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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 20, 1959

STAFF NOTES NO. 550

1. MIDAS. -- Project MIDAS (Missile Defense Alarm Satellite) is aimed at a reliable operational satellite-borne missile-alarm capability in 1962. Satellites on polar orbits will carry detection scanners to watch large areas of the upper atmosphere for infra-red emanations from ballistic missiles rising above the atmosphere. The alarm will be transmitted instantaneously to Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) sites and relayed to ZI intelligence and operations centers, providing maximum alert time. A successful MIDAS system would complement BMEWS and increase warning time 65% to 100%. An initial MIDAS launch is scheduled from Cape Canaveral in November, to be followed every other month by one of three more, using ATLAS boosted vehicles on orbits near 300 n. mi. altitude. A follow-on series at higher orbital altitudes will be conducted from Vandenberg. (S)



2. Missing DISCOVERER Capsule. (Ref: SN #533). -- We do not consider it likely that the Soviets will return the DISCOVERER II capsule lost near Spitzbergen, if they have it. However, we have delivered a note for the record, with the concurrence of the Norwegians, asking the Soviets to cooperate in recovering the capsule and requesting any information about it they may have. State does not intend to release the note to the press at present. (S)

3. US Business Census. -- Commerce will announce tomorrow that businesses operating in the US numbered 4.6 million at the beginning of 1959, an increase of 1.25% over the year, with the largest gains (about 2.5%) in services and finance. During 1958, 411,000 concerns were newly established and 356,000 firms went out of business. (Admin. Conf.)

4. US-USSR. -- The USSR wishes to begin preparation for extension of the Cultural Exchange Agreement which ends in January 1960. We believe an extension is in our interest. Rather than postponing discussions until conclusion of the Foreign Ministers' and possible Summit meetings, we prefer to show confidence in the current Geneva talks and have proposed Exchange Agreement negotiations for late June or early July. (C)

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