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Approved For Release 2005/01/10 : CIA-RDP81B00401R000300010003-8

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

12 December 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Bruce C. Clarke, Jr.
Deputy Director, National Foreign Assessment

FROM : [redacted]
National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

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SUBJECT : Lessons Learned

You will recall that shortly after the Cuban Brigade crisis abated, I told you that I planned to write a memo summing up some of the lessons learned from that experience. Subsequently in a conversation we had with the DCI, we advised him that such a memo would be prepared. I have had the memo in draft in my safe for some time, but my trip to the Soviet Union and a far graver crisis in Iran caused it to rest there undisturbed. I believe, however, that it would be desirable to get this to you and the DCI before the issue is entirely forgotten and the memo grows stale. As you will see, the problems raised by the brigade experience range from those that are fixable by some minor organizational adjustments and resource reallocations to those that would require nothing short of a cultural revolution to repair. You can start at either end, or at both simultaneously.

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cc: Chairman, NIC

NSA review(s) completed.

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Bruce C. Clarke, Jr.
Deputy Director, National Foreign Assessment

FROM: [redacted]
National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

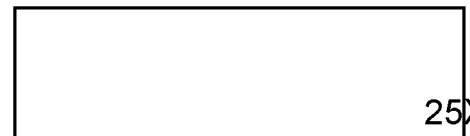
SUBJECT: The Soviet Brigade Episode: Lessons Learned

I. Introduction

1. The Intelligence Community's performance in dealing with the Soviet brigade issue was neither an instance of gross intelligence failure nor an example of brilliant success. The Community's performance was, in fact, highly uneven: it did fairly well, though raggedly, when the issue of Soviet ground force presence in Cuba was given a very high priority and enhanced collection lead to a breakthrough, but its routine non-crisis performance revealed serious deficiencies which appear to have systemic roots in the way we go about the analytical enterprise in the Intelligence Community.

2. Because of the acute political sensitivity of the brigade issue and the apparently incurable propensity of the US government to leak, the impression of ragged performance by the Intelligence Community was exaggerated by highly visible and tendentious public interpretations of interim intelligence findings which surfaced while continuing more systematic efforts were still in process. Along with erratic behavior in the policy and legislative communities, this contributed to the general impression of incompetence conveyed by the US government throughout the episode.

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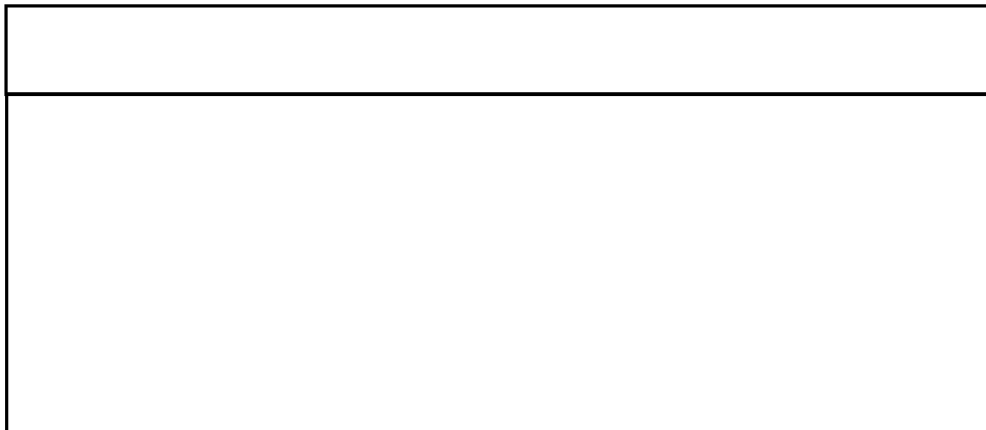
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3. For the purpose of trying to extract some lessons from this experience, the Community's performance in dealing with the brigade and related Soviet-Cuban military issues can be analyzed across three dimensions: questions of resource investment and allocation; questions of analytical methodology, organization and quality; and questions pertaining to joint Community procedures and interagency allocation of responsibilities. All of these of course interrelate and overlap. Many of the comments that follow pertain to problems affecting the Community as a whole; some, to NFAC or CIA alone.

II. Implications for Resource Investment and Allocation

4. In the first place, it appears evident that many of the difficulties -- illustrated below -- which the Community experienced in dealing with the brigade and related issues reflected a much broader resource problem which will cause us continued embarrassment unless remedial action is taken. Neither procurement nor allocation of resources -- in the Intelligence Community as a whole and in CIA in particular -- have been appropriately modified to keep pace with the substantial expansion of Soviet political and military activities in non-Warsaw Pact countries abroad in the last five years. This is true for both collection and analysis. In consequence, resources available to develop and exploit new information about Soviet activities in lower priority areas have proven particularly inadequate and have made us highly vulnerable to surprise.



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--It was also, of course, reflected in the paucity of resources given to the Soviets-in-Cuba problem prior to the summer of 1979 by such CIA components as OIA, OSR, OPA/USSR, and DDO.

*This was the single most serious deficiency in Community performance on the brigade. While paucity of resources doubtless played some role, it is likely that internal organizational interface problems were also involved.

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5. Because of the meagerness of the total pool of Community resources for coverage of Soviet overseas activities, these resources are transferable only at considerable risk. When political circumstances have dictated an extraordinary concentration of resources on a given subject -- as became the case with the Soviet brigade in Cuba in the summer of 1979 -- this has required stretching coverage of other important targets dangerously thin.

25X1 --This fact was dramatized when an extraordinary temporary surge [redacted] in August 1979 had to be significantly diminished because of competing requirements, immediately after it had helped produce a major intelligence breakthrough.

--Considerable diversion of resources in OIA and OSR was also required during the period of maximum effort on this problem in the summer and early fall of 1979. The strain on resources of the Regional Analysis Division of OSR was particularly notable because of competing demands, for example, demands resulting from the simultaneous evolution of Soviet activities in Afghanistan.

6. It is thus important that over the long term more resources should be permanently funneled by the Community and the Agency into both collection and analysis of Soviet activities abroad, so that the enhanced attention now devoted to Cuba should not be allowed to set the stage for future inadequate performance in some new crisis area now given lower priority. 25X1
Specifically:

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[redacted] it is appropriate that
greater weight be given then heretofore to creating more
[redacted] of increasing 25X1
Soviet involvement which are outside the [redacted] 25X1
areas of the USSR, East Europe, and China.

--OSR should be assigned specific responsibility for tracking Soviet forces (including MAAGs) throughout the third world and in all distant Communist states such as the SRV and Cuba. OSR should set aside dedicated organizational entities and personnel for this task.

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12 Dec 1979

--OER should be given specific responsibility to track Soviet, East European and Cuban arms shipments to distant Communist states as well as the non-Communist third world nations.

--Regional analytical centers such as OPA's Cuban Analytical Center (CAC) are, in principle, a useful idea, even if CAC has not yet lived up to its potential. In addition to the suggestions for quality improvement discussed below, a larger input of qualified Soviet specialists is needed for such centers dealing with regions where the Soviets are directly involved.

III. Qualitative and Methodological Shortcomings.

7. While questions of priority and sheer resources availability weighed heavily, performance deficiencies experienced in working on the Soviet brigade issue, since it first surfaced as an issue of interagency concern in the Summer of 1968, reflect a much broader set of problems of more universal relevance. The major analytical shortcomings of the Community revealed -- in this instance essentially in NSA and NFAC -- certain established styles, habits, and methodologies which combine to make the Community vulnerable to error of omission. The problem can perhaps best be illustrated by singling out the principal analytical shortcomings as they were encountered in the evolving study of the brigade.



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to a brigade. Both the possible presence of a brigade in Cuba and its possible location at Santiago would have been suggested earlier by a review of old [redacted] [redacted] associating Soviet military personnel specifically with Santiago and including references to a brigade at that location. As it turned out the key 1968-1971 [redacted] reporting was first retrospectively discovered after the August 1979 collection breakthrough, not by NFAC or CIA, where the files had not been checked, but [redacted]

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--Failure to conduct elementary archival research in good time also impeded our ability to provide a reconstruction of the evolution of the Soviet ground force presence in Cuba from the missile crisis period of 1962 to the present. Accordingly, our estimated dating of the probable origins of the brigade or its precursor was repeatedly amended as old files were examined to the ultimate embarrassment of the administration.

8. While the possible organization, methodological, or cultural reasons for [redacted] poor performance with respect to proper interpretation

[redacted] not known, it does appear that on the NFAC side, shortcomings in performance do reflect certain deeply ingrained deficiencies that are pervasive and impact most strongly on the performance of the Office of Political Analysis.

9. The heavy pressure exerted on OPA by multiple consumers from the outside, reinforced by a still dominant current intelligence culture and reward system on the inside, have cultivated an operational style which emphasizes simple, short and quick quasi-analytical work at the expense of developing skills, working habits, methodologies and expertise required to perform more complex, broader, sophisticated analysis. So pervasive are these external pressures and internal institutional predilections that even the CAC, an OPA unit established in large part for the explicit purpose of promoting interdisciplinary research, has thus far not surmounted them. Between August 1978 when the Soviet ground force issue in Cuba became a matter of interagency intelligence concern until July 1979, when the CAC was tasked to draft an IIM on possible Soviet ground force presence in Cuba, no systematic research effort was made to exploit the Community's archives in order to provide some historical context for fragmentary but politically sensitive current intelligence evidence.

10. At least in part because of the current intelligence orientation in OPA, there does not appear to be a common set of professional research procedures widely employed by analysis units and no elementary research methodologies established for analysts by OPA management to insure that

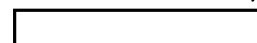
when new issues or problems are unearthed, that past evidence and previous analysis production on the subject are reliably brought to bear. The absence of methodological norms and expectations appears to be more prevalent in OPA than in OER or OSR, which are more research-oriented. In consequence, much of the relevant mass of data on political matters for which CIA maintains complex retrieval systems at enormous expense is not exploited in the conduct of political analysis at NFAC.

11. These problems have been compounded by others. Because of the low priority assigned the Cuban-Soviet subject for a number of years, the number of analysts working this problem who retain a memory of past reporting and production on the subject has dwindled almost to the vanishing point. This fact further reinforces the need for NFAC to establish a routine methodology for the institutionalization of data retrieval. Such a routine is important in all subject areas, but is indispensable in low-priority areas -- such as was the Cuban-Soviet question -- where an institutional memory may not be available to supply relevant (and in this case, essential) background.

12. At the same time, until quite recently almost no Soviet (as distinguished from Cuban) experienced political or military specialists were allocated to the Soviet-Cuban issue, the principal full-time exception being a lone OSR analyst detailed to the Cuban Analytical Center, where he was obliged to cope with a multitude of demands. Thus a specific skewing of area skills devoted to the question has intensified the problem created by a more general insufficiency of research and drafting skills. This problem should be attacked, as mentioned earlier, by a wider diffusion of Soviet specialists in regional analytical centers.

13. Finally, our experience with the Cuba-Soviet problem has demonstrated a need to habituate analysts -- in NFAC and throughout the Community -- to express levels of confidence routinely in making judgements and estimates. Otherwise, judgements which deserve low confidence are blindly inherited and passed on by rote, sometimes for years, without due qualification. Examples drawn from work on the brigade and related matters include:

--Estimates of the size and even the headquarters of the Soviet MAAG in Cuba which by frequent reiteration and the atrophy of caveats simply got to be taken for granted and not re-examined. It now appears from examining old data that the headquarters was mislocated and that the size of the MAAG group may have been considerably underestimated.



12 Dec 1979



--Similarly the longstanding Community estimate of manning levels for the Soviet SIGINT facility at Lourdes, described

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--A key mistake in assumptions going back to 1963-64 was that all Soviet ground force combat units had been withdrawn from Cuba after the missile crisis. Retrospectively it is clear that the evidence regarding Soviet withdrawal from Santiago was never as clear as that pertaining to other locations of Soviet combat units and that a more carefully caveated and qualified judgement might have kept some residual focus on the issue over the years.

IV. Community Procedural and Other Problems

14. Finally, further compounding the problems encountered have been certain issues of Community allocation of responsibilities and Community procedures.

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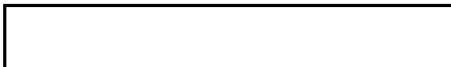
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17. A second issue concerns the coordination process for interagency products. It became clear, in the course of coordination of the large Soviet-Cuban estimate, the July small IIM on the brigade, and the September Memorandum to Holders on the brigade, that the rules of the game hitherto understood for such coordination contain serious latent dangers. One agency, in the course of coordination, repeatedly demanded the right to insert views which the remainder of the Community unanimously considered not only unjustified by evidence, but also irrelevant to the issue immediately at hand and gratuitously inflammatory. It was only with great difficulty that this Agency was ultimately dissuaded from insistence on its right to have its most inflammatory contentions published as dissenting footnotes, which under the circumstances could well have had severely adverse political consequences. The issue is a sensitive one, bordering as it does on the right of each agency to express dissenting views, but it seems clear that serious thought should be given to clarification of the DCI's rights in such extreme cases.

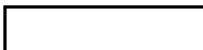
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cc: Chairman, NIC



12 Dec 1979



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THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

18 December 1979

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ACTION	DIRECT REPLY
APPROVAL	DISPATCH
COMMENT	FILE
CONCURRENCE	INFORMATION

REMARKS:

FROM: NAME, ADDRESS, AND PHONE NUMBER

NIO/USSR-EE 7E62 HQS

NOTE FOR: The Director
The Deputy Director

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I think [redacted] has done a good job of beginning to pull together some of the lessons to be learned from our experience with the Soviet brigade issue. So far as his comments relate to NFAC matters, I plan to take these up with the appropriate people to discuss possible remedies. [redacted] comments with respect to [redacted] could be addressed by a Soviet brigade postmortem. Alternatively, you could consider sending a copy of [redacted] memo to [redacted] and inviting him to comment on it. I leave it to your judgment whether, given the nature of [redacted] remarks, that is a politic thing to do.

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Bruce C. Clarke, Jr.

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