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Soviet Wartime Management: The Role of Civil Defense in Leadership Continuity

**Interagency Intelligence Memorandum
Volume I—Key Judgments**

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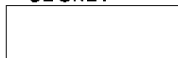
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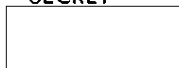
SOVIET WARTIME MANAGEMENT:
THE ROLE OF CIVIL DEFENSE IN
LEADERSHIP CONTINUITY

VOLUME I—KEY JUDGMENTS

Information available as of 25 October 1983
was used in the preparation of this Memorandum.


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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

National intelligence issuances on Soviet civil defense have addressed the objectives, scope, and pace of the program and its likely effectiveness in reducing damage from a nuclear attack.¹ While these estimates concluded that a large percentage of the leadership would survive a large-scale US nuclear attack on the USSR, they did not address in detail the specific role of civil defense in Soviet plans to ensure continuity of their leadership. 


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In this Memorandum we assess the Soviet civil defense infrastructure and measures for leadership protection and relocation as an integral part of a broader national command and control system. This national system would provide strategic direction of theater and intercontinental forces and for the defense of the USSR from nuclear attack. We have assessed the Soviets' progress in making the necessary preparations that would enable their management structure to function according to the USSR's strategy for nuclear war. 

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Volume I of this Memorandum contains the Key Judgments derived from the detailed analysis in Volume II, distributed separately. The Memorandum was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs. It was drafted by the Defense Intelligence Agency with the participation of representatives from the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the National Photographic Interpretation Center, the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, for the Department of the Air Force, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This Memorandum was coordinated by the Interagency Working Group on Soviet Civil Defense. 

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KEY JUDGMENTS

The Soviets' confidence in their capabilities for global conflict is probably critically dependent on their assessment of the survivability and continuing effectiveness of their leadership during and following a nuclear attack. To this end, the Soviets have been making the preparations required to facilitate the transition from peacetime to wartime and to give their leadership the potential for effective performance in a nuclear conflict. These preparations are intended to provide for:

- Continuity of party, government, military, and economic leadership at all levels.
- Mobilization of human and material resources.
- Support of military operations.
- Continuity of essential economic activity.
- Conduct of postattack recovery operations. 



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The Soviets have made considerable progress in:

- Delineating the wartime management system and the responsibilities of Soviet leaders at all levels.
- Preparing the civilian leadership to make a rapid transition to their wartime roles through the use of special organizations that plan, train, and exercise during peacetime.
- Providing their leadership with hardened urban command posts, exurban relocation facilities, and redundant, hardened communications. (Relocation facilities are those exurban command posts to which military and civilian leaders and their staffs will relocate in wartime for the purpose of exercising command and management functions.) 

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Concept and Organization

 The Soviet wartime management organization  would consist of:

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- The National Command Authority and other national-level leaders who would direct the military, political, and economic activities of the nation.

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- The leaders of the 16 military districts who would have the key role in wartime territorial administration, management of recovery operations, and in providing continuing support of military operations following a large-scale nuclear attack.
- The leaders of those regional organizations responsible for vital services such as transportation, communications, and electric power.
- The leaders of the 15 Soviet republics who would be responsible for supporting the war effort and maintaining the integrity of the multinational Soviet state. [redacted] the Soviet republics would not be in the chain of command from the National Command Authority to key territorial organizations.
- The leaders of oblasts, the basic territorial elements, who would be responsible under military district supervision for directing rescue and recovery operations and for military support tasks.
- The leaders in cities, rural areas, and at individual installations who would operate under oblast control. [redacted]

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We estimate that a total of 179,000 officials [redacted] constitute the leadership that would be responsible for the continuity and survival of the nation in a nuclear war. The key elements of Soviet leadership would be primarily those at the national, military district, republic, and oblast levels—about 100,000 individuals, including about 60,000 full-time civil defense staff personnel. [redacted]

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The USSR Civil Defense organization is intended to provide the wartime management system with a command structure staffed by military personnel with the professional expertise necessary for civilian leaders to carry out their assigned wartime roles. The legal basis for this largely military structure to perform its wartime mission would derive under Soviet statutes from declaration of a "special period," comparable to martial law in World War II. [redacted]

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The Communist Party would continue to function in wartime as it does in peacetime, with primary responsibility for the formulation and implementation of policy. Its parallel structure with the state administration facilitates party control of administrative functions. In wartime, party officials would also be present on the military councils of the military districts, the highest regional politicomilitary authority in wartime. [redacted]

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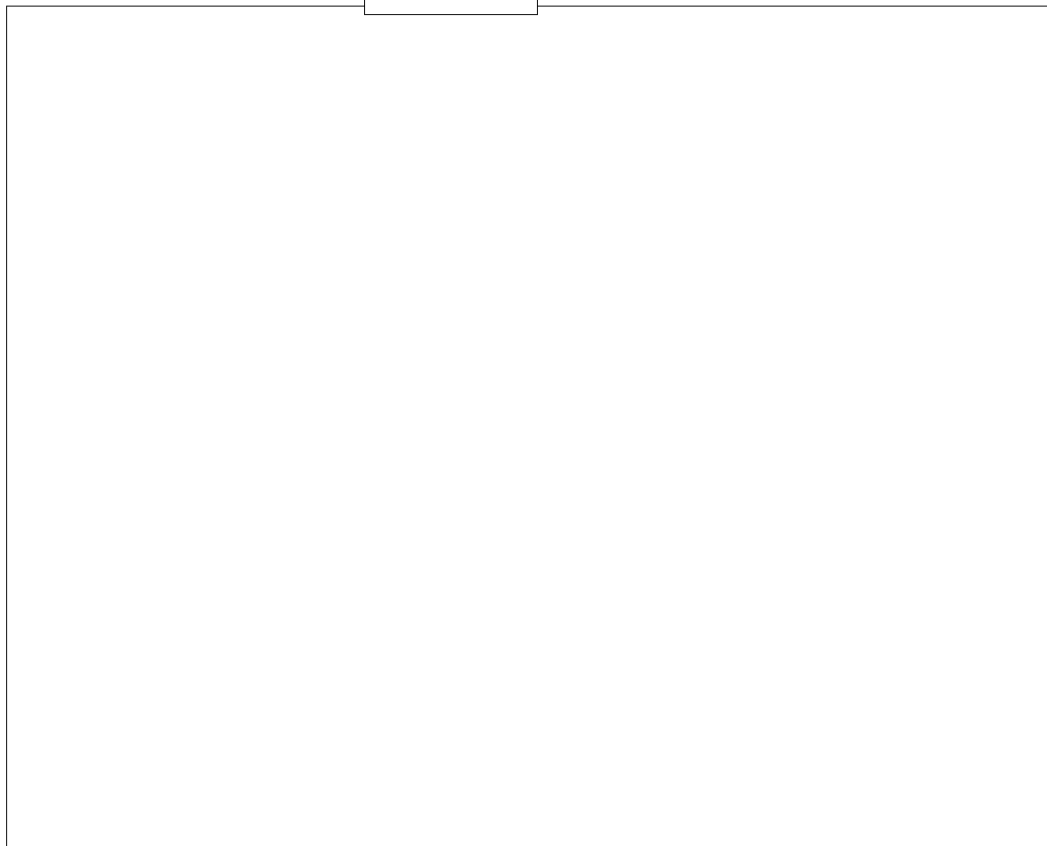
The Soviets do not expect the entire national leadership to be destroyed in wartime. Should national-level control be temporarily

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[Redacted]

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interrupted, however, the military district would have the means and, we believe, the authority for decentralized operations. Moreover, the highly structured, bureaucratic, and authoritarian nature of the Soviet system, which is widely perceived as hindering peacetime performance, would greatly facilitate the management of the nation under the catastrophic circumstances of nuclear war.

[Redacted]

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Transition to Wartime

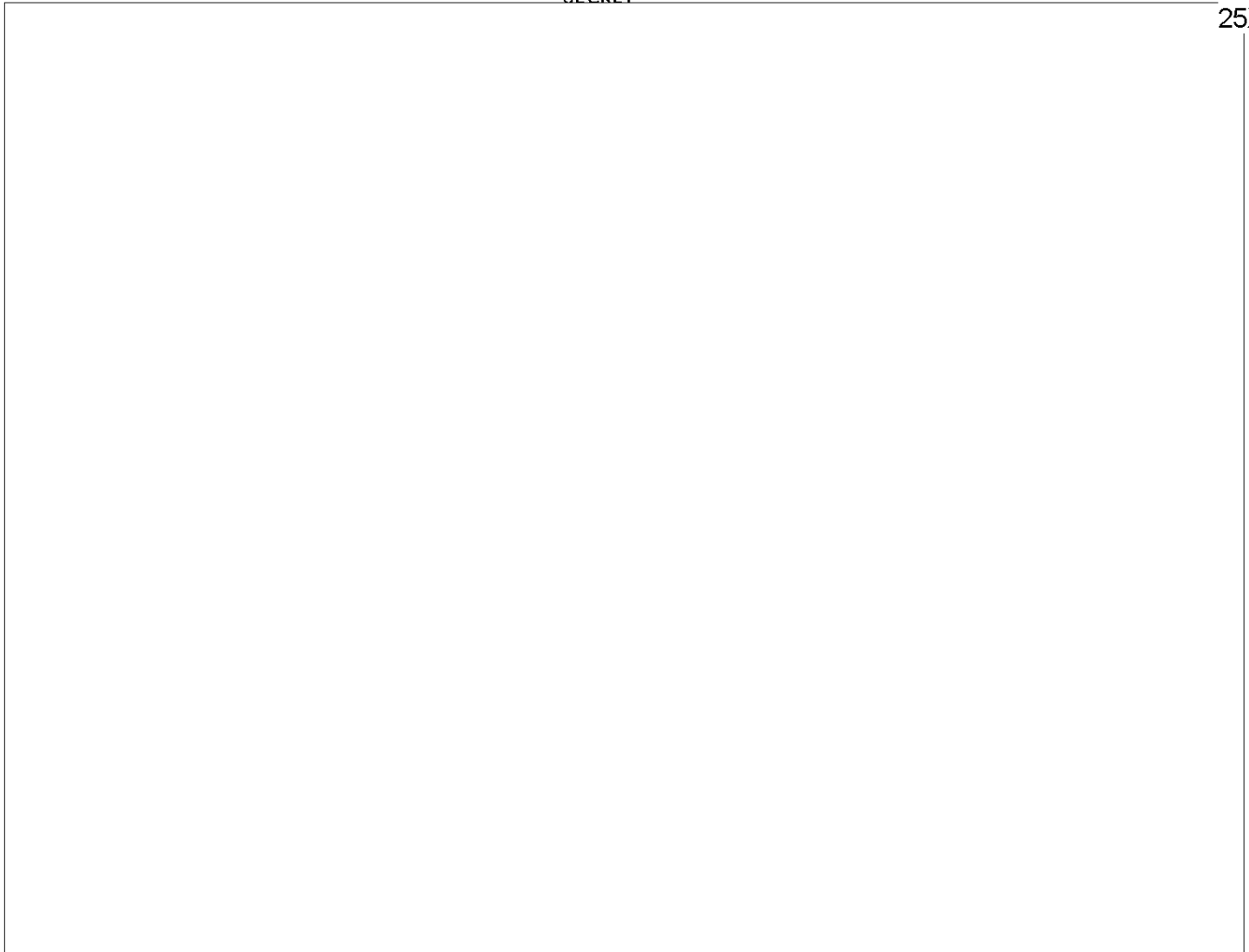
The Soviets believe that a nuclear war would be preceded by a period of international tension and probably conventional conflict. Previously, we concluded that a large percentage of the leadership on which the Soviets would rely for wartime management would probably survive a large-scale US nuclear attack with as little as a few hours' warning. Under these circumstances the Soviets are probably confident that they could make the transition from a peacetime to a wartime management posture prior to a nuclear attack on the USSR. That transition would be governed by changes in Soviet armed forces readiness levels.

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Relocation Facilities

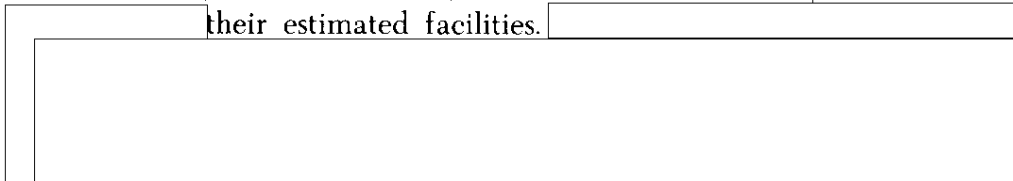


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Many of these are for leaders at lower levels, such as the oblast, for which we have located their estimated facilities.

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Costs. We are unable to estimate the total costs of Soviet preparations for wartime management. One measure of the magnitude of the Soviet investment in their program is the cost of relocation facilities:

- We calculate the total cost of construction and equipment at the single- and dual-purpose facilities we have identified to date to be at least 1.5 billion (1970) rubles. If these facilities were built in the United States, the cost would be some US \$5 billion (1981).



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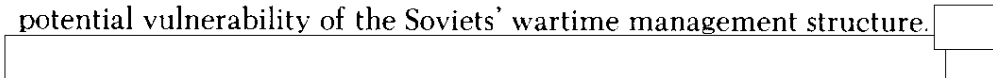
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costs would be \$28-56 billion if the sites were duplicated in the United States. This estimate does not include the costs of civil defense personnel, supporting communications networks, or hardened urban facilities. We believe, therefore, that the overall cost of the program would be significantly greater than the at least \$28 billion we have estimated for relocation sites alone.

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Vulnerability. Despite the extent of their preparations, the effectiveness of the Soviets' wartime management will depend heavily on the vulnerability of their leadership facilities to a US nuclear attack. Most of their urban and exurban facilities would be vulnerable to destruction if they could be located and were attacked by US weapons (see table 4). Hardened urban command posts for the leadership have not been emphasized in our analysis because they would largely be vacated during the period prior to nuclear attack. Thus, locating exurban command and control sites and supporting communications is key to the potential vulnerability of the Soviets' wartime management structure.



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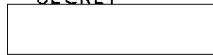
Trends and Implications

We expect the Soviets will continue to improve the facilities required to give the leadership the potential for effective performance


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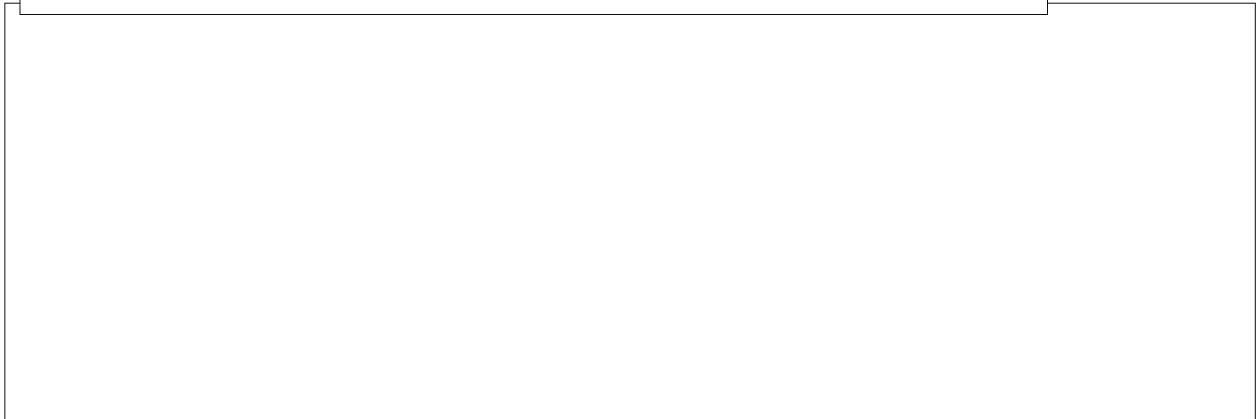
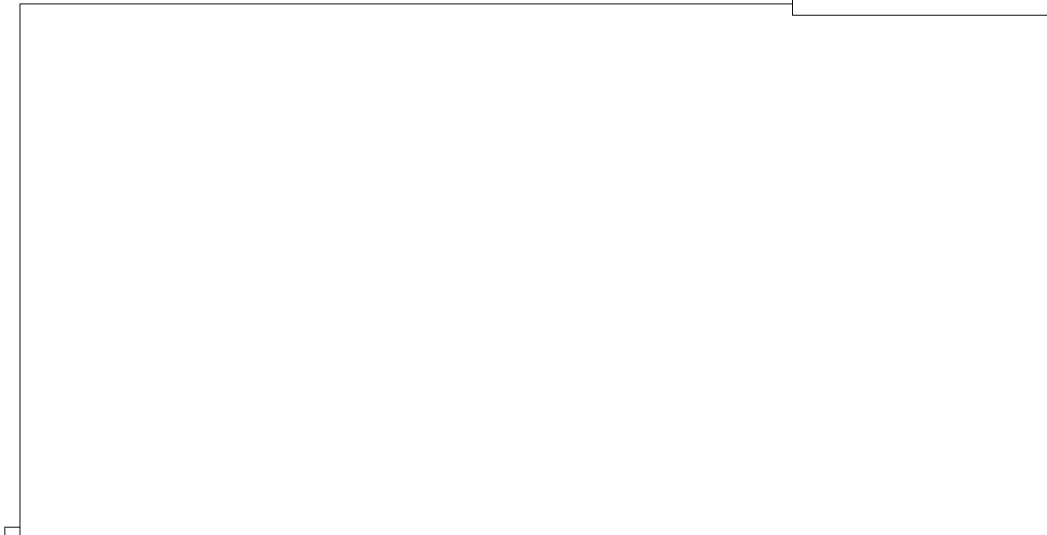
in wartime, increasing both the number and hardness of fixed sites and improving communications support at all levels. They will probably concentrate on further improvements in the capabilities of military districts to integrate active and passive measures for defense against nuclear attack, to assure manpower and logistic support required by the war effort, and to direct poststrike recovery operations. The military district will remain the key element of Soviet wartime territorial administration. 

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The Soviets may believe that deep underground structures such as those near Moscow will assure the survivability of the top leadership—a priority objective of their wartime management plans. We have not yet assessed the implications of such a perception by Soviet leaders. Nonetheless, their confidence in the effectiveness of their overall wartime management structure is almost certainly tempered by the belief that civilian as well as military leadership facilities would be high on the list of US targeting priorities in a nuclear conflict. 

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In sum, the scope of the USSR's program for leadership continuity in nuclear war and the investment it has received over the past 25 years indicate that the Soviets are serious in their efforts to achieve a survivable and effective wartime management structure. This structure is intended to exercise control over whatever national assets survive a nuclear attack. Such a capability would be vital to their plans for favorably concluding the war effort and for postwar recovery.



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