

Soviet military build up gaining momentum, Laird reports

WASHINGTON (AP)—Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird reported Tuesday the Soviet military build up "is showing greater momentum" than predicted a year ago, requiring the United States "to undertake a major new strategic initiative."

Laird said the administration's decision to accelerate development of a costly new missile-armed submarine force involves not only military but also political

and diplomatic considerations, including prospects for an arms-limitation agreement.

"This step must signal to the Soviets and our allies that we have the will and the resources to maintain sufficient strategic forces in the face of a growing Soviet threat," he told Congress in his annual defense report.

The Russians, Laird said again, already outstrip the United States in land-based ICBMs and will draw even in submarine-launched

missiles next year.

To allow them to achieve a large numerical superiority in missiles "would be diplomatically and politically unacceptable," he said in backing the Pentagon request for \$942 million in fiscal 1973 for developing a new undersea-launched missile system known as ULMS.

ULMS involves building a new missile and submarine, bigger, more difficult to detect and with greater range than the existing

Polaris-Poseidon craft. ULMS submarines are expected to cost at least \$1 billion apiece when the first boat goes to sea in 1978.

While Laird stressed the Soviet's growing lead in offensive missiles, he made no reference to the speed with which the U.S. is building its arsenal of nuclear warheads.

But comparative-strength charts in the secretary's report show that the United States, by installing multiple warheads (MIRVs)

on its land-based Minute Man and sea-based Poseidon missiles, will have in just one year added 1,000 warheads, bringing the U.S. total to 5,700. During this time, the Russians upped their total warhead force to 2,700, an increase of only 400.

Laird presented the new defense report as completing the transition begun three years ago to a strategy which seeks "to deter war, but insure adequate capabilities to protect our nation

and its interests should deterrents fail."

U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War "is coming to an end," Laird said, and the planning now is for America's long-range security needs.

Despite Soviet advances, Laird said he is confident the U.S. nuclear arsenal is sufficient to deter all-out war.

"This conclusion is valid provided that the improvement programs for existing forces, and

new programs that will be discussed later, are approved and developed, and provided that we are not faced with a serious technological surprise on the part of the Soviet Union," he said.

As for the developing Chinese threat, Laird reported they are not expected to have an ICBM capable of striking the United States until after 1975.

At home, Laird said the U.S. armed forces will reach by June 1973 their "base line force" of just under the 2.4 million men and women, the smallest in 23 years.

Laird renewed his pledge to end draft calls by July 1973 but said enlistment and retention rates in the armed services are still too low for an all-volunteer force.

Researchers say snowmobiles can cause deafness

CHICAGO (AP)—The noise from snowmobiles is potentially more damaging to hearing than that from most rock 'n' roll groups, two Michigan researchers say.

The noise levels of the heavy model of the winter sports vehicles "appear more intense than other forms of recreational and environmental noise," they report.

Dr. Fred H. Bess and Robert E. Poyner of the Hearing Clinic of Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, report on their study of snowmobile noise in the February issue of the Archives of Otolaryngology, published by the American Medical Association.

Many snowmobile drivers report a ringing in their ears and temporary hearing loss "after rides of even short duration," they say.

"Racing drivers have reported temporary losses varying from four to 14 days following competition racing," they add, and cite a case marked permanent hearing loss in one youth who had driven a high-power, "souped up" snowmobile for five years.

The Central Michigan study involved 12 drivers, ages 11 to 33, and five passengers, ages 6 to 30, with a median age of 14.

The subjects rode the vehicles for two hours in a cross-country "safari" and were tested before and after the ride.

Even at idle the noise level from 22-horsepower snowmobiles exceeded the levels considered to be potentially damaging, the researchers report.

Measured half an hour after the "safari," the subject still showed some hearing loss, they found.

They observed that most of the subjects tested in the study rode the snowmobile an average of two hours a day during the school week and three to five hours each on Saturday and Sunday.

Many snowmobilers ride for as long as eight hours on weekend trips, they noted.

The researchers said the noise levels produced by the 22-horsepower snowmobile should not be tolerated for more than eight minutes and those of the 26-horsepower engine for not more than two minutes.

"It seems certain," they said, "that snowmobile engine noise endangers hearing."

Consequently, they recommend that "drivers and riders should wear some form of protection when snowmobiling, and governmental public officials should establish and monitor safe maximum sound pressure levels for snowmobile engines."

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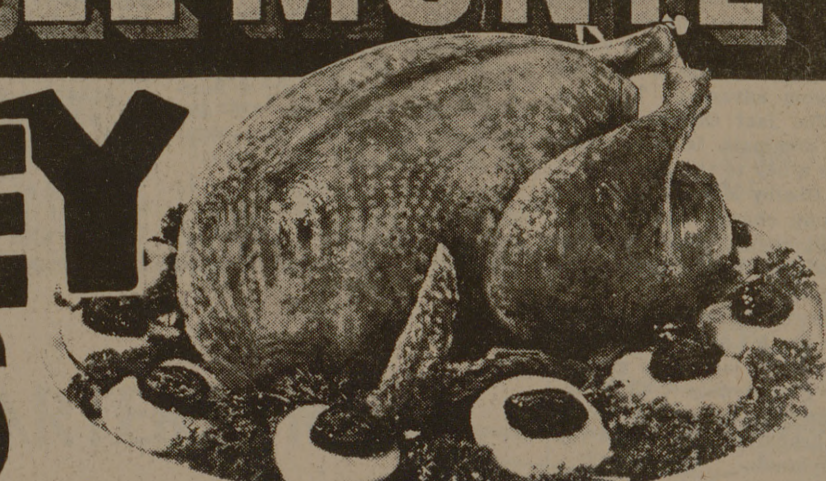
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