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Release to Wednesday PMs
December 11, 1957

From the Office of
Congressman Gerald R. Ford, Jr.
of Michigan

"The Truman Administration cancellation in June of 1947 of the only U. S. Intercontinental Ballistic Missile contract for the design and construction of a test vehicle prevented our nation from having an operational ICBM by 1953," Representative Gerald R. Ford, Republican of Michigan, stated following a review of the House appropriation hearings and a study of Defense Department information.

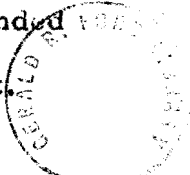
President Truman ordered the impounding of \$75 million of vital research and development funds in fiscal 1947 that resulted in the entire elimination of work on long-range supersonic guided missile types. In April 1946 an initial research and development contract for the design and construction of an ICBM test vehicle had been awarded to Convair which is the contractor for the current ICBM Atlas. Approximately 14 months later this important contract was cancelled as a consequence of the impounding of research and development funds by President Truman. Senator Stuart Symington, Democratic of Missouri, one of the critics of the missile program today, at that time was Assistant Secretary of the Army for Air. He also served as Secretary of the Air Force from September 18, 1947, to April 26, 1950.

This ICBM contract was not renewed with Convair until January 1951 after the start of the Korean War and then only on a limited or study basis. According to Congressman Ford, "if the original ICBM program had been pushed instead of cancelled for a three and one half year period, the United States would have had an operational ICBM by 1953."

President Eisenhower on February 19, 1947, then Chief of Staff for the War Department, in testifying before the subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations said the following:

"In the field of guided missiles, electronics and supersonic aircraft, we have no more than scratched the surface of possibilities which we must explore in order to keep abreast of the rest of the world. Neglect to do so could bring our country to ruin and defeat in an appallingly few hours. Those of us who were in Europe in the black days when Hitler was making his last desperate gamble with the V-I and V-2, know how close to success that gamble came. Yet those weapons, terrible and effective as they were, were child's toys in comparison with those which can be produced."

Despite this strong testimony by General Eisenhower in early 1947 as to the need to explore guided missiles, the Truman Administration impounded funds Congress had previously appropriated for research and development.



It is also pertinent to point out that in the same testimony before the committee General Eisenhower said,

"But there does exist, most emphatically, the necessity for a practical, farsighted, well-balanced, and forceful program for research and development. This program must be planned and operated on a continuing basis with authorizations available over a period of 4 or 5 years, if necessary, so that the most economical results can be obtained."

Representative Ford said, "It is obvious from the subsequent cancellation of the Convair ICBM contract, only 14 months after its initiation, that the Truman Administration was acting contrary to Eisenhower's military advice for the effective handling of research and development programs for modern weapons."

In addition Major General H. S. Aurand, Director of Research and Development for the War Department in the hearings on the military budget for fiscal year 1948 said on February 18, 1947, only a few months before the cancellation of this important ICBM contract by the Truman Administration, "To continue with the subject of funds required for research and development, we would like to repeat that, as an example the V-2 indicates, this is a very expensive undertaking. But, in addition, for efficient operation of research and development activity, it is essential that there be long-range continuity of effort. As you gentlemen realize, the accomplishment of long-range research objectives cannot be attained by a series of disconnected hand-to-mouth efforts. There is no scientific supermarket where one can drop in and casually purchase a new can of radar today and a pound of countermeasure tomorrow. Our ability to operate successfully is therefore dependent not only on the actual amount of funds in our hands at any given time, but also on the stability of our future."

Despite General Aurand's warning, the Truman Administration after the initiation of an ICBM contract in April of 1946 cancelled the same contract in the summer of 1947. The contract was not renewed until January of 1951. According to Congressman Ford, "this break in continuity in the funding of our research and development work on the ICBM by the Truman Administration resulted in the U. S. failure to have the long-range supersonic missiles ahead of the Soviet Union."

On March 6, 1947, Major General C. E. LeMay, then Assistant Chief of Air Staff Research and Development testified before the Military Establishment Appropriations Subcommittee of the House of Representatives that "When the \$75 million cut came it was the straw that broke the camel's back. It meant a cut of 20 to 30 per cent."

This withholding of research and development funds and the subsequent cancellation of the ICBM contract with Convair by the Truman Administration was made despite the emphatic statements of then General Eisenhower, General Aurand and General LeMay that continuity in military research and development was vital in the new weapon field, including missiles.

Franklin Buehl 1:00

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