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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL BRIEFING

23 May 1957

LATEST SOVIET GUIDED MISSILE TEST ACTIVITIES

I. Since I last reported to the Council (24 January 1957) the latest intelligence on the Soviet guided missile program, we have acquired additional significant intelligence on Soviet ballistic missile test activities which I would like to review briefly this morning.

II. The Kapustin Yar Guided Missile Test Range is located just north of the Caspian Sea (see chart) and has been our primary source of information on Soviet ballistic missile activities. As you recall, in January we had identified three co-located outstations approximately 950 nautical miles downrange. At that time the purpose of these new stations could not be identified. [redacted]

[redacted] they are probably serving a new impact area. [redacted]

[redacted] practice "countdowns" indicates that ballistic missiles probably will be test fired to approximately 950 nautical miles within the near future, possibly by the end of this month. Previous ballistic missile firings on the Kapustin Yar Test Range have not exceeded approximately 650 nautical miles. We believe that, with a reduction in the estimated warhead weight of the 650 nautical mile missile from 6000-7000 pounds to 2000-3000 pounds without a significant loss in nuclear yield and with some structural improvements currently within Soviet capabilities, the range of the present 650 nautical mile missile could be readily increased to 950 nautical miles for test purposes and could have a maximum range of about 1200 nautical miles. This range would be sufficient to reach most European targets from launching sites within the USSR.

III. In addition to the above developments, we have acquired indications of Soviet preparations for possible firing of a test ICBM or an earth satellite vehicle. Our

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evidence consists primarily of guided missile associations with the Novokazalinsk and Klyuchi areas

IV. Analysis of all our available evidence leads us to believe that the Soviets are involved in preparations for the test firing of an ICBM or for the launching of an earth satellite vehicle from the Novokazalinsk area; either event would be compatible with our most recent National Estimate of Soviet capabilities in these fields. The Soviet ICBM is estimated to be a threat in the 1960-1961 period; to achieve this date, we would expect their flight testing program to commence at least two to three years earlier. The USSR has indicated an intention to orbit an earth satellite vehicle during the International Geophysical Year, July 1957 to December 1958.

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