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SOVA/RIG

20 April 1987

Talking Points for ADDI's Current Intelligence Briefing of HPSCI

Soviet Troop Withdrawal From Mongolia

I. Soviet Public Statements

Moscow announced on 11 April that the withdrawal of one motorized rifle division and several smaller units from Soviet forces in Mongolia had begun. The first trainful of troops crossed back into the USSR on 13 April, according to Soviet media.

- Gorbachev had stated in Vladivostok last July that Soviet and Mongolian leaders were examining the idea of withdrawing a "considerable number" of Soviet troops.
- On 16 January, the Soviets announced they had reached a decision in consultation with the Mongolians that they would withdraw one division plus, and that it would take place this spring.

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#### IV. Reasons for the Withdrawal

The withdrawal is the first concrete Soviet move to address any of China's main security concerns, which Beijing calls the "three obstacles" to full-fledged normalization of Sino-Soviet ties: the massive build-up of Soviet forces in Mongolia and along the Sino-Soviet border, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and Moscow's support for Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia.

- Gorbachev probably hopes that Beijing will see the withdrawal as a sign that the USSR is willing to make some concessions in order to achieve genuine improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, especially when viewed in conjunction with the conciliatory position Moscow is now taking on the border dispute.
  - o The Soviets may also hope the withdrawal will convince China to agree to talks on mutual force reductions along the Sino-Soviet border, which Moscow has been proposing since last summer. Beijing contends that its reduction of Chinese armed forces by one million men--which it claims is largely complete--obviates the need for China to reciprocate the Soviet move.
- The withdrawal was almost certainly timed to create a favorable atmosphere for the 10th round of Sino-Soviet political talks, which began on 14 April.

V. Further Withdrawals?

[redacted] Moscow is prepared to remove most of its troops from Mongolia. We believe the Soviets would do so only in the context of a comprehensive understanding with China that included reciprocal reductions of Chinese forces near its borders with Mongolia and the Soviet Union.

25X1

- Further limited withdrawals are possible, however, depending upon how Beijing responds to this initial unilateral pullout.
  - o China's official public response thus far has been to minimize the significance of the withdrawal.
- If, as seems likely, Beijing pockets the Soviet move and simply reiterates earlier demands for a full pullout of Soviet forces from Mongolia, Gorbachev would risk appearing weak by making further unilateral reductions.

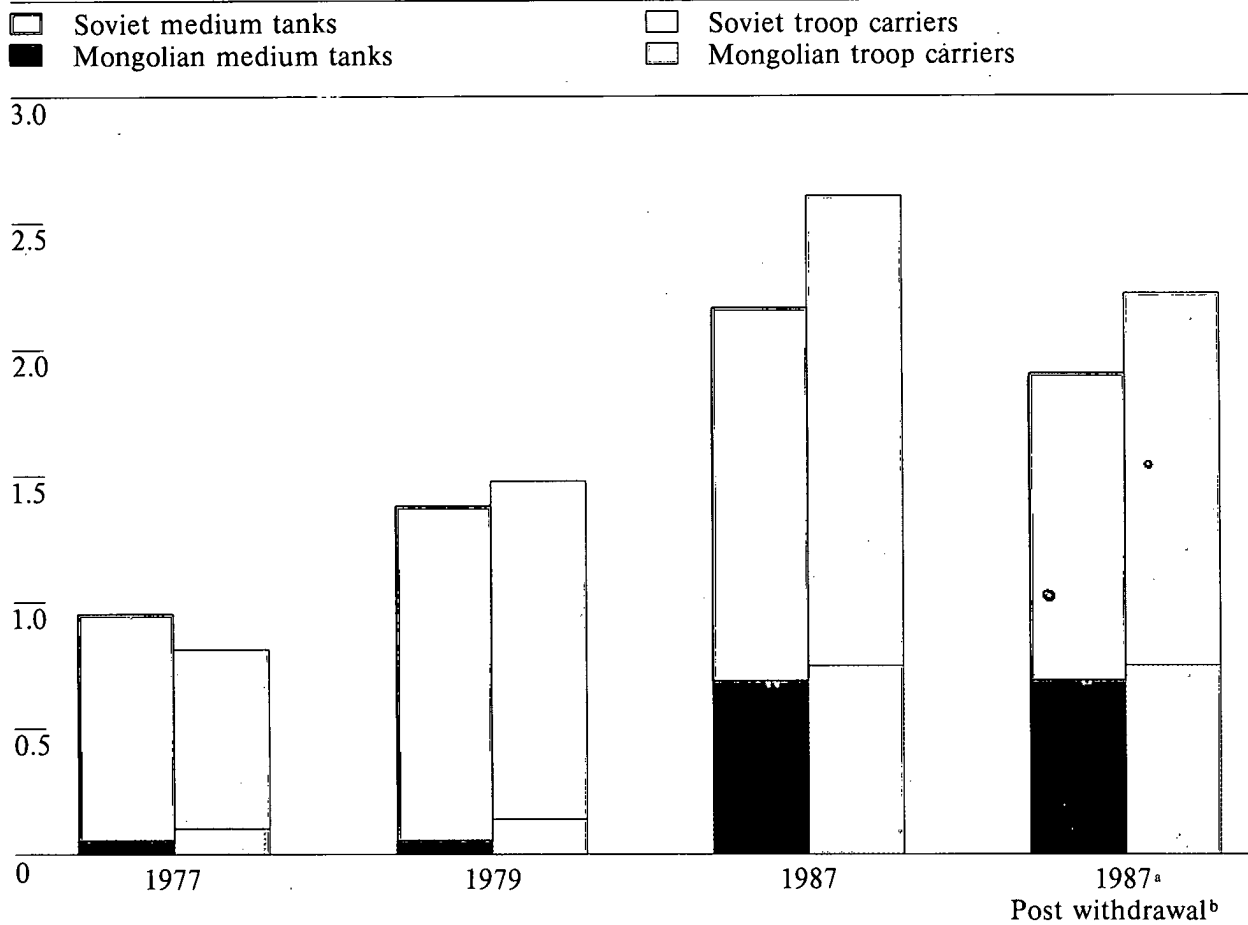
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**Chronology of Soviet Military Presence in Mongolia**

1921	Red Army assists Mongolian People's Republic in establishing independence from China.
1939-40	Soviet and Mongolian forces successfully repel Japanese incursions into Mongolia.
1945	Soviets use Mongolia as a major staging area for attacks against Japanese forces in Manchuria.
1956	All Soviet Ground Forces leave Mongolia.
1967-77	Two Soviet tank divisions and one motorized rifle division deployed to Mongolia after relations with China deteriorate.
1979	Five Soviet divisions deployed to Mongolia for maneuvers after Chinese incursion into Vietnam. Two divisions stay, bringing total to five.
1986	In July, General Secretary Gorbachev announces unilateral withdrawal of some Soviet forces from Mongolia in a speech at Vladivostok.
1987	In April, Soviets begin withdrawal of one motorized rifle division.

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**Mongolia: Growth in Tanks and Troop Carriers***Thousand*<sup>a</sup> Estimated.<sup>b</sup> After one Soviet Motorized Rifle Division withdrawn.

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US Relations With MongoliaI. The Normalization Process

The United States and Mongolia established formal diplomatic relations on 27 January 1987, culminating off-again, on-again negotiations stretching back over 15 years.

- The Soviets, who control Mongolia's foreign policy, must have given a "green light" to this move, perhaps with the idea that it would buttress Gorbachev's new Asian policy of portraying the USSR as a responsible power interested in dialogue rather than confrontation.
- The Soviets, who had torpedoed previous talks on the issue during the early 1970s, presumably still have reservations about allowing the US to acquire a "listening post" in Ulaanbataar.
- But their willingness to allow the Mongolians to begin fresh talks with the US last summer was in keeping with the recent thaw between China and Mongolia, as well as Gorbachev's public remarks about the possibility of a partial Soviet troop withdrawal from Mongolia.
- The Soviets probably calculated that allowing Mongolia to normalize relations with the US would help convince China that the USSR was willing to loosen somewhat its grip on Mongolia.
- The Chinese, for their part, have been generally helpful during the normalization process, and they have given no sign of being upset by the advent of US-Mongolian relations.
- Beijing--unlike Taipei--has no territorial claims on Mongolia, and may welcome US-Mongolian diplomatic relations as a means to lessen Ulaanbataar's international isolation and dependence on the USSR.

II. Unresolved Questions

Neither the US nor Mongolia is likely to dispatch an ambassador to the other side's capital, or to open an embassy there anytime soon.

- The Mongolians commented on 27 January that further talks would be necessary before ambassadors could be exchanged, and they have noted since then that the search for embassy sites might take some time.

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- Meanwhile, the two sides agree that embassy openings should occur at more or less the same time, and have taken initial steps toward that goal, but still have a long ways to go in working out administrative details, not to mention the political aspects of the matter.

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