

VIOLATING SALT : MOSCOW JAMS U.S. SATELLITES

Defense and intelligence officials have confirmed reports appearing on June 4 in the Washington Times and June 5 in Defense Daily that the Soviet Union continues to violate its arms control agreements with the U.S. The reports tell of Soviet jamming of U.S. satellites that monitor Soviet nuclear missile tests. According to the reports, electronic interference with U.S. satellites began last year after the Soviet downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007. Intelligence experts claim the interference is electronically precise, timed to coincide with Soviet missile test flights and clearly deliberate. This interference with U.S. satellites highlights the need for the U.S. to complete the testing of its anti-satellite system that is now under development.

For years the Soviets have been encrypting much of the telemetry from their missile tests, in violation of provisions of the SALT I and anti-ballistic missile agreements, and the commitment by Brezhnev to comply with the SALT II treaty. The agreements specifically prohibit interference in the national technical means of verification of the other party to the treaty. To the extent they interfere with U.S. verification efforts, both the encryption of missile test telemetry and the jamming of monitoring satellites constitutes such interference.

Last January 23, the President detailed to Congress seven Soviet violations of arms control agreements, one of which was the encryption of missile test telemetry. The main concern involved Soviet encryption of test data on the new SS-X-25 ICBM. The Soviets encrypted more than 90 percent of SS-X-25 test data to prevent the U.S. from verifying that the SS-X-25 is in fact a new missile. If it is, then it is the second new ICBM developed by Moscow since the SALT II agreement was signed in 1979. This violates the SALT II provision limiting each superpower to only one new missile.

Added to the continuing Soviet encryption of telemetry, the newly revealed electronic interference with U.S. satellites designed to gather information on Soviet missile tests presents a pattern of Soviet violations of both the letter and spirit of the arms control agreements they have signed.

Electronic interference with satellites is only one of a number of capabilities the Soviets have for anti-satellite (ASAT) activities. These include an operational orbital satellite interceptor that has been

tested at least 18 times, ground-based lasers with ASAT capabilities and nuclear-armed Galosh anti-ballistic missiles that can also be used against satellites. By contrast, the U.S. ASAT, which has been under development for years, has yet to be tested in space. The first test is scheduled for November, but on May 23 the House voted to prohibit the Defense Department from conducting space tests of the U.S. ASAT.

Last year the Soviet Union announced a moratorium on further ASAT testing in space if other countries did likewise. This clearly was an attempt to prevent the U.S. from catching up in ASAT capabilities. If the U.S. halts space testing, the Soviets will continue to have a much-tested operational ASAT plus other ASAT capabilities, while the U.S. would be left with an untested ASAT. In voting to prohibit U.S. ASAT testing, most House members were unaware that the Soviets had begun interfering with U.S. satellites through electronic means.

Soviet behavior in refusing to return to the START nuclear arms negotiations, together with their deliberate interference with U.S. satellites, should not be rewarded by a concession that would lock the United States into a position of inferiority in anti-satellite capabilities. The Defense Department should be permitted to conduct the planned operational test of the U.S. ASAT this fall.

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National Security Record

For further information:

Report to the Congress on U.S. Policy on ASAT Arms Control, The White House, March 31, 1984.

"The Fight for a U.S. Anti-Satellite Defense," National Security Record, June 1984.

"Arms Control Violations--The Military Response," National Security Record, March 1984.

Robert Foelber and Brian Green, "Space Weapons, the Key to Assured Survival," Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 327, February 2, 1984.