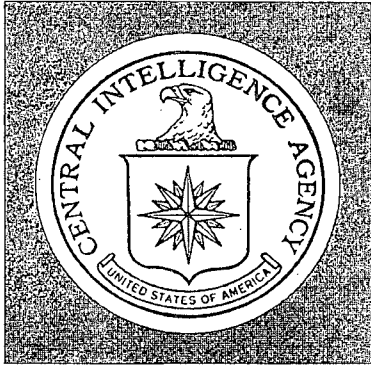


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HR70-14



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*Please return to C. Helms*

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Military Developments in the Soviet-Czech Confrontation*

[Redacted]

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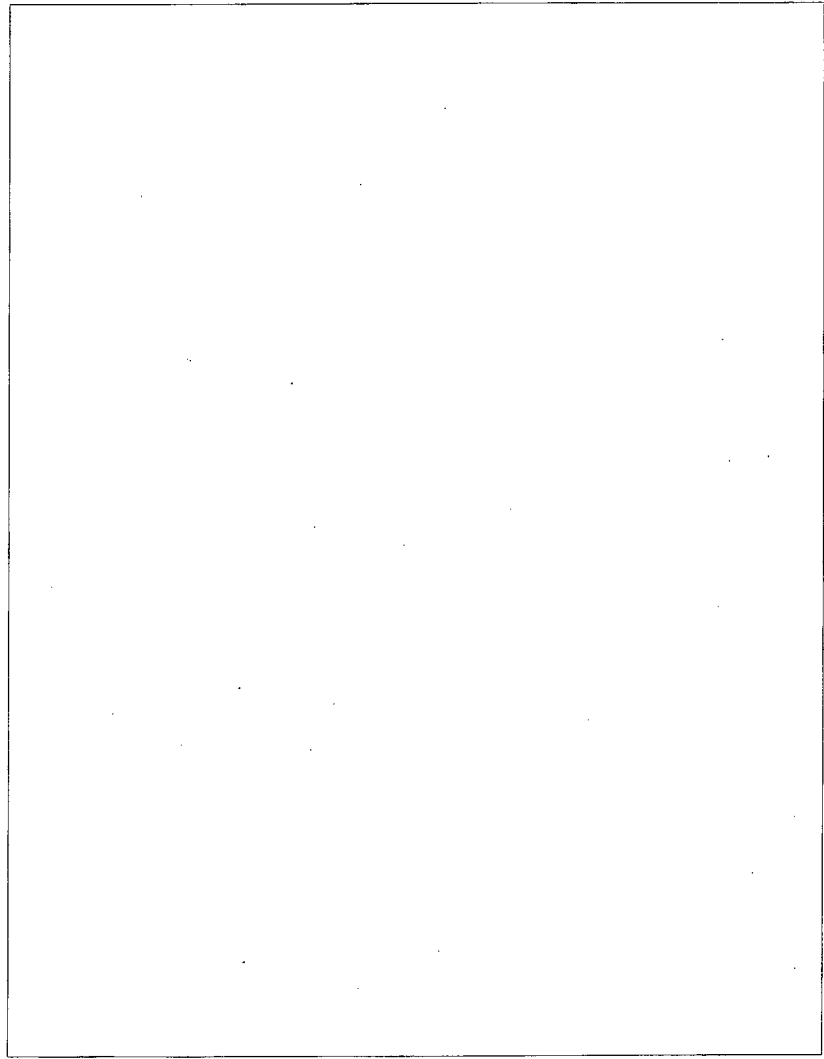
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
2 August 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Military Developments in the  
Soviet-Czech Confrontation

Summary

Soviet military pressure against Czechoslovakia has grown steadily as the political confrontation has intensified. Within the last two weeks five field armies have been poised near Czech borders, Soviet tactical air forces near Czechoslovakia have been increased 70 percent, and large Soviet troop units have been seen moving inside Czechoslovakia.

Soviet troop activity in May and June appeared to be mainly a show of force. This troop activity had limited value as a genuine threat of large-scale intervention because the units involved were in a peacetime configuration and lacked the support elements necessary for extended combat.

In mid-July, however, the pressure tactics entered a new phase. The Soviets began a major call-up of civilian reservists and vehicles in the western USSR --an unprecedented move for them in peacetime--necessary to support deployments in Eastern Europe. The evidence, however, does not suggest any extensive mobilization of low-strength divisions.

The full scope of the Soviet mobilization is not known, but by now it could have provided a control and support structure sufficient to support a doubling of Soviet ground forces strength in Eastern Europe.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA.  
It was prepared by the Office of Strategic Research.

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Military Events

1. As the Soviet-Czech confrontation has intensified, the Soviets have increasingly relied on the threat of military intervention to deter Czech resistance. The Czech armed forces, in contrast, have not shown any indications of preparing for hostilities.

2. In early May the Soviets moved a few divisions to positions near the Czech border. In mid-June elements of these divisions, tactical air units, and high-level staffs entered Czechoslovakia under the guise of a Warsaw Pact exercise. Most of these units subsequently left, [REDACTED]

3. In mid-July the Soviet pressure tactics entered a new phase. [REDACTED]

On 23 July the Soviet press reported extensive mobilization of men and equipment throughout the western USSR as part of a large rear services exercise. Moscow later announced that the exercise had been extended to East Germany and Poland.

4. Soviet, Polish, and East German forces were subsequently massed in areas near the Czech border. By 30 July five armies were known to have been poised against Czechoslovakia, and there have been indications of further reinforcement from the USSR (see map). In addition, tactical air forces near the Czech border have been increased from 14 to 24 regiments.

5. On 31 July large Soviet units--at least one division--were sighted in central Czechoslovakia.

6. In short, it appears that the Soviet high command has in about two weeks' time completed military preparations sufficient for intervening in Czechoslovakia if that is deemed necessary by the political leadership. (For a detailed chronology of events, see Annex.)

Mobilization

7. In developing this military posture, the Soviets and their Polish and East German allies have mobilized to a degree unprecedented in peacetime, despite the danger of provoking counteractions by the West and destabilizing the military situation in Central Europe.

9. Existing combat units at the division or army level are not, by themselves, capable of sustained military activity. The Warsaw Pact forces are structured so that only the front-level organization is capable of sustained independent action, with the facility for continuous re-supply of the combat units. By design, the line divisions and, to a large degree, the armies have only combat responsibilities and rely on the front and the front rear services for the bulk of their logistic requirements. Effective employment of the combat elements is contingent upon the early establishment of a functioning rear services organization. Although individual divisions can be moved over long distances prior to mobilization, they cannot fight for more than a few days without this support.

10. Except for the Soviet forces in Germany, Soviet ground forces have little front organization or functioning rear services elements in peacetime. Front staff and headquarters elements are submerged

in the peacetime military administrative structure without identity as an existing operational force. The service units are at low or cadre strength and are only concerned with the routine day-to-day supply and maintenance of a garrisoned army.

11.   
the Soviets have carried out many of the steps needed for mobilization. A vital feature of the exercise was the announced mobilization of reservists and civilian vehicles. The Soviets later announced that the exercise had been expanded to include Polish and East German armed forces. While we are unable to confirm the scope of the Soviet mobilization, the announcements clearly imply that it is of major proportions. Such an effort could by now be sufficient to support a doubling of Soviet army strength in Eastern Europe. There is no evidence, however, of any extensive mobilization of low-strength Soviet divisions.

12. According to Warsaw Pact plans, mobilization begins with the alerting of key command and control personnel and their separation from the peacetime administrative structure. Reservists and civilians must be called up and integrated in the required units. Some men and vehicles will be used to augment reduced-strength combat elements, with the great majority used to create the rear service units. Some supply units are at low strength and can be filled out by adding the required mix of men and vehicles. Other units must be created entirely from mobilized resources. Many civilian transportation organizations are mobilized with no more than minor modification of their existing organizational structure. Concurrently with these steps, the rail transportation system for westward movement must be geared up and much of the available rolling stock assembled at unit areas and at border transshipment points.

13. In the current buildup, Polish rail cars reportedly began to be massed about 23 July. Further evidence suggests that Soviet forces from the Baltic and Belorussian Military Districts began entering Poland about 28 July. Forces from these areas

heretofore have not been involved with Czechoslovakia. This movement approximates expected actions of the Soviet Union in the event of a reinforcement against NATO. It is possible that because of the shift of three GSFG armies towards Czechoslovakia, the Soviets feel a need to fill the void created in their defenses against NATO.

14. Warsaw Pact procedures allow movement to begin before all the units are created or brought up to strength since the front is designed for phased deployment. Deployment involves moving the units by road or trains in such order that they arrive with organizational integrity. The numbers of men and vehicles involved, combined with the complexity of the routing and scheduling, require a high degree of control and maximum utilization of the transportation network for a successful and timely operation. Once the front is organized and the transportation network made available, about four divisions per day or approximately one army could be moved from the western USSR through Poland.

#### The Threat

units have redeployed southward within East Germany to the area closest to western Czechoslovakia, where the eight full-strength Czech divisions are located.

16. The Polish field army from the Silesian Military District has been reoriented toward the Czechoslovak border. At least one Soviet army from the Carpathian Military District is partially deployed inside Czechoslovakia.

17. Military attache observations indicate that the Soviet Southern Group of Forces in Hungary is out of garrison and that its four divisions are now close to the Czech frontier.

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18. The Soviets have a force of tactical aircraft located near Czechoslovakia which is nearly twice the size of the Czech air force, and which contains nearly three times as many modern aircraft. The Soviet forces are mostly MIG-21's and SU-7's, while half of the 600 Czech combat aircraft are older model MIG's.

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Annex

Chronology of Significant Military Events  
in the Soviet - Czech Confrontation

Date

Event

8 May - Soviet troop movements reported along northeastern Czech border.

10 May - Soviet troops in East Germany move southward. *(began earlier)*

11 May - First of several restricted areas imposed in southern East Germany.

17-22 May - Grechko and Kosygin visit Prague accompanied by commanders of Soviet forces which have taken up positions on Czech borders.

24 May - Warsaw Pact exercise announced.

30 May - Czech defense ministry publishes details on exercise claiming only "marker units" will participate.

30 May - Warsaw Pact chief of staff arrives in Prague for exercise planning.

31 May

18 June - Marshal Yakubovskiy arrives in Czechoslovakia.

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- [redacted]
- 23 June - Prague states a Soviet tank unit has taken up a position in the western part of the country.
  - 30 June - Warsaw Pact exercise ends. Soviet troops remain in Czechoslovakia.
  - 2 July - Yakubovskiy attends exercise "evaluation."
  - 7 July - Travel restrictions in East Germany extended to 15 July.
  - 9 July - Czech defense minister says withdrawal of Soviet troops being negotiated.
- [redacted]

13 July - Some Soviet troops withdraw to Poland.

[redacted]

<sup>15</sup>  
~~17~~ July - Czech General Prchlik accuses Yakubovskiy of breaking his word on Soviet troop withdrawals.

[redacted]

[redacted]

21 July - Soviet troops remain in Czechoslovakia,

[redacted]

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- [REDACTED]
- 23 July - Moscow announces large rear-services exercise to take place in western USSR. Czechoslovak military officials state 5,000 to 6,000 Soviet troops remain in the country. An estimated 2,000 Soviet troops reported encamped at Zilina, Czechoslovakia.
- 24-25 July - Additional Soviet troops begin moving into southern East Germany from Berlin area.
- 25 July - Soviets announce large air defense exercise over large area of USSR.
- [REDACTED]
- 28 July - Entire southeast quadrant of East Germany closed.
- [REDACTED]
- 30 July - Moscow announces that rear services exercise has been extended to East Germany and Poland. US embassy in Warsaw receives reports of Soviet troops moving into Poland from the USSR. More Soviet troops move into southern East Germany.
- [REDACTED]
- 29-31 July - US attache sees two large Soviet convoys in central Czechoslovakia. Soviet forces in Hungary move into assembly areas. East German and Polish reserves reportedly called up.

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