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# Cuba: Soviet Military Deliveries in 1983



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An Intelligence Assessment

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June 1984

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**Errata**

Notice to recipients of Intelligence Assessment: *Cuba: Soviet Military Deliveries in 1983*, ALA 84-10054D/GI 84-10101D, [redacted]

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The last half of table 2 on page 7 is incorrect. Please replace it with the new table attached. [redacted]

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**Table 2**  
**Soviet Military Deliveries to Cuba:**  
**Selected Weapons Systems and Equipment, 1976-83 (continued)**

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	Total Observed 1976-83
<b>Naval</b>									
Frigate, Koni-class						1			1
Submarine, F-class				1	1				2
Missile attack boat, Osa-II class	1	1	3	2		2	4		13
Hydrofoil patrol craft, Turya-class				2	2	2		3	9
Patrol boat, Zhuk-class	2	4			6				12
Coastal minesweeper, Sonya-class					1	1			2
Inshore minesweeper, Yevgenya-class		2	1	2	2	2	1		10
Degaussing ship, Pelym-class							1		1
Landing Ship, medium, Polnocny-class							2		2

Included are estimates of the most significant items by quantity. Numbers are minimum counts and include only items confirmed on imagery. Totals for some equipment, such as T-62 tanks and BM-21 multiple rocket launchers, include deliveries both to Cuban forces and, possibly, to the Soviet brigade there.

Absence of data for ground force equipment delivered in 1982 is due largely to increased Cuban concealment and deception measures. The increase in data for ground force equipment delivered in 1983 may be the result of a relaxation of those measures.



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# Cuba: Soviet Military Deliveries in 1983

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**An Intelligence Assessment**

This paper was prepared by [Redacted] Office of African and Latin American Analysis, and [Redacted] Office of Global Issues. [Redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Middle America-Caribbean Divison, ALA, [Redacted]

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**Cuba: Soviet Military Deliveries in 1983** 

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**Key Judgments**

*Information Available as of 1 April 1984 was used in this report.*

In 1983, for the third year in a row, the Soviet Union delivered a large quantity of military goods to Cuba. Moscow shipped a significantly higher tonnage of arms than in 1982, but this volume was more than offset by a large decline in deliveries of military-associated goods. All told, the volume of deliveries in 1983 was off nearly 20 percent from the previous year.

Key features of the 1983 deliveries were:

- Shipments of *combat arms* rose to 38,400 tons—up from 24,540 tons in 1982 but somewhat below the 20-year high of 45,000 tons sent in 1981.
- Shipments of *military-associated goods* fell substantially to less than 13,000 tons from the high of 35,000 tons registered in 1982.
- The most important items delivered were 180 tanks and more than 200 artillery pieces to help modernize and expand Cuba's ground forces.
- The Cuban Navy and Air Force also benefited from the delivery of three MIG-23 and six MIG-21 fighter aircraft and 19 new helicopters, including four MI-14 Haze, Cuba's first antisubmarine warfare aircraft.

The increased tonnage of arms since 1982 is almost certainly a result of the higher mix of such heavy ground force weapons as tanks and artillery, as opposed to the fighter aircraft that made up the bulk of the shipments in 1982.

We do not view the large reduction in the tonnage of military-associated items shipped in 1983 as a significant reduction in the level of Soviet support. Large fluctuations in Soviet deliveries of military-associated equipment from year to year probably are normal. Furthermore, a larger volume—some 5,000 tons—of military-associated items was sent to Cuba by East European shippers in 1983. These indirect shipments are not included in our tonnage calculations.

Even without taking hostile action, Cuba's regular armed forces could have a significant impact on the allocation of US naval and air forces in time of war or crisis by threatening merchant shipping and troop convoys entering and exiting the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. Soviet deliveries also are gradually improving Cuba's defensive capabilities and raising the potential cost to the United States of any attempt to neutralize Cuban forces by invasion, airstrike, or blockade. Cuba's small but growing potential for intervention and power projection in the Caribbean and Central America also threaten US interests because most of the states of the region have little ability to defend themselves and would look to the United States for protection.

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The bulk of the military goods delivered to Cuba probably has remained in that country.  Cuba continues to serve as a conduit for the clandestine transfer of some Soviet military equipment to other Third World countries, particularly Nicaragua and Angola.

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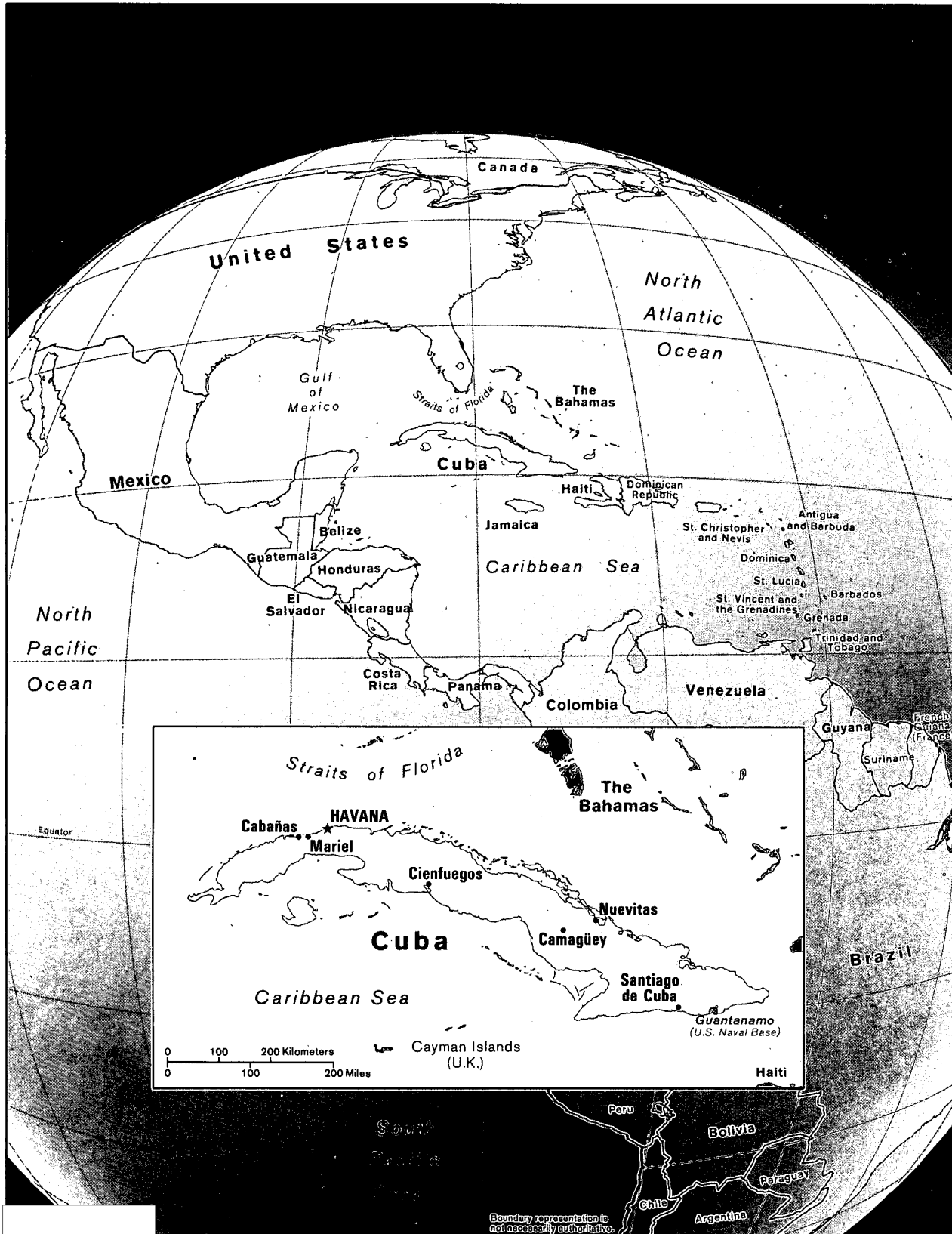
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### Cuba: Soviet Military Deliveries in 1983

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#### Introduction

This paper details the available information on shipments of arms and military-associated equipment from the Soviet Union to Cuba during 1983, identifies trends in those shipments, and assesses the impact of delivered equipment on Cuban military capabilities.<sup>1</sup> It also identifies some of the measures the Cubans and Soviets have taken to deny us information on precisely what items are being shipped.

The reader needs to keep in mind that there are certain limitations to the completeness of the data:

- Delivered tonnage figures are derived through a careful compilation of confirmed shipment data. While this procedure may result in some underestimation of the flow of arms and supplies because of the deliberate exclusion of small lots or fragmentary evidence from tenuous sources, we believe—based on more than 20 years of observation—that our procedures assure meaningful comparability across the years.
- Specific items of equipment are tabulated from observations at the sending and receiving ports, or of the decks of ships en route. Some items are added only after they are first seen at a Cuban garrison, rather than tracked through shipping.
- Our highest confidence in identifying delivered items attends the acquisition of naval vessels and aircraft. Tank and artillery counts have a somewhat lower reliability. We cannot be certain of the amount of ammunition or small arms delivered, nor of the detailed composition of military-associated equipment.

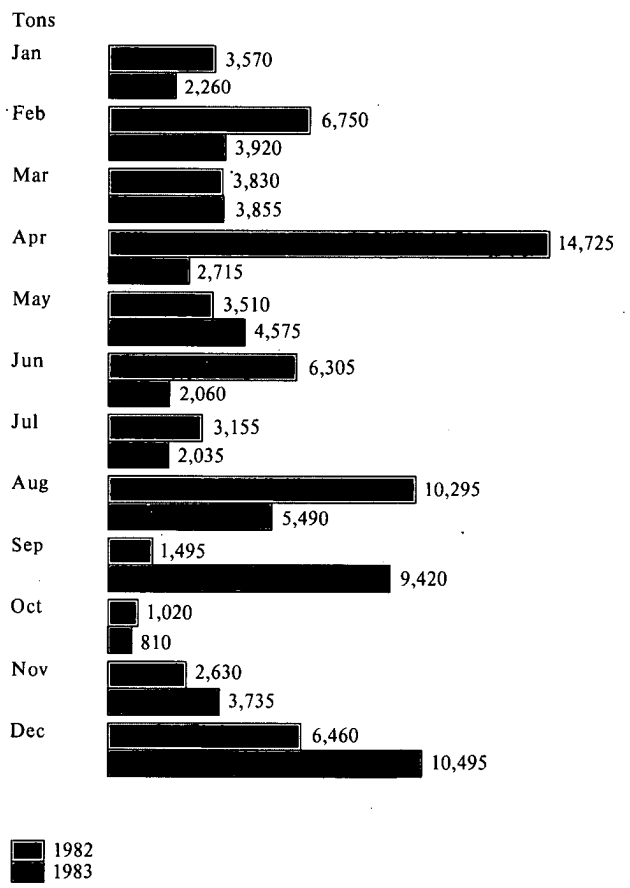
#### Deliveries in 1983

##### Broad Patterns

The overall tonnage of Soviet seaborne military deliveries to Cuba in 1983 was about 20 percent less than

<sup>1</sup> "Arms" or "military equipment" include weapon systems, ammunition, and naval vessels; "military-associated equipment" includes items such as spare parts, trucks, bulldozers, and field kitchens.

#### Cuba: Soviet Military Deliveries, 1982 and 1983



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for the previous two years, (table 1).<sup>2</sup> We estimate that 51,400 metric tons were shipped on 54 Soviet-flag voyages in 1983 as compared with almost 64,000 tons aboard 64 voyages in 1982.<sup>3</sup> Total tonnage delivered

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<sup>2</sup> All tons referred to in this paper are metric tons.

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**Table 1**  
**Soviet Deliveries of Military Goods to Cuba**

*Selected years*

	Identified Military Deliveries <sup>a</sup>		Military-Associated Deliveries <sup>b</sup>		Naval Ship Deliveries <sup>c</sup>		Total
	Ships	Tonnage	Ships	Tonnage	Ships	Tonnage	
1962	125	250,000					250,000
1965	5	10,800					10,800
1970	8	11,300					11,300
1975	8	13,900					13,900
1976	13	19,500					19,500
1977	10	21,600					21,600
1978	12	22,200					22,200
1979	12	17,300					17,300
1980	14	20,900					20,900
1981	24	45,500	21	18,200			63,700
1982	15	24,540	47	35,465	6 <sup>d</sup>	3,730	63,735
1983	20	37,690	32	12,970	2 <sup>d</sup>	710	51,370

<sup>c</sup> Incorporated in 1982 estimates for the first time as a separate category; includes patrol craft carried on deck, which were included in prior-year tonnages; also includes for the first time naval ships delivered under tow or their own power.

<sup>d</sup> Number of delivery voyages. In some cases, a merchant ship carried two patrol boats as cargo.

<sup>b</sup> Military-associated goods such as trucks, field kitchens, bulldozers, and so forth,

per month during the first seven months of 1983 averaged just over 3,000 tons but rose to 6,000 tons per month from August to yearend. The peak deliveries in the months of September and December of 9,420 tons and 10,495 tons, respectively, represented nearly 40 percent of all identified military equipment deliveries to Cuba last year (figure 1).

Cuba receives all of its military equipment from the Soviet Union free of charge. We estimate the market value of the equipment received in 1983 at US \$650 million. Compared with the \$4.1 billion in economic aid and subsidies Cuba received from the USSR last year, this is not an awesome amount for the Soviets to provide to ensure effective Cuban participation in Communist military activities in the Third World.

**Major Arms Deliveries**

In 1983 Soviet shipments of combat arms to Cuba

increased to 37,700 tons from 24,500 tons shipped in 1982. The tonnage of naval vessels delivered fell from 3,730 tons to 710. Excluding deliveries during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, the tonnage of arms in 1983 is second only to the 45,500 tons delivered in 1981. The number of delivery voyages carrying arms increased from 15 in 1982 to 20 in 1983,

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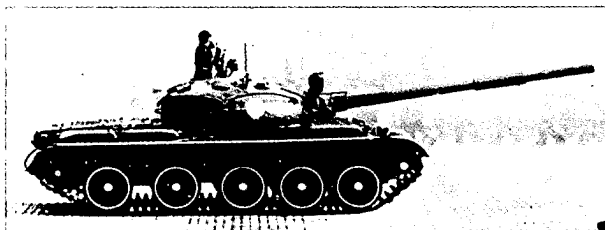
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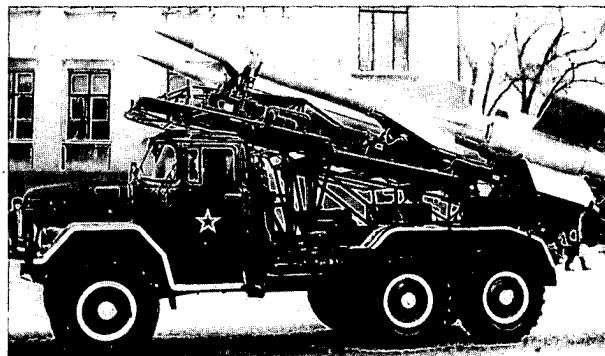
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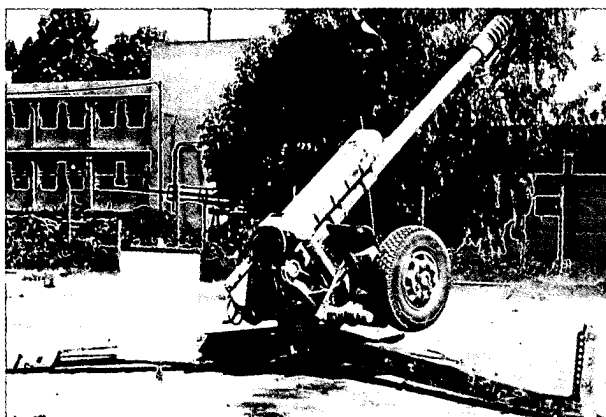
T-62 Medium Tank [redacted]



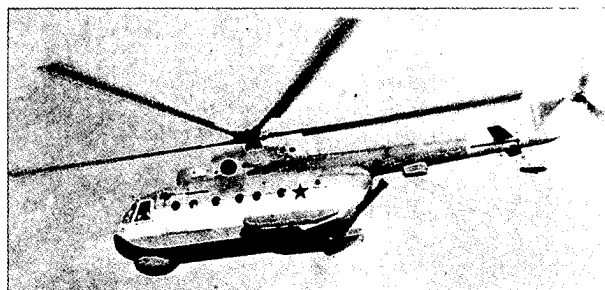
SA-3 Air Defense Missiles [redacted]

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D-30 122-mm Howitzer [redacted]



MI-14 Haze A ASW Helicopter [redacted]

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[redacted] The increased arms delivery tonnage in 1983 is attributable primarily to an emphasis this year on upgrading ground force equipment in response to Cuban perceptions of a growing offensive military threat posed by the United States. [redacted]

Among the most important items delivered in 1983 were at least 180 tanks—107 T-62s and 73 T54/55s—and more than 200 pieces of artillery. The Cuban Air Force received three MIG-23 and six MIG-21 fighters and 15 MI-17 helicopters. The Navy obtained a new capability with the delivery of four MI-14 antisubmarine warfare (ASW) helicopters. Three hydrofoil torpedo boats were also provided to the Navy (table 2). [redacted]

**Military-Associated Equipment**

While combat arms shipments increased by more than half from 1982 to 1983, shipments of military-associated goods such as spare parts, trucks, and other support equipment decreased by more than 60 percent, to a level below that for 1981. In 1983, 12,970 tons of military-associated goods were delivered on 32 ship voyages.<sup>5</sup> [redacted]

[redacted] By comparison, in 1982 military-associated items were delivered in 46 ship voyages carrying a total of 35,475 tons. [redacted]

<sup>5</sup> One voyage, from the Baltic port of Klaipeda, consisted of a 2,700-ton-floating drydock towed by two Cuban tugs. While a floating drydock can have civilian uses, [redacted]

[redacted] This item alone accounts for one-fifth of the total tonnage of military-associated equipment delivered in 1983. This delivery illustrates the need for caution in interpreting short-term trends and shows how some items of military-associated equipment can have a dramatic and disproportionate impact on yearly totals. [redacted]

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**Delivery Trends in 1984**

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*Preliminary data for the first three months of 1984 indicate that deliveries of military equipment are considerably higher than for the comparable period in 1983. Some 19,260 tons—more than 15,000 tons of which are arms—have been delivered in the first quarter of 1984 compared with 10,085 tons in the first quarter of 1983.* [redacted]

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*The most notable new deliveries are a Koni-class frigate—Cuba's second—and an F-class submarine—Cuba's third. Cuba's ground forces received 31 amphibious armored personnel carriers and at least 7 D-30 122-mm howitzers. The Air and Air Defense Force received large shipments of surface-to-air missiles, launchers, and radars.* [redacted]

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shipments.<sup>6</sup> Large fluctuations in shipments of military-associated equipment year to year may be normal. [redacted]

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**Shipments From Soviet Allies**

In 1983 a growing volume of significant military and military-associated items, not included in the tonnage figures presented here, were delivered by East European suppliers. Shipments from Romania, East Germany, and Bulgaria in 1983 totaled about 5,000 tons—mostly trucks, ammunition, and telecommunications equipment. More than a dozen other shipments were noted from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, each of less than 100 tons. These included optical devices, parachutes, helmets, spare parts, and aviation goods. In 1982 we noted only some 500 tons of East European military equipment consisting of 30 L-39 jet trainers delivered from Czechoslovakia. [redacted]

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**Funneling Arms to Others**

Cuba continues to serve as a conduit for military equipment to other Soviet clients in the Third World. For example, documents found by US forces in Grenada indicate all but a small portion of the

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With only a three-year historical data base for such items, we are not entirely confident that we understand the factors that affect the volume of these

<sup>6</sup> Prior to 1981, this category was not included in our estimates of Soviet military deliveries to Cuba. [redacted]

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**Concealment and Deception Practices**

*The Soviets publish no figures on their volume of military shipments and attempt to disguise their nature and frustrate attempts to track them. Both Cuba and the USSR continued to use routine concealment and deception measures in handling arms shipments during 1983, including false declarations of cargo and destination when queried and performing some unloading operations under cover of darkness.* [redacted]



stockpiles of Soviet-made arms, ammunition, and military vehicles delivered to that country was to come by way of Cuba. Although Soviet and East European ships made a number of military deliveries directly to Nicaragua in 1983, [redacted] Cuba continues to send military equipment and supplies there as well using both ships and aircraft. [redacted]

Cuba also was more active in 1983 in delivering Soviet-built military equipment to Angola. Cuban merchant ships were noted transporting 33 T-54 tanks, trucks, and at least two AN-2 light transport aircraft to Angola last summer. We cannot quantify what percentage of Soviet military shipments to Cuba in 1983 have been sent to other countries, but we believe that the vast majority have remained in Cuba. [redacted]

**Impact on Cuba's Armed Forces**

The military equipment delivered in 1983 will enhance Cuba's ground force capabilities and support an expansion and upgrading of its ground-based air defenses. [redacted]

**Ground Forces**

Cuba's ground forces, which are the least modern of the three services, received the bulk of the equipment delivered in 1983. The delivery of some 180 T-62 and T-54 or T-55 tanks has allowed Cuba to retire the last 80 World War II vintage T-34s from active units, to replace 33 T-54 tanks the Cubans shipped to Angola, and to form at least one new tank regiment. [redacted]

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The 210 artillery pieces delivered in 1983 consist predominantly of old-model antitank guns, all of which have been in the Cuban inventory for many years, but also include enough 130-mm field guns to equip two new artillery battalions. A battalion of 12 D-30 122-mm howitzers, the most common artillery support weapon in Soviet ground force units, was seen for the first time with a Cuban unit in Cuba in early 1983. We did not observe the delivery of these weapons. Eight additional SA-9 short-range air defense launchers whose delivery also was not observed were seen with a Cuban unit in 1983. [redacted]

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**Air Defenses**

We noted a widespread expansion of Cuban surface-to-air missile defenses in 1983. SA-3 sites were permanently deployed to central Cuba for the first time, construction of two new sites in western Cuba was nearly completed, and two new SA-2 sites were begun near Santiago de Cuba in the east. Although only a relatively few missiles were seen being delivered at Cuban ports in 1983, we noted a large shipment of SA-3s in late December 1982. Considering the amount of construction, in all likelihood we saw only a small percentage of the missiles and launch-related equipment that were delivered. [redacted]

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Eight electronics vans that are components of the Soviet-built Vozdukh-1 air defense command and control communications system also were delivered to Cuba for the first time in 1983. This semiautomated system can be used to integrate and disseminate air surveillance tracking data from a number of outlying radar stations to weapons controllers at air defense headquarters. Until now, Cuba has had to rely on manual plotting and the passing of position reports by voice radio to surface-to-air missile sites, a procedure that significantly slows reaction times. [redacted]

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**Table 2**  
**Soviet Military Deliveries to Cuba:**  
**Selected Weapons Systems and Equipment, 1976-83**

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	Total Observed 1976-83
<b>Ground</b>									
Tank, T-54/55, medium					30			73	103
Tank, T-62, medium, 115-mm	50					10		107	167
APC, BTR-60, 60P, 60PB					45	26			71
Amphibious infantry fighting vehicle, BMP				24	6	9			39
Antitank gun, 57-mm, M1943, ZIS-2						71		82	153
Antitank gun, 85-mm, M-45						29		40	69
Antitank gun, 100-mm, T-12					51	44		64	159
Air defense artillery, self-propelled, 23-mm, ZSU-23-4	15		7						22
Air defense artillery, 23-mm, ZU-23						17			17
Air defense artillery, 57-mm, S-60					36				36
Field artillery, rocket launcher, 122-mm, BM-21	40							12	52
Field artillery, howitzer, self-propelled, 122-mm, M1974							5		5
Field artillery, howitzer, 122-mm, D-30								12	12
Field artillery, field gun, 130-mm, M-46						12		24	36
Field artillery, howitzer, self-propelled, 152-mm, M1973							3		3
<b>Air/Air Defense</b>									
Fighter, MIG-21, Fishbed/Mongol	3	13	14	2	21	26	35	6	120
Fighter, MIG-23, Flogger			12			4	20	3	39
Transport, AN-26, Curl			5	15		4		2	26
Helicopter, MI-8, Hip			22	3					25
Helicopter, MI-14, Haze								4	4
Helicopter, MI-17, Hip H								15	15
Helicopter, MI-24, Hind							12		12
Missile launcher, SAM, SA-3, Goa	9	3	6						18
Missile, SAM, SA-2, Guideline						46			46
Missile, SAM, SA-3							230	14	244
Missile, SAM, SA-6						20			20
Missile, SAM, SA-9, TEL							3	8	11
Electronic warfare equipment, Turn Cut/Turn Pole					2	1			3
Electronic warfare equipment, Turn Twist/Spike					2	2			4
Radar, Fan Song E						3			3
Radar, Odd Pair						2			2
Radar, Back Trap						2			2

**Table 2**  
**Soviet Military Deliveries to Cuba:**  
**Selected Weapons Systems and Equipment, 1976-83 (continued)**

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	Total Observed 1976-83
<b>Naval</b>									
Frigate, Koni-class						1			1
Submarine, F-class				1	1				2
Missile attack boat, Osa-II class	1	1	3	2		2	4		13
Hydrofoil patrol craft, Turya-class				2	2	2		3	9
Patrol boat, Zhuk-class	2	4			6				12
Coastal minesweeper, Sonya-class		2	1	2	2	2	1		16
Inshore minesweeper, Yevgenya-class									
Degaussing ship, Pelym-class							1		1
Landing Ship, medium, Polnocny-class							2		2

Included are estimates of the most significant items by quantity. Numbers are minimum counts and include only items confirmed on imagery. Totals for some equipment, such as T-62 tanks and BM-21 multiple rocket launchers, include deliveries both to Cuban forces and, possibly, to the Soviet brigade there.

Absence of data for ground force equipment delivered in 1982 is due largely to increased Cuban concealment and deception measures. The increase in data for ground force equipment delivered in 1983 may be the result of a relaxation of those measures.

#### Air and Naval Forces

The Soviets delivered only nine fighter aircraft and three hydrofoil torpedo boats to Cuba in 1983, down substantially from the major shipments to the Navy and Air Force in the previous two years. Both of these services have already been extensively modernized, with more than three-fourths of their combat equipment delivered since the mid-1970s. [redacted]

The most significant deliveries to the Air Force and Navy in 1983 were helicopters. A new helicopter regiment is being formed near Camaguey with 15 new MI-17 Hip H models received during the year. These helicopters are armed with machineguns, and can carry both troops and weapons pylons. Four MI-14 Haze A helicopters delivered to the Navy will give Cuba its first ASW aircraft. They are now stationed at Mariel Naval Air Station, just west of Havana. [redacted]

#### Prospects for Future Deliveries

We expect Cuba will continue modernizing its armed forces over the next several years. Because Havana does not pay for any of the equipment it receives from the USSR, the further growth in its military capabilities is dependent on how closely Cuban policy meshes with Soviet aims and on Moscow's evaluation of the risk of provoking the United States. In our view, Soviet deliveries to Cuba over the past few years indicate that Moscow is firmly committed to strengthening Cuba's defenses against a possible attack or blockade but understands that introducing offensive weapons such as medium bombers would cause a serious crisis. The Soviets also appear willing to make some improvements in Cuba's regional intervention capabilities, but probably will move slowly and cautiously to gauge US reactions. [redacted]



The volume of Soviet arms shipments to Cuba probably will continue at about the same rate as in 1983. The expansion of surface-to-air missile defenses in eastern and central Cuba and the improvements in command and control systems will require the delivery of more radars, missiles, and communications equipment. In our view, Cuba's ground forces need more modern artillery weapons, and an announced doubling of the size of the Territorial Militia may require the delivery of additional large quantities of small arms and ammunition. [redacted]

equipment to Africa or Nicaragua on a quick-reaction basis, though Cuba would still be dependent on the USSR for any large-scale redeployment of forces. [redacted]

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Ground-based air defense probably will be the area of greatest concentration in the next few years. In addition to the SA-2 and SA-3 systems being added, Cuba may receive additional mobile SA-6 and SA-9 launchers for low-altitude air defense. Cuban forces in Angola may be operating another Soviet low-altitude system—the SA-8—and Cuba might receive some of these as well. Another but less likely possibility would be the SA-5, a long-range, high-altitude system the Soviets installed in Syria in late 1982. Such a system would be capable of denying US SR-71 overflights, and could potentially threaten aircraft operating in southern Florida and the Keys. [redacted]

The Cuban Navy is continuing to expand in both size and capability, as delivery of a second Koni-class frigate and a third F-class submarine in early 1984 indicate. The pattern of Soviet naval deliveries over the past six years and our projections of what recently completed port facilities will support suggest that Cuba will receive as many as three additional submarines and possibly two more amphibious landing ships through 1987. A total of six submarines would make the Cuban Navy a considerable threat to merchant shipping and convoys. Concerns about the possibility of a naval blockade or mining of Cuban ports might lead to the delivery of additional minesweepers. [redacted]

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**Implications for the United States**

We expect Cuba's inventory of fighter aircraft to remain relatively stable for the next five years. Because the Air Force has just completed a massive reequipment and retraining program, we doubt it would undertake another large turnover so soon. One possible addition, if Moscow were willing to provide it, would be a few MIG-25 Foxbat high-altitude fighters. Havana's public and private protests to US officials indicate it is seriously nettled over US SR-71 overflights and might want a weapon to challenge them. A reconnaissance version of the MIG-25 also is available, which the Cubans might use to fly over and around US borders in retaliation for US reconnaissance flights. [redacted]

In time of war or crisis, Cuba's regular armed forces could threaten merchant shipping passing through the Caribbean or exiting the Gulf of Mexico and, even without taking hostile action, would be likely to cause the diversion of many US air and naval assets to protect troop convoys bound for Europe. The major quantitative and qualitative improvements in air and sea defenses over the past three years would considerably raise the cost to the United States of any attempt to neutralize Cuban forces. [redacted]

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The most likely additions to Cuba's air inventory in the next few years will be more helicopters and transport aircraft. Cuba probably will be filling out the new helicopter regiment formed in 1983 with additional MI-17s and may add more ASW aircraft. Cuba's transport fleet currently lacks a heavy cargo-carrying aircraft. Delivery of five or six Soviet-built IL-76s would enable Havana to move heavy or bulky

Cuba's small but growing amphibious offensive capability and the military airfields the Cubans are helping to build or upgrade in Nicaragua also pose a significant threat of intervention and intimidation to their neighbors in the Caribbean and Central America. Many of these countries have no conventional armed forces, and we believe they would either look to the United States for protection from Cuban threats or try to reach some accommodation with the Castro regime. [redacted]

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