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# CIA Sees Soviet Strategic Buildup, But Critics Slam Report's Release

by Michael Ganley

**T**he Soviet Union is on the brink of a massive expansion of its strategic nuclear offensive and defensive forces, according to a new intelligence estimate by the Central Intelligence Agency.

In rare public testimony, intelligence officials told Senate Members at a joint hearing of the Armed Services Strategic and Theater Nuclear Forces Subcommittee and the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee June 26th that the USSR's arsenal of strategic nuclear warheads could grow to 12,000 by 1990 from an estimated 9,000 warheads today. Without continued arms control restraints, the officials estimated, the number of deployed Soviet warheads could rise to between 16,000 and 21,000 by the mid-1990s.

Some conservative Republican Senators, apparently frustrated by the Congressional slowdown of the Reagan Administration's military buildup, urged the White House to release the CIA report and let CIA officials testify in open session about it. The report is based on conclusions of a secret new National Intelligence Estimate on Soviet military forces prepared by the CIA.

Some Senate Democrats, however, complained that Republicans were playing "partisan" politics with the intelligence assessment and damaging the CIA's credibility on Capitol Hill.

The CIA assessment and testimony came only two weeks after President Reagan announced June 10th that the US will continue to comply with SALT II despite intense pressure from conservatives in Congress to renounce the accord.

The Soviets could deploy more than the

predicted 3,000 new nuclear warheads in the next few years, according to information provided *AFJ* by one Republican Senator's office.

Those documents show a potential Soviet warhead increase in the next six to seven years of between 2,956 and 5,072, even under current SALT I and SALT II restraints. The US, by contrast, must dismantle nearly four times as many warheads as the Soviets between now and 1991 in order to stay within the treaties' limits.

Some of the new Soviet missiles are designed to carry more warheads than older ones they replace. The numbers of launchers would still remain within the SALT I and SALT II accords, however. Because the US is deploying hundreds of single-warhead, air-launched cruise missiles, which are counted as launchers under the SALT accords, its Trident modernization program would raise the total number of launchers above treaty limits unless older Poseidon subs and Minuteman missiles are retired.

About 7,600 US warheads, over two-thirds of which are based on nuclear submarines, are currently deployed. Only modest future increases in the number of US nuclear warheads are planned, depending upon how many M-X missiles are approved by Congress. (The Senate voted to cap deployment at 50 M-X missiles, while the House voted on June 18th for only 40 missiles, the difference to be resolved in a House-Senate conference that began July 11th.)

## Republican Pressure

The Republican who pushed hardest to get portions of the new intelligence report released was Sen. James A. McClure (R-ID). On June 6th, McClure, along with Senators Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Steven D. Symms (R-ID), wrote President Reagan asking him to release as much of the information in the new National Intelligence Estimate as possible.

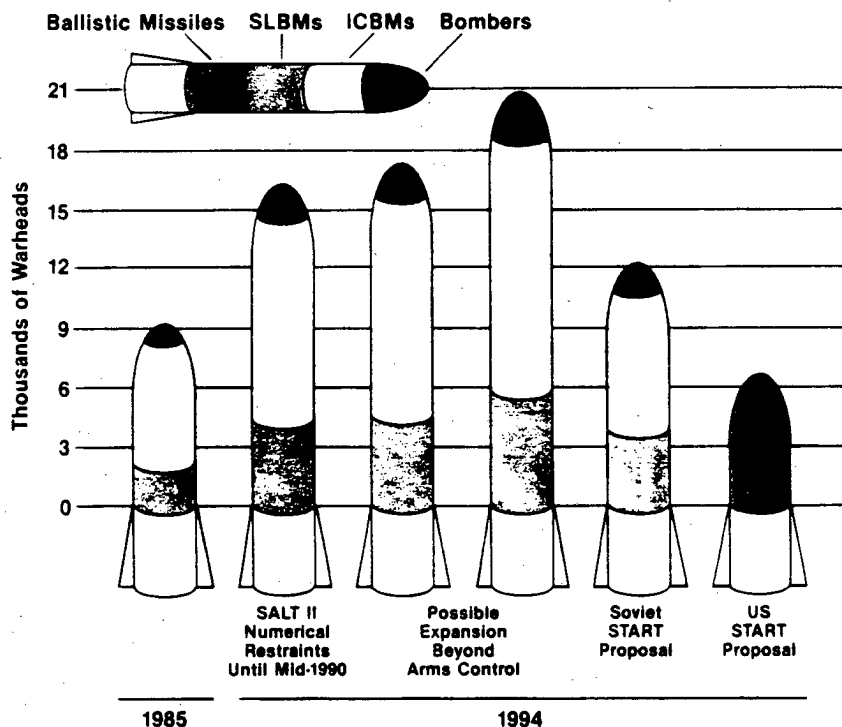


McClure

They told the President that because the new report—NIE 11-3-8-85—predicts "a dangerously worsening state of Soviet military supremacy. . . . We consider a full public understanding of the evolving military imbalance between the US and the Soviet Union to be essential. . . ."

Shortly after receiving the letter, the White House ordered release of a declassified version of the intelligence report's conclusions, according to Hill sources.

## Growth in Number of Deployed Warheads on Soviet Strategic Intercontinental Attack Forces by 1994



Source: *Soviet Strategic Force Developments*; CIA paper presented in testimony before the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, June 26, 1985.

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Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK), Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, agreed to a request from McClure to hold the joint hearing.

McClure has previously succeeded in getting the Administration to declassify information on the Soviet arsenal. In February, for example, as debate on the Fiscal Year 1986 defense budget got under way, DoD declassified information on both Soviet conventional and nuclear capabilities at McClure's urging. In a "Dear Colleague" letter enclosing much of the declassified information, McClure said it showed that, "On the average, the Soviets hold a 6-to-1 advantage over the US in the key measures of military power."

Sen. Gary Hart (D-CO), among other Democrats, protested at the joint hearing, however, that disclosing the new intelligence information "threatens to make partisan and ideological what is central to this nation's security."

Robert M. Gates, Deputy Director of Intelligence for the CIA, said he would not "address the motives of the White House" in releasing unclassified conclusions of the new intelligence estimate.

"We're fully aware of the dangers of a public presentation to the integrity and objectivity of our assessments," Gates added, but "we also recognize the value of making available on a broad basis a commonly agreed set of facts for discussion of Soviet strategic force development."

"We were impressed that we were getting in secret session the assessment of the CIA about things we know about the Russians that they know we know about but our public didn't know," Sen. Stevens told Democratic critics at the hearing, "and we felt they [the public] had a right to know."

### The Assessment

The NIE's conclusions and the CIA testimony revealed that by the mid-1990s the Soviets expect to replace with improved systems nearly all of their currently deployed intercontinental nuclear attack forces—land- and sea-based ballistic missiles and heavy bombers. Seven new ballistic missiles are under development. The Soviets' newly produced Bear H bomber also will become operational this year carrying a new AS-15 ALCM. Their Blackjack bomber will go into service in 1988 or 1989 carrying both ALCMs and bombs.

The CIA report predicts that over the next 10 years, the Soviets also will deploy 2,000 to 3,000 ALCMs, sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCM), and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCM).

Soviet improvements in ballistic missile defense, antisatellite, and directed-energy and kinetic-energy weapons also "will significantly improve the capabilities of their [Soviet] strategic defenses over the next 10 years," the intelligence report says.

The Pentagon's annual *Soviet Military Power* book released earlier this year (June AFJ) touches on many of the points mentioned in the new Soviet intelligence analysis.

But the intelligence report provides more detailed and precise figures on future deployment numbers and times, and, in one instance, even a dollar amount.

The Soviets, for example, are conducting extensive work on both ground and airborne laser weapons "that would cost roughly \$1-billion per year if carried out in the US," the report says. "We are concerned that Soviet directed-energy programs may have proceeded to the point where they could construct operational ground-based ASAT [antisatellite] weapons," the report adds.

On a more optimistic note, the report finds that:

- "We do not believe there is a realistic possibility that the Soviets will be able to deploy in the 1990s a system that could pose any significant threat" to US nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines.
- "Stark economic realities" could force the Soviets to stretch out development of some deployment programs.
- Soviet active and passive strategic defenses will be "unable to prevent large-scale damage from a major attack," though their technology increasingly will defend military and industrial bases necessary to continue wartime operations. ■ ☆ ■