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SOVIET SALT CHEATING: THE NEW EVIDENCE

At the very time proponents of arms control agreements with the Soviet Union are urging ratification of SALT II and progress at the START negotiations at the expense of rigorous verification standards, there is new evidence of Soviet violation of the 1972 SALT I Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Instead of protesting this Soviet cheating, the Reagan Administration has been strangely silent and the Congress has ignored the unambiguous signs of Soviet nuclear warfighting preparations.

Recent photographs taken by a U.S. surveillance satellite on a routine sweep of the eastern Soviet Union reveal the construction of an immense radar system deep inside the Soviet Union north of the Mongolian border. This new radar system is targeted toward Alaska and uses advanced "phase-array" technology which will enhance Soviet abilities to predict impact areas of incoming warheads and improve target handling capabilities for ABM battle-management. Construction of the new radar complex with a transmitter building almost 500 feet long and 300 feet wide violates the ABM Treaty. Article I prohibits any ABM system for territorial defense; Article II defines radars with an ABM role to apply to this type of system; Article VI proscribes deployment "in the future of radars for early warning of strategic missile attack except at locations along the periphery of... the national territory and oriented outward." (Emphasis added.)

This new radar system has clear ABM battle-management capabilities; it is almost identical with large missile tracking radars now being tested at Pechora in the Soviet Northwest, at Lyaki close to the Caspian Sea and two other locations. It closes the gap of coverage against incoming U.S. land- and sea-based missiles targeted against eastern Soviet territory and, together with already existing radar sites, will soon enable the Soviets to mount a formidable antiballistic missile defense against a retaliatory strike by the United States. When combined with growing Soviet first-strike capabilities against U.S. land-based ICBMs and vigorous Soviet preparations for civil defense, it becomes apparent that the Soviets are on the verge of acquiring all major elements for the potential to wage nuclear war against the United States at tolerable costs. An effective Soviet ABM capability will expose the United States to Soviet nuclear blackmail and jeopardize U.S. ability to counter Soviet threats to strategically vital regions of the world.

This new evidence reinforces longstanding concerns about systematic Soviet violations of the ABM Treaty. Battlefield management radars are

the long leadtime component of any ABM defense system and the Soviets seem to have gained a great deal of experience in this field since 1975 when they installed an ABM-X-3 radar in the Kamchatka impact area for their ICBM tests. Over the years, the Soviets have also been upgrading their surface-to-air (SAM) bomber defense systems--now presumed to perform an ABM role. Since the Carter Administration, the Soviets repeatedly have tested various types of SAM missiles in a discernable ABM mode at altitudes above 100,000 feet and have deployed thousands of less capable SA-5 missiles around Soviet cities. These illegal ABM activities and the development of an anti-tactical ballistic missile system clearly point to a Soviet decision to subvert the ABM Treaty shortly after signing it.

Refusals to acknowledge these Soviet treaty violations point to the perennial dilemma of what to do after detecting cheating. The Administration is doing itself and the country no favor by refusing to acknowledge the mounting evidence that the Soviets are developing a capability which seriously erodes strategic stability and will soon permit the Soviet Union to break out of the ABM Treaty. The Administration should document and publicize Soviet ABM activities and Treaty violations. It should accelerate the U.S. ballistic missile defense (BDM) program. Unless Moscow can refute the evidence that its radar and weapons programs are not designed for an ABM role, the U.S. should abrogate the ABM Treaty.

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For further information:

Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "New Soviet Radar Violates SALT Pact," New York Post, July 27, 1983.

Jake Garn, "Soviet Violations of SALT I," Policy Review, No. 9 (Summer 1979), pp. 11-32.