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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

5490

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

ACTION  
April 20, 1971

HR70-14

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: K. Wayne Smith *KWS*

SUBJECT: [redacted] Intelligence on Warsaw Pact Exercises,  
Plans, Organization and Concepts of War in Central  
Europe

APPROVED FOR  
RELEASE - HISTORICAL  
COLLECTION DIVISION  
HR70-14 DATE:  
07-18-2012

In my memorandum of November 6, 1970, to you regarding our capability to monitor Warsaw Pact military exercises, I mentioned a "highly sensitive source." You asked "what source"? (My memorandum is at Tab B.)

The Source

The CIA was initially reluctant to give a detailed reply, in accordance with its legal responsibility to protect intelligence sources. However, I have been able to gather a fairly complete picture of the type of information provided by this particular source.

It is and will probably continue to be the key to the intelligence community's appraisal of the Warsaw Pact strategy and plans for the Central Region of Europe.

The information is contained in a series of documents [redacted] which have been available to the U. S. intelligence community since 1967. The documents appear to emanate from a fairly high [redacted] official, perhaps military, with access to classified Warsaw Pact information.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

The [redacted] series has contributed enormously to our understanding of Warsaw Pact concepts and doctrine for conventional and nuclear war in Central Europe. The CIA is preparing an Intelligence Memorandum on "Soviet Concepts of War in Europe" drawing primarily on these documents. It should be ready for circulation to a limited audience, including you, within the next week or two.

The documents pertaining to this subject include:

-- Critiques of Warsaw Pact military exercises since 1966  
[redacted] These critiques supply information on scenarios and on Pact estimates of NATO's military options.

-- A series of lecture notes [redacted] which appear to emanate from strategic military courses for senior Warsaw Pact officers in Moscow in April 1970. [redacted]

-- A translation [redacted] undated article attributed to Colonel-General Glebov, emphasizing the importance of pre-emption in the initiation of nuclear warfare, and giving various planning figures for the depth, area and rate of movement planned for a Warsaw Pact front. [redacted]

These documents provide evidence that Warsaw Pact commanders and staff officers are instructed to plan for conflict which could begin either with a conventional or a nuclear phase. In either case, the conflict is seen as rapidly escalating with the initial nuclear strike serving as a decisive blow and employing "strategic" means such as MR/IRBM force and long-range aviation, backed-up by tactical weapons.

[redacted]  
"number of NATO installations Planned for Neutralization in the First Strike in the Theater of War." (You should note, in particular, the 207 strikes planned on "industrial and administrative centers" using "strategic weapons.")

This emphasis on an extensive initial nuclear strike probably proceeds from a belief that NATO would itself rapidly escalate and, therefore, the Pact would be forced to pre-empt rather than suffer extensive damage itself. For example, the article by Colonel-General Glebov observes that:

The timing of the first nuclear strike, i. e., the timely launching of this strike, will have considerable effect on the success of an offensive operation. Even a slight delay in the launching of this strike will enable the enemy to use all of his nuclear means of destruction. This may be avoided only by the launching of the first strike on the basis of the first signs of enemy preparations to use nuclear weapons.

Based on this and similar evidence, it seems clear that current Pact planning does not envision a controlled or flexible escalation once the nuclear threshold is crossed even though it has been modified to include an initial conventional phase. It is not clear, however, whether the Soviets believe it is possible to "decouple" theater nuclear war in Europe from strategic war.

If the basic assessment of Soviet intentions is correct, its strategic significance is heightened greatly by the fact that SACEUR and many of our European allies believe that NATO could not maintain an initial conventional defense for more than a few days. You may recall that General Goodpastor's view expressed in a personal memo to you was that "against a maximum-scale, sustained Soviet attack we could not expect to be able to sustain a cohesive defense for more than a few days by conventional means alone." (No SACEUR has ever said publicly or privately that NATO could hold for more than three days against an all-out Pact attack.)

Given this view and its credibility to our allies, the risks of a nuclear exchange would be high should even a limited conflict break out in Central Europe.

-- We would feel uncertain about the level of Soviet effort and, given SACEUR's view of the balance, would probably have to at least prepare for the use of tactical nuclear weapons should our conventional defenses prove inadequate.

-- If the [redacted] information is correct, the Soviets would interpret these preparations according to their doctrine and move to pre-empt the expected NATO attack. [redacted]

In short, the danger implicit in Soviet emphasis on a pre-emptive strike at the first sign of NATO preparation for a limited nuclear conflict is greatly heightened by the apparent belief of SACEUR and our Allies that NATO would be forced to rely on nuclear weapons soon after the outbreak of a conflict. The official doctrines of the NATO and Pact may play a larger role in this situation than their military capabilities since there is no reason to believe that either NATO or the Pact are really incapable, if necessary, of carrying on a purely conventional conflict for at least a limited period.

There are a number of other documents in the [redacted] series that may yield equally valuable insights into Warsaw Pact planning. There has been little analysis and evaluation of these documents. They include:

- Intelligence evaluations of recent major NATO exercises.
- Minutes of Pact military intelligence conferences, including information on how the Pact may evaluate the NATO threat.

On the whole, the [redacted] series offers unique opportunities for gaining further insight into Pact doctrine, requirements and capabilities, and into the impact of NATO doctrine and capabilities on Pact plans. For example, a logical sequel to the forthcoming CIA memorandum on Soviet Concepts for War in Europe would be a study of Pact requirements and capabilities for tactical nuclear warfare. This study would exploit the planning detail of [redacted] series and could provide a useful cross-check on current estimates of the Pact tactical nuclear warhead stockpile.

An evaluation of the Pact view of the NATO threat as expressed [redacted] and other sources is another subject which could produce useful results. The evidence suggests that the Pact tends to wildly exaggerate NATO capabilities and sees MC 14/3 as basically aggressive in purpose. For example, a typical Pact exercise scenario predicates war outbreak resulting from a NATO attempt to seize East Germany or "detach" it from the Pact.

It is not clear to what extent, however, their view of NATO is the only one available to the Pact, or is only a highly conservative military view (in effect, akin to the assessment of Pact capabilities and intentions we would get from the JCS if unconstrained by other points of view.) It may also be the case that the Soviets deliberately encourage an inflated view of the NATO threat as a means of constraining their East European allies.

To ensure that [redacted] material is fully utilized, I have prepared a brief memorandum to Dick Helms for your signature. It informs him of your interest in the forthcoming CIA memorandum on Soviet Concepts for War in Europe and suggests two follow-up studies on requirements and capabilities for tactical nuclear war and on the Pact view of the NATO threat.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memorandum to Helms at Tab A.

Concurrence: William Hyland

NUMBER OF NATO INSTALLATIONS PLANNED FOR  
NEUTRALIZATION IN THE FIRST STRIKE  
IN THE THEATER OF WAR

Target designation	First Strike				
	Total	Strategic Weapons	Front Weapons		
		Number	o/o	Number	o/o
Operational-tactical nuclear weapons (missiles, aircraft)	17	6	35	11	65
Airfields and air bases	165	159	96	6	4
Nuclear ammunition battalions	32	28	85	4	15
Anti-aircraft missile battalions	32	28	88	4	17
Divisions and separate brigades	40	16	40	24	60
Anti-aircraft defense control and detection centers	62	48	77	11	18
Industrial and administrative centers	207	207	100	--	--
Harbors and naval bases	71	71	100	--	--















