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White House, 1918

9-0558

18 August 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Discussion of Soviet and US Long Range Ballistic Missile Programs

PRESENT: Director of Central Intelligence
Senator Stuart Symington
Col. Tom G. Lanphier (formerly an assistant to Mr. Symington, formerly President of the Air Force Association, now Assistant to the President of Convair)
Howard Stoertz, Jr., ONE Staff

PLACE AND TIME: DCI's office, 6 August 1958

Senator Symington opened by describing Col. Lanphier's background and experience, his knowledge of the Atlas program, and his long interest in the relative strength of the US and the USSR. The Senator expressed his great confidence in Lanphier, based on long personal association. Lanphier had come to him only the day before with information on Soviet IRBM and ICBM progress which did not agree with what the DCI had told him a short time before (on 21 July, also in DCI's office). The Senator felt the only thing to do was to lay the problem on the table with the DCI, and had cleared his intention with Senator Russell before coming. Lanphier added that Senator Symington and the DCI were the first people to whom he had voiced his concern. The Senator indicated that they both planned to talk with Henry Kissinger that night.

Lanphier said his information on US programs came from personal experience, and his information on what the Soviets are doing came from people in the US intelligence services. It became clear during the discussion that he referred to people in the intelligence components of the military services, in the AEC, and in CIA. He did not further identify his informants.

Lanphier said the Atlas program to develop a 5,500 nautical mile missile began officially 3½ years ago. Last week, within a few weeks of the original schedule, a relatively complete Atlas was successfully fired, testing all the elements of the system for the first time. This missile went about 2,500 miles.

The next milestone, delivery to a military base of an operational missile that can react in less than ½ hour and cover the target area in Russia, will occur some time in 1960 at the earliest. (Lanphier

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does not consider that the capability the US plans to acquire at Camp Cook next summer will be a true operational capability, since the missile will have a slow reaction time and Cook is a training base remote from most targets in Russia.)

The next milestone is a significant number of ICBMs in place. The most significant number in current US plans is 70 operational missiles in readiness at nine Atlas bases by early 1962. We also may have four Titan bases, no earlier than 1962 and possibly later, with at most 30 or 40 missiles. Therefore, our planned intercontinental missile retaliatory force in 1962 is on the order of 100 ICBMs at some 13 bases in the US, if Titan continues to develop. Lanphier expects the missiles to have a 50 per cent reliability and a CEP of something less than 5 miles. He later indicated his belief that roughly 75 to 100 operational missiles was a realistic figure for 1962.

Turning to the Soviet program, Lanphier said his information was that they began at Kapustin Yar in about 1953, ran hundreds of short range tests, and by the end of 1956 had fired on the order of 300 missiles of around 1,000-1,500 miles range. They then cut down developmental testing of these missiles and established bases in the Baltic area and in southern USSR, opposite the Middle East. These bases have been operational since late 1956 and early 1957. The Soviets have had for over a year a capability with several hundred IRBMs (1,000-1,500 miles) out of the Baltic area.

Upon questioning, Lanphier said he had been told specifically of bases on islands in the Baltic opposite Estonia (indicating those at the mouth of the Gulf of Riga). He had heard that there are some 20 IRBM bases on these islands, but had heard no details about these particular bases.

Leading toward the ICBM problem, however, Lanphier indicated that Soviet IRBM and ICBM bases look very much alike. They look like a keyhole -- a circle with a straight part on it. In recent instances they've been moving the big missiles, and presumably the others as well, on rails. He referred to the establishment of railroad networks associated with launching bases. He pointed out Murmansk as an area where missile trains have been moving, in a context which indicated that in this case he meant ICBMs. He added that the Soviets have begun to establish missile bases (presumably IRBMs) in the Maritime Provinces of the Soviet Far East, some opposite Formosa, and some in Indo-China. He had begun to hear this information about the Far East within about the past three months, and had seen base locations indicated on a map.

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On the ICBM, Lanphier's understanding is that the Soviets have launched missiles from Kapustin Yar and from the Sputnik base at least 3,500 miles into the sea in the Kamchatka area and into the north central Siberian area (he pointed this last out very generally on map). The more conservative figures he has heard are that 50 to 60 were fired in 1957, beginning in January, and that another 20 were fired in the first five months of 1958, for a total of about 80 firings in the 3,500 mile range. In these firings, something was seen, observed, or known to leave a point, sometimes with mid-course guidance pick-up, and to land in the impact area. There was a concentrated bunch of 30 to 40 during three months in the summer of 1957, with six in one week. Lanphier had plotted these 80 firings on a graph, which he had shown the Senator but had not brought to the DCI's office. On questioning, he reiterated that these firings did not include those to IRBM ranges.

Lanphier added that his information was that the Soviets had tested at least two missiles with nuclear warheads in excess of a megaton, one of which went at least 3,500 miles. One, however, was fired a couple of thousand miles to a new range in the sea north of Murmansk. Firing a live warhead in this direction, over great numbers of their own people, is an indication of their confidence.

On the basis of this testing record, Lanphier believes the Soviets are now establishing the bases that we won't be establishing until 1961 and 1962, and that they are two to three years ahead of us. He said he would not argue that they now had an operational ICBM that they could completely rely on, but he thought they would have something like our projected 1962 capability within the next twelve months.

Later, Lanphier raised a technical point bearing on the above. He noted that the US was going to fire 115 missiles (presumably Atlases) to achieve a production rate of six a month in 1960, and build gradually to eight a month in 1962. In his opinion, our estimate of 100 Soviet ICBMs operational in a year or so and 500 in two years was not consistent with the firing of only six ICBMs to date. Either the one was over-estimated or the other underestimated.

There was considerable discussion about how much of the US the Soviets could reach with missiles launched from various points in the USSR, with Lanphier pointing out that 5,500 miles range was not needed from Murmansk and other northern areas.

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Senator Symington said he had heard of six ICBM firings as early as January, the DCI indicated that he would have said fewer than six at that time, and the Senator indicated his belief that there must have been more than a few in the interim. He and Lanphier held in sharp contrast the figures of six and 80, emphasizing that the latter was obtained from people in the intelligence services. The Senator questioned the DCI's use of agreed intelligence, and Lanphier suggested that information was not getting to the top very rapidly. They were reassured that CIA was in a position to check Lanphier's information without having to rely on spokesmen from other agencies.

Lanphier several times made it clear that his information was hearsay from people in the intelligence business, although he said not all of it was from any one source. He believed it was sufficiently different from the DCI's official position, and apparently so much more alarming, that he and his informants were concerned. The DCI, on the other hand, stated that he did not feel that he was minimizing the danger, but that he could not go along with Lanphier's figures on test firings. He said he doubted that Lanphier's figures could be backed up in any intelligence component in the Government.

After Lanphier had left the room, the DCI reviewed for the Senator his estimate of the Soviet capacity to produce and deploy ICBMs, emphasizing that the estimated operational capability for future dates would vary depending upon just when a first operational capability was achieved. He also noted that our statements on numbers of test firings were based on what we considered to be reasonably good detection capabilities.

Evaluation:

Lanphier claims no direct sources of information about the USSR. He has apparently gotten his information from talking with people in or on the fringes of intelligence, possibly in connection with his work at Convair.

There is no hard intelligence to back up his statements about Soviet missile testing and operational bases. On testing, it is possible that he has mixed up firings to various distances, interpreting more of them as long range firings than the evidence warrants. On bases, it is possible that his statements reflect unconfirmed information in the possession of the intelligence community.

H. STOERTZ, JR.
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