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imagery analysis report

Soviet Brigade Training Cycle, Cuba (S)

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MAY 1980
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SOVIET BRIGADE TRAINING CYCLE, CUBA (S)

SUMMARY

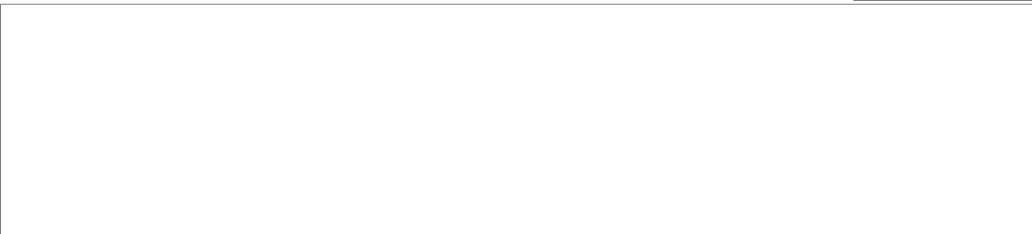
1. (TSR) This report summarizes the training cycle of the Soviet brigade in Cuba during 1978 and 1979 and includes an analysis of training activity observed as of [redacted] Also included are a locator map, a training cycle chart, a unit listing by facility, a postulated table of organization and equipment (TO&E), and 14 annotated photographs.

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2. (TSR) [redacted] Five facilities in Cuba have been identified as being associated with the Soviet brigade (Figure 1). They are Santiago De Las Vegas Military Camp 2 ([redacted]), Lourdes Central Signal Intelligence (Sigint) Complex ([redacted]), Alquizar Military Training Area ([redacted]), San Pedro Military Training Area ([redacted]) and Mariel Training Center and Antiaircraft Artillery (AAA) School Granma Base ([redacted]). During 1978 and 1979, the Soviet brigade engaged in a six-month rotational/training cycle commencing with troop rotation and culminating in a field training exercise involving the combat fire support elements of the brigade (Figure 2). The training cycle begins immediately after the scheduled semiannual troop rotation which takes place in May and late October or early November at the main garrison of the Soviet brigade in Santiago De Las Vegas. [redacted]

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BASIC DESCRIPTION

3. (TSR) The Soviet brigade in Cuba is garrisoned at three facilities. The major elements are at Santiago De Las Vegas Military Camp 2 (Figure 3), and the remaining single motorized rifle battalion is at Lourdes Central Sigint Complex (Figure 4). A third garrison area is at Alquizar Military Training Area which houses only a training company and an engineer platoon (Figure 5). The brigade training is conducted at three training areas, Alquizar, San Pedro Military Training Area (Figure 6), and Mariel Training Center and AAA School Granma Base (Figure 7). Soviet forces have occupied Santiago De Las Vegas since at least December 1962 and have occupied Lourdes since at least June 1963. These two facilities now house most of the brigade units (Table 1). The brigade TO&E resembles the standard Soviet regimental TO&E, although there are several features which are unique to this brigade. These features include a battery of six 122mm D-30 howitzers, a battery of nine BRDM-2 SAGGERS (antitank guided missiles—ATGMs), and at least one and possibly two platoons of ZSU-23/4 guns assigned to each motorized rifle battalion (Figure 8). Two of the three motorized rifle battalions are equipped with the BTR-60PB (one battalion at Lourdes and one at Santiago De Las Vegas); the remaining motorized rifle battalion at Santiago De Las Vegas is equipped with BMP and is the only known fully equipped BMP battalion in Cuba. Although the BMP is being used by Cuban expeditionary forces in Africa, only six BMPs have been positively identified within Cuban units on the island.

the spring and fall troop rotation, a tent camp containing Soviet tents is erected on a firing range (Figures 3 and 9). These tents are utilized for in and out processing of troops. This activity closely parallels in both timing and technique the troop rotation activity observed in the Groups of Soviet Forces in eastern Europe. This troop rotation activity in Cuba can be confirmed on imagery dating back to the fall of 1976.

Garrison Training

5. (TSR) Initial training of new troops takes place primarily at Santiago De Las Vegas. This training appears to be oriented toward individual soldier skills such as small-arms qualification and driver training. Additionally, training by tank and APC crews on the minirange probably consists of subcaliber firings and main gun bore sighting.

6. (TSR) Garrison training at Lourdes has been at an extremely low level. The motorized rifle battalion garrisoned at Lourdes is probably responsible for physical security for the Lourdes complex; therefore, it is highly likely that the initial training of replacement troops assigned to this battalion takes place at Santiago De Las Vegas. This procedure would preclude any reduction in the level of effectiveness in the Lourdes security force. Occasional training by the TMM (truck-mounted scissors bridge) company and the 122mm D-30 howitzer battery at Lourdes has been observed. This training is most likely connected with scheduled preventive maintenance procedures and/or crew proficiency drills. The ZSU-23/4 battery is the most active ground force element at Lourdes. It has been observed in an operational air defense mode on numerous occasions.

Troop Rotation

4. (TSR) Troop rotation activity has been observed only at Santiago De Las Vegas. During

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Table 1.
Soviet Brigade Units

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Type of Unit	Location/BE No	Remarks	
Soviet Brigade Headquarters	Santiago De Las Vegas Military Camp 2 [redacted]		
Motorized rifle battalion	Santiago De Las Vegas Military Camp 2	BTR-60PB equipped	25X1
Motorized rifle battalion	Santiago De Las Vegas Military Camp 2	BMP equipped	
Motorized rifle battalion	Lourdes Central Sigint Complex [redacted]	BTR-60PB equipped	25X1
Tank battalion	Santiago De Las Vegas Military Camp 2		
Multiple rocket launcher battalion	Santiago De Las Vegas Military Camp 2		
Recon element	Santiago De Las Vegas Military Camp 2		
Chemical company	Santiago De Las Vegas Military Camp 2		
TMM company	Lourdes Central Sigint Complex		
Engineer platoon	Alquizar Military Training Area [redacted]	BAT M elements	
Training company	Alquizar Military Training Area	Postulated echelon	25X1



● HOME GARRISON
⊕ TRAINING AREA

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FIGURE 1. LOCATIONS OF FACILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SOVIET BRIGADE, CUBA

[redacted]

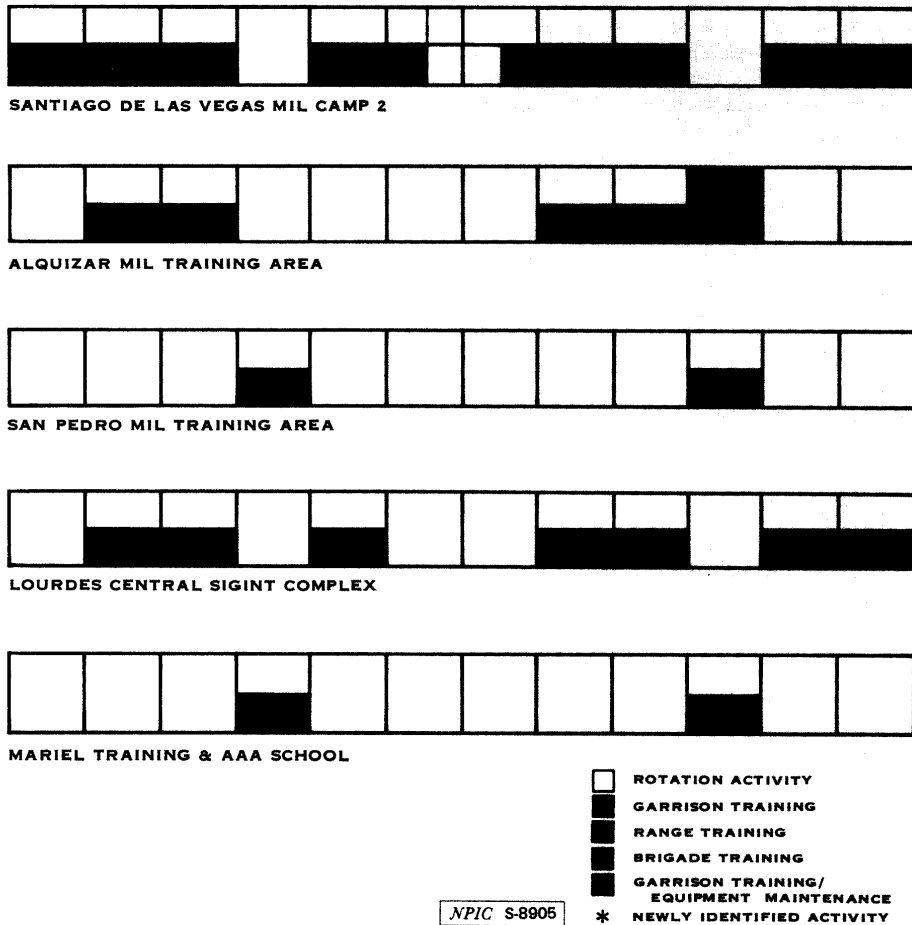


FIGURE 2. CHART OF SOVIET BRIGADE TRAINING CYCLE

Range Training

7. (TSR) No distinct break between the garrison training and the range training has been discernible on imagery. The range training is conducted along with, and in addition to, the garrison training. APC and tank crew gunnery training takes place at Alquizar. As small units become proficient in individual military skills, they move to Alquizar. Alquizar serves as the primary range for Soviet tank and BMP gunnery qualification. The personnel trained at Alquizar use equipment which has been stationed here continuously since October 1979. The consistent observation of BMPs and T-62 tanks suggests that the Soviets have formed a training company for their tracked-vehicle-equipped elements (Figure 10). The formation of such a training company is not unusual for Soviet forces and conforms to training techniques observed in other Soviet forces. Prior to October 1979, no training unit was garrisoned at this facility.

Field Training Exercise

San Pedro Military Training Area (1978-1979)

8. (TSR) During August 1978 and 1979, the brigade conducted semiannual field training at San Pedro.

The San Pedro exercise activity involves the combat fire support elements of the three motorized rifle battalions and brigade-level fire and logistical support (Figure 11). A review of imagery during the exercise period revealed that two R-405 signal vans were field deployed at the home garrison, Santiago De Las Vegas (Figure 12), while the brigade trained at San Pedro. These R-405 vans probably serve as the communications link between the exercise elements and the brigade headquarters.

Although no imagery of the actual exercise was obtained, imagery of the Soviet bivouac area obtained on showed definite signs of recent occupancy.

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**Mariel Training Center and AAA School
Granma Base (1978-1979)**

9. (TSR [redacted]) The ZSU-23/4 element of the Soviet brigade was observed training at Mariel in August 1979 and was probably there in September 1978. [redacted]

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[redacted] The units participating in the activity consisted of ZSU-23/4 guns, three batteries of 57mm S-60 AAA, and two distinct tent camps, one with Soviet tents and one with Cuban tents. The 57mm S-60 AAA is not believed to be part of the Soviet brigade. The brigade converted from the 57mm S-60 to the ZSU-23/4 in early 1978, and no evidence is available to suggest that the brigade retained the 57mm guns. All 57mm sites known to be controlled by the brigade were either razed or converted to ZSU-23/4 in early 1978. Since the Soviets would require an airspace closure for their training, this joint Soviet-Cuban training may be only for the convenience of utilizing the airspace closure.

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**Mariel and Alquizar Military
Training Area (1980)**

11. (TSR) Concurrently with the training at San Pedro, the Soviets conducted ZSU-23/4 training at Alquizar and subsequently at Mariel. The training activity was first observed at Alquizar on [redacted]. On that date, 23 ZSU-23/4s were observed parked adjacent to the tank firing range. Also present were two tent camps, one containing Soviet tents and the other containing one Cuban-type frame tent and two personnel tents (Figure 15). The training observed at Alquizar consisted of individual platoons deployed in an air defense mode. It is unlikely that any live firing took place at this facility since the range facilities available here would not accommodate such activity. One platoon of ZSU-23/4 guns appeared to be definitely associated with the Cuban tent camp. This platoon was segregated from the Soviet ZSU-23/4 contingent on numerous coverages. The Alquizar exercise had terminated by 3 March. A review of past imagery failed to provide any evidence of this activity ever having occurred in the past.

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San Pedro Military Training Area (1980)

10. (TSR) Although the brigade appeared to follow the same schedule as in 1978 and 1979, a number of new training events were observed. The brigade moved into the San Pedro Military Training Area in February 1980. The Soviet bivouac area was occupied and equipment was in place by [redacted]. Unit groups observed during this exercise included three batteries of BRDM-2 SAGGERS, three batteries of 122mm D-30 howitzers, three batteries of 120mm mortars, one battalion of BM-21 multiple rocket launchers, elements of a tank battalion, elements of a BTR-60PB-equipped motorized rifle battalion, and elements of a BMP-equipped motorized rifle battalion (Figure 13; not all shown on graphic). This equipment was the same as that observed during previous exercises, except for the BMP battalion which was observed for the first time in 1980. The training events appeared to conform with those observed during previous exercises until [redacted] when an artillery unit equipped with 130mm M-46 field guns was observed bivouacked approximately 2 kilometers from the Soviet bivouac (Figure 14). The bivouac established by this artillery unit lacked the symmetrical pattern observed in the Soviet bivouac, and it contained Cuban tents. As the exercise progressed, the 130mm M-46s were joined by elements of a BM-24-equipped multiple rocket launcher battalion. Subsequently, these elements were joined by two batteries of 122mm M-30 howitzers. The Soviet brigade is not known to contain any of these weapons; however, they are found in Cuban independent artillery brigades. Therefore, in all probability, this artillery unit observed at San Pedro was a Cuban brigade. The proximity of the Cuban equipment to the Soviet area suggests that some type of joint training was underway. Following the return to garrison by elements of the Soviet brigade, the artillery units remained at San Pedro. Also remaining was a tank battalion and the BMP battalion. The fact that the artillery units remained behind when the Soviets departed further reinforces

12. (TSR) On imagery of [redacted] the ZSU-23/4s were at Mariel collocated with three batteries of 57mm S-60 AAA. These are probably the same three batteries observed training with the ZSU-23/4s in August of 1979. As was the case at Alquizar, two tent camps (one with Soviet tents and one with Cuban tents) were present and one platoon remained segregated from the others. On three occasions, the ZSU-23/4s were observed deployed on the beach in a linear formation. A noticeable gap between the main body of guns and the single platoon was observed on all three occasions (Figure 16). This apparent segregation of one platoon along with the continued presence of one platoon at a separate camp containing Cuban tents indicated that this platoon of ZSU-23/4 guns was Cuban.

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Other Activity

Santiago De Las Vegas (1980)

13. (TSR) The spring troop rotation was first observed on [redacted]. On that date, the Soviets were erecting the rotation tent camp.

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14. (TSR) On imagery of [redacted] a display of the major equipment assigned to the brigade was seen on the soccer field at Santiago De Las Vegas. The display included one T-62, one BTR-60PB, one ZSU-23/4, one SA-9 transporter-erector-launcher, one 122mm D-30 howitzer, one BM-21 motorized rocket launcher, one 120mm mortar, and one R-140 and one R-405 radio set. A BRDM-2 SAGGER was approaching the display, as was a BMP. The SA-9 in this display is the only one observed to date in Cuba.

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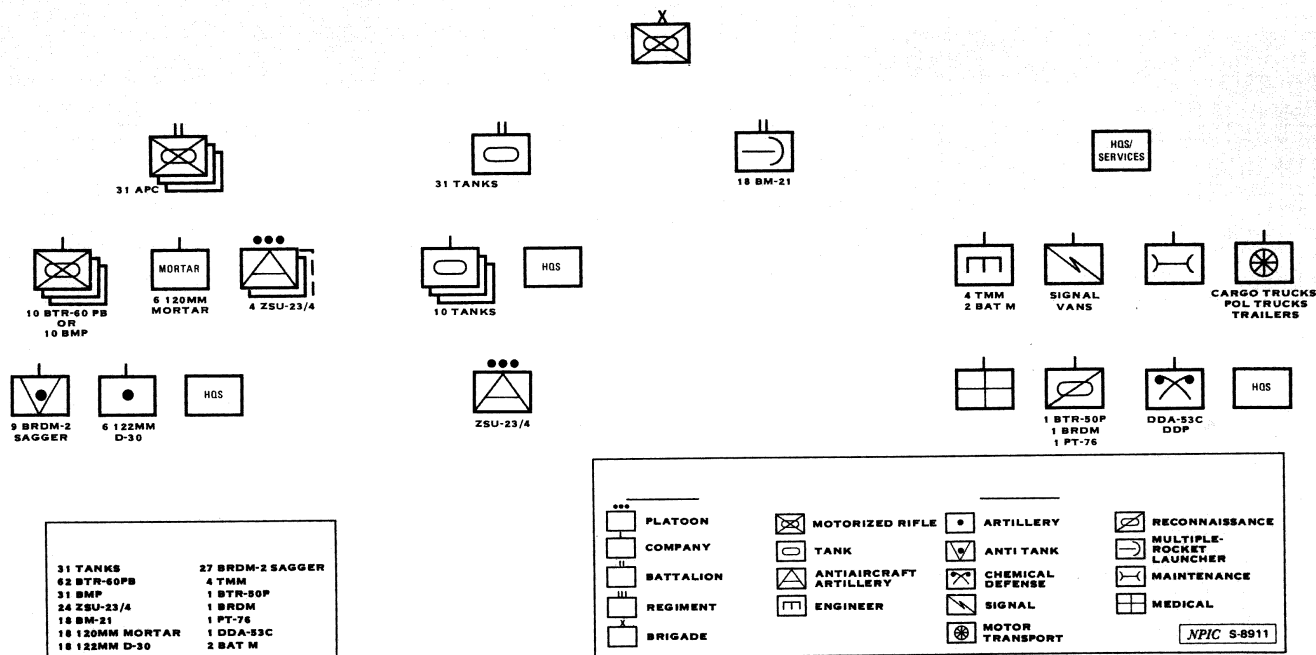


FIGURE 8. SOVIET BRIGADE POSTULATED TABLE OF ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT

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REFERENCES

IMAGERY

(TSR) All relevant KEYHOLE and selected aircraft imagery from [redacted] 25X1
[redacted] was used in the preparation of this report. 25X1

DOCUMENTS*

- 1. NSA. 2/00/12085-79, *Organization and Activities of Soviet Ground Formation in Cuba, Mar 76-Jul 79 (SC)*, 31 Jul 79 (SECRET/S)
- 2. NSA. 2/00/2898-79, *Soviet Motorized Rifle Unit Conducts Field Training in Cuba (SC)*, 21 Feb 79, 0101Z (SECRET/S)
- 3. NSA. 2/00/6328-79, Apr 79, 211601Z (SECRET/S)

*Additional collateral information was received via telephone from [redacted] 25X1

(S) Comments and queries regarding this report are welcome. They may be directed to [redacted] Third 25X1
World Forces Division, Imagery Exploitation Group, NPIC, [redacted] 25X1

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