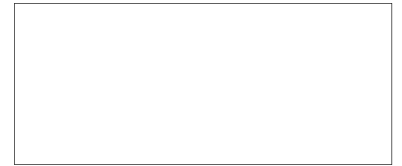




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Near East and South Asia Review



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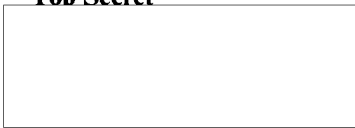
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Articles


The Soviet Campaign Against Pakistan's Nuclear Program 

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For the past few years Moscow has campaigned actively against Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, attacking it both in the press and in private demarches. Although Moscow's criticism is consistent with its desire to limit the spread of nuclear weapons, it is also exploiting the issue to its own advantage in South Asia. 

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Afghanistan: Insurgents Assess the Stinger 

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Afghan insurgents believe that the Stinger surface-to-air missile has had a significant impact upon their war effort over the past 10 months, helping to offset Soviet and Afghan regime airpower. Insurgent successes with the Stinger have also boosted resistance morale. 

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Syria's Strengthening Coastal Defenses: Trying To Close the Back Door 

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The bulk of the Syrian armed forces is positioned to face Israeli threats from the direction of the Golan Heights and Lebanon, and only in recent years has the Syrian regime revealed deep concern about the vulnerability of its coastline. Despite new weapons and training, Syria's ability to defend its coastline remains extremely limited. 

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Israel: Expanding Role for Attack Helicopters

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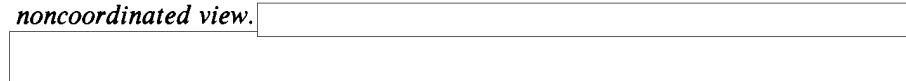
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Israeli military planners have substantially defined and expanded the battlefield mission for the attack helicopter force. In a future war Israel's attack helicopters will probably play a decisive role in the air-to-ground arena, particularly in close air support, partly supplanting the more conventional use of strike-fighter aircraft.



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Some articles in the Near East and South Asia Review are preliminary views of a subject or speculative, but the contents normally will be coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Occasionally an article will represent the view of a single analyst; an item like this will be designated as a noncoordinated view.



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Near East and South Asia Review 

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Articles

The Soviet Campaign Against Pakistan's Nuclear Program 

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For the past few years Moscow has campaigned actively against Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, attacking it both in the press and in private demarches. Although Moscow's criticism is consistent with its longstanding desire to limit the spread of nuclear weapons, it also is exploiting the issue to its own advantage in South Asia. Soviet attacks on the Pakistani program escalate during periods of tension with Islamabad—usually over Afghanistan—and subside when Moscow is seeking improved bilateral ties. 

will seek improved relations with Pakistan to further prospects for a favorable political settlement in Afghanistan. The Soviets might reduce their criticism of Pakistan's nuclear program but would continue to counsel restraint in Islamabad to maintain credibility in India. Should Pakistan test a nuclear device, Moscow will protest strongly and launch a major propaganda campaign against Islamabad's action.




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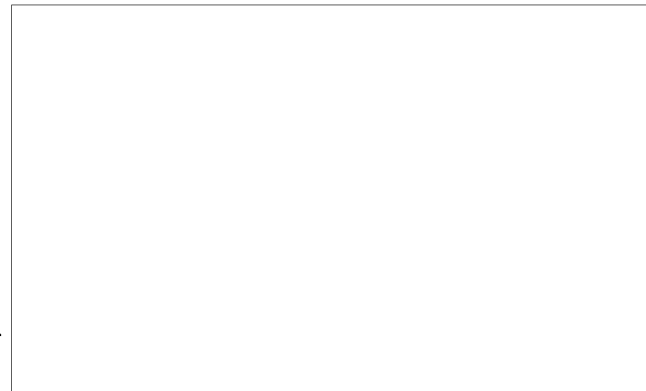
Soviet Comment on Pakistan's Nuclear Capabilities
Moscow's public campaign against Pakistan's nuclear weapons program has drawn heavily on Western and Indian press reporting. In October 1985, TASS cited a Western report that Pakistan had "already created the necessary components for a nuclear bomb" and had "even tested the explosive device" to trigger the nuclear reaction. Shortly thereafter the Soviets cited Indian press reports that Pakistan had the necessary technology to produce two nuclear bombs annually.



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The Soviets have charged the United States with complicity in helping Pakistan develop nuclear weapons in return for Islamabad's cooperation in projecting military power into South Asia and serving as a supply base for the resistance forces in Afghanistan. Moscow hopes to press Pakistan to back away from its nuclear weapons program and, perhaps more important, to modify its policy toward Afghanistan. Moscow also is seeking to undermine US-Pakistani relations, strengthen relations with India, portray the United States as a threat to regional stability, and project an image of a respectable superpower seeking peaceful solutions to regional problems. The Soviets have demonstrated some caution in their exploitation of the issue, probably because they do not want Indo-Pakistani tensions to get out of control and because they do not want India to activate its own nuclear weapons program. 



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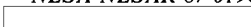
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If the United States cuts aid to Pakistan as a result of Islamabad's nuclear procurement activities, Moscow probably will soften its criticism of Pakistan in order to exploit the strain in US-Pakistani relations. If Pakistan subsequently backs away from its support for the Afghan resistance, Moscow almost certainly



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- From May through July 1986, Soviet media criticism of Pakistan was particularly harsh. *Pravda* went beyond normal Soviet rhetoric to assail Pakistan for its "criminal involvement" in Afghanistan.
- Air and ground attacks from Afghanistan on Pakistani border areas increased sharply in the first half of 1986. [Redacted]

In the wake of this episode, the Soviets intensified their propaganda against Pakistan and made a series of demarches on the nuclear issue. They approached the United States, charging that Pakistan's nuclear program was accelerating and calling on Washington to prevent Pakistan from exploding a nuclear device. Moscow stressed that such an explosion would damage international nonproliferation efforts and fundamentally change the strategic situation on the Indian subcontinent. The Soviets simultaneously delivered this message in London. This demarche noted that the main suppliers of nuclear equipment to Pakistan were private companies in Western Europe and Canada. [Redacted]

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From the summer of 1986 until the spring of 1987, Moscow's anti-Pakistan propaganda was muted, and, to the best of our knowledge, no Soviet demarche was made concerning the Pakistani nuclear program. This paralleled a generally softer line by Moscow toward Pakistan that may have reflected a perception by the Kremlin that its pressure had been counterproductive.

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[Redacted] By late 1986, Moscow and Kabul had embarked on their "peace offensive" in Afghanistan and were trying to pull Islamabad into the campaign for "national reconciliation." [Redacted]

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By the spring of 1987 the Soviet attitude toward Pakistan and its nuclear program had again toughened, and pressure on the border with Afghanistan intensified. When a leading Pakistani nuclear scientist, A. Q. Khan, made a statement that a bomb had "already been tested on a simulator," the Soviets gave the statement extensive publicity.¹ One Soviet press account cited US experts as having concluded that Pakistan was capable of producing "four or five Hiroshima-size weapons annually." [Redacted]

The recent arrest in Philadelphia of an individual of Pakistani extraction charged with trying to export from the United States material that could be used in the enrichment of uranium for nuclear arms triggered more critical Soviet commentary. TASS charged that Pakistani agents had tried to purchase such equipment and technology in the West for years. The article claimed that US intelligence had information that the Pakistani bomb would be analogous to those developed in the United States during World War II and would have a yield of 10-15 kilotons. [Redacted]

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Soviet Charges About the US Role

The Soviets have coupled their attacks on the Pakistani program with allegations about US support for the program. They hope to undermine US-Pakistani relations, limit US-Pakistani military cooperation on Afghanistan, and weaken the

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¹ In reporting Khan's statement, TASS acknowledged that the scientist subsequently had repudiated his statement about Pakistan's nuclear potential but recalled that in 1984 Khan had blurted out comments about Pakistan's capacity for developing an atomic bomb. [Redacted]

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prospects for better relations between the United States and India. They may even hope to help provoke US Congressional moves to cut aid to Pakistan. [Redacted]

longstanding policy of not developing nuclear weapons. [Redacted]

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Soviet charges of US complicity in Pakistan's nuclear weapons program have been directed primarily at Indian audiences and have emphasized the premise that Pakistan could not manufacture nuclear weapons without outside assistance. Moscow has charged that Washington has supplied Pakistan with the means to deliver nuclear weapons—even as it verbally “restrains” Pakistan from producing such weapons—and has accused the United States of violating the Symington Amendment, which provides for the cutoff of US assistance to any country importing technology for unsafeguarded nuclear facilities. [Redacted]

[Redacted] During the visit to India of the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs in August 1987, Soviet broadcasts to India were particularly harsh in their attacks on the United States for its failure to restrain Pakistan's nuclear ambitions. [Redacted]

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While seeking to exploit the nuclear issue with India, the Soviets have shown occasional restraint—possibly because they do not want Indo-Pakistani friction to get out of control and do not want the Indians to activate their own nuclear weapons program. During a visit to India in the spring of 1987, when Indo-Pakistani tension was high, Soviet Communist Party Secretary Anatoliy Dobrynin tried to calm Indian fears. According to press reports, he told a meeting of members of Parliament at an All-India Congress Committee reception that, although the Soviet Union shared India's general perceptions of threats in the subcontinent, it did not agree with the “paranoia” of the ruling Congress Party. In response to questions, he specifically minimized the threat from Pakistan, saying that the USSR was not aware of Pakistan's having a nuclear bomb. [Redacted]

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During its intense campaign against the Pakistani program in mid-1987, the Soviet press elaborated on these themes. *Pravda* stated that the United States had trained Pakistani nuclear physicists, delivered a nuclear reactor to Pakistan, and “resorted to various ruses and illegal actions” to export nuclear technology to Pakistan. It explained that the United States was indulging Pakistan because the latter serves as a “bridgehead for the undeclared war against Afghanistan” and because having an “obedient ally, armed to the teeth, and, moreover, possessing nuclear weapons . . . fits well into US strategic plans in Asia.” [Redacted]

Izvestiya charged Washington with having passed nuclear technology to Pakistan and accused the Reagan administration of having justified extending military aid to Pakistan by assuring Congress that Pakistan does not intend to create nuclear weapons—even though Pakistan refuses to give such assurances. The article indicated that the administration has been reluctant to provide Congress with such assurances this year because it would be “laughable” and was therefore asking Congress to make an exception to the law banning military sales to nations pursuing a nuclear weapons program. [Redacted]

Outlook

The Soviets will continue to work to prevent Pakistan from exploding a nuclear device and to focus attention on Washington's “complicity” in Pakistan's actions. They will emphasize Pakistan's success in importing nuclear technology and materials, attributing this to US collusion. They will ignore US efforts to cut off nuclear technology to Pakistan and US success in obstructing some nuclear transactions. [Redacted]

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In exploiting the nuclear issue, the Soviets will continue to ignore Islamabad's rationale for its nuclear program—that it is needed as a deterrent

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The Indian Angle

Soviet propaganda [Redacted] play on Indian fears of Pakistan's nuclear capability and complement domestic pressure in India to reassess its

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against India—as well as President Zia’s claims that Pakistan does not intend to take the final step of assembling a weapon. To avoid antagonizing India, Moscow will not endorse Pakistani proposals for New Delhi and Islamabad to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and accept full-scope safeguards, a nuclear-free zone, or other verification measures, despite Soviet endorsement of nuclear-free zones in other areas of the world. The Soviets presumably believe—as do we—that India is not likely to accept any nuclear arrangement in the region that limits its options, even if this position leads to a nuclear-armed Pakistan. Moscow’s failure to press India with respect to these issues strongly supports our belief that the Soviets are less concerned with nonproliferation than with exploiting the issue to gain additional leverage in South Asia, particularly in regard to the war in Afghanistan. [Redacted]

If the United States cuts aid to Pakistan as a result of Islamabad’s nuclear procurement activities, the Soviets may soften their criticism, hoping to encourage Pakistan to alter its policy toward Afghanistan. If Pakistan should respond by backing away from the Afghan resistance, Moscow will be even more likely to seek improved relations with Islamabad to achieve movement toward a favorable political settlement in Afghanistan. Under these circumstances, Moscow probably will be less critical, publicly and privately, of Pakistan’s nuclear program. To maintain its credibility with India, however, the Soviets will have to continue to counsel restraint in Islamabad. Should Pakistan test a nuclear device, the Soviets will feel compelled to protest strongly and to mount a propaganda campaign against Islamabad.

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Afghanistan: Insurgents Assess the Stinger

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Afghan insurgents believe that the Stinger surface-to-air missile has had a significant impact on their war effort over the past 10 months. They perceive that the Stingers have helped to offset the Soviets' and Afghan regime's most effective counterinsurgency weapon—airpower. The insurgent belief that the Stinger is an effective air defense weapon has boosted resistance morale.

insurgents said the withdrawal of Soviet air support for attacking ground forces helped turn the tide in that battle.

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Since Stinger-equipped insurgents first shot down aircraft in Afghanistan in September 1986, many insurgents have come to believe that they have a state-of-the-art weapon with which to effectively challenge Soviet airpower.

In addition, insurgent reports indicate that possession of Stingers has affected air attacks on insurgent base camps and supply caravans.

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even those groups that do not possess the Stinger have a more optimistic outlook on the resistance's prospects.

an insurgent base that had been frequently bombed by the Soviets was not attacked as often once Soviet forces realized the guerrillas had acquired Stingers. When the Soviets did conduct airstrikes, they used high-flying jets instead of attack helicopters, reducing the accuracy and effectiveness of the attacks.

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Insurgent Reports of Stinger Effectiveness

The insurgents consider the Stinger's shootdown rate, which they claim is over 70 percent, to be a key measure of the missile's overall effectiveness. Although that figure probably is exaggerated, other sources indicate a sharp increase in Soviet and regime aircraft losses since the introduction of the Stinger.

Using the Stinger

The Stinger has some operational characteristics that make it more valuable in comparison with other air defense missiles:

[Redacted]

Furthermore, about half of the losses last year occurred in the last three months—following the introduction of the Stinger.

- The missile is capable of engaging an aircraft either as it approaches or leaves the gunner's area. In contrast, the SA-7 is generally fired only at departing aircraft.

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According to the insurgents, the Stinger has helped to limit Soviet and regime air attacks during some combat operations. They say that Soviet and regime combat aircraft often will retreat after one aircraft in an attack group is shot down or after the pilots see a Stinger fired. Soviet aircraft in one engagement immediately left the area when resistance forces fired Stingers, even though the targeted aircraft were clearly out of range. The

- To date the Soviets evidently have been unable to develop a consistently reliable countermeasure. There are indications that Stinger attacks have not been regularly deterred by the infrared jammer being used in Afghanistan.

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- The Stinger is a fire-and-forget weapon, whereas the Blowpipe requires the gunner to stay in an exposed position to guide the missile to the target.

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In our view, extensive training on the Stinger is a key factor in insurgent successes with the missile. The insurgents have obtained better results from the Stinger than the Pakistani military did in early 1986, almost certainly because of better training. [Redacted]

Outlook

At least for the near term, the Stinger will continue to be a useful counter to Soviet airpower. The guerrillas probably hope that pilot concerns about the presence of the missile will have a multiplier effect, helping to inhibit combat airstrikes in areas where insurgent groups do not have Stingers. Because of the Stinger's successful operations for the better part of a year, the guerrillas almost certainly do not anticipate that the Soviets will soon have an effective and comprehensive counterweapon. [Redacted]

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The insurgents have employed the Stinger effectively in ambushes. In describing the tactic, insurgent forces say that a gunner will situate himself in an ideal firing location, such as close to an airfield. There he waits for proper weather conditions and a target that is well within the Stinger's acquisition range. Because of the advance preparations and the element of surprise, the Stinger gunner is more likely to achieve a shootdown. Soviet and Afghan regime forces have sought to foil ambushes by intensifying patrol activity near likely attack positions and by buttressing perimeter defenses around airfields, but resistance forces have managed to find and exploit weaknesses in these defenses. [Redacted]

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Should the Soviets develop effective means of countering the Stinger, the morale of the insurgents would be affected. But resistance groups probably would quickly resume tactics employed before the acquisition of the Stinger, seeking to avoid engagements in which Soviet airpower can be fully applied. [Redacted]

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Insurgent groups also have learned to use the Stingers in conjunction with other anti-aircraft weapons to increase the density and complexity of their air defenses. For instance, by deploying both the Stinger and anti-aircraft heavy machineguns, the guerrillas believe that they are better able to destroy aircraft that fly below the Stinger's minimum effective altitude. [Redacted]

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Syria's Strengthening Coastal Defenses: Trying To Close the Back Door [Redacted]

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The bulk of the Syrian armed forces is positioned to face Israeli threats from the direction of the Golan Heights and Lebanon, and only in recent years has the Syrian regime revealed deep concern about its vulnerability to attacks launched along its relatively undefended northwestern front—the approximately 135-kilometer coastline between Lebanon and Turkey. Long the most neglected service in the Syrian military, the Syrian Navy has profited from Damascus's resolve to strengthen its coastal defenses as have the Air and Air Defense Forces and the Electronic Warfare Directorate. Despite new weapons acquisitions in place along the coast and an increase in the frequency and complexity of joint training between Syrian naval and air assets, Syria's ability to defend against air or naval attacks in the coastal area remains extremely limited—particularly if attacks were to occur with little warning or at night. [Redacted]

catalyst for expanded Syrian coastal defense training.

[Redacted]

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Syria's efforts to strengthen its coastal defenses continued throughout the summer of 1986, probably spurred by revelations in the Western press about the central role of Syrian intelligence in the terrorist Nizar Hindawi's bungled attempt on 17 April to bomb a crowded El Al jetliner in London. [Redacted]

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Syria almost certainly became acutely aware of its coastal defense weaknesses during the war in Lebanon in 1982, when Israeli amphibious landing forces inserted numerous armored vehicles and troops north of Palestinian concentrations along the southern Lebanese coast. Damascus could scarcely avoid concluding that in a future war the Israelis could divert Syrian troops from the principal battlefields on the Golan Heights and in Lebanon by opening a northern front along the Syrian coastline. Israel's use of amphibious landing forces in 1982 also evidently boosted Syria's interest in developing a similar capability. Although Soviet advisers had provided instruction on seaborne operations against Israel since 1980, [Redacted] Syria did not acquire its first amphibious landing ship until January 1984. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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What Is at Stake?

Syria's most vulnerable front to Israeli attack—the coastal area—is home to virtually all of the country's most important economic installations and—of symbolic importance—is the birthplace of most of Syria's Alawi ruling elite. Syria's primary petroleum facilities are at Baniyas on the coast, where about half of the country's oil refinery operations are conducted. The other half of Syria's domestic refining capacity is at Hims, only about 70 kilometers inland. Baniyas and the port of Tartus also serve as Syria's only export and import facilities for petroleum products. Syria's largest thermal power plant is located in the Baniyas

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Worldwide focus on the extent of Syrian state-supported terrorism, particularly since late 1985, has increased Damascus's longstanding fears that Israel would launch retaliatory airstrikes through Syria's relatively undefended coastal area and served as a

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area, and a second power plant is near Hamah, about 65 kilometers inland. Syria's major ports—Tartus and Latakia—handle nearly all maritime traffic, and Tartus is the Syrian military's lifeline for Soviet military equipment deliveries. The mountainous area just east of the coast is considered the Alawi heartland and contains Qardaha, the secluded hometown village of Syrian President Assad. [Redacted]

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Upgrading the Navy

The Syrian Navy began to receive some long overdue attention in 1984 as part of the Soviet rush to replace Syrian weaponry lost during the conflict in Lebanon in 1982 and to upgrade Syrian defenses. Although the Soviets' primary concern was to modernize Syria's Air and Air Defense Forces as well as to upgrade Syrian armored forces, they and the Syrians gradually turned their attention to the lackluster Navy and weak coastal defenses. In addition, the Syrian Navy's somewhat improved status might have been due to the appointment as naval commander in July 1984 of Major General Tayyarah, an uncle of Syrian Vice President Khaddam. [Redacted]

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By early 1984, Syria had received two new coastal defense missile systems, the SSC-3 with a range of 90 kilometers, and the SSC-1B, which has a range of 335 kilometers. Syria also acquired its first amphibious landing ship, a Polish-built Polnocny—capable of carrying six tanks—and would receive two more a year later. In late 1985 the Soviets delivered two aging Romeo-class submarines [Redacted]

So far in 1987, there has been less [Redacted] training than in recent years, possibly due to the same fuel constraints that evidently have caused a sharp decline in this year's [Redacted]

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[Redacted] according to a Lebanese radio report, in late July 1987 Syrian naval vessels conducted an amphibious landing exercise at Shikka Harbor, which is 13 kilometers southwest of Tripoli, Lebanon. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Despite Israel's overwhelmingly superior coastal defense capabilities, the Syrian Navy probably nurtures the hope of being capable of launching seaborne commando operations against the Israeli coastline. [Redacted]

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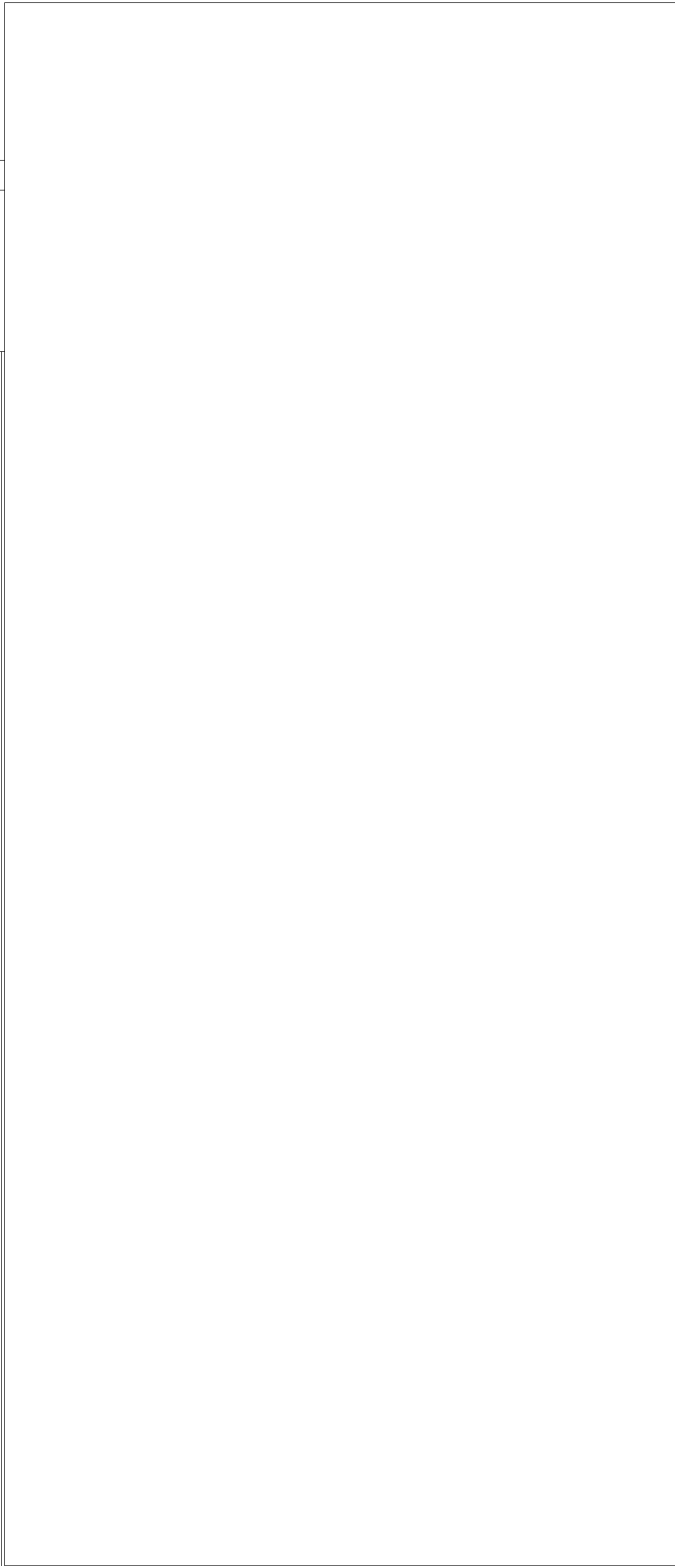
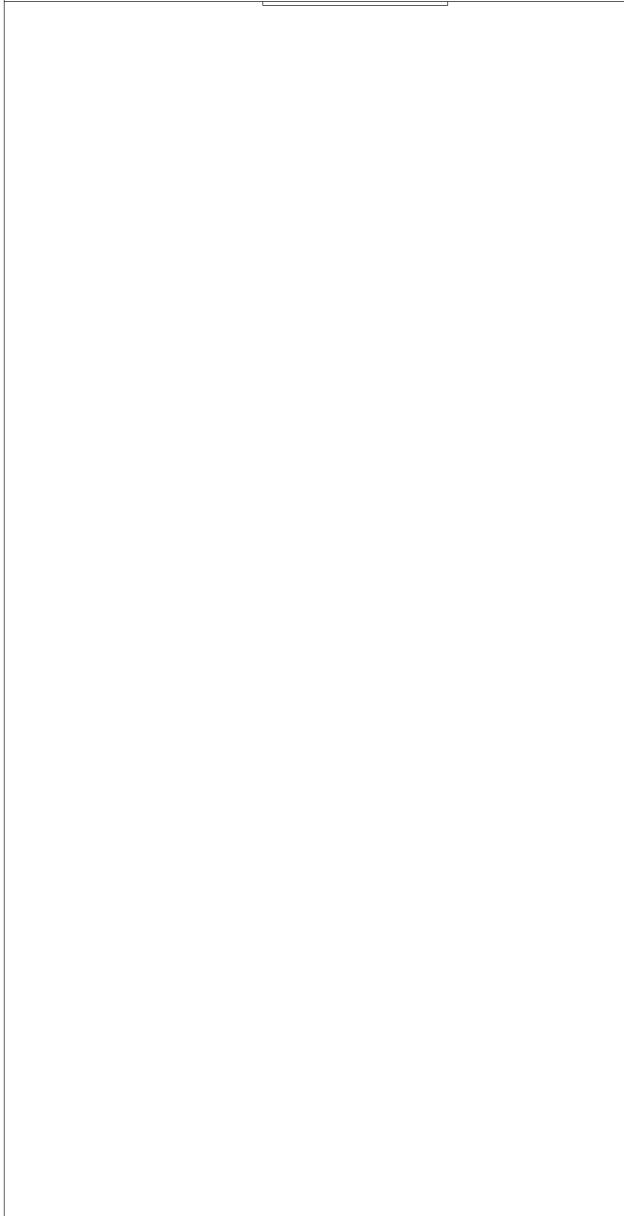
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ground forces training exercises. The MI-14 helicopters have operated farther offshore this year, however, indicating that they will eventually conduct over-the-horizon targeting for the coastal defense missiles.



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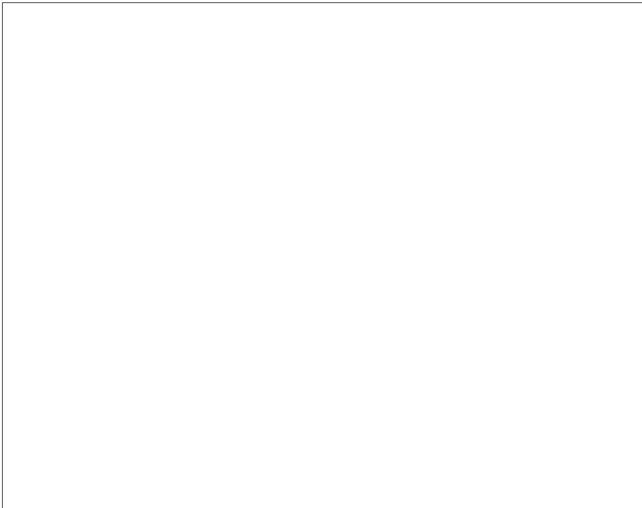


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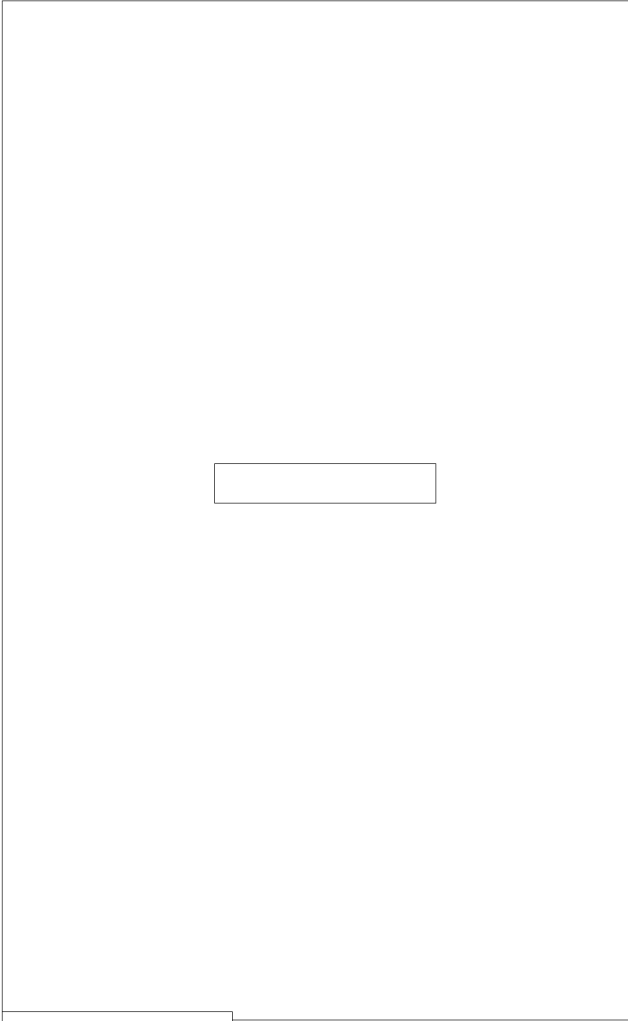
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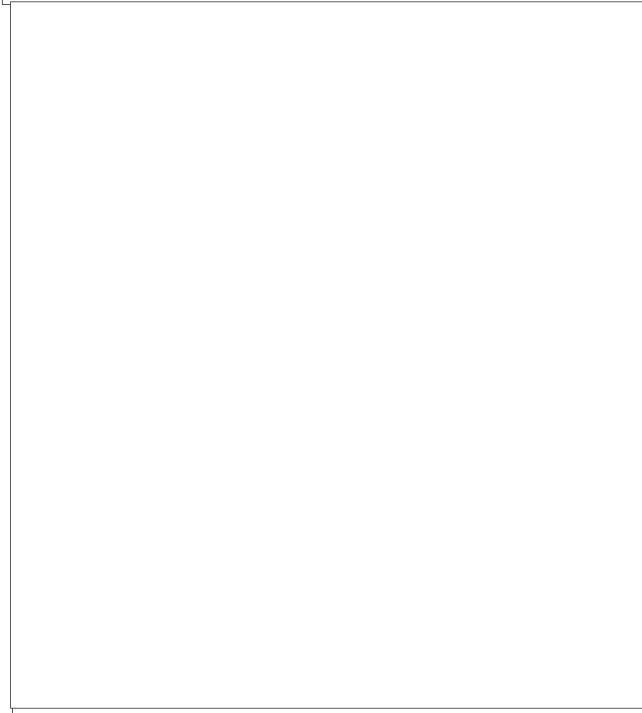
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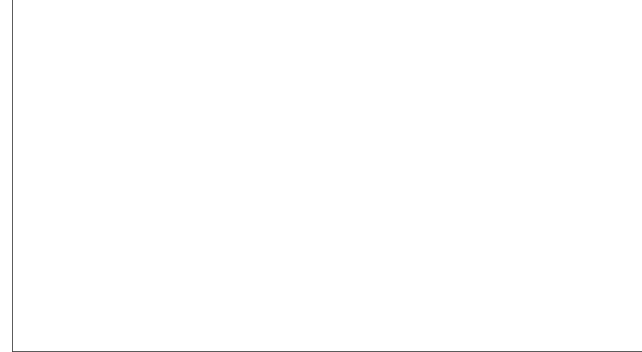
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Ground Forces in the Coastal Region

Aside from the 11th Armored Division, which is headquartered in the Hims area, all of the Syrian Army's regular divisions are stationed in the Damascus area or just opposite the Golan Heights. The only armored unit stationed near the coast is the

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826th Armored Regiment, equipped with T-55 tanks and probably subordinate to the coastal regional command. [Redacted]

timely Syrian response to an air attack launched along the Syrian coast include the ability of Syrian air defenses to identify hostile aircraft and their intent and warn the appropriate interceptor squadrons and surface-to-air missile batteries. [Redacted]

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The Army has evidently shelved its plans—at least temporarily—to create two new armored divisions—the 17th and 18th—in northwestern Syria. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Their designated areas of operation suggest they would have been responsible for defending against a seaborne invasion by armored forces and against an attack mounted from Turkey. This year, with the usually insulated military suffering unprecedented budget cuts, the Army has almost certainly been compelled to postpone plans for the new divisions. [Redacted]

Syrian installations in the coastal area remain particularly vulnerable to ship-launched missile attacks, in part because the coastal defense missile brigade probably has only a limited capability to target ships that are over the horizon. Syrian Haze helicopters probably will become more active in providing over-the-horizon targeting data, a role the Romeo submarines might also eventually assume.

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Outlook

Despite recent improvements and remedial efforts, Syrian coastal defenses almost certainly could not prevent an Israeli airstrike from damaging or destroying key economic and military installations. Syrian President Assad's resolve to increase coastal defense preparedness—as a result partly of the airspace violation last November—suggests, however, that Syrian air defenses could inflict some losses on the attacking force. The most critical factors behind a

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Israel: Expanding Role for Attack Helicopters [Redacted]

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Israeli military planners have substantially redefined and expanded the battlefield mission for the attack helicopter force on the basis of its past successful performance in Lebanon and during recently modified training. In a future war Israel's attack helicopters will probably play a decisive role in the air-to-ground arena, particularly in close air support, thus partly supplanting the more conventional use of strike-fighter aircraft in such operations. [Redacted]

The attack helicopter emerged on the Middle Eastern scene following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, during which fierce tank battles exacted heavy armor losses on both sides. Armed with the latest in antitank weaponry, the attack helicopter seemed an ideal acquisition for both Arab and Israeli commanders seeking an alternative means for destroying enemy tanks. Moreover, the impressive showing of the attack helicopter by both Israel and Syria during Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 validated the role of attack helicopters in supporting ground operations and highlighted their potential for influencing the battle's outcome much as tanks have done in the past. [Redacted]

Faulty Air Doctrine

Israel's growing reliance on the attack helicopter to perform ground support missions has resulted from the poor performance of fixed-wing aircraft in this capacity during the 1982 Lebanon war, according to [Redacted] Errors in target identification undermined efforts to provide close air support, often resulting in the strafing and bombing of Israeli troops. In one instance, Israeli planes attacked an Israeli armored battalion, leaving 75 dead and wounded. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Pilot training in the years preceding the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, therefore, emphasized tactics intended to facilitate neutralizing enemy air defenses and improving offensive counterair capabilities and strategic interdiction techniques. Coordinated air and ground training was scant, reflecting the view that the use of sophisticated, high-performance aircraft in close air support was not cost effective. Despite Israeli efforts to implement more rigorous combat pilot training procedures to remedy this deficiency, close air support continues to be a low priority for the air force—indicating that real improvement will come only through the deliberate application and innovative tactical use of the attack helicopter. [Redacted]

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Inventory Trends and Limitations

Israel's attack helicopter inventory [Redacted] will grow slowly to about [Redacted] the end of the 1990s, in our judgment. A reduced defense budget imposed by economic austerity measures and uncertainty over the fate of the Lavi fighter aircraft program—Israel's top air procurement item—have virtually halted expansion of the attack helicopter fleet, according to [Redacted] Consequently, acquisition of the advanced US AH-64 Apache helicopter is likely to be postponed indefinitely until a decision on the Lavi is made or unless the United States offers Israel a dramatically more favorable repayment schedule. Canceling the Lavi fighter would release substantial funds to the defense budget and would almost certainly result in purchase of the advanced AH-64 attack helicopter. [Redacted]

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Bell AH1S Huey Cobra flying patrol for the Israel Defense Force IAF Magazine



Israel's light attack helicopter, the Hughes 500 MD Defender Jane's

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compared to that of the AH-64 Apache. The AH-1S Cobra is armed with up to eight TOW antitank missiles, a three-barrel 20-mm cannon in the chin turret, as well as 40-mm grenade launchers, rockets, and bombs.

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Thirty Hughes 500 MD Defenders and two captured, refurbished Syrian SA 342L/Gazelles constitute Israel's light attack helicopter fleet, according to

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The Hughes 500 MD Defender is less capable than the Cobra because it is armed with only four TOW antitank missiles. The Gazelle helicopters are capable of delivering both the French HOT and AS11/12 antitank missiles.

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The threat of hostilities with Syria, terrorist activity against Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, and the relative peace prevailing along Israel's southern border as a result of the peace treaty with Egypt will lead Israel to point its attack helicopter fleet toward the north for the foreseeable future.

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Barring private-sector arrangements, the Israelis will concentrate over the next several years on improving the quality of their existing attack helicopter fleet, which includes both heavy and light attack helicopters. Older models will receive modern components to ensure continued combat effectiveness. By careful maintenance of helicopter subsystems the Israelis will aim to prolong the life of the equipment and sustain the combat readiness of the force.

[Redacted]

[Redacted] estimates that Israel has 40 Bell AH-1S Cobra heavy attack helicopters, which are based on an older technology

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Exploiting the Attack Helicopter Potential

Israeli strategists consider the attack helicopter to be a pivotal element in their ability to mount a coordinated air and ground operation to blunt an initial Syrian thrust to reclaim the Golan Heights—particularly during the crucial 24 to 36 hours Israel needs to mobilize its reserves. To this end, Israeli military commanders have placed considerable emphasis on developing a superior helicopter warfare capability capitalizing on the advantages of the attack helicopter while minimizing its vulnerability to heavily armed ground vehicles and enemy attack helicopters.

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Prospects

The attack helicopter has proved to be a highly mobile, maneuverable, and lethal weapon system ideally suited to support Israel's concept of an armored war of movement.

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By comparison, Syrian attack helicopter training has progressed little beyond the basic maneuvers needed for close air support. In the final outcome, the rudimentary skills of the Syrian pilots will continue to be no match for their Israeli counterparts.

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Economic austerity, however, has proved to be a double-edged sword for Israel's attack helicopter fleet. On the one hand, the helicopter's cost effectiveness has made it increasingly attractive for executing missions previously reserved for high-performance aircraft—which are extremely expensive

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to replace. On the other hand, a scaled-down defense budget and a continued costly commitment to the Lavi fighter have curtailed procurement of much-needed additional attack helicopters—either for replacement or modernization purposes. Without major acquisitions of attack helicopters, especially advanced models like the US AH-64 Apache, the Israeli military will find it increasingly difficult to incorporate an aging helicopter fleet into its ambitious plans for the future.

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