

# “Miracle Weapons”: Air Scientific Intelligence Interim Report on German Long-range Rockets (June 26, 1943)

## Abstract

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During the Second World War, Allied concerns about German weapons development focused on the potential of a “super-weapon” on which the Germans could rely to turn the tide of war. German propaganda referred to the development of precisely such a weapon, and this made the British particularly fearful of its potential deployment in retaliation for their bombing of German cities. Although knowledge about the various German programs was vague, the Allies were aware of the long-range rocket projects underway in Germany. The “Vengeance” rockets (V1 and V2) were known to the Allies, as the following Air Scientific Intelligence report makes clear. The V1 “flying bomb” or “doodlebug” (so named for the sounds its engine made in flight), consisted of a fuselage containing electronics and the payload, a pair of wings, and a pulsejet engine for propulsion. Meanwhile, the V2 was a liquid-propelled rocket, the first long-range guided ballistic missile in the world. The V2s were based on the research of Wernher von Braun, whose work on liquid propulsion led to the launch of two test rockets by 1934. By war’s end, approximately 9,500 V1 and over 3,000 V2 rockets had been launched against Allied targets, predominantly English coastal cities. The Allies also feared the development of uranium bombs in Germany, and although these projects did exist, the Americans were the first to successfully produce such super weapons, the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945.

## Source

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### SUMMARY

The evidence of the existence of a long range rocket is reviewed; this evidence comes mainly from three types of source: secret agents, prisoners-of-war, and photography. Collateral evidence from other types of source is considered.

The evidence shows, beyond doubt of “planting,” that the Germans have for some time been developing a long range rocket at Peenemünde. In its present form this rocket is about 38 feet long by 6-7 feet diameter, which is probably three tail fins, and a weight of 40-80 tons; it has been photographed. It is uncertain how much of the development and constructional work is done at Peenemünde, but it would be consistent with the large majority of the reports if Peenemünde were the sole site.

The principal trouble experienced has been that of controlling the rocket in flight, and it is doubtful whether this trouble has yet been entirely overcome. The technical authorities would therefore probably prefer to delay using the rocket until next year at least, but the Führer is said to be demanding its operation as soon as conceivably possible, within the next few months. In this case the rocket is likely to be erratic, and London would be the only worthwhile target. The present production of rockets is probably small, so that the rate of bombardment would not be high. The only immediate counter measure readily apparent is to bomb the establishment at Peenemünde.

Source: An Extract from Air Scientific Intelligence Interim Report on German Long-range Rockets (DEFE 40/12) (June 26, 1943), National Archives, U.K. Available online at:  
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/british-response-v1-and-v2/source-1/>

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