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30 November 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence  
SUBJECT : Status of the Soviet ABM Program and Estimated  
Soviet Reactions to US Deployment of ABMs

Summary

1. We have recently completed our annual National Intelligence Estimate of Soviet strategic air and missile defenses. The estimate (NIE 11-3-65) was approved by the United States Intelligence Board on 18 November. In our review of developments in the Soviet ABM program, we estimated that the USSR has begun to deploy ballistic missile defenses at Moscow.

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We also estimated that the Soviets could achieve an initial operational capability at Moscow in 1967 or, more probably, 1968, and that over the next ten years the USSR will extend its ABM defenses to provide protection for other major urban-industrial areas.

2. Earlier this year we produced a Special National Intelligence Estimate in which we estimated Soviet reactions to US deployment of ABMs. The estimate (SNE 11-12-65) was concurred in by the United States

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Intelligence Board on 22 September. In this estimate, we concluded that a US decision to deploy ballistic missile defenses, by itself, would not significantly worsen US-Soviet relations, although the Soviets would feel compelled to respond in several ways, including efforts to improve and expand their strategic strike capabilities and to intensify work on their own ABM program. We rated as low the chances of a positive Soviet reaction to a new offer on arms control made at the same time that US ABM deployment was announced.

3. In another recent National Intelligence Estimate on Soviet strategic attack capabilities (NIE 11-8-65), we also considered some possible effects of US ABM deployment on Soviet military programs. One effect, we believed, might be to incline the Soviets to higher numbers of ICBMs; another might be to revive interest in the manned long-range bomber. It seemed certain, however, that a US decision to deploy an ABM system would spur Soviet development of penetration aids.

I. STATUS OF THE SOVIET ABM PROGRAM

4. We estimate that the Soviets are now deploying an ABM system for the defense of Moscow. [Redacted]

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5. The Soviets are constructing very large radars (Hen Houses) in the northwest, which probably are intended to function as part of a ballistic missile defense.

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these radars will serve a

ballistic missile early warning function, and they may provide some tracking and prediction data for use by antimissile missile launch units.

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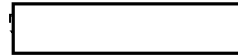
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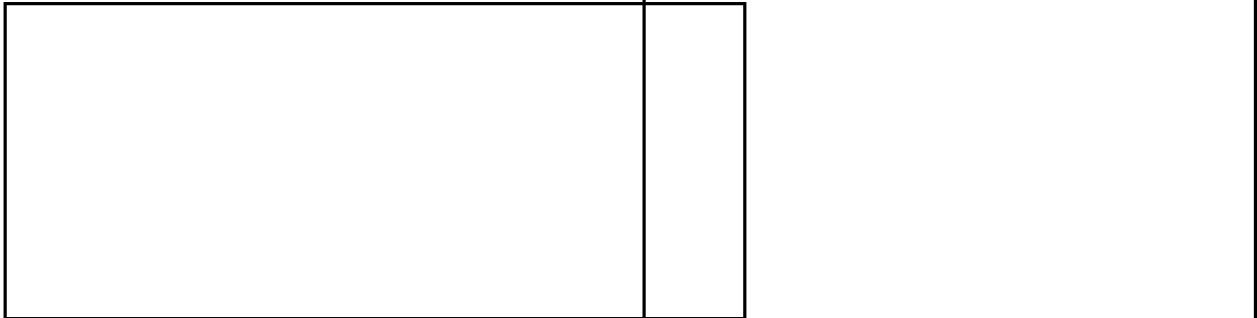
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6. The Soviets are also constructing a huge radar (Dog House) about 30 miles southwest of Moscow.<sup>4/</sup>

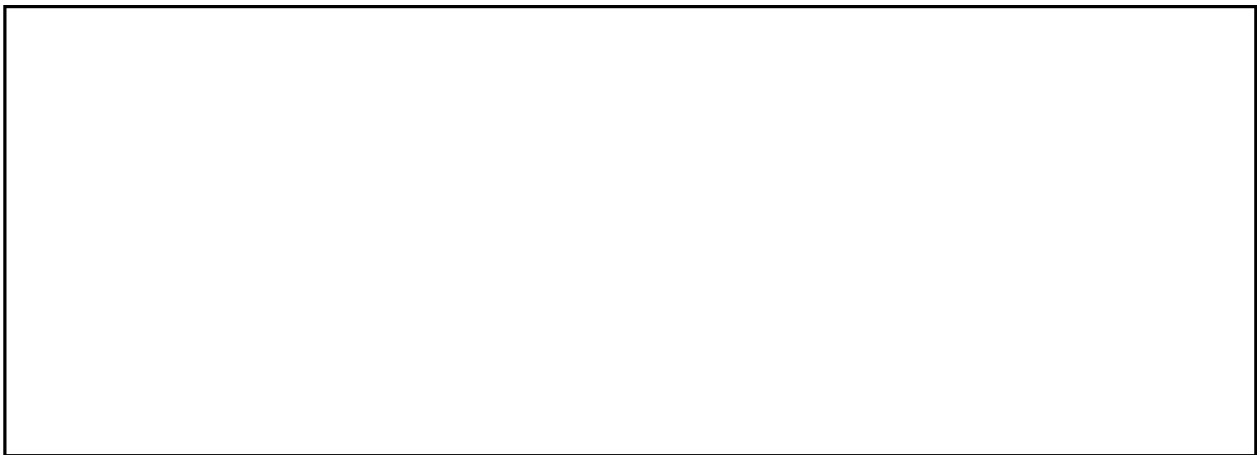


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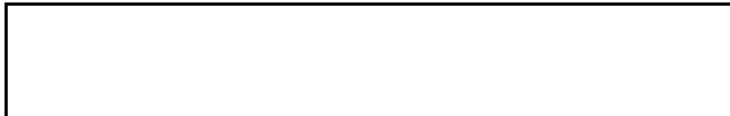
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that this radar, which could be operational in 1967, is intended to serve a long-range acquisition and early target tracking function for ballistic missile defenses in the Moscow area.

7. In addition to the Dog House, the Soviets are working on a series of "triads" located at some of the outer ring SA-1 sites at Moscow.



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the triad facilities will provide final target tracking and missile guidance for the Moscow ABM system. 6/

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It should be noted, however, that the Soviets will probably undertake some of these advanced weapons programs even if the US implements no ballistic missile defense program.

17. It seems certain that a US decision to deploy an ABM system

would spur Soviet development of penetration aids.

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the large payloads of some Soviet ICBM systems present an obvious opportunity for trade-offs between nuclear yield and such devices. Relatively unsophisticated types of penetration aids such as fragmenting boosters and balloons are within present Soviet technical capabilities and could be developed without testing.

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Development of

other penetration aids such as shielding, decoys, and jammers would require flight tests.

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Political Reactions

18. The Soviet assessment of a US decision to deploy ABM defenses would go beyond military significance and consider political motivations as well. The Soviets would first of all view the decision as evidence that the US was intent upon maintaining its strategic position vis-a-vis

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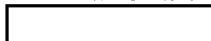
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the USSR. While they would recognize that their own ABM program had contributed to the US decision, they would judge that the US in this instance was willing to see, or at least saw no way to avert, a continuation of the arms race. Further, it is conceivable that they would view the decision as a move to force them to make military expenditures which would keep their economy under strain. They might even interpret it as a sign that the US considered nuclear war somewhat more likely in the longer term, particularly if the announcement came at a time of crisis, in, for example, Vietnam. Associated US expenditures for a shelter program would probably strengthen the voice of those advocating this interpretation. The Soviets would be likely to interpret the coupling of the US announcement with a disarmament proposal for, say, reducing strategic delivery vehicles as part and parcel of a scheme designed to restrict their strategic capabilities.

19. It is possible, however, that in view of internal Soviet policy debates stemming from the resource demands of the military, the US decision might increase pressures on the Soviet leaders to stabilize some aspects of arms competition. In this context, a simultaneous new offer on arms control might have some prospects. We rate the chances of a positive Soviet reaction, however, as low.

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20. In the propaganda field, the Soviets almost certainly would charge the US with reducing the prospects for disarmament, and probably would accuse the US of seeking to increase its capabilities for nuclear war. Over the longer term, however, the Soviets probably would stress two propaganda lines: one, that the concept of "Fortress America" was again gaining ascendancy in the US; the other, that Soviet missile defenses were superior to those of the US, and that the latter could not cope with a Soviet strategic missile attack.

21. In any event, we believe that a US decision to deploy ballistic missile defenses, by itself, would not significantly worsen US-Soviet relations. Nor would it be likely to have any direct or basic effect on Soviet policies in existing problem areas, i.e., Vietnam or Berlin. And we believe that such a US decision would not change any of the key determinants of Soviet policies toward Western Europe or Communist China.

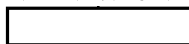


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SHERMAN KENT  
Director/  
National Estimates

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