



III

SATURN HISTORY DOCUMENT
University of Alabama Research Institute
History of Science & Technology Group

Date ----- Doc. No. -----

THE MISSILE GAP: A STUDY OF THE FORMULATION OF
MILITARY AND PUBLIC POLICY
(1957-1961)

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty
of the
Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy
by
Edgar M. Bottome

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 1966

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Name: Edgar M. Bottome

Born: Logan, West Virginia, March 9, 1937

Married - No children

Education: Public High School in Logan, West Virginia
Vanderbilt University (1955-1959), Phi Beta Kappa,
A. B. Magna Cum Laude
The Fletcher School: M.A. 1960
M.A.L.D. 1962

Military Service: 1960-1962, First Lieutenant, United
States Army

Present Position: Instructor of Government, Boston Univer-
sity, Boston, Massachusetts

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE	
I NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND UNITED STATES STRATEGY (1945-1956)	1
II THE ORIGINS OF THE MISSILE GAP (1956-1957) ..	20
III THE INITIAL IMPACT OF THE MISSILE GAP DEBATE (1958)	62
IV THE DEBATE INTENSIFIES (1959)	92
V POLITICAL PARTISANSHIP AND THE AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY (1960)	128
VI THE MISSILE GAP MYTH DESTROYED (1961)	168
VII CONCLUSIONS	197
Soviet Strategy, American Intelligence and the Missile Gap	198
Budgetary, Partisan and Military Effects of the Missile Gap	230
The Impact of the Missile Gap Abroad	246
GLOSSARY	254
APPENDIX A - Comparative Weapons Systems of the United States and the Soviet Union (1950-1966)	259
APPENDIX B - Total United States Military Expenditures 1950-1964	274
APPENDIX C - Relevant Public Opinion Polls ..	275
BIBLIOGRAPHY	279
ABSTRACT	
VITA	

ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces and analyzes the complex and often contradictory factors which led to a popular belief in the United States that the Soviet Union possessed a commanding superiority over the United States in intercontinental ballistic missiles during the period 1958-1961. This illusion of a "missile gap" was created by the numerous Americans who feared that this Soviet superiority would lead to a devastating attack on United States retaliatory forces. The factors and forces which nurtured and maintained this belief constitute the subject matter of this paper.

In approaching the missile gap period, this writer has chosen to present a chronological unfolding of information as it was presented to the public at the time. This is intended to give the reader an unobstructed appreciation and understanding of the diversity of force involved, and the role played by each of these forces in the creation and destruction of the missile gap myth.

The reliability of the source material is handled with honest skepticism, since in many cases the degree of built-in bias of the author was either not known, or known so well as to discredit the authenticity of the information published; a single source rarely could be accepted as authoritative. For this reason, much of the analysis of the subject matter was possible only when later information became

available, and the various sources could be compared with more authoritative and corroborative information. The classified nature of much of the material also left unanswered questions which are noted in the text of this paper.

This paper is divided into three basic parts. The first is a single chapter providing an abbreviated survey of the relevant background information on United States defense policy from the end of World War II to 1956. In this chapter the evolvement of the post-war United States policy of containment and of the concept of strategic nuclear deterrence are discussed. The basic strategies and weapons systems advocated to implement this policy of containment through deterrence also are discussed.

The following five chapters trace the unfolding and eventual destruction of the missile gap myth. Here, evidence is presented to support the thesis of this paper which is that a multitude of interacting force combined to give rise to the illusion of American ICBM inferiority. Such factors as partisan political interests, military interservice rivalry, and the opinions found in the mass media are viewed in relation to the part they played in creating the belief in the missile gap. In addition, the question of Soviet missile capability versus military intent are examined in relation to American beliefs and pre-conceptions concerning these questions. Finally, the destruction of the missile illusion is analyzed and the destruction of the missile gap myth is completed.

The final chapter presents the analysis of the subject matter and it is here that conclusions and calculated speculations are found, based on the total evidence available in retrospect. This chapter is divided into three main sections dealing with the complex inter-relationship of:

- 1) Soviet Strategy, American Intelligence, and the Missile Gap;
- 2) Domestic Budgetary, Partisan and Military Effects of the Missile Gap; and
- 3) The Impact of the Missile Gap Abroad.