

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON: 3/25 ANEW YORK TIMES  
3 April, 1985

# PENTAGON REPORT SAYS SOVIET SPURS ITS ARMS PROGRAM

By **BILL KELLER**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 2 — The Defense Department today made public a new assessment of Soviet military power, charting what the Pentagon called continuing, rapid progress in weapons technology.

It said that progress was especially marked in submarines, nuclear missiles and space weaponry.

The report spoke of an expanding Soviet program in laser weapon research, which it said was part of a drive for superiority in space weapons that demonstrated the need for President Reagan's own space-based missile defense program.

## Laser Weapons Are Described

The Russians were reported to have built prototype ground-based laser weapons deemed capable of interfering with American satellites and of being deployed by the late 1980's.

The report also provided details of what intelligence officials said was an increasingly menacing Soviet posture in Europe, including expansion of the arsenal of medium-range missiles and the organization of two new army divisions poised for rapid assault.

At a news conference, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger said the document demonstrated the "very relentless" nature of the Soviet buildup, and the need for continued American weapons modernization to match it.

## Senate Panel Takes Up Budget

The publication of the fourth annual Pentagon assessment, called "Soviet Military Power," came as the Senate Armed Services Committee began work on three versions of a military spending bill that would cut President Reagan's military budget by anywhere from \$8 billion to \$20 billion.

At the news conference, Mr. Weinberger also made his sharpest attack to date on the Soviet Union for the killing of an American Army intelligence officer in East Germany.

The Defense Secretary, departing from the more conciliatory tone taken by the State Department since the March 24 incident, said the death of the officer, Maj. Arthur D. Nicholson Jr., was not an isolated act but an expression of Soviet policy.

Mr. Weinberger said the Russians

"presumably regret that they didn't get the sergeant" who accompanied Major Nicholson on a picture-taking mission at Soviet military installation in East Germany.

The Defense Secretary said the United States Army commander in Western Europe should wait for an apology before meeting with his Soviet counterpart to discuss the incident.

"I think he should take the approach of waiting until the Soviets make some kind of an apology that verges somewhat more slightly on civilized behavior than they have exhibited thus far," he said.

The State Department announced Saturday that the American and Soviet commanders would meet to discuss the incident, but no date has been set. A State Department spokesman, told about Mr. Weinberger's remark, said today: "We think it is appropriate for the Soviet Union to apologize but it is not a precondition for the talks already agreed to."

## Beamed by TV Around the World

Mr. Weinberger's news conference was timed for 8:15 A.M. so that it could be beamed around the world by the television satellite of the United States Information Service.

The Pentagon document was rearranged from previous editions to highlight Soviet developments in antimissile defenses and space weaponry with a view to fending off criticism of the similar American efforts.

"These are systems that the Soviets are attempting to keep the Americans from achieving," Mr. Weinberger said. "They apparently want a monopoly."

The Pentagon report said the Soviet Union had more than 10,000 scientists and engineers working on laser weaponry. It said the Russians "apparently believe" that lasers, along with more remote technologies such as particle beams and radio frequency weapons, will be the future means both for attacking satellites and for defending against missiles.

But the Pentagon acknowledged that the Soviet Union faced difficulties in turning lasers into a missile defense system. The report said that the operation of such a system "is not likely in this century."

The document included the first official reports of some new weapon developments. They were the flight test of an intermediate-range missile to replace the SS-20; signs of two experimental intercontinental ballistic missiles, and the first report and photograph of an advanced class of nuclear-powered attack submarine, the Akula.

## More SS-20's Reported Deployed

The Pentagon report said the Russians were continuing to deploy SS-20's as the United States proceeded with its deployment of Pershing 2 and cruise missiles in Western Europe. Pentagon officials said the number of SS-20's, each with three warheads, had increased from 378 a year ago to 414.

In an expanded description of Soviet forces in Europe, the report spoke of two innovative "operation maneuver groups" that could be used for quick raids through enemy lines, and of a reorganization of the Soviet Air Force, reportedly intended to improve its capacity for a large-scale air attack.

The report said that Soviet forces had stockpiled ammunition for 60 to 90 days in the western region, closest to Western Europe. That would compare with about 30 days of ammunition for American troops and only 5 to 10 days for the Western European allies.

The report said the Soviet Union was near deployment of two new ICBM's, the single-warhead SS-25 and the multiple-warhead SS-24.

"If the Russians wanted to, they could deploy it tomorrow," a defense intelligence official said of the SS-25, adding that the SS-24 was expected to

be deployed next year.

In addition, the report said, "recent activity" on Soviet test ranges indicated that the Russians were at work on two new missiles, including a more accurate successor to the 10-warhead SS-18.

However, the report also indicated that the Soviet Union did not expand the deployment of land-based ICBM's, the mainstay of its nuclear arsenal. Past Pentagon estimates showed steady growth in the number of warheads deployed.