

The Soviet ABMs Kissinger concealed

by Robert Gallagher

Henry Kissinger, as National Security Adviser to President Nixon and chairman of the National Security Council (NSC) Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) Verification Panel, disregarded and falsified corroborative intelligence estimates of the U.S. Army, the U.S. Air Force, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the Office of the Director of Defense Research and Engineering that the Soviets were deploying a nation-wide antiballistic missile (ABM) system.

Kissinger advised President Nixon that there was no conclusive evidence to support intelligence evaluations that the "Tallinn" air defense system based on the Soviet SA-5 missile had ABM potential, and treated it as a mere anti-aircraft system in his effort to bolster the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) with the SALT I.

The 1972 ABM Treaty between the United States and Soviet Union restricts each country to one anti-missile missile site each. The Soviet system covered by the treaty provides some protection for Moscow with its Galosh ABM missiles. The Tallinn ABM system—reports of which Kissinger disregarded—is now deployed at up to 16 sites around the Soviet perimeter, with a total of 1,200 launchers (see map). Some sources report that each missile is nuclear armed.

Most of the components of this system were deployed before the 1972 treaty was negotiated. The Reagan administration, soon after its inauguration, cited this system as a blatant violation of SALT I. Administration spokesmen expressed fears that the United States was now boxed in by the arrangement negotiated by Kissinger, because if Washington were to abrogate the treaty, such action could be followed by rapid Soviet deployment of a complete nation-wide ABM system.

John Newhouse reports in his book on the SALT negotiations:

What the Americans saw in 1965 was, they feared, just the tip of the iceberg. The existence of Galosh [the ABM system protecting Moscow—R.G.], of large missile- and space-tracking radars, and, withal, of Tallinn seemed to betray a broad Soviet ABM research and development program that, in time, would produce refinements leading to extensive protection of all urban Russia. . . . The Americans began to fear that the Tallin system might also be ultimately designed for defense against missiles, or, at the least, to serve dual purposes. As the SA-5 and its radars began to

be deployed in large numbers around the Russian perimeter, the Air Force argued—with some support from DIA—that it was illogical for the Soviets to commit such large resources against a diminished American bomber threat unless Tallinn was to have some ABM capability.

Several Defense Department officials, both liberals and conservatives, have testified to congressional committees that the United States deployed multiple, independently-targetable warheads (MIRVs) on its ballistic missiles to overwhelm a vast Tallinn ABM system. Paul Warnke, former aide to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1971 that "we made the decision to deploy MIRVs in the late 1960s when we feared that the so-called Tallinn air defense system might prove to be a large-area ABM deployment." Dr. John Foster, former Director of Defense Research and Engineering and a supporter of Dr. Edward Teller, told the Senate Subcommittee on Preparedness in 1968 that the Poseidon program (sea-based missiles with MIRVs) "was started mainly because of the uncertainty of the Tallinn threat."

The ink was barely dry on the ABM Treaty when the Soviets began to test the SA-5 as an ABM system in 1972 and 1973 in mock engagements with ICBM nose cones.

U.S. intelligence on the SA-5 is incomplete. For over 10 years, U.S. agencies confused the missile with a less powerful, anti-aircraft missile first detected near Tallinn, Estonia. The SA-5 missile, code named Gammon, has a range of at least 150 miles, is propelled by two or three solid rocket boosters, uses radar homing to seek its targets, and can intercept up to an altitude of 100,000 feet. The missile has gone through numerous upgradings since first deployed in 1967.

The Reagan administration reported in February 1981 detection of large phased-array ABM radars for acquisition and tracking that ring the U.S.S.R., with 10 about to become operational as part of the Tallinn system. The radars are said to reach out thousands of miles to acquire U.S. ICBMs as targets. In addition, the Soviets have developed a rapidly deployable mobile ABM radar, known as the ABM-X-3. Defense officials have compared the SA-5 to the U.S. Army's Nike-Zeus ABM. The Nike-Zeus, however, never had the powerful radars now guiding the SA-5.

