



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet CONVAIR SM-65 ATLAS

Note: This item is currently in storage.

The Strategic Air Command's first Intercontinental Ballistic Missile was the Convair B-65 Atlas (later redesignated SM-65). The Atlas became operational in 1959. Because of the vulnerability of the Atlas while above ground, an underground silo was developed. An elevator raised it to ground-level for launching.

While on alert duty, the Atlas missile was maintained in the fully raised (above ground) position since it could not be launched from its underground silo. The silo was only for protection from enemy attack. The Atlas ICBM could deliver a nuclear warhead more than 6,300 miles from its launch site. Phased out in 1965, the Atlas still served as a first stage booster for USAF and NASA space projects, including several Mercury manned space flights.

SPECIFICATIONS (Atlas D):

Diameter: 10 ft. (not including strap-on boosters)

Length: 75 ft. 10 in. (85 ft. 6 in. in ICBM configuration)

Weight: 260,000 lbs. maximum at launch

Armament: Nuclear warhead on ICBM, none on scientific or Mercury flights

Engines (ICBM/Atlas D): Two Rocketdyne LR105-NA strap-on boosters & One Rocketdyne LR89-NA-3 plus two small vernier rockets for attitude correction (steering)

Engine thrust at launch: 360,000 lbs.

Crew: None (One on Atlas Mercury)

PERFORMANCE (Atlas D):

Maximum speed: Orbital velocity of about 17,500 mph. (approximately 16,000 mph as an ICBM)

Range: over 6,300 miles as an ICBM (the Atlas D could achieve orbit)

Maximum altitude: varied by orbital track (approximately 900 miles as an ICBM)