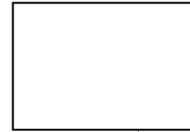


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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505



National Intelligence Council

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EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Prospects for Soviet Military Assistance to Cuba

- **In 1991 Soviet military aid to Cuba is likely to fall substantially, perhaps by some 35 percent below the yearly average for the current five-year plan (1986-1990), and will decline further in 1992.**
- **Moscow will probably also reduce the number of its military advisers and technicians in Cuba. However, it will want to retain the Lourdes SIGINT site and the brigade that secures it, although this would not preclude some downsizing of the brigade.**
- **Such reductions will not significantly degrade Cuba's military capabilities because large amounts of Soviet-supplied equipment--including some new systems--are being transferred from Angola to Cuba.**
- **We see little prospect that the Soviets will use reductions in military assistance to Cuba as a means to pressure the Castro regime to enact significant reforms. But they are also unlikely to buttress Castro by providing the levels of assistance he desires.**

This Executive Brief was requested by Bernard Aronson, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, Department of State, and represents the findings of Intelligence Community representatives at a meeting held on 31 October 1990. It was produced by the National Intelligence Officer for Latin America and coordinated with representatives of CIA, State/INR, DIA, NSA, and the Services.

All portions classified

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The Current Five-Year Plan

Moscow has generally adhered this year to the provisions of the current five year plan (1986-1990) for military aid to Cuba. Deliveries will amount to about \$1.3 billion by the end of the year, about the same as in 1989. This is somewhat less than the annual average for the last five years, but consistent with past Soviet practice of front-loading deliveries in the first two or three years of five-year plans.

The Soviets continue marginally to upgrade the Cuban armed forces.

These aircraft will modestly improve Cuban air defense capabilities. Other deliveries this year--an anti-submarine warfare patrol ship, some T-62 tanks, additional helicopters, and transport aircraft--provide Cuba with only minor improvements.

In addition, Cuba continues to buttress its arsenal with Soviet-supplied equipment it is bringing back from Angola. The value of those arms will total about \$250 million this year.

Trends Over the Next Two Years

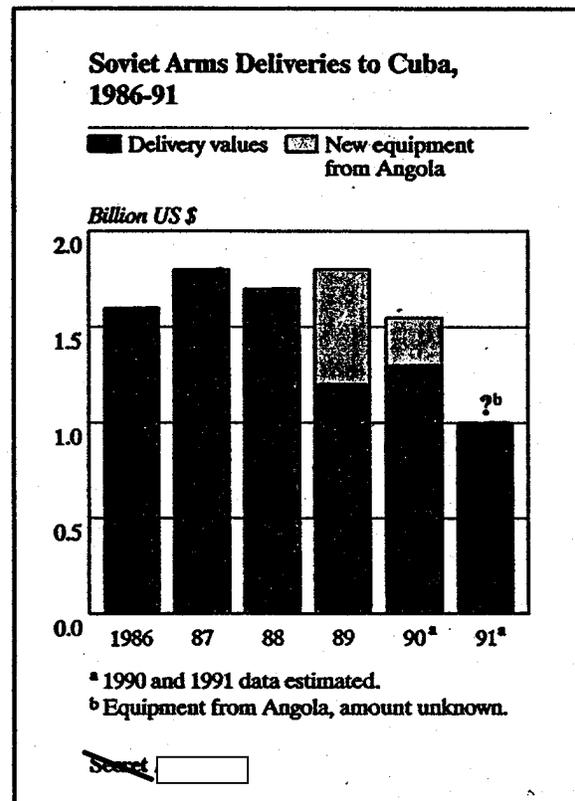
We believe the Soviets intend to reduce their military assistance to Cuba over the next two years.

likely to fall by some 35 percent below the yearly average--about \$1.6 billion--for the current five-year plan, although no time period was specified. The Soviets have been warning other military aid recipients of similar reductions.

Other factors could cause even sharper cuts:

- Severe economic problems in the USSR might embolden reformers who want to sharply reduce the burdens of assisting the increasingly isolated and intransigent Castro regime.
- The real decline in the volume of equipment received by Havana could be as high as 50 percent if Moscow continues to inflate the ruble cost of its military hardware, as it has over the last few years.

In any event, we believe that cuts beyond the anticipated 35 percent next year will be likely in 1992. We cannot, however, estimate their magnitude with any precision.



Discussions on future military assistance levels are underway. We believe that the Soviets will conclude only a one or two year agreement, as they have in negotiations over economic aid. The Soviets' refusal to commit themselves to a five-year plan will make long-term planning extremely difficult for the Cubans and leaves open the possibility of more drastic cuts or even a cutoff in the future. Moreover, Moscow is unlikely to provide Havana with any major new weaponry, other than the MIG-29s already in the pipeline. [redacted]

[redacted] Havana will receive only second-hand equipment, the kind of hardware Cuba is now predominantly receiving.

Declining military aid will not have a dramatic impact on Cuban capabilities, at least over the next year or so. Moreover, the effect of a reduction in Soviet deliveries will continue to be buffered by the transfer of equipment from Angola. If, for instance, Cuba receives the 24-28 MIG-23 fighters it currently has in Angola--as seems likely--its current inventory of 39 would be significantly augmented. This would represent a greater increase in capability than the eight MIG-29s already delivered. Moreover, it is also possible that another 12 MIG-23s from Angola now being refurbished in the Soviet Union will be sent to Cuba.

In the near term, Havana's chief military problem will not be equipment, but fuel. There have already been shortfalls in Soviet oil shipments to Cuba, resulting in some cutbacks in military operations. If fuel shortages become severe in the military, reduced training could gradually degrade military proficiency and be reflected, for example, in increased aircraft accidents.

A development which already appears to be underway and would have an adverse impact on the military is the suspension, or sharp reduction, in the training of Cuban military personnel in the USSR and the loss of training opportunities in

Eastern Europe. Our information on the Soviet training cuts is limited, but over time such reductions would erode Cuban proficiency, especially if training on high technology systems were reduced.

Soviet Personnel

We also expect that some of the 9,800 Soviet military advisers and civilian technicians (many of whom support military programs) in Cuba will be withdrawn over the next two years. A phased withdrawal of perhaps as many as 50 percent of them seems likely. The impact on the Cuban military of such cuts would be mixed.

- Except in highly technical areas, the Cubans are generally self-sufficient in maintenance, and we expect that Soviet technicians dealing with the most sophisticated systems will remain.
- But if they were included in a sweeping drawdown, advanced Cuban equipment--including electronic warfare and advanced fighter weapons systems--would begin to deteriorate.
- In addition, withdrawal of technicians could result in some degradation of Cuban communications and air defense capabilities.

On the other hand, we believe the Soviets will continue to maintain their additional 2,100 military personnel at the Lourdes SIGINT site. This facility provides Moscow a wide range of intelligence collection capabilities, most of which cannot be duplicated. The Soviets continue to upgrade their collection capabilities at this facility, indicating at the minimum that top military planners presently have no plans to reduce their commitment there.

Furthermore, the future of the 2,800 troops in the Soviet brigade is closely linked to that of the Lourdes site. The

brigade provides security for Lourdes, and is likely to be stationed nearby as long as Moscow maintains an important presence there.

A reduction in the size of the brigade or a change in its composition is possible nonetheless. An independently deployed brigade is not a standard Soviet military unit, and the force in Cuba could be shrunk without undermining its ability to perform its principal mission. For example, its bridging units or chemical defense company could be withdrawn.

We have no indications that the Soviets are considering any such changes in the brigade, but some analysts believe there is a distinct possibility Moscow could offer to reduce it in return for US concessions on Cuba or, failing that, could reduce it unilaterally.

The Soviet-Cuban Military Relationship

Shrinking Soviet support for the Cuban military, especially in the context of a broader estrangement, will undoubtedly exacerbate bilateral tensions. We have seen few manifestations of this, however, and military-to-military ties are likely to remain more amicable than political relations. Soviet army chief of staff Moiseyev, who recently visited Cuba, probably endeavored to reassure his Cuban counterparts. His visit was also a reciprocation for one to Moscow earlier this year by the Cuban chief of staff.

We see little immediate prospect that Moscow will use military assistance as a means of pressuring Havana to implement political and economic reform. It is not clear that the Soviets would in any event regard such leverage as efficacious, and they will probably prefer to maintain reasonably harmonious military ties. But neither do we judge that the Soviets will move to buttress Castro with the levels of military assistance he desires.