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BACKUP #4

20 February 1960

WHY DOES RATE OF ICBM PRODUCTION FALL OFF IN LATER YEARS?

A. The pace-setting factors in this program are construction of launching facilities, activation and training of units, and establishment of logistic support.

1. In this year's analysis we concentrated on these factors, which are represented by missiles on launcher.

2. Complete new weapon system -- not like replacing one type of aircraft ^{at} ~~in~~ an established ~~base~~ ^{base} with another type.

B. In the low side of our bracket, the number of ICBMs on launcher increases at a virtually constant rate (about 9 per month) after peak rate is reached in the latter part of 1960.

1. A new launcher, with associated facilities, is activated every 3 or 4 days for about 2 1/2 years.

2. This is a vigorous program, requiring effective planning, operations, and coordination.

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C. In the high side of our bracket, 13 launchers are activated per month at peak rate in an early "push", but in 1962 this rate drops back to about the level of the low side.

D. These schedules are consistent with:

1. Conclusion in the estimate that the Soviet ICBM program, while not a "crash" program, is designed to achieve a substantial capability at an early date.

2. Soviets may consider that a rapid ICBM buildup would give them, in about 1961, a considerable political, psychological and military advantage.

3. After about that time, increasing hardness of US fixed bases, Polaris and Minuteman, and warning and alert capabilities, will bring steep increase in Soviet ICBM requirements and hence diminishing return from each additional ICBM of the performance characteristics we estimate for them.

E. It is true that the figures in the estimate imply a falling-off in missile production rates.

1. As the ICBM system matures, fewer missiles will be needed in inventory to support a given number on launcher.

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2. In our analysis, we satisfied ourselves that production of missiles would be sufficient to support the buildup to about 1961, and then let missile production for operational purposes vary in accordance with the launcher activation rates I described above.

3. Actually, we allowed minimum additional production of 20 percent for proof testing, major maintenance, training and attrition, and did not estimate the number of additional missiles that might be produced for further R&D or for use in space program.

F. In the years beyond 1961, we deliberately rounded the totals so that the on launcher figures would be a bracket of an even 100 (250-350 in mid-62, 350-450 in mid-63).

1. This was to give a general idea of where the majority of the USIB believed the totals might fall in 1962 and 1963.

2. This more general treatment is in accordance with our conclusion that the course of the Soviet program

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after about 1961 is subject to many variables and
must be constantly reviewed by intelligence.

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