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The Soviet Role in Developing and Improving the
Defense of Cuba [redacted]

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A comparison of the pattern of Soviet military deliveries to Warsaw Pact and Third World nations indicates that, until recently, Cuba has generally lagged behind other beneficiaries of Soviet aid in the receipt of the more sophisticated weapons systems. Moreover, until 1976 the supply of military equipment was tailored to fit Cuba's defensive posture against the threat of a US or US-supported force. The delays experienced by Havana over the years in the receipt of new weapons and the purely defensive character of the weapons probably result primarily from Soviet awareness of US sensitivities. [redacted]

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The accompanying table shows the delivery dates of certain Soviet weapon systems to Cuba, three Warsaw Pact nations, and five Third World nations in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Before 1976, Cuba usually received new Soviet weapons several years after most other military aid clients.* For example, of the five nations listed in the table as having received the MIG-23, only Romania obtained the aircraft after Cuba. Similarly, Cuba received the SA-3 after six other nations and has yet to be provided the SA-6 system or the Scud tactical missile. The USSR also was tardy in sending T-62 tanks, ZSU-23/4 anti-aircraft artillery, and Osa-I guided missile patrol boats. The delay in the flow of new weapons prior to 1976 could also reflect the arms levels stockpiled in the early and mid-to-late 1960s as well as sharply reduced manpower levels in the Cuban military. [redacted]

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After 1975, however, the situation began to change as a staged modernization of the Cuban military became evident. The timing of the Soviet decision and the mix

*The only notable exception occurred in 1966 and 1967 when Cuba received FROG tactical rockets before Egypt, Libya, and perhaps other countries. [redacted]

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Dates of Initial Receipt of Selected Soviet Weapons Systems

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Country	Aircraft										Surface-to-Air Missiles	
	MIG-21 Fighter	MIG-21 Model D	MIG-21 Model F	MIG-21 Model H	MIG-21 Model J	MIG-21 Model K	MIG-21 Model L	MIG-23 Interceptor/ Fighter- Bomber	MIG-25 Reconnais- sance/ Interceptor	TU-22 Super- sonic Bomber	SA-3	SA-6
Cuba	1962	—	1967	1977	1972	—	1975	1978	—	—	1976	—
Peru	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1973	Not confirmed
East Germany	Before 1966	—	1966	1964	1969	1973	1973	1978	—	—	1970	1976
Poland	Before 1966	—	1968	1970	1969	—	1974	—	—	—	1970	1975
Romania	Before 1966	—	—	1973	1970	—	1977	1979	—	—	—	1971-72
Egypt	Before 1966	—	Between 1965 & 1968	—	—	—	—	1975	—	—	1970	1972
Libya	1977	—	1976	—	—	—	1977	1975	1978	1975	1974	1974
India	Before 1966	1964	1965	—	1973	—	1976	—	—	—	1975	1977
Indonesia	Before 1966	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

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Dates of Initial Receipt of Selected Soviet Weapons Systems (Continued)

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Country	Ground Forces Equipment			Ships					
	T-62 Tank	FROG Tactical Rockets	ZSU 23-4	OSA I Guided Missile Patrol Boat	OSA II Guided Missile Patrol Boat	Nanuchka Guided Missile Patrol Boat	Turya Hydrofoil Patrol Boat	Conventional Attack Submarine	SCUD
Cuba	1976	1966 or 1967	1976	1972	1976	—	1979	1979 ¹	—
Peru	—	—	1975	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Germany	1972	NA	1966	1966	—	—	—	—	Before 1966
Poland	1966	NA	1966	1966	—	—	—	1966 ²	Before 1966
Romania	3	NA	—	—	1966	—	—	—	Before 1966
Egypt	1972	1970	1966	1966	—	—	—	1966 ⁴	1973
Libya	1974	1978	1971	—	1976	—	—	1976 ¹	—
India	—	—	1974	1966	1976	1977	—	1968 ¹	—
Indonesia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1966 ²	—

NA - Not available.

¹ F-class submarine.² W-class submarine.³ Received the T-72 in 1978; no record of a T-62.⁴ W-class and R-class submarine.

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of weapons made available may reflect in part compensation for the Cuban role in Angola and Ethiopia, but the available evidence indicates that the general decision to upgrade the Cuban military was made before the Cuban involvement in Angola had become a major intervention. The timing also suggests that Moscow's perceptions of the United States had changed and that the USSR did not feel as constrained by fear of US reactions in the aftermath of the Vietnam conflict and in the course of a constitutional crisis in Washington. [REDACTED]

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Cuba's current military modernization program was probably discussed initially by Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, and Brezhnev during Soviet leader Brezhnev's visit to Cuba in January 1974. Full agreement apparently was not reached, however, as Raul Castro traveled to Moscow for extended discussions with Soviet officials immediately after Brezhnev returned home. Because no further meetings between the top leaders of the two countries occurred until after the beginning of the 1976 to 1980 Five-Year Plan, it seems probable that the general policy decisions to upgrade the Cuban military were made at this time and that their implementation was left to Cuban and Soviet negotiators during 1974 and early 1975.* It seems likely that the draft agreement between Cuba and the USSR was completed by February 1975 [REDACTED]

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Fidel Castro's speech at the First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party in December 1975 also indicated that the major features of the military modernization had been agreed upon. He stated:

In the next five-year period, the armed forces will be supplied with a considerable volume of even more modern weapons, with higher firepower, maneuverability, and automation of components.

*Fidel Castro traveled to Moscow for the 25th Congress of the Soviet party (23 February - 6 March 1976). Raul Castro went there for Marshal Grechko's funeral in April 1976. The delivery of the first new weapon system (an Osa-II guided missile patrol boat) of the current modernization program occurred in February 1976.

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The pattern of top-level meetings, the timing of Castro's statements in December 1975, and the subsequent arrival of the new equipment during the period 1976-79 are all indications that the major features of the modernization program were agreed upon before January 1976. Nevertheless, Moscow's willingness to supply some weapon systems may have increased as a result of Cuba's actions in Angola and Ethiopia.

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Cuba: Growing Hardships 

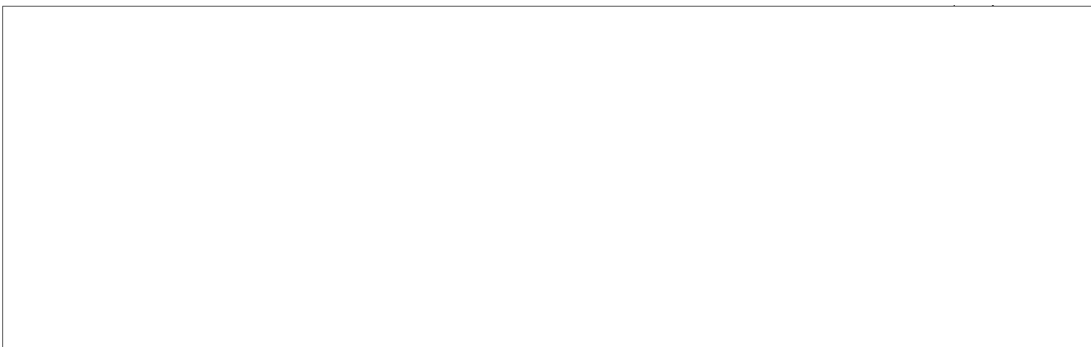
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Living conditions in Havana have continued to deteriorate in the past year, and other areas on the island are probably suffering the same decline in living standards. Food is strictly rationed and the quality continues to fall. Gasoline for private vehicles is not available, while the public transportation system continues to disintegrate. Petty crime is on the rise. The austere living conditions experienced by Havana's residents are certain to cause resentment when viewed alongside Castro's considerable--and expensive--preparations for the nonaligned movement's summit meeting in Havana in September. 

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The food supply on the island has tightened considerably in recent months. Beef has not been available since the beginning of the year. Eggs, which used to be freely offered in the marketplace, are now rationed. Such staples of the Cuban diet as black and kidney beans are not available. While pork is almost never offered in stores, an entire pig reportedly can be obtained in the countryside in exchange for an electric fan. Chicken and fish have been the only meat offered to the population since January. The available fish is unpalatable and unfamiliar, since most of the popular varieties caught by the Cuban fishing fleet are sold abroad for hard currency. 

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