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FOR

PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM

The McLaughlin Group

STATION

WRC-TV

DATE

February 3, 1985 12:00 Noon

CITY

Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT

Soviet Cruise Missile

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN: Issue two: At least into Finland. Remember the Soviet cruise missile that landed mysteriously in Finland a few weeks ago, Mort? The London Daily Express reported this week that the missile had gotten loose from the Russians after they launched it and was headed towards Hamburg, West Germany. So the Soviets sent up jet fighters and they shot the missile down, and it fell to the earth in Finland.

Throughout these events, the Russians kept the Pentagon posted with the hotline. That's what the story said. The Pentagon denied the story. So did the White House. So did the NSC. But on Thursday Caspar Weinberger shocked the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when he said this:

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CASPAR WEINBERGER: The Soviets demonstrated their defense against cruise missiles a couple of days ago when they shot down one of their errant missiles that was on its way at least into Finland.

MCLAUGHLIN: At least into Finland.

After the testimony, the Pentagon called some hurried meetings. Then they sent out a spokesman, who stuck with the original denial and said that Weinberger was confused.

What's going on, Morton?

MORTON KONDRACKE: I know, John, you think that this is the start of World War III, and they hushed it all up. Right? I take that the Pentagon knows what it's talking about, that Cap Weinberger made a mistake, that he was talking about -- he was talking about Soviet capabilities and he got it confused with...

MCLAUGHLIN: You've joined the cover story.

KONDRACKE: Look, the West Germans agreed to that point. The Finns agreed, the Norwegians agreed that there was no sign of Russian scramble...

MCLAUGHLIN: They all decided to hush it up.

ROBERT NOVAK: John, I think one thing about you is any kind of propaganda, you are just like a big old dog. The propaganda comes, and you lump on it.

Don't you understand, when they talk about this, this is disinformation, talking about a cruise missile aimed for Germany, to scare the Nervous Nelly peace bloc in Europe.

Do you know there is no evidence whatsoever that this missile was headed for Germany?

MCLAUGHLIN: Patrick?

PAT BUCHANAN: I don't have anything to contradict what he says.

JACK GERMOND: Bob is right. There is no evidence at all to support taking this whole thing seriously, to tell you the truth.

MCLAUGHLIN: Oh, come one. Look, the number of unreported, underpublicized, even by your new magazine, Newsweek, about errors, particularly computer errors, relating to this sensitive area of nuclear armaments is a scandal. It is a scandal.

KONDRACKE: John, they recovered the missile. The missile was obviously not armed with a warhead. It was a drone missile. It was designed for target practice.

MCLAUGHLIN: They recovered the tail-end of the missile. They don't know that it was a drone.

BUCHANAN: There is something of significance here. The Soviets are developing a look-down, shoot-down radar on their MiG-29 interceptors, which, if it has the capacity to shoot down cruise missiles, is very serious stuff. Because, as you know, our B-52s, that's their penetration capability now, the cruise.

MCLAUGHLIN: My concern is that the public has a right to know what really went on.

NOVAK: Well, that's always been your concern.

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MCLAUGHLIN: Is it your feeling that the United States Congress should hold hearings on this matter?

Pat?

BUCHANAN: No.

Bob?

Jack?

 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{NOVAK}}$: Well, wait a minute. I didn't get a chance. I didn't get a chance to answer.

It is so ridiculous that you raise that. The answer is no.

MCLAUGHLIN: Jack?

GERMOND: The answer is no.

MCLAUGHLIN: Mort?

GERMOND: And the other thing is, if they're going to depend on you for their information, Lord help them.

KONDRACKE: I think they should get on with Ed Meese...

MCLAUGHLIN: Well, the answer is they should hold hearings, and they probably will.