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Soviet Command and Control for Warfighting

Good morning. It's a pleasure to be here with you today. As you begin the last day of your conference on "C3 I for Warfighting," it's appropriate and important to review Soviet Command and Control for Warfighting because of its key implications for our national security policy in this decade.

~~I~~ To evaluate Soviet Command and Control for Warfighting we must view it in the larger context of the traditions and unique perspectives of Soviet military power. This is important because Soviet strategies and force developments seldom "mirror image" our own.

~~The leadership~~ The Soviet Union has thought deeply about the likely nature of a modern large-scale war and how to effectively control their forces in such a conflict.

~~The~~ The nature and history of the Soviet Union's conservative political system stresses firm centralization of authority and control. Consequently, the Soviet political leadership places a heavy premium on centralized command and control of its military forces--both for political as well as military reasons.

~~The~~ The political leadership tasks the Soviet military to seriously plan for all potential phases of a large-scale war, which they believe can go through a series of complex phases.

~~37~~ Soviet military preparations for conflict, therefore, are guided by a General Staff that has the authority to both shape and

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direct their military forces. As we shall see, this key institution in the Soviet military hierarchy is both a source of strength and weakness.

- B. The Soviets see their requirements for military forces and operations within the framework of a competitive world that they regard as inherently unstable.
1. The Soviet leadership perceives threats to the homeland potentially arising from a variety of directions.
 - a. This includes major theater wars in Europe or China as well as intercontinental war with the United States.
 - b. In addition, the Soviets are concerned with ~~all potential~~ ^{broader} threats--and opportunities--~~on their periphery~~ as their actions in Afghanistan, ^{Africa} Iran and the Middle East will attest.
 2. The Soviets deploy and structure their military forces so that they can take the offensive wherever possible because the Soviets want any conflict to be fought on the territory of the enemy, and not on the Soviet homeland.
 - a. Because the Soviets are uncertain about how and where a conflict might arise, Soviet forces are postured so as to be able to mobilize and reposition in as short a time as possible, and to be able to sustain operations over an extended period.

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- b. Soviet forces are large, complex and diverse. Such forces are intended to give them the broadest possible array of military capabilities. They are also consistent with the Soviets' sense of historical insecurity. ^{and} They reflect the high level institutional power of the Soviet military.
- c. In addition to concerns about possible conflicts with NATO and China, the Soviets are increasingly concerned with improving their capability to manage power projection operations ⁱⁿ distant regions of the world.

II. Fundamental to any understanding of Soviet command and control for warfighting is the type of conflicts the Soviets believe they may have to fight.

- A. The Soviet military planning process assumes that a war could evolve through numerous stages, each presenting enormous challenges to planning and decisionmaking. If a general nuclear war occurs, the Soviets believe it most likely would result from the expansion of a major theater conflict, preceded by a political crisis period during which tensions would rise significantly. The Soviets expect--but do not count on--such a period of tension giving them the time to raise the operational status of deployed forces and to mobilize the bulk of their reserve forces.
- B. The Soviets have contingency plans for military operations in any geographic theater. They ^{have been} ~~are~~ most concerned about the European

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theater, however, so over the next few minutes I'll concentrate on how they see a major war unfolding against NATO.

1. The Soviets see a conventional conflict with NATO as likely to follow a crisis period and last an indeterminate length of time. Soviet scenarios for the conventional phase of a European conflict typically show the Warsaw Pact containing a NATO attack and then launching a counter-offensive which penetrates deeply into Western Europe.
2. They see a theater nuclear phase as likely to flow out of the conventional conflict because of the inherent risk of conventional operations. From the Soviet perspective, escalation to nuclear weapons is highly likely. This is because they expect NATO to use nuclear weapons to avoid losing a conventional war with the Warsaw Pact. They do not discount, however, their using nuclear weapons to halt a NATO breakthrough on a key route of advance that they judged could not be contained by available conventional forces.
3. The Soviets also take into account the possibility that theater nuclear war might begin with little or no conventional phase. They have a requirement to be able to preempt in the event they detect NATO preparing to use nuclear weapons.
4. From the Soviet perspective, escalation to intercontinental nuclear war would not be necessary if they could achieve their

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theater objectives without it. Keep in mind, however, that they view theater nuclear war as only an uncertain step away from intercontinental nuclear war. In the intercontinental phase, the Soviets would seek to destroy or disable US and allied nuclear and conventional forces worldwide, and isolate US power from the theater campaign.

5. The Soviets believe major intercontinental strikes against US targets, lasting for hours or days, would be followed by the conclusion of the theater campaign that gave rise to the conflict, with the Soviets attempting to secure their theater objectives. Concern that this phase could continue for some time underlies their preparations for protracted war.
 6. The Soviets view intercontinental nuclear forces as having only a limited role in the concluding phases of a NATO-Warsaw Pact war. They expect operations in the Eurasian theaters would be conducted primarily by surviving ground, air, and naval forces supported by perhaps a small number of strategic nuclear strikes. In this phase, the Soviets would plan to attempt to reconstitute conventional and strategic forces, and to the extent possible focus on securing their theater objectives.
- C. As you can appreciate from this brief review of how the Soviets believe a major war might unfold, their command and control planners are given extremely stiff operational challenges.

III. Let's now examine in greater detail the implications of centralized command and control for the Soviet Union in managing peacetime and wartime operations. ~~Clearly it is a source of much of the strength of the Soviet military system.~~

A. Centralization of authority within the Soviet General Staff permits it to coordinate the development of weapons and operational practices with the development of supporting command and control systems.

1. This is not to suggest that this is perfectly done or that distortions in planning don't result from bureaucratic and budgetary conflict. Their arms of service are as independent-minded as are ours. But the potential for the more systematic management of this function within the Soviet General Staff is substantial.

2. Since in wartime the General Staff will act as executive agent of the national leadership, it is in a powerful position to impose central direction to the development of the overall command and control system.

B. The Soviets have structured their C3 system with the objectives of maintaining continuity of command and control and directing their military forces in all situations.

1. The General Staff, working with the five services, conducts a regular training program to prepare the C3 system for the

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transition to wartime operations and to handle the complexity of modern warfare.

2. The General Staff also insures that high priority is given to the survivability, redundancy, and flexibility of command, control, and communication facilities and equipment.
 - a. Command survivability is achieved through the construction of numerous hardened and concealed fixed command posts which will probably direct the early phases of a conflict.
 - b. In addition, there are also fixed alternate command posts as well as mobile command systems on land, in the air, and at sea.
 - c. The strategic military communications system includes extensive networks of cable and open-wire communication lines, radio-relay links, radio-communications stations, and communications satellites. This redundancy of communication means is intended to improve the prospects of communicating in a nuclear environment.
3. The Soviets recognize that the automation of the command system could make their forces more responsive to central direction in both peacetime and wartime.
 - a. The Soviets have done research on and written about automating their command, control, and communications systems for many years. They treat the control of troops as

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a military science and have a number of military mathematicians working on control theory.

- b. They are introducing automation into their C3 system which could enable Soviet commanders to increase the effectiveness of wartime operations as a result of improved battle management techniques. The Soviet Air Defense Forces and the Moscow antiballistic missile system employ automation most extensively.
- c. The Soviets are behind the US in automation technology. However, their ability to systematically apply what they have, and willingness to quickly field systems incorporating available technology, compensates considerably for their technological lag.

IV. While the highly centralized command and control structure I've just described to you is a source of considerable strength of the Soviet system, it is simultaneously a major weakness.

- A. The concept of centralized planning, in itself, has the potential to create special problems for Soviet authorities.
 - 1. Its large bureaucracy may be overwhelmed by the data required to coordinate the planning for such large and diverse forces at central staffs. Moreover, innovation and creativity are not strong characteristics of large organizations in authoritarian countries. In terms of controlling forces, especially during

the initial phases of a war it is doubtful that a commander in the field would be permitted to deviate from operational plans developed centrally.

2. If, for any reason, Soviet centralized control were cut off, it is not clear that adequate staffs and information systems exist at lower levels to minimize serious operational disruption.

~~This makes the Soviet command and control system a particularly attractive target for attack.~~

- B. Because of the concern for centralized control and an awareness of how quickly it can be lost, the Soviets frequently exercise the supporting command, control, and communications systems in a variety of simulated conflict situations.
- V. The potential loss of centralized control during wartime could motivate the Soviets to reintroduce the use of theater-level high commands, in areas such as the Far East, as was done in World War II.
 - A. Theater level high commands function as intermediate authorities between the General Staff and the operating forces in theaters of military operations.
 - B. They would exercise direct control over subordinate forces, and may be better adapted for planning and conducting large and complex theater operations while still under the overall direction and control of the General Staff.

- C. If a war did occur, Soviet theater-level commands would probably operate on the periphery of the USSR, including Europe, the Far East and perhaps South Asia. Subordinated forces probably would include portions of the Soviet ground forces, air and air defense forces, naval forces and perhaps even long-range bombers.
1. A combined arms approach to military planning in peacetime could facilitate the capability of the Soviet Union to achieve a timely wartime utilization of all its military forces.
 2. The Soviet concept of combined arms warfare involves more than simply the joint use of weapon systems and forces. It requires that all required systems and forces are brought to bear in a unified, effective manner at all levels--front, theater and national--of command.
 - a. In the Soviet view, for example, the air battle over Europe is not an end in itself--it is meant to support the advance of Soviet ground forces into Europe.
 - b. Likewise, the battle for naval supremacy in the waters around Greenland, Iceland and Britain does not have the sole objective of simply sinking Western naval forces. It is also meant to protect the Soviet Unions' SSBN force, a key portion of the Soviet strategic nuclear strike forces.
 3. The degree of successful integration of these diverse force components would largely determine whether complex, multiphase Soviet theater operations could achieve their goals.

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VI. Disruption of their adversaries' command and control structure is as important to the Soviets as insuring the survivability of their command and control system. Such operations are key elements in their overall planning for military operations.

A. The success of counter-C3 operations would be instrumental for the Soviets in determining how well the war could be prosecuted. These operations will include the use of electronic warfare techniques, sabotage, and conventional force attacks, as well as direct nuclear strikes.

1. Such operations could include attacking fixed facilities such as command centers in NATO Europe, and communication sites which link US military forces overseas with command centers in the US.
2. Other operations could include disruption of US communications by attacks against space-based communication and navigation systems that support US tactical forces and SSBNs.

B. Soviet capability to execute missions of this type has long been within their grasp and today are fully integrated into their operational plans.

VII. To sum up, a key element in Soviet assessments of their capabilities to conduct military operations is the effectiveness and survivability of their command and control system. In addition, they place great emphasis on the prospects for disrupting and destroying the command and control systems of their adversaries.

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- A. The Soviet Union prepares seriously for the possibility of fighting, not merely deterring, warfare. It is developing a command system to support a complex and demanding concept of war.
- B. Improvements in Soviet command and control survivability and efficiency will continue at an impressive pace.
 - 1. The Soviets will deploy additional mobile command posts to supplement the extensive system of bunkered command facilities servicing the national leadership and the military forces.
 - 2. They will increase the variety, sophistication, and security of communications available to national-level commands and to operating elements of strategic forces.
 - 3. They will increase the use of automation to improve operational effectiveness.
- C. If the Soviet Union is to have high confidence in its military power in the future, however, it will have to address fundamental command and control issues.
 - 1. The Soviets are well trained in planning and executing initial operations when the details can be worked out in peacetime. Soviet central planning, however, will have to respond coherently if NATO or other opponents survive initial operations and Soviet centralized command is degraded.
 - 2. The carefully planned buildups for massive operations that characterized Soviet strategy in World War II may not be

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possible in the fluid operational environment we expect to see in the nuclear age.

3. The initiative of local commanders may be difficult to develop in an officer corps trained to await orders from higher authorities.

Thank you for the opportunity to *review with you the Soviet approach to* discuss ~~Soviet~~ C3 and warfighting. It is an area of the Soviet military challenge that has been in the background too long. It is an area of military preparations that the Soviets have thought about--and committed significant resources to--for quite awhile.