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SOVIET STRATEGIC AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSES

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the capabilities and limitations of Soviet strategic air and missile defense forces through mid-1967, and general trends in these forces through 1975.

CONCLUSIONS

A. Confronted by powerful Western strategic attack forces, the USSR is sustaining its vigorous effort to strengthen its defenses. We believe that the Soviets are responding to those challenges to their security that they can now see or foresee from aircraft, ballistic missiles, and earth satellites. (*Paras. 1-5*)

Air Defenses

B. The Soviets have achieved a formidable capability against aircraft attacking at medium and high altitudes, but their air defense system probably is still susceptible to penetration by stand-off weapons and low-altitude tactics. The Soviets probably foresee little reduction in the bomber threat over the next ten years. To meet this challenge, they are improving their warning and control systems and are changing the character of their interceptor force through the introduction of new high-performance, all-weather aircraft. In addition, there are recent indications that the Soviets are now employing light AAA in some areas for low-altitude defense. (*Paras. 3, 4, 8-19*)

C. The Soviets probably will continue to improve and to rely on the SA-2 as the principal SAM system. We believe that they will develop an improved or new SAM system for low altitude defense; such a system would probably be deployed more extensively than the SA-3. Deployment of a long-range SAM system probably is now

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underway in the northwestern USSR and probably will be extended to other peripheral areas and to some key urban locations in the interior.^{1 2} (Paras. 20-26)

Ballistic Missile Defenses

D. For nearly ten years, the Soviets have given high priority to research and development of antimissile defenses. We estimate that they have now begun to deploy such defenses at Moscow. These defenses could probably achieve some capability as early as 1967, but we think a more likely date for an initial operational capability is 1968. We do not yet know the performance characteristics of this system, or how it will function. (Paras. 27-34)

E. The Soviets will almost certainly continue with their extensive effort to develop ballistic missile defenses to counter the increasingly sophisticated threat that will be posed by US strategic missile forces. We cannot now estimate with confidence the scale or timing of future Soviet ABM deployment. We believe, however, that the Soviets will deploy ABM defenses for major urban-industrial areas. By 1975, they could deploy defenses for some 20 to 30 areas containing a quarter of the Soviet population and more than half of Soviet industry. (Paras. 36-37)

Antisatellite Defenses

F. The Soviets could already have developed a limited antisatellite capability based on an operational missile with a nuclear warhead and existing electronic capabilities. We have no evidence that they have

¹ Lieutenant General Joseph F. Carroll, USAF Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, Major General John J. Davis, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, US Army, and Major General Jack E. Thomas, Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, US Air Force, believe that the many uncertainties stemming from analysis of available evidence does not permit a confident judgment as to the specific mission of the new defensive systems being deployed in northwest USSR. They acknowledge that available evidence does support a conclusion that the sites in the northwest may be intended for defense against the aerodynamic threat. However, on balance, considering all the evidence, they believe it is more likely that the systems being deployed at these sites are primarily for defense against ballistic missiles.

² Rear Admiral Rufus L. Taylor, Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy, and Lieutenant General Marshall S. Carter, USA, Director, National Security Agency, do not concur in the degree of confidence reflected in this judgment. Although they concur that the deployment activity is more likely a long range SAM system than an ABM system, they believe that the evidence at this time is such that a confident judgment is premature.

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done so. In any event, we believe that the Soviets would prefer to have a system which could track foreign satellites more accurately and permit the use of non-nuclear kill mechanisms. We estimate that the Soviets will have an operational capability with such a system within the next few years. We believe, however, that the Soviets would attack a US satellite in peacetime only if, along with a strong desire for secrecy, they were willing for other reasons to greatly disrupt East-West relations.³ (Paras. 38-41)

³ Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the Soviets would conclude that the adverse consequences of destroying or damaging US satellites in peacetime would outweigh the advantages of such an action. He therefore believes it highly unlikely that they would attack US satellites in peacetime.

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