

Role of Egypt's Russian Advisers Is Worrying U.S.

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 21—Some senior American officials are becoming increasingly concerned about the growing involvement of Soviet military advisers in the armed forces of the United Arab Republic.

There is a danger, the American officials say that the 2,000 to 3,000 Soviet military advisers who are assigned for the first time at small-unit levels in the Egyptian Army, Navy and Air Force could be drawn into sudden combat with the Israelis.

During the last 16 months, American analysts say, the Soviet Union has poured about \$2.5-billion worth of modern arms into the Middle East. These have nearly replaced all the jets, tanks, artillery and other weapons lost by Egypt during the 1967 war and have more than replaced the losses of Syria and Iraq. Equivalent weapons would cost the United States about \$4-billion, the analysts say.

In addition to the equipment, the Russians have sent in 2,000 to 3,000 military advisers, up from 500 to 700 before the six-day, June, 1967, war.

Fulltime Assignments

Before the war, Soviet advisers based in Cairo would occasionally make quick trips to the field to see how the training was going. Now they are assigned fulltime down to battalion level in the army and fly with each air force squadron.

They oversee all aspects of training, officials here say. From time to time, high-level military groups are reported to come in from the Soviet Union to visit the Egyptian troops.

In an effort to hold down incidents, the Russian advisors do not live with the Egyptians but go to separate hotels and apartment houses under orders not to fraternize.

The U.A.R. Air Force, under its Russian advisors, has been dispersed to several new strips, large and small. Some planes, in fact now operate from straight stretches of highway. Egypt also now keeps her 20 TU-16 medium-range bombers in Iraq, Algeria and the Sudan to preclude their being destroyed in a surprise attack.

sonic jet fighters she lost last year. Since December, the United States has shipped about 30 of an order of more than 80 A-4E Skyhawk jets, but these are subsonic bombers, ill-suited for air defense.

Early Strike Possible

One American official said: "Israel has only about 65 Mirage-III fighters to try to defend against well over 200 sophisticated MIG-21's in the air forces of Egypt, Syria and Iraq."

The MIG-21's could be used to try to achieve air superiority over Israel, thus enabling Arab bombers to fly unhindered.

Realizing the temptation to the Arabs of a pre-emptive air strike—which the Israelis used to destroy the U.A.R. air force in 1967—Israel has been trying to unfreeze delivery of 50 French Mirage-V fighters and to purchase 50 United States Phantoms.

Although the Mirage fighters have been paid for, France has refused to deliver them, as part of an arms embargo.

In contrast to the weakness in air defense, Israeli forces now sit in commanding defensive positions, in the Sinai Desert, in the Golan heights of Syria and on the West Bank of the Jordan River.

In addition, all the experts agree that a mere comparison of weapons inventory does not accurately portray relative military strength. The motivation, leadership and technological skill of Israel's soldiers are considered far superior to those of all her Arab neighbors.

This belief, of course, can be overstated. Analysts note that the Egyptian Air Force never really got a chance to fight in 1967 because most of its planes were demolished on the ground. And the army, without air cover, was effectively blasted from the air and the ground.

Russian technicians often man early-warning radar and surface-to-air missile sites and Russian pilots fly some air defense patrols, according to intelligence reports.

Israel's strategic position is much changed. Her greatest in her air defenses. Israel needs to replace the 40 to 50 super