

DISCUSSION

Introduction

1. There has been much Soviet talk about the increased danger of nuclear war. This theme has appeared in public pronouncements by Soviet political and military leaders, in statements by high officials targeted at both domestic and foreign audiences, in internal communications, and in other channels. Soviet authorities have declared that Washington is preparing for war, and have issued dire warnings that the USSR will not give in to nuclear blackmail or other military pressure. The articulation of this theme has paralleled the Soviet campaign to derail US INF deployment. It continues to this day, although at a somewhat lower intensity in recent months than in late 1983.

2. Since November 1983 there has been a high level of Soviet military activity, with new deployments of weapons and strike forces, large-scale military exercises, and several other noteworthy events:

— *INF response:* Start of construction of additional SS-20 bases following Andropov's announcement on 24 November 1983 of termination of the 20-month moratorium on SS-20 deployments opposite NATO; initiation in late December of patrols by E-II nuclear-powered cruise missile submarines off the US coast; first-ever forward deployment in mid-January 1984 of long-range missile-carrying D-class SSBNs; and the start of deployment also in mid-January of 925-km range SS-12/22 missiles in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and continued propaganda and active measures against INF deployment.

— *Response to NATO exercise:* Assumption by Soviet air units in Germany and Poland from November 1983 of high alert status with readying of nuclear strike forces as NATO conducted "Able Archer-83," a nuclear release command post exercise.

— *Soviet exercises:* Large-scale exercise activity during spring 1984 which has stressed integrated strategic strike operations, featuring the multiple launches of SS-20s and SLBMs, survivability training including the dispersal of operational Northern Fleet SSBNs supported by

a large number of ships; and the use of survivable command, control, and communications platforms, possibly in a transattack scenario.

— *Berlin air corridors:* Periodic Soviet imposition beginning 20 February 1984 of minimum flight altitudes for the entire length of one or more of the Berlin air corridors—a unilateral change in the rules governing air access to Berlin.

— *Afghanistan:* Deployment in mid-April of several airborne units to Afghanistan, launching of a major spring offensive into the Panjsher Valley, and initiation on 21 April for the first time of high-intensity bombing of Afghanistan by over 105 TU-16 and SU-24 bombers based in the USSR.

— *East Asia:* Deployment in mid-November 1983 of naval TU-16 strike aircraft to Vietnam for the first time; positioning of both Soviet operational aircraft carriers for the first time simultaneously in Asian waters in March 1984; and the first joint Soviet/Vietnamese amphibious assault exercises on the coast of Vietnam in April.

— *Caribbean:* A small combined Soviet/Cuban naval exercise in the Gulf of Mexico, with the first-ever visit of a Soviet helicopter carrier in April/May, and Soviet/Cuban antisubmarine drills.

— *Troop rotation:* Initiation of the airlift portion of Soviet troop rotation in Eastern Europe 10 days later in April than this has occurred for the past five years.

This Estimate explores whether the Soviet talk about the increasing likelihood of nuclear war and the Soviet military activities listed above constitute a pattern of behavior intended either to alarm or intimidate the United States and its allies or to achieve other goals.

Possible Explanations

3. Specifically, in examining the facts we address five explanatory hypotheses:

a. Both the Soviet talk about war and the military activities have been consciously orchestrated

Introduction

There has been much Soviet talk about the increased danger of nuclear war. This theme has appeared in public pronouncements by Soviet political and military leaders, in statements by high officials targeted at both domestic and foreign audiences, in internal communications, and in other channels. Soviet authorities have declared that Washington is preparing for war, and have issued dire warnings that the USSR will not give in to nuclear blackmail or other military pressure. The articulation of this theme has paralleled the Soviet campaign to derail NATO INF deployment. It continues to this day, although at a somewhat lower intensity in recent months than in late 1983. (S)

Since November 1983 there has been a high level of Soviet military activity, with new deployments of weapons and strike forces, large-scale military exercises, and several other noteworthy events.

8 4 0 6 0 5 0 1 2 2 4
-- *INF response:* Start of construction of additional SS-20 bases following Andropov's announcement on 24 November 1983 of termination of the 20-month moratorium on SS-20 deployments opposite NATO; initiation [redacted] of patrols by E-II nuclear-powered cruise missile submarines off the US coast; [redacted] forward deployment [redacted] of long-range missile-carrying D-class SSBNs; and the start of SS-12/22 missiles in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and continued propaganda and active measures against INF deployment.

-- *Soviet exercises:* Large-scale exercise activity during spring 1984 [redacted] operational Northern Fleet SSBNs supported by a large number of ships; [redacted]

-- *Berlin air corridors:* Periodic Soviet imposition beginning 20 February 1984 of minimum flight altitudes for the entire length of one or more of the Berlin air corridors—a unilateral change in the rules governing an access to Berlin.

-- *Afghanistan:* Deployment in mid-April of several airborne units to Afghanistan, launching of a major spring offensive into the Panjsher Valley, and initiation on 21 April for the first time of high intensity bombing of Afghanistan by over 105 TU-16 and SU-24 bombers based in the USSR.

-- *East Asia:* Deployment in mid-November 1983 of naval TU-16 strike aircraft to Vietnam for the first time; positioning of both Soviet operational aircraft carriers for the first time simultaneously in Asian waters in March 1984; and the first joint Soviet/Vietnamese amphibious assault exercises on the coast of Vietnam in April.

UNCLASSIFIED