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Duplicate of C05183811: DIF (opted to release positions)

9 September 1983

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Who's Calling the Shots in Moscow?

1. Because the recent KAL shootdown is highly damaging to Soviet world-wide interests--INF, relations with Japan, etc.,--it has raised questions regarding civilian-military relations in the USSR and the question of who is in charge in Moscow. In view of the adverse impact on the Soviet "peace offensive," does it illustrate an increased influence exerted by the military in Soviet policymaking circles? Does it reflect an effort by the military to undercut Politburo decisions--for example, to forestall arms control initiatives? [redacted]

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2. The majority of Soviet leaders, both civilian and military, have been willing to see their relations with successive US administrations deteriorate rather than significantly alter their policies, particularly in the Third World. US resistance to these policies, including a military buildup in response to the Soviet defense program, perhaps helps explain the current testiness of Moscow's behavior in a number of areas. It may well be that the Soviets would have shot down the Korean airliner even if detente had been in full bloom. It is easier, however, to act aggressively when there is not so much to lose, and certainly to react with a maximum of bellicosity after the event. [redacted]

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3. It is not surprising that the political and military leaders share a common outlook on the nature of the external environment. It is an outlook rooted not only in their perceptions of the external world, but also in the personalities of the current Soviet leaders and in the decisionmaking structure itself. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the Office of Soviet Analysis, Current Support Division. It has been coordinated with the National Intelligence Officer for the USSR and Eastern Europe. Comments and queries are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Strategic/Internal Branch, CSD, [redacted]

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4. Two key figures in the formulation of Soviet policies and spokesmen for the regime are Foreign Minister Gromyko and Defense Minister Ustinov (and earlier, Marshal Grechko). These leaders have made direct inputs into Politburo decisions since 1973, and their influence has grown during the past decade, along with that of their political ally, Andropov. Gromyko, in particular, has a reputation for obduracy in international affairs, and it is possible that a good deal of Soviet assertiveness in foreign affairs since 1975 can be attributed to his influence. [redacted]

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5. The military, in the persons of Grechko and then Ustinov, have had two quite different personalities representing their interests in policymaking councils in the past decade, and it is not clear that they have both spoken with equal vigor and effectiveness in defense of the military's needs. [redacted]

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6. Andropov has taken some pains to project an image of flexibility and "reasonableness" in his approach to international affairs [redacted]

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[redacted] and certainly has played a key role in formulating and implementing the USSR's more forward foreign policy of the past decade. In addition, he must give due account to the views of his allies, Gromyko and Ustinov, not to mention other older Politburo leaders who began their political careers when Stalin had proclaimed the Soviet Union under a siege of "capitalist encirclement." [redacted]

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7. Moreover, Andropov (like Brezhnev before him) has actively courted the military. A number of professional military officers and defense-industrial managers have advanced in military and political rank under Andropov's aegis. To some extent, of course, this may reflect Ustinov's influence with Andropov, but to all appearances Andropov has promoted military men because he needs their support. [redacted]

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8. Another factor contributing to the commonality of civilian and military outlooks in the Soviet Union is the direct involvement of Andropov and other political leaders in military-strategic policymaking. Andropov heads the Soviet Defense Council and is de facto Supreme Commander-in-Chief. [redacted]

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9. Andropov reportedly is well informed on the details of arms negotiations, and it should not be surprising that he appears to appreciate the professional military's concern for the threat that deployment of Pershing IIs in Europe would pose for Soviet command and control, as well as for Soviet

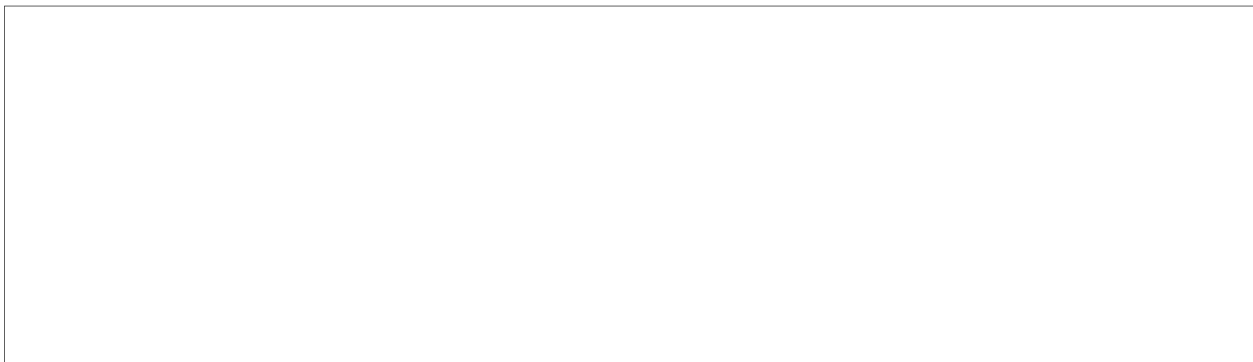
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- strategic forces and territory. His proposals to reduce the SS-20 force, including some dismantling, probably were worked out with the military well in advance and made in the knowledge of the Soviet military's capability to compensate with other systems. [redacted]

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11. Different rules of the game appear to apply in the case of Soviet submarines operating in restricted waters off Nordic countries. Here, local commanders probably are carrying out an intelligence activity within general guidelines set down in advance by the civilian-military authorities in Moscow. The embarrassment caused by occasional disclosures of their operations apparently has not dissuaded Moscow of the activity's usefulness in the present international environment, because the submarines are continuing their forays. [redacted]

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12. In brief, it is the political leadership that calls the shots, while the military acts in concert to implement orders. Both the political and military leaderships, sharing a common outlook on the need for fast reaction in an increasingly dangerous and threatening world environment, appear to be comfortable with the arrangement, wherein the military has considerable flexibility to operate within general rules laid down by the political authorities. In this situation, the military hardly will be gainsaid by the political leadership in such incidents as the KAL shutdown because they are playing by the rules. [redacted]

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13. This arrangement helps to explain the extraordinary tenor of Moscow's rebuff of Western demands for an apology in the KAL case. Combined with the USSR's increased military strength, it also suggests that militant obduracy can be expected in US-Soviet relations in general, and in crisis situations in particular, as long as the current crop of Soviet leaders and the present defense decisionmaking process remain in place. [redacted]

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