

STANFORD AND THE STANFORD RESEARCH INSTITUTE
--The Stanford-SRI Coalition

The Stanford Research Institute was set up in 1946 as a "wholly owned subsidiary of Stanford University. Stanford is, therefore, responsible for all the Institute's activities. These activities include:

1. Research in chemical and biological warfare and research in developing and testing dissemination techniques for a variety of chemical warfare agents.
2. Research in counterinsurgency operations, mapping and surveillance, feasibility of U.S. participation in "limited wars," and other research which interferes with the political and economic development of overseas countries.

In allowing research in such areas as CBW and counterinsurgency, is Stanford acting according to the moral and social values which are supposed to guide universities? Is the research at SRI restricted according to its value to society? Does the argument for "academic freedom" in research hold up when the uses to which research findings are applied are considered?

An investigation into university conducted military research raises two basic questions:

1. What is the true value of the vast proliferation of U.S. military technology? Is it necessary or beneficial? Does it contribute to the future peace and stability of the world?
2. What is the nature of the academic enterprise, and how can the university best serve the interests of human society?

A university committee is presently studying the relationship of SRI to Stanford University. In April the committee will submit its proposal. There are basically four possible recommendations for the Stanford-SRI structure.

1. The first possibility would be to leave the relationship between Stanford and SRI unchanged. According to Seymour Hersh, "University officials tend to describe their research institutes as non-profit research organizations that exist separately with different staff and budgets. Therefore it is argued restrictions on classified research that might ordinarily have some validity for the university proper have no place in a research affiliate. But since many grad students and faculty serve both as researchers and staff at the institutes and as members of the University, this seems to be a case of the officials wanting the best of both possible worlds." How does this commentary relate to SRI? Hersh has the following account of the status of SRI: "In 1967 a study noted that the General Accounting Office once accused SRI of attempting to defraud it of \$250,000 by charging the government had donated to Stanford University and which the University had later given to SRI. The GAO, in presenting its case, said 'that the Institute had acknowledged the close ties with Stanford University are clear cut and unmistakable as evidenced by the fact that the trustees of the University are general members of the Institute and elect the Institute's Board of Directors.' The Accounting Office added that 'the trustees of Stanford (themselves directors of such top military contractors as General Dynamics, Lockheed and FMC), acting as general members of the Institute and as electors of the directors of the Institute, are in a position to exercise control of the Institute as well as of the University."

The intimate connections between Stanford and SRI become clearer when one realizes that the following trustees are also directors of SRI: Ernest Arbuckle, Morris Doyle, William Palmer Fuller, Richard Guggenlime, Thomas Jones, Thomas Pike, Henry Symonds, and previously David Packard. Also, fifty-three Stanford faculty members consult at SRI. The ties between Stanford and SRI are clearly evident. To continue the relationship as it exists now would mean continuing to allow SRI to draw from the immense pool of talented personnel and resources available because of the University, and CBW and counterinsurgency work could continue unchecked at SRI. Stanford would continue to be neither a purely academic place nor a socially responsible institution.

2. Another proposal would recommend that the University sever ties with the Institute, leaving SRI as an autonomous institution. The effect of severance would be twofold. One, severance would relieve the University of its responsibility for the research conducted at SRI and the possible applications and effects of that work. There is, however, no indication that SRI as an independent body would redirect its operations toward more creative and humane goals; severance, therefore, would seem to be one step in a chain of abdications of responsibility which leaves no one accountable for the work done at SRI. Two, the disaffiliation of SRI might present a real loss to the University, for Stanford would no longer have access to the resources at the Institute. The example of severance of the Cornell Aeronautical Lab from Cornell illustrates that the sale of a university research establishment can have negative ramifications of an unpredictable magnitude. A further consideration which can be suggested only tentatively is the negative effect which severance would have on the possibility of redirecting the work of individual scientists by providing alternative research projects which are constructive rather than destructive.

3. A third alternative would be to sell the Institute under a restrictive covenant which would restrict and police the research done there. Presently there is no institution or body which is directly accountable for the work conducted at SRI. Sale with a restrictive covenant would make the courts responsible for enforcing the restrictions on research. This might in some ways be the most satisfactory solution, for it allows the university to regain its status as a purely academic institution, while at the same time imposing research guidelines for SRI. There is, however, the question of whether it is a practical solution. There is no precedent for this method of disaffiliation, and it is unlikely that the courts would take the responsibility for the surveillance of the Institute and for setting the necessary guidelines. Enforcement of the guidelines might ultimately involve lawsuits and court battles. Furthermore, the number of buyers who would be interested in a research institute with restrictive guidelines prescribed is surely limited.

4. The final possible solution is to integrate the Institute more closely with the University. The University would then be accepting its responsibility for the use of its resources, and SRI could become subject to the moral and social values of the University which encourage research which is morally and socially desirable. The Institute could concentrate its operations in such areas as pollution, population control, urban problems, education, disease control, ecology, etc. The integration of the Institute and the University would allow a strong complementary role to exist between Stanford and SRI which would benefit both Stanford faculty and students and also the employees of SRI. The pooling of human and structural resources could result in quality research which would contribute to the improvement of human society.

The SRI COALITION is a group of faculty, students, and members of the Stanford community who are opposed to the research being conducted at SRI in chemical and biological warfare and counterinsurgency. We consider research of this nature to be antithetical to the stated objective of SRI, to "serve the public interest through performance of research to improve the standard of living and the peace and prosperity of mankind." We further challenge the fact that "there is no institutional policy which provides for rejection of research projects from legally established bodies, including the Department of Defense, on the basis of moral judgments concerning the nature of the work or the client's function." We recommend that measures be taken to bring SRI under closer regulation by the University and that no contracts in CBW or counterinsurgency be renewed or accepted by SRI.

For further information on the SRI Coalition, call 326-2745 or 321-7858.