

# Bombs in the back seat

by Geoff Stone

A U.S. scientist who worked on an SDI study group says nuclear weapons may soon be small enough to be put in the trunk of a car and smuggled across the border.

Richard Zare, a member of an American study group on directing energy weapons, talked this past Sunday on the possibility of "decreasing" nuclear destruction by the strategic defence initiative (SDI).

Zare said considering the large amount of illegal "white powder" flowing in and out of the U.S., he

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does not have much faith in the U.S. immigration stopping the smuggling of nuclear weapons into the country when their size decreases, which will inevitably happen.

Speaking in a half-filled auditorium in the Dunn Science building at Dalhousie, Zare discussed the current policy in the U.S. on producing Directed Energy Weapons (DEW) for the "Star Wars" program.

DEWs use lasers to stop or change the course of incoming ballistic missiles, thereby in theory protecting the U.S. from much of the Soviet ballistic weaponry.

Zare talked about the general issues surrounding SDI, including the reaction of the science community to increased SDI research.

Zare said one U.S. scientist gave the SDI initiative a "D" for its performance. "It is destabilizing dumb, and damned expensive," said the Harvard University scientist Zare quoted.

Speaking on the role of SDI in U.S. military research, Zare said the SDI program was in place

before the Reagan administration announced an increase in SDI research, and that research will continue on SDI, even if the present government is replaced. "There are other military objectives," he said.

These other objectives include using directed energy weapons on other satellites, and directing the laser beams onto earth targets.

Zare talked on the recent history of nuclear politics, giving a Reader's Digest version of the nuclear numbers game. "In nuclear weapons, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are basically the same," said Zare.

He said the present system gives 90 per cent effectiveness as the target reliability for the SDI system. This would mean as few as 14 ballistic missiles would hit their target in North America, Zare said.

Zare admitted that these numbers did not include such possibilities as low-flying missiles, and many other ways of sending nuclear weapons.

The findings of Zare's study group on DEW weapons found

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Zare described the simple mathematics of DEW research, which he said involves rethinking many of the present concepts in laser technology.

Most of the members of the audience were people from the chemistry department, which held the event as their memorial lecture.

A member of the chemistry faculty said because the lecture was on a Sunday, and because the media did not well publicize the event, there was a low turnout.



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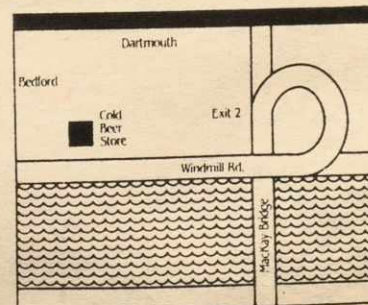
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