

December 15, 1983

SOVIET COMPLIANCE WITH THE  
CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES DOCUMENT  
OF THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT

INTRODUCTION

The signatories of the Helsinki Final Act are required by the Act's "Documents on Confidence-Building Measures (CBM's) and Certain Aspects of Security and Disarmament" to give prior notification of "major military maneuvers exceeding a total of 25,000 troops, independently or combined with possible air or naval components." In addition, signatories are encouraged to engage in other confidence-building measures on a voluntary basis. These voluntary CBM's include inviting observers to maneuvers, military exchange visits, prior notification of major military movements, and prior notification of exercises involving fewer than 25,000 troops. [redacted]

The United States has formally charged the Soviet Union with violating the prior-notification provision of Basket I of the Helsinki Final Act by its conduct of the "Zapad-81" exercise. The Final Act provisions constitute political commitments, but not binding legal obligations. The Soviet actions were clearly contrary to their commitment. [redacted]

IMPLEMENTATION

From 1975 to 1981, all Conference on Security and Confidence-Building Measures in Europe (CSCE) participants holding military maneuvers of 25,000 ground troops or more provided prior notification of those maneuvers. However, "Soyuz-81", a Warsaw Pact exercise in Poland which could conceivably have involved more than 25,000 men, was not notified under CSCE. Soviet failure to notify the "Soyuz-81" exercise raised some questions about Eastern compliance with the letter as well as the spirit of the Final Act. However, [redacted] [redacted], the U.S. did not lodge a formal protest. Although this was a command staff exercise, it apparently involved some number of troops, but we do not know how many. [redacted]

"Zapad-81" was the largest maneuver conducted by any CSCE signatory state, or group of signatory states, since the Final Act was adopted in 1975. The Soviet Union's notification of this September 4-12, 1981 maneuver did not contain all the information required by the confidence-building measure on prior notification of major military maneuvers. The CBM's document requires the notifying party to provide "information of the designation, if any, the general purpose of and the states involved in the maneuver, the type or types and numerical strength of the forces engaged, the area and estimated time-frame of its conduct." The Soviet notification, issued on August 14 in Moscow, did not include the maneuver's designation, nor did it provide the types of forces engaged. Finally, and most importantly, the Soviet notification did not include the number of troops taking part. Through diplomatic channels, the United States asked the Soviet Union about these items prior to the beginning of the maneuver. No further information was provided by the Soviets until September 5 (the second day of the maneuver), when the Soviet news agency TASS reported the name of the maneuver and the

fact that approximately 100,000 troops were taking part. The U.S. formally protested the Soviet Union's lack of notification of "Zapad-81" as inconsistent with the Helsinki Final Act. [ ]

It should be noted, however, that Soviet compliance with the maneuver notification provisions of the Helsinki Final Act has improved during 1983. Between June 1 and November 30, 1983, the Soviet Union notified two major maneuvers and made its first voluntary Final Act notification of a maneuver involving fewer than 25,000 men. All three notifications were made 21 days in advance, as required by the Final Act, and specified the number of troops participating, as well as the areas in which the exercises were to take place. [ ]

The first of the two major maneuvers was notified on June 8; the exercise was scheduled for June 29-July 4 with participation of approximately 50,000 men. The second major maneuver was notified on July 4; the exercise was scheduled for July 26-30 with participation of approximately 26,000 troops. The Soviet Union's first voluntary notification was made August 15 of an exercise scheduled for September 5-10 involving approximately 23,000 troops. The Soviets invited three NATO countries-- Turkey, Greece, and Italy--as well as Yugoslavia, Switzerland, Algeria, and Austria to send observers to the exercise. Although this welcome step went beyond the minimum requirements of the Final Act, it must be balanced by the Soviet Union's failure to invite NATO observers to either of the two major exercises noted above. [ ]

As background, the record of Eastern states regarding CBM's has been disappointing when compared with that of Western states and the information in notification issued by Eastern states has normally been minimal. The U.S. and its NATO Allies have scrupulously notified all major maneuvers of more than 25,000 troops. Both NATO and Neutral/Non-Aligned signatories have made voluntary notifications of maneuvers involving less than 25,000 troops. Of the Warsaw Pact states, only Hungary has consistently made such notifications. NATO and Neutral/Non-Aligned signatories have regularly extended invitations to Eastern and other observers, and given them the opportunity to carry out their activities. In contrast, the Eastern states have invited observers to less than half of their major maneuvers. In addition, Eastern states are frequently unwilling to permit those observers who are invited to, in fact, adequately observe the exercise. [ ]

In 1982, Czechoslovakia notified the maneuver "Druzhiba-82", held in Czechoslovakia from January 25-30 and involving 25,000 Czech, Soviet, and Hungarian forces, but no Western or Neutral/Non-Aligned observers were invited. However, the Warsaw Pact did not notify "Druzhiba-83", which took place in Czechoslovakia from February 14 to 19, 1983, and involved Czech, Hungarian, and Soviet troops. Given the tight security which surrounded the exercise, it was not possible to verify whether more than 25,000 troops took part. [ ]

Also in 1982, Bulgaria notified that "about 60,000 men" would be participating in the "Shield-82" Warsaw Pact exercise between September 25 and October 1. This notification displayed a typical Warsaw Pact minimalist approach to CSCE obligations. Particularly egregious was the failure to specify the area involved and the countries which would be taking part in the exercise. [ ]