

starters, this project itself will require a nuclear capacity, so the argument that it will make nuclear arms obsolete is patently false. The funds invested, plus the technological spin-offs produced, especially in the military field, will be sufficient to fulfill imperialism's economic and military ambitions that have so far been restrained by international accords. The SDI project will also serve to activate the Israeli military industry and the economy generally. According to Lt. Gen. James Abrahamson, SDI director at the US Defense Department, high-tech is to be channeled into improving Israeli military capabilities: «The technology... will contribute to some of Israel's very pressing military needs.»

NOT CONFINED TO SPACE

The SDI is not a lot of 'space-junk' as many think. It is much more down-to-earth than most imagine it to be. One of the first technologies to emerge from SDI research is that needed for anti-tactical ballistic missiles. Developing a workable defense against tactical missiles, a small part of the SDI, could be accomplished in the relatively near future with existing weapons. It is believed that the computer software for the US's Patriot anti-aircraft missile, or the expensive AMRAAM (advanced medium range air-to-air missile) could be reprogrammed. Either could then target ballistic missiles which are comparatively slower and lower flying than strategic missiles.

US and Zionist strategic analysts attach high priority to anti-missile defense. Experts in military technology estimate that 'Israel' will be cut out to develop systems capable of locating and destroying ground-to-ground missiles with laser beams operating in conjunction with an advanced computer system. This technical know-how to be acquired through participation in the SDI, will better enable the US to project its military hegemony through Israeli battle performance.

No less connected to these projects are high expectations for R&D in aircraft technology. The US is particularly involved in projects related to this field in conjunction with 'Israel', especially those carried out by the Israel Aircraft Industries and Tadiran which produces technological components. Dr. Robert O'Neill, director of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, says that by joining the SDI, 'Israel' will be able to update aviation electronics and combat command and control systems, especially since it depends greatly on air superiority.

The Israeli aircraft industry grew in tandem with the Technion's aeronautical engineering faculty. Therefore it is natural that this institute of technology in Haifa, should play an important role. For thirty years, the Israeli Technion research center has been supported by three of the US armed services with funds ranging in the millions of dollars. The institute provides 70% of the country's engineers and much of its scientific research. Already the US had doubled donations to the Technion to make up for the withdrawal of 50% of the Israeli government's subsidies.

In addition to improved anti-aircraft capacity, the US is taking giant steps towards renovating and expanding the naval forces and facilities in 'Israel', whether ships or submarines. There is talk of bigger and more ships as well as enhanced surveillance efforts to counter threats to US imperialist military maneuvers in the region.

STAR WARS ON EARTH

Many arguments have been raised against the SDI in the US and in 'Israel'. These include the colossal technological and

financial effort needed to erect the so-called defense umbrella off the ground. It is estimated that the SDI would require from 600 to 5,000 shuttle flights, costing \$30-60 billion. In view of the US's shuttle disasters suffered during the past two years as a result of pushing the shuttle launches to 15 a year, the SDI does seem to be rather far-fetched. Moreover, writing instructions for the computers that would manage the 'star wars' battle is another colossal task. Even if it were technically possible to produce the necessary software, there would be no way to test it completely. Another obstacle is the effort needed to mount a defensible platform from which to destroy missiles in their boost phase. In addition, in space the duplication of equipment required for high reliability is extremely expensive, and realistic testing of the integrated hardware and software after deployment is impossible.

With respect to 'Israel', many opponents of its participation in the SDI have expressed skepticism in view of its infant space agency, compared to the better established research and development giants of the imperialist camp. The Israeli space agency was only recently established (July 1983) under the guidance of the Minister of Science and Development. Operating out of a rented office with a handful of full-time employees, it is sustained on a budget of \$500,000 a year. This office works in close coordination with NASA, with US technicians installing a laser tracking station in the hills near Jerusalem. The station will be one of 19 around the world. The US claims that their main purpose is measuring the movement of continents, but is this all?

Yet whether the SDI is feasible or not, the US and 'Israel' are forging ahead on an expanded level of alliance which will tolerate no debate or opposition. Donald Hicks, US undersecretary of defense, suggests that he will withhold research grants from scientists who criticize Defense Department policy. He particularly had the SDI in mind: «If they want to get out and use their roles as pros to make statements, that's fine, it's a free country,» he said in an interview with *Science* magazine, but «freedom works both ways. They're free to keep their mouths shut... I'm also free not to give them money.» (Mr. Hicks is the nation's largest dispenser of research funds.)

In short, being a part of the SDI, 'Israel' would move up with the leading edge of technology useful for military application. «Space junk» is not the point - improvement in computer technology, battle management systems and detection systems is. In the second week of February this year, US Defense Secretary Weinberger stated that the US may be able to deploy the first elements of the SDI within six years. Newspaper reports confirmed that some of the components first to be deployed have not so much to do with space, but are advanced new weapons. The most immediate result of 'Star Wars' may simply be more 'advanced and efficient' battles here on earth.

Thus, opposition or skepticism on the basis that the SDI cannot produce a 100% effective shield is beside the point. The Pentagon's military objectives could well be achieved if the SDI can give the US enough of a first-strike edge against the Soviet Union and any retaliatory strike, to guarantee its political edge around the world. In this context, the US's intensified interest in fortifying 'Israel', its most reliable ally and military base in the Middle East, is a number one priority of its strategic policies.