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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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(310) DEFENSE-INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, MARCH 27 (AP)-AMERICA'S TOP DEFENSE OFFICIALS STRONGLY DEFENDED SHIFTING INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES AS AN EFFORT TO MAKE THE BEST USE POSSIBLE OF INFORMATION ON SOVIET MILITARY RIGTH.

REP. GEORGE H. MAHON, D-TEX., CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE, WARNED, NEVERTHELESS, HE WOULD "NOT LET UP FOR ONE MINUTE" ANY POSSIBILITY THAT INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION HAD BEEN TAILORED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES.

HIGHLY CENSORED TESTIMONY MADE PUBLIC TODAY BY THE SUBCOMMITTEE HAD MAHON AND REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH., CLOSELY QUESTIONING SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT S. MCNAHARA AND GEN. LYMAN L. LEMNITZER, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, ABOUT CHARGES INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION HAD BEEN RIGGED.

FORD SAID PENTAGON ESTIMATES APPEARED TO SHOW A "MISSILE GAP" COMPARED WITH THE SOVIET UNION ONE YEAR AND U.S. WEAPONS SUPERIORITY 12 MONTHS LATER.

"COULD THERE BE ANY POSSIBILITY OF THEM BEING RIGGED?" ASKED MAHON.

"I SEE NO SUCH POSSIBILITY WHATSOEVER," REPLIED LEMNITZER. "I KNOW THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED AND I KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. I AM CONVINCED OF THIS, AS A MATTER OF FACT."

LEMNITZER ADDED, "THE ESTIMATES THAT I HAVE BEEN PRESENTED ARE THE ESTIMATES OF THE U.S. INTELLIGENCE BOARD, AS THEY WERE LAST YEAR, AND TO BE HERE THOSE PRESENTED BY MY PREDECESSORS, AND AS WILL BE THOSE THAT WILL BE PRESENTED BY THE SERVICES."

MCNAHARA ADDED THAT IN AREAS NOT COVERED BY THIS JOINT INTELLIGENCE BOARD HE HAD RELIED ON SPECIALIZED MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AND PROJECTED IT SEVERAL YEARS INTO THE FUTURE.

"...WE MUST BETTER USE ALL THE INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING TECHNIQUES WE CAN. OTHERWISE THE RELIABILITY OF THESE FIGURES HAVE LITTLE OR NO VALUE AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED," FORD SAID.

LATER, GEN. FREDERIC W. SMITH JR., AIR FORCE VICE CHIEF OF STAFF, WAS QUESTIONED ABOUT THE CHANGE IN ESTIMATES OF RUSSIAN MISSILE STRENGTH.

HE SAID THE CHANGE IN ESTIMATES DID NOT REFLECT ANY LESSENING OF SOVIET CAPABILITY.

"THEY ARE NOT AS GOOD AS WE USED TO THINK THEY WERE," HE SAID. "IT IS A RECOGNITION THAT THEY ARE NOT AS GOOD AS WE USED TO THINK THEY WOULD BE."