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# Arms Hurdle: Trust in Soviet

## Skirmish on Verification Heralds Coming Debate

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WASHINGTON, April 19 — The latest skirmishing over the touchy issue of protecting against Soviet cheating under a new arms treaty has produced no winners this week. But it has pointed up a predicament inherent in the entire effort at arms control for the 1980's.

A fundamental objective of the Administration's arms control policy is to foster confidence and trust between the superpowers and to provide a backdrop of relative predictability in the arms race so that some unforeseen international crisis does not involve the United States and Soviet Union in a nuclear war.

Yet the snappish tempest over verification illustrates that one of the greatest obstacles President Carter faces in trying to win Senate approval of a new arms treaty is mistrust about Soviet intentions and suspicions about how far Moscow intends to carry the nuclear buildup it has carried out since the first strategic arms agreement in 1972.

That suspicion and mistrust — seven years after the first arms accord — are what make many senators so profoundly undecided about how to cast their votes and prompts a handful of others to argue that Washington is not well enough equipped today to detect Soviet cheating.

And though the main events of the arms debate are months off, the preliminary bout over what the arms controllers call verification is a harbinger of the thorny fight that lies ahead.

The issues are bafflingly complex. They touch on such highly classified national security questions that full public debate is hampered by inhibitions against giving away vital secrets to the Russians. And feelings run so strong that each side in the national debate can be quick to impugn the other's motives and accuse its antagonist of bad faith and slanted, self-serving leaks to the press.

### Furor Over Use of U-2

The opposition to a new strategic arms limitation treaty was outraged by the appearance of a report in The New York Times quoting Administration officials as saying they planned to use U-2 spy planes to improve American means of verification. Senator Jake Garn, Republican of Utah, accused the Administration of a "distorted" leak of top-secret information intended to make the treaty more palatable while Congress was sworn to secrecy.

But just a few days later, Jody Powell, the White House press secretary, sarcastically quipped that Senator Garn would be dismissed if he was a White House employee, on the ground that the Utah Republican had leaked "a distorted" version of secret C.I.A. testimony to The Times in an effort to discredit the Administration's intelligence program. In fact, both articles were less leak than journalistic piecing together.

The contretemps over the articles produced not only partisan feuding between Congress and the White House but also private sniping within the Administration, evidence of the edginess on all sides on the paramount issues of national defense and arms control.

The immediate point of contention this week has been how long it will take the United States to recover from the loss of two American electronic listening posts in Iran, one of which was described by American officials as "a gold-plated wiretap" into the Soviet missile test-launch program based in Soviet Central Asia.

### 'Total' and 'Adequate'

Senate critics of arms control cried out in alarm after Adm. Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence, estimated at a private Senate briefing that it would take roughly until 1984 to totally replace the intelligence-gathering capacity lost in Iran. Defense Secretary Harold Brown sought to ease these fears with his public assurances that while total replacement might take that long, enough could be recovered in about a year for the United States "to verify adequately" Soviet compliance with an arms treaty.

His contention is that, while American intelligence might miss a Soviet missile test here or there, it normally takes Moscow years to develop, test and produce a brand-new missile. So he was confident that the Russians could not get away with a whole series of tests and steal a march on the United States with some entirely new weapon.

But that assurance has not put the matter to rest. Privately, a senior Pentagon official conceded that, for technical reasons, Mr. Brown's estimate could slip a few months. Even further delay, he said, could result from the need to gain permission from Turkey and possibly other countries for overflights by American U-2 planes trying to monitor Soviet missile tests.

Beyond that, Senate critics and skeptics were quick to raise objections. For example, Senator John Glenn, an Ohio Democrat who has sensed public mistrust of Moscow and made verification a major issue as he campaigns for re-election, suggested a slowdown in the whole procedure.

### Why Not Wait a Year?

If it was going to take a year or more to be ready on verification, Senator Glenn suggested in a telephone interview, perhaps President Carter ought to wait a year or so before sending an arms treaty to the Senate, since he had often promised not to submit any treaty that was "not verifiable."

As the Senator put it, other Government timetables have slipped in the past and arms control is too critical a matter for the Senate to agree on what he called "the prospect of adequate verification" and not to insist on "the real thing."

The months ahead will undoubtedly produce sharp and occasionally acrimonious debate on Soviet heavy missiles and on the medium bomber known in the West as Backfire. It will examine the overall United States defense posture, the vulnerability of the American intercontinental missile force and the need for a new mobile missile.