

'Worst-Case' Intelligence Hit

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Official U.S. intelligence estimates reject the "worst case" argument about Soviet military intentions, senators said yesterday after secret testimony from Central Intelligence Agency Director George Bush.

However, "there are honest, legitimate bases for disagreement in this area," said Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.), who stimulated an inquiry into the current intelligence dispute.

Claims that "political considerations" altered official estimates of Soviet strategic intentions are unwarranted, Sen. Clifford P. Case (R-N.J.) said following three hours of testimony by Bush before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"I'm satisfied, as a member of the Intelligence Committee and as a member of this committee," Case said, "that this (political influence claim) is not so."

Bush, who is leaving office as CIA director, was questioned in the controversy over using outside specialists to challenge the official intelligence estimators. The outsiders, labeled Team B, headed by Harvard Prof. Richard Pipes, essentially took a "worst case" view of Soviet intentions, to prepare for war against the United States.

"I think this is a matter of subjective judgment," Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) said after hearing Bush, who supervised both Team A and Team B.

"There isn't any doubt that the Russians have engaged in rather substantial military buildup since 1973,"

Humphrey said. "There has been an upward revision" of U.S. concern about the Soviet buildup, Humphrey added.

"I think the Soviets' competition with the United States is one of catch up, so to speak," Humphrey said. Others argue the opposite, that it is clearly to surpass.

"The Soviets, on balance, have a position of parity with us," Humphrey said. "As for the immediate future I don't think there is any doubt that . . . the United States has the edge. But looking into the 1980s it's questionable whether we can maintain that edge . . . So that's when the issue comes as to whether or not the Russians are engaged in a program of military superiority."

Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.), when asked if the official estimates turned toward the "worst case" analysis of Soviet intentions as a result of the Team A-Team B competitive analysis, said: "No, I would not say that. I would say there are two clearly delineated points of view," which the committee must now consider.

"The worst case proposition," Javits said, is "that the Russians are striving for superiority." It is countered, he said, by "the general intelligence estimate which would indicate that American policy is proceeding on the right assumptions, that is, that the balance of terror still remains the policy of both countries."

Some critics have charged that the Team A-Team B exercise over-stiffened the estimates which the Carter administration inherits. Humphrey,

however, said "I think it's beneficial to have outside critics. It doesn't require that you agree with their analyses, but it does compel you to reexamine your methodology."

Case said the official estimates, "as always, expressed a majority opinion and dissents." He said that "in my judgment the estimates correctly included any propositions by Team B that were regarded by the estimators as important enough to be included."

Percy said he attempted, unsuccessfully, to bring the intelligence judgments onto the public record, because "we ought to tell the Russians what we are concerned about."