



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

14 December 1982

SOVIET ARMS DELIVERIES TO CUBA AND THEIR IMPACT
ON THE CUBAN ARMED FORCES

Summary

Some 56,100 metric tons of military equipment were delivered by the USSR to Cuba during the reporting period.¹ Of that total, 50,260 metric tons arrived in 1982. The pace of total military-related deliveries this reporting year is nearly the same as last year. Deliveries of arms have returned to lower levels common until 1981, but these were offset by a significant increase in the delivery of military-associated support equipment.² The most important military items delivered were fighter aircraft, helicopter gunships, surface-to-air missile launchers and an amphibious landing ship.

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This memorandum was prepared by the Office of African and Latin American Analysis and Office of Global Issues, CIA, and coordinated within the Intelligence Community. Comments and questions may be directed to [redacted] Office of African and Latin American Analysis, [redacted]

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The major impact of these deliveries on the Cuban armed forces will be a potentially significant improvement in air force capabilities, a strengthening of the navy, and a somewhat greater capability to provide military support to allies in the Caribbean region. It will take Cuba some time--perhaps another year or two--to integrate all of these new weapons into its armed forces. The technical sophistication of these weapons--many of which are new to Cuba--has required a greater Soviet advisory presence. A new training school for fighter pilots was also established in Cuba this year, with assistance from the Soviets.

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We believe that most of the arms and equipment delivered by the Soviets have remained in Cuba, but Cuba also continues to serve as a conduit for Soviet military equipment destined for Nicaragua and Grenada. Although we can identify some shipments of small arms, ammunition, jeeps, and trucks from Cuba to those two countries, we cannot determine whether these items came from this year's Soviet deliveries or from older Cuban stocks.

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The Deliveries

The overall volume of Soviet arms and military-associated deliveries continued at a high pace during the last two months of 1981 and the first nine months of 1982, even when adjustments for changes in our estimative methods are taken into account (see page 4). Shipment tonnage per month ranged from 2,370 tons in December 1981 to 9,140 tons in February 1982. There were no deliveries in October this year, but several arms carriers subsequently have arrived in Cuba, and it appears that the totals for calendar year 1982 will be only slightly below the 63,700 metric tons overall carried in 1981. [redacted]

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Leading the list of items delivered were large numbers of fighter aircraft. These included 24 MIG-23s, the first since 1978, and 36 MIG-21s.³ The 15 Czechoslovak-built L-39 jet trainers that were delivered on a Czechoslovak ship late this summer have formed the nucleus of a new fighter training school. Finally, Cuba received its first 12 MI-24 Hind helicopter gunships in January. [redacted]

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Ground-based air defense equipment delivered this year included at least three SA-9 surface-to-air missile (SAM) launchers, the first seen with a Cuban unit in Cuba,⁴ and possibly some additional SA-6 SAM equipment to support two new SAM facilities. The SA-6 system was first identified in Cuba last December, but apparently was delivered earlier in 1981. It was not included in last year's report of Soviet arms shipments. [redacted]

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Deliveries to the Cuban Navy included six OSA-II missile patrol boats, a Pelym-class degaussing ship, two small minesweepers, and a Polnocny-class medium amphibious landing

³AA-7 air-to-air missiles, and AS-7 and possibly AS-10 air-to-surface missiles--all carried by the MIG-23--were also noted in Cuba for the first time this year. [redacted]

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⁴SA-9 equipment has not yet been identified at a Cuban garrison. The three launchers were seen at a training facility with a Cuban armored unit. The Soviet brigade in Cuba also has SA-9s. [redacted]

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ship.⁵ A second Polnocny was en route to Cuba at the end of the reporting period and was delivered in December. [redacted]

With the exception of 48 anti-tank guns that arrived late last year, we have not identified any specific pieces of ground force equipment delivered during the reporting period. [redacted]

[redacted]

Consequently, we saw no military equipment on the quays at Cuban ports this year, even while the ships that carried arms from the USSR were in port. [redacted]

may have been a result of explicit stories about Soviet arms deliveries to Cuba which began appearing in the press as early as July 1981. Unlike aircraft and naval vessels, which are primarily kept in the open, new ground force equipment is difficult to identify after it reaches a military garrison. [redacted]

[redacted]

The number of Soviet ships carrying arms from the Black Sea Port of Nikolayev to Cuba declined this year to a level roughly equal to that seen in the 1970s. At the same time, however, shipments of military-related goods from other ports, only included in our estimates in the last two years, are up substantially. (see Chart 1). In 1981, 18,200 metric tons of military-associated goods were delivered in 24 ship voyages from ports other than Nikolayev. In 1982, military-associated goods were delivered by 43 ship voyages from other ports and accounted for 29,760 metric tons of the total deliveries in January through October. [redacted]

Data on tonnage and ships in chart 1 for 1962 through 1980 reflect only major military shipments. These shipments are comprised of ships loading goods at Nikolayev and some few shipments from other ports where military cargo--usually naval craft [redacted] Tonnages of identified military deliveries for 1981 and 1982 should be used to compare with

⁵In previous years we have not included tonnages of naval ships delivered under tow or under their own power because of the typically large tonnages involved and the inherent risks that inclusion of these figures might lead to misinterpretation of real trends in deliveries. Henceforth such tonnage will be included but noted separately in order to facilitate monitoring of all component trends. [redacted]

prior-year figures. Starting in 1981 we included shipments of military-associated goods from ports other than Nikolayev when it could be determined that they were assigned to the Cuban military. This change was made to make our estimate directly comparable to those of other government agencies. [redacted]

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Impact on Cuba's Armed Forces

Air and Air Defense

The large number of new fighter aircraft delivered over the past year has allowed Cuba to modernize and expand its air force. We believe that most of the new aircraft are replacing older MIG-15, MIG-17 and early-model MIG-21 fighters. Many of the older aircraft are too old to be of further use and are simply stripped of useful parts and abandoned. Others have been refurbished, probably with parts cannibalized from other older aircraft, and are still available either for use by the Cubans or perhaps to pass on to Nicaragua when the time is judged right.

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[redacted]

The 36 MIG-21s delivered were divided between the airbases at Holguin in eastern Cuba, and San Julian--where the new fighter school was established. Counting an additional 22 MIG-21s delivered in September and October last year, Cuba has doubled the number of late-model MIG-21s in its air force in the last 15 months. Late model MIG-21s are roughly comparable to the US F-5E. [redacted]

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The 24 new MIG-23s joined a squadron of MIG-23 fighter-bombers Cuba has had since 1978 to form a Flogger regiment at San Antonio de los Banos Airfield just southwest of Havana. Four of the new aircraft have been identified as trainers, while most of the rest appear to be air defense variants. At least some of these are known to be Flogger B interceptors, the first of this model to be sent to Cuba. The Flogger B interceptor has a more advanced radar and weapons system than the MIG-21 and other MIG-23 models exported to Cuba. They are more effective against medium and low altitude attackers than Cuba's MIG-21s and were the most advanced fighter in the Soviet Air Force from 1972-1978. As a fighter, the MIG-23 is roughly comparable to the US F-4. [redacted]

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The new MI-24 helicopter squadron has been established at Cienfuegos. Helicopter gunships are primarily designed for supporting ground forces, but we do not yet know what mission the Cubans intend for them. They would be particularly valuable both for internal defense and for counterinsurgency operations in

Cubans plan to send them to Nicaragua or that their pilots are being trained for such a mission. [] 25X1

The new SA-6 and SA-9 SAMS Cuba has received are mounted on mobile launchers and are more effective against low-altitude targets than the SAMs Cuba has received in the past. The radar-guided SA-6 is used to defend mobile ground force formations in the USSR and Eastern Europe, but the Cubans appear to be setting up semi-permanent launch positions for them. The SA-6 is especially effective against high-performance aircraft attacking at medium to low altitudes. The SA-9 is an infrared-guided system with a much shorter range. It is usually employed in conjunction with radar-directed antiaircraft artillery. [] 25X1

It will take the armed forces some time--perhaps another year or two--to train enough pilots, operators, and maintenance technicians to assimilate all of these new weapons into their units. The technical sophistication of these weapons, particularly the radars and missiles, will require a greater Soviet advisory presence over the new few years. Establishment of the fighter training school in Cuba will allow Cuban pilots, and perhaps Nicaraguans, to receive their training close to home and in their native Spanish. Until now, Cuban and Nicaraguan fighter pilots have been sent to schools in the USSR and Eastern Europe for up to four years. [] 25X1

The Navy

The six new OSA-II missile patrol boats constitute a nearly 50 percent increase in the inventory of these vessels. They are primarily used for coastal defense missions, but the long range (20-39 km) radar-homing missiles they carry give them an offensive capability as well. [] 25X1

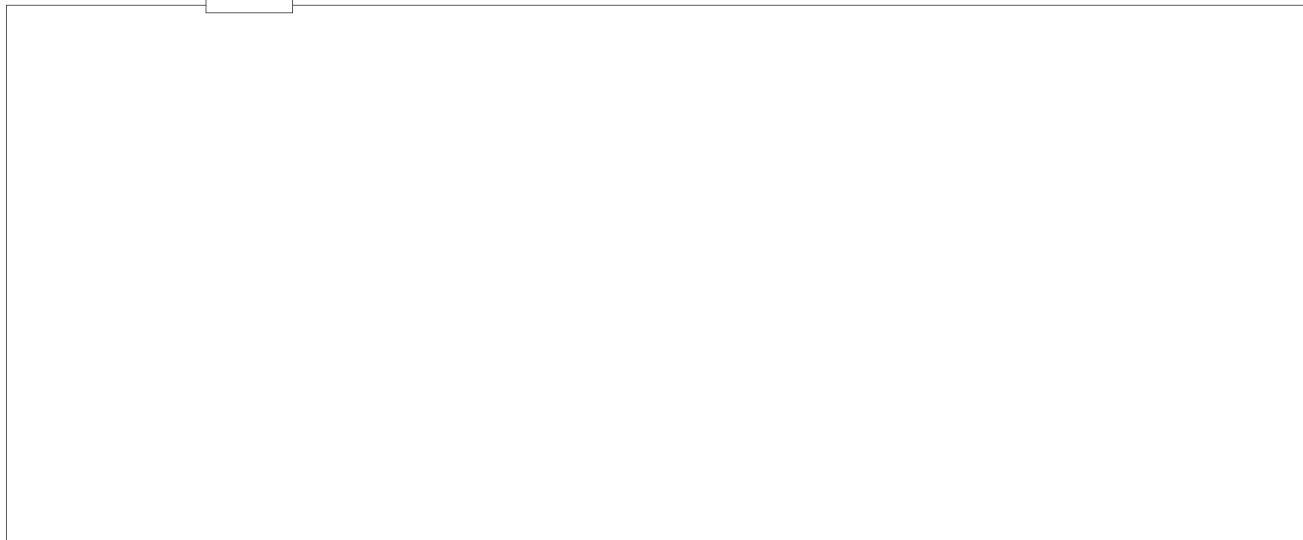
The delivery of two minesweepers and a degaussing ship (used to measure the magnetic signature of surface combatants to provide data that can protect them from certain torpedoes and mines) suggests a continuing Cuban concern about the threat of a US blockade possibly involving the use of mines and attack submarines. [] 25X1

The most significant new delivery to the Cuban navy this year was the Polnocny-class amphibious landing ship. The Cubans previously have had to move all troops and equipment abroad by air or on merchant ships that require access to a friendly port. Amphibious landing ships give the Cubans some capability to deliver troops and equipment over beaches or even, in some limited cases, to conduct opposed landings. While the capacity

limited cases, to conduct opposed landings. While the capacity of these landing ships is relatively small (180 troops or six armored vehicles each), they can be used both for delivering equipment outside of port areas and for limited offensive operations. Their radius of action limits them to the Caribbean region.

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Chart No. 1

SOVIET DELIVERIES OF MILITARY GOODS TO CUBA

Selected Years

YEAR	Identified Military Deliveries		Military- Associated Deliveries		Naval Ship Deliveries*	TOTAL
	SHIPS	TONNAGE	SHIPS	TONNAGE	TONNAGE	
1962	125	250,000	--	--	--	--
1965	5	10,800	--	--	--	--
1970	8	11,300	--	--	--	--
1975	8	13,900	--	--	--	--
1976	13	19,500	--	--	--	--
1977	10	21,600	--	--	--	--
1978	12	22,200	--	--	--	--
1979	12	17,300	--	--	--	--
1980	14	20,900	--	--	--	--
1981	24	45,500	21	18,200	--	63,700
1982**	11	18,100	43	29,760	2,400	50,260

* Incorporated in the 1981 and 1982 estimates for the first time as a separate category; which were included in prior-year tonnages; also includes Naval ships delivered under tow or their own power.

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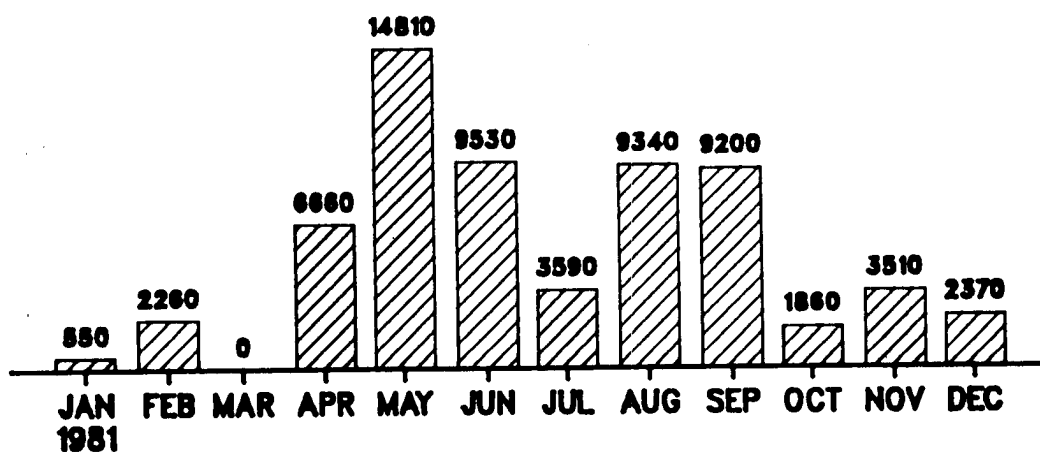
** January through October only.

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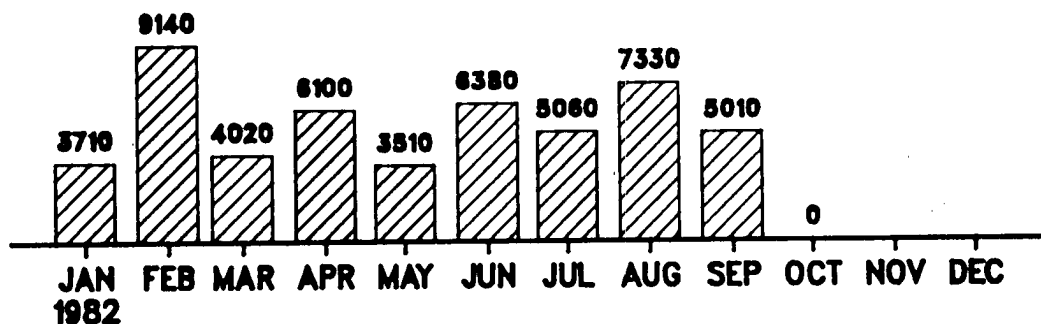
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Chart 2 Tonnage of Soviet Military Shipments to Cuba, 1981 and 1982

TOTAL 1981: 63,680 Metric Tons (Jan-Oct: 57,800 Metric Tons)



TOTAL 1982: (Jan-Oct) 50,260 Metric Tons



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