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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 6, 1975

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: BRENT SCOWCROFT
FROM: JIM CONNOR

The attached was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation:

"Information - Interesting"

cc: Don Rumsfeld

Attachment -
Christian Science Monitor Article - 10/3/75
"Soviets send Backfire Bombers to E. Europe"

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Gen. Sorenson

Info
interesting

Do they threaten U.S.?—a SALT dispute

Soviets send Backfire bombers to E. Europe

By Kenneth W. Gatland
Special to
The Christian Science Monitor

London
The Soviet Union will soon have three squadrons of Tupolev Backfire supersonic bombers — a total of 36 aircraft — according to defense analysts in Europe. Each swing-wing bomber is capable of launching standoff missiles to avoid flying over heavily defended targets.

The latest winged missiles, which the Russians designed to attack peripheral targets in Europe and points east of Suez, are basically terrain-followers. They are believed to be capable of making their final attack at heights below 100 feet to frustrate early detection by defense radars. U.S. naval task forces, including aircraft carriers equipped with nuclear weapons, could be prime targets.

Backfire is one of the weapon systems complicating the latest round of strategic-arms-limitation talks (SALT) in Geneva. The Russians continue to deny that the bomber, which has a range of some 3,500 miles, threatens the United States.

But, the West has evidence that the Backfire can be refueled in the air. In theory, it could attack Washington and other targets on the East Coast of the United States and return, or possibly divert to Cuba.

U.S. SALT negotiators want Backfire counted in the 2,400 strategic nuclear delivery systems — land based, airborne, and submarine — allowable to both sides under the proposed SALT 2 agreement.

The Soviet Union already has gained clear advantages in the throw-weight of warheads through the development of a new family of powerful intercontinental ballistic missiles. Recently President Ford warned that if there



Soviets add to supersonic missile-carrying fleet

Sovfoto

was no progress in the current SALT negotiations, he would have no choice but to ask Congress for an additional \$2 billion to \$3 billion for nuclear arms, on top of the \$9.8 billion in the defense budget.

Meanwhile, the prospect of the U.S. Air Force operating nuclear-armed air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) from its strategic bombers has caused consternation in the Soviet camp. The winged subsonic missile, powered by a turbofan engine, is being developed by Boeing Aerospace. It should fly under power for the first time early next year.

The 14-foot long missile, which has a wing span of 6½ feet, can be prepackaged like an

outsized sausage. As soon as it leaves the mother plane, the missile's narrow wings swing forward like knife blades, the tail surfaces spring into position, and even the air intake pops up from the back of the fuselage. The engine lights, and the ALCM is away.

This packaging system allows a Boeing B-52 to carry 12 of the 1,900-pound missiles on its wings and eight internally. The Rockwell International B-1 supersonic bomber (which has yet to be approved for production) could carry 24, all internally.

There is no denying the force of the argument. American strategic bombers carrying a mix of ALCMs and short-range attack

missiles (SRAMs) would complicate the problem of defending the vast territories of the U.S.S.R. If combined with the formidable B-1 swing-wing bomber, they would force the Russians to rethink their entire strategy.

Not only could the ALCMs fly low over the ground, but also they would be capable of making diversionary sweeps to skirt known ground-to-air missile sites. They would be kept on course by a miniature computer that compares preprogrammed geographical features with the geography the missile "sees" during actual flight. And because ALCMs carry nuclear warheads, each one would have to be intercepted.

German court

Millions in needless storm damage