

# Star Wars not enough, House panel told

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WASHINGTON — As the Pentagon presses ahead with its trillion-dollar plan to build a Star Wars missile shield, defense officials have told Congress the Soviets are stepping up their efforts to deliver nuclear weapons underneath the shield.

Citing a possible threat posed by low-flying Soviet bombers and cruise missiles, the Pentagon says it may have to significantly increase spending for air defenses. One estimate has put the cost as high as \$50 billion.

"The steadily increasing numbers and quality of Soviet long-range bombers and cruise missiles, coupled with advanced penetration technologies, have significantly increased the ... threat to North America," Air Force Lt. Gen. James Abrahamson told the House Appropriations Committee defense subcommittee, according to newly released testimony.

Bombers and cruise missiles launched from planes and submarines fly too close to Earth to be detected by the proposed Star Wars network of sensors and weapons, Abrahamson, who heads

the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization that is developing the missile shield, said the United States must invest in an "air defense initiative" to thwart attacks that might be launched underneath the Star Wars umbrella.

He said the Soviet emphasis on bombers and cruise missiles could have been sparked by the Pentagon's efforts to deploy a Star Wars system, but is more likely the result of "steady advances in low-observable and cruise missile technologies."

Abrahamson, responding to written questions from the House

panel, acknowledged that if Star Wars succeeds, the Soviets will be pushed to develop systems that can more easily evade Star Wars.

But Robert Duncan, the Pentagon's director of defense research and engineering, said the application of radar-evading "stealth" technology to Soviet planes and missiles will make them more difficult to detect. "I must emphasize that maintaining our capabilities against an advanced threat will be difficult," he said. "We don't know the answers today."

Like Star Wars, the proposed lower-altitude defense system

would consist of layered defenses, with initial attacks on Soviet bombers and submarines occurring before they launched their weapons. The Pentagon already has invested more than \$500 million in its Teal Ruby experiment to assess the feasibility of putting heat-detection devices on satellites that could track aircraft across wide expanses of the globe.

Spending for the air defense program quadrupled from \$50 million in the 1988 budget to about \$200 million in the 1989 budget. The Pentagon has refused to release an estimated total cost.