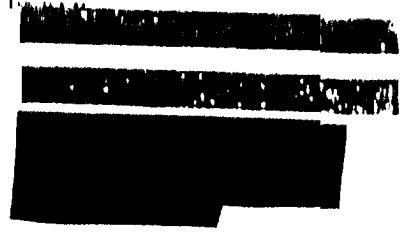


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United Report on Soviet Ground Forces Brigade in Cuba

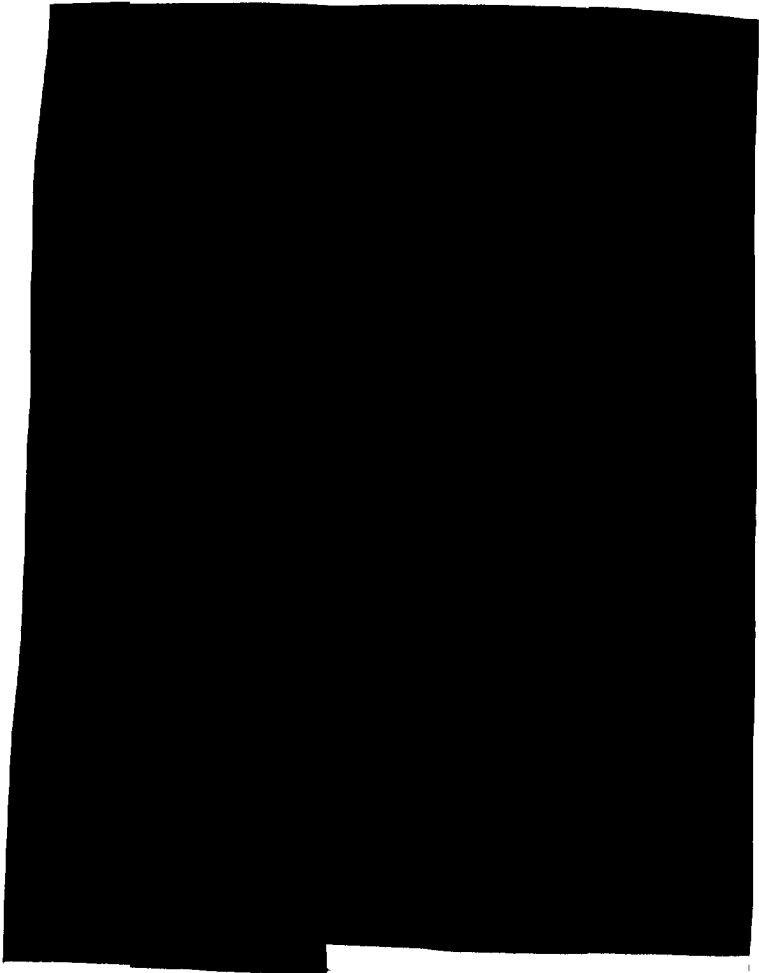
Intelligence Information
Memorandum to the President

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UPDATED REPORT ON
SOVIET GROUND FORCES BRIGADE IN CUBA*

PREFACE

This memorandum is a followup to the Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, "Possible Presence of Soviet Ground Forces in Cuba," that was published on 19 July 1979. This memorandum is based on [redacted] data, some of which has been reexamined or collected since then. It is not a definitive study of the origins and evolution of the Soviet ground forces brigade in Cuba. Further collection and analyses are continuing. [redacted]

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*This memorandum to holders of the 19 July 1979 IIM, "Possible Presence of Soviet Ground Forces in Cuba," was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for USSR and Eastern Europe, National Foreign Assessment Center. It was coordinated within the Central Intelligence Agency; with the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; with the Defense Intelligence Agency; with the National Security Agency; and with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. Information available as of 1700 EDT on 18 September 1979 was used in the preparation of this memorandum.

[redacted]

[redacted]

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Review On 18 Sep 1999
Derived From Multiple

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SUMMARY

A Soviet ground forces combat unit--called a brigade by the Soviets--has been in Cuba since at least the mid-1970s. It is possible that the unit or its precursors have been there since the early 1960s as a residual of the 1962 Soviet troop presence. The brigade consists of motorized rifle, tank, and artillery battalions, plus various other combat support and service support elements. The brigade probably has a strength of some 2,600 men, although the unit might have additional support elements that could raise its strength to 3,000 or even somewhat higher. We have insufficient information to determine the brigade's mission. We believe the most likely mission is to provide a small but concrete Soviet commitment to Castro, implying a readiness to defend Cuba and his regime. Another mission, particularly for the elements of the brigade stationed at Lourdes, may be to provide security for Soviet facilities. There is no evidence indicating that the Soviet unit has participated in training Cuban personnel or units. While it cannot be excluded that the Soviet unit has been used for demonstrations of Soviet military tactics and techniques to Cuban observers, there is no evidence from [redacted] that this is the case.

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DISCUSSION

Introduction

This IIM sets forth what we now know about the presence of Soviet combat troops in Cuba based on recently acquired information and on older data reinterpreted in light of current analytical judgments.

A 19 July IIM, "Possible Presence of Soviet Ground Forces in Cuba," concluded, after a review of [redacted] data gathered over several years, that a Soviet ground forces brigade was possibly stationed in Cuba, but that its size, location(s), and mission were uncertain. Since then, the Intelligence Community has substantially increased its attention to the Soviet military in Cuba. [redacted] intelligence collection efforts against Cuba have been augmented. Various intelligence agencies have established working groups to assemble and examine data on Soviet activities there.

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The heightened intelligence collection and analysis effort has confirmed that a Soviet military unit, called a brigade by the Soviets (and, on one occasion, by the Cubans [redacted]), is in Cuba. The collection effort has provided data on the organization, strength, and locations of the unit, as well as some information on its history. Thus far, however, we have not been able to determine what its current mission may be, or exactly how long the brigade or elements of it have been in Cuba. It is possible that the brigade or its precursors may date as far back as 1962.

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Recent Evidence

In April and July 1979, in support of the production of an IIM assessing the overall Cuban-Soviet military relationship, the National Security Agency published several summary reports on Soviet ground forces organization and activities in Cuba. In addition to ambiguous references to a "brigade" [redacted]

[redacted] reported instances of small-scale Soviet tactical training that took place over a three-year period beginning in July 1976. Taken together, in July 1979, [redacted] to the presence of Soviet ground forces units in Cuba, subordinated to a Soviet brigade command, and consisting of one tank battalion, one, and probably two, motorized rifle battalions, a multiple rocket launcher battalion, as well as other combat and service support elements.

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[redacted] during the first two weeks of August. [redacted] resulted in evidence of [redacted] small-scale Soviet tactical training.

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[redacted] enabled us to conclude for the first time with a high degree of confidence that it was actually Soviet, and not Cuban, units [redacted]

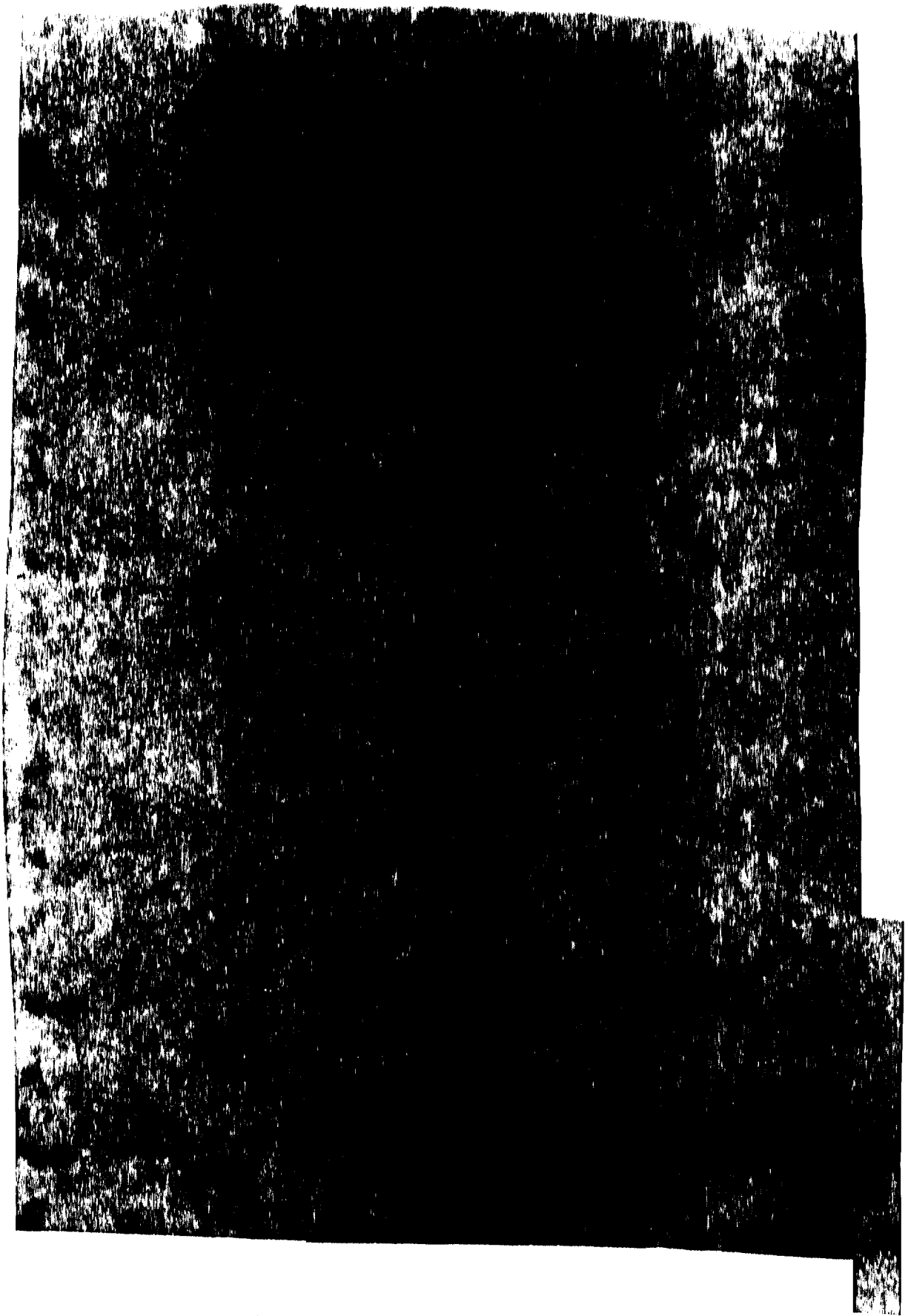
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There was enough equipment for one tank battalion, a motorized rifle company, two howitzer batteries, two multiple rocket launcher batteries, three antitank missile batteries, and elements of a mortar battery. In addition, there were enough tents in the bivouac to accommodate a full complement of personnel for these units. [redacted]

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equipment [redacted] Most of the [redacted] was at Santiago de las Vegas, a garrison facility of sufficient size to accommodate most of the units subordinate to the brigade. [redacted]

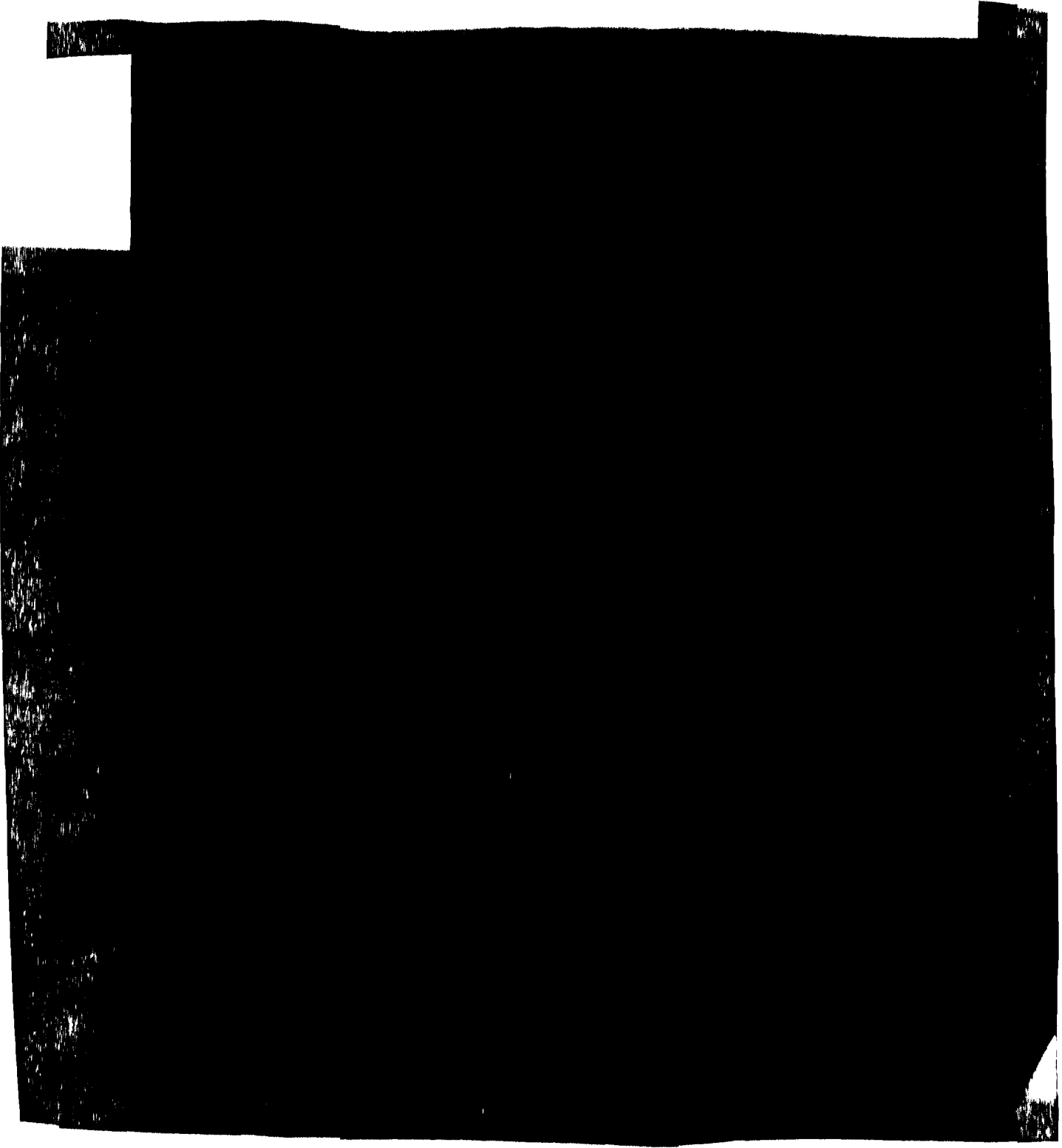
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wore uniforms that had no insignia and were distinctly different from Cuban uniforms--were frequently in Santiago de las Vegas or Managua in civilian clothes either shopping or having a night on the town.

[redacted] a Soviet ground forces brigade has been in Cuba since at least 1964. The unit was reportedly well equipped with tanks, armored personnel carriers, and other equipment, and the equipment was kept in sheds, presumably to prevent it from being identified. The soldiers assigned to the brigade received six months' training before being sent to Cuba, spent one year there, and served their final six months' duty in the USSR.

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[redacted] the mission of the unit is not to train Cubans. Subsequently, [redacted] corroborating the existence since at least 1967 of such a Soviet ground forces combat unit in Cuba.

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Earlier Intelligence

On the basis of a review of archival material, we believe that the Soviets may have maintained ground forces units in some form in Cuba since 1962, although we cannot confirm this as yet. Soviet ground forces units--numbering between 4,000 and 7,500 men organized in highly mobile armored combat groups--were deployed primarily at four locations in Cuba between August and October 1962. In October 1963, we estimated that by then most Soviet ground forces personnel had been withdrawn from these four main camps. The Soviets remaining were then judged to be no longer organized as combat groups but were believed to be involved in training Cuban units. A recently initiated, but still incomplete, review of photography suggests, however, that elements of a Soviet ground forces unit may have remained at the Santiago garrison since the fall of 1962.

[redacted]

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In light of recent evidence and retrospective analysis, these units were probably elements of the Soviet brigade or its precursors. The force consisted of a headquarters, a tank battalion, and two infantry battalions. The formation's headquarters were indicated to be at the approximate location of the Santiago de las Vegas garrison.

[redacted]

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to Soviet ground forces involved in exercises and training activity, and since October 1975, periodically to a "brigade." These were regarded in the Community at the time as consistent with the known Soviet military training and advisory presence in Cuba. (TS U)

The Brigade's Organization and Strength

A synthesis of the [redacted] intelligence confirms that a Soviet ground forces brigade is in Cuba, and suggests that its headquarters is located near Santiago de las Vegas. Available information indicates the brigade consists of four maneuver battalions--one tank and three motorized rifle--plus combat support elements, including one multiple rocket launcher battalion and a field artillery battalion, and service support elements. If the brigade were fully manned, it would have some 2,600 men. The brigade could include more small combat support or combat service support units that could push its strength to 3,000 men or even somewhat higher.

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We believe that the Soviet brigade is at or near its full personnel strength.

[redacted]

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Mission

[redacted]

-- [redacted] the most likely mission is to provide a small but concrete Soviet commitment to Castro, thus implying a readiness to defend Cuba and his regime.*

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-- Another mission--particularly for the elements of the brigade stationed at Lourdes--may be to provide security for Soviet facilities.

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* The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, believes the most likely mission to be security for present and future Soviet facilities. If a Soviet commitment to defend Cuba were the principal mission, the Soviets would more likely have advertised this unit's presence, rather than deliberately conceal it.

-- The Soviet brigade lacks the air and sea lift capability required to give it a power projection role. In any case, we believe it is highly unlikely that the Soviets view such a mission as militarily and politically plausible.

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-- While the brigade or its precursor elements may have had some role in training Cubans in the 1960s, there is no evidence that this has been the case in recent years. The apparent lack of communications between elements of the brigade while on exercises and Cuban army elements, and evidence that Soviet and Cuban elements make separate use of the San Pedro training area, strongly suggest that the Soviet unit does not train Cuban personnel or units.

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also indicates that the unit does not conduct training operations with Cubans. Moreover, known Soviet training units elsewhere--that is, MAAG missions--usually consist largely of officers, and it is unlikely that such an officer-heavy group would train as an integral Soviet unit or that it would, or could, exercise in the way that we have observed the Soviets exercise at San Pedro. While it cannot be excluded that Cuban military personnel have observed Soviet exercises as a demonstration of military tactics and techniques,

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-- We believe that direct collaboration with Cuban personnel in training efforts today is primarily the function of the personnel of the Soviet military advisory mission, which appears to us to be an entity separate from the brigade.

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