

Las Vegas Review-Journal 3

ANTI-MISSILE

Test Ray Gun

CPYRGHT

At Nevada Site

Work on a mysterious anti-missile light ray gun, which has been going on since last December, is expected to be accelerated in the next few months as a result of a Congressional investigation. It was revealed here Monday. The project, one developed by the Air Force, is being conducted at Watertown, on the northern edge of the AEC Test Site.

The Air Force, according to testimony before the Congressional committee, had dropped active work on the project. However, from reports from the Test Site indicate that all work has not been halted and Edgerton, Gernshausen and Grier has been conducting continuing tests at the site.

Existence of the space-age project was revealed when the House space committee published closed-door testimony taken last February. Chairman Overton Brooks (D-La.) told a reporter the gun would use light rays to explode incoming enemy missiles.

Joseph V. Charyk, assistant Air Force secretary, conceded in the testimony that one government committee of civilian scientists recommended going ahead with the project. But he said a second group urged an overall study of the "uncertainties" in missile defense.

The project was proposed by the Varo company of Dallas, Tex. Rep. Olin Teague (D-Tex.), a committee member, said the Air Force dropped plans for a \$6,400,000 ray gun facility at Yucca Flats, and an additional \$2,900,000 for research during the current fiscal year.

Rep. Brooks told United Press International he felt the proposed ray gun should be further investigated "to see

whether there is anything worthwhile in it." Rep. Teague said the anti-missile system was the sum on a mirror to set fire to a leaf."

Teague reported that the project was vetoed by Dr. Jack P. Ruina, a deputy to Charyk.

An Air Force official, while agreeing that the project was cancelled, said funds for a general study of anti-missile warfare had been substantially increased.

Charyk told the committee the project was abandoned only after the second advisory committee recommended an overall study of "major technical" problems encountered in missile defense. He said this is what the Air Force is doing.

The administration's budget for the coming fiscal year — which begins July 1 — carries approximately \$100,000,000 for Project Defender, consisting of a large number of missile defense studies.

Charyk said the Air Force considered the ray gun proposal premature, until we had pinned down, in a better fashion, some of the technical uncertainties."

Rep. James M. Quigley (D-Pa.), also a committee member, said Congress had approved the money for the radiation defense system "but that somewhere along the line someone, or a few persons, have just said 'Let's not. Let's wait awhile.'"

Quigley described the project as a "gamble, a calculated risk." But he insisted this was "one of those areas where maybe we ought to take a gamble."

The Air Force, in a release to the Review-Journal, admitted that work still was progressing on the performance of various radar studies at Watertown since December, 1950, but described the activity as "highly secretive."