

UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

28 March 1955

Dear Mr. President:

The attached which you may have noticed in the press this morning was not another in the series of leaks about weapons but merely a precautionary statement put out to prevent apprehension by observers of the high altitude test (40,000 feet) which will be seen for long distances.

Respectfully,

Lewis L.



Lewis L. Strauss

The President
The White House

encl.

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Atomic Blast Six Miles Up To Test New Air Defense

Nuclear Warhead For Missiles Used To Be Tried Out Soon in Nevada

By Darrell Garwood
International News Service

The Pentagon announced last night that history's highest nuclear explosion would be set off over Nevada soon to prove that atomic antiaircraft warheads can be used safely in the defense of American cities.

The great altitude of the detonation, presumably about five or six miles, will so minimize ground radiation that a person standing even directly beneath the explosion would suffer a radiation dose less than one-hundredth of that involved in a standard chest X-ray.

A new era in anti-bomber defenses is expected to result. Whole fleets of enemy planes might be destroyed by a single atomic blast, and lone attackers could be knocked down even though a missile missed its mark by as much as a half-mile.

Designed for Missiles
The high-altitude antiaircraft warheads, including several being tested at lower levels during the current Nevada series, are designed for firing in ground-launched guided missiles such as the Army's "Nike" and in rockets carried under the wings of jet fighter planes.

A carefully worded statement issued jointly by the De-

fense Department and the Atomic Energy Commission said:

"Because of their great power, atomic air defense weapons will greatly increase our ability to repel an enemy air attack.

The employment of such weapons for air defense purposes will enhance the effectiveness of interceptor aircraft squadrons and ground-based air defense units in stopping enemy bombers short of our cities and other strategic targets.

"By providing this added effectiveness to our defenses, atomic weapons produce a further deterrent to aggression against the free world."

No Damage Feared

The statement added: "Although such a weapon exploded at these altitudes (many thousands of feet) can destroy aircraft within a considerable distance from the point of burst, no damage or injury from blasts, heat or nuclear radiation is anticipated to property or individuals from this test."

The nuclear radiation on the ground even directly beneath the point of detonation of this defensive weapon could be measured only with the most sensitive of scientific instruments and a person exposed could receive less than a hundredth of the dose received in a standard chest X-ray.

The statement mentioned no specific missiles, but made clear that warheads casting the atom in its first purely defensive role can also be fitted into much smaller rockets carried by fighter planes.