

Soviet's Missile Bases

Washington Finds No Proof Moscow Has Capability of Launching ICBM's

By HANSON W. BALDWIN

Despite the repeated alarms in Washington, hard evidence of Soviet capability of launching long-range missiles is still absent. No verification has reached this country of numerous reports published here and abroad of the identification of ballistic missile launching pads. Several such reports have been investigated and were found to be erroneous. Launching sites for both intermediate range and intercontinental ballistic missiles could, of course, be hidden in deep forests, or placed underground or deep in mountainous valleys, or they might be mobile.

But extensive underground construction would probably be detected, at least in the case of some sites, after a lapse of time. And intermediate range ballistic missiles—the Soviet types of these have ranges of 700 and 1,100 miles—would have to be emplaced, if they were to reach Allied targets, somewhere near the periphery of the Communist heartland.

The satellite areas have never been as thoroughly sealed off as Russia itself, so that sooner or later any extensive missile emplacements in Eastern Europe probably would be detected.

Many observers believe that Russia expects to utilize mobile launching sites for at least her intermediate range ballistic missiles: at sea, submarines, and on land, specially designed railroad flat cars. But again there is no conclusive evidence, as yet, of any such launching systems.

If Russia had hundreds of 700 or 1,100-mile ballistic missiles mounted on flatcars, some of them almost certainly would have been seen by now. One or more of the Soviet Z-class submarines, the largest submarines yet built in Russia, apparently have been modified to launch what some experts believe may be short-range ballistic missiles. But so far this is the only hard evidence of Soviet missile-launching sites anywhere.

This purely negative evidence cannot be construed to mean, of course, that the Russians have no operational ballistic missiles. In fact, other hard evidence suggests that they have a significant number, probably in the hundreds, of 700-mile missiles in the hands of troops.

It is probable that these mis-

siles can be fired from mobile launchers, from hard-surfaced roads or quickly improvised launching sites. In any case, no fixed permanent installations have been discovered.

Available evidence suggests that the Russians have few, if any, 1,100-mile rockets in operation. Originally, it was believed that the 700 and 1,100-mile rockets were part of the same "family," but it is now believed the two are distinct types.

The importance of the 1,100-mile missile is that its additional range would enable it to reach a few bases and missile sites that are beyond the range of the 700-mile rocket. Because of its increased range its launching sites could be moved well back behind the Communist frontiers.

In the intercontinental ballistic missile field, we have detected the firing of only one Soviet missile this year at a range of more than 3,000 miles.

This brings the total recorded firings of Soviet long-range missiles (beyond 3,000 miles) to seven. It is possible, though this possibility is not rated too highly, that the Russians have established an Arctic test range, beyond the reach of our two long-range surveillance radars in Turkey and the Aleutians.

In any case, best estimates are that the U. S. S. R. now has, or soon will have, a few ICBM's in operation (though not too reliable). If present estimates of Soviet capabilities are correct, and if the Russians utilize those capabilities to the maximum, the Russians may have roughly 100 ICBM's some time in 1960 and perhaps 500 by late 1961, more probably some time in 1962.

Contrary to popular impression, the Russians are still producing piloted bombers, though at a slow rate. They now have about 150 heavy bombers, and are believed to be producing one Bison a month.

The Bison is Russia's standard heavy bomber, with four jet engines. Apparently none of the turbo-prop Bear bomber has been produced for the last two years.

Small production of the Badger two-jet medium bomber, roughly comparable to our B-47, is continuing. The U. S. S. R. may have built up its total number of mediums to more than 1,000 by some time this spring.

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