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CIA 402 SS-18

U.S. Warns Russians to Stop Encoding

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 31 — The Carter Administration has warned the Soviet Union that an attempt to impede American efforts to monitor a Soviet missile test on Dec. 21 has jeopardized the ability of the United States to verify Soviet compliance with the terms of a projected treaty limiting strategic arms, Government officials said today.

The Administration, they added, has also told Moscow in recent days that if the Soviet Union, under a new treaty, tried to conceal test data in this manner, the United States would consider it a serious violation of the agreement.

The officials said the unusual warning was prompted by a test firing of Mos-

cow's new SS-18 missile, the largest and most lethal rocket in the Soviet arsenal. During the test, Moscow is said to have transmitted electronic messages from the missile to Soviet ground stations in code in an apparent effort to conceal the signals from American listening posts on the periphery of the Soviet Union.

Since the test information, known as telemetry, is viewed by the Central Intelligence Agency as vital to verifying Soviet compliance with a new accord, the December missile firing has complicated last-minute efforts to complete the arms negotiations. It is also seen as raising new problems for the Administration in convincing the Senate that the United States could detect a Soviet effort to evade parts of the proposed agreement.

So far, officials said, Moscow has not responded to the warning.

Meanwhile, the Administration's handling of the telemetry issue is being debated in the United States Government. Some aides charge that Adm. Stansfield Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence, has exaggerated the importance of the test data in verifying a new accord, thus setting back chances for a treaty with Moscow.

The officials said that in a number of conversations with President Carter, Admiral Turner had pushed for a firm American position on Soviet attempts to encode test data despite the fact that other agencies doubted the utility of such a stand.

A Central Intelligence Agency spokesman refused to discuss the issue.

Encoding first emerged as a serious issue in the arms talks after an SS-18 test

Missile Data

in July when much of the missile's telemetry was sent in code.

Last fall, American negotiators tried to get Moscow to accept a ban on such encoding but failed. In late December at Geneva, Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko agreed to an ambiguous provision in which Moscow was permitted to encode only missile test data that would not hinder American verification of a new accord.

However, the provision evidently does not specify what information is necessary to monitor an accord. Some officials say this omission could allow Moscow to continue to withhold key information about new missiles. In an effort to remove this ambiguity, the Administration officials said, the United States has told Moscow that the encoding of the Dec. 21 test is an example of what would be banned by the new provision.

CIA 101 Turner, Adm.
CIA 402 Telemetry