novel. "A comedy," she confesses.

PSR-LA is truly privileged to be a recipient of Dr. Brothers' prodigious gifts.

CITY OF LOS ANGELES LIMITS MERCURY

On August 2nd the Los Angeles City Council unanimously approved a resolution calling for a "mercury-free Los Angeles." The policy urges hospitals, pharmacies and retail stores to eliminate the use

and/or sale of mercury products. The resolution, sponsored by Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, was greatly aided by PSR-LA's Adam Levine with assistance from Dr. James Greenwood of UCLA's Office of Environment, Health and Safety—which moved to eliminate mercury products from its facility last year.

Every year, 158 tons of mercury in the United States are released into the environment. Mercury falls into lakes, rivers and oceans and finds its way into the fish we eat. The three main sources of mercury pollution are utility, commercial and industrial boilers, medical equipment, and municipal waste. It is a dangerous and potent neuro- and reproductive toxin—an amount as small 1/70th of a teaspoon can contaminate a 25-acre lake to the point where fish are unsafe for human consumption.

PSR-LA is seeking to hire a public health organizer to expand our work on weaning LA's medical community from using environmentally hazardous material.

Calendar

NOVEMBER 4

PSR-LA and the Orange County Alliance for Global Nuclear Disarmament are co-sponsoring a pre-election candlelight vigil in support of nuclear disarmament, 5:00 - 7:00 PM. South Coast Plaza Hotel, 666 Anton Street, Costa Mesa. Call (714) 835-6304 or (310) 458-2694.

NOVEMBER 27

Dinner salon at the home of PSR-LA director, Jonathan Parfrey, in Pacific Palisades.

DECEMBER 11

Gary Hart, former United States Senator and former U.S. Presidential Candidate,

currently Co-Chair, U.S. Commission on National Security for the 21st Century, "Memo to the President on a New National Security Policy," Burkle Center for International Relations, UCLA, 3:00 - 5:00 PM, Bunche Hall, Room 4269.

JANUARY 8

Dinner salon at the home of PSR-LA director, Jonathan Parfrey, in Pacific Palisades.

JANUARY 1 - FEBRUARY 15

Atomic City: Los Angeles in the Nuclear Era, PSR-LA's fabulous and wonderfully updated exhibit of photographs and cultural artifacts, will be on display at the Oviatt

University Library of California State University, Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff Street, in the San Fernando Valley.

JANUARY 9

Journalist Sam Day will speak on behalf of the Southern California Federation of Scientists at Midnight Special Bookstore. The talk is entitled "Modechai Vanunu: Israel's Nuclear Martyr."

PSR SPEAKERS

FINE SPEAKERS AFFILIATED WITH PSR-LA ARE AVAILABLE FOR YOUR EVENTS.

Leslie Brothers, M.D., on firearm violence

Kirk Murphy M.D., on environmental threats to the public health

Joseph Burkes M.D., on continuing dangers of nuclear war

Co-President, Felix Aguilar MD
Co-President, Jimmy H. Hara MD
Treasurer, Kirk J. Murphy MD
Secretary, Jose Quiroga MD
Executive Director, Jonathan Parfrey
Environmental Health Coordinator, Martha Dina Arguello
Development Associate, Kraig Hill

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