

Bungling Brass, Red Tape Delay Plane Production

Editor's note: This is the first of a series of six articles documenting a serious situation in military aircraft production which imperils our national security.

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New York Herald Tribune News Service

Washington—Pentagon indecision in top places and a massive system of petty bureaucracy on lower levels is seriously hamstringing this country's production of warplanes.

This conclusion is based on a six-week survey by a team of New York Herald Tribune reporters. The survey was started after some manufacturers and Pentagon officials had expressed grave concern over the inefficiency, delays and muddling encountered in aircraft programs.

These worries had been voiced privately to these reporters. They now have been checked and cross-checked with many leading airplane producers and Pentagon officials. The reports are being confirmed.

Superiority Over USSR Open Question
At stake is the national security. Today it is an open question whether this country still has quantitative and qualitative air superiority over the U.S.S.R.

Already the Soviets are producing more planes than the United States. They are fast approaching us in the quality of their new aircraft. And unless this country drastically changes today's situation, our Air Chiefs say, the U.S.S.R. soon may rule the skies.

The lag in this country's aircraft production is mostly in what is called "lead time." This is the time required to bring out a new bomber or fighter, from inception of the first study through all the stages of design and development to actual production.

Compare the B-29 Superfortress, heavy bombers designed by the United States and the U.S.S.R. to carry hydrogen bombs. It took the United States eight to nine years' lead time to bring into production its first B-29.

By contrast, the Soviets produced the Bison, their 6,000-mile-range heavy bomber, in four to five years. Our Air Force was astonished when a single Bison flew in the Moscow air show in 1954, proving that we no longer held a monopoly on jet-powered international carriers of nuclear weapons. There was consternation in our Air Force when the Soviets flew 12 Bisons at the 1955 Moscow air show, proving they were producing quantities of their big bombers.

The Russians also are closing the quality gap.

EXAMPLE—It took the United States five years—from 1948 to 1953—to produce our first supersonic fighter, the F100 Super Sabre. By the spring of 1955—a year and a half earlier—the U.S.S.R. was producing scores of its supersonic fighter, the Farmer. At the 1955 Moscow air show, the Soviets publicly exhibited 46 of these swept-wing warplanes.

EXAMPLE—During World War II the United States experimented with jet engines but the Soviets did little or nothing in this field. Yet by 1944 the U.S.S.R. had turned out a jet engine with an estimated 20,000 pounds thrust, far more powerful than anything this country had then. Only now are we starting to produce an engine in this class, the General Electric J79. The Soviets in the meantime have had two years to improve their 1954 engine. Major efforts on futuristic planes needed.

These Soviet advances are all the more perilous in view of still another fact: The experts say that guided missiles will not replace piloted aircraft for several years. Unless this country extends major efforts on more futuristic warplanes and engines in those years, the U.S.S.R. may capture the air lead.

Why is this country slow in turning out advanced-type aircraft, jet engines and electronic equipment for warplanes?

In an attempt to pinpoint the causes, this team of reporters visited aircraft, jet engine and electronics plants from the East to the West coast. And many of the top Pentagon officials were consulted.

As manufacturers examined with these reporters the life histories of some of today's and tomorrow's combat airplanes, there emerged two broad reasons for excessive lead time in getting new airplanes into the air:

1. Indecision in Pentagon aircraft planning and programming, and Air Force conservatism and rigidity in holding manufacturers to Air Force "rules" while the plane is being built. Intelligence reports indicate that Soviet aircraft programming is much more direct and decisive.

2. The sudden, new complexity of supersonic-electronic warplanes. In itself, this automatically is extending lead time. This applies to the U.S.S.R. as well as this country.

Combining these findings from manufacturers came a surprisingly frank admission from an Air Force general who participated on the top level in the United States' aircraft programs:

For obvious reasons—including a recent recommendation by a Defense Department committee that officials be disciplined if they publicly discuss security matters—the general would not allow his name to be used.

Administrative Delay Major Factor

"One of the major factors in lead time is administrative delay," he said. "That adds perhaps 10 to 25 per cent to production time."

Explaining "administrative delay," almost as if echoing bitter complaints from some manufacturers, he laid much of the blame on an ever-growing number of Defense Department and Air Force committees and groups which must approve an aircraft program before it gets under way.

"This compounds delay when engineering changes or alterations are suggested for aircraft," he said. "If you want to add something to a fighter or bomber, or change something, approvals from multiple committees are necessary."

He further pointed out that the Air Force must justify its aircraft programs annually to Congress to obtain funds to carry them out, and must explain its programs whenever there is a change of high-ranking personnel in the Air Force or the Administration.

"The B-52 program was well underway when Harold Talbott came in as Air Force secretary (in 1953)," he said. "It had to be justified to him. When Talbott left and Donald Quarles took over as secretary, the program had to be explained and justified again."

All the aircraft manufacturers interviewed agree that lead time can be reduced—even sharply slashed. This is the way, they say, to do it:

1. Cut the decision time in the Pentagon. Major, green-light, go-ahead decisions are stalled for months and even years while Pentagon boards, committees, study groups, agencies and sub-agencies fight out their differences on aircraft projects to final, belated agreement.

EXAMPLE—The B-52 was first conceived as a study project in 1946. But not until 1949 did the Air Force authorize engineering work on a prototype.

EXAMPLE—The J79 jet engine now is being produced but the Pentagon has not yet authorized—after a year of discussion and study—the manufacturing research for the next generation of jet engines which must power the long-range bombers of 1970.

2. End the red tape and rivers of paper work imposed on manufacturers by lower-echelon Air Force supervisory groups which hang over the aircraft producers' shoulders all the way from drawing board to flight line.

EXAMPLE—"We have to struggle daily through a mass of bureaucratic pulp," said one expert supervising production of a much-needed fighter. "We are making this airplane despite the Air Force."

3. Provide smoother programming and funding for advanced research, on such projects as pocket-sized power plants to drive six-foot missiles at supersonic speeds, tires to withstand heat several times the boiling point of water.

EXAMPLE—"Getting decisions out of the Pentagon to enable us to go ahead is like digging in a clam bed," said Robert E. Gross, president of the Lockheed Aircraft Corp., makers of the F104 "Starfighter," the world's best ultra-sonic, lightweight fighter plane.

With all respect to the many highly competent and dedicated people in the Pentagon, the Pentagon "system" itself is needlessly delaying the decisions we must have to get started on designs.

Then, when we get those first decisions and build a prototype of a new plane, we enter into another period of waiting while the Pentagon makes up its mind about the go-ahead for production."

EXAMPLE—William Allen, president of Boeing Airplane Co., which makes the B-52, long-range, nuclear bomb carrier, declared

Britain Will Seek Deferment in Interest Payments

Gold, Dollar Reserves Plunge To New Low

London — (U.P.) — Chancellor of the Exchequer Harold Macmillan said today Britain will seek to defer interest payments due the United States and Canada to ease the economic pressure resulting from the Suez crisis.

The money saved, he said, will be used to pay for emergency shipments of oil from the United States.

Reserves At New Low
Macmillan made his announcement as Britain's gold and dollar reserves plunged to a grave new low. November's drop of \$279 million was the greatest since 1952, but Macmillan said the government was determined to maintain the British pound at \$2.80.

He said Britain also plans to reduce its \$1.3 billion contribution to the international monetary fund and perhaps to sell some of its dollar securities to bolster dwindling reserves of hard currency.

Higher Gasoline Prices
He announced increases in prices and customs duties on oil which will boost the price of gasoline in this country to 84 cents a gallon. But he said he hopes no further "austerity" measures will be needed.

Macmillan said he already has asked the U.S. government to approve a waiver of the \$70.38 million interest payment due Dec. 31 on America's \$3.75 billion postwar loan to Britain. Authorities in Washington have agreed to ask Congress to approve the request, he said.

Principal To Be Paid
If Congress agrees to defer the interest payment, the chancellor said, he will ask Canada for a similar waiver on the \$22.2 million interest due that country at the end of the year.

He said repayments of principal to the two nations, \$56.2 million to the United States and \$15.5 million to Canada, will be made on schedule.

County Gets Share Of Forest Receipts

Jackson county yesterday received a \$219,226.65 check as its share of receipts from national forest land within the county, during the 1955-56 fiscal year, Karl Janouch, county treasurer, has reported.

Twenty-five per cent of the total, \$55,856.66, is being placed into the county school fund and 75 per cent, or \$163,369.99, is being placed in the county's general road fund.

Jackson county has 394,335 acres of national forest land, including portions of the Klamath, Rogue River and Umpqua national forests.

The total acreage was somewhat higher before changes by Congressional action took effect. Due to the delayed enactment of the change, the county received an overpayment of \$2,073.13 last year. This amount was deducted from this year's total before the county received yesterday's check.

The \$219,226.65 net revenue share is 14.4 per cent more than the county received last year, Janouch said.

Charles Porter Stops En Route to Washington

Congressman-elect Charles O. Porter, Eugene, was in Medford briefly this morning, en route to Washington, D.C., with his family. He takes office when the 85th Congress convenes in January.

The Porters plan to go by way of southern California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, combining a brief vacation with the trip east.

Porter was a frequent visitor here during the campaign, in which he defeated Republican Congressman Harris Ellsworth, Roseburg.

that, although Pentagon problems are complex, "there is room for improvement in the decision time."

EXAMPLE—J. O. Yeasting, vice president for finance and a director of Boeing, said that "paper work nuisance and excessive supervision of manufacturing detail" are hampering factors in reducing aircraft lead time.

Time-Wasting Factor in Design Phase
EXAMPLE—Gen. Joseph T. McNamery (U.S.A.F., Ret.) president of Convair, producer of the new supersonic F102 all-weather fighter-interceptor and the supersonic B58 medium jet bomber, says:

"The biggest time-wasting factor is in the design phase. Fifteen months were used up deciding on the design for the F102."

But the Pentagon, despite sharp Congressional questioning, defends its methods. In discussing manufacturers' complaints about United States' warplane programs, Air Force Secretary Donald Quarles gave this answer:

"We could tell a manufacturer to get out an aircraft in one-third the time it takes today, but that aircraft then might be obsolete when we got it."

The Air Force attempts to build into its airplanes—even while they are on the production line—the latest aeronautical advances and developments. "We try to reach the best compromise," Quarles said, "and we're not always sure if we do."

But, he added, just because aircraft manufacturers criticize Air Force aircraft programs is no proof those programs are faulty. To the manufacturers' complaints about Air Force "interference," Quarles replied "you cannot say they (the programs) are wrong just because of that; if there was no 'interference' the programs might be worse."

Tomorrow's article: The B-52, a case study of delays, indecision and snafu.

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Afro-Asian Bloc Put On Spot In Hungary Resolution

Vote To Seek Friday Deadline for Observers

United Nations, N.Y.—(U.P.)—India's indications it would vote for a resolution giving Hungary until Friday to admit U.N. observers put the rest of the fence-straddling Afro-Asian bloc on the spot today.

The Afro-Asian bloc has been loud in its condemnations of Anglo-French actions in the Suez Canal Zone but slow to condemn Soviet Russia for its bloody intervention in Hungary.

The United States and 13 supporting nations have submitted a resolution setting a Friday deadline on the admission of U.N. observers, and calling on Russia to withdraw its troops. Seek Face Saving

The Arab delegations in particular among the Afro-Asian nations were looking for a face-saving way to vote on the resolution. They do not wish to risk displeasing the Soviet Union which has given them arms, but they also do not want to be condemned by the West for failing to participate.

Twenty-two speakers were listed for debate.

There were strong indications that India, generally conceded to be the most powerful member of the Afro-Asian bloc, would vote for the resolution. An Indian delegation spokesman said it would be guided by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's foreign policy speech in New Delhi Monday.

Nehru rejected outright Communist claims the Hungarian uprising was a "Fascist plot." And he said Hungary's refusal to admit U.N. observers might mean charges of mass deportations are "partly true."

In Budapest, a government spokesman admitted that Hungarians had been deported but claimed they have all been returned.

Shows Bring Relief From Fog in Valley

A storm front moving across southern Oregon last night brought welcome relief from heavy fog which has clung to the valley floor during the past few weeks.

Rainfall during the storm measured .08 inch, and the Medford weather bureau forecast mixed rain and snow showers in the valley tonight and tomorrow, with generally cloudy skies continuing. Snow was forecast in the mountains.

The storm reversed temperatures conditions in the valley which caused the fog. Weather bureau officials said air aloft is cooler than valley air. During the past few weeks, valley air has been much cooler than air aloft, resulting in a layer of heavy fog.

The fog started clearing between 9 and 10 p.m. yesterday.

Weather

FORECAST Generally cloudy tonight and Wednesday with snow showers in mountains and mixed rain and snow showers in valley. Low tonight 38. High Wednesday 45.

Highest Yesterday 51
Lowest this Morning 31

Our Skies Tonight

Sunrise 7:34 a.m.
Sunset 4:39 p.m.
Moonset 7:03 p.m.
First Quarter Dec. 19

PROMINENT STARS
Sirius, Rigel, Regulus, Vega, 8:24 p.m.
Antares, 11:01 p.m.

VISIBLE PLANETS
Mars, in the south 7:14 p.m.
Jupiter, low in east 1:37 a.m.
Venus, in the southeast at sunrise.

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