

Subject: Documentation for the Alleged "Missile Gap"

ADDI Endorsement:

The DDI has approved the request in paragraph 2. The steps outlined in paragraph 3 are acceptable; however, we do not have an extra copy of the study which we can dedicate to this purpose. I understand that ONE has two copies and recommend that one of these copies be acquired for your purposes.

EDWARD W. PROCTOR
Assistant Deputy Director for Intelligence

9 February 1970

Given to *on 9 Feb 1970*

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180-70

20 January 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Deputy Director for Intelligence
SUBJECT: Documentation for the Alleged "Missile Gap"

1. Pursuant to our telephone conversation of 16 January, the CIA Historical Staff requests a retention copy of Mr. Howard Stoertz' study, "Intelligence Aspects of the 'Missile Gap,'" November 1968, [redacted] Codeword, Limdis.

2. This study is requested on behalf of [redacted] [redacted] currently writing the "CIA History during the Dulles Period." [redacted] desires permission to extract from the Stoertz report summary information relevant to the tenure of Mr. Dulles as DCI, and to cite the report as a more complete treatment of the alleged "missile gap."

3. If the above request is granted, the Historical Staff will:

- a. Identify the Stoertz report for permanent retention as a source reference in an Agency history.
- b. Index the report in the Master Index of the CIA Historical Staff (subject to limited access).
- c. Lodge the report in the Executive Registry of the DCI for the use of [redacted] during the writing of his project.
- d. Eventually transfer the report to a secure Agency historical archive.
- e. Maintain Limdis controls over access to the report subject to DDI instructions.

[redacted]
Deputy Chief, CIA Historical Staff

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GROUP 1
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File (IAS)

IAS - 102/68
18 November 1968
Copy 2

~~John Proctor - info~~

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

1. Attached are the papers I have prepared at your request on the subject of the "Missile Gap." Three items are included:

a. [] a talking paper.

b. [] a historical review on which the talking paper is based, including Annexes reproducing key source material.

c. An unpublished draft briefing note dictated by Sherm Kent in 1961 and just found. It is pertinent to page 16 of the historical review and should be added to Annex B.

2. I'm available for consultation on this at your convenience. Would suggest late this week, and would suggest also that [] and Ed Proctor be included in the discussion. I'm sending a copy to each of them with an Eyes Only injunction. They provided assistance in the form of documents and good memories.

HOWARD STOERTZ, JR.
Director
Imagery Analysis Service

Distribution:

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- 2 - ADDI
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Briefing Note for DCI in preparation
for Congressional and other brief-
ings in early 1961.

Dictated by Sherman Kent, slightly
edited by H. Stoertz

Unpublished Draft
14 February 1961
Secret

1. There is, of course, hard evidence to the effect that the USSR has developed an ICBM. The critical sources of this evidence have been the monitoring of Soviet test range firings and photography of the test range-head itself. We are confident that we have detected virtually all successful ICBM and space launchings, and we know something about failures as well.

2. On the basis of this evidence, we can determine with reasonable confidence the range of the Soviet ICBM, its general configuration, the type of propulsion and guidance employed, and the likely type and weight of its nosecones. Drawing upon this and other evidence, we can estimate within what we believe to be tolerable margins of error the probable accuracy, reliability, and warhead yield of the ICBM system.

3. Thus when we speak of development, testing, and performance, we feel that we stand on reasonably firm ground. Our views have been checked out and accepted by a large number of knowledgeable American scientists, engineers, and technicians who consult on a regular basis with the many components of our intelligence community.

4. But when we come to the question of Soviet ICBM production and deployment, we are on very different ground. Here, to be sure, there is evidence, but it is fragmentary and equivocal. Indeed, this evidence is of such a character that we would prefer to pass over it completely and not make estimates with respect to numbers. Were the weapon in question of a lower degree of importance we could refrain from quantitative estimates until the evidence had accumulated in greater quantity and quality. But we realize that the Soviet ICBM is presently the single unanswerable threat to US security. In these circumstances, we feel that we do not have the option whether or not to talk in numbers.

5. The evidence being what it is, no one should be surprised that disparities appear when we attempt to arrive at an agreed community view. The

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unpleasant fact is that we do not know precisely how many ICBMs the USSR now has, nor how many it will have by 1963. We are in no sense complacent about this. We are doing all in our power to gather the new information which will make possible a narrowing of the disparities and the uncertainties in our estimates.

6. The Soviets on their part, fully aware of the importance to us of the data we seek, do all in their power to deny it to us.

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SUBJECT: Talking Paper on INTELLIGENCE ASPECTS OF THE "MISSILE GAP"

- A. National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) issued in 1957-1960 contributed to the "missile gap" crisis, but they did not cause it.
1. It was caused by the influence, on estimators and policy-makers and legislators and the public, of the Soviet surge in ICBM development and space flight beginning in the summer of 1957.
 2. Caused also by public comparison of estimated Soviet ICBM capabilities and programs with planned US programs.
 3. US Intelligence did not make comparisons as such, and did not make its estimates public.
 4. But general thrust and sometimes specific conclusions of NIEs were used publicly to support such comparisons by defenders and critics of the Administration.
- B. NIEs of the period grossly overestimated Soviet ICBM prospects for early 1960's. Intelligence did not discover error and correct its overestimates until 1961.
1. Greatest overestimate, made soon after Sputnik in December 1957, anticipated Soviet initial operating capability (IOC) with ICBMs in mid-58 to mid-59, and indicated USSR could have operational capability with 500 ICBMs in mid-60 to mid-61.

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2. NIEs issued over next two years backed away from these very early dates somewhat. Intention of estimators was to make relatively gradual adjustments.
 3. Estimate of probable Soviet buildup in operational ICBM launchers, first made in February 1960, projected 140-200 for mid-1961. This estimate substantially unchanged by time of Presidential election.
 4. In mid-1961, Intelligence discovered that Soviet deployment program bore no resemblance to existing estimates and made sharp downward revision in NIEs.
 5. NIE issued in September 1961 carried only 10-25 Soviet launchers operational at that time and projected very little increase for months immediately ahead. (Even this number was somewhat high and was further adjusted downward later.)
- C. Fundamental problem facing estimators was inadequate evidence caused by inability of collection programs to penetrate stringent Soviet security, plus inadequate US base of missile experience against which to evaluate evidence.
1. US Intelligence would have preferred not to make quantitative projections, but did so because of importance of Soviet threat and pressure of US defense planning needs.
 2. Estimators also influenced by the historical context of late 1950's, which included:

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- implications of Sputnik about Soviet missile and scientific progress;
- sense of intensified Soviet competition with US, fostered by Khrushchev in his policy statements and private conversations with US officials;
- earlier curtailment of Soviet intercontinental bomber programs presumably in favor of missiles;
- earlier Soviet progress in short and medium range missiles;
- concern for viability of strategic retaliatory forces to which US committed for deterrent power.

3. Operating in this context, estimators had to try to bring to bear whatever elements of indirect evidence and limited US experience they thought relevant to the ICBM deployment problem.

D. Overestimates were based on US Intelligence expectation of much more rapid ICBM deployment program than Soviet leaders probably authorized, and on smooth buildup of deployed ICBM forces which did not actually occur.

2. Test program and space launchings gave picture of powerful and reliable first-generation ICBM system but gave little hint that Soviets might encounter problems in producing and deploying this cumbersome system in quantity.

3. US collection programs at that time could not get evidence on production of ICBMs and supporting equipment and could not effectively monitor the vast areas of USSR in which deployment might occur.
 4. Estimators drew conclusion that absence of firm evidence of deployment could not be interpreted to mean absence of deployment.
 5. Estimated large, steady buildup in light of recognized Soviet capabilities and estimated high value of ICBMs to Soviet strategy.
- E. Conclusion drawn by Intelligence was that in mid-1961 USSR would have its greatest opportunity to gain political, psychological and military advantage over US through rapid deployment of operational ICBMs.
1. Thought long range missile would enable USSR to overcome its previous strategic inferiority.
 2. Considered numbers of US targets Soviets could threaten and concluded that reasonable and probable Soviet ICBM buildup would be very dangerous to soft bases of US deterrent forces in 1961, though this US vulnerability would be short-lived because of subsequent advent of hardened US facilities.
- F. These conclusions not drawn by Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) and CIA alone.
1. NIEs passed upon by USIB under DCI's chairmanship. Drafted by DCI's Board of National Estimates from contributions by all Intelligence agencies.

2. Contributions on missiles also prepared by committees of technical specialists (e.g., GMAIC) in intelligence community.
 3. Advisers from industry, universities, and elsewhere in government also consulted. CIA consulted 40 such advisers in missile field in 1958-59. DCI also regularly called on special panel of US missile experts (Hyland Panel).
 4. All evidence shared among agencies, discussion encouraged, and estimates re-examined whenever new evidence or analysis or need warranted it.
 5. Dissents invited from any member of USIB. On ICBM problem, for example, Air Force member often estimated numbers of launchers higher than those estimated by DCI, and registered these estimates as dissents in NIEs. Army member often registered dissents on the low side.
- G. Clarification and correction of the ICBM estimates came relatively suddenly in 1961, as result of

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1. Concluded that some time in 1958 the Soviets had decided to deploy only a small force of first-generation ICBMs while pressing toward second-generation systems.
2. Effect of Soviet decision was seen to have produced a low plateau of deployed strength in operational launchers which would not increase markedly until second-generation program began to bear fruit in 1962.
3. Further refinements and adjustments were made thereafter, and some loose ends like USAF dissents on the high side remained.
4. But since that time it has been possible for US Intelligence to follow and record an accurate, up-to-date picture of current and near-term Soviet strength in operational ICBM launchers.

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Remarks:

*Thank you —
This is a useful
historical record.*

MT

This was sent to the DDCI
for his reading on 27 January.

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FROM: NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NO.	DATE
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<i>DCI</i>	<i>16 Jan</i>
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