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**C**ritical observers hope that the renewed scrutiny of the president's Strategic Defense Initiative resulting from the collapse of the superpower summit talks will finally convince the nation and Congress that Star Wars is a virtually useless trillion dollar fantasy.

The president calls SDI a miracle defense system that will render nuclear weapons obsolete, but organizations such as the American Federation of Scientists and the Mt. View-based Pacific Studies Center say it is costly, makes the Bay Area an inviting military target, and, most importantly, won't work.

"We're either going to have nuclear war or cut defense expenditures," says Palo Alto attorney Walt Hays, who has actively sought to reduce local dependence on military spending.

Since 1983, at least 43 Bay Area companies have landed a total of \$2 billion in defense contracts to design and build lasers, rockets and surveillance equipment for the Strategic Defense Initiative. Only Los Angeles has received more SDI money.

That translates into tens of thousands of jobs—one job per \$50,000 to \$60,000, according to Mike Closson of the Center for Economic Conversion in Mt. View.

Fourteen Silicon Valley companies, including Lockheed, Westinghouse and SRI International, have been awarded SDI contracts. The latest

addition, General Electric of Sunnyvale, last month was selected for a \$350 million contract to design a nuclear reactor for launch into space.

The device is the forerunner of much larger nuclear powered systems that will use lasers and particle beams to destroy nuclear missiles headed for US targets. And that raises safety and economic concerns, especially for Sunnyvale, home to both Lockheed and GE and their nearly \$1 billion in SDI money.

"As far as putting nuclear reactors into space, it's a very, very dangerous thing," says Randy Schutt, research analyst with Pacific Studies Center in Mt. View. "And it belies what Reagan is saying.

"He's saying it's a nonnuclear system, but it's going to be powered by nuclear reactors and the actual laser weapons that might be used might also be driven by nuclear explosions."

Anybody who watched the Challenger explode finds little comfort in General Electric's assurances that nuclear devices can be launched "safely" into space. Critics fear that launching disasters might spread radioactive waste for miles or that falling satellites could drop enriched nuclear fuel into the wrong hands.

But those fears are tough to translate into legislation. Local SDI opponents have sought and so far failed to get municipal governments to act.

The San Jose Jobs for Peace Conversion Task

Force presented an ordinance in August to the San Jose City Council that would have established a commission to monitor San Jose's dependence on military contracts. But the council rejected the ordinance and Task Force chairman Sol Zeltzer says his group is considering other options.

"We're still working on it," he says.

In light of the concerns about SDI's ineffectiveness and increasingly strident protests in the scientific community, it is sobering to consider that billions of dollars and thousands of local jobs are linked to SDI, a program that could be wiped out with laser speed by Congress, a new president or an arms control agreement. SDI's dim prospects raise the issue of what would happen to the already troubled Silicon Valley economy if the program is shelved.

**S**tar Wars is bad even if it works," writes Charles L. Glaser in a recent issue of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*. Glaser, a fellow at Harvard University's Center for Science and International Affairs, contends that SDI reduces rather than enhances the chances for peace.

Glaser's article, which has framed much of the Star Wars debate so far, maintains that the vulnerability of each superpower to nuclear attack has prevented the use of nuclear weapons since World War II. "Without the possibility of an

outcome clearly preferable to our current situation, there is no good reason to invest enormous resources in strategic defense and to risk creating a more dangerous world," he concludes.

In spite of overwhelming pressure to support the President on SDI, Glaser is not alone in his opposition.

"People are beginning to understand that biological survival is not social survival, and that the whole fabric of this society and Soviet society would be destroyed (in a nuclear exchange)" said Dr. Herbert Abrams, shortly after a recent speech in Los Gatos at the Jewish Community Center's Breakfast Club.

Abrams, a Stanford radiologist who last year accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, is quite skeptical that a fail-proof nuclear shield could be designed and deployed. "Remember," he says, "an effective Star Wars system would require at least ten million lines of (computer) code. . . . The launch system of the Challenger required only 80,000 lines. . . ."

Critics of Star Wars have adopted various approaches in their spirited but thus far futile opposition to the \$30 billion five-year federal research project. Early on, influential physicists like Sidney Drell, head of Theoretical Physics at Stanford and Deputy Director of the Stanford