

With regard to an ICBM, we believe that the Red Chinese nuclear weapons and ballistic missile development programs are being pursued with high priority. On the basis of recent evidence, it appears possible that they may conduct either a space or a long-range ballistic missile launching before the end of 1967. However, it appears unlikely that the Chinese could deploy a significant number of operational ICBM's before the mid-1970's, or that those ICBM's would have great reliability, speed of response, or substantial protection against attack.

Red China also has some bombers which could carry nuclear weapons, but most of them have an operational radius of only a few hundred miles. It is highly unlikely, on the basis of cost alone, that they would undertake the development, production, and deployment of a new, long-range bomber force. If they chose to do so, it would take them a decade or more before they could deploy it. Accordingly, we have no reason on this account to change our estimate that a significant Red Chinese nuclear threat to the continental United States will not develop before the mid-1970's.

CAPABILITIES OF THE PROPOSED FORCES FOR ASSURED DESTRUCTION

The most demanding test of our assured destruction capability is the ability of our strategic offensive forces to survive a well coordinated surprise Soviet first strike directed against them. Because no one can know how a general nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union might occur, prudence dictates that we design our own strategic forces on the basis of a greater threat than we actually expect.

Capability against the expected threat

Even if the Soviets in the 1972 period were to assign their entire available missile force to attacks on our strategic forces (reserving only refire missile and bomber-delivered weapons for urban targets), more than one-half of the total forces programmed last year for 1972 would still survive and remain effective.

Considering the overall size and character of that force, it is clear that our strategic missiles alone could destroy the Soviet Union as a viable 20th century society, even after absorbing a well coordinated, surprise first attack. Indeed, the detonation of even one-fifth of the total surviving weapons over Soviet cities would kill about 30 percent of the total population (73 million people) and destroy about one-half of the industrial capacity. By doubling the number of warheads delivered, Soviet fatalities and industrial capacity destroyed would be increased by considerably less than one-third. Beyond this point further increments of warheads delivered would not appreciably change the result, because we would have to bring smaller and smaller cities under attack, each requiring one delivered warhead.

Although it is not at all certain that they will do so, we must, as I noted earlier, base our force planning on the assumption that the Soviets will deploy a reasonably effective ABM defense around their principal cities; and we must be prepared to overwhelm it.

We have been hedging against this possibility for some time, and last year we took a number of actions of which the following are the most important: