

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Jesse Helms
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Jesse:

The President has asked me to respond to your letters of April 25, 1985 and October 2, 1985. I am impressed with the candor of the answers that have been prepared and hope that you will find them useful and persuasive. (C)

The President came into office deeply disturbed by the dangerous weakening of intelligence capabilities during the 1970s and concerned that too often assessments of Soviet objectives and military programs were insufficiently rigorous. (S)

The Administration has devoted high priority and sizable resources to the rebuilding of the Intelligence Community. From the outset, I took as one of my principal priorities the improvement of the quality of analysis. Many far-reaching steps to that end have been taken in the last five years, ranging from a reorganization of the analytical component to more rigorous evaluation of analysts and monitoring of their performance, detailed review of analysts' drafts by senior managers and experts outside CIA, much greater emphasis on highlighting minority or controversial points of view, and a premium on close contact with those in think tanks, universities and business with contrary views or who question conventional wisdom. (S)

I believe that improvements in intelligence collection combined with dramatic and sometimes drastic measures to improve analysis have in fact significantly improved the quality of intelligence now available to the Administration compared to when the President assumed office. The President and the National Security Council members have been briefed regularly on Soviet strategic force developments by Intelligence Community officers and have found the assessments tough-minded, realistic and very professional. Similarly, the Intelligence Community's contribution to the Administration's deliberations on Soviet non-compliance with arms control and analysis of the Soviet approach to arms control have been impressive. In short, the President

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has more direct knowledge than many of his predecessors of CIA's and the Intelligence Community's work on the Soviet Union and has been deeply impressed by the improvement in the last several years. He is proud of the role the Administration and the Congress has played in this improvement. (S)

As you will see from the answers to your questions, you have been given incorrect information on a number of points. While during the 1960s and early 1970s the Intelligence Community underestimated the prospective future size of Soviet strategic offensive forces and in the mid-70s CIA underestimated Soviet defense expenditures, the Community correctly forecast many developments relating to Soviet strategic weapons. More to the point of your concerns about CIA, I would particularly draw your attention to the listing on pp. 4-5 of the many instances where CIA was out in front of the Intelligence Community in recognizing the growing Soviet strategic threat.

While I consider it a high priority to continue improving the strength of our counterintelligence capabilities, the need for which recent events has clearly illustrated, I am disturbed by the inferences in your letter of disloyalty at CIA. I have seen no evidence to support charges that past analysis has been affected by pro-Soviet bias or by penetrations. Moreover, we have devoted unprecedented efforts and resources to examine possibilities for Soviet deception. When there were errors in the past, I believe they were due to shortcomings in leadership at various levels of CIA, lack of resources and the attitudes of policymakers -- including the nature of their questions and tasking. Suggestions that past shortcomings were due to a pro-Soviet bias or worse are unjustified and unwarranted. All Americans can and should be proud of the extraordinary loyalty and dedication of the men and women of CIA. (S)

Sincerely,

William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence

Enclosures:
As Stated

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR 2 OCTOBER 1985 LETTER
FROM SENATOR HELMS

Question 1: Why does the CIA produce single-source analysis of Soviet and Communist Chinese open publications such as is done by Foreign Broadcast Information Service?

Answer: FBIS from its inception, when it successfully applied propaganda analysis techniques to Nazi broadcasts, has engaged in the systematic analysis of totalitarian government propaganda organs, particularly Soviet and Chinese media. The premise underlying its methodology is that such media are highly controlled, purposive, and sensitive political instruments. Close and rigorous examination of changes and anomalies in the behavior of these instruments over the years has yielded significant insights into the policies and politics of the countries involved. The kind of rigorous scrutiny of the media that is required is a full-time, specialized occupation, and the insights derived from it provide corroborative evidence for use in all-source analysis.

Directorate of Intelligence analysts use in their all-source work the same open-source data available to FBIS media analysts. They find it helpful to have comprehensive coverage and analysis of the open-source material gathered in one place and well organized for them. They weigh the results of FBIS analysis against their own translations and interpretations of the same data and against other, classified data.

Question 2: Is there an internal CIA review process to identify possible pro-Soviet bias in published unclassified or classified analytical products?

Answer: There has been in recent years an intensive internal review process with a view to overall improvement of CIA's analytical process as well as to weed out analyst bias of any variety. First, every piece of finished intelligence intended for readers outside of CIA is reviewed by an analyst's branch chief, division chief and office director. Moreover, all drafts are reviewed by the Deputy Director for Intelligence before being released for publication. Beyond this review, there has been a high priority placed in recent years on having draft papers reviewed by outside experts wherever possible, and particularly those who have a different view from CIA's or who are likely to be critical to ensure that all points of view have been considered.

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Finally, at the beginning of 1985, the Deputy Director for Intelligence created a Military Advisory Panel comprised of outside experts with the purpose of subjecting CIA's work on military/strategic issues to the sternest possible test of realism and criticism.

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This Panel not only meets with the analyst directly after examining a draft paper but also sends its comments directly to the DDI to inform his review of the paper.

In addition, national estimates on strategic matters are prepared by the entire Intelligence Community, are often reviewed by outside specialists and are evaluated in draft by the Director's Senior Review Panel, which always includes at least one senior retired military officer.

In sum, in recent years, CIA has developed the most intensive internal review process in its history designed to ensure the most realistic, objective and high quality assessments possible, as well as to weed out analyst or other individual bias.

Question 3: Was the attached article mentioned above screened to detect its possible pro-Soviet bias? If not, why not? If so, why was it published under the official imprimatur of the CIA?

Answer: The review of Professor Godson's book in Studies in Intelligence was reviewed by that publication's board of editors prior to publication. For nearly 30 years, Studies in Intelligence has provided a forum for members of the Intelligence Community to offer personal views, historical retrospectives, and address controversial issues. In the past it has served at times as the only vehicle for the expression of minority or controversial points of view.

The cover of the document states that "All opinions expressed in the Studies are those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the official views of the Central Intelligence Agency or any other component of the Intelligence Community." Many in the Agency disagreed with the book review you have cited; some felt that it was also too personal.

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In sum, the book review was the personal opinion of a writer who does not prepare finished intelligence for the policy community and it did not represent the view of CIA as an institution.

Question 4: Is there a possible pro-Soviet bias in many CIA products over the past 20 years?

Question 7: Could a possible pro-Soviet bias have played a role in the prolonged and worsening CIA under-estimates of Soviet strategic forces in the 1960s and 1970s?

Question 13: Has the CIA consistently under-estimated Soviet global objectives and misunderstood Soviet arms control objectives?

Answer: The question of "CIA" underestimates of Soviet strategic forces in the 60's and 70's and what biases and misunderstandings were involved is a mixture of fact and fiction. It is imperative to remember, for example, that these estimates were not the estimates of CIA alone but of the entire American Intelligence Community including the Defense Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, and the intelligence organizations of the Military Services (although individual services from time to time disagreed on specific weapon systems. The NIEs of the 1960s did, in fact, consistently underestimate the prospective future size of Soviet strategic offensive forces. In retrospect, these underestimates appear to have reflected a mistaken belief that the Soviets would limit their deployments to avoid triggering further expansion of US offensive forces. The estimators failed to appreciate the depth of Soviet determination to overcome weaknesses that contributed to their humiliation in the Cuban missile crisis. They failed to realize that Europe and Asia affected Soviet planning for ICBMs, a number of which were deployed as Eurasian as well as intercontinental targeting options. They failed to appreciate adequately, particularly in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Soviet belief that they had an opportunity to acquire strategic superiority over the United States and their determination to achieve it. Finally, the estimators probably overcompensated for the gross overestimates in the 1950s and early 1960s -- the bomber and missile gaps.

In the 1970s, particularly after the SALT I agreement, the track record of American Intelligence also was mixed. The Intelligence Community underestimated the pace of Soviet submarine construction. CIA also underestimated the Soviet defense expenditures.

It is also important to realize, however, that during this same period, the NIEs correctly forecast continued Soviet development of strategic defensive systems and overestimated the success the USSR would have in developing its ballistic missile defenses, advanced low altitude capable fighters and airborne warning control systems. During the 1960s and 1970s, Community estimates of qualitative developments in Soviet strategic weapons were often accurate, although there were overestimates and underestimates on specific issues.

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In sum, CIA and the rest of the US Intelligence Community underestimated Soviet ICBM and SLBM deployments in the 1960s and early 1970s. However, in contrast to conventional wisdom, CIA and the rest of the Community accurately forecast a number of strategic offensive developments during that same period, as well as accurately forecast Soviet intentions with respect to strategic defense. Estimates of major weapons deployments over

the last several years have been accurate or have, on occasion, been over-estimated.

Estimates of Soviet strategic forces since 1973 have given greater attention to Soviet strategic objectives as well as technical developments.

- As early as the 1973 estimate, Soviet Strategic Arms Programs and Detente: What Are they Up To?, the Community stated "We believe the Soviet leadership is currently pursuing a strategic policy it regards as simultaneously prudent and opportunistic. Aimed at assuring no less than a continued maintenance of comprehensive equality with the United States while at the same time seeking the advantage of some degree of strategic advantage if US behavior permits. The Soviets probably believe that unilateral restraints imposed on the United States by its internal problems and skillful Soviet diplomacy offer some prospects that a military advantage can be acquired."
- In 1975-76, the Community concluded that the Soviets were seeking a strategic posture which had some visible and politically useful advantages over the US and would give the USSR better capabilities than the US to fight and survive a nuclear war.
- A CIA publication in 1981 stated that "For more than two decades, the USSR has been engaged in a major buildup of its forces Among the many factors underlying this buildup, the most basic is the attitude of Soviet leaders that military might is a necessary and effective instrument of policy in an inherently unstable world. This attitude has been embodied in and reinforced by an ambitious military doctrine that calls for forces structured to fight and win future conflicts."
- The Community stated in 1984 that "The Soviet leaders are likely to remain attached to expanding their military and international power They are not ready for a form of detente that foreswears expansion of their power."
- Finally, in a 1985 assessment the Community stated "Moscow will not agree to arms control steps that would seriously detract from the key elements of Soviet nuclear strategy/counterforce strikes against enemy nuclear forces and damage limitation Soviets will look to arms control to help slow down US technological development, particularly in areas where they believe themselves to be in a long term technological disadvantage."

Question 5: Is there any evidence of the influence of possible pro-Soviet penetrations, moles or bias in the preparation, analysis and dissemination of intelligence products on the Soviet Union over the past 20 years?

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Question 6: Has any important intelligence analysis or evidence related to the Soviet Union ever been withheld or suppressed within or by CIA? Did any of this intelligence evidence or analysis reveal Soviet deception? What is the counterintelligence significance of the suppression of intelligence on Soviet deception?

Answer: Because of retirements and other departures, we are not in a position today to speak definitively to the question of whether important analysis or evidence relating to the USSR has "ever" been withheld or suppressed within or by CIA. At the same time, we know that on a few occasions in the early-to-mid 1970s, senior policy officials requested -- and the Agency acquiesced in -- the withholding of certain highly sensitive information related to arms control from our routine intelligence publications for periods ranging from several hours to several months. This information was not withheld from intelligence analysts involved in arms control monitoring. Whether the information concerned was made available through other means to senior policy officials outside of the White House at that time is not known to us.

At no time since 1981, and we believe in the period immediately before that, has the Agency withheld from any member of the National Security Council any important intelligence analysis or evidence relating to the Soviet Union.

Over the years there have been repeated instances in which the dissemination of documents has been severely restricted due to the extreme sensitivity of the source material. Particularly as the problem of leaks and other misuse of intelligence has steadily worsened, there is a perceived growing need on the part of senior intelligence officials increasingly to restrict the dissemination of sensitive intelligence information. There are occasions in which only the principals of the National Security Council have received sensitive intelligence information.

In addition, over the years there have been delays in the dissemination of intelligence, including some assessments dealing with possible Soviet deception, because of the need to corroborate evidence, to refine the analysis, or on a few occasions because the analysis was particularly controversial. In virtually every case, this information eventually was disseminated, if only on a limited basis.

There have been no examples of which we are aware in recent years of the suppression of intelligence on Soviet deception. Indeed, the establishment of various organizations throughout the principal intelligence agencies of the Community has created a strong institutional framework aimed at surfacing such information, attracting the greatest possible attention to it on the part of analysts in both the policy and intelligence communities, and in encouraging debate and discussion.

Question 8a: We have recent reports that the CIA: has further down-graded Soviet Backfire bomber range estimates? Are these recent reports correct? Are they best explained by an under-estimative analytical bias, a possible pro-Soviet bias, bureaucratic incompetence, or all of the above?

Answer: The statement is incorrect. CIA estimates of the performance of the Backfire have remained essentially unchanged since 1976. Data analyzed subsequent to 1976 have supported this estimate.

DIA and FTD, however, have recently downgraded their estimates of Backfire performance. Approximately a month ago they announced the results of a reanalysis, based on new data, which now conforms well with CIA's original analysis.

Question 8b: CIA is negatively reassessing evidence of Soviet Biological and Chemical Warfare arms control violations?

Answer: These "recent reports" are incorrect. CIA has never negatively reassessed the evidence bearing on Soviet Biological and Chemical warfare violations. A recent review of such evidence by US intelligence fully supported the original Intelligence Community judgments bearing on Soviet violations through the use of CBW agents.

At the same time, in response to US efforts to publicize the Soviet use of CBW agents, there have recently been fewer reports of such usage in Afghanistan and Laos.

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Question 8e: CIA is denying and down-playing evidence of Soviet Camouflage, Concealment and Deception (Maskirovka)?

Answer: This recent report is incorrect. To the contrary, Soviet efforts at camouflage, concealment and deception are receiving ever greater attention by CIA and the Community. While Intelligence Community work on deception began in recent years with a conference at the Pentagon in 1972 and the first interagency paper on this subject since the late 1950s was prepared in 1975 (and updated at the end of 1978), the fact is that work on Soviet CC&D was not given a strong institutional base until the 1980s.

In the last five years, however, the Intelligence Community has taken a number of steps further to improve its ability to detect and understand the Soviet intelligence denial and deception activity. This effort began with the establishment in DIA, CIA and NSA several years ago of dedicated organizations with the sole objective of investigating Soviet denial and deception activity.

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An NIO for Foreign Denial and Intelligence Activities was established in January 1984, followed a few months later by the Foreign Denial and Deception Analysis Committee -- the first DCI level committee ever established to work on this problem.

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A major initiative was the CIA-sponsored conference bringing together government and non-government experts on Soviet deception in August, 1984. The proceedings of that conference will shortly be published on a classified basis. The Community recently completed the first national intelligence estimate on Soviet denial and deception, dealing with Soviet CC&D techniques more exhaustively than ever before as well as their implications for US security. The Intelligence Community also has established a two-week training course for analysts to sensitize those working on the Soviet Union to the scope and application of Soviet deception activity. Most recently, CIA sponsored with Community and outside participation, a major conference on an element of deception, that is, disinformation.

In sum, in recent years the Community, with CIA and DIA in the lead, has tackled the deception issue more intensively than ever before in its history and has dedicated resources to the examination of this problem that will significantly enhance our knowledge and understanding of it.

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Question 9: Was John Paisley likely to have been a Soviet KGB mole inside the CIA, who may have been assassinated by the KGB in order to protect other CIA moles? What is the best assessment of Paisley's full career and death? Have traces of other CIA moles ever been detected?

Question 10: Are reports that CIA has regressed into continued under-estimation of Soviet military spending correct?

Answer: These reports are incorrect. CIA estimates that the cost of Soviet military activities in dollars were 35% higher than US defense expenditures during the past decade. These estimates, which have grown steadily, reflect the costs of financing the deployment of a new generation of land and sea based missiles, new bombers, the expansion and modernization of air defenses, and the continuation of the heavy procurement of land arms. We also estimate that the Soviets continue to make substantial commitments of resources to military R&D activities. Our estimates of the costs of Soviet space activities show an annual rate of growth of over 15% since 1980.

The finished estimates are widely reviewed inside and outside the Intelligence Community. The DCI's Military Economic Advisory Panel, a panel of experts from academia and industry, regularly reviews these estimates and reports on its findings directly to the DCI. Two years ago the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board convened a special team of experts to conduct a thorough study of all aspects of CIA's Soviet defense

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spending estimates. Neither of these review processes have identified any systematic bias -- either up or down -- in the estimate.

At the same time, we have been trying in recent years to persuade members of both the Executive and Legislative Branches to use estimates of Soviet military spending with much greater care. We have stressed repeatedly in testimony before the Congress and in documents for policymakers that it is the capability of Soviet forces that matters, not what it costs them. We have emphasized that cost estimates have their greatest value as an analytical tool measuring relative levels of emphasis and overall burden over long periods of time. We have reminded users that specific year expenditures are subject to error and that the more current an estimate the greater the likely error.

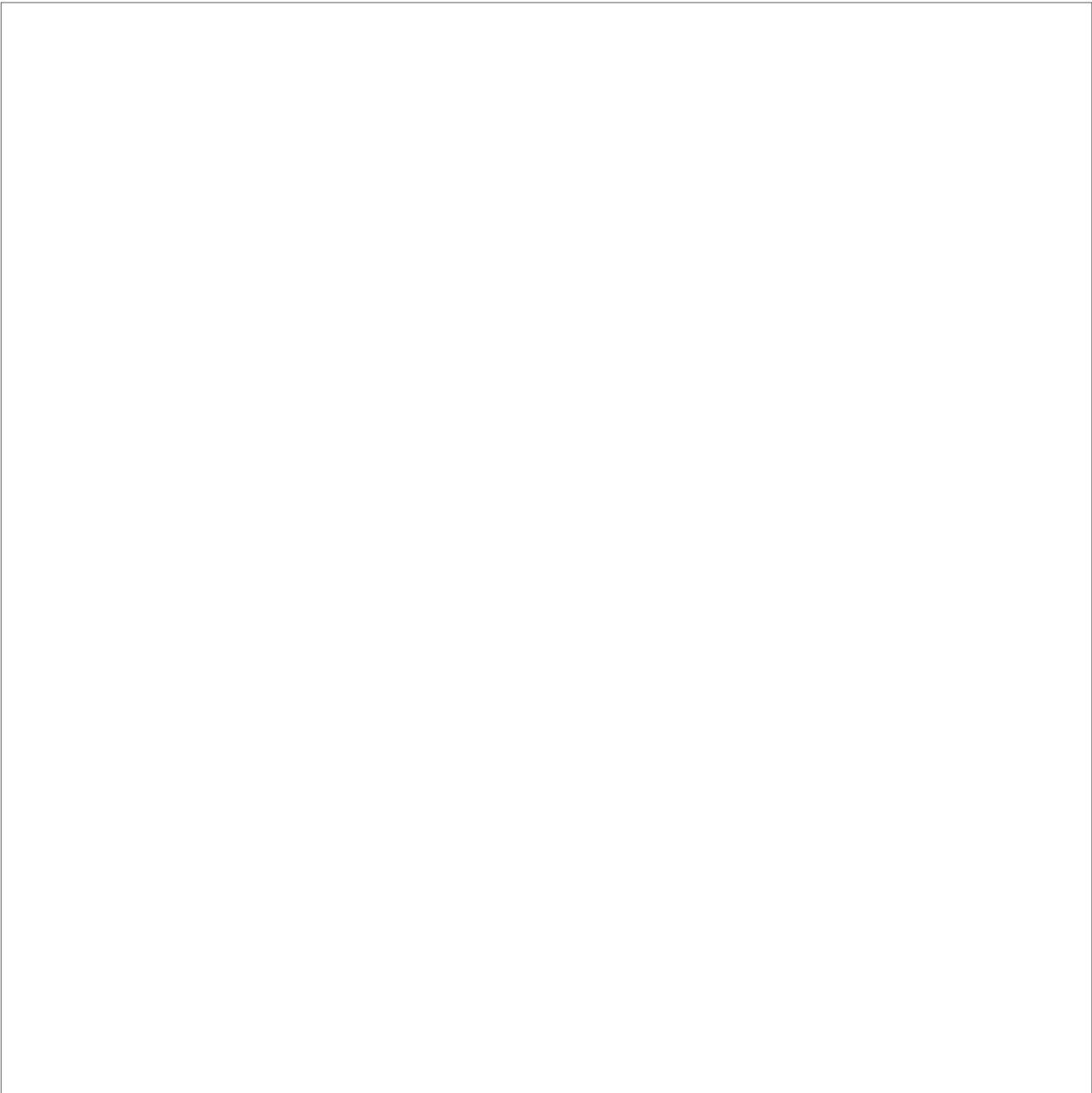
In our most current work, we are endeavoring to make clear the degree to which the level of Soviet expenditures overall for defense depends to a large extent to what categories of effort are included. The categories heretofore counted by CIA and DIA have been purely military and account for some 14-17% of GNP. At the same time, if one adds to that other expenditures such as the cost of supporting their foreign wars and clients, intelligence, and other such activity there is no question but that the figures would be higher.

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Question 14: Can at least five years of the 10 year 1980-1990 U.S. "window of vulnerability" be attributed to under-estimates by CIA of Soviet ICBM accuracies?

Answer: The record of US Intelligence Community estimates of Soviet ICBM accuracy is mixed.

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Although the Intelligence Community misjudged when the Soviets would test MIRVed ICBMs with a hard-target capability, it overestimated the pace at which such systems would be deployed.

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The Intelligence Community between 1976 and 1984 also overestimated the accuracies Soviet ICBMs would achieve in the mid-1980s.

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It is important to add that the growing vulnerability of the US ICBM force to Soviet accuracy improvements was recognized early in the 1970s, perhaps even earlier, and was a principal reason for US interest in more survivable ICBMs.

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