



Clinton Poised to Tap NSF Director?

The Clinton Administration appears ready at last to nominate a director of the National Science Foundation (NSF); NSF officials say an announcement could come this week. Topping the list of candidates to be vetted by the president on his return from Asia, sources say, is physicist Neal F. Lane, provost of Rice University. Rice officials note that the *Hous-*

ton Chronicle is reporting that Lane is "likely" to be nominated NSF director. When contacted by *Science*, Lane declined to comment.

Lane, 54, received his Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma and has focused on theoretical atomic and molecular physics at Rice, except for a stint as director of NSF's physics division (1979-1980), and 4 years (1984-1986) as chancellor of the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs.

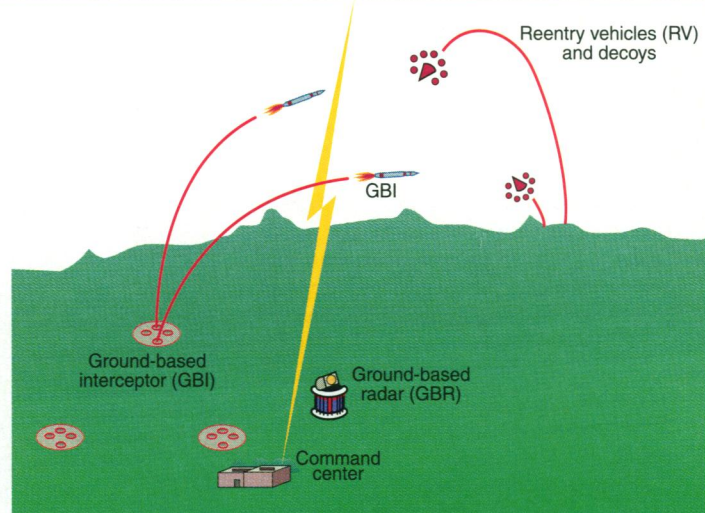
Researchers Win Data Network Reprieve

To many scientists, it looked like the end of a favorite perk: Earlier this year, congressmen introduced bills that would force most researchers off the NSFNet "backbone," the high-capacity computer network over which thousands of researchers chatter every day. But now, after much carping, scientists may have won a reprieve.

The bills, intended to encourage private investment in networks, would force all but the most data-intensive researchers off NSFNet in 18 months (*Science*, 21 May, p. 1064). But legislators appear to have had a change of heart. Late last month, Representative Rick Boucher (D-VA) deleted the 18-month deadline from his bill before it passed the House science committee. In its place, Boucher inserted a provision that

would give the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) 6 months to recommend a timetable for the transition. An aide to Senator Ernest Hollings (D-SC) says the senator intends to change his bill similarly. Both bills are expected to get White House support because they incorporate data-highway language that Vice President Al Gore authored last year as a senator.

No word yet on how long the breather might last, but research groups hope OSTP will recommend at least 3 years. Aside from having to pay for a free ride, research groups cite other concerns about early privatization: Companies don't have the necessary hardware in place, commercial prices are still too high, and it may take years to modify network routers to discriminate between paying and nonpaying e-mail.



SOURCE: BMDO ILLUSTRATION: D. DEFRANCESCO

Future "Star Wars"? U.S. and Russian scientists are planning joint research on space-based sensors (Brilliant Eyes) and other technologies.

U.S., Russia Consider Global Defense Network

One of the more fanciful visions of the Reagan era during the early 1980s called for Americans and Russians to some day jointly build and run a space-based "Star Wars" defense against ballistic missiles. Well, that starry-eyed reverie may not have been so fantastic after all: U.S. and Russian scientists now intend to conduct joint Star Wars research, if their governments endorse the plan.

A few things have changed since Reagan first talked about his Star Wars dream. The Soviet Union has collapsed. The Pentagon has renamed the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization, the

force behind Star Wars, the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO). And BMDO officials, struggling to find their post-cold war niche, have found an unlikely ally in the Russians. "None of us felt this would happen," says BMDO's technology deputy, Simon Worden, but it has.

BMDO had its first taste of Russian defense technology last spring, when it purchased the Russian-built Topaz II nuclear reactor for testing as a spacecraft propulsion system. Now BMDO and the Russian Ministry of Defense want to work toward a "Global Defense Network." Worden says BMDO has identified three areas of joint research: space-based sensors, a collection of satellites for "global and ecological security," neutral particle beams and lasers, which Worden says the Russians "in some cases are years, if not decades, ahead of us"; and computer modeling for "global security regime operations." The experiments would cost a few tens of millions of dollars, Worden says.

Worden says he hopes to get joint experiments off the ground in 2 years. Russian Minister of Science Boris Saltykov, in a recent speech, echoed those goals. The next step is up to Clinton—and that's where BMDO may run into trouble. Says one administration official, "We still don't know what direction we want to take with BMDO."

Intrigue Grows Around Redfield Report

While the U.S. Army has yet to publicly announce its verdict, military officials are spreading the word within the ranks that Robert Redfield of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research has been exonerated of charges that he "overstated" the value of an AIDS vaccine he tested in HIV-infected people (*Science*, 2 July, p. 19). Because these officials are refusing to discuss details of the investigation with Redfield's co-workers, some scientists are alleging that the Army's investigation failed to dig below the surface: "It's a whitewash," claims one Redfield colleague who insists on remaining anonymous. An Army spokesman denies there's a whitewash afoot and says Redfield is not allowed to comment at this point.

The charges against Redfield were based on a presentation he gave at the 1992 international AIDS conference in Amsterdam on a therapeutic AIDS vaccine made by MicroGeneSys Inc. Last October, the Army launched its investigation after receiving a for-

mal complaint from military researchers (*Science*, 6 November 1992, p. 883), several of whom were interviewed during the inquiry. But unlike the Public Health Service's Office of Research Integrity, the Army failed to provide complainants with a draft investigatory report. This has led several scientists to charge that the Army plans to clear Redfield without revealing its reasoning.

Charges from anonymous scientists are hardly conclusive. But there is evidence the military hopes to keep the investigation tightly under wraps. In March, a Walter Reed investigator told *Science* that an Army lawyer said the military would try to "block" a request from this magazine for details regarding the case. Then in May, 3 months after *Science* had filed a Freedom of Information Act request, the Army told *Science* that it had never received it. Military attorneys now are evaluating a second request to see what, if anything, they must release.