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'Doomsday Plane' Cost Has Risen

Washington

Costs have increased almost 14 per cent for construction of the presidential "doomsday plane," since the project began in 1972, a general accounting office report said yesterday.

The study, released by representative Les Aspin (Dem-Wis.) also said the Defense Department eliminated plans for installation of complex data processing equipment in the aircraft. He contended that this apparatus is essential to the operation.

The "doomsday plane" is part of the advanced airborne command posts, a fleet of seven Boeing 747's from which the President would direct U.S. forces during a nuclear attack.

The report showed that costs have increased from \$482 million to \$548 million — 13.7 per cent — since last year even though the Air Force deleted the requirement for the sensitive automatic processing equipment.

Aspin said the entire program was pegged on the idea that the flying command posts would be able to link up with an extensive computer system which the military would need to conduct a nuclear counter-attack.

Without that, he said, the command post "doesn't have anything to offer except some extra floor space, and that's pretty expensive floor space."

"What's happened is that we're paying more and getting less, and the Pentagon is trying to hide it all with some fancy bookkeeping," Aspin said.

United Press