US wields nuclear axe

By Bob Wasserman

Last week a Soviet military satellite equipped with a nuclear warhead was launched somewhere in Northern Canada. For the sixth time this year, information released upon the satellite's crash could weigh as much as one hundred pounds, and it indicated that the arms expertise is in the hands of the Soviets. If there are twenty more US or Russian nuclear satellites in space, all of which must come down eventually.

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II) between the US and the USSR resume this year, and a possible Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty on all nuclear tests might be signed by Great Britain, the US, and the USSR. Before these events take place, perhaps we should examine the thirty-year history of nuclear proliferation.

After the first atomic bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and the first Cold War with Russia and China began, one hydrogen-bomb fusion, almost one hundred times as powerful as the A-Bomb, is the 1950s the US diversified its nuclear arsenal and also complicated a vast nuclear stockpile.

According to Herber York, writing in Race and Russia (1970), by 1960 the United States had "the energy equivalent of ten thousand World War II's" committed in its nuclear arms cache. Since it is safe to assume even if the 1960's did not produce a larger number of missiles, the old ones were not simply dismantled and thrown away, therefore most of these bombs are still in the United States.

Not getting into all the horrible possibilities surrounding the neutron war, one has to wonder at this ridiculous figure of the Pentagon's toys. What's worse, this allegedly invisible arsenal didn't prevent the US from entering two wars since 1945, and even losing one. After the Vietnam debacle and all the anti-war demonstrations, it might have seemed logical to believe that the military would be completely ignored for a while, but it wasn't to be.

President Carter has increased defense spending in his budget for the 1979 fiscal year, and this amount accounts for more than twenty-five percent of the total national budget.

Not nuclear weapons, the sole possession of the superpowers, the US and Russia, South Africa is well on its way to developing a nuclear bomb, despite international disapproval. Even such a global power as Pakistan has "the bomb," presumably for defense against its neighbor India, which also has nuclear capacities. The military prowess of these two countries resides only in their frightening sights in the world, for as India and Pakistan have large, explosive populations, they also have high militaries and widely diversified populations.

While the rest of the world is concerned with the possibility of a nuclear war, the US looked into the possibility of a new weapon, the Neutron Bomb, which would "do not destroy property. While the controversy began by President Carter for further study of this weapon took place long years ago, this idea is not a new one. In 1961 Freeman Dyson wrote in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists; "neutrons bombs, like hydrogen bombs, will in the long run not completely our lives, increase our insecurity, and permit us to live at the expense of our own extinction."

To help understand the reason behind the neutron bomb decision and the nuclear arms build-up, one must only realize that the priorities of the military establishment. At present research is going on to develop a high-energy laser for military use. However, it is doubtful that this weapon will be used by the Pentagon to blow up the Pentagon. The official explanation is that it is not possible for the weapon to be used in a high-value target. However, it is not too much to expect for an ICBM missile to suddenly blow up the Pentagon, so that case I can only hope that world leaders and military officials realize the seriousness of the war games they are playing.

perspectives

feedback

BU clarifies position

To the editor:

In recent weeks, your newspaper has carried stories about the controversy surrounding the funding of the expansion, and a6 publication by Boston University students and others, which has been denied University endorsement. Before these events take place, perhaps we should examine the thirty-year history of nuclear proliferation.

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MIT's new priorities must be re-examined

Opinion

By William Lasser

MIT has reached a crucial moment in its history, a time when the basic values and goals which its educational policy must be reconsidered and revised if the institute is to continue to play an important role in American society.

During the past year, I have commented in this space on several seemingly unrelated issues facing the Institute, and The Tech has reported on a multitude of events which have a bearing together. Yet at the base of all the controversies during 1977 at MIT is the continuation of this university's basic values.

We identified two scandals of significance, the Thursday and Grogo incidents; we faced and still face difficult questions of academic policy; we saw the establishment of a new Commission on MIT Education which analyzed and reported on several aspects of campus life. The Commission's work has been largely lost in the calm of the seventeen years, yet the questions are addressed as important today as they were then. The establishment of the Commission was at least an attempt to deal with the larger issues involved in MIT education. After all, the end of its recommendations were largely ignored. Perhaps the time has come for a new Commission on Education, operating under more serious conditions and with the assistance of its objectives will be more thoroughly implemented.

Some have likened MIT to a vocational school which prepares students to play a certain trade. That, while disheartening, is in many ways a correct analysis. For past generations of MIT graduates, success in the sciences and engineering professions required only the expertise to do so, while the smoke has cleared, there is no widespread program to implement this basic policy. Instead, we have a new course in "science within your reach," which, while an attempt to serve all, has given an indication that MIT is pursuing the goal of teaching science within the reach of the student.

After the debate in the undergraduate assembly of the last few years, the Institute created the Committee on MIT Education which analyzed and reported on several aspects of campus life. The Committee's work has been largely lost in the calm of the seventeen years, yet the questions are addressed as important today as they were then. The establishment of the Commission was at least an attempt to deal with the larger issues involved in MIT education. After all, the end of its recommendations were largely ignored. Perhaps the time has come for a new Commission on Education, operating under more serious conditions and with the assistance of its objectives will be more thoroughly implemented.

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