

ABM Has Breached Pentagon's Guard

By George C. Wilson

Washington Post Staff Writer

THE NEW Pentagon leadership, in declaring so flatly that Russia is building weapons for a surprise attack on the United States, has given its congressional opponents a second-strike capability.

Senators opposing the antiballistic missile system, for example, can turn some of the testimony used to sell the ABM against other Pentagon programs in the new budget. This will be true whether President Nixon's Safeguard ABM is voted up or down.

Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), who opposes the ABM, already has told Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird that he is being inconsistent by declaring that Polaris submarines are in danger of detection and then cutting back on weapons for protecting them.

Also, Laird—in releasing so much previously classified information about Soviet military progress to justify the ABM—has prompted demands for the release of more intelligence so the public can get the full picture. The net result promises to be a widening debate on how much money the Pentagon really needs for new weapons.

The ABM testimony by Laird, Deputy Defense Secretary David Packard and Secretary of State William P. Rogers also has shown the Administration to be in disarray about military threats to this country. This cannot help but embolden congressional critics as they try to exercise their power of the purse on the military budget this year. Congress may finally find a way to arm itself against the Pentagon.

Its Own Analysts

ONE IDEA, mentioned by Sen. Clifford P. Case (R-N.J.) in a moment

of frustration during the ABM hearings, is to set up an outside group of experts to help Congress assess military proposals. Another is to take a leaf out of former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara's book and establish an office of systems analysts to tear apart budget requests and propose alternatives.

Such ideas have never gotten anywhere in Congress in the past. Power-jealous committee chairmen insisted that they and their staffs could handle the situation. But it is politically "in" this year to criticize the military. So schemes for making sounder judgments than can most lawmakers, with little time or will to do their homework, may finally get somewhere.

Short of that, Congress this year is at least asking more questions about

military programs. And the contradictory answers the supposed experts are giving will encourage the members to keep digging.

Here, point by point, are some of those answers, given in recent days by Nixon Administration leaders in response to questions on the ABM:

FIRST STRIKE, or counterforce, is the strategy of knocking out the other nation's nuclear forces so they cannot hit back. Russia, for instance, would have to knock out all American missiles in silos, bombers on the ground and Polaris submarines in the ocean. Otherwise, Russia would be destroyed by the American retaliatory, or second-strike, attack.

● Laird: "With the large tonnage the Soviets have, they are going for our missiles and they are going for a first-strike capability. There is no question about that . . . As we look over the development in the current deployment of the SS-9, it leads me to come to the conclusion that with their big warhead, and the testing that is going forward in the Soviet Union, this weapon can only be aimed at the destroying of our retaliatory force . . . If they were going to go just at our cities and not knock out our forts,

Sen. Fulbright, it would not require weapons which have such large megatonnage . . ." (March 21, Senate Disarmament Subcommittee.)

• John S. Foster, director of Defense research and engineering—the Pentagon's top technical job: "Looking to the mid-70s, we see the possibility that the Soviets—should they choose to continue their current deployment level—they could pose to the U.S. bomber forces and Minuteman forces a sufficient capability in first strike so as to render uncertain our level of retaliation . . ." (March 20, Senate Armed Services Committee.)

• Secretary of State Rogers: "I have difficulty in believing that the Soviet Union would initiate a first strike. I have difficulty believing that any nation would initiate a first nuclear strike, because any leader or leaders of sound mind would know that it probably would result in the destruction of mankind . . . Certainly it is difficult to understand why the Soviet Union is deploying SS-9s . . . But insofar as whether they are doing it with the intention of actually having a first strike, I don't believe that." (April 7 press conference.)

See ABM, Page B5, Column 1

ABM, From Page B1

OPPONENTS of the Safeguard ABM argue that our 41 Polaris submarines—each carrying 16 missiles with up to ten warheads each—would clobber Russia even if our ICBMs were knocked out in a surprise attack. They therefore contend that spending \$2.1 billion to protect 350 Minuteman ICBMs—as the first step in the Safeguard program—is buying more insurance than the United States needs.

This line of reasoning assumes that Russia will not find a way to detect and destroy submarines prowling in the ocean depths.

• Laird: "The next question is: Are there any reasons to believe that our Poseidon (multwarhead) force will be vulnerable to pre-emptive attack during the early 1970s? If this particular question is limited to the period through 1972, I would say I believe that our forces will remain very free from attack. If you go beyond in the time period, I would have to seriously question that." (March 21, Senate Armed Services Committee.)

• David Packard, the man in charge of the review that led to the recommendation to deploy the Safeguard ABM: "During my studies, I saw clear efforts on the part of the Soviets to find ways to counter the Polaris. I believe that our Navy will keep ahead of the Soviets, but I want to remind you that we should never depend on any single weapon system for our deterrent." (March 26, Senate Disarmament Subcommittee.)

CRITICS CONTEND that the United States reacted to the Soviet ABM around Moscow by building multi-headed missiles—Poseidon and Min-

uteman 3, MIRV (multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle) amounts to putting up so many warheads that they use up the defending missiles. Then other missiles go into the target unimpeded. The question is whether Russia will react to our ABM as we did to theirs, by upgrading the offense.

• Laird: The American MIRV "was not related to Galosh (the Soviet ABM) because we started appropriating funds for the development of this program prior to the time we knew Galosh was in being." (March 21, Senate Disarmament Subcommittee.)

• Packard: He said that American planners, when they saw the Soviet ABM building, "concluded that the Soviet could be attempting to protect

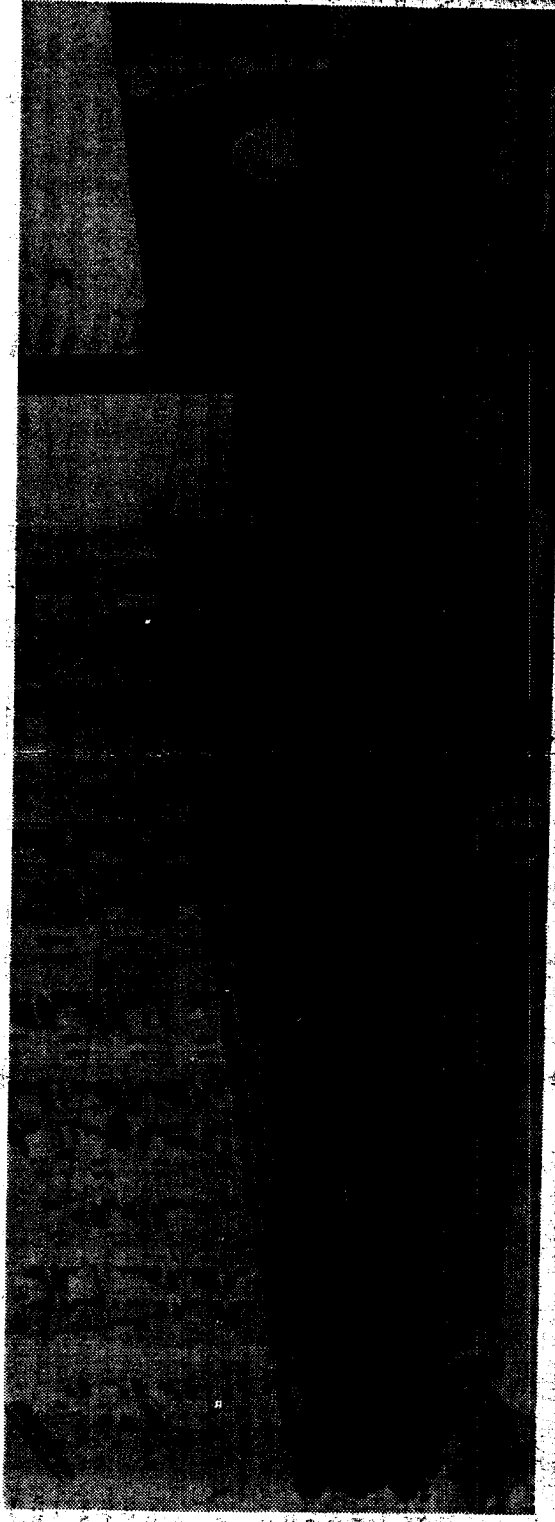
their cities from our deterrent threat. This we could not permit. We have a proper counter to the Soviets' moves and possible intentions for we were developing multiple guided warheads that could be installed on strategic missiles. We are continuing to develop this weapon. But if the Soviet Union had deployed its ABM around its second-strike forces—its missile sites—we would not have had to react." (March 26, Senate Disarmament Subcommittee.)

• Foster: "There are a number of ways to attempt to defeat the ballistic missile defense . . . We have tended to go . . . to a very conservative measure, the use of multiple re-entry vehicles . . ." (Military Applications Subcommittee of the Joint Atomic Energy

Committee hearings, Nov. 6 and 7, 1967, read into the record of the Senate Disarmament Subcommittee March 26.)

THE SOVIET FOBS (fractional orbital bombardment system) is described in the Pentagon as a "cheap shot" weapon designed to elude American radar defenses either by flying beneath them or flying the long way around the world to hit the United States from the south instead of the north.

Foster has said in the past that it may be designed to destroy our bombers before they have time to get off the ground, making FOBS part of a first-strike arsenal. Former Secretary



Russia's SS-9 Scarp missile, built for a 15-to-25-megaton warhead, was unveiled in November, 1967, on the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

United Press International

McNamara said he was not concerned about FOBS because new over-the-horizon radar recaptures the warning time by spotting the missile early.

• Laird: "Now I cannot assure this committee that the experiments that have been carried on by the Soviet Union at this time and the FOBS that have actually been deployed and actually have been launched do carry nuclear weapons, but it is very important that we here in the United States not assume that they do not carry nuclear weapons." (March 20, Senate Armed Services Committee.)

• Foster: "The rate of (FOBS) testing is not as high in this last year as it was in previous years." (March 20, Senate Armed Services Committee.)

LAIRD'S TALK about the first-strike threat of the Soviet SS-9 Scarp missile raises the question about its counterpart in the United States, the Titan 2. The United States has 54 Titan 2s on the line now.

These big liquid-fueled missiles are considered on the way out, however—not as desirable as the Minuteman ICBM. But the Titan's ability to lift a warhead of ten or more megatons—of Laird's own argument about the SS-9 is used—would seem tailored for the MIRV.

If the objection is the Titan's lack of accuracy, what makes the Pentagon so sure that the SS-9 will be accurate enough to knock out a Minuteman ICBM protected by tons of concrete? And if the intelligence about the SS-9 changed, as Laird testified, in a matter of months, how can the Pentagon be sure that it will not change again?

The House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, certainly not a dourish group, already has demanded that the military intelligence agencies be streamlined. The conflicts in the Nixon Administration's first-strike statements provide fresh ammunition for such lawmakers.

Nixon Administration leaders previously have been attacked by the political opposition that has done more to erode the ABM support than any other group of the national legislature that Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) is forming to fight President Nixon on the ABM export bill. It is in business for a long time, tapping the deepening antiwar sentiment—and the pocketbooks—that Sen. Eugene McCarthy (D-Minn.) opened up in his presidential bid.