

22173

National
Foreign
Assessment
Center

~~Secret~~

**CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED
1999**

The "Eurostrategic" Balance: New Soviet Numbers

An Intelligence Memorandum

~~Secret~~
PA 81-10323X
August 1981
Cop

?

16

Warning Notice

**Intelligence Sources
and Methods Involved
(WNINTEL)**

**National Security
Information**

**Unauthorized Disclosure
Subject to Criminal Sanctions**

**Dissemination Control
Abbreviations**

NOFORN (NF)
NOCONTRAVENUE (NC)
PROPIN (PR)
ORCON (OC)

RFI
FGI
WN

A microfiche copy of this document is available from OC R
DEB (SI 1177) printed copies
from OC O'IMD (SI 1211).
Regular receipt of NEAC
reports in either microfiche
or printed form can also be
arranged through OC O'IMD.

All material on this page
is unclassified.

Not releasable to foreign nationals
Not releasable to contractors or contractor companies
Caution - proprietary information involved
Dissemination and extraction of information
controlled by originator
This information has been authorized for release to:
Foreign government information
WNINTEL - Intelligence sources and methods involved
Derivative classification
Review 20 years from d.
Derived from multiple sources

~~Secret~~

The "Eurostrategic" Balance: New Soviet Numbers (U)

Summary

Moscow has changed the way it presents the East-West balance of long-range theater nuclear forces (LRTNF) in Europe. Whereas in 1979 Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov alleged that the USSR was threatened by "approximately 1,500" Western theater nuclear systems, Soviet officials--including Ustinov--now routinely refer to "approximately 1,000" such systems. For the first time, the Soviets also have given a number for their own LRTNF in Europe, claiming they too have about 1,000 such systems. (U)

The new numbers apparently result from an internal Soviet review of the LRTNF issue done since the preliminary US-Soviet exchanges were conducted last fall. The individual Western weapon systems remain as militarily effective and threatening in the Soviet view as before. But the Soviets seem to have adjusted their arms control policy away from considering Western LRTNF as an adjunct to their SALT frame of reference--in which all nuclear systems conceivably capable of striking the USSR were counted as "strategic"--toward a more "Eurostrategic" approach that distinguishes Western LRTNF more carefully from both intercontinental and tactical systems. (S)

The new count presages Moscow's opening position at US-Soviet talks on LRTNF limitations planned later this year. The Soviets apparently saw their old count as unpersuasive for purposes of public and diplomatic presentation and, by supplying new numbers, intend:

- To give more weight to their arguments against NATO's LRTNF modernization plan, especially to buttress the Soviet assertion that a European equilibrium already exists.
- To engage the West in bargaining over elements of the LRTNF balance.
- To shift the focus of the LRTNF debate from limitations on Soviet systems to mutual limitations involving Western ones as well. (U)

Analysis of all Soviet statements of the last several years suggests that the new count omits some US forces formerly included in Moscow's presentation of the balance. Most of the difference is probably accounted for by a decline of nearly 300 in the number of US F-4 aircraft counted and by dropping the 180 Pershing Ia missiles. (S, NF)

This memorandum was written by _____, Office of Political Analysis. Information available as of 25 August 1981 has been used in the preparation of this report. It has been coordinated with the Office of Strategic Research, the Arms Control Intelligence Staff, and the National Intelligence Officers for Strategic Programs and for General Purpose Forces. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to _____, OPA.

~~Secret~~
PAXI-10321X
August 1981

~~Secret~~

The 1,000 figure represents a sizable reduction—down from 1,500—in the number of LRTNF the Soviets have attributed to the United States and NATO in recent years. It almost certainly reflects no change in the Soviet appreciation of the military effectiveness of, or threat to the USSR posed by, the US and NATO systems that Soviet spokesmen have variously cited as comprising Western LRTNF.

The most likely explanation for the change is a shift in the Soviet approach to arms control. The Soviets evidently are adjusting from a SALT frame of reference—in which every conceivable Western LRTNF system is considered as part of an overall calculation of strategic forces that includes US and Soviet intercontinental systems—to a more "Eurostrategic" view. In the new framework, US and Soviet systems counted under SALT are excluded from the upper end of the spectrum of forces to be limited, and shorter range Western and Soviet theater nuclear systems are excluded from the lower end.

Ustinov's recent list thus omits some systems previously cited by various Soviet sources. US Poseidon SLBMs potentially available for use in a European conflict by the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) and Pershing Ia ballistic missiles based in West Germany are excluded.² In addition, hundreds of US "forward-based" systems (FBS) are apparently no longer counted, probably including US F-4 aircraft based in the United States but intended for contingent deployment to West Germany.

[The Soviets, however, probably estimated different numbers for several systems [They may count as plausible threats as many as six carrier air wings, not the two reflected [This would account for 136 additional systems.³ Other differences are possible:

- The Soviets may count the US F-4 aircraft differently from the method used to reach the US figure, which includes dual-based aircraft located in the United States but intended for redeployment to Europe. For example, if they tallied the theater-based US F-4s in West Germany and Spain, their count would be 264, not 245.

² Ustinov states in his article that the Western LRTNF he cites threaten Soviet territory. A *Pravda* editorial in July 1980 referred to the threat posed by such systems to Soviet territory "and the territory of its allies."

³ This and similar figures in the text are possible constructions consistent with Soviet statements; they are not reported Soviet figures. ...

~~Secret~~

~~Secret~~

L

]

- According to the data provided [] the Soviet figure for French SLBMs is 80, apparently derived from the 80 launch tubes in French submarines []
- The Soviets might think of British Buccaneer aircraft deployed in West Germany as forward-based systems able to strike the western USSR and thus may count []

Why the Change?

The new Soviet count may well presage Moscow's opening position at the US-Soviet LRTNF talks planned for this fall. Besides the specific indications that Pershing Ia and US Poseidon missiles need not be counted as

~~Secret~~

~~Secret~~

LRTNF, their new position can be represented by the Soviets as showing a willingness to make concessions for the sake of progress on arms control. It also seems to reflect a strong Soviet desire to gain some kind of agreed limitations on both new US LRTNF missiles and US FBS.

The Soviets want to influence the political atmosphere as much as possible, including intra-Alliance consultations, before and during the US-Soviet LRTNF talks. Throughout 1979, the Soviets were at a rhetorical disadvantage when it came to arguing about numbers of nuclear weapons in Europe. In defending the USSR's position on LRTNF, Soviet commentators and diplomats insisted that an overall balance of nuclear forces in Europe existed, but could offer no details. They probably believed that specific Western data about NATO and Soviet armed forces undercut the credibility of Moscow's professed interest in arms control negotiations and alarm about NATO's plans.

Now, however, Moscow hopes to strengthen Soviet contentions about the LRTNF balance by references to Soviet-supplied data. For example, Vadim Zagladin, first deputy chief of the Central Committee's International Department, has publicly compared the new Soviet numbers with alleged Western numbers. Declaring that "according to Secretary of State Haig, the Soviet Union has about 1,040 medium-range weapons," Zagladin stated that "in Western Europe, too, there are about 1,000 means of delivery now." He concluded that, should the NATO LRTNF decision be implemented, the Western systems "will number as many as about 1,600" and create a "preponderance" for NATO.

Moscow wants to force the United States and the Allies to take more seriously Soviet contentions that parity now exists, that NATO's LRTNF modernization is unjustified, and that US FBS and Allied systems are integral parts of the LRTNF balance. Moscow hopes that its version of the balance will engender discussion in NATO capitals, prompt Western inquiries about its details, and in effect draw the West into a bargaining process.

In 1979 the Soviets may not have undertaken a study of the European theater nuclear balance akin to the official US study done in 1978, Presidential Review Memorandum 38. Defense Ministry studies of the strategic balance and the Western threat, of course, existed. Soviet concern with US FBS goes back many years, and the Soviets have sought to gain agreed limitations encompassing them since SALT negotiations began. Moscow, however, probably did not focus on making calculations and presentations that isolated the LRTNF balance from the overall US-Soviet strategic equation until the time of NATO's decision approached. Instead, top policy officials probably were preoccupied with SALT II, signed in

~~Secret~~

~~Secret~~

(that do not have land attack as their primary mission (for example, Backfires assigned to Soviet Naval Aviation).

**Evolution of the
Soviet Position:
August 1979-July
1980**

In a *Pravda* article published on 25 October 1979—shortly after President Brezhnev's offer to reduce the level of Soviet LRTNF deployments in Europe and less than two months before NATO adopted its plan to install 572 new US missiles in Europe—Ustinov asserted that NATO's new LRTNF would supplement "the already existing US forward-based systems and the corresponding systems of Britain and France—approximately 1,500 units," thereby "altering the strategic situation in NATO's favor." The last use of the number 1,500 appears to have been on 10 July 1980 by a political observer of the Novosti press agency. Throughout this period, the Soviets publicly insisted that an overall regional balance in nuclear forces in Europe existed.

The possible composition of the 1,500 figure can be inferred from the arguments Soviet officials presented at the time regarding its largest component, the US FBS committed to the European theater. In Ustinov's words, these were "devices comprising the system of forward basing and intended for actions against targets on Soviet territory." The figure most commonly cited by Soviet spokesmen in 1979-80 for the total number of US FBS was 1,200.⁴ That figure was used by General Akhromeyev, First Deputy Chief of the General Staff, during discussions with a US Congressional delegation headed by Senator Biden that visited Moscow in August 1979, that is, before the Soviets began a propaganda campaign designed to undermine the evolving NATO consensus on LRTNF modernization. During discussions about the US-Soviet strategic balance and the agenda for SALT III, Akhromeyev stated that:

... we made a concession in principle not to include US FBS in the SALT II negotiations. But if we start talking about drastic cuts [in the intercontinental balance], you will understand that the 1,200 US FBS in Europe and the surrounding oceans and seas become a more significant threat.

By limiting his focus to Europe, Akhromeyev indicated that he was not counting US nuclear-capable aircraft in northeast Asia and on carriers not committed to the European theater.⁵ In other statements, Akhromeyev and

⁴ The figures and terms used by Soviet spokesmen have frequently appeared to be inconsistent. The figures cited here are from statements by Soviet officials who used the numbers and terms more carefully than others, and who, by virtue of their positions, would have had access to official Soviet data.

⁵ Soviet negotiators at SALT I and II had argued that the latter systems, as well as US nuclear-capable aircraft committed to the European theater and Pershing missiles in West Germany, should be considered US strategic assets.

~~Secret~~

~~Secret~~



Lieutenant General Chervov [

] made clear that the US Poseidon SLBMs committed to SACEUR were not included in the 1,200

Ustinov's staff could have reached the 1,500 total by adding to the 1,200 US FBS the numbers for British and French strategic nuclear delivery systems, including bombers, and possibly US SLBMs committed to SACEUR as well [

] The Soviets, however, probably estimated higher numbers. [] for some systems If they had counted four additional carrier air wings and 16 additional

~~Secret~~

~~Secret~~

French SLBMs (as their July 1981 data suggest they now count), then 152 more systems would be included. In addition, they probably counted many more F-4s than []

When these differences are taken into account, the Soviet count of 1,200 US FBS is approximated (the total reached by using the figures above is 1,174), as is the overall Soviet count of 1,500 Western LRTNF (the total reached by using the figures above is 1,554).

If these figures reflect the calculations used by the Soviets in preparing their public numbers, they obviously were not thinking in terms of a balance of like systems based in a geographic area but in terms of the maximum capabilities the US would be able to commit to a conflict in Europe. By comparing these figures for 1979 with those given as probably making up the new 1981 count, most of the difference between Ustinov's old and new numbers is accounted for by a drop of nearly 300 US land- and carrier-based F-4s and of the 180 Pershing Ia missiles. Almost all of the remaining difference is accounted for in the figures for British bombers, which decline by 75.

Words Replace the
Numbers: July 1980-
April 1981

The Soviets stopped using the 1,500 and 1,200 figures shortly after Chancellor Schmidt's visit to Moscow in early July 1980. On 15 July an unsigned editorial in *Pravda* discussed Brezhnev's offer [] to begin talks with the United States on LRTNF. The editorial did not use any figures for US FBS or NATO LRTNF capabilities generally. Asserting that the Soviet proposal of "interconnected discussion of medium-range armaments and American forward-based nuclear means is justified," it listed the US systems that Moscow then insisted were relevant to the question of LRTNF arms control:

- "Planes carrying nuclear weapons and stationed at airbases in a number of West European countries, the numbers of which can be considerably increased in a brief span of time."

- By counting reinforcement and reserve aircraft based in the United States, the Soviets could have tallied as many as 170 additional land-based US F-4s. By counting the F-4 complements of six carriers, the Soviets could have counted another 144 aircraft.

- Such a worst case view omits significant factors that would reduce actual US day-to-day capabilities for such a conflict. Even if all US F-4s committed to Europe are assumed to have nuclear roles (which is not true), almost all would have to fly one-way or high-altitude missions, or be refueled in flight, to strike targets in the USSR. Carrier-based F-4s--presumably included because a cautious Soviet planner would assume that they are nuclear capable like the land-based F-4s they outwardly resemble--are in fact not nuclear capable and are intended for air defense, not theater strike tasks. The US Second Fleet would have to be redeployed from the western Atlantic Ocean to the North and Norwegian Seas for its aircraft to be within striking range of the northwestern USSR. Pershing Ia ballistic missiles have only a marginal capability to strike Soviet territory.

~~Secret~~

~~Secret~~

- "Carrier-based planes carrying nuclear weapons capable of reaching the territory of the USSR and its allies."
- "American missile-carrying submarines placed at the disposal of the European NATO command."

The editorial stated for the first time that US nuclear weapons capable of reaching the territory of the USSR's Warsaw Pact allies, as well as the USSR itself, should be considered part of US FBS. Earlier Soviet commentary had been ambiguous on this point. Ustinov, for example, had stated that the 1,500 systems he cited were capable of reaching "Soviet territory" while General Chervov had stated that the 1,500 were based "in the vicinity of the borders of the Soviet Union and the socialist community." East European commentators, however, had charged that NATO's intention was to build up US nuclear potential that could be used against targets "on the territory of the Soviet Union and its allies." For nearly a year after the appearance of the *Pravda* editorial of July 1980, there were Soviet references to US systems capable of striking the USSR and its allies.

This broad definition of US FBS was apparently the main basis for the Soviet position at the US-Soviet preliminary exchanges on LRTNF held in Geneva during October and November 1980. The Soviets argued that even NATO aircraft and missiles owned by the Allies and armed by the United States should be considered as "factors in the strategic situation." Although the Soviets said that they did not intend to establish direct limits either on these US-armed systems or on French and British strategic nuclear arms, they insisted that the latter must nevertheless be taken into account in any limitations placed on an aggregate number of NATO systems.

The single formal proposal presented by the Soviets urged that the United States and the Soviet Union reach prompt agreement to freeze the aggregate number of "principal nuclear arms on the European continent," establish appropriate aggregate levels for those forces, and undertake "substantial stage-by-stage reductions." According to the Soviet negotiators, the "principal nuclear arms" to be frozen should include US FB-111, F-111, and F-4 aircraft committed to Europe, the A-6 and A-7 aircraft on carriers deployed near Europe, and US SLBMs committed to SACEUR.

**New Soviet Count:
1000**

No authoritative Soviet public references to numbers of NATO LRTNF systems appeared after July 1980 until mid-May 1981. (

) April, however, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, using prepared

~~Secret~~

~~Secret~~

notes, presented new Soviet numbers in his case against NATO's plan to deploy new LRTNF. Gromyko argued that the two opposing alliances have roughly equal numbers of LRTNF launchers in Europe. In total, he contended, NATO possesses more than 1,000 means of delivery that can reach the USSR, and the sum total of Soviet means of delivery of "medium-range" is not in excess of 1,000. Hence, Gromyko insisted, NATO LRTNF modernization was unnecessary and would upset the balance between the two sides.

☐ Soviet press articles had argued that the West had certain advantages in LRTNF, although an overall balance was said to exist. On 14 March, an authoritative article by "A. Petrov" in *Pravda* sharply criticized the West European rejection of Brezhnev's offer of a mutual moratorium on LRTNF deployments, and argued that if, as NATO spokesmen contend, the SS-20 is strategic for Western Europe, then Western weapons are strategic for the "socialist" states. The article asserted that such a calculation would show that "the West has the edge" in both "means of delivery and nuclear charges."

On 25 March, another authoritative article in *Pravda*, by "I. Aleksandrov," stated that specialists from the Soviet Ministry of Defense recently had studied "all components of Warsaw Pact and NATO military forces" and had concluded that an equilibrium between the two sides "continues to exist." The study presumably provided the basis for the two new elements contained in Gromyko's presentation ☐ the Soviet figure for NATO LRTNF was lowered significantly, and a Soviet figure for Soviet LRTNF was provided for the first time

A new count similar to Gromyko's was soon made public by several Soviet commentators. Leonid Zamyatin, Chief of the Central Committee's International Information Department, gave a precise number slightly under 1,000 in a speech on 16 May:

According to the data of our specialists, a count should be taken of all means which can deliver nuclear weapons . . . to the territory of other states. Now the aggregate quantity of medium-range means of delivery of nuclear weapons in Europe possessed by the US and its allies amounts to 987 units, which approximately

☐ was told the Soviets count their SS-4, SS-5, and SS-20 missiles, and their Backfire, Bunder, and Badger aircraft, as making up their side of the balance. During Chancellor Schmidt's talks in Moscow, Ustinov maintained that one or two older missiles were being dismantled as each new SS-20 was deployed, and that although the number of warheads in the Soviet land-based "medium-range" missile force was rising, such an increase would enable the USSR only to match the West in terms of numbers of weapons. . . .

~~Secret~~

~~SECRET~~

corresponds to the quantity available to the Soviet Union. . . . If the United States insists [on deploying new LRTNF] then US superiority over the Soviet Union would be approximately one and a half times. And this is precisely the aim of the United States.

The next significant Soviet statements on the balance were those provided publicly by Ustinov in his 25 July *Pravda* article [

Straightening Out the Line

The emergence of the new count has not been without its anomalies. There apparently were snags in the dissemination of instructions to Soviet media editorial staffs and to officials dealing with foreign affairs

In a *Pravda* article on 30 March, veteran commentator and retired military officer Simonyan maintained that US FBS in Europe alone consisted of "around 1,200 delivery means." This figure was higher than the total number of US and allied LRTNF referred to by Gromyko [

] and accords with the fall 1979 figure used for US FBS. The next month retired Rear Admiral Andreyev appeared to argue that "approximately 320" US aircraft on carriers in the Mediterranean Sea and the western Atlantic Ocean should be included in tallying US FBS. This figure would appear to include aircraft other than the A-6s and A-7s cited by Ustinov three months later

In early May, the Soviet weekly journal *New Times* (published in many languages and distributed worldwide) printed a table depicting numbers of US FBS (based on data of the International Institute for Strategic Studies), which differs from the list appearing in Ustinov's *Pravda* article by including the US Pershing Ia and the US Poseidon SLBM. *New Times* assigns US F-4s a range of 750 kilometers and A-7s a range of 900 kilometers, both of which are less than the 1,000-kilometer range given by Ustinov as the lower end of his spectrum of threatening Western LRTNF.

These anomalies do not necessarily indicate internal contention over shifting to the new number. They do indicate, however, some lack of coordination between private Soviet diplomacy and public Soviet statements

The most likely explanation for the lack of coordination is that Gromyko's use of the new numbers in his [occurred before a high-level decision to disseminate instructions on the new "Eurostrategie" frame of reference and its related numbers for US LRTNF to all media components]

~~Secret~~

The new line clarified by Ustinov in July will probably be a consistent and vital element of Moscow's efforts before this fall's negotiations to persuade the United States and European countries that no new NATO LRTNF are needed and that agreed LRTNF limitations are desirable. Already, a televised presentation on 24 August reiterating it has been made by Major General Starodubov, commissioner of the USSR's delegation at the most recent meeting of the US-Soviet Standing Consultative Commission on SALT. Furthermore, there appear to have been no new anomalies since the *New Times* article in May.

**Arms Control
Implications**

As the July 1980 *Pravda* editorial foreshadowed the Soviets' position at the preliminary exchanges during the fall of 1980, the new Soviet numbers for the European LRTNF balance probably foreshadow the Soviets' opening position at the US-Soviet LRTNF talks planned for this fall. Moscow probably took the unprecedented step of revising *downward* its estimate of an opponent's strength before negotiations have begun because it has calculated that the new lower count could serve its goal of preventing, or at least reducing the eventual size of, new NATO LRTNF deployments.

~~Secret~~

Appendix

Key Soviet Statements on LRTNF

Brezhnev, Speech in East Berlin, 6 October 1979

We are ready to reduce the number of nuclear weapons systems of medium range deployed in the western areas of the USSR, compared with the present level, but naturally only if Western Europe does not deploy additional nuclear weapons systems of medium range.

[

Brezhnev, Speech in Moscow, 23 February 1981

We propose that agreement be reached on establishing a moratorium now on the deployment in Europe of new medium-range nuclear missile systems of the NATO countries and the USSR—in other words, to freeze both quantitatively and qualitatively the existing level of such systems, including, of course, the forward-based nuclear systems of the United States in this region. This moratorium could come into force as soon as negotiations on this question commence and be in effect until a permanent treaty on limitations or, even better, on reduction of such nuclear systems in Europe is concluded. In this we proceed from the position that both sides should curtail any kind of preparations for the deployment of corresponding additional systems, including the US Pershing-2 missiles and ground-based strategic cruise missiles.

Ustinov, Article in *Pravda*, 25 July 1981

The proposal for a moratorium is based on the rough parity in medium-range nuclear weapons between NATO and the USSR that has existed in Europe for a number of years—about 1,000 carriers on each side. On the

~~Secret~~

NATO side these carriers are US aircraft carrying nuclear weapons (F-111, F-4) which are stationed at air bases in a number of West European countries; FB-111 medium bombers; aircraft carrying nuclear weapons (A-6 and A-7) on board US aircraft carriers—over 700 in all; and also land-based medium-range ballistic missiles, missile submarines, and the bomber force of US allies—about 300 in all. All these systems have a range (a radius of operation) from 1,000 to 4,500 kilometers and present a real threat to Soviet territory. (C)

~~Secret~~