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THE MILITARY POSTURE OF THE SOVIET UNION

Soviet military policy is focussed on three goals: to overcome the US advantage in strategic offensive capabilities, to improve defensive forces as a deterrent against the US, and to upgrade Soviet capabilities for waging war short of an all-out nuclear exchange. Underlying these military goals is the Kremlin's desire to enhance its ability to act with confidence and flexibility in world affairs.

In this respect, Soviet conventional military forces have been engaged in military operations twice in the past year. Large ground and air forces were used for the Czech intervention in 1968 and several divisions remained in Czechoslovakia. The clashes between Soviet and Chinese troops along the Ussuri River last month will reaffirm to the Soviet leadership the necessity of continuing to reinforce Soviet military capabilities along the border with Communist China.

Strategic Offense

The Soviet inventory of operational land-based intercontinental missiles will reach a parity in numbers of operational launchers--with the US force of 1054 ICBMs in 1969.

The latest Soviet ICBM systems have been deployed in the fashion of US Minuteman missiles--in hardened and widely dispersed single silos, each presenting a separate aiming point for an attacking force.

In addition to these measures to reduce the vulnerability of their ICBMs, the Soviets are engaged in active research and development to make other qualitative improvements, such as a program to develop a multiple warhead delivery system on one of their ICBMs.

They also continue to work on an experimental weapon system which has come to be labeled a fractional-orbit bombardment system (FOBS). It is, in effect, an extended-range ICBM which flies on a lower trajectory than a normal

ICBM and thus would be more difficult for US radars to detect and track. It might also be fired southward from the USSR, approaching the US from the south and avoiding US northward-facing early warning radars.

The potential of the FOBS' low trajectory is offset in part by the system's smaller payload and lower accuracy compared to an ICBM. Thus it does not appear suitable as a weapon for attacking US missile sites or other hardened installations. The Soviets may view it as being effective in a surprise attack on soft targets or as a counter ABM weapon. No FOBS are as yet believed to be deployed.

In contrast to the ICBM developments, the Soviet force of about 700 medium-range and intermediate-range missile sites has remained virtually unchanged since 1963. Most of these sites are located in the western USSR, where they could launch missiles against any targets in Western Europe.

The lack of change in the MRBM/IRBM force may be due to the development of a mobile strategic missile. The Soviets have claimed to have such a missile, and they have publicly displayed tracked transporter-launchers for this type of system in Moscow parades for the past several years. They have also paraded a two-stage solid-propellant missile which could be used for this purpose.

As their strategic missile forces have grown, the Soviets have allowed their inventory of long-range bombers to decline slightly. They now have some 150 heavy bombers supplemented by about 50 tankers for aerial refueling. Their medium bomber force, composed of twin-jet aircraft, has declined to somewhat less than 800. Soviet medium bombers are believed to be targeted against the NATO countries and other areas of the periphery of the Soviet Union.

In an effort to extend their operational usefulness, many of the bombers, both heavies and mediums, have been modified to carry air-to-surface missiles. In addition, some of the older medium bombers have been replaced by a newer model with a supersonic dash capability.

No replacement has appeared for the four-jet Bison and four-turboprop Bear heavy bombers. A delta-wing heavy bomber which was first seen in 1961 never progressed beyond the prototype stage.

Strategic Defense

Defense against strategic attack continues to hold its traditionally high priority in Soviet military planning. New antiaircraft systems are being introduced, and an anti-ballistic-missile (ABM) system is being installed for the defense of Moscow.

The Moscow ABM system has been in development for more than ten years. Construction of launch sites and attendant radars began about six years ago and has proceeded irregularly since then. There have been signs that the Soviets are not going to deploy as many ABM launchers as they originally intended. The missile for the Moscow ABM system, the Galosh, was first seen in November 1964 when it was paraded, enclosed in its canister, through Red Square in Moscow. The system apparently now has a limited operational capability, but the slow pace of development and the fact that it has not been deployed at other cities probably indicates that Soviet officials have reservations about its effectiveness.

Meanwhile, the Soviets are still highly concerned about the threat from manned bombers and air-launched missiles. During the last few years they have upgraded their fighter-interceptor defenses by introducing new aircraft with better performance and armament. Their current inventory probably numbers about 3500 interceptors. In 1963 they began deploying a new defensive missile system, sometimes referred to as the Tallinn system, in many areas of the Soviet Union for defense against aircraft and air-to-surface missiles.

The Tallinn deployment is superimposed on a large network of sites for the older and shorter-range SA-2 air defense missile system. The SA-2 parallels the US Nike-Ajax in design and performance. In addition, the Soviets are deploying mobile surface-to-air missile systems to provide improved tactical defense against attacking aircraft.

Navy

In 1963, Admiral Gorshkov assumed command of the Soviet Navy with an order that ships would put to sea. Since then, the navy has developed from a water-borne adjunct of the ground force into a significant maritime power, operating with increasing frequency in distant waters.

The Soviet Navy began continuous deployments in the Mediterranean some four years ago. Since the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967, a flotilla including nuclear submarines and missile-armed surface ships has been operating in these waters with deployment reaching as many as 50 combatant and support ships including submarines. Soviet warships are also active in the Indian Ocean now.

All of the major surface ships built since 1960 have been armed with surface-to-air or surface-to-surface missiles. Over 20 major surface ships and nearly 50 submarines are equipped with long-range anti-ship cruise missiles. The Soviets have also deployed about 100 Osa- and Komar-class patrol boats armed with a short-range missile similar to the one which the Egyptians used to sink the Israeli destroyer Eilat.

The current inventory of surface ships consists of some 22 cruisers, 80 destroyers, 25 guided-missile destroyers, and some 2300 ships such as other patrol boats, auxiliaries, support ships, minesweepers, coastal escorts, and intelligence collectors.

The Soviets are also building several new classes of ships intended to help them catch up with US naval capabilities. Two large helicopter cruisers launched in the past two years will be used for anti-submarine operations.

While the submarine fleet has declined slightly in numbers in recent years--to some 380 in 1969--its effectiveness is being improved by the addition of new types of torpedo-attack and ballistic-missile submarines.

The new Soviet Polaris-type submarine can fire 16 ballistic missiles to a range of 1,500 miles. Several units of this class are already operational and production has reached 6 to 8 each year.

About 40 older ballistic-missile submarines carry an average of three launchers each. They are believed to be targeted against European and Asian targets. Only 10 of these are nuclear powered.

The Soviets now have about 44 submarines equipped with cruise missiles with a range of about 300 miles.

These submarines are believed to be intended to attack naval and merchant vessels. Some 300 other submarines are configured for torpedo-attack missions or used for training.

The Soviet Navy also has a land-based air force and a small force of marines. The Naval Air Force has increased slightly in the last few years and currently has about 500 bombers and 370 other aircraft for transport, reconnaissance, and antisubmarine warfare. The aircraft are all land-based, primarily on the European coastline of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Navy has no aircraft carriers.

Increased Soviet interest in amphibious landing operations became obvious in 1967 with the introduction of tank landing ships, some of which have been deployed to the Mediterranean since June 1967. The small force of Soviet marines, however, is believed to number only about 6000 men.

Ground Forces

The Soviet Army is estimated to number about two million men, organized into 140 divisions. Most of these divisions are far below full combat strength but many of them could be brought up to strength rapidly. Moreover, each division is about half the size of a US division. About half of them are stationed in the Western USSR and Eastern Europe opposite NATO.

The evolution of Soviet ground forces over the past several years has been characterized by emphasis on mobility and short-term striking power at the expense of many of the support elements needed for extended combat. There are indications of a debate in Soviet military circles over the desirability of matching NATO's concept of flexible response and the possibility of non-nuclear warfare, but so far the Soviet ground forces have not shown signs of preparation for this type of strategy.

Soviet capability for airlifting troops and equipment has been enhanced by the introduction of the new AN-22 heavy assault transport, which the Soviets unveiled at the 1967 Paris air show. The Soviets claim that this aircraft can carry 88 tons of cargo to a

distance of 2,800 nautical miles non-stop. The current Soviet air transport force has about 1500 short and medium range aircraft. In addition a large part of the Soviet inventory of some 1500 helicopters supports the ground forces.

Tactical Aircraft

The display of new aircraft in the Moscow Air Show of 1967 revealed the extent of Soviet efforts to upgrade their tactical air strike and interceptor capabilities. Ten new or modified fighters were demonstrated, including two with variable-sweep wings. Several were clearly experimental and will not be produced in quantity. Others may be produced for Soviet air defense and tactical fighter units. Four new vertical take-off and landing aircraft were displayed, reflecting Soviet interest in dispersing fighters away from improved airfields.

The number of aircraft in Soviet tactical air units has remained relatively stable in recent years.