

Soviet Sub Fleet Poses Threat to U.S. Coasts

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Russia's expanding under-seas fleet has reached the stage where missile-firing submarines could be stationed continuously within reach of large U.S. coastal population centers, informed sources here and in Europe say.

The Soviets are said to have on station at all times at least one nuclear-powered missile submarine in the Atlantic and another in the Pacific. They are deployed in ocean areas from which they could zero in on launch positions off the U.S. coasts in two to three days.

The development has not been publicized, but it is being eyed anxiously in Western capitals.

The submersibles are spearheads of a growing fleet that can logically be expected to take stations in due course within firing range of American population centers.

The Russians thus could try to counter the American Polaris submarines now stationed

in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Pacific within easy reach of Soviet and Red Chinese targets. This, in effect, could redress the military balance in a way the Soviets failed to do with their missiles in Cuba in 1962.

The Russians today reportedly have 45 nuclear-powered submarines, just 11 fewer than the United States and larger by number than previously revealed. Of these, 20 carry torpedoes to attack shipping and other subs, 10 are ballistic missile subs, and 15 carry winged guided missiles.

The Soviets also have 75 diesel-powered submarines armed with missiles—35 ballistic and 40 guided.

The information available indicates that the 45 nuclear and diesel submarines armed with ballistic missiles have a total of 120 launchers. These apparently give the Soviets a potential rocket-firing capability near the American coasts about triple the number of missiles delivered in Cuba.