

The Washington Merry-Go-Round | THE WASHINGTON POST B
Friday, August 28, 1953

H-Bomb Defense Speeded

By Drew Pearson

Now that Russia has the terrible H-bomb, civil-defense authorities are rushing plans to evacuate every major city in the United States at the first warning of an air attack. For the stark truth is that Soviet bombers, streaking low over our radar at night, cannot be stopped.



Pearson

While it's been decided to evacuate major cities, a lot of other problems remain unsolved and undecided. One of the biggest problems is how to get the advance warning in time to organize a mass evacuation. Even on short notice, however, civil-defense experts still think the best solution is to alert the population to flee out of town as fast as possible.

Bomb shelters can be built to withstand the force of an atomic blast, but the scorching, searing devastation of a hydrogen explosion can reduce a city the size of New York to charcoal in one blow. As a result, civil-defense authorities have decided it is no use to build shelters; more practical to concentrate on mass-evacuation plans.

In fact, civil defense has already tangled with the military behind the scenes over what to do with the people once they are evacuated. Civil-defense planners prefer to let each individual work out his own problem, and drift back into town at his leisure after the danger is over.

Military leaders want to organize the construction and factory workers, however, so they can be whisked back into town at once to rebuild the blitzed factories or to resume production without delay if the town is spared.

Surprise Raids Are Easy

Meanwhile, it is our air-raid warning net that has civil-defense officials worried. The Air Force has built an invisible wall of radar across the Canadian border and down both coasts. Each major city is also ringed with radar and anti-aircraft guns. Only gaps are along our southern frontier, which is relatively safe from Russian long-range bombers.

However, it's revealing no secret that Soviet bombers, flying low at night, could escape detection until right on top of the radar screen. Only then would our radar-guided night fighters start seeking them out and attacking them one at a time. While this grim game of hide-and-seek was going on, the majority of the bombers would be certain to get through to New York, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, Washington—particularly if they crashed the radar wall at scattered points.

Of course, Air Force scientists are working feverishly in secret Boston laboratories to find a foolproof air-raid warning system. They have invented one device, which should give the United States several hours advance notice of any suspicious flights over one route enemy bombers might take to the United States—provided the new device works. However, scientists fear that electronics equipment can be depended upon only half the time in certain climates.

No Attack Soon

As for the likelihood of a Soviet H-bomb attack, our experts are convinced the Russians have not yet consolidated the H-bomb ingredients into an actual bomb, though this is just a matter of time. Our own scientists have built a bomb which is so large it can barely be squeezed into the bomb-bay of our biggest planes. However, it will be difficult to drop the bomb without destroying the plane that carries it.

Russia's long-range bomber, the TU-4, can be modified to carry an H-bomb in time. Meanwhile, the Russians could convert submarines into makeshift H-bombs that could be exploded along our coast, spreading radioactive spray that would kill all life for miles inland.

The Navy has posted picket ships, equipped with sensitive sonar devices, along the coast to listen for marauding submarines. However, even the Navy acknowledges that this sonar barrier is not foolproof.

Until a better warning net is invented, the Air Force argues that the best defense against a Russian H-attack is the power to retaliate. Only the Air Force has the means to deliver A-bombs and H-bombs to the Russian heartland. Just as Russian planes can penetrate our defenses, Air Force planes can get through the Russian defenses by saturation raids—namely, hitting Russia from several sides at once.

Yet it was the Air Force, our first line of defense, that took the entire five-billion-dollar defense cut.

Note—The Russian H-bomb explosion has jarred Secretary of Defense Wilson and Deputy Secretary Kyes into thinking they may have made a mistake cutting the Air Force so drastically.

No Pentagon AWOLs

Top brass around the Pentagon are having trouble these days getting the afternoon off.

With such efficiency experts as Charlie Wilson and his assistant, Roger Kyes, in the driver's seat, even high-ranking officers have to watch their working hours.

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Read Drew Pearson's column every day in The Washington Post. Hear him on WTOP radio at 6:45 p. m. Sunday.