

**October 6, 1959**

**Report by the Director of CC CPSU Department of  
Military Industry on the American 'Discoverer'  
Satellites**

**Citation:**

"Report by the Director of CC CPSU Department of Military Industry on the American 'Discoverer' Satellites", October 6, 1959, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Translated for CWIHP by Daniel Rozas. <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/120751>

**Summary:**

Report outlining the need to organize systematic observation of newly launched American "Discoverer" satellites to determine their orbit and radio frequencies.

**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

Top secret

CC CPSU

The Chairman of the Committee of State Security under the USSR Council of Ministers, cde. Shelepin, addressed the CC CPSU with the question of organizing systematic observation of American Earth satellites "Discoverer."

We report on the matter.

According to information from the American press, the military ministry [sic] of the United States of America has been periodically carrying out launches of artificial Earth satellites of the model "Discoverer." The frequencies and other technical data, as well as orbit parameters of these satellites, are not mentioned in the press. It is possible that the "Discoverer" satellites are used for studying the earth surface with the help of television cameras and other instruments, that is for surveillance purposes. It can be assumed also that the Americans want to use these satellites to tie together triangulation data of the USA Geological Service with the necessary geodesic points in the territory of the Soviet Union, with the goal of obtaining initial data for firing ballistic missiles.

Observation of "Discoverer" satellites is not currently being carried out from the territory of the Soviet Union. Work for orbit determination is not being carried out either. The establishment of the flight of a satellite over the territory of the country and the determination of the parameters of its orbit are possible only through the capture of radio signals relayed by the satellite transmitters, for which it is necessary in the first place to know their working range of frequencies. Ordinary radio surveillance in a broad range of frequencies, even if well organized, will be difficult, especially if the satellite is programmed or instructed from the ground to periodically cut off transmission.

Consequently, to simplify the task, it is necessary, in addition to organizing a network of radio-technical investigation within Soviet Union's territory, to use agents to immediately obtain information on the range of frequencies employed the transmitters on these satellites.

In order to take steps to combat these satellites, the parameters of their orbits obtained through radio-technical investigation must be verified by optical means.

Thus, locating the "Discoverer" Earth satellites, determining exactly their coordinates and designing means to combat them presents a difficult assignment, which will require employing the forces of many organizations.

In connection with this, we believe it necessary to entrust the Commission on Military-Industrial Questions under the USSR Council of Ministers Presidium, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defense (Chief surveillance department), the Committee of State Security, the Ministry of Communication and the State Committee on Radio-Electronics, to examine cde. Shelepin's memorandum and three months' time present the necessary proposals to the CC CPSU.

Director of CC CPSU Department of Military Industry  
(signature) I. Serbin  
6.X.59