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THE MAN WHO SHOT DOWN A LONG-RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILE: 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE BIRTH OF GRIGORII V. KISUN'KO

Abstract

In 1961, the Soviet Union demonstrated the first intercept and destruction of a warhead of a long-range ballistic missile. This consequential event led to the birth of Soviet missile defense and paved the way to fielding the operational missile defense system A-35 in 1970s and its successor A-135, on duty today, protecting Moscow. Missile defenses played prominent roles in the Cold War. At the same time, very little is known in the West about pioneers who led this development. Missile defense also branched off to several technical and operational areas of direct importance to space programs such as ballistic missile early warning, space situational awareness, space weapons, and antisatellite weapons. This paper presents a story of Grigorii V. Kisun'ko, 1918–1998, who significantly contributed to design of the first Soviet anti-aircraft missile system S-25 (SA-1); then achieved the first ballistic missile warhead intercept by Experimental System A and oversaw development of the first operational missile defense system A-35; and finally was fired in the internal struggle in the Soviet defense establishment. This year marks the 100th anniversary of his birth. The life of Kisun'ko reflected a complex turbulent history of the twentieth century.