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COMMUNIST AREA

● USSR: Military

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CHANGE IN THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES, 1965-66

A detailed comparison of the estimates for the Soviet Armed Forces which have just been published by the Institute of Strategic Studies with those of a year ago can now be made. There is a strong impression of continuity rather than of any abrupt changes of direction in the overall military policies of the Kremlin.

ABM Deployment?

As regards the greatest potential for technological change, which lies in the ABM sphere, the authors of "The Military Balance, 1966-67" are extremely cautious. They write only of "the beginning of what may be a token operational deployment of anti-ballistic missiles around Moscow and Leningrad. The difficulties which brought the earlier ABM deployment programme to a halt had apparently been overcome." The only further information on the subject in the booklet states:

It is reported that a network of Ballistic Missile Defence sites is being prepared around Leningrad and Moscow.

Strategic Rocket Forces

On this question, the booklet is more informative. It estimates Soviet operational ICBMs at about 300 (an increase of 30 over last year), and adds that the majority of them are second generation systems. In 1965 this proportion was estimated as being "at least half." The number of MRBMs and IRBMs remains static at 700-750 (the same as in 1965), but the number of fleet ballistic missiles is shown as

150, compared with 120 last year. Consequently the total of strategic missiles available to the Kremlin can now be put at a maximum of 1,200, compared with 1,140 in 1965. Such a small percentage increase during the year certainly does not suggest any crash program for the expansion of the Soviet strategic rocket forces, which appear to have increased less rapidly than those of the U.S.

In 1965, the U.S. inventory of ICBMs was shown as 854, with fleet ballistic missiles listed as numbering 544, whereas this year the equivalent figures are 934 and 624. The Western superiority in numbers is consequently in the ratio of about four to three for all categories of strategic missiles, about three to one for ICBMs alone, and about four to one for fleet ballistic missiles alone. Such a comparison overlooks the substantial advantage in range of Polaris over the Soviet FBMs.

In terms of personnel, the expansion of Marshal Krylov's command is shown as being much more vigorous than in terms of hardware. Parkinson's law remains operative:

ISS Estimates of Strategic Rocket Forces Personnel

<u>1964</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>
110,000	180,000	200,000

Decrease in Air Force Inventory

According to the ISS estimates, the Soviet Air Force has been scrapping its aircraft at an impressive rate in recent years:

Soviet Air Force Operational Aircraft

<u>1962</u>	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>
15,000	12,500	11,000	10,500	10,000

Air Force Manpower, USSR

600,000	500,000	510,000	510,000	500,000
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This table also suggests that Parkinson has been at work. A decrease of 33 percent in the number of aircraft operated over the past 5 years has been accompanied by a reduction of only one-sixth in Air Forces manpower.

The number of strategic bombers available to the Kremlin has not changed substantially in the past twelve months. There are believed to be 110 Bisons, 100 Bears and 900 Badgers and Blinders (the latter two aircraft being twin-engined medium bombers). But the number of U.S. aircraft in the same categories has decreased faster, as a result of the phasing-out of the B-47 and the greater reliance of SAC on ICBMs.

Number of Strategic Bombers

	<u>USA</u>	<u>USSR</u>
1964	1100	1190
1965	935	1100
1966	680	1120

Thus the USSR now has about 50 percent more aircraft in this category than the USA, but the ISS is evidently expecting a considerable reduction in the Long Range Air Force over the next few years, since it reports that Blinder (the Tu 22) is "expected to replace Badger at the rate of one Blinder for each three Badgers." If this takes place, it implies a run-down of the Soviet medium bomber force to about the 300 aircraft mark.

Fighter Aircraft

The most substantial reported change during the year in the Air Forces came in the fighter category, where there are now said to be 4,500 aircraft in service, compared with 6000 last October. A cut of 25 percent in one year is a major reduction by any standard, and it seems to imply much greater reliance by the Kremlin on surface-to-air missiles -- a policy to which events in N. Vietnam cannot be said to lend any support whatever.

Land Forces

According to the booklet, there have been few changes of major significance during the year in the strength and organization of the Land Forces. The most important increase is shown as being in the airborne forces which are now up to 100,000 men (60,000 last year), but the airlift capacity is still only large enough to move two divisions in one operation.

Navy

The most interesting developments in seapower seem to have been the build-up of the nuclear underwater fleet, now estimated at 50 submarines (40 last year), and the concurrent decrease in conventionally-powered submarines to 350, from 370 a year ago. The rate of building of nuclear submarines is now more convincingly estimated at five a year (cf the ISS estimate of ten p.a. in 1965). But most surprisingly there is no change in the number of submarines shown as able to carry missiles, which is still given as forty (15 nuclear and 25 conventional), despite the increase of 30 in the number of fleet ballistic missiles estimated as available to the Kremlin.

Did Defense Spending Fall?

Another somewhat unconvincing aspect of the ISS annual report is its section on defense spending. This puts the real defense budget for 1966 at about \$35 billions, but for 1965 the figure was said to be \$40 billions. Yet the "token operational deployment" of ABMs may have begun in the Leningrad and Moscow areas, the ICBM force was growing slowly but steadily, expenditure on nuclear submarines must have been rising at a faster rate than could be offset by the savings made on the conventional underwater fleet, and the spending on SAMs, radar and anti-aircraft weapons must have risen because of the Vietnam commitments. Indeed the "secret" letter of the CPSU to E. European parties published by Die Welt in March said that military aid for Vietnam had cost 1 billion rubles in 1965. Altogether the conclusion probably should be not that Soviet defense spending in fact fell during the year, but that the ISS is now recognizing that last year's figure was an over-estimate.

Functional Man-power Breakdown

The gradual redeployment of manpower by the Kremlin's military leaders can best be seen from comparison of the figures in the table below:

Functional Man-power Breakdown - USSR

	1965	1966
Nuclear Strategic Forces	180,000	200,000
Home Air Defense	300,000	325,000
General War Ground Forces	520,000	525,000
General Purpose Forces		
(Army)	880,000	860,000
(Navy)	350,000	350,000
(Air)	320,000	320,000
Air Mobility	75,000	75,000
Amphibious	3,000	3,000
Training, R & D, General Support	522,000	507,000
Total	3,150,000	3,165,000

On the whole, therefore, there have been no sharp alterations of course. But a steady build-up of the nuclear strategic forces and home air defense command has been accompanied during the year by an equivalent numerical decline in the general purpose forces of the Red Army and in the numbers available for the training, research and development, and general support category.

Whereas a year ago the general purpose forces of the Red Army were more than twice as strong as those of the US Army (880,000 cf 400,000), now the proportion has been significantly altered as a result of the US build-up for the Vietnam war (860,000 cf 657,000). One result is that whereas the active armies of Nato now total 3,200,000, the equivalent figure for the armies of the Warsaw Pact is now shown as 2,875,000. The West has the bigger battalions.

One may reasonably conclude that if the Soviet marshals of the old school were dissatisfied with Khrushchev because of his allegedly excessive reliance on strategic rocketry instead of massed land forces, they now have good reason to be still more dissatisfied with the Brezhnev-Kosygin version of "collective leadership" on exactly the same score. It seems increasingly probable that the "conventional land forces versus strategic missiles" controversy had little or nothing to do with the downfall of Khrushchev.