

U.S. Speeds Building Of Atom Bomb Planes

By WILLIAM THEIS

WASHINGTON, May 26.—The Air Force announced today a program to increase production of the giant B-52 intercontinental bomber by 35 per cent as a result of a recent disclosure that Russia has a fleet of similar planes.

The program may make it possible to complete replacement of the B-36 bomber in two years instead of three. The B-52, on which production is just starting, is America's first all jet heavy bomber.

The new sky giants, costing more than \$8,000,000 each, are expected to be produced at a rate of between 100 and 200 a year.

DIRECTIVE GIVEN.

The Air Force Said: "Air Secretary Harold Talbott has directed the Boeing Aircraft Company to accelerate B-52 production.

"The B-52 production line at Boeing Seattle (Wash.) and Boeing Wichita (Kan.) will be boosted approximately 35 per cent above the present program.

"The acceleration will permit the Air Force to complete the replacement of B-36's in its heavy bombardment and strategic reconnaissance wings well ahead of the present schedule."

The Air Force reportedly has eleven heavy bomber wings, each containing thirty planes. The exact number of these air fleets, capable of carrying hydrogen as well as atomic bombs, has never been given officially.

PLANT ORDERED.

The Air Force said the new expansion is possible only because Boeing was ordered in October, 1953, to build a second plant for manufacturing B-52's at Wichita.

The original plant for this plane is at Seattle. The Seattle plant is already turning out

bombers, and the Wichita plant is to get into production soon. The first B-52 will reach combat units some time next month.

The new program was cleared by Defense Secretary Wilson and announced by the Pentagon after Talbott told Congress of the plans.

The Air Secretary and Gen. Nathan Twining, Air Force chief, gave the new production figure at a day-long closed hearing with the Senate Armed Services Committee.

SOVIET STRENGTH.

Talbott said: "I think our discussion has been constructive."

Senator Symington, Democrat of Missouri, former Air Secretary and leading critic of Air Force budget cutting, said he hopes two things would emerge from the decision to offset the Soviet air strength:

- 1—That "confusion, including disagreements, between various people in the Pentagon will be ended," and
- 2—That "from here on they will be more candid with the American people and the press in release of information and its evaluation because it is obvious . . . that the security of the United States is in an unprecedented position."

Earlier, Senate Armed Services Chairman Russell, Democrat of Georgia, disclosed the Air Force's intention to act.

Russell said he had "heartily recommended that we get back to two shifts" on production of B-52 bombers—the type the Soviets have matched, at least in appearances.

Today's hearing was an outgrowth of the Pentagon's disclosure on May 13 that Russia has in production B-52 type long range bombers, advanced jet fighters, and a jet engine more powerful than anything produced in this country.

Russell said Congress is ready to give them (the Air Force) any sums necessary to increase jet production.

He said the important thing at present is to increase production of types already developed—to "tell the citizens building B-52's and F-100's (jet fighters) how badly they are needed."