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SOVIET SABOTAGE OF SDI?

Are the Soviets engaged in a worldwide strategy to sabotage our SDI and space programs and terrorize those participating in them? The disasters have cost billions of dollars, the coincidences are startling, and they cry out for immediate investigations by the Senate and House Select Committees on Intelligence.

Let's catalogue the catastrophes and coincidences.

1. On January 28, our space shuttle Challenger, launched from Cape Canaveral in Florida, exploded seconds after take-off, killing the entire crew.

2. On April 18, a Titan II (our most dependable rocket), launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, blew up five seconds after lift-off, destroying a badly-needed reconnaissance satellite.

3. On April 25, a Nike-Orion rocket, carrying a scientific probe, misfired after a NASA lift-off from the New Mexico desert. This was the first failure after 55 successful launches.

4. On May 3, a Delta rocket, launched from Cape Canaveral in Florida, had to be destroyed by ground controllers after a mechanical malfunction sent it spinning out of control 70 seconds after lift-off. This was the first failure after 43 straight successes, and destroyed a $57 million weather satellite.

The previous reliability for these rockets was impressive. The shuttle had a 100 percent success record; the reliability of the other three systems was 95 percent. The chance of four failures in a row, from launches conducted by two different agencies (NASA and the Department of Defense) from different launch sites, are mathematically astronomical.

The specific cause of each failure was different, but most of these rockets had to be destroyed by radio command from the ground to prevent debris from falling into population areas. As a result of the loss of these American reconnaissance satellites, the U.S. no longer has the capability of putting satellites into orbit to monitor Soviet nuclear

deployments and serve as early-warning systems against a missile attack.

5. On May 30, the French Ariane rocket exploded at the Kourou launch site in French Guinea. The French have reopened their investigation because of new information that sabotage may have caused the failure. The French say it would have been easy for one well-placed person to have caused the disaster by sabotage.

6. On July 18, 1983, 34-year-old U.S. Air Force Captain William Howard Hughes, Jr., whose job included training officers to destroy rockets that malfunction after launch, was sent to the Netherlands to work with NATO. He disappeared and has never been seen again. Our intelligence agencies believe that Hughes defected to the Soviet Union or was captured by Soviet agents. On December 8, 1983, the Air Force declared him a deserter.

Hughes had been the "lead analyst" of the Command Control and Communication Surveillance Systems at the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center at Kirkland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, N.M. His knowledge is more valuable to the Kremlin than the information transmitted by the spies who were recently prosecuted.

7. On the morning of the Challenger launch on January 28, 1986, four Soviet spy ships were in Florida waters. The Soviets have consistently stationed their electronic spy vehicles, disguised as trawlers, as close to every U.S. space launch as the Coast Guard would allow, in order to gather data on our shuttle's performance.

Four hours before the Challenger disaster, the Soviet spy ships suddenly steamed northeast at full speed. No explanation was ever offered. Why were they mysteriously absent from the scene of the only shuttle disaster we've had?

8. On July 9, Karl Heinz Beckurts, a prominent nuclear physicist and research chief of West Germany's largest electronics company, Siemen's Corporation, was killed in Munich by a powerful remote-controlled bomb that destroyed his car while he was driving to work. A note left at the scene of the attack identified the Red Army Faction of the infamous terrorist Baader-Meinhof Gang as the criminals, and their motive as Beckurts' involvement with the American SDI.

It is possible that the five disasters, the disappearance, the departure of the Soviet ships, and the death are all coincidences. But the vast U.S. intelligence gathering apparatus, in Congress and the Administration, owes the American people a thorough investigation and public disclosure of the evidence.