

deployment of the MX as a new and more powerful ICBM.

The purpose of this paper is not to revive these familiar debates. It is, instead, an attempt to provide a guide to understanding some of the basic characteristics of the strategic weapons systems which the superpowers either presently possess or are about to deploy. Understanding these characteristics allows the claims and counter-claims about particular weapons systems to be checked against some basic performance characteristics. Used in context, these characteristics not only provide insight into the old debates, but also criteria by which to judge current negotiating proposals and future developments.

The analysis begins with an account of the public sources which provide the basis for informed analysis of strategic arms control issues. The strategic force balance is then presented, using both simple quantitative indicators and more complex indicators of weapons performance and quality. The counter-force capabilities of American and Soviet strategic weapons systems are then compared in order to complete the context for the analysis of the Soviet and US proposals at Geneva. The conclusion indicates the promising areas for negotiation and the logic of arms control trends in the current strategic environment.

## II. The Public Sources Generally Relied Upon

There are three basic sources of information on strategic weapons systems which appear annually:

- The Military Balance, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)
- The Armament and Disarmament Yearbook published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)
- The US Department of Defence Publications, Soviet Military Power (SMP) and the Fiscal Year Reports of the Secretary of Defense to