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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

11 April 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: Validity of Heavy Bomber Estimate in NIE 11-4-57

1. The Board of National Estimates and representatives of the IAC agencies have reviewed our latest estimate of Soviet long range bomber strength, NIE 11-4-57 dated 12 November 1957. We have focussed upon heavy bombers, since the medium bomber estimates do not appear to be in serious question. In paras. 135-139 we estimated that the number of heavy bombers and tankers in operational units would reach 150-250 in mid-1958 and 400-600 by mid-1960.\* The lower figures in these brackets were predicated upon moderately increasing rates of production at factories known to have been producing heavy bombers. The higher figures assumed the entry of additional factories into the heavy bomber program.

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\* There were several footnotes to these estimates. Air Force believed the strengths estimated above would all be bombers, and that additional tankers would be provided. Joint Staff and Army believed the higher figures in the brackets were excessive, and that even the lower figures would require an increase in production which was not evident nor indicated by trends. Navy believed that mid-1958 strength would almost certainly approximate the lower figure in the bracket.

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2. We now believe, in the light of subsequent evidence and the lack of indications which would support a rising curve of heavy bomber production, that the above estimate is in some important respects invalid. The available evidence suggests that:

(a) The rate of BISON heavy bomber production at Moscow/Fili, instead of increasing gradually after mid-1957, has decreased.

(b) The production of BEAR turboprop heavy bombers at Kuibyshev, if it has continued at all, has also been at a rate lower than previously estimated.

(c) No other factory is known to have entered the heavy bomber program, although plant expansion and other activities at some factories may reflect current preparations for bomber, transport, or tanker production.

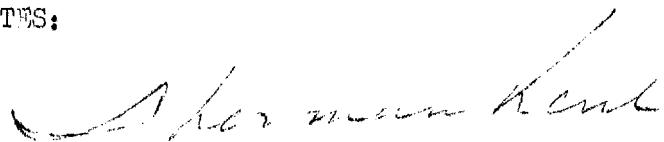
(d) Evidence on the activity of Long Range Aviation units does not demonstrate a continuing buildup in heavy bomber and tanker strength.

3. The trends cited above suggest that the predicted expansion of the BISON/BEAR force over the next few years will not be realized. In addition, the introduction of new heavy bombers, as discussed in SNIE 11-58, would have an effect on the estimates in NIE 11-4-57.

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4. In the light of discussion with representatives of the IAC agencies and the conclusions set forth above, the Board recommends that the IAC note this memorandum and direct the preparation of a new national intelligence estimate on the strength and composition of the Soviet long-range bomber force.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



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