



Intercept 1961: The Birth of Soviet Missile Defense (Library of Flight)

Mike Gruntman

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More than 50 years ago, pioneering scientists and engineers in the Soviet Union and the United States searched for a technical means of defense against deadly ballistic missiles. In *Intercept 1961* Mike Gruntman tells the story, little-known even to experts, of the earliest breakthroughs which paved the way for the emergence of a powerful missile defense complex in the Soviet Union, a major factor in the Cold War. On March 4, 1961, a Soviet guided missile performed the first nonnuclear intercept of an intermediate range ballistic missile at the Saryshagan test site in the Kazakhstan desert when it destroyed an approaching warhead. This spectacular achievement followed earlier intercepts by the United States Army of several shorter range missiles. Mike Gruntman describes the birth of Soviet air and missile defense systems and their technical challenges. The new field also led to the emergence of monitoring space objects in orbit, ballistic missile early warning, and antisatellite weapons. Ten years later, the first operational missile defense system was deployed to protect Moscow, its successor system remaining active today. *Intercept 1961* is especially relevant today as the United States and other countries continue facing the eternal protect-or-avenge dilemma when balancing offensive capabilities against defensive protection. In an age of unstable governments, spreading weapons of mass destruction, and radical ideologies and terrorism, this historical background is critical for informed policy formulation, threat evaluation, defense planning, and counteracting the proliferation of weapons and sensitive technologies. It is a must read for students of history, scientists and engineers, analysts, and specialists in international relations and national security.

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