MIT rebutts Biden charge

By Seth Gordon

No more than 47 percent of research on campus is for the Department of Defense, stated Professor Kenneth A. Smith '58, MIT associate provost and vice president for research. The statement was made in response to Democratic presidential candidate Joseph R. Biden Jr., who in July said, "75 to 80 percent of those brilliant students at MIT, they're working on defense projects," on a televised discussion with other Democratic candidates, according to the MIT News Office.

Biden's statement was used by editorial writers, especially after it appeared in The New York Times News of the Week in Review, the News Office reported.

The proportion of funds for research on campus from the DOD has not changed much over the past five years, according to statistical figures by Smith.

The DOD is not the only source of defense research. The Department of Energy is responsible for developing and building nuclear weapons; however, Smith said, that MIT does not get more than "nickels and dimes" from the DOE for such research.

Smith reported that the DOE's two largest DOD contracts for MIT are for the Plasma Fusion Center and the Laboratory for Nuclear Sciences, which receive $12 million and $20 million dollars a year, respectively.

Smith stated: "Only about eight percent of our graduate students (and very few of our undergraduate students) receive stipends from work sponsored by the Department of Defense."

The Student Financial Aid Office confirmed that only graduate students would be likely to do defense work.

Thomas C. Hsu G, a student member of the Military Influence Committee on Campus Research Committee, asserted that the increase in Lincoln was "almost certainly" due to the Strategic Defense Initiative.

The budget for research at Lincoln during fiscal year 1987 had increased by 20 percent over 1986, according to preliminary figures released by Director of Finance John A. Carrié '75. The budget for research on the campus the same year only increased by 7 percent, according to the MIT News Office.

The DOD subsidizes, calls for "fair trade" agricultural products, it is wrong for the US government to support such subsidy programs, says Gephardt.

By Probst Mohr

The United Technologies Corporation announced last week that it will sponsor the completion of MIT's three-year human-powered Daedalus.

The Hartford-based corporation said that it will offer additional assistance in engineering and materials, making it the project's largest sponsor.

"The money will be used to finish construction on the human-powered Daedalus airplane which will fly more than 60 miles from the island of Crete to mainland Greece this spring, recreating the flight of the mythical Greek craftsman Daedalus."

The project team began work on the Daedalus craft in June and estimates completion by mid-October, according to Peggie Scott, the project's director of external affairs. Construction of the airplane is finished, the plane will be taken Edwards Air Force Base in California where it will be thoroughly tested before the Crete-Greece flight.

The architects, comprised of MIT faculty, engineers, and students, successfully completed "spar" testing of the plane's 112-foot wing frame on Tuesday. The spar test, which involves turning the airplane in wind tunnels and applying forces of up to 1.5 times that of gravity to the ends, creates a stress test of the structure's strength.

The human energy (in the form of a bicycle-like peddaling) is needed to power the plane. Daedalus is being constructed from the lightest materials available. Polystyrene foam, chosen for low density, will make up much of the support structures for the wings and fuselage. The skin of the aircraft will be made of 0000 thick mylar sheets. The total weight of Daedalus is 50 pounds. A team of three to four pilots is being chosen to fly Daedalus. Picked from across the country, these individuals will train individually under the supervision of Yale University it stationed at Edwards Air Force Base. The ability of these pilots, all of whom are athletes, to endure a seventy-five mile flight must be confirmed, Scott said.

(Please turn to page 2)

Advisor-led seminars are popular

By Michael Gojer

Alumni 400 of the 651 freshmen who signed up for the freshman advisor seminar program had to be turned away this year for lack of space, according to Travis R. Merritt, head of the Undergraduate Academic Support Office. The oversubscription occurred despite boosting the number of seminars from eight to 32 last year, Merritt said.

Freshmen who participate in the program meet with their advisor and fellow advisors in a weekly academic seminar. The goal of the program, Merritt said, is for incoming freshmen to establish a good relationship with a faculty member through close and frequent contact. The seminars were first offered last year and received "wild, enthusiastic acclaim" from both students and faculty, Merritt said.

The number of MIT first-choice responses for freshmen advisor seminars dropped from 225 last year to only 100 this year, Merritt observed. She said the regular seminars were intentionally downsized to freshmen in comparison with the advisor seminars. She also noted that there has been an increase in the number of upperclassmen participating in the regular undergraduate seminars.

"It is our intention to get as many of these freshmen programs working as possible," Merritt said. But he warned that increasing the number of advisor seminars for next year will require a budget increase, although he thinks faculty are more aware of the programs than they were last year.

(Please turn to page 10)