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**SOVIET CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS
WITH RESPECT TO THE CLANDESTINE
INTRODUCTION OF WEAPONS OF MASS
DESTRUCTION INTO THE US**

Submitted by the

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency; the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

on 17 May 1960. Concurring were the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Intelligence, Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff; The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. For the position of the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, see his footnote on page 2.

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SOVIET CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE CLANDESTINE INTRODUCTION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION INTO THE US

THE PROBLEM

To assess Soviet capabilities for the clandestine introduction and delivery of weapons of mass destruction in the US; and to estimate the likelihood of Soviet resort to this mode of attack.¹

CONCLUSIONS

1. The USSR is capable of attacking selected important targets in the US by means of the clandestine introduction and delivery of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons of mass destruction.

2. The USSR would be most unlikely to undertake the delivery of such attacks except as a subsidiary operation in conjunction with a deliberate Soviet initiation of general war. Elsewhere we have estimated this latter contingency to be unlikely during the next few years.² Even in that case, a decision to deliver such attacks would depend not only on Soviet ability to attack specific targets, but also

on the Soviet estimate of the strategic importance of their destruction, the risk of detection prior to delivery of the attack, the possible consequences of such detection, and the feasibility of destroying the target by other means. No matter how slight the risk of detection, we believe that the USSR, considering the consequences of possible detection in forfeiting surprise, compromising the Soviet main effort, and possibly provoking a US military reaction disastrous for the USSR, would not undertake clandestine attacks in the US with weapons of mass destruction. However, if the USSR regarded such attacks as the only feasible means of achieving a potentially decisive strategic effect, it might accept the risks involved.

3. So long as Soviet strategic attack capabilities remain substantially limited to attack by bombers, clandestine attack will remain the only feasible means of detouring nuclear weapons in the US with

¹ Herein we are concerned only with the clandestine introduction of weapons of mass destruction into the US prior to the open initiation of hostilities. This estimate does not deal with either (a) surreptitious attacks by military units such as missile launching submarines, or (b) clandestine operations initiated after the outbreak of war.

² See paragraph 131 of NIE 11-4-59, dated 9 February 1960, including the footnote of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, thereto.

no warning time. In particular, clandestine nuclear attack will be the most reliable means of destroying or immobilizing substantial numbers of SAC aircraft prior to warning. For this purpose, the USSR might accept the risks involved.

4. When the USSR has acquired a sufficient ICBM capability, there will be no strategic purpose served by clandestine attack that could not be accomplished by ICBM attack without incurring the risk of detection inherent in clandestine attack—unless the US had meanwhile developed an effective defense against ICBMs, or had at least developed a capability to launch a substantial proportion of its land-based retaliatory force prior to the arrival of Soviet ICBMs at target. In these eventualities, the USSR might still regard clandestine attack on SAC bases as strategically justifiable. Otherwise, the USSR would almost certainly not undertake the clandestine introduction and delivery of weapons of mass destruc-

tion in the US after it had acquired a substantial ICBM capability.³

³The Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, believes that this paragraph should read as follows:

"Since the USSR is capable of attacking selected important targets in the US by means of the clandestine introduction and detonation of nuclear weapons, the US cannot afford to say that the USSR will not exercise this capability. Even though the USSR acquired a substantial ICBM capability, if the US had meanwhile developed an effective defense against ICBMs or had at least developed a capability to launch a substantial proportion of its retaliatory force prior to the arrival of Soviet ICBMs at target, the USSR might still regard clandestine attack on US retaliatory forces as strategically justifiable. If, at some unspecified time in the future, the USSR should acquire a sufficient ICBM capability which would permit it to plan attacks on Western retaliatory forces with the degree and certainty of success required to insure that the USSR could win a general war without itself incurring unacceptable damage, there would be no strategic purpose served by clandestine attack. However, the majority of the US Intelligence Board does not believe the USSR will attempt to acquire a sufficient ICBM capability prior to 1964 (NIE 11-4-59, dated 9 February 1960, paragraph 10). For the present then, the USSR has not only the capability of clandestine attack, particularly with nuclear weapons, but has strategic justification for employing this type of attack on selected targets until some unspecified time in the future."

DISCUSSION

5. The clandestine introduction of men and material into the US is not now a matter of insuperable difficulty and could not readily be made so. No estimate is available as to the number of persons in the US and neighboring countries who could actually be relied upon as technically and psychologically capable of executing dangerous missions in behalf of the USSR, but the number required for the clandestine operations herein considered would not be large.

Weapons Suitable for Clandestine Use

6. *Nuclear.* The USSR could produce a variety of nuclear devices suitable for clandestine

introduction and delivery. Such devices could range in yield from about one kiloton to about seven megatons—the range of presently tested Soviet devices. To facilitate clandestine introduction, any device within this range could be designed to break down into a number of relatively simple and transportable components. Not much technical skill would be required to reassemble a low-yield device. When assembled, it would be transportable in the luggage compartment of an automobile. Greater skill would be required to reassemble a high-yield device and, once assembled, it would be difficult to handle. The size and weight of any multimegaton de-

vice would preclude its use except as a fixed installation in the hold of a ship, in a truck-trailer, or in a building.

7. *Biological.* Certain biological warfare agents are peculiarly suited for clandestine use because they could be produced in the US without great difficulty or risk (obviating any need for their clandestine introduction) and because their actual delivery on target would not be immediately detected. However, the delayed action of biological agents renders them unsuitable for use in situations requiring an immediate or precisely timed effect.

8. *Chemical.* Chemical warfare agents would be difficult to introduce and deliver in quantities sufficient to obtain effective concentrations on extensive target areas. Moreover, their effective delivery with precise timing would be subject to unpredictable conditions of wind and weather. However, chemical agents could be effectively used on a small scale against personnel in key installations. A supply of V-agents ample for this purpose could be clandestinely produced in the US without great difficulty or great risk of detection, obviating the necessity of clandestine introduction.

General Considerations Affecting Soviet Intentions

9. Many important targets in the US are vulnerable to clandestine nuclear, biological, or chemical attack. Whether the USSR would undertake to deliver such attacks at the outset of a nuclear general war would depend not only on its ability to attack specific targets, but also on the Soviet estimate of the strategic importance of their destruction, the risk of detection prior to delivery of the attack, the possible consequences of such detection, and the feasibility of destroying the target by other means.

10. Specific US security measures on land and sea frontiers and at potential targets cannot guarantee the detection of a clandestine attack prior to final delivery, but they pose an element of risk which the USSR cannot ignore. In addition to the specific risk in particular cases, there is a general risk of dis-

covery through a US penetration of the clandestine apparatus, or through the defection of an agent, or by sheer accident. The USSR could never be sure that none of these mischances would occur.

11. The USSR would almost certainly anticipate that the delivery of a clandestine attack in the US with weapons of mass destruction would precipitate general war—except that biological agents might be disseminated without detection or possibility of attribution. We believe that the USSR would be most unlikely to undertake clandestine attacks in the US with weapons of mass destruction except as a subsidiary operation in conjunction with a deliberate Soviet initiation of general war. Elsewhere we have estimated this latter contingency to be unlikely during the next few years.⁴ Almost certainly the USSR would not accept the risks inherent in maintaining stocks of such materials in the US for use on a contingency basis. By definition, the circumstances of a Soviet pre-emptive attack would not allow sufficient time for the introduction and delivery of such weapons. Moreover, in such circumstances, the intensification of US security precautions would greatly increase the risk that subsidiary clandestine operations would compromise the Soviet main effort.⁵

12. No matter how slight the risk of detection, we believe that the USSR, considering the consequences of possible detection in forfeiting surprise, compromising the Soviet main effort, and possibly provoking a US military reaction disastrous for the USSR, would not undertake clandestine attacks in the US with weapons of mass destruction. However, if the USSR regarded such attacks as the only

⁴ See paragraph 131 of NIE 11-4-59, dated 9 February 1960, including the footnote of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, thereto.

⁵ In Soviet military literature, pre-emptive attack is defined as an attack with immediately available forces designed to seize the strategic initiative from an enemy who is himself preparing imminently to attack. The USSR would not be likely to conclude that a US attack was imminent unless the situation were so tense that the US, on its part, would be taking extraordinary security precautions.

feasible means of achieving a potentially decisive strategic effect, it might accept the risks involved.

Particular Forms of Clandestine Attack

13. Below we evaluate several particular forms of clandestine attack from a Soviet point of view in accordance with the criteria set forth above.

14. *Biological and Chemical.* Biological agents are unsuited for use in situations requiring precise timing. The use of chemical agents is dependent on unpredictable conditions of wind and weather. Neither of these weapons is well suited for use in a clandestine attack designed to have a precisely timed effect upon the initial operations of a nuclear general war. Regarded in the context of a massive nuclear attack with consequent fallout, subsidiary clandestine biological and chemical attacks would be redundant.

15. *Nuclear Detonations in Diplomatic Premises.* Under existing practices with respect to diplomatic immunity, the USSR would incur no appreciable risk of detection in assembling multimegaton devices in secure areas in the Soviet Embassy in Washington and the offices of the Soviet UN Delegation in New York, for detonation at H-hour. The outstanding advantage of such an attack over attack by bombers would be its denial of warning time. Considering the minimal risk involved and the advantages to be derived from the destruction of Washington and New York without warning, the USSR might undertake such an operation. With the advent of ICBMs, however, the same effect could be accomplished by missile attack without incurring even the slight risk of a US search in violation of Soviet diplomatic immunity.

16. *Nuclear Detonations on Shipboard in Major Ports.* As compared with bomber attack, the outstanding advantage of the detonation of multimegaton nuclear devices on shipboard in major ports at H-hour would be the denial of warning time. Existing port security measures would probably deter the use of merchant ships for this purpose, but could not prevent the delivery of such an attack by fishing boats or similar small craft to which nu-

clear weapons had been transferred at sea. Under alert conditions, the additional countermeasures likely to be in effect would probably deter the delivery of such an attack by any means. With the advent of ICBMs, the same effect could be accomplished by missile attack without incurring the risk of detection inherent in clandestine introduction.

17. *Clandestine Attack on SAC Bases.* So long as Soviet strategic attack capabilities remain substantially limited to attack by bombers, clandestine nuclear attack on selected SAC bases at H-hour will remain the most reliable means by which the USSR could attempt to destroy or immobilize substantial numbers of SAC aircraft prior to warning. Chemical attack would also be effective for this purpose, but might be regarded as less reliable on account of uncertainties regarding wind and weather conditions at H-hour. The specific security measures in effect at SAC bases would not preclude the effective delivery of such attacks. The general risks involved in undertaking such operations would be considerable, but, if the USSR had already decided to accept the risks inherent in a deliberate initiation of general war, it might regard the risks involved in this form of clandestine attack as warranted by the potentially decisive effect to be achieved, which could be accomplished by no other means. However, when the USSR has acquired a substantial number of ICBMs, the same effect could be accomplished by ICBM attack without incurring any risk of detection prior to launch—unless the US had meanwhile developed an effective defense against ICBMs, or had at least developed a capability to launch a substantial proportion of its land-based retaliatory force prior to the arrival of Soviet ICBMs at target. In these eventualities, the USSR might still regard clandestine attack on SAC bases as strategically justifiable.

18. *Clandestine Attack on Hardened Sites.* As a means of delivering nuclear weapons without providing the warning time derived from the approach of bombers, the ICBM will in general supersede clandestine attack. For some time, however, the number of ICBMs required to destroy a hardened site will be

excessive. Consequently, consideration must be given to the feasibility of clandestine attack on such targets. It appears that a clandestine operation could not deliver a nuclear

device of sufficient yield near enough to a hardened site to disable it. Chemical attack against site personnel might be suitable for this purpose.

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