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Soviet Union Increases Nuclear-Armed Subs off U.S.

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Eastern European Deployments Rise

The **Soviet** Union had increased the number of submarines carrying nuclear missiles off U.S. coasts, Marshal Dmitri **Ustinov**, the **Soviet** defense minister, announced May 20. The missiles, according to **Ustinov**, were capable of striking U.S. targets within eight to 10 minutes.

Ustinov, in an interview with the official **Soviet** news agency, Tass, confirmed that the increase in sea-based missiles was one of a number of **Soviet** countermeasures announced in response to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's deployment of U.S. intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Western Europe. [See 1983 [Andropov Announces Steps to Counter NATO Deployment; Missiles to Be Based at Sea](#)]

Pershing II missiles deployed in West Germany, **Ustinov** said, would take only "eight to 10 minutes" to reach "targets and peaceful cities" in Warsaw Pact countries. "But this is an illusory advantage," he said. "We have increased the number of our submarines with nuclear missiles aboard off the coasts of the U.S.A. In terms of their characteristics--yield, accuracy, the ability to reach targets on the territory of the United States and the flight time to target--**Soviet** sea-based missiles create a counterbalance equal to the threat that is posed to **us** and our allies by the American missiles in Europe."

In addition to the sea-based missile deployments, **Ustinov** said, Moscow would increase its European nuclear arsenal in response to the NATO buildup. "In case of further growth of the American nuclear missile potential in Europe," he said, "we will accordingly increase the number of SS-20 missiles in the European part of the U.S.S.R." In addition, he warned, Moscow would increase the deployment of "operational-tactical missiles," begun earlier in the year in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. [See 1984 [Other International News: U.S. 'Copter Chased in Czech Airspace](#)]

Ustinov's warning followed a defense ministry announcement carried by Tass May 14 that new **Soviet** missiles were being deployed in East Germany. "An additional number of **Soviet** enhanced-range theater missile complexes," the announcement said, "is being stationed on the territory of the German Democratic Republic as a response measure to the deployment of American missiles on the territory of Western European countries."

Reagan Discounts Threat

President Reagan, asked at a White House press conference May 22 about the nature of the **Soviet** threat, discounted the importance of the additional submarines. [See 1984 [Economy: Reagan Optimistic on Economy](#)]

"If I thought there was some reason to be concerned about them, I wouldn't be sleeping in this house tonight," Reagan said. "No, this isn't really anything new. They're announcing and they're publicizing, but those submarines are off both our coasts."

"They've had submarines in and out and patrolling there for extended periods of time," Reagan added. "Maybe there's one or two more than had been there at one time in the past, but I think again, it is in keeping with their talk about **us** putting the Pershings in Europe and that they're now going to show **us** that they can do something in return if we do that. So they have the submarines offshore. But, no, I don't think they pose any particular threat at all."

Administration officials said the White House was seeking to prevent a widely perceived deterioration in U.S.-**Soviet** relations from becoming a major campaign issue that could damage the President's image.

U.S. Navy Secretary John Lehman had announced Feb. 14 that new **Soviet** Delta-class submarines previously stationed in the Arctic had been moved to the North Atlantic in response to the NATO deployments. Lehman estimated that the new submarines were at least 400-500 miles (600-800 kilometers) off the U.S. coast.

Lehman said the Delta submarines were apparently replacing the Yankee-class submarines that had patrolled the Atlantic and Pacific since 1971. However, he said the new submarines were more vulnerable in the Atlantic than they had been in the Arctic and their missiles were less accurate.

"I invite them to deploy all their Deltas there," Lehman told reporters. "The purpose is to send **us** a political message, but from a military standpoint, it pleases **us**."

Lehman declined to disclose how many Deltas were stationed off the Atlantic coast, but unidentified Navy officials estimated that there were between four and six.

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