

DMS
9/19/88DCI TALKING POINTSSpace Program

The vigorous Soviet space program is predominantly military in nature. More than 70 percent of Soviet space missions are for military purposes only, with much of the rest serving a dual military-civil function. The Soviets view space as an integral part of their overall offensive and defensive force structure, not as a separate arena or as a sanctuary. While the Soviets seek to be able to deny enemy use of space in wartime, current Soviet antisatellite capabilities are limited and fall short of meeting this apparent requirement. Today, in addition to the dedicated nonnuclear orbital interceptor, other systems--the nuclear Galosh ABM interceptor and two ground-based high-energy lasers--have the potential to destroy or interfere with some satellites in near-Earth orbit, but the potential threat to satellites in higher orbit is limited.

The Soviets are expending a relatively greater share of their resources for space on manned space programs than is the US. The Soviets are currently developing a version of the US space shuttle, a heavy-lift booster system, and a space plane, and have engaged in military-related experiments aboard the SALYUT-7 space station. The Soviets continue to pursue their manned space programs, maintaining in orbit the SALYUT space station, which is manned during most of the year. This gives the Soviets the capability to perform a variety of functions from space, including military R&D and using man to augment their other reconnaissance and surveillance efforts. We are looking at the long-term military implications of this heavy emphasis on man in space. In addition, there are other developments indicating Soviet research on space-based ballistic missile defense.

Strategic Defense

The Soviets spend as much on strategic defensive forces as they do on strategic offensive forces. Soviet active and passive strategic defenses, while unable to prevent large-scale damage from a major attack, are intended to provide a degree of protection for the leadership, military, and military-related facilities necessary for wartime operations. The Soviets will significantly improve the capabilities of their strategic defenses over the next 10 years, as a number of new types of weapons are introduced and many of the older systems retired.

The Soviets have actively engaged in antiballistic missile (ABM) research, development, and deployment programs for many years. We are particularly concerned that the Soviets' continuing development efforts give them the potential for widespread ABM deployments. The Soviets have the major components for an ABM system that could be used for widespread ABM deployments well in excess of ABM Treaty limits.

There is strong evidence of Soviet efforts to develop high-energy laser weapons, including those with potential application to ASAT and BMD missions. These efforts have been taking place, in some cases, since the 1960s. We estimate a laser weapon program of the magnitude of the Soviet effort would cost roughly \$1 billion per year if carried out in the United States.

We are concerned that Soviet directed-energy programs may have proceeded to the point where they could construct operational ground-based ASAT weapons. In addition, Soviet research includes a project to develop high-energy laser weapons for use in space. A prototype high-energy, space-based laser ASAT weapon could be tested in low orbit in the early 1990s. Even if testing were successful, such a system probably could not be operational before the mid-1990s. The Soviets are also conducting vigorous research in the areas of particle beam weapons, radiofrequency weapons, and hypervelocity kinetic-energy weapons.

By their actions and propaganda--directed at scientific and public opinion elites in Western societies--the Soviets have demonstrated they are very concerned about the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and its focus on advanced technology. In their view, it could force them to redirect their offensive ballistic missile development programs to reduce vulnerabilities or could stimulate a costly, open-ended high-technology competition for which they probably are concerned that the United States can outpace their own ongoing efforts. They are probably also concerned that SDI will lead to a sustained US effort in strategic defenses--an area in which they have had a virtual monopoly.

Resource Issues

While Soviet economic problems are severe, we see no signs that the Soviets feel compelled to forgo important strategic programs or that they will make substantial concessions in arms control in order to relieve economic pressures. Soviet force decisions and arms control decisions are likely to continue to be driven by calculations of political-strategic benefits and the dynamism of weapons technology. We judge that strategic forces will continue to command the highest resource priorities and therefore would be affected less by economic problems than any other element of the Soviet military. We believe, however, that, as a result of the stark economic realities, decisions involving the rate of strategic force modernization probably will be influenced by economic factors more now than in the past and some deployment programs could be stretched out. In this respect, SDI poses a set of problems for the Soviets, the potential solutions to which involve considerable risk and uncertainty--factors with which planned economies do not deal well.

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