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HR70-14

NIE 11-14-64

10 December 64

No. Pages 8

APPROVED FOR RELEASE -
HISTORICAL COLLECTION
DIVISION HR70-14 DATE:
07-18-2012

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

NUMBER 11-14-64

Capabilities of Soviet General
Purpose Forces

Special Annex

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

As indicated overleaf
10 DECEMBER 1964

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The Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Concurring:

Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

Director of the National Security Agency

Abstaining:

The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB and the Assistant to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

NUMBER 11-14-64

Capabilities of Soviet General Purpose Forces

Special Annex

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CAPABILITIES OF SOVIET GENERAL PURPOSE FORCES

SPECIAL ANNEX

PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE ON SOVIET GROUND FORCE DIVISIONS

1. Since the completion of NIE 11-14-63, we have acquired a substantial body of additional KEYHOLE photography on Soviet ground force installations and have devised techniques for analyzing and collating such photography with other forms of evidence about ground force units. The result has been a major step forward in our ability to make judgments, on a reasonably current basis, as to the existence of Soviet ground divisions. Some better definition of the likely types and categories of divisions has also been achieved. Although varying degrees of uncertainty continue to exist, we now have increased confidence in our estimates about Soviet ground force order-of-battle.

2. We have acquired and examined KEYHOLE photography of all of the 174 locations where, in 1963, we had some kind of evidence (not necessarily current) to suggest the existence of a Soviet ground division. All of these areas have been covered at least once by KEYHOLE photography in 1963-1964. The most recent photography examined on the great bulk of them (i.e., 144 of the 174) dates from the summer of 1964, on many there is repeated KEYHOLE coverage acquired in the 1960-1964 period, and on a few there is TALENT photography dating even earlier. Not all the available photography is of equal quality and completeness, but the number of locations on which we have only marginal coverage is small.

3. In relation to the other types of evidence available, KEYHOLE photography has certain advantages and disadvantages. Probably the greatest single advantage with respect to the ground force problem is that the accumulated coverage is comprehensive. Our ability to acquire KEYHOLE photography is not geographically limited, as is the case with COMINT and Attache sources. The coverage is subject to our own programming and does not depend on chance

acquisition, as is the case with [REDACTED] some other sources of information. The great preponderance of our coverage is KH-4 photography, which is not normally of sufficient resolution to identify vehicles and equipment. However, we have had KH-7 coverage of a number of ground force associated installations which has been of sufficient resolution to identify vehicles and equipment, and these sightings have made it possible to identify and locate certain subordinate regiments and battalions of divisions, and a small number of non-divisional combat and combat support units. Photography cannot of course supply any direct information on unit designations. But it can be used, together with other sources, to make inferences as to the types and categories of units. Finally, it provides more comprehensive data on the Soviet ground establishment than we have been able to acquire from other sources for many years.

Number of Active Divisions

4. In examining the photography on the 174 locations, we have sought to assess, in the first instance, whether or not they contain ground force installations whose size and configuration are appropriate to those of a divisional garrison, and whether or not there is evidence of training facilities and activity (especially activity of tanks and other tracked vehicles) commensurate with that which we would expect of an active division. In this assessment, the greatest weight has been given to the identification of active training areas-

5. The photographic examination, and its analysis in the light of evidence available from other sources, has yielded the following conclusions as to the probability that the 174 entities were active Soviet ground force divisions as of 1963-1964:

97	entities considered definitely or almost certainly to be divisions
29	entities considered probably to be divisions
<u>126</u>	<i>subtotal</i>
12	entities considered to have a better than even chance of being division
<u>138</u>	<i>subtotal</i>
12	entities considered to have about an even chance (?) of being divisions
<u>150</u>	<i>subtotal</i>
24	entities considered probably, almost certainly, or definitely not divisions
<u>174</u>	<i>total entities examined.</i>

6. From the above, it can be seen that the photographic examination has tended to eliminate a number of entities from consideration as currently-active divisions. It has also tended to raise our confidence in the evaluation of the remaining divisions—for example, we now consider 20 more divisions to be definitely identified than we did in 1963—though it has by no means eliminated all uncertainties as to the total current number. As in our analysis of 1963, we must reckon with the chances that even some of the entities which we think are definitely or almost certainly active divisions are in fact not. Conversely, even some of the entities now eliminated may in fact be divisions—this possibility is raised by the fact that in at least one area, the Odessa Military District, there are a few active divisions whose training facilities do not appear in the photography, suggesting that these and perhaps other divisions train at unidentified locations remote from their garrisons.

7. On the basis of the above, we conclude with high confidence that the actual number of active divisions in the Soviet ground forces, as of 1963-1964, was within the range of 120-140. Thus the photographic evidence has narrowed the range of uncertainty from the 110-140 divisions given in NIE 11-14-63, and has raised the low side by 10 divisions.

Trend in Numbers of Divisions

8. The cumulative and repeated KEYHOLE coverage now available has provided important new evidence as to the trend in numbers of divisions over the past few years. Early KEYHOLE or TALENT photography, dating from 1960 and before, is available on a number of the locations which we suspected contained divisions on the basis of other evidence. At 17 of these locations, the photography suggests activity in the earlier period, while more recent photography points to a reversion of training areas to farmland or contains other indications that the military facilities are no longer active. This and other evidence leads us to believe that some 15-20 divisions which existed in 1959-1960 were probably disbanded in 1960-1961. This was the time period between Khrushchev's announcement of a reorganization and reduction in the Soviet military establishment and the Berlin crisis.

9. The photographic review does not indicate any significant change in the number of active divisions since about 1961. For example,

well over 100 divisional areas have been examined in photography acquired in the summer of 1964, and in no instance is there any suggestion of abandonment, nor is there any indication of the reactivation of inactive areas. This conclusion also holds true throughout the past several years for those areas on which comparative photographic coverage is available.

10. The photographic analysis thus gives us the strong impression that the overall divisional structure of the Soviet ground forces was reduced at the time of the announced military reductions in about 1960, and that it was fairly stable in the period from about mid-1961 to mid-1964. We do not exclude the possibility of some exceptions to this generalization, and of course this does not mean that the personnel strengths or even the categories of individual divisions remained unchanged.

11. The photography examined since mid-1964 is too small a sample to say whether there has been any very recent reduction in the number of active divisions. Further reductions in 1964 have been suggested by Khrushchev's statements, some military writings, and recent evidence of new reorganization within the ground forces.

Categories and Types of Divisions

12. Photography has contributed to the identification of Soviet divisions by type (i.e., motorized rifle, tank, and airborne) and by category (i.e., Category I or combat strength, Category II or reduced strength, and Category III or cadre). These identifications are not easily made, however, and our uncertainties about them generally remain greater than our uncertainty about the total number of divisions in the force.

13. The number of Category I divisions as of 1963-1964 is estimated to fall within the range of 60 to 75. Some of these divisions, notably those in East Germany and Poland, are well known on the basis of evidence other than KEYHOLE photography. The others are at locations in which the photographic and other evidence has revealed a similar magnitude of facilities as well as a high level of training and other activity. On most of the Category I divisions, the level of activity is great enough, and its type is distinctive enough, so that by using photographic and other evidence we can make a reasonably

confident estimate as to whether the division is of the motorized rifle, tank, or airborne type.

14. Category III divisions, estimated to total 30 to 45, are those which photographic and other evidence has shown to be of the smallest size and to be the least active. It was noted in the photography that no tank divisions appear to fall into this category; all are believed to be motorized rifle division cadres.

15. Category II divisions, at reduced but not cadre strength, are the least certain of our identifications. These divisions are those whose size and level of activity seem to fall between the extremes of the other two categories. Although no meaningful range can be estimated for this category in view of its interrelationship to the others and the ranges estimated for them, the residual weight might amount to some 25-45 divisions. Category II is, in effect, the remainder.

16. Photographic evidence on airborne division garrisons and training facilities has thus far been less informative than is the case with tank and motorized rifle divisions. KH-4 photography reveals the existence at known airborne garrisons of some characteristic paratroop training paraphernalia such as jump towers, aircraft mockups, etc., but does not confirm recent use of such devices.

[redacted]

The estimate as to the number of airborne divisions is almost certainly correct, but the evidence on which the assessment of the manning levels of these divisions is based is less conclusive. Three of the seven estimated airborne divisions appear [redacted] to engage in less training and exercise activities than the others, and have been estimated to be Category II divisions.

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