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Intelligence Report

Soviet Naval Strategy: Concepts and Forces for Theater War Against NATO

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Soviet Naval Strategy: Concepts and Forces for Theater War Against NATO

Principal Conclusions

During the past decade, Soviet naval strategists have become more flexible in their view of the possible course of development of a theater war with NATO. They now see naval operations in such a war as evolving in up to five stages:

- a period of rising tensions during which surveillance operations would begin
- a possible period of conventional (nonnuclear) hostilities
- possibly a period of limited nuclear operations in Europe, which probably would be accompanied by widespread nuclear operations at sea (Nuclear war at sea during a conventional conflict in Europe is not currently an element of Soviet strategy.)
- theater-wide nuclear war
- a concluding phase during which the winning side would consolidate its gains.

Soviet and other Warsaw Pact naval forces are organized into several theater commands for war with NATO. Each theater naval command has several wartime missions to which forces must be allocated. Soviet planners probably believe that the forces currently earmarked for each theater are adequate to defend Pact territory against seaborne attack and to limit damage from carrier-based aircraft strikes. They probably consider their antisubmarine and interdiction forces inadequate to carry out their missions in all theaters.

Likely future developments in Soviet naval strategy for theater war against NATO include:

- greater emphasis on open-ocean antisubmarine warfare
- greater use of submarine-launched ballistic missiles in theater war
- development of increased capabilities for conventional war at sea.

The Soviets might also adopt a doctrine permitting nuclear operations at sea during conventional hostilities on land in Europe. This could be done in reaction to Western discussions of such a strategy or in realization of the advantages that selected nuclear strikes at sea would have over limited nuclear attacks on land—for example, the absence of a collateral damage problem.

These considerations probably will stimulate Soviet production of attack submarines, high-endurance surface ships, and strike and antisubmarine aircraft, as well as provisions for logistic support.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
January 1975

INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Soviet Naval Strategy: Concepts and Forces for Theater War Against NATO

Preface

Since the mid-sixties, Soviet strategy for employing naval forces in a NATO - Warsaw Pact theater war has undergone important changes. These changes were discussed in classified Soviet and Warsaw Pact documents written in the late sixties. The documents, acquired recently by CIA, have provided important insights into Soviet plans for wartime naval operations and form the basis for the major judgments of this study.

This report discusses the evolution of Soviet naval strategy in the post-Khrushchev era, the Soviet scenario for naval actions in a NATO - Warsaw Pact war, and the likely Soviet view of the adequacy of naval resources for wartime operations. It provides an estimate--consistent with Soviet documents --of the types and numbers of Warsaw Pact naval forces which might be assigned to various wartime tasks in the open ocean and in coastal areas. The study concludes with a discussion of likely developments in Soviet naval strategy in the next five years and their implications for Soviet naval procurement programs. It does not discuss Soviet employment of naval forces in an intercontinental nuclear war arising out of a NATO - Warsaw Pact theater conflict.

Note: This report was prepared in the Office of Strategic Research in consultation with analysts of the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Office of Naval Intelligence, but without formal concurrence by intelligence offices outside CIA. Comments and queries regarding this publication may be directed to

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Evolution of Soviet Naval Strategy

The Post-Khrushchev Period

In the early sixties, Soviet naval strategy for war against NATO was predicated on a short, decisive nuclear conflict. This doctrine called for the early, massive use of nuclear weapons to forestall enemy nuclear attacks from the sea. The principal forces to be employed were cruise missile and torpedo attack submarines and missile-equipped strike aircraft. These were to establish a defense in depth against Western carrier task forces attempting to penetrate to within striking range of the USSR. Defense against Western ballistic missile submarines was to be accomplished by a combination of antisubmarine barriers and area searches by submarines and aircraft. Major surface ships were to play a secondary role in antisubmarine searches and anticarrier defense. Interdiction of NATO's sea lines of communications was accorded a low priority since Soviet strategists believed that the war would be concluded successfully before seaborne reinforcement of Europe could begin to have an impact.

The Mid-Sixties--Reaction to "Flexible Response"

By the mid-sixties, Soviet views on the nature and course of a NATO - Warsaw Pact war had begun to change. A major factor for change was the strategy of "flexible response" which had been introduced into US and NATO plans and exercises. In response to this shift in Western strategy, Soviet military theorists gave increased attention to the importance of armed forces equipped and trained for conventional as well as nuclear operations.

[redacted] classified documents, including lectures on strategy delivered at courses for non-Soviet Pact military officers, indicate that in the mid-sixties the plans for war in Europe included a possible brief period of conventional hostil-

ities preceding theater-wide nuclear war. The entire campaign was still envisaged as short, however, with most of the action completed within a few weeks. Naval strategists shared the views of other Soviet military analysts. In a classified document written in 1966, Rear Admiral Kruchenykh, an instructor at the General Staff Academy, argued that NATO's flexible response doctrine obliged the Soviet Navy to be ready for both conventional and nuclear war at sea.

A particular problem for naval strategists was the determination of the proper mix of nuclear and conventional weapons for deployed naval forces. Kruchenykh recommended that most units carry both types of weapons; he noted, however, that submarines equipped with antiship missiles but having only a few missile tubes might be armed only with nuclear weapons. He probably was referring to the J class (four launchers) and the modified W classes (two or four launchers).

Recent Changes in Soviet Concepts of Naval Warfare

Soviet naval strategy continued to evolve through the late sixties, and Soviet naval writings [redacted] of that period emphasized flexibility in the employment of naval forces.

The missions of Soviet naval forces--except some ballistic missile submarines--were reexamined in the context of conventional, limited nuclear, and theater-wide nuclear war. Several naval authors emphasized the need to attack Polaris submarines during a possible conventional phase. This view was also reflected in classified Warsaw Pact strategy lectures of the late sixties *(see box)*.

In 1969 Marshal Zakharov, then chief of the General Staff, discussed in a classified article the possibility of a war which would include conventional, tactical nuclear, and large-scale nuclear phases. The concept of limited nuclear operations in Europe may have been evaluated [redacted], but limited nuclear operations

Antisubmarine and Anticarrier Missions in Conventional Operations

Excerpts from Warsaw Pact lectures on strategy for war in Europe delivered in 1969-1970:

The enemy, under conditions of a critical situation, may go over to the employment of nuclear weapons.... Therefore, it is necessary to use all means [during a possible conventional phase] to destroy his launchers and nuclear delivery aircraft...

Peculiarities in the conduct of an offensive operation with conventional weapons [include the need to]...engage in joint operations of naval and long-range aircraft to destroy the main forces of the enemy fleet, especially missile submarines.

Features of the conduct of operations with employment of conventional means of destruction [include]...at sea, a joint operation of fleets and Long Range Aviation to destroy enemy naval forces—aircraft carriers and missile submarines.

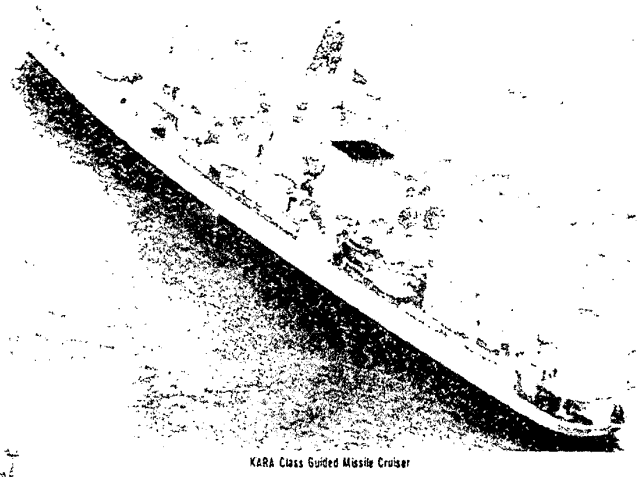
at sea have not been discussed explicitly in available Soviet writings

A classified article, written in 1968 by Captain First Rank Vyunenko and Rear Admiral Tuz, discussed the possibility of a period of limited nuclear hostilities in a NATO - Warsaw Pact war, in which there would be widespread use of tactical nuclear weapons at sea. They advocated that Soviet naval forces use all the nuclear means at their disposal during limited nuclear operations in Europe, with the exception of some submarine-launched ballistic missiles earmarked for use against strategic land targets. Other submarine-launched ballistic missiles--those with lower yields--were to be used as tactical weapons against targets in the European theater--enemy troop concentrations, ports, naval bases, airfields, shore-based antisubmarine detection systems, and navigation and communications stations supporting missile submarines.

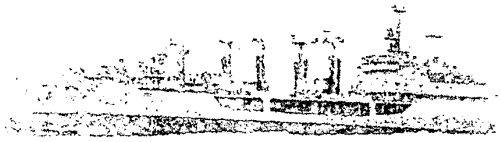
The changing concepts brought renewed interest in the interdiction of NATO sea lines of communications. Zakharov noted in his 1969 article that interdiction could become important in the closing stages of a NATO - Warsaw Pact war, to prevent seaborne reinforce-

Recent Additions to the Soviet Navy

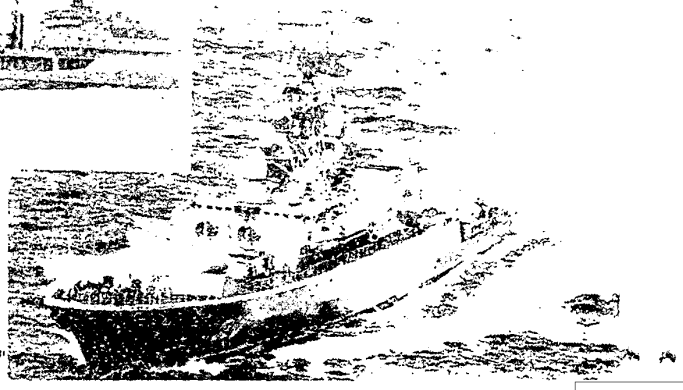
TU-142 BEAR F Antisubmarine Aircraft



KARA Class Guided Missile Cruiser



BORIS CHILIKIN Replenishment Oiler



KRIVAK Class Destroyer

ment of NATO's ground forces. A 1974 article noted the importance to NATO of sea lines of communications for both military and economic support of Europe. Attacking NATO shipping still had a lower priority than antisubmarine or anticarrier warfare, however, and Soviet strategists still stressed a relatively short war--one that probably would be essentially over before NATO could mount a major reinforcement from the sea.

Force Development

The new Soviet naval systems which became operational during the early seventies reflected the strategic concepts developed in the sixties. Newer classes of combatants were built with better living conditions and greater endurance than earlier classes, enabling the ships to stay at sea for longer periods of time. They were equipped with improved air defense systems to enhance combat effectiveness in areas beyond the cover of land-based aviation. Naval logistic support also received increased attention; two new auxiliary ship classes were introduced, though only a few of these ships were built, suggesting that Soviet planners saw little urgency in providing logistic support for extended combat operations. A new long-range antisubmarine aircraft--the TU-142, a modification of the TU-95 Bear heavy bomber--was developed and deployed in small numbers in recognition of the need to conduct antisubmarine operations in the open ocean.

Naval Strategy for War in Europe: Current Soviet Concepts

Overall Scenario

Classified Soviet documents reflect a flexible scenario for a NATO - Warsaw Pact war. Zakharov's

1969 article described five possible stages in such a war:

-- A period of warning, with rising tensions and deteriorating political relations, during which both sides would make preparations for conflict.

-- A phase of conventional operations. The primary focus of Pact operations in this phase is on breaking through NATO's forward defenses and disrupting its theater nuclear strike capability, including that of naval forces.

-- A possible period of limited nuclear operations. The scale of nuclear activity in this phase is not well defined. Limited use of nuclear weapons in Europe may have been evaluated [redacted], but there is no evidence that limited nuclear operations at sea have been dealt with in exercises. Some Soviet naval strategists have contended that limited nuclear operations in Europe would signal widespread nuclear warfare at sea.

-- Theater-wide nuclear war, regarded as a period of "decisive nuclear action." During this phase, massive nuclear strikes would be conducted. The scenario most often discussed and practiced involves a preemptive nuclear strike delivered on receiving warning of an imminent large-scale NATO nuclear attack. This phase may coincide with the start of intercontinental nuclear warfare but the Soviets may no longer see a necessary connection between the two as they did in the early sixties.

-- A concluding phase during which Pact forces would consolidate their territorial gains, eliminate pockets of enemy resistance, and assess requirements for further operations.

Soviet writers point out that this progression is not inevitable and that a war in Europe could begin

not only with conventional operations but also with limited nuclear warfare or a large-scale nuclear exchange. They nonetheless continue to stress the likelihood of escalation to widespread nuclear war.

Naval Operations in a Theater War With NATO

Over the last decade, the Soviet Navy has practiced all of the combat tasks applicable to a NATO - Warsaw Pact theater war, but it has rehearsed them in fragments--never integrated into a complete war scenario. Classified writings, and especially classified lectures on strategy for war in Europe given to Warsaw Pact officers in the late sixties, provide a framework to Soviet war plans. According to these sources, naval actions in a NATO - Warsaw Pact war would follow the basic scenario for war in Europe and the escalation of the naval conflict would be keyed to the course of operations on the continent. The documentary evidence indicate that the Soviets expect naval actions to unfold as outlined below.

Warning Period. During the period of warning, the Soviets would increase the readiness of Pact naval forces and deploy naval units to combat stations both near Soviet shores and in the open ocean to begin surveillance operations, concentrating on enemy aircraft carriers and ballistic missile submarines. The forces normally deployed during peacetime would be sufficient to carry out surveillance in Warsaw Pact home waters and in the Black and Baltic Seas. The Soviet naval squadron in the Mediterranean has sufficient strength to conduct routine surveillance of NATO surface ships, but its antisubmarine forces would require reinforcement even for limited operations. Augmentation of the Mediterranean squadron to full wartime levels probably would require about two weeks. Naval forces deployed routinely in the Atlantic and Pacific are only a fraction of estimated wartime requirements; reinforcement in these areas probably would require a week to ten days.

Conventional Phase. The Soviets think it likely that a NATO - Warsaw Pact war would soon become nuclear and therefore plan conventional operations to weaken the enemy's nuclear capability. Pact naval forces (including naval air elements), assisted by some bombers of Long Range Aviation, probably would attempt to destroy enemy naval units at sea and at their bases in Europe early in the conventional phase, again concentrating on aircraft carriers and ballistic missile submarines.* these attacks would be coordinated with the "Air Operation" conducted by Pact tactical air forces and elements of Long Range Aviation against NATO's European-based nuclear delivery systems According to Warsaw Pact strategy lectures, amphibious assaults would begin in the opening days of the conflict and efforts would be made to control the Baltic and Black Seas. NATO ASW forces would be attacked in an effort to facilitate Soviet submarine deployment.

Limited Nuclear Operations. There is no direct evidence in writings to indicate that the Soviet Navy plans to conduct limited nuclear operations at sea, even though its forces have the capability to do so. According to one Soviet classified article, limited nuclear operations on the European continent might trigger widespread nuclear warfare at

* It is possible, if the Soviets saw the opportunity to contain the conflict at a conventional level and given the very low probability that they could actually destroy an enemy ballistic missile submarine, that the Soviet leadership would refrain from attacking SSBNs in order to reduce the chances of escalation. A policy of prohibiting attacks on SSBNs would pose problems for the Soviet Navy since its forces would be unable to distinguish enemy ballistic missile submarines in the open ocean from attack submarines which would pose a threat to Soviet submarines and surface ships.

sea, but other articles do not reflect such a concept. Nor does Soviet doctrine appear to sanction nuclear warfare at sea while the war in Europe remains conventional. If the Soviets were to employ nuclear weapons at sea during a limited nuclear phase, they probably would allocate some Long Range Aviation heavy bombers to augment naval anticarrier attacks using nuclear missiles. There has been limited discussion in Soviet military writings of the use of land-based ballistic missiles against naval ships. It is possible --but unlikely--that some ballistic missile submarines would make selective nuclear strikes against theater land targets.

Theater-Wide Nuclear War. With a transition to theater-wide nuclear war, Soviet naval forces would begin an almost unlimited use of tactical nuclear weapons, if they had not done so earlier. Some older G and H class ballistic missile submarines probably would deliver nuclear strikes against European targets. Pact lecture notes indicate that their targets would be naval facilities, troop concentrations, and airfields. Strategic missiles carried by Y and D class submarines probably would be withheld as a strategic deterrent as long as the conflict remained confined to Europe and the surrounding seas and oceans.

Concluding Phase. Elements of the Soviet submarine force probably would attempt to interdict NATO seaborne reinforcements during the concluding phase of a NATO - Warsaw Pact theater war. As this phase progressed--assuming an outcome favorable to the Pact--naval forces would assist the ground forces in establishing control over occupied territory and would eliminate resistance by enemy naval units.

Theaters of Operations

A classified article written in 1970 by the Soviet Navy commander in chief, Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, in-

dicated that Warsaw Pact naval operations would be organized on a regional basis, with forces allocated to various "theaters of military operations" within the European theater of war. Two types of theaters of military operations--continental and ocean--are cited in classified Soviet writings. These writings have indicated that naval forces would be assigned to both types, but their command relationships *(see chart)* and tasks would differ.

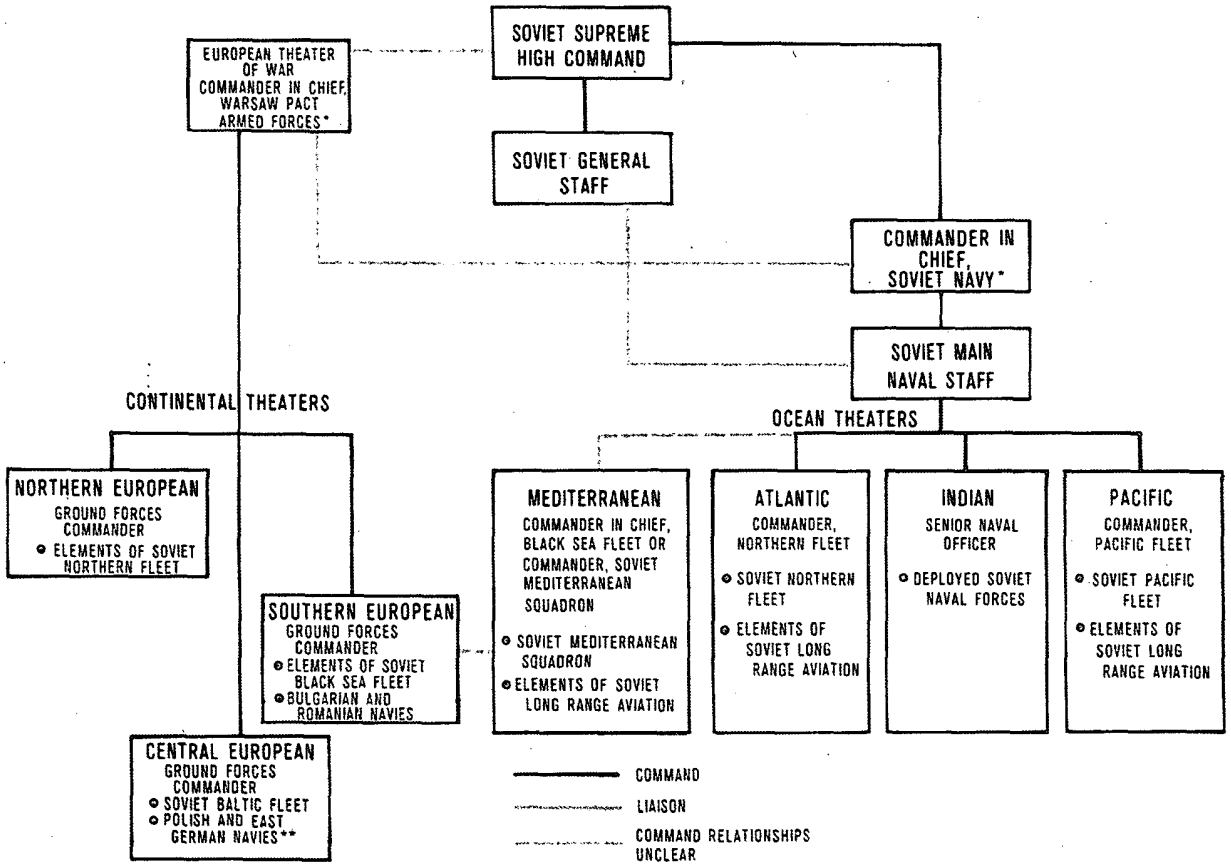
In a war with NATO, Europe and the surrounding seas probably would be divided into three continental theaters of military operations--the northern, central, and southern European. The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans would be designated ocean theaters. The Mediterranean Sea might either be designated an ocean theater or become part of the southern European theater, depending on the manner in which the conflict evolved. Wartime Soviet naval operations in the Mediterranean would be similar to those in the Atlantic, hence the Mediterranean is treated in this paper as an independent ocean theater. Other distant areas, such as the Indian Ocean, might also be designated ocean theaters, but Soviet naval operations in these areas in a war with NATO probably would be extremely limited unless NATO had sizable naval forces deployed there.

Ocean Theaters

Soviet documents indicate that the tasks of destroying NATO's nuclear-capable naval forces and of preventing seaborne reinforcement of Europe would fall primarily to the commanders of the ocean theaters--the Atlantic, Pacific, and probably the Mediterranean.

Atlantic Ocean Theater. During a time of rising tensions--the warning period--Soviet Northern Fleet naval units assigned to the Atlantic Ocean theater almost certainly would deploy from home bases and attempt to locate NATO carriers and ballistic missile submarines. Surface and submarine units assigned stations in the northern Norwegian Sea could reach them in two or three days. Those assigned to operations in more distant areas would need a week to ten days to reach their stations. *(See map, page 17.)*

Warsaw Pact Naval Command Relationships for Theater War Against NATO



This chart depicts the nominal Warsaw Pact naval command structure for a war against NATO. Pact communications systems are sufficiently flexible to permit other relationships, including direct control of lower echelons by high-level commanders.

* The commander in chief of Warsaw Pact Armed Forces and the commander in chief of the Soviet Navy are members of the Supreme High Command.

** May also be assigned to the Northern European Theater.

Some long-range Bear D reconnaissance aircraft probably would be deployed to forward airfields in the USSR and possibly to Cuba and Guinea as they have been in major fleet exercises during the past several years. The aircraft probably would begin reconnaissance sweeps early in the period of tension. In the Norwegian Sea they probably would be augmented by naval and Long Range Aviation medium bombers. Some antisubmarine aircraft--Bear F and IL-38 May--probably would be staged to forward bases to carry out searches in the Norwegian Sea and south into the Atlantic.

Intelligence collection ships probably would sortie to supplement those continuously on station in peacetime. The stations occupied by these ships usually include two off the US East Coast, two or three in the Greenland - Iceland - United Kingdom Gap, and two each off the US Polaris bases at Holy Loch, Scotland, and Rota, Spain.

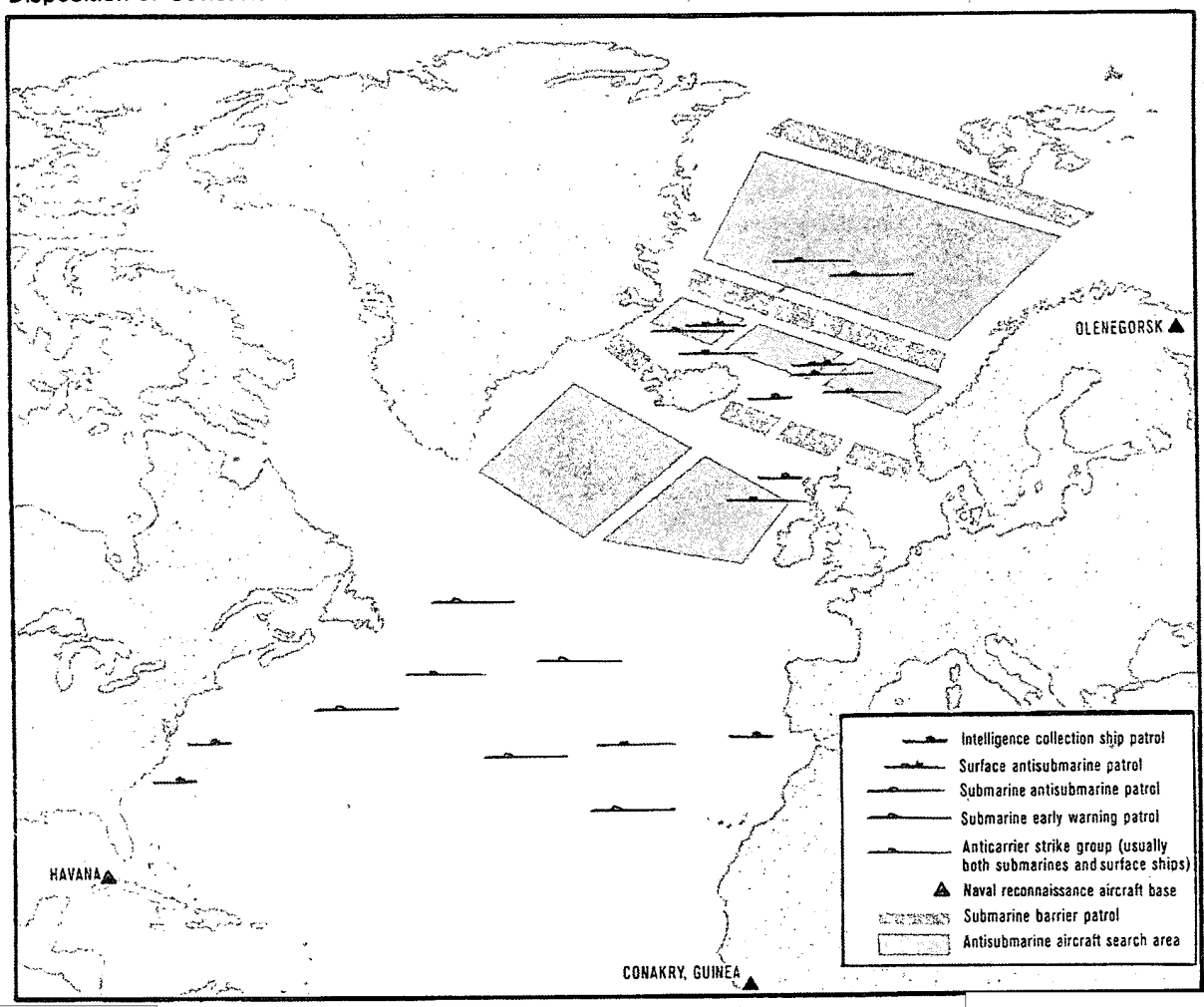
Some nuclear-powered attack submarines--principally the V and U classes--probably would patrol off the Polaris bases in an attempt to detect and track deploying US missile submarines.

The nuclear-powered units probably would be supported by several diesel-powered submarines and antisubmarine surface ships. Other nuclear-powered attack submarines probably would attempt antisubmarine searches in the large areas suitable for Polaris operations in the North Atlantic and the Norwegian Sea, in conjunction with antisubmarine aircraft. This strategy was advocated by several naval writers in the sixties

Still others probably would escort deploying ballistic missile submarines to prevent NATO forces from tracking them.

Several exercises--"North" in 1968, "Ocean" in 1970

Atlantic Ocean Theater of Military Operations: Postulated Initial Wartime Disposition of Soviet Naval Forces



presented a fairly complete picture of the Soviets' plans for using their other submarines in the Atlantic. Cruise missile submarines, assisted by a few missile-equipped major surface combatants, probably would establish several anticarrier defense barriers in the Norwegian Sea and the North Atlantic. A C class cruise missile submarine probably would be assigned to trail each aircraft carrier. Older nuclear attack submarines and diesel-powered units probably would establish antisubmarine and antiship barriers--directed in part against Western ballistic missile submarines--in the Norwegian Sea.

the long-range F class units probably would be employed in the more distant barriers and at the entrance to the Norwegian Sea, while the shorter range W and R classes would form the majority of units assigned to stations off Norway or at the entrance to the Barents Sea. In establishing these barriers the Soviets would seek to divide potential enemy operating areas into surveillance zones--as advocated in a classified article written by Rear Admiral Gonchar in 1968. Submarine, surface, and air surveillance forces would search these zones, and the submarine barriers would provide warning of enemy movements from one zone to another.

Farther out in the Atlantic, submarine patrols probably would be established to provide early warning of enemy movements. The Soviets would round out their ocean surveillance efforts in this phase using reconnaissance satellites--Elint, radar, and possibly photographic--to scan ocean areas.

Other naval forces intended for eventual combat employment in the Atlantic theater almost certainly could be brought to combat readiness during this period. To accomplish this, minor repairs to surface ships and submarines would be completed and ammunition and stores would be loaded. Northern Fleet naval strike aircraft probably would be placed in a state of increased readiness and some aviation units from

other fleets probably would be redeployed to the Northern Fleet area. Rear Admiral Brezinskiy suggested such a shift in a classified article published in 1968,

With the beginning of conventional operations, should this stage take place, Soviet naval forces in the Atlantic Theater almost certainly would attempt massive, coordinated anticarrier attacks- using surface-, air-, and submarine-launched cruise missiles and probably submarine-launched torpedoes. Naval medium bombers probably would be employed in regimental strength--about 20 missile-launching aircraft plus supporting units--against each enemy aircraft carrier strike group. Some Long Range Aviation bombers might also participate in these attacks. initial attacks probably would be made in coordination with the Air Operation in Europe. Following the first strikes, Soviet anticarrier forces probably would regroup and conduct repeated attacks until the enemy forces were put out of action or hostilities escalated to a nuclear stage.

Classified articles and Warsaw Pact lecture notes indicate that Soviet antisubmarine forces would not refrain from attacking ballistic missile submarines during a conventional phase but would deliver conventional attacks against any enemy submarine being tracked.* Area searches and barrier patrols probably would continue throughout the Barents and Norwegian Seas and into the North Atlantic. Antisubmarine units operating near the Polaris bases at Holy Loch probably would attempt to engage deploying missile submarines.

Soviet doctrine, as reflected in a book on antisubmarine warfare written in 1968 and an article in an authoritative military journal in 1973, calls for attacks against any enemy antisubmarine forces detected

*See footnote on page 12.

in the open ocean during this period. NATO's other major antisubmarine defenses--sound surveillance system (SOSUS) terminals and patrol aircraft bases in Iceland, Norway, and the UK--might also be attacked during this phase, but few Soviet naval resources would be available for such missions at the opening of hostilities.

If a period of limited nuclear operations in Europe were to ensue, Soviet naval forces in the Atlantic would continue their primary task of countering NATO's naval nuclear strike forces. The navy would be free to use at least some nuclear weapons and might undertake nuclear operations on a fairly large scale. In addition, Long Range Aviation heavy bombers equipped with nuclear missiles might be made available to augment naval anticarrier forces, This could free some naval assets--particularly submarines--for other tasks, especially antisubmarine warfare.

Another option open to the Soviets during this period would be to use naval or Long Range Aviation aircraft for nuclear strikes against SOSUS facilities and maritime patrol aircraft bases in the Atlantic theater. Some submarine-launched ballistic missiles--probably the SS-N-4 and SS-N-5 carried by the G and H classes--might also be employed against these targets. This would be consistent with the views of Vyunenko and Tuz, who advocated using some ballistic missile submarines in a theater strike role,

Escalation to theater-wide nuclear war would permit Soviet naval forces in the Atlantic to employ nearly all of their nuclear weapon systems, if they had not done so earlier. If the conflict remained confined to the European theater of war, and had not spread to include nuclear strikes against the USSR, they would continue to withhold submarine-launched ballistic missiles intended for intercontinental attack. The Soviets might assign additional attack

submarines to protect their ballistic missile submarines during this phase.

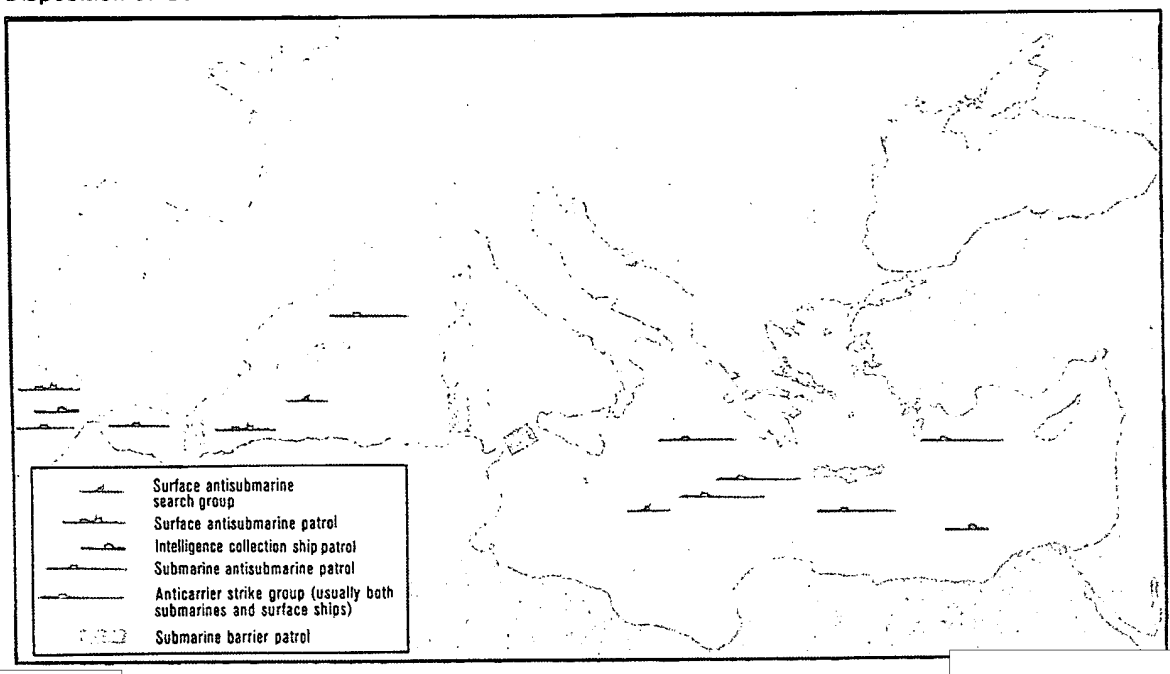
In the concluding phase of a war in Europe, Soviet naval units in the Atlantic probably would continue operations aimed at destroying enemy naval forces. They probably would also conduct a submarine interdiction effort to prevent reinforcement of NATO from the United States. Articles by Navy Commander in Chief Gorshkov and other naval writers indicate that submarine interdiction barriers would be augmented by long-range naval reconnaissance aircraft.

Mediterranean Theater. Soviet writings indicate that wartime naval actions in the Mediterranean would be similar to those in the Atlantic. The Soviet Mediterranean naval squadron normally has 12 to 15 major surface combatants and a similar number of submarines--enough to begin combat operations. Soviet actions in several crises in the Middle East indicate, however, that the squadron would be reinforced during a period of rising tension. The squadron probably would be augmented both by submarines from the Northern Fleet and surface combatants from the Black Sea. It would take at least a week for Northern Fleet nuclear-powered submarines and about two weeks for diesel submarines to reach the Mediterranean. Three to seven days probably would be required to augment the squadron surface forces.

The augmented force almost certainly would attempt to maintain continuous contact with major US units, especially aircraft carriers, during the period of rising tensions, as was done during the 1970 Jordanian crisis and the 1973 Middle East war. Mediterranean squadron antisubmarine operations during the warning period probably would include intensive surveillance of the US Polaris submarine base at Rota, Spain, by a combined force of intelligence collection ships, antisubmarine surface combatants, and submarines.

Additional submarine and surface antisubmarine barriers probably would be established within the Mediterranean.

Mediterranean Theater of Military Operations: Postulated Initial Wartime Disposition of Soviet Naval Forces



Nuclear-powered attack submarines probably would conduct area antisubmarine searches in the eastern, central, and western Mediterranean. one or two surface antisubmarine search groups--composed of a Moskva class helicopter cruiser and several destroyers--also would search likely Polaris operating areas.

Initial antisubmarine and anticarrier attacks in the Mediterranean, as in the Atlantic, probably would be conducted at the onset of hostilities--whether conventional or nuclear.* A classified article by a Soviet tactical air force officer indicated that Frontal Aviation aircraft would attempt to neutralize NATO's forward air defenses in southern Europe so that Soviet naval medium bombers could break out of the Black Sea to participate in anticarrier attacks. Follow-up antiship strikes--conventional or nuclear--probably would be carried out by those ships and submarines which managed to survive NATO counterattacks, and by shore-based naval strike aircraft. If the Soviets could attain air superiority over the Mediterranean, they might deploy a detachment of antisubmarine aircraft to operate there.

If the Soviets were to adopt a policy for limited nuclear operations at sea, they might employ nuclear antiship missiles against US aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean while hostilities in other ocean areas remained conventional. Carriers operating in the central or eastern Mediterranean are within range of targets in the USSR and Eastern Europe and thus are more urgent targets for Soviet antiship forces than are carriers in the Atlantic theater, which must penetrate several echelons of anticarrier defenses before they can come within striking range of objectives in Warsaw Pact territory. The use of nuclear anticarrier weapons in the Mediterranean would increase greatly the Soviet Navy's chances of disabling the entire Sixth Fleet carrier force early in the conflict

* See footnote on page 12.

With a transition to theater-wide nuclear war, the Soviet Mediterranean naval force could commit all of its nuclear antiship missiles and antisubmarine weapons.

Pacific Ocean Theater. Although the main actions in a NATO - Warsaw Pact war would take place in the European theater, the Soviets also expect a threat from US aircraft carriers and ballistic missile submarines in the Pacific. The tasks assigned to Soviet naval forces in the Pacific Ocean theater are the same as those in the Atlantic. They include intensified surveillance during the warning period, concentrating on aircraft carriers and potential ballistic missile submarine operating areas, and, once hostilities begin, conventional or nuclear attacks against US naval forces, especially nuclear-capable units. The Soviets might be more circumspect about attacking US ballistic missile submarines in the Pacific than in the Atlantic since they pose no direct threat to Warsaw Pact operations in Europe.

Continental Theaters

According to classified Warsaw Pact lectures, naval forces assigned to continental theaters of military operations have the tasks of establishing control over closed seas and coastal areas, conducting amphibious assaults in support of Pact operations in Europe, and protecting coastal shipping. These missions require close coordination with ground and air forces. The operations would be similar in either a conventional or a nuclear theater war. Naval operations to establish control of the seas in the continental theaters could be initiated with little advance warning. Amphibious assaults would require several days' preparation, however, and one to three more days would be required for amphibious forces to move to their assault areas.

Northern European Theater. forces assigned to the northern

European theater have the mission of defending the northern USSR against attack from Norway or from the sea and possibly conducting offensive operations into Scandanavia either through Finland or directly into Norway. The purpose of such operations is not clear, but they may be intended to neutralize NATO surveillance capabilities in the area. Naval units in the northern European theater would include elements of the Northern Fleet and possibly some Baltic Fleet units.*

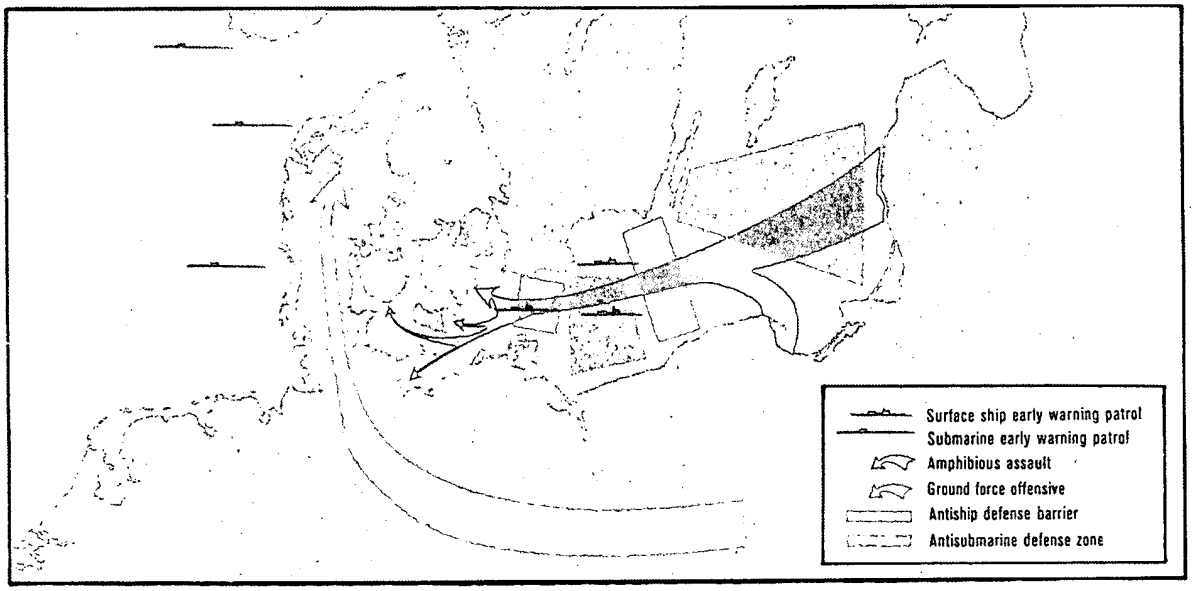
During a period of tension, Northern Fleet offshore defense forces almost certainly would establish antisubmarine patrols by surface, submarine, and air elements in the Barents Sea and attempt to detect and track Western submarines in Soviet home waters. Late in the period, defensive minefields probably would be established along the sea approaches to the Soviet coast.

with the opening of hostilities, Northern Fleet forces would attack any Western submarines detected in the Barents Sea. Warsaw Pact doctrine calls for strikes by naval aircraft against NATO naval facilities and surveillance posts in northern Norway. According to the timetable established in Warsaw Pact strategy lectures, amphibious forces carrying up to about a regiment (1,800 men) of Soviet naval infantry probably would leave their bases shortly after fighting began. Landings would begin on the second or third day of the war. Operations to maintain control of coastal waters and protect shipping probably would continue throughout the campaign, and additional small-scale amphibious assaults might be conducted.

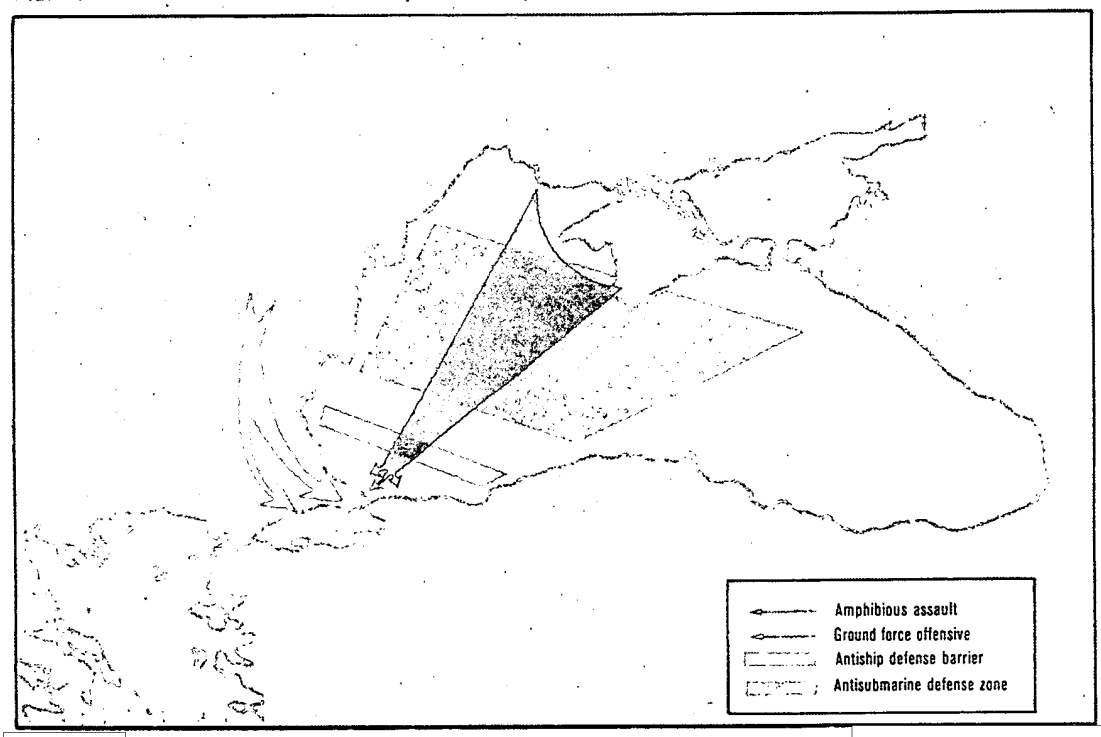
Central European Theater. Warsaw Pact naval forces assigned to the Central European Theater probably include the Soviet Baltic Fleet and the Polish and East German navies. Pact documents have

* The Baltic Fleet would normally function as part of the central European theater. Its wartime operations are discussed in the following section.

Central European Theater of Military Operations: Planned Warsaw Pact Naval and Amphibious Operations



Southern European Theater of Military Operations: Planned Warsaw Pact Naval and Amphibious Operations



confirmed that these forces form an integrated naval command with two main tasks--to control the Baltic Sea and its approaches and to support Warsaw Pact offensive operations aimed at capturing Denmark and the Baltic coast of West Germany.

According to these sources, the Baltic navies would conduct amphibious assault operations, probably utilizing the equivalent of up to three regiments, to assist in seizing the Danish Straits in coordination with Pact airborne troops and air forces. They also would carry out antiship and antisubmarine operations against NATO naval forces operating in the Baltic or attempting to penetrate the straits, and air attacks against NATO ports and naval bases. Pact naval forces also probably would defend sea lines of communications in the Baltic, and ports and naval bases. The Soviet Baltic Fleet also may provide some surface, submarine, and air units for operations with the Northern Fleet in the Atlantic Ocean theater as they did in a major Northern Fleet exercise in 1971.

Southern European Theater. Naval forces in the southern European theater are charged with defending the Soviet, Bulgarian, and Romanian coasts, establishing control over the Black Sea, and conducting amphibious landings utilizing up to two 1,800-man regiments to assist in seizing the Turkish Straits and other objectives in Turkey and Greece. Pact plans--as revealed by classified documents call for combined operations by elements of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet and the Bulgarian and Romanian navies. Cooperation among the Pact navies is not as highly developed here as in the Baltic, however. The Romanians have attempted to retain a higher degree of national control over their forces Soviet planners probably have devised contingency plans for operations in the Black Sea should Romania not participate.

Distant Areas

The small number of Soviet naval units deployed to distant areas such as the Caribbean Sea or the Indian Ocean probably have contingency missions in the event of a NATO - Warsaw Pact war. These units probably would attempt to track any Western naval forces in their areas during a crisis and to engage them with conventional or nuclear weapons. Because of the limited size and capabilities of these forces, they would be extremely vulnerable to counterattack. If they were able to carry out their tasks and survive they probably would try to join Soviet forces in the ocean theaters or--if they could be resupplied--to disrupt Western shipping.

Disposition of Forces

The variety of tasks assigned to Soviet and Warsaw Pact naval forces and the requirement--dictated by geography--to maintain widely separated and largely self-contained fleets require Soviet naval planners to establish priorities for the allocation of forces among the various missions and theaters. Changing strategic concepts--especially the need to prepare for both conventional and nuclear war--have compounded the Soviet problem.

Allocation of Combat Forces to Theaters

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Allocation of Forces to Missions

Soviet theater commanders probably have contingency plans for allocation of their assigned naval forces to meet competing mission requirements. At the opening of hostilities, the commanders of ocean theaters would have to divide their forces to meet both the aircraft carrier and submarine threats, as well as to perform supplementary tasks such as distant area reconnaissance. In the continental theaters, although the allocation task would be easier, the commanders would have to provide forces for control of closed seas, escort of shipping, and strikes against naval-associated land targets.

Soviet writings indicate that in the ocean theaters almost all of the major surface combatants and submarines equipped with antiship missiles would be assigned to the anticarrier mission. These units probably would be supported by several other major surface combatants, by several regiments of strike and reconnaissance aircraft, and by one or two regiments of heavy and medium bombers from Long Range Aviation. Most of the other major surface ships and nuclear-powered submarines, and a few diesel-powered submarines, probably would be assigned to antisubmarine warfare along with all of the antisubmarine aircraft. The remaining diesel-powered submarines, and possibly a few nuclear-powered torpedo attack units, probably would be used in barrier or early warning patrols where they could attack enemy units, both surface ships and submarines.

An illustrative allocation of forces in the Atlantic Ocean theater--given 30 days' warning--would assign to anticarrier warfare about 15

major surface combatants, about 20 submarines, some 60 naval strike aircraft, 40 reconnaissance aircraft, and 50 bombers from Long Range Aviation; to antisubmarine warfare, about 25 major and 10 minor surface combatants, 25 submarines, and 35 aircraft; and to early warning or barrier patrols, about 5 surface combatants and 25 submarines.

In the Mediterranean the likely initial allocation to anticarrier warfare would be about 15 surface combatants, 15 submarines, 50 strike aircraft, and 5 reconnaissance aircraft; to antisubmarine warfare, about 20 surface combatants and 10 submarines; and to barrier and warning patrols, several submarines and surface combatants.

For anticarrier operations in the Pacific, the Soviets might assign about 15 major surface combatants, 15 submarines, about 70 naval strike and 45 reconnaissance aircraft, and perhaps 30 bombers from Long Range Aviation. Antisubmarine warfare forces in the Pacific might include about 25 major surface combatants, 10 submarines, and up to 50 aircraft. A few minor surface combatants and 20 submarines probably would be deployed initially to barrier or warning patrol stations on the approaches to the Soviet Pacific coast.

Soviet Perceptions of Force Level Constraints

Soviet planners probably believe that their forces have a good capability to counter the Western aircraft carrier threat. A classified article by Rear Admiral Brezinskiy calculates that 6 to 10 hits by antiship missiles with conventional warheads are required to put a Western aircraft carrier out of action, but the Soviets apparently believe that at least four times that many missiles must be launched to achieve the required number of hits.

Naval antiship missile launchers--on ships, submarines, and aircraft--available to Soviet ocean theater commanders at the beginning of the war probably

would total some 200 in the Atlantic and in the Pacific, and 150 in the Mediterranean. All of these missiles probably would not be available for an initial attack in a conflict involving only conventional weapons. About half probably would be used in initial conventional strikes and the remainder held back for a second conventional strike or as a hedge against escalation to nuclear war. Thus, using half of their available antiship resources, the Soviets could allocate about 25 conventional missiles in the first attack against each of the six to eight NATO carriers which they anticipate will operate in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. A similar number could be employed against four carriers in the Pacific. Their confidence probably is bolstered by their ability to coordinate torpedo attacks with missile strikes, to draw on Long Range Aviation assets to augment naval forces, and to conduct follow-on missile attacks.

Soviet planners probably are less confident about the capabilities of their antisubmarine force. A Soviet naval air officer, Major General Nevzorov, in a classified article published in 1966 calculated that some 500 submarines or 1,000 aircraft sorties would be required to search the likely Polaris operating areas. Another naval air officer, Major General Sukhanov, provided figures which suggest that thousands of submarines or aircraft would be required for this mission. Current Soviet force levels would support assignment of only a small fraction of these numbers.

These authors were writing before the latest generation of Soviet antisubmarine forces became operational. The new forces have improved Soviet antisubmarine search capabilities somewhat, but this improvement still has not reduced Soviet force level requirements to manageable proportions. Even assuming successful search and detection, the Soviets lack the submarines required to trail all NATO ballistic missile submarines continuously. Classified Soviet documents estimate that about 23 US and several Allied ballistic missile submarines would operate in the Atlantic and Mediterranean theaters, but the Soviet Navy probably could deploy a maximum of 20 nuclear-powered torpedo attack submarines to those areas.

Similarly, they probably could deploy only about six nuclear-powered attack submarines in the Pacific to counter about seven Polaris submarines.

Furthermore, the submarines the Soviets have available are much noisier than Polaris submarines

To help compensate for this imbalance in detection capabilities, Soviet planners probably would like to have a nuclear-powered attack submarine inventory sufficient to assign several units to each Polaris submarine on patrol.

The Soviet Navy probably would like to have more flexibility to use its submarines for interdiction. In the final stages of a war with NATO, Soviet planners might be faced with a requirement for interdiction and might reassign some submarines to that task. Unless they had completed their antisubmarine warfare campaign successfully--a highly unlikely possibility--they probably could not spare more than about 20 submarines in the Atlantic and 15 in the Pacific for interdiction. Most of these probably would be diesel powered.

Outlook

The next five years undoubtedly will see a continuation of recent trends in Soviet naval strategy. The wartime tasks of the Soviet Navy probably will remain much the same as they are at present, but Soviet strategists probably will give more attention to antisubmarine warfare, to flexibility in the employment of nuclear weapons, and to forces for conventional warfare at sea.

Antisubmarine Warfare and the Strategic Balance

Having agreed, in the ABM Treaty of 1972, to forgo deployment of a national antimissile defense network that would have helped to limit damage from a Western submarine-launched ballistic missile attack, the Soviets now have two alternatives in planning their antisubmarine forces. They could forgo an intensive anti-Polaris effort--on the grounds that the limited effectiveness of their antisubmarine forces would contribute little to limiting the damage from a US intercontinental nuclear strike--and rely on their own intercontinental nuclear strike capability to deter the West from using its missile submarines. Or they could pay increased attention to antisubmarine warfare, not only to compensate for loss of the option to deploy a national ABM network but also to limit NATO's ability to use ballistic missile submarines for nuclear strikes in the European theater.

[redacted] evidence on antisubmarine warfare research, suggest that the Soviet Navy has chosen to intensify its antisubmarine warfare efforts--especially against ballistic missile submarines. Classified documents indicate that Soviet naval strategists regard antisubmarine warfare as their major unsolved strategic problem.

[redacted]

The Soviets still face major obstacles, however, in attempting to develop an effective antisubmarine defense. They would have to find a reliable detection method, and they probably see a requirement for better means of distinguishing ballistic missile submarines from other submarines. The Soviets also would have to program more operating forces--submarines, surface ships, and aircraft--for the antisubmarine mission. They probably will develop and deploy more forces capable of conducting antisubmarine warfare, but there is no evidence that they will be able to solve the critical detection and identification problems in the next decade.

Naval Forces in Theater Nuclear War

Recent developments in Soviet theater nuclear forces suggest that the Soviets are taking steps to improve the Warsaw Pact's ability to conduct nuclear warfare in Europe with less reliance on delivery systems based in the USSR This may be an attempt to "decouple" theater and intercontinental nuclear war and to reduce the possibility that Soviet nuclear strikes against NATO forces would result in Western nuclear retaliation against the Soviet Union.

Increased reliance on sea-based nuclear systems for theater nuclear war would complement these efforts. More ballistic missile submarines--with their relative invulnerability and geographic isolation not only from the USSR, but from European population centers--could be earmarked for theater targets. To exploit these advantages fully the Soviets would have to improve further both their communications with

missile submarines on patrol and the accuracy and targeting flexibility of submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

Nuclear War at Sea

Documentary sources indicate that Warsaw Pact strategists probably believe that their capability to conduct conventional war on the European continent is superior to that of NATO. Naval strategists in the sixties believed that acceptance of a conventional war option would weaken the navy's ability to carry out its total complex of missions. The most likely Soviet solution to this dilemma would be to improve the Navy's conventional warfare capabilities to conform more closely to those of Warsaw Pact ground forces. Another possibility would be to develop a strategy which permitted the use of nuclear weapons at sea while the war in Europe remained conventional.

There is no direct evidence that the Soviets have adopted--or even that they are considering--such a strategy, yet selective nuclear strikes at sea would have advantages over limited nuclear attacks on land. All targets would be clearly military, hence there would be no collateral damage problem. Nuclear war at sea has been discussed openly by Western strategists and such discussions could stimulate Soviet adoption of similar concepts. The SS-NX-13 tactical ballistic missile, now being developed, could improve the Soviet Navy's anticarrier capabilities in nuclear war at sea.

Force Implications

Likely future developments in naval strategy probably will stimulate some changes in the Soviet Navy's procurement policies. These changes will be

reinforced by the requirement--probably recognized by Soviet planners--to replace many of the ships, submarines, and aircraft which were procured in the fifties and which still comprise a major portion of the Soviet naval force.

The difficulties of the ASW mission probably will require increased production of nuclear-powered attack submarines. If the Vladivostok strategic arms limitation accord is implemented successfully, some reductions in the size and possibly changes in the mix of Soviet strategic forces would be required. It is not clear how this would affect the submarine force, but one Soviet option would be to maintain a ballistic missile submarine force at or below the level of 62 units permitted under the Interim Agreement and shift more shipyard resources to attack submarine programs.

Faced with a renewed interest in sea lane interdiction, the Soviets might also step up production of diesel-powered submarines. These submarines would be effective against lightly defended Western convoys and would be much less expensive than nuclear-powered submarines. Conventional war requirements probably will result in increased interest in flexible, high-endurance surface ships, such as the Kara class cruiser and the Kiev class ASW aircraft carrier now under construction; in logistic support ships, such as the Boris Chilikin class replenishment oiler; and in access to overseas base facilities.

Greater flexibility in land-based naval air power probably will be sought with the deployment of the Backfire bomber to Soviet naval air units. The Backfire will improve the Navy's capability to strike naval targets at great distances from land and to penetrate NATO defenses in attacking both sea targets and naval-related land targets. More attention probably also will be given to the development and production of long-range antisubmarine aircraft --far more than the dozen or so currently in the inventory.

Summary

During the early sixties, Soviet naval strategy for a possible war against NATO was predicated on the likelihood that the war would be a short, decisive nuclear conflict. By the mid-sixties this view had changed and the Soviet Navy was planning and developing forces for both conventional and nuclear war. In the late sixties and early seventies selective use of tactical nuclear weapons in naval warfare probably was considered by Soviet strategists. The Soviets continued to believe, however, that a war with NATO would be brief, with the main campaign not exceeding several weeks, and that there was a high probability of escalation to theater-wide nuclear war.

In the current Soviet view, Warsaw Pact naval operations against NATO would be keyed to hostilities in Europe and their duration would depend on the course of the ground war. Naval operations could develop in several stages:

-- A period of rising tensions and deteriorating political relations, during which naval forces would deploy to combat stations and begin surveillance operations.

-- A possible period of conventional hostilities in which the Warsaw Pact navies would attempt to establish control over the Baltic and Black Seas, conduct amphibious landings in the Turkish and Danish Straits and possibly northern Norway, and attempt to destroy NATO naval forces--especially nuclear delivery systems such as aircraft carriers and ballistic missile submarines--using conventional weapons.*

-- Possibly a period of widespread nuclear operations at sea, triggered by limited nuclear operations

* Conventional attacks on aircraft carriers and missile submarines are justified in Soviet doctrine as necessary to improve the Pact's position for the probable nuclear phase. It is possible that, if the Soviet leaders thought they could successfully contain the conflict at the conventional level, they would refrain from attacking enemy ballistic missile submarines in order to reduce the chances of escalation.

in Europe. Current Soviet doctrine does not appear to support a nuclear war at sea while the war in Europe remains conventional.

-- Theater-wide nuclear war, including unlimited use of nuclear weapons at sea and probably strikes against NATO targets in Europe by older Soviet ballistic missile submarines.

-- A final phase of theater war during which the Warsaw Pact navies would assist the ground forces in establishing control over occupied territory and attempt to interdict NATO reinforcement of Europe by sea.

To carry out these tasks, the Warsaw Pact navies would be organized into regional commands called "theaters of military operations." The tasks of destroying NATO's nuclear-capable naval forces and preventing seaborne reinforcement of Europe would fall primarily on forces in the ocean theaters--the Atlantic, the Pacific, and probably the Mediterranean. Naval forces assigned to the three continental theaters of military operations in Europe--the northern European, central European, and southern European--would have the tasks of controlling closed seas, conducting amphibious assaults, and supporting Warsaw Pact ground forces. Pact naval forces probably would require from one to two weeks to bring naval forces in all theaters up to wartime strength, although limited combat operations in some areas probably could begin almost immediately.

Because of the great variety of wartime naval tasks, the geographic separation of the Warsaw Pact fleets, and the growing requirement to prepare for both conventional and nuclear war, Soviet planners have had to establish priorities in allocating forces to wartime missions. They probably are confident that current coastal defense and anticarrier forces--either conventional or nuclear--can prevent a NATO seaborne invasion of Pact territory and significantly limit damage from carrier-based air strikes. They almost certainly consider their antisubmarine force level inadequate, however, and believe that

their antisubmarine warfare requirements limit severely their ability to assign forces to lower priority missions such as interdiction of NATO's sea communications.

The next five years probably will see a continuation of recent trends in Soviet naval strategy. Emphasis on open-ocean antisubmarine warfare probably will increase, but there is no evidence that the Soviets will be able to solve the critical open-ocean submarine detection and identification problems in the next decade. Ballistic missile submarines may gain a greater role in theater nuclear war, and Soviet strategists might consider the possibility of a nuclear war at sea while hostilities in Europe remain conventional. The Soviets probably will attempt to increase the Navy's firepower, endurance, and survivability in conventional war. These considerations, as well as the need to modernize their force, probably will stimulate increased production of attack submarines, high-endurance surface ships, logistic support ships, and strike and antisubmarine aircraft. They probably also will induce the USSR to attempt to acquire greater access for its naval forces to overseas ports and airfields.