

The Teapot Committee noted that “while existing [intelligence] evidence does not justify a conclusion that the Russians are ahead of us, it is also felt by the Committee that this possibility certainly cannot be ruled out.” The Committee stated that “important aspects of the present long-range missile program [of the Air Force] consisting of three projects, Snark, Navaho, and Atlas, are believed to be unsatisfactory” (Neufeld 1990, 255).

The Teapot Committee recommended a radical reorganization of the ballistic missile effort. The Atlas, with the projected range of 5500 n miles (10,200 km), would now rank a top priority of the Air Force and the actual development would begin. Setting up a special development-management agency for the entire Atlas program was deemed most urgent. The complexity of the ICBM was thus demanding emergence of a new technical area, *system engineering and technical direction*, that would become prominent in the future. The Committee stated that “the nature of the task for this new agency requires that over-all technical direction be in the hands of unusually competent group of scientists and engineers capable of making system analyses, supervising the research phase, and completely controlling the experimental and research phases of the program.”

Two days before the Teapot Committee issued its report, another independent study confirmed the feasibility of the Atlas ICBM. The assessment by RAND's Bruno W. Augenstein stated that the Atlas could achieve the operational status in the early 1960s providing the stringent performance characteristics were somewhat relaxed and the program priority and funding increased. In an assuring development on 1 March 1954, the Bravo test demonstrated the feasibility of high-yield, compact, and low-weight nuclear warheads: the Atlas program was now possible within the state of the art.

The report of the Teapot Committee triggered a set of events that significantly accelerated the American ICBM program. First, the reorganization of the Air Force development effort followed. To manage the Atlas program, the special *Western Development Division* (WDD) was activated under command of General Schriever at 409 East Manchester Blvd., Inglewood, California, in July 1954.



Fig. 12.26. Commander of Air Force's *Western Development Division* General Bernard A. Schriever, b. 1910, supervised development of the first American ICBM Atlas, the highest research and development priority of the Air Force. Schriever also played an important role in the early military space program. In 1961, he assumed command of the newly established *Air Force Systems Command*. Photo (ca. 1956) courtesy of 45th Space Wing History Office Archives, Patrick Air Force Base, Florida.

**Soviet  
Missile  
Program**

**“Long-  
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tory”**

**System  
Engineer-  
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Direction**

**Atlas  
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