

# National News

## SDI is officially on chopping block

The lead story of the U.S. Army newspaper *Stars and Stripes* on Feb. 5 reports that U.S. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft participated in a report calling for dropping the idea of a "Star Wars shield," and concentrating instead on making land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles mobile.

President Bush has significantly upgraded the role of NSC director, and Scowcroft's role in the preparation of the report puts the Strategic Defense Initiative officially on the chopping block.

The report, "issued with unusual bipartisan support" on Feb. 3, was sent to the White House in hopes that Bush would accept its basic premises and ask Congress to act on them.

*Stars and Stripes* comments, "If the main recommendations of the 18-month study are adopted, it will mean official recognition that former President Reagan's dream of a space-based missile defense system—under the Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly known as Star Wars—is dead. It also will mean a renewed U.S. commitment to completing a broad arms control agreement with the Soviets at the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START)."

Carter administration Defense Secretary Harold Brown, who co-chaired the panel that compiled the report, claimed that a nationwide defense against missiles is not feasible and that the United States must retain and improve the doctrine of nuclear deterrence.

The panel also included "members of the national security priesthood," including Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee; Sen. John Warner of Virginia, the ranking minority member on the committee; Sen. William Cohen (R-Me.); Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee; Robert McFarlane, former U.S. national security adviser; R. James Woolsey, former Undersecretary of

the Navy; and Amos A. Jordan of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown.

## Urban decay a self-feeding process

Roderick Wallace, at the Department of Epidemiology and Social Medicine of Albert Einstein College of Medicine, released a new study in January entitled, "A Synergism of Plagues: 'Planned Shrinkage,' Contagious Housing Destruction and AIDS in the Bronx," which demonstrates that urban decay creates a self-feeding shockwave of murder, drugs, and AIDS.

Wallace attacks the policy of "planned shrinkage" developed by the New York City RAND Institute which closed many fire stations, and which triggered a process he termed "contagious urban decay." When fires break out, people are driven into other neighborhoods, which become overcrowded, leading to more fires and further abandonment of housing.

Wallace points out that the spread of drugs is ordinarily contained by a kind of social immune system, a network of personal relationships mediated by churches, clubs, schools, and community groups, which are destroyed by contagious urban decay. The result is accelerated drug addiction, skyrocketing homicide rates, infant mortality, and, most recently, rampant AIDS spread as the forced migrations have mixed IV drug users into previously relatively drug free populations.

## Top Democrats call Bush 'one of us'

New York Gov. Mario Cuomo told 140 House Democrats gathered at the Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, for their annual "issues conference" on Feb. 4, that the presidency of George Bush presents Democrats with "a

moment of extraordinary opportunity" to implement the Democratic agenda.

Bush has heard "the voices of people crying for help. . . . The man chosen to be our President, after having tried it another way for a long time, has begun talking like one of us," Cuomo said. "We should make the most of it."

Clark Clifford, a longtime fixture of the Washington establishment, extolled Bush in a *Washington Post Magazine* story on Feb. 5 on the preparation of his memoirs. "I had a fairly close relationship with Prescott Bush, George Bush's father," Clifford said. "I found him to be intelligent, a splendid public servant. He brought the boys up exceedingly well."

Clifford insists that for Bush to be successful, he must not "buckle under to the ideology of the right wing," which he has shown himself sensitive to in the past. On whether Bush really agreed with Reagan, Clifford comments, "He's had to take a public position of having to approve everything that's gone on. But I would be surprised if he did approve of everything. Eight years ago, when he took a look at Reagan's economic policy, he delivered himself of a striking expression: voodoo economics—an interesting little indicator. But then he had to suppress any indicators of criticism."

## Soviet spetsnaz threat to U.S. energy grid

For the first time, a U.S. government official has publicly acknowledged that Soviet unconventional war-fighting units, or *spetsnaz*, are a threat to U.S. targets, especially the nation's energy grid.

Edward Bodolato, deputy assistant secretary for energy emergencies, told the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee on Feb. 8 that his office has developed procedures to determine possible threats and to respond to energy emergencies, and is taking steps to improve security. Top priority, he said, would be given to protecting electrical power systems, because power lines are most vulnerable to attack.