

JAN 11 1967

Anti-Missile Decision to Be Delayed

By George C. Wilson
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Johnson has decided the United States can safely give diplomacy a try before plunging into building an anti-missile system.

This decision, disclosed in his State of the Union Message last night, is backed by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara but opposed by military leaders.

McNamara has been saying the multi-billion-dollar anti-missile project can be delayed a while longer; the Pentagon's Joint Chiefs of Staff contend the time has come to cut metal.

A big reason for the conflict is the argument within the U.S. Government over what the Russians are up to in missile defense.

White House officials last night said their reading of intelligence information is

that Russia is not now placing anti-missiles anywhere except in or near Moscow.

Military leaders and many Pentagon civilian research chiefs have a far different interpretation. They believe Russia is firmly embarked on an anti-missile defense for whole areas of the country, not just a few cities.

One military intelligence report asserts that Russia is placing anti-missiles across the paths U.S. ICBMs and Polaris missiles would have to travel to hit Soviet targets.

President Johnson is under considerable congressional pressure to move ahead on Nike X. He obviously is hoping Llewellyn E. Thompson, just starting his second tour as U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, can negotiate an agreement with the Russians that would forestall the need for Nike X production.

Waiting for diplomatic soundings also enables the President to keep extra Nike X funding out of his Fiscal 1968 budget — at least for a while.

The Pentagon estimates it would cost \$3 billion to \$6 bil-

lion to produce and install a thin Nike X defense around the U.S.—one good enough to stop early Chinese missiles. A full defense against more sophisticated Soviet ICBMs would cost about \$40 billion, including fallout shelters.