

~~UNITED STATES~~

~~AIR FORCE~~

~~INFORMATION REPORT~~

~~JAN 1977~~

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States now faces a crossroads concerning the land based ICBM. The level of ICBM effort has been diminishing over time with the FY 1977 budget marking the end of production of ICBMs in this country. On the other hand, the Soviet Union is extensively modernizing its ICBM force which accounts for about eighty percent of Soviet strategic forces. Based on Soviet modernization activities we can forecast a large ICBM throwweight advantage in their favor and increasing vulnerability of Minuteman both of which can result in military imbalance and degraded strategic stability. Meanwhile, Minuteman improvements now in progress are reaching the limits of that system's capability. The silo hardening program will be complete in 1979, guidance improvements will be implemented in July 1978, and a new, higher yield warhead is programmed to start deployment in early 1980s. Although these are important steps in pursuit of maintaining US-USSR stability, they will be outstripped by the Soviet programs in the 1980s unless the Soviets become restrained. M-X is conceived to maintain the military balance if that restraint is not forthcoming. If Soviet programs progress according to estimates, we should have the option of making an M-X deployment decision by late 1980; development lead time necessitates starting full scale development in FY 78 to protect that option.

Soviet upgrading of their strategic nuclear forces is massive in scope. Three, possibly four, new ICBMs are being deployed which have improvements of 2-3 times in accuracy, up to four to five times in throwweight, and up to 10 times as many warheads as the systems they are replacing. Many of these are being deployed in new super hard silo launchers. One new SLBM is being deployed that can reach US targets from its home port. All of these systems are expected to complete deployment in the early 1980s. Soviet bomber capabilities also are being upgraded with the deployment of the BACKFIRE bomber and a new follow-on heavy bomber is anticipated for the mid-1980s. The size and scope of these efforts indicate an attempt on the part of the Soviets to achieve a nuclear capability superior to that of the US. Such an advantage clearly would endanger strategic stability.

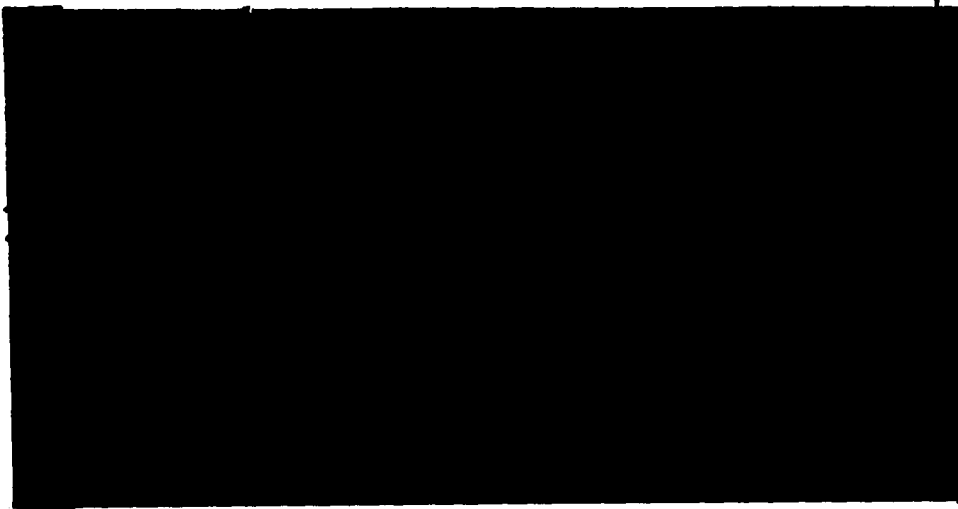
It is US policy that no overall imbalance favoring the USSR should exist or be perceived to exist. Because of the magnitude of Soviet strategic nuclear force modernization, however, an imbalance will develop if the US does not respond with a visible commitment to counter Soviet improvement initiatives.

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This counter to Soviet force improvements must include a modernized land based missile force as part of the TRIAD because of its unique capabilities and needed increases in nuclear firepower to help provide visible rough equivalence with the Soviet Union. The design of this ICBM force must take into account the following factors:



M-X system design has considered the foregoing. The basing mode will improve survivability to such an extent that the Soviets would be required to employ far more of their throwweight to attack M-X than they could expect to destroy in any such attack. The missile will provide more than three times the throwweight of MINUTEMAN while staying within current and tentative future SAL constraints. Also, the additional warheads will greatly enhance the target coverage capacity of our strategic missile forces, and improved accuracy will increase the efficiency of our weapons and the potential damage to all targets held at risk by such weapons.

Mobile basing modes have been subjected to extensive study. innovative approaches are being sought; but, for purposes of early development, the two most promising are shelters and covered trenches. They fall into a category of basing modes called "multiple aim points" (MAP). There would be numerous shelters or miles of covered trench per missile. Missiles on their transporter/launchers would be moved periodically from shelter to shelter or to different locations in the trench. An attacker would not know which shelters or portions of trench contained missiles and, therefore, would be forced to plan and scale his attack to cover the entire basing system. Survivability and throwweight exchange ratios will be dependent on the number of aimpoints per missile (number of shelters or miles of trench); therefore, the basing mode will

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have inherent growth potential to make it progressively more costly to attack and to counter the threat posed by any additional increases in Soviet capability for attack on our ICBMs.

To begin deployment of M-X in the early to mid 1980s when MINUTEMAN survivability is threatened and the increasing throw-weight differential favoring the USSR will be significant, full-scale development should be initiated in FY 78. Advanced development of propulsion and guidance already has progressed to the point where a well ordered, full-scale development program can be established with confidence. Basing concepts have been studied, and validation models are programmed for construction in FY 77-78. Even with this foundation, however, development lead times are such that operational deployment could not start until 1983 if full-scale development begins in FY 78.

Getting started is important not only for reasons of strategic balance and sufficiency but also to provide a visible US commitment to stability which should influence and encourage the Soviets to negotiate equitable follow-on SAL agreements, hopefully at lower, equal aggregates.

In summary, initiating M-X full-scale development in FY 78 is timely to provide for deployment in a MAP basing mode in the early to mid 1980s. That deployment is viewed as necessary:

- To provide the needed characteristics and capacity within the total strategic nuclear forces of the United States to assure long-term stability in the relative strategic balance between the US and the USSR.

- To provide the continuing survivability of efficient, controllable ICBMs in a CONUS basing mode that can be extended as needed to make disadvantageous to the Soviets any attempt on their part at a disarming attack.

- Finally, the decision to proceed with this significant and relevant modernization and improvement in the ability of US strategic forces to challenge Soviet improvements will provide a strong inducement to them for further substantive negotiation and adherence to strategic arms control and limitations...recognizing that the US will not tolerate any imbalance in our relative ability to counter the momentum in Soviet strategic programs.

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