

The Long-Range Implications of Sputnik III

On May 24, the Board of Directors of the Air Force Association, meeting at Dallas, Tex., adopted the following statement. As a service to Air Force readers, we reprint the statement, in view of its important commentary on the post-Sputnik defense posture of the United States vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, months after the launching of a first Russian satellite and the consequent beginning of the space age. We believe the statement expresses some hard facts that sooner – better than later – must be digested thoroughly by every American.

Sputnik III, as large and as heavy as an American Automobile, has been orbiting the Earth for more than a week.

The gloomy, long-range implications of its presence have been largely ignored on this side of the Atlantic.

We are preoccupied with tax cuts and the distance to the Dodgers' left-field fence.

United States prestige is at a new low in almost every part of the world. Spectacular Soviet successes stand out in sharp relief against a backdrop of American complacency in a time of peril.

What does Sputnik III really mean?

- *The Soviet Union is at least a year ahead of the United States in space technology.*
- *The Soviet Union has developed rocket motors powerful enough to deliver megaton bombs on any target in this hemisphere.*
- *At the present rates of progress of the two nations, the Soviet Union soon will be in position to dictate terms to the Free World.*

We must regain world leadership, particularly in ballistic missile capability and space technology. We cannot hope to accomplish these goals under present half-measure programs.

The time for decision is now. Our elected representatives in both the executive and legislative branches of our government must make the painful choices between “business as usual” and “investment for survival.”

The American people, today more than ever before in our history, need to be informed of the real facts respecting the position of the United States vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in this many-sided struggle. Its outcome will determine whether the peoples of the world can be free or

whether they will be Soviet slaves. We must have candor, to a degree seldom practiced in recent years. We need public dissemination of vital information now locked up by senseless security regulations. Armed with the facts, the people of America have always had the intelligence and the courage to do what is necessary and right.

We call upon the President to place the facts before the people, take us into his confidence, clarify the threat, present an affirmative plan of action to regain initiative for the Free World. —
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