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Soviet Naval Personnel: Qualities and Capabilities



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A Research Paper

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SOV 85-10207D
December 1985

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Soviet Naval Personnel: Qualities and Capabilities



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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by 
Office of Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are
welcome and may be directed to the Chief,
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**Soviet Naval Personnel:
Qualities and Capabilities**

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Summary

*Information available
as of October 1985
was used in this report.*

The Soviets face many difficulties in operating a modern, high-technology navy with a largely conscript force. They have attempted to minimize the effects of conscript shortcomings through a system of highly centralized decisionmaking, narrowly focused training, and reliance on setpiece battle plans. Their approach has yielded mixed results.

The principal strengths of the naval personnel system are:

- *Professional officer corps.* Officers constitute less than one-fifth of the Navy's personnel but provide most of the technical expertise needed to run the fleet. They are an elite group, predominately drawn from the urban, upper strata of Soviet society. They are mostly volunteers who have been competitively selected for their academic talents, psychological traits, and demonstrated loyalty to the state. On the whole, they appear to be good engineers with a sound education in math, science, and the theoretical aspects of their naval specialties. They also appear to be motivated, hard workers with extensive "hands-on" experience in equipment maintenance and operations.
- *Long-serving career personnel.* Most officers and some warrant officers serve in the Navy for at least 25 years. These men form a corps of experienced personnel who know well the Navy's equipment, procedures, and fleet operating areas. Their experience partially offsets the problems resulting from the regular turnover of short-term conscripts.
- *Tight control of personnel.* Despite some glaring failures of discipline, the party generally has been effective in maintaining its grip on the Navy, checking dissident activity and securing the obedience of sailors—a task made difficult by problems associated with a multiethnic force and harsh service conditions. Sailors' activities are strictly regimented and closely monitored. The system is highly dependent on the threat of punishment, however, and provides little incentive for self-motivation.
- *Selective unit manning.* The Navy has been fairly successful in concentrating its best personnel in the most important jobs. Career inducements are used to attract the better officers to the more critical Navy components—personnel in the submarine force, for instance, are a cut above the rest of the Navy. Ethnic reliability and competency problems are controlled somewhat through a policy of largely staffing combat units and key leadership and technical positions with Slavic personnel while placing non-Slavs mostly into low-skill or less essential support tasks.

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The following deficiencies, we believe, will impair the Navy's wartime performance:

- *Poor quality of enlisted men.* Limited career opportunities for petty officers and warrant officers have prevented the Navy from attracting either the number or quality of men needed to form a reliable cadre of career enlisted personnel. Three out of four Soviet sailors are short-term conscripts, who are usually young, unmotivated, and capable of performing only elementary, narrowly specialized tasks.
- *Overburdened officer corps.* Officers thus serve both as unit commanders and as technical specialists who conduct much of the "hands-on" equipment maintenance and operation. Officers are usually overworked, and the almost total reliance on them to operate ships means that even a few casualties among them could cripple a ship.
- *Lack of cross-training.* Both officers and enlisted personnel tend to be narrow specialists. This inhibits their understanding of the interrelationship and capabilities of various weapon systems that must operate together to be effective in combat. Should combat casualties or other circumstances make select personnel unavailable for duty, most Soviet sailors would find it difficult or impossible to fill in.
- *Low sustainability.* A lack of emphasis on training in at-sea equipment repair, safety, and damage control, together with the reliance on overworked officers to operate ships, is likely to cause Soviet naval units to have less endurance than their Western counterparts. If forced to conduct prolonged sea deployments, they will be more likely to suffer casualties from maintenance problems and mistakes made by fatigued officers or less qualified relief personnel. In addition, the poor training of naval reservists will hamper casualty replacements in a protracted war.
- *Rigid operating patterns.* The Soviets have exhibited a marked tendency toward stereotyped training exercises, tight control of ships by higher authorities, and an insistence on commanders conducting operations "by the book" with no room for individual flair or variations. Such practices discourage the development of initiative by tactical commanders and,

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during wartime, can lead to inappropriate responses, lost opportunities, and a severe vulnerability to communications interruption. If opponents can keep combat operations moving quickly, emphasizing unexpected actions and the disruption of Soviet command communications, Soviet commanders will be forced to deviate from their plans and make rapid, on-the-spot tactical decisions—a behavior not emphasized in their training. This rigidity may also make the Soviet Navy more susceptible to operations analysis than Western forces. A study of Soviet methods may reveal behavior patterns that can serve as a tipoff to Soviet intentions in battle.

- *Coverups.* The Soviet naval personnel system encourages coverups of deficiencies at all levels. Performance appraisals often emphasize quantitative or time-oriented accomplishments at the expense of quality work.

We believe the Navy's personnel system, despite its weaknesses, is adequate to support the limited naval operations required by Soviet war plans. The Soviets have taken personnel limitations into account in developing equipment, tactics, and operating procedures. Their war plans do not require most of their naval units to conduct operations as complex and demanding as those expected of the US and other Western navies. Most of their fleet is intended to conduct defensive operations lasting only a few weeks, in waters relatively close to Soviet shore facilities, and characterized by setpiece combat situations. Under such conditions, personnel problems that would be serious in Western navies would be less troublesome. If a war with the West became a prolonged conflict, however, involving repeated combat situations over large areas and placing a premium on tactical imagination and flexibility, we believe the personnel shortcomings would make it difficult for the Soviet Navy to adjust.

The Soviet naval personnel system has been resistant to change over the years. It is likely to face an increasing demand for quality personnel, however, with the continued introduction of more sophisticated equipment. In addition, recent fleet-level exercises suggest the Soviets are considering wartime operations that will place increased demands on personnel—for instance, to operate conventional takeoff and landing aircraft carriers, to manage large surface task groups, and to extend sea control and sea denial areas farther from the USSR. Weaknesses in their personnel system may become more pronounced under such circumstances.

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The declining proportion of Slavs in the draft-age population will also pressure the Navy's personnel system. We believe the Soviets will deal with this problem by tightening restrictions on military service deferments and possibly by improving preinduction training of Soviet youths.



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Scope Note

Analysis of the fighting capabilities of the Soviet Navy usually emphasizes the qualities and capabilities of its equipment. A thorough assessment of the Navy, however, requires close scrutiny of its personnel system. This study evaluates how the Soviets select, train, use, and motivate their naval personnel. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] The judgments expressed in this study are necessarily subjective because of the nature of the problem and evidence on which they are based. The limitations and biases of the evidence were considered in making the assessments contained herein. [Redacted]

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**Soviet Naval Personnel:
Qualities and Capabilities** []

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Availability of Manpower

Service Obligation

All Soviet males between 18 and 26 are liable for service in the armed forces. Most conscripts serve a two-year term, but seagoing naval personnel serve three years, which probably explains why many young Soviets fear conscription by the Navy. Permanent deferments, for medical problems or family hardships, are rarely granted. []

Temporary draft deferments, which offer a number of advantages, are sometimes available to university students. The students are still liable for military service after graduation, but for shorter terms than nongraduates—one and a half or two years instead of the usual two or three. Also, those who complete college ROTC programs can be commissioned in the reserves, so they can serve their commitment in the preferred officer ranks. Some of these reservists are never called to active duty after graduation. []

The availability and advantages of educational deferments have been curtailed over the last decade. Soviet draft laws were revised in 1977 and again in 1980, resulting in longer service terms for college graduates and fewer deferment opportunities. []
[] deferments for college are now available at only three or four academic institutions in the USSR, suggesting that additional restrictions have been imposed since 1980. []

If enforced, the stricter policies are probably unpopular with the Soviet elite. Bribery of university and draft board officials has been a common way of obtaining preferential treatment in the USSR; the new policies, however, would make it more difficult for members of the elite to obtain deferments for their children. []

Demographic Trends

The leadership's willingness to force such unpopular measures on the upper strata of Soviet society presumably reflects its increasing concern about the

demographic dilemma facing the military forces. In 1985, the number of draft-age males is expected to decline to 2.1 million—a 20-percent drop from its 1978 peak of 2.7 million. The number is not expected to reach the 1978 level again in this century. Moreover, the proportion of non-Slavic minorities among 18-year-olds—25 percent in 1970—is rising steadily and is expected to reach nearly 40 percent by 1990.¹ Non-Slavs generally are less educated than Slavs, have more difficulty with the Russian language, and come from rural cultures that make it more difficult for them to adapt to a technology-oriented service like the Navy. In addition, the military leadership considers non-Slavic conscripts to be politically less reliable. []

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Because the Navy's manpower requirement is only about 6 percent of the USSR's total annual conscription, the demographic trend has not yet been felt by the Navy to the same extent as it has by the other services. In addition, the Navy may have a high priority in the selection of conscripts. The Navy's officer corps is almost exclusively Slavic and its fighting units are predominantly so. Non-Slavic minorities are usually relegated to construction and sentry units where language and technical skills are not essential. Nonetheless, the Navy is not immune to the problems of the changing demographics. The Soviet press has described problems of sailors who cannot speak Russian serving aboard major surface combatants—a large antisubmarine warfare (ASW) ship in the Pacific Fleet had at least 24 nationalities among its crew. Competition with other segments of Soviet society for the declining number of Slavic males in the manpower pool could induce minor changes in the Navy's personnel system. []

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Educational Level

The share of the current 18-year-old cohort with at least a high school diploma is high by Western standards. High-ranking Soviet officials have claimed a steady rise in the educational level of recruits, and the Chief of the Main Political Directorate for the Army and Navy stated that virtually all now have at least a high school education. Such statistics are probably misleading, though; there has been much criticism in the Soviet press of school officials who relax graduation standards to increase the number of awarded diplomas. Educational standards also differ from those in the West, making direct comparisons difficult. Soviet schools discourage students from exercising independent thinking or creativity, emphasizing instead the memorization of class materials. Practical exposure to technological subjects, such as computers or automobile maintenance, is also likely to be limited, particularly in rural schools. [redacted]

Preinduction Training

Soviet youths are exposed to a variety of military training programs prior to service in the armed forces. We believe the primary value of these programs to the Navy is that they familiarize youths with military life, foster an interest in hobbies and activities with military applications, and encourage martial attitudes and patriotism. [redacted]

The primary organization for preinduction military training in the USSR is the All-Union Voluntary Society for Assistance to the Army, Air Force, and Navy (DOSAAF). Local branches are supposed to conduct classes on military subjects, promote sports and hobbies with military applications, and instill young people with proper Communist attitudes toward service in the armed forces as well as hatred for enemies of the state. Activities are conducted at sponsoring factories, farms, schools, and special DOSAAF training centers. [redacted]

Participation in DOSAAF is supposed to be voluntary, although in many cases young men may be subjected to official or parental pressure to join in order to demonstrate a willingness to conform to socialist norms. Teenagers are sometimes advised by



Figure 1. Soviet youths undergo preinduction training at a maritime DOSAAF school. [redacted]

their local draft board that they will soon be drafted and things will be easier on them if they volunteer for a DOSAAF class. Also, participation may be the only way for young people to engage in certain recreational activities such as driving, racing motorcycles, shooting, or amateur radio. [redacted]

The quality of preinduction training apparently varies widely. Emigres have reported that, in some cases, it is quite good. For example, DOSAAF conducts classes in technical subjects such as radio operations and diving, which can run three to six months, full-time—about the same length as basic specialty training in the Navy. New draftees who have successfully completed such programs reportedly are able to skip basic specialist training and report directly to their operational unit. The Soviet press has stated that one in three conscripts already has a military specialty before callup. [redacted]

Such figures, however, are not supported by the majority of emigre reporting nor by the frequent press criticisms of the DOSAAF program. Moreover, military officers have complained that DOSAAF-trained specialists are poorly prepared for their service duties. High-ranking DOSAAF officials have strongly criticized the organization's leadership and quality of instruction. Only 70 to 80 percent of the teaching positions are filled, and there is an acute shortage of teachers of specialized skills like diving. About half of

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the DOSAAF instructors are college educated, but many are retired enlisted personnel with little formal civilian or military education. Fleet Admiral G. N. Yegorov stated in a 1983 *Red Star* article that 60 percent of DOSAAF instructors are veterans of World War II—which would make most of them over 60 years old. Teachers have been criticized for conducting classes by simply reading from service regulation manuals. Teacher apathy probably is encouraged by the lack of compensation and inadequate supervision. [redacted]

DOSAAF is a voluntary organization, with few paid workers, and administration is often lax. Regional administrative committees frequently have been criticized in the press for failing to direct or even visit local chapters. Other problems noted [redacted] in articles on DOSAAF include a failure to conduct classes in the Russian language, poor military discipline by students and staff, grade inflation, inadequate facilities, lack of up-to-date training equipment, and “flippant attitudes” by students toward military subjects. Emigres have indicated that some DOSAAF organizations are little more than amateur sports leagues. The weight of our evidence indicates that the quality of preinduction training is generally poor and instances of higher quality are the exception. [redacted]

As a technology-oriented service, the Navy has a strong incentive for improving the quality of preinduction training as a means of coping with the demand for trained technical specialists. If more recruits could be trained through quality DOSAAF programs, more would be able to skip portions of their basic training and report directly to their units upon conscription. This would have the effect of indirectly lengthening conscription terms—one way of partially compensating for the shortage of Slavic sailors. [redacted]

So far we have seen little evidence of significant improvements being made to the DOSAAF program. In 1981, however, Fleet Admiral Yegorov was named to head DOSAAF, with a mandate for improving technical training for young people. Yegorov served as Deputy Commander in Chief for Combat Training from 1967 to 1972 and was promoted to admiral during that period. US attaches have described him as an officer with a reputation for high competence who

has written extensively on military training topics. His appointment may indicate increased Navy support for preinduction training. [redacted]

Training and Use of Conscripts

About 75 percent of Soviet naval personnel are short-term conscripts. When drafted, they are usually young, unskilled, and unmotivated. The majority are not happy about being drafted and look forward eagerly to being discharged, according to emigres. [redacted]

The Soviet Navy's answer to the problem of training these men is narrow specialization. Whenever possible, naval equipment is designed to be easy to operate and maintain. Soviet maintenance practices complement this design philosophy by leaving little to the discretion of unit personnel. Stress on component replacement, rather than repair, reduces the requirements on conscripts' abilities, according to Soviet writings. Junior officers and warrant officers, rather than conscripts, make most decisions about equipment operation and do all “hands-on” technical work. [redacted]

The classroom technical instruction program for enlisted personnel is short, and on-the-job training is emphasized. By getting draftees to their units soon after induction, the Navy hopes to get as much useful labor as possible out of them in the short period of active duty. [redacted]

Career naval personnel do not regard the conscript as a true member of their service team, according to emigres. Conscripts are viewed more as temporary workers providing short-term labor under the direction of the regulars. Therefore, naval authorities believe there is not much point in expending significant time or effort on developing complicated technical skills. Instead, conscripts are expected to simply do the elementary tasks assigned to them and not make trouble. In effect, the Navy views draftees more as part of a ship's machinery than its crew, and this attitude is reflected in conscript training programs and duty assignments. [redacted]

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Selection

Local draft boards, or *voyenkomats*, maintain dossiers on all draft-age males that are supposed to be used to place them in jobs for which they are best suited. The dossiers contain an extensive profile of each recruit, including school records, employer references, political records, social contacts, relatives living abroad, ethnic background, and health status. Twice a year, representatives of the different services, known as military buyers, review the dossiers to decide on a service and service branch for each draftee. [redacted]

[redacted] told Western officials that the Navy has a high priority in the selection process because its work generally requires more educated, technically oriented personnel. We do not have sufficient evidence to substantiate that claim, however. [redacted]

Specialty Assignment and Training

After a four- to six-week boot camp, recruits will be assigned their naval specialty—the job they will probably hold for the rest of their service term. Conscripts normally are not given a choice, and we believe that failure to consider their individual talents and preferences reduces their effectiveness. [redacted]

Fleet authorities base their decisions on background records and simple selectivity tests; radio operators, for example, have been chosen simply on their ability to tap a pencil quickly or how fast they could write a word legibly. Information in draft board dossiers on premilitary training is supposed to affect specialty assignments, but press articles indicate it is often ignored. The chief of a DOSAAF radio school cited a case where his honors-graduate telegraph operator became a battery handler, and, in another example, a ham-radio enthusiast was assigned to a ship's boiler room. [redacted]

The manning depots' penchant for putting "square pegs in round holes" probably results in part from the large numbers of recruits they process. Some 2.2 million people must be processed in the annual draft—a large burden by any standard and one that is particularly taxing for a Soviet bureaucracy that is not known for its efficiency. [redacted]

Most Navy recruits are sent to a five-month basic specialist course after boot camp. Here, they are supposed to become familiar with the equipment they

will be using in their units and learn basic theory and skills related to their job. The theoretical instruction may address topics such as the basic principles of electricity, radar, engines, or submarine structure. Depending on his specialty, a new sailor may also be taught a skill like schematic diagram reading, circuit tracing, knot tying, soldering, or Morse code. Many emigres report also receiving some familiarization with ship damage control. [redacted]

Emigre reports indicate that, quite often, training centers do not have classroom models, mockups, or equipment for recruits to practice on. Tests are sometimes so simple that everyone passes. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Many emigres describe their specialist training as useless. [redacted]

Other emigres, however, give a different picture. They describe competent instructors who make good use of slides, films, equipment mockups, and models. Classroom instruction is sometimes supplemented by training on simulators for specialties like radar and sonar operators. [redacted]

The variance in reporting suggests that the quality of naval specialty training is uneven. This is probably not a serious problem, since the Soviets intend for the most significant training to occur after a sailor has joined his operational unit. Prior training does appear to break recruits into the discipline of military life, however, and most sailors bound for the more important combat assignments, such as submarines, probably go through the better quality training centers. [redacted]

Some recruits skip specialty training and report directly to their units after boot camp. Besides those who have received equivalent training from DOSAAF, they include about one out of four conscripts who are assigned to jobs for which special

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skills training is not necessary, such as sentries, construction laborers, or warehouse workers. These jobs are predominantly filled by recruits who are considered to be politically unreliable, to speak Russian poorly, or simply to be less intelligent. [redacted]

Unit Training

The most important part of conscript training is conducted on the job by operational units. The Soviets use a structured, Navy-wide system tied to the semi-annual conscription cycle and geared toward rapid assimilation of new personnel. A few months before a group of draftees completes its service obligation, the Navy brings in new recruits to receive their orientation from the sailors they are to replace. [redacted]

As a result of this regular influx of new draftees, a Soviet ship, at any given time, will have a fair number of novices among its crew. These men contribute little to the operation of their ships, and Soviet military writings have indicated that in some cases they may even hinder smooth operations. Training and supervision of the new sailors require a considerable amount of time from experienced officers and warrant officers. [redacted]

A new conscript is assigned to the specialist he is to replace for an initial training period of about two months. One emigre reported that a conscript could not leave the Navy until his successor passed his proficiency exam—a powerful incentive for dedicated teaching. Testing standards, however, are sometimes relaxed in the interest of expediency. [redacted]

Enlisted personnel in the Soviet Navy are awarded one of four specialist grades that are supposed to signify their proficiency in their particular jobs. To advance a grade, conscripts are supposed to pass an examination by a committee of officers, although in this case, also, some emigres report lax testing procedures. In the 1960s, the average times to achieve specialist grades were as follows:

3rd class	7 to 9 months
2nd class	13 to 15 months
1st class	19 to 21 months
Master	6 to 8 years

In 1974, however, the Navy adopted the slogan "from 3rd to 1st in a year," indicating that the time to achieve each step had been reduced to only six



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Figure 2. Most training of conscripts is conducted on the job, in small groups, under the direction of an officer or warrant officer. While effective, this approach takes a significant portion of the officer's time away from his many other duties. [redacted]

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months. A sailor usually achieves a 3rd class specialist grade upon completion of the initial specialist training period, although some do not receive this grade until after they join their units. Emigres report that it often takes about a year before they feel confident in their specialty. [redacted]

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Conscript specialists reportedly are assigned narrow mechanical duties as a consequence of the naval leadership's belief that they cannot be entrusted with any significant decisionmaking responsibility. [redacted]

various conditions. Multiship exercises, simple at first and later more complex, complete the training process. [redacted]

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The Soviet unit training program uses simulators, training ships, small-group demonstrations, and classroom instruction. Military press articles and emigre reporting indicate that the most prevalent method of instruction involves small-group training in equipment maintenance and operations under the direction of an officer or warrant officer. This approach probably is effective, but press articles also indicate that it takes a significant portion of the officer's time away from his other duties. Given the officers' many other responsibilities and their general attitudes toward conscripts, they probably do not undertake this duty with enthusiasm. [redacted]

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Training simulators are especially attractive to the Soviet Navy. They enable sailors to get hands-on practice without putting wear and tear on combat equipment. This reduces training costs and is in keeping with the Soviet policy of limiting peacetime use of equipment in order to conserve it for wartime. Simulators also provide controlled environments that facilitate competency evaluations based on preestablished performance norms. Soviet military writings have stressed the advantages gained from recording training performances on tape for more accurate evaluation and critiques. A recent *Red Star* article praised advances in computers that enable entire submarine crews to train together on simulators, using complex scenarios; previously, the various crew components had to train separately because of equipment limitations. [redacted]

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Many other duties of conscript specialists are similarly limited. Soviet sonar operators are not allowed to identify contacts on their screens. Instead, they must report the existence of a reading to an officer or warrant officer on the bridge, who determines if the contact is a viable target. [redacted]

Unit training is required of a ship's crew before it can be certified as combat ready. Such training allows sailors to practice their skills and raise their specialty grades, complete their assimilation into shipboard routines, and gain needed experience in working with others in their department. [redacted]

The operational unit training program is driven by "socialist competitions." At the beginning of every training period, each sailor makes pledges detailing the level of expertise he will attempt to achieve in the coming year. These pledges become the criteria against which his performance is judged. Competitions are held among watches, departments, ships, and so on, up to the fleet level. Results are used to evaluate individuals and identify training deficiencies,

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A structured unit training program begins at the pier, where the crew is instructed on standing watch and is familiarized with department operations. The next phase takes place in port and at sea and involves systems testing, damage-control procedures, and a general progression to full combat readiness. Training then moves to short cruises, during which the crew fires weapons occasionally and practices responses to

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Figure 3. Socialist competition winners [redacted]



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but primarily the competitions are a management tool to motivate sailors and stimulate improved performance. [redacted]

Peer pressure is the key to making the socialist competitions work. The names of leaders as well as laggards are publicized in an effort to appeal to the Russian sense of sacrifice to the group. Such competitions are probably effective motivators in the better combat units, which have higher morale. It is evident from statements by the chief of the Navy's Main Political Directorate and frequent press criticisms, however, that competitions are often characterized by "formalism"—to achieve quantitative goals, units only go through the motions of competition at the expense of quality work. [redacted]

Increasing the number of conscripts with dual specialties is often one of the goals of a ship's socialist competitions. Soviet naval writings pay much lip-service to the benefits of having sailors learn additional specialties and bestow praise on ships with a high percentage of cross-trained sailors. Exemplary ships are commonly cited as having a third of their crew cross-trained in another specialty. [redacted]

Emigres attest, however, that, with rare exceptions, enlisted sailors are not at all interested in learning how to perform additional duties. Moreover, Soviet naval officers are hard pressed to find time to teach

new sailors a single specialty in light of the high conscript turnover rate. Competing priorities for officers' time discourages them from teaching additional skills to unmotivated conscripts who will be leaving the Navy in a few months anyway. A ship's commander who needs to inflate his percentage of cross-trained crewmen in order to impress fleet authorities can more easily meet his goal by relaxing the specialists' examination requirements than by diverting more of his officers' energies to teaching. For those few conscripts motivated to do so, learning a new specialty is probably not very difficult because of the simplicity of naval conscript duties and because, in most cases, it would be a specialty closely related to the conscript's first one. [redacted]

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Extended-Service Careers

Naval enlisted careers traditionally have been held in low esteem in the USSR, and retention of career servicemen remains a serious problem for the Navy. The actual reenlistment figures for the Soviet Navy are not known, although evidence from emigres and observations of the rank structure of Soviet crews indicate they are extremely low. Some Western analysts estimate that retention is as low as 1 percent. Career petty officers and warrant officers make up

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Enlisted Ranks in the Soviet Navy

Senior warrant officer
 Warrant officer
 Ship's chief petty officer
 Chief petty officer
 Petty officer 1st
 Petty officer 2nd
 Senior seaman
 Seaman

Promotion through the enlisted ranks can be extremely rapid. Most conscripts will make at least senior seaman or petty officer 2nd by the end of their shipboard service, and a few even reach chief petty officer (although most at this rank are extended-service personnel). Although an integral part of the Navy, personnel in naval aviation, infantry, construction, coastal defense, and various shore support branches use ground forces ranks. [redacted]

Comparing Soviet Navy enlisted ranks, particularly at the senior levels, to corresponding US Navy ranks could be misleading. Soviet petty officers and warrant officers have considerably less training, responsibility, and status than do most noncommissioned personnel in the US Navy. Senior US enlisted personnel perform duties that, in the Soviet Navy, are more often performed by officer specialists. [redacted]

only about 8 percent of the Navy's personnel total. In an effort to attract more enlistments, the Soviets decreed in 1971 that petty officer ranks for extended service personnel would be phased out and replaced with the new rank of *michman* (warrant officer). The new rank was introduced with much press fanfare, a more distinguished uniform, and better pay and benefits than petty officers received. [redacted]

The Soviet Navy still has some petty officers among its extended-service personnel, however. Warrant officers must initially serve five-year terms, whereas petty officers need only enlist for two years. Some conscripts probably were unwilling to commit themselves to the longer service terms, prompting the Navy's decision not to phase out the petty officer rank

entirely. Nonetheless, the pay benefits probably prompt most career enlistees to opt for service as a warrant officer. [redacted]

Soviet press articles claim that only the best of sailors may be chosen to become warrant officers. Emigres say, however, that virtually anyone willing to sign the five-year commitment is accepted. Prior to boot camp, new draftees are offered the opportunity to go directly to warrant officer school, but almost all reject the offer. Most conscripts who complete their term of service and reenlist are promoted directly to warrant officer. [redacted]

Training

The primary role of the warrant officer in the Soviet Navy is to assist the officers by lifting some of the burden of supervising and training conscripts and by providing continuity and experience. Warrant officers usually serve in the same specialty—often on the same ship—for as long as they remain in the Navy. They are used to train new junior officers and conscripts and assist in maintaining equipment. They also have some responsibility for maintaining discipline at the subunit level, although defector reporting and press articles indicate that most warrant officers are poor leaders. The Navy provides little, if any, leadership training to its career enlisted personnel, according to emigres. [redacted]

Before they are sent to the fleets, warrant officers usually receive training in special programs lasting from six months to two years. Those with previous naval experience (as conscripts or petty officers) sometimes are allowed to skip this training. Emigres have stated that admissions standards for warrant officer training are for appearances only and that, in fact, because of the Navy's recruitment difficulties, almost anyone is admitted to the schools. [redacted]

Emigres and military press articles suggest that teaching staffs at warrant officer schools are of poor quality and that schools lack adequate facilities, instruction materials, and training equipment. One emigre stated that much of the instruction was in basic academic subjects such as algebra, writing, and

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Russian grammar. The program was entirely self-study, with every two cadets sharing one book. In place of instructors, there was only a sergeant who watched over the class to guard against discipline infractions but provided no instruction or assistance. Even the warrant officer training within the fleet itself appears substandard. Ship commanders have been criticized for ignoring warrant officer cadets assigned to their ships on orientation cruises and for using cadets on cleanup details, which teach them little about shipboard equipment and operations. A rear admiral admitted, in a Soviet naval journal, that some instructors at warrant officer schools are Navy misfits who are not qualified to teach their subjects and who often have never been to sea. The Soviets attribute much of the problem to the Navy-wide view that service at these schools is a dead end in terms of career prospects. Apparently, this applies even to the schools associated with the all-important submarine fleet. [redacted]

Emigres report that almost no one fails to graduate from the warrant officer schools. In one example, those who failed the final exam were encouraged by school officials to retake it until a passing grade was achieved. If the cadets still could not pass, transcripts were altered to ensure they graduated anyway. [redacted]

Status

The Soviet naval warrant officer also has a problem with status. One emigre summed up the attitude of most sailors toward warrant officers when he reported that, in his unit, warrant officers were referred to as "low-mentality freeloaders." Emigres consistently report that officers and conscripts look down upon, if not despise, warrant officers. They are viewed as individuals who could not make it in the civilian world and who were not good enough to earn commissions. They are widely viewed by conscripts as being corrupt (press articles on corruption commonly mention warrant officers), brutal disciplinarians, and petty bureaucrats who are fond of enforcing trivial regulations and abusing their authority. [redacted]

Career Prospects

Career opportunities for extended-service personnel in the Soviet Navy are dismal. These sailors are strongly discouraged from transferring to another unit or even

changing ship departments. Although young warrant officers can become officers if they display talent and have the academic skills to pass the entrance exams for higher naval school, such advancement appears uncommon. Even if a candidate can pass the exams, unit commanders are reluctant to lose a good warrant officer and tend to discourage such attempts. Thus, most warrant officers are locked into their ranks and billets with little chance of promotion or transfer. Low compensation has also been a problem. Despite regular raises, their pay has not kept pace with wages in comparable civilian jobs. [redacted]

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When low status and limited career prospects are added to the usual hardships and family strains associated with Navy life, it is not surprising that few choose to reenlist. Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union S. M. Gorshkov has admitted that many of the more skilled warrant officers are being lost to civilian industry. [redacted]

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Value to the Navy

Despite the weaknesses in the warrant officer program, the Soviet Navy depends on these personnel to provide experience, continuity, and skilled assistance. The Navy reasons that even people with little talent are bound to acquire useful knowledge and skills if they remain in the same job for their entire career. [redacted]

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Because of their experience, warrant officers can become stabilizing factors in a unit. They are useful for helping junior officers learn to maintain and operate shipboard equipment. Perhaps most important, warrant officers provide some relief for commissioned officers from the time-consuming tasks of maintaining equipment and training and supervising conscripts. *Red Star* offered an example of a naval aviation unit, whose personnel averaged age 28, in which a 33-year-old warrant officer was the primary source of experience—even the captain turned to him for advice. [redacted]

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The value of warrant officers is demonstrated by the Navy's willingness to relax standards whenever their enforcement might drive career enlisted personnel

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from the service. An article in *Red Star* addressed the case of a captain 3rd rank who wrote a flawless fitness report for a warrant officer in exchange for his agreement to reenlist. No mention was made of the serviceman's five serious violations of discipline or the poor condition of his squad. [redacted]

The Soviet Navy faces a paradoxical situation. Warrant officers as a group are held in low regard by sailors and officers alike, but their services are considered indispensable. We believe the naval personnel system is squandering a potentially valuable human resource by permitting such a discouraging environment to exist for its career enlisted. Many of the sailors who could potentially fill petty or warrant officer ranks will be lost to the Navy because there are no attractive career prospects outside of the officer ranks. [redacted]

Women in the Navy

There appears to be only a small number of women in the Navy; they almost always serve in the enlisted ranks, holding jobs such as radio or telephone operator, typist, nurse, supply clerk, and cook. There are no women in combat roles, and emigres have reported that females are not even given the basic training and small-arms instruction that all males receive. [redacted]

Naval careers do not appear to be popular among Soviet women (one emigre described her service as "dull, hard, and unrewarding"). Many female sailors are married to career Navy men and probably only enlist because civilian jobs are sometimes hard to come by at remote garrisons. The Soviets have shown little interest in inducing more women to enlist in the Navy beyond the occasional low-key press articles praising women sailors for their contributions as "combat helpmates." In conversations with US naval personnel, Soviet officers have generally disparaged the practice of allowing women to serve in the Navy. [redacted]

In the future, however, the Soviets may be forced to make changes in these practices. If greater career opportunities were available to them, the Navy might

attract more educated women from Slavic backgrounds who might help ease the problems resulting from demographic changes in the USSR. Even if they were not employed in combat billets, more women in more responsible roles could free men now holding support jobs for service in fighting units. [redacted]

Officer Careers

The backbone of the Soviet Navy is its professional officer corps. Naval officers are an elite group, predominantly drawn from the urban, upper strata of Soviet society. They are mostly volunteers who have been carefully selected for their academic talents, psychological traits, family backgrounds, and demonstrated loyalty to the state. Almost all are career men who enter the Navy with the intention of serving at least 25 years. Officers make up about 17 percent of the Navy's personnel. [redacted]

There are substantial differences between Soviet and Western views on the role of naval officers. In contrast to Western officers who delegate equipment maintenance and repair to enlisted technicians, Soviet officers serve both as commanders and as technical specialists who conduct much of the hands-on work. Because of the general inadequacies of Soviet conscripts, an officer is expected to be able to perform virtually all of his enlisted subordinates' duties, including routine maintenance. [redacted]

Leadership in the Soviet officer system is reserved for a select few who receive special preparation and training. This is accomplished through the use of a two-track career system: a command track for ship captains and various squadron and fleet commanders, and a specialist track for technicians and staff specialists. Commanding officers are chosen from those junior officers who exhibit both technical know-how and leadership skills in their first assignment. These men are groomed for command through broad (by Soviet standards) career assignments and higher schooling. The rest of the officers are expected to

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Figure 4. *The backbone of the Soviet Navy is its professional officer corps.*

develop an even greater depth of knowledge of their specialties and serve the fleet as career specialists and staff officers.

Soviet naval officers, including those in command career tracks, are more specialized than their Western counterparts. While Western navies stress the development of general line officers with a broad range of fleet experience, the Soviets prefer an officer to serve in one area—often on one ship—where he can develop detailed knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of his particular ship class.

The real authority and leadership in the Navy is concentrated in the officers in the senior command career track. These men generally are well trained, experienced, and dedicated to the Soviet system, which rewards them with high prestige and material benefits. They have more self-confidence than other naval officers because of their higher social class and special chosen status.

Officer specialists and junior officers make up the administrative level of the Soviet Navy. They are valued more for their technical expertise than their leadership skills, although they conduct low-level supervision of enlisted sailors in addition to assisting commanders as staff officers and special technical troubleshooters. Many of these men perform functions that, in Western navies, would be performed by petty officers or warrant officers.

Specialist officers generally are slow to take initiative, unwilling to deviate from established operating patterns, and better at obeying than giving orders. Their fear of deviating from established procedures is likely to be greater than any urge to take advantage of an opportunity.

The Appeal of an Officer Career

A career as a naval officer offers a number of attractions in the USSR; status is a major one. The Navy considers itself an elite force, and press articles and emigres furnish evidence that the Soviet public views it as a select group, working in the forefront of glamorous new technology. An officer career also offers generous pay and health care, employment security, an opportunity to travel beyond Soviet borders, and a good pension.

For the sons of naval officers, encouragement to follow in their fathers' footsteps can provide an incentive to join the Navy, and there is evidence that a naval tradition continues in some Soviet families. The importance of nepotism and other connections may be a persuasive factor in some decisions to pursue an officer career.

A prospective officer also faces a number of disincentives. Virtually mandatory membership in the CPSU and closer party supervision might dissuade some from pursuing a commission. There are also the usual problems that often accompany a Soviet sailor's life: hardship posts in remote areas, family separations—with resultant marital difficulties—and being forced to live and work closely with lower-class conscripts.

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Ways To Be Commissioned

The majority of Soviet naval officers earn their commissions by graduating from one of the higher naval schools. The Navy sometimes drafts graduates of other service schools to fill officer billets in naval aviation or naval infantry units (in which case cadets are not given a choice of service). A small percent of active-duty officers are university and technical institute graduates commissioned through ROTC programs or officer candidate school (OCS) courses, but these officers usually only serve their minimum service requirement of one and a half or two years. Qualified warrant officers may take the entrance exams for higher naval school or be commissioned through a six-month OCS program for technical specialists. They, too, probably account for a small fraction of career naval officers. [redacted]

Higher Naval Schools

The higher naval schools are the Soviet Navy's equivalent of the US Naval Academy at Annapolis. Each school has a five-year program that awards an engineering degree—except the political school, which has a four-year program leading to a bachelor of arts degree. [redacted]

Naval aviation and naval infantry officers attend joint-service schools operated by the Air or Ground Forces. Officers bound for support billets (medical, supply, or finance, for instance) also attend joint-service schools. Cadets at nonnaval schools probably receive little or no orientation to the naval aspects of combat operations. One Soviet press article described a young graduate of an aviation school on his first shipboard assignment who was afraid of water and who had not even received basic water-survival training. [redacted]

The Soviet Navy apparently believes that the basic instruction received at joint-service schools is sufficient and that new officers can be broken into the Navy's way of doing things once they join the fleet. This probably impedes readiness somewhat by forcing operational combat units to take time from other duties to conduct the sort of basic training that would take place prior to reporting in Western navies. [redacted]

Table 1
Soviet Higher Naval Schools

Name	Location	Type
M. V. Frunze	Leningrad	General officer
P. S. Nakhimov	Sevastopol'	General officer
Kaliningrad	Kaliningrad	General officer
S. O. Makarov	Vladivostok	General officer
S. M. Kirov	Baku	General officer
Leninskiy Komsomol	Leningrad	Submarine officer
A. K. Popov	Leningrad	Communications/sonar
F. Dzerzhinskiy	Leningrad	Engineering
V. I. Lenin	Leningrad	Engineering
Sevastopol'	Sevastopol'	Engineering
Kiev Political	Kiev	Political officer

Selection. Soviet naval officers appear to be drawn largely from upper-class Slavic families. One emigre reported that the ethnic composition at his higher engineering school included only three or four Central Asians out of a class of 150, with the majority of cadets being of Great Russian origin. Eighty percent were from urban areas, where better educated, upper-class families tend to concentrate. [redacted]

The Soviet press and emigres indicate that admissions to the higher naval schools are highly competitive and that there is no shortage of applicants. There have been reports that Frunze, the most prestigious school, receives nine applications for every cadet accepted. Prospective cadets are required to furnish admissions committees with a detailed autobiography that includes a recommendation from the Communist Party or Komsomol and to take written and oral exams in mathematics, physics, and Russian. Applicants must also pass a psychological test, which is used to assess such factors as emotional stability, motivation, reasoning ability, attention span, and reaction time. The Chief of Soviet Naval Educational Institutions has stated that psychological evaluations are of great

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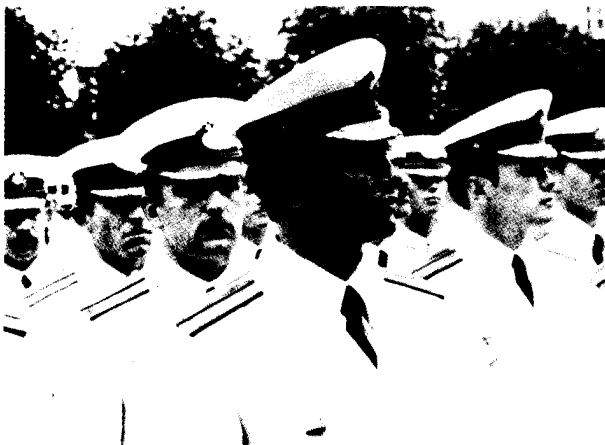


Figure 5. An officer school graduation ceremony. These men constitute an elite group, primarily drawn from urban, upper-class Slavic families.

importance in the selection process and that the school dropout rate has declined since their introduction. The Air Force schools that furnish naval aviators also use such tests. [redacted]

Family connections can play an important role in a young man's acceptance by one of the naval schools. Emigres and press articles have confirmed that the entire admissions process can be bypassed for the sons of high-ranking naval officers and party officials. Such practices no doubt result in the admittance of some persons who otherwise could not meet the entry requirements. [redacted]

Quality of Instruction. Emigres describe faculty at the higher naval schools as being generally well versed in their disciplines. Most instructors are naval officers, although some civilians are used to teach mathematics and science. An impressive ratio of one instructor per 10 cadets appears typical. Faculty members tend to remain at the higher schools for long periods, potentially leading some to lose touch with the requirements of the operational fleet. [redacted]

The curriculums at the higher naval schools are slanted toward quantitative and scientific studies and are much more specialized than the academic training most US officers receive. Students specialize in one area, such as navigation, gunnery, or communications. At the Frunze general officer school, students spend the first two years concentrating on math, natural

sciences, geography, and elementary navigation. In the third and fourth years, more emphasis is placed on naval subjects such as tactics, weapons technology, or engineering. By the fifth year, students progress to advanced tactics and navigation and prepare a thesis. [redacted]

Practical training at sea (or field exercises for shore specialists) is conducted during the summer between regular terms. Special training ships are often used, although cadets are placed on operational ships as well. Some cadets serve several weeks on a ship of the class to which they eventually will be assigned. Press articles indicate that ship captains tend to regard cadets as a nuisance to be avoided, and, apparently, cadets on training cruises are sometimes ignored by the ship's regular crew. Some practical training of cadets is also conducted in naval yards and factories. [redacted]

A good deal of the students' time also is spent on political education in Marxism-Leninism, foreign language study, and physical training. In addition, all cadets go through a two-month naval infantry course covering such subjects as the use of small arms and chemical warfare. [redacted]

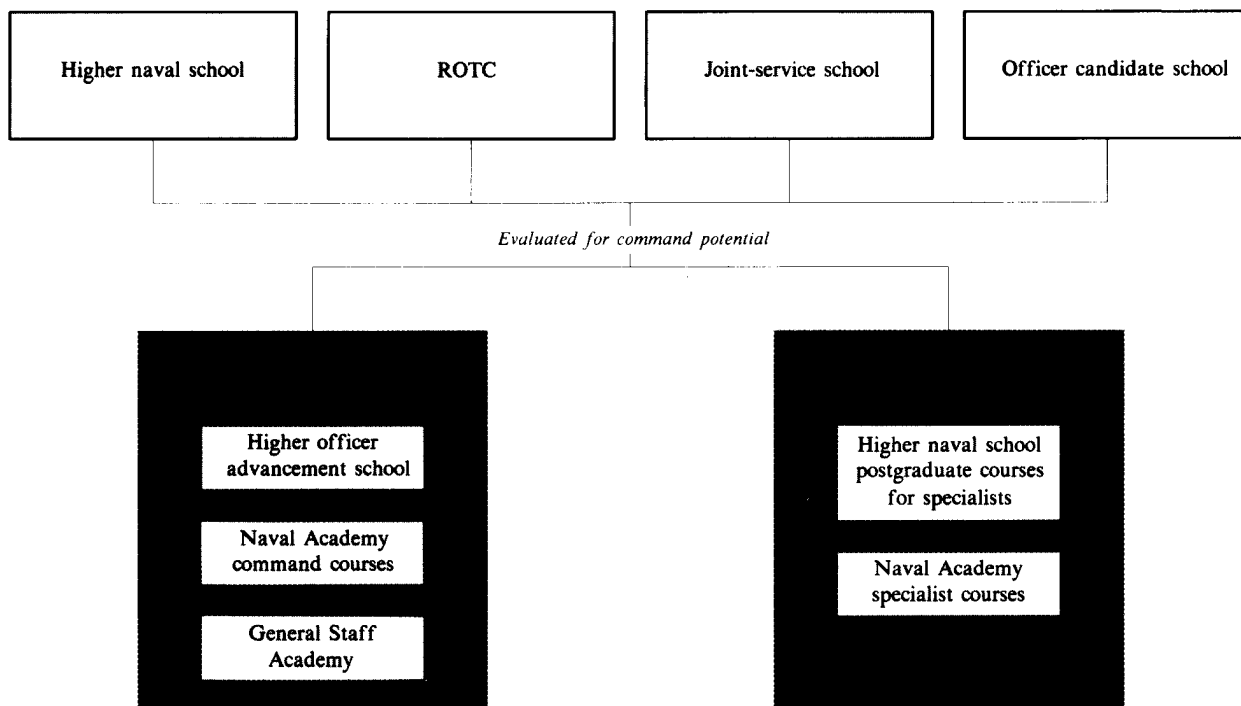
The curriculums at the other higher naval schools are similar to, but more specialized, than those at the general officer schools. An emigre who attended a higher engineering school reported that, for the first three years, all students take the same standard courses, most of which deal with naval propulsion systems. At the beginning of the fourth year, the cadets are assigned a specialty such as submarine propulsion, surface diesel systems, or surface gas turbine systems. Graduates of the engineering schools are usually limited to careers as technical specialists. [redacted]

Graduates. The higher naval schools graduate narrow specialists, not generalists. On the whole, they appear to be good engineers with a sound background in math, science, naval engineering, and the theoretical aspects of their particular specialties. Emigres report that these young officers, although they may be unsure of themselves at first, are highly motivated,

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Figure 6
Education Options for Soviet Naval Officers



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hard workers who are not “afraid to get their hands dirty” when it comes to working with shipboard equipment. [Redacted]

Soviet belief that command training is more appropriate later in an officer’s career, and then only for those who have demonstrated leadership qualities and are destined for command assignments. [Redacted]

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The primary deficiency in new Soviet naval officers is a lack of adequate leadership and managerial skills. Emigres and Soviet press articles indicate that junior officers often have trouble dealing with conscripts, setting priorities, and organizing their time. The leadership and management knowledge of naval school cadets appears limited to experience gained on cadet training cruises. This probably reflects the

There also has been some criticism in the military press of graduates of higher naval schools who lack basic naval skills and are unable to put their theoretical knowledge into practice. One officer on his first assignment was horrified to discover the shipboard equipment he was responsible for was completely

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foreign to him, while another could not properly operate a sextant. Emigres have faulted the higher naval schools for not having good-quality training aids, scale models, and simulators—a view that has been supported by Western visitors to the Frunze school. This may account for some of the practical-skill deficiencies experienced by junior officers on their first assignments. Emigres also report, however, that, after about their first year, junior officers seem to develop confidence in their technical skills. [redacted]

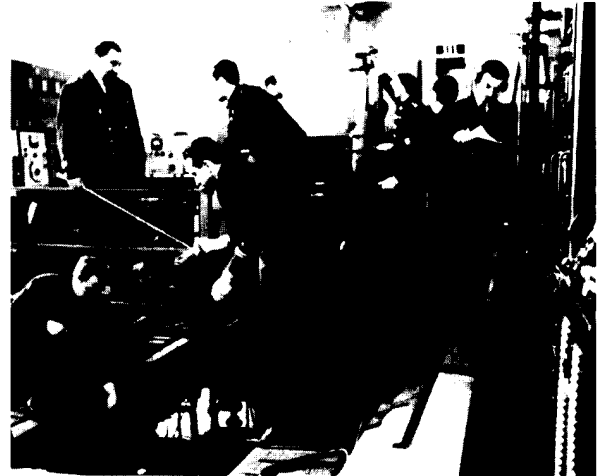
Postgraduate Officer Education

Once an officer graduates from a higher naval school, he tends to stay on a ship for several years, so there is not much opportunity for coursework ashore. Some postgraduate programs exist for young officers, but little is known about them. Correspondence and resident courses, including precommand and various specialist courses, are apparently conducted by the higher naval or joint-service schools. [redacted]

A midcareer course is conducted by the prestigious Leningrad Naval Academy A. A. Grechko, the highest educational institution operated exclusively by the Navy. The Academy takes officers under age 36 with at least six to 10 years of fleet experience and prepares them for commanding large ships or for senior staff appointments. The majority of the students are captains 3rd or 2nd rank. [redacted]

The Grechko Academy has a high reputation in the Soviet Navy, and attendance there is an important step in attaining flag rank. The Academy is very selective; Western observers were told in 1969 that only 7 to 8 percent of all Soviet naval officers are able to attend during the course of their careers. There are four faculties: command, weapons, engineering/construction, and electronics. The faculty includes a large number of flag officers and receives the most modern equipment available. In addition to its educational functions, the school also serves as a think tank for naval doctrine and technical matters. [redacted]

The highest level of officer training is provided by the General Staff Academy in Moscow. Its two-year program covers tactical, operational, and strategic employment of large units, fleets, and groups of forces. Admission is limited to senior command officers from all services, and naval officers probably



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Figure 7. Hydroacoustic training at the Soviet Naval Academy (top); tactical problems at the Soviet Naval Academy (bottom). [redacted]

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account for only a small fraction of those attending. Navy graduates go on to fill the highest command and staff positions in the Navy and Ministry of Defense.

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Through higher command postgraduate training, officers who have spent their careers on one class of ship presumably are given a broader exposure to naval operations. Through classes, seminars, war gaming, and other school activities, they get the opportunity to work with officers from varied service backgrounds.

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This perspective is probably further enhanced in higher assignments, as the officers become involved in fleet-level staff and exercise planning.

First Assignment

A newly commissioned officer usually is assigned to a billet that corresponds to his school specialty (navigation, gunnery, or engineering, for instance). Typically, he will stay in one department on the same ship for the next three to six years, progressing through positions equivalent to assistant division officer, division officer, assistant department head, and department head. During this period, he is expected to become well versed in the operations of his department, with some assistance from more experienced officers and warrant officers. In the Soviet system, junior officers take the same specialty rating tests as enlisted sailors to demonstrate their ability to perform hands-on technical work.

An officer's initial assignment is ordinarily quite hectic and provides a demanding introduction to Navy life. Soviet press articles indicate that naval officers generally are overworked, and, for the junior men trying to learn the ropes, the pace must seem especially grueling. A new officer's principal responsibilities are:

- To master his own specialty.
- To learn the general operations of his department.
- To replace or repair broken equipment and conduct regularly scheduled maintenance.
- To train and supervise conscripts and lead unit political meetings.
- To keep abreast of new technological developments and pursue self-improvement courses.
- To handle the paperwork.

Like enlisted sailors, officers are encouraged to push themselves harder through "socialist competitions." The competitions are more effective motivators for officers than for enlisted men, because the former have long-term career prospects to consider.

Command Officer Selection

While junior officers perform their duties and work on mastering their given specialties, their potential for future command is evaluated by their ship commanders, adding further to the pressure of first assignments. Soviet writings indicate that, in making this

Major Ship Departments

1. Navigation
2. Gunnery/missiles
3. Mine/torpedo
4. Communications
5. Engineering
6. Aviation
7. Control

Command officers are usually drawn from the navigation, gunnery, control, and sometimes communications departments. Captains of surface vessels are most often gunnery officers, while submariners are typically navigators. There are few command opportunities for engineering officers, who tend to be career specialists.

assessment, a ship's captain will consider factors such as the junior officer's leadership qualities and success in training and supervising conscripts; how effectively he identifies priority tasks, organizes his time, and performs under pressure; his status among fellow officers; his standing in the socialist competitions; how well he follows orders and conforms to established procedures; and his technical expertise. A spotless political record is mandatory to be considered for command, and the ship's political officer is consulted in the evaluation, according to emigres. Another factor that might well have an influence is an officer's connections—particularly a relative or close family friend in a high Navy or party position (one Soviet officer said the surest way to be promoted in the Soviet Navy is to be related to Admiral Gorshkov). The evaluation of these factors is highly subjective, and the commanding officer (CO) of a Soviet ship has wide discretion in choosing who, from among his officers, will be given the opportunity for a career as a commander.

At the end of the evaluation and selection process, the junior officers are categorized into two groups—those who will remain specialists throughout their careers

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Table 2
Soviet Navy Officer Ranks

Seagoing Ranks	Ground Forces Ranks ^a	Approximate US Equivalent ^b
Admiral of the fleet of the Soviet Union	Marshal of the Soviet Union	Fleet admiral
Admiral of the fleet	Marshal	Admiral
Admiral	Colonel general	Vice admiral
Vice admiral	Lieutenant general	Rear admiral
Rear admiral	Major general	Commodore
Captain 1st rank	Colonel	Captain
Captain 2nd rank	Lieutenant colonel	Commander
Captain 3rd rank	Major	Lieutenant commander
Captain lieutenant	Captain	Lieutenant
Senior lieutenant	Senior lieutenant	Lieutenant (junior grade)
Lieutenant	Lieutenant	Ensign

^a Ground Forces ranks are used by officers serving in naval aviation, infantry, construction, coastal defense, medical, chemical, supply, shore engineering, and legal branches. Most seagoing personnel use traditional naval ranks.

^b Soviet officer ranks tend to equate more to their US counterparts than enlisted ranks, although there is still a disparity. In the Soviet Navy, rank and billet are separate; rank is based primarily on time in grade. It is not unusual to find a young officer in command of a major combatant with several more senior officers serving under him—a situation that would not occur in the US Navy. By the same token, some Soviet officers (junior officers and career specialists) have duties and responsibilities that would be performed by petty officers or warrant officers in the United States.

[Redacted]

and those who will be trained as line commanders. Each career track has its own career-development program. [Redacted]

Ranks, Positions, and Career Tracks

Rank and position are separate in the Soviet Navy. Rank is mostly dependent on time in grade. Position is based on an individual's leadership qualities, technical background, and general experience and education. Because the Soviets have a much different view of the importance of age and experience than that of Westerners, Soviet naval officers are often given significant command assignments at an earlier age, then stay in these positions to develop experience. It is not unusual

to find a young, relatively junior officer in a command position with older, more senior officers serving under him in various career-specialist billets. [Redacted]

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The trend since the 1960s has been toward increasingly younger commanders at the helms of Soviet ships. Half of the Kara-class cruisers are now commanded by captains 3rd rank between 31 and 34, and others began the post at that rank and were promoted to captain 2nd in the job. Most Krivak-class frigates are commanded by captains 3rd rank who took command as captain lieutenants (ages 27 to 30), and Kresta-class cruisers are now commanded by captains 3rd; they were once commanded by captains 1st. The skipper of the aircraft carrier Kiev assumed command of the ship when he was only 33. [Redacted]

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Some young officers may find themselves in charge of ships or ship departments before they have enough experience at sea. This could prove dangerous in combat or emergency situations, and it probably contributes to accidents and equipment breakdowns on Soviet ships. Experienced staff specialists can provide assistance to inexperienced command officers, but, in situations that call for quick reaction and decisive action, the opportunity for confusion and indecision is increased. [Redacted]

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Fleet Admiral N. I. Smirnov has stated that flag officers have a special responsibility to watch over newly appointed commanders as they develop experience. This may partially account for the tendency for a ship commander's authority to be superseded during special situations (such as sea rescue operations, foreign port calls, and exercises) by embarked squadron commanders or staff specialists or through rigid control from headquarters ashore. [Redacted]

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This tendency can be viewed as part of the general pattern characteristic of the Soviet command structure of important decisions being referred upward. This approach probably inhibits the development of a young commanding officer's self-confidence and instills in him a dependency on higher authority for direction in demanding situations. [Redacted]

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When Things Go Wrong, Soviet Style

[redacted] a salvage operation gone awry illustrates several of the problems to which the Soviet Navy is vulnerable during emergency situations. In this instance, the line of command among officers was unclear. Most of the work was performed by the officers, with enlisted sailors merely looking on. Alcohol abuse reduced personnel effectiveness, and sailors demonstrated a lack of knowledge regarding damage control and safety. [redacted]

In December of 1965, a Northern Fleet fresh-water distillation ship ran aground in the Kola inlet, and a submarine rescue ship was sent to offer assistance. Upon arrival, it was discovered that the distillation ship had a broken keel and flooded engine room. The ship's crew had erected a tent-like shelter and lit a fire to keep warm. In addition, they had become intoxicated from consuming the ship's entire monthly ration of alcohol (Soviet ships are issued alcohol for maintaining equipment, but it is often consumed by the crew instead). [redacted]

After the salvage party boarded the disabled ship, officers began issuing orders that were countermanded by other officers, resulting in mass confusion. There were many instances where officers performed work while sailors merely watched. After approximately 20 hours of pumping, most of the water had been removed. At this point, however, pandemonium set in. [redacted]

Funnels were not available for refueling the pumps, and a decision was made to carry

gasoline from a storage tank in buckets. The resultant fuel spillage on the hot engines caused a fire, which rendered several water pumps inoperable. Fuel spillage also made the decks slippery, and several sailors sustained injuries by slipping and falling. Lubricating oil from the pump engines was used up, but no one replaced it, causing the remaining pumps to burn out. New pumps were brought to the scene and connected to the existing hoses, which by this time had frozen. Sections of hose were disconnected and the ice inside broken up with hammers—causing them to spring leaks. During this time, officers continued to countermand one another's orders. [redacted]

Eventually, the water was pumped out and a line attached from a tugboat to the disabled ship. After several attempts, the ship was pulled free, but apparently the damaged hull was not properly patched, and the ship began taking on more water. The pumps could not keep up, and the ship settled deeper into the water. Additional pumps were brought aboard, and, after more pumping, pontoons were lashed alongside. Two weeks after the start of the salvage operation, the distillation ship was towed to port. Unfortunately, the ship with the two pontoons attached was too large to enable it to tie up alongside a pier, and so the makeshift contraption had to be beached. A month later, the ship was towed to a floating drydock where it was eventually repaired. [redacted]

We cannot be certain how such usurpation of a ship captain's authority would affect Soviet wartime operations at sea. While few Western captains would accept such a situation, it appears that the practice generally is accepted in the Soviet military, and the implied lack of trust in the CO's abilities does not necessarily result in a loss of face. However, if

squadron staff specialists were permitted to countermand the CO's orders, the crew could begin to wonder who was in control and the resultant loss of leadership could lead to chaos in a critical situation. We know from emigre sources that such problems have occurred during peacetime rescue operations. [redacted]

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We believe the Soviet proclivity toward rigid shore control of ship operations could be a serious problem. Tactical decisions often are dictated by headquarters staffs ashore, tying the hands of the on-the-scene commanders. This reduces the ability of Soviet naval units to react to unexpected enemy actions and rapidly unfolding situations. [redacted]

There are, however, a number of advantages to the Soviet approach to training ship commanders. Because they stay on the same ship for four to 10 years, most know their vessels well. Moreover, they can establish a meaningful track record from which their superiors can evaluate them, making it easier to identify both star performers and incompetents. Because the Navy is willing to place young officers in command billets, it is easier to encourage and reward talented and energetic ones with challenging assignments. [redacted]

A Soviet captain normally selects his own executive officer (the second in command) and other assistant commanders from among the ship's officers. An executive officer then has the opportunity to prepare for his own command through an on-the-job training program, which familiarizes him with all ship departments, making him something of a generalist by Soviet standards. He must also qualify as a watch officer and perform well at sea. Once qualified, the executive will probably succeed his old CO as the ship's captain. Thus the optimal career path for a junior officer is from department head, to executive officer, to commanding officer. [redacted]

Soviet military writings have criticized the on-the-job training for young commanders-to-be. Many COs are reluctant to let their junior officers take over ship operations because they don't want to deal with problems that could result from their inexperience. Admiral Gorshkov has commented that COs tend to want to do everything—other men are present on the bridge as onlookers. [redacted]

Although Soviet commanding officers are generally familiar with all of their ship's departments, they are expected to leave the expertise in each department to the specialist officers. Fleet Admiral Smirnov wrote in *Morskoy Sbornik* that the continued modernization

of complex naval equipment makes it too difficult for a CO to have an expert's knowledge of every ship department. [redacted]

Those officers who fail to be selected as commanders can sometimes transfer to another, similar class of ship as a department head, but more often they become career specialists. A specialist officer might be a department head for three to four years, attend a specialist course ashore, and then return to his old unit as a staff specialist. Failure to serve in command billets does not limit an officer's promotion prospects as it would in many Western navies. A career specialist can continue to advance in rank up to, and including, flag rank. [redacted]

Staff officers give much-needed experience to the fleet, often assisting ship crews in preparing for sea deployment, accompanying them on extended cruises and exercises, and serving on inspection teams. Soviet military writings have expressed some concern, however, that staff officers sometimes perform work that should be done by regular crews and that the latter become "witnesses rather than participants in the events," thereby failing to gain needed experience. Moreover, the Soviets have written that, in wartime, such patronage would be impossible, as there are not enough staff officers for all of the Navy's ships. [redacted]

Soviet naval officers tend to be assigned to one ship for long periods (up to 10 years in some cases). When an officer is transferred, it is normally to another ship of the same type, in the same department, and often within the same fleet. Even when an officer changes ship types, he is usually in the same department, with similar responsibilities. Soviet officers are not encouraged to cross-specialize; the Navy believes modern naval technology is too complex for them to master more than one specialty. [redacted]

The primary advantage of this policy is that only a limited number of officers on any Soviet ship are likely to be in the initial stages of learning their duties and familiarizing themselves with equipment. The Soviets believe this is essential, given the complexity of modern naval technology and the shortage of

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qualified enlisted technicians to help run their ships. On the other hand, Soviet officers' narrow focus and lack of a broad range of fleet experience make it difficult for them to fill in for one another when a given officer is unavailable for duty. The system also probably inhibits an officer's understanding of the interrelationship and varying capabilities of different ship classes that must operate together in combat.

Sea Training

The sea experience that Soviet naval officers receive is strikingly different from that of their US counterparts. In general, the United States operates a "steaming navy" with a high operational tempo. The Soviet Navy, in contrast, conserves its equipment during peacetime and emphasizes readiness to go to sea, so that most of the time Soviet officers spend on their ships occurs in port, at anchorages, or on short cruises of a day or two.

US carrier deployments in the Pacific in 1984, for example, averaged about eight months, with at least five and a half to six months spent under way. A Soviet Pacific Fleet carrier deployment will typically run for only one to five months, with most of the time spent in ports or anchorages. On average, only about 10 percent of the Soviet surface fleet is deployed away from Soviet home waters at one time.

Exercise training in the Soviet Navy is characterized by short, simple, stereotyped, and carefully planned drills with little or no "free play" among participants. We believe this pattern of training does not prepare Soviet officers for realistic battle conditions, where it is necessary to make combat decisions in an unpredictable environment. This lack of experience will probably result in the use of slow and unimaginative ship maneuvers and tactics in wartime.

An example of the lack of realism in Soviet sea training is provided by a 1982 *Red Star* article written by a submariner and a surface ASW officer. The officers described an ASW exercise that followed "cut-and-dried patterns." The ASW ship commander "reduced his risks to the minimum" by repeatedly waiting for the target submarine to move from "one

assigned point to the next." The submarine commander did not try to shake off his pursuer because only the surface ship commander was evaluated for the exercise. Moreover, the submarine's actions were all planned in advance by the ASW staff to ensure that a contact would be made.

Postexercise critiques of such training are of little value to the participants, according to the article's authors, because there is no opportunity for joint analysis by submarine and surface ship officers. In fact, it was in a chance encounter years later that the two authors discovered they had once participated in the same exercise. Only then did the ASW officer learn that the submariners were critical of the ASW staff for not designing a realistic exercise scenario.

The Soviets apparently have difficulty reacting to the unexpected during exercises and sea cruises. Soviet military writings indicate that, in cases in which the timetables of planned exercises are changed even slightly, naval units are sometimes unable to adjust. In one example, a crew failed an exercise when its emphasis was changed from ASW to air defense on short notice. In another case, a top-rated crew botched a missile firing after a surprise inspection cut an hour from the preparation time for the exercise. Unable to adjust to the change of plans, the officers and men "were nervous and making mistakes all over the place," according to the article.

The Soviet Navy trains its officers to calmly choose the "correct" school solution to various combat situations, according to military writings. Watch officers, for example, are trained on simulators that present operators with various sea combat events such as an air attack, sonar contact, or a cruise missile attack. Officers' responses are recorded on a magnetic tape, which is compared to the school solution tape. An officer's rating is based on how quickly he identifies a situation and chooses the proper action. Through this and other training methods, the Soviets hope to make tactical decisions automatic and almost reflexive to minimize the need for independent thinking by tactical commanders.

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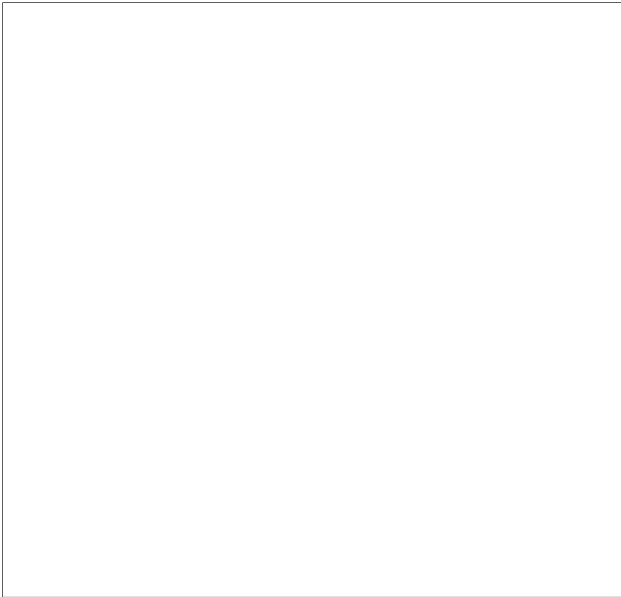
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Western Observations of Soviet Naval Operations



Crewmembers approached and worked near engaged aircraft without protective clothing, wearing shorts and shoes only. No hearing protection devices were noted, despite the high noise produced by the Forger aircraft. Personnel were noted running across the flight deck while aircraft were on final approach. [redacted]

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During one test evolution, a refueling hose was left attached to a Forger aircraft. When it was noticed, a crewmember disengaged the hose, while it was under pressure, spilling fuel over himself, the aircraft, and another crewman. The aircraft never shut down, and a limited spill cleanup was conducted using rags, which were later observed blowing about the deck while aircraft were taking off. The only corrosion control noted was a hand wipedown of the outer skin using rags. No freshwater washdown was conducted above decks. One sailor stopped working on an aircraft, urinated on the flight deck, and then returned to work. [redacted]

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Safety. The Soviets' lack of concern over shipboard safety conditions is illustrated by [redacted] Soviet aircraft carrier operations in the South China Sea:

Ship repairs at sea by Soviet crews are very basic and usually involve the replacement of defective components rather than actual repairs. Soviet ships carry few spare parts and have only limited shop equipment on board. When breakdowns occur at sea, the ships usually return to a repair yard where the work can be done by specialists. Most peacetime naval operations are not seriously affected by this policy, because the Navy generally leaves most of its fleet in port and limits most ship cruises to waters close to the USSR.³

[redacted]

Emigres have reported a low emphasis on damage-control training in the Soviet Navy, and some crews privately believe their ships would be lost if they were to sustain even moderate damage. Even Fleet Admiral

[redacted]

Smirnov criticized damage-control training in his 1984 "Navy Day" article for *Morskoy Sbornik*. [redacted]

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The low priority given to damage-control training is illustrated in a 1983 Soviet military press article, "Why a Training Ship Rests Idle." The article focused on a Pacific Fleet damage-control training ship that was used only 35 percent of the time. Despite Navy regulations requiring periodic refresher training for career personnel, almost no officers or warrant officers observed the requirement, and fleet authorities showed no interest in enforcing it. [redacted]

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We believe a lack of emphasis on training in at-sea ship maintenance, damage control, and crew safety will limit the Soviet Navy's ability to conduct prolonged deployments during wartime. The Soviet approach is probably a reflection of both the belief that

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a war at sea will be brief and destructive, with little opportunity for repairs by crews, and a recognition of the limitations of the conscript sailors that make up most of the Navy's personnel.

Compensation

An officer's pay is based on rank, position, and length of service with various allowances for hardship posts and special duties or qualifications. Position pay constitutes the largest share of an officer's income, being roughly double the pay received for rank, and it is awarded irrespective of rank. Thus a commanding officer will receive more pay than an officer of equal rank in a noncommand billet.

Pay allowances and other benefits are used to reward officers serving in assignments that are important to the Navy but which involve family hardship or are dangerous or otherwise undesirable. Time served in the submarine fleet or certain hardship areas counts as double time for pension computation. Special bonuses are given for remote area assignments, sea duty (the biggest bonuses go to submariners on nuclear boats), under-ice transfers, and equator crossings. Special allowances are also given for flight duty, raising specialty ratings, and belonging to a "combat ready" unit.

Coveted assignments, higher promotion prospects, and other career inducements are apparently also used as an incentive to attract the best officers to critical Navy components. The importance of the submarine fleet, for example, is reflected in the dominance of submariners in a variety of key appointments. Submariners and naval aviators are also promoted one year ahead of other officers at each rank level up to captain 1st.

Political Infrastructure

Purpose

The political infrastructure of the Soviet Navy is distinctive. Its primary purpose is to monitor personnel and ensure that the Navy remains completely subservient to the CPSU, although it is also responsible for boosting unit morale, increasing productivity, and preventing discipline problems.

Key Naval Posts Held by Submariners, March 1985

First Deputy Commander in Chief

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Chief of the Main Naval Staff and First Deputy Commander in Chief

Commander, Northern Fleet

Commander, Pacific Fleet

Deputy Commander in Chief for Combat Training

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Deputy Commander in Chief for Training

Chief of Staff, Northern Fleet

Chief of Staff, Pacific Fleet

Chief of Staff, Black Sea Fleet

Chief of Staff, Baltic Fleet

First Deputy Chief of Staff, Northern Fleet

Deputy Chief of Staff, Pacific Fleet

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Chief Navigator of the Navy

Deputy Head of the Directorate of Combat Readiness

Fleet Navigator, Pacific Fleet

Head of the Naval Academy

Head of Makarov Higher Naval School

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Head of Popov Higher Naval School

Head of Leninskiy Komsomol Higher Naval School

Head of Kirov School

Head of Nakhimov School

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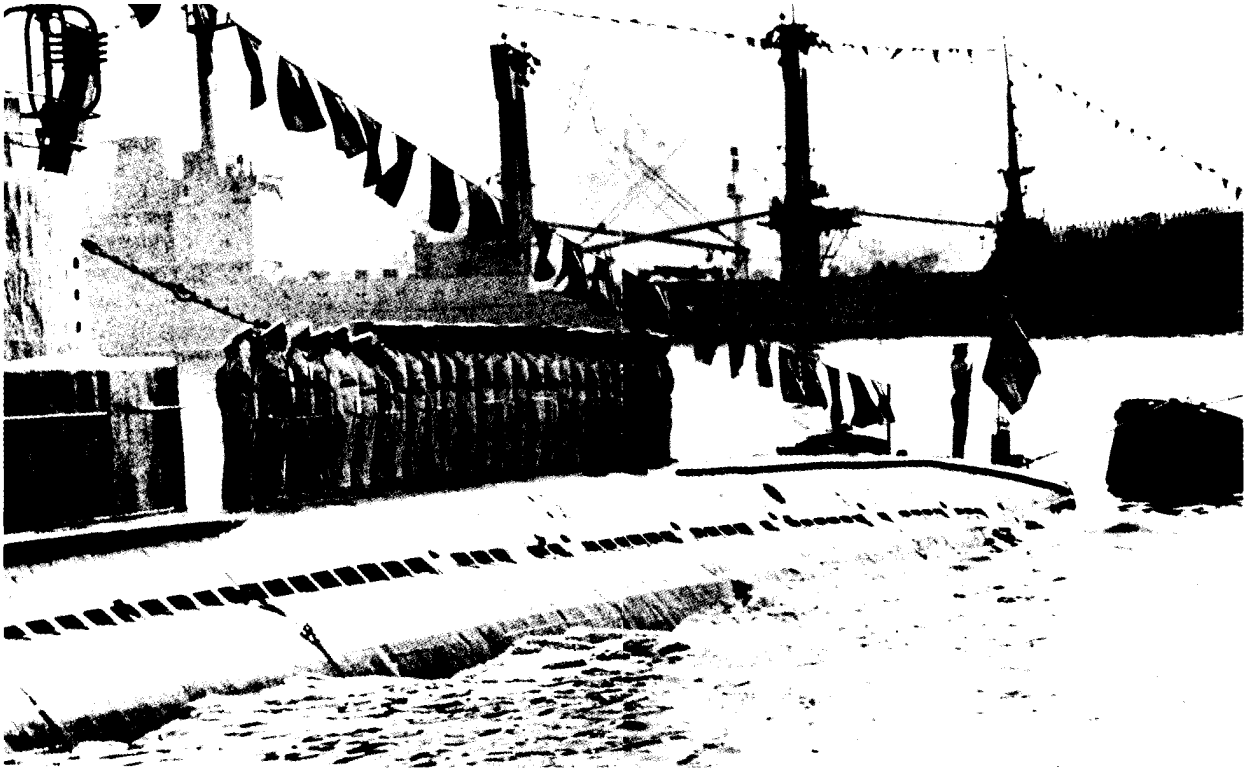


Figure 8. As a result of career inducements and selective manning policies, Soviet submariners are a cut above other naval personnel.



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The Communist Party's grip on the Navy is maintained through both direct and indirect methods. Indirect control is achieved because virtually all career naval officers and many career enlisted men belong to the CPSU. Although emigres indicate that many join simply to further their careers, they are nonetheless subject to party discipline, which exerts a powerful control over their actions. Every officer knows that, if he runs afoul of the party and is expelled, his naval career will be over and his prospects for a successful civilian career ruined.

The CPSU is represented directly by the *zampolit*, or political officer, who serves as a combination of secret-police officer and unit chaplain. After the commanding officer, he is the most influential man

aboard a Soviet vessel. The political officer's principal duties are:

- To be the "eyes and ears" of the party aboard a ship and recruit an informant network among the crew.
- To maintain political files on the officers and men and screen candidates for promotion, service in sensitive positions, or duty on foreign port calls.
- To conduct regular political meetings and indoctrinate the crew with Marxist-Leninist ideology, the views of the CPSU leadership, and the history of the Navy and the party.
- To be the information officer.
- To organize socialist competitions, motivate the crew to work harder and observe regulations, and instill a sense of duty and patriotism.

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Figure 9. Political meetings are an integral part of Soviet Navy life both ashore and at sea. As an element of psychological control in a totalitarian state, the bombardment of sailors with propaganda serves as a constant reminder of the CPSU's pervasive presence and authority.

- To share the responsibility for maintaining unit discipline with the commanding officer and to address crew grievances.
- To serve as morale officer and sports/recreation director.

Political meetings are an integral part of Soviet Navy life both ashore and at sea. We know from emigre sources that, while enlisted sailors are usually encouraged to join the party, they are not ordinarily required to. Attendance at political meetings, however, is mandatory regardless of rank or party affiliation.

The captive audiences at these meetings are subjected to regular doses of Marxist-Leninist dogma, and

various pronouncements by the regime are read and discussed. New directives from naval authorities and naval regulations are also addressed.

Political meetings play a central role in organizing a naval unit's socialist competitions. In cooperation with regular officers, the political officer helps ensure that appropriate competition objectives are set and progress duly noted. Outstanding crewmen are lauded for their efforts, while group pressure is exerted on those not deemed to be carrying their weight.

Emigres indicate that political meetings at sea are shorter and more businesslike, with considerably less emphasis on ideological matters. On many ships, they are little more than a medium for keeping the crew up to date on news from home, sports scores, and the TASS view of world events.

Effectiveness

Soviet writings indicate that the morale and ideological motivation of officers and enlisted men are considered a principal ingredient of the military might of the armed forces. How well the Navy's political infrastructure disciplines and motivates its people is a paramount factor in the naval morale equation.

We believe that, despite some glaring failures (such as the mutiny of the Storozhevoy crew in 1975), the Soviets generally have been effective in maintaining a tight party grip on the Navy and in guarding against subversive activities by real or potential dissidents. Officer career advancement is dependent on unquestioned support of the political system, and this, in turn, ensures that the most significant segment of the Navy is co-opted by the party.

The informant networks operated by political officers also seem to serve their purpose. Some emigres claim that, in many units, everyone knows who the informants are and avoids them. It seems unlikely, however, that a Soviet sailor can always be certain that what he says or does will not somehow get back to the authorities, and this generally serves as an effective deterrent to politically deviant behavior.

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We doubt that the political propaganda and ideological preaching to which Soviet sailors are regularly subjected are likely to motivate them to work harder or risk their lives in battle. Emigres overwhelmingly report that crews react with boredom and apathy to the incessant dogmatic outpourings, a finding that is consistent with Western observations of the Soviet civilian population (one emigre related that, in his unit, new draftees were forced by senior sailors to sit in the front at political meetings so the seniors could sleep in the back). [redacted]

Nonetheless, propaganda probably fulfills a useful function in the Navy. As an element of psychological control in a totalitarian state, the bombardment of sailors with propaganda serves as a constant reminder of the CPSU's pervasive presence and authority. As an illustration of the psychological pressure exerted, an emigre reported that, upon his ship's return from a cruise to Angola, the crew listened in silence to the Soviet state radio denouncing US criticisms of "totally fabricated" Soviet naval deployments to Angola—with no one even daring to joke about it. [redacted]

Propaganda may have some effect on raising morale, particularly in wartime or in periods of tension, if the regular party line is supplemented by appeals to the traditional Russian love for the motherland and suspicions about the aggressive intentions of foreigners. The value of propaganda to the Navy's morale in war might well be related to whether or not the average sailor could be made to believe his country was acting in a defensive rather than an aggressive role. The war in Afghanistan has shown that propaganda is not effective in motivating Soviet soldiers in countries where they are clearly invaders. [redacted]

In its attempts to raise morale and instill enthusiasm, the Navy's political structure achieves mixed results. On the positive side, the political officer provides a special avenue for crew grievances, and, in some cases, he serves as a special counselor for young sailors experiencing difficulty with Navy life. If he uses his influence effectively, he can potentially help crew morale by allowing sailors to feel they have a well-placed officer to represent their interests. Both emigre and press sources, for example, have described

cases where sailors, unfairly denied liberty for extended periods, approached the political officer, who intervened with the ship's captain. [redacted]

Frequent criticisms in the military press have revealed severe problems with apathy and bureaucratic attitudes on the part of naval political officers, however. Political training often is viewed as a panacea by the naval leadership. For many cases of discipline, morale, or unit performance problems, fleet authorities order more political training rather than remedies for the specific problem. [redacted]

Political training also takes time away from more practical naval activities—a trade-off that the Soviets appear willing to accept. Although we do not know precisely how much time is devoted to political instruction, one emigre reported his unit spent three hours a day, six days a week on it when they were in port. A more common figure, however, is one three- to four-hour meeting each week ashore, with short (20 minutes to an hour) daily meetings at sea. [redacted]

The political officer's function of reporting on the political reliability and general competence of commanders potentially creates a conflict between them. Emigres have described cases of strained relations where a ship's regular officers regarded the political officer as an "unnecessary appendage" in an otherwise technically oriented group. Usually, however, there is a significant commonality of interest between the two, because both are rated on their ship's standing within the fleet. [redacted]

Morale and Discipline

Living Conditions

Life in the Soviet Navy is hard. Sailors generally put in long hours with little time off. The largest and most important fleets—the Northern and Pacific—locate most of their base facilities in desolate areas with harsh climatic conditions. The resultant morale difficulties are made worse by an apparent unwillingness

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on the part of the Soviet leadership to devote resources to easing living conditions. Career personnel fare better than conscripts, although they too suffer from the effects of assignments in remote areas, particularly on their family lives. [redacted]

Recreational facilities at most naval bases are practically nonexistent, so sailors depend on trips to the nearest town for relief from boredom. Political officers, in their attempts to arrange for entertainment on base, are hampered by the lack of available resources and apparently confuse entertainment with indoctrination. A Soviet admiral writing about the use of films for entertainment, for example, listed the following titles of films that were to be shown to various ships and garrisons:

- "The Communist Party as the Organizer and Inspirer of the Great October Socialist Revolution."
- "Lenin, the Founder of the Soviet State."
- "The Friendship of the Peoples of the Socialist Community."
- "We Are Building Communism." [redacted]

A 1982 press article described housing facilities at naval bases that were plagued by poor construction, leaking roofs, and no heat. Some units go without mail from home for months at a time in the winter months, according to emigres. Emigres also report that poor-quality food in insufficient amounts is a problem for shore personnel throughout the Navy, and, in remote areas, where a harsh climate inhibits local agriculture, food shortages can cause morale problems for both sailors and their families. [redacted]

The Chief of the Northern Fleet Directorate for Trade, writing in *Logistics and Supply of the Soviet Armed Forces*, described some of the conditions that interfere with the quality of food in remote areas:

- Suppliers consider the Navy bases a low priority.
- Aeroflot does not allocate enough aircraft to transport produce.
- Northern Fleet bases lack sufficient food-storage facilities.
- The Navy's food trucks are not insulated.

The Navy has attempted to ease the food shortages by administering its own auxiliary farms in remote base areas, but, because of the harsh climate, the results have not been good. [redacted]

Harsh living conditions and the monotony of isolated outposts take their toll on the family life of married sailors. An emigre who served in the Pacific Fleet noted that, among a group of 20 young officers, half of the wives who accompanied them to Kamchatka returned to Leningrad after only three months. [redacted]

Conscripts receive very little pay. A naval infantryman who served with the Black Sea Fleet said parents had to mail money to their sons just so they could afford to eat a decent meal in the servicemen's club. Conscripts do receive a few token benefits, such as exemption from income taxes and preferential admission to colleges and trade schools after their discharge. [redacted]

Medical care for naval personnel is better than that available to civilians, according to emigres. [redacted] attributed this in part to officer pay scales, which enabled naval doctors to earn 10 percent more than their civilian counterparts. [redacted]

Leave and liberty are rarely granted for most conscripts; the general Soviet approach seems to be to keep them confined to the base or ship, where their activities can be more easily monitored and controlled. Most conscripts get one 10-day leave period during their term of service. Liberty policies vary greatly from unit to unit. One emigre reported his unit was allowed only one five-hour liberty every three months in Severomorsk, although a more commonly reported figure is one six-hour pass on weekends. Career sailors receive 30 days of leave a year (45 if they serve on nuclear submarines) and have evenings free in home port. [redacted]

When Soviet sailors are fortunate enough to get liberty, their lack of spending money greatly restricts what they can do. In the Baltic states, they also frequently face openly hostile civilians and occasionally are even forced to travel in groups for safety. In the rest of the USSR, relations between locals and Navy men are generally good. [redacted]

Conditions at Sea. Living conditions at sea tend to be spartan, as Soviet ship designs generally do not

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Figure 11. A sailor on liberty checks his watch. Navy leave and liberty policies tend to be restrictive, as the Soviets prefer to keep sailors confined to base or ship, where their activities can be more easily monitored and controlled.

emphasize crew habitability. Conditions are cramped by Western standards, and amenities such as air-conditioning are not found on many vessels. Emigres report that shortages of soap are common at sea, and one Northern Fleet captain authorized extra leave to any sailor who caught 10 rats aboard his ship.

Liberty in foreign ports is rarely granted for Soviet ship crews on distant deployments. At these ports, sailors ordinarily go ashore in small groups escorted by a junior officer or warrant officer. They are carefully briefed by the political officer beforehand on the dangers of contact with foreigners and are typically told that Western port cities are "false fronts" designed to hide the true squalor of life for the masses in capitalist countries. The visits are rather tame, by Western standards, and often consist of organized sightseeing or museum visits.

Despite the conditions at sea, emigres indicate that many Soviet sailors prefer sea duty to shore assignments, for a number of reasons. Soviet cruises are usually short, and, in some cases, conditions ashore may not be much better than conditions on ship. Emigres consistently report that food at sea is much better and is available in ample quantities. Ideological indoctrination is kept to a minimum on cruises. In addition, sailors receive bonuses for sea duty of extra pay or special credit certificates for purchasing scarce foreign goods in special import stores in the USSR. Many emigres also report a greater sense of teamwork or esprit de corps at sea, where relations between officers and enlisted men tend to be more casual.

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Effect on Readiness. In wartime, the spartan living conditions probably would have little effect on combat effectiveness. Russians have historically shown an ability to accommodate hardships in war, and Soviet civilians even in peacetime accept living conditions that would appear harsh by Western standards.

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In peacetime, however, substandard living conditions sap morale, erode enthusiasm, and contribute to alcoholism, AWOL cases, and other discipline problems. The loss of training opportunities because of poorly motivated sailors, for instance, indirectly affects the Navy's wartime readiness—it certainly accounts for some of the substandard operational performance noted in this report.

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The Soviets have written that the welfare of their sailors is a component of the fleet's combat readiness, and press articles confirm that the naval leadership is aware of the poor living conditions and their contribution to morale and discipline problems. Still, little has been done to improve the situation.

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Discipline

The Soviet naval leadership places little trust in its sailors, and naval practices discourage sailors from engaging in any activities that are not closely monitored and controlled. Soviet military writings have stated that "a high level of military discipline can be

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achieved only when commanders and officers constantly supervise the behavior of subordinates" while maintaining a "strict regimentation of behavior" and exact observance of naval regulations. To this end, discipline is maintained through a variety of redundant and overlapping informal, administrative, legal, political, and clandestine controls. [redacted]

Informal. In the Soviet Navy, senior conscripts rule over junior ones. By tradition, new draftees are forced, under the threat of physical violence, to serve on cleanup details, do laundry, shine shoes, and perform other menial tasks. [redacted]

The informal hierarchy is tolerated and even encouraged by officers and warrant officers because it lightens their already extensive supervisory duties. In fact, emigres have related that senior sailors were sometimes punished for being "too easy" on first-year conscripts. Evidence from emigres indicates, however, that this informal discipline sometimes gets out of hand, with conscripts being severely beaten and denied food. Such abuse has been serious enough to attract the attention of high-ranking naval authorities and has resulted in some criminal prosecutions. [redacted]

Administrative. Commanders have considerable leeway in disciplining subordinates. Administrative discipline generally deals with violations of military regulations such as communications security, dereliction of duty, and being absent without leave (AWOL). Punishment options include assignment of extra duties, denial of leave or liberty, demotions, or brig sentences. A commanding officer sometimes delegates minor discipline matters to a "military court of honor" composed of a sailor's peers. [redacted]

Legal. The Military Procuracy is a legal entity whose function is to investigate crimes, charge servicemen, and institute criminal proceedings. The procuracy handles problems such as theft of state property and assaults, although it can also address violations of military regulations such as being absent without leave. It may elect to file charges in cases where commanders have failed to take appropriate disciplinary measures. [redacted]

Criminal cases involving sailors are tried by a military tribunal, which is ordinarily made up of a permanent president and two "assessors" chosen from fleet officers, warrant officers, and some conscripts. A tribunal's punitive powers include the ability to impose sentences to the brig, disciplinary battalions, labor camps, and internal exile. [redacted]

Military journalists can also play a role in the investigations process. By law, correspondents from *Red Star* can subpoena and inspect official records pertaining to allegations received in letters to their editor. In March 1984, *Red Star* received over 24,000 letters from its readers pertaining to problems in the armed forces such as corrupt officers and misuse of position, in addition to numerous complaints about inadequate living conditions for sailors and their dependents. Although military correspondents possess no punitive powers, their investigations and articles frequently cause commanders to take corrective measures or result in the filing of charges by the procuracy. [redacted]

Political. The Communist Party handles infractions of party discipline, such as missing political meetings, as well as nonpolitical offenses such as drunkenness, theft, and going AWOL. Its punitive powers range from placing bad marks on a sailor's political records to expulsion from the party. The party is also indirectly involved in military legal and administrative matters because virtually all officers are party members. [redacted]

Clandestine. The KGB is also involved in the process of maintaining naval discipline, although we have only limited evidence of its activities. Emigres have reported that KGB officers in naval uniforms have been involved in investigations of mutinies, uprisings, living conditions, and unit morale problems and that regular officers are afraid of them. Emigres also say that the KGB places professional undercover residents on some naval vessels to recruit agent networks among the crew and that it considers it important to place good agents on ships destined for foreign ports. The KGB may also conduct background checks of crews

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Life in a Soviet Naval Brig

Emigres indicate that Soviet sailors greatly fear being sent to the brig. The following description of a typical brig is compiled from a number of emigre sources:

Most naval brigs are overcrowded, and commanders often must bribe wardens to have one of their sailors admitted. Upon arrival, a sailor first has his head shaved—one of the worst consequences of a brig term because it is an embarrassing stigma when sailors go on pass after being released to their units. They also have all nonissue clothing (usually sweaters from home worn under uniform shirts) permanently confiscated, along with belts and hatbands that could be used to attempt suicide. [redacted]

A typical brig day begins with reveille at 0500 hours, followed by “physical training” consisting of running around a room 100 times. Five minutes is allowed for a breakfast of “terrible food” (such as a soup made from fish and cereal) in small quantities. Prisoners are forced to run wherever they go. [redacted]

The day’s activities consist of some form of strenuous work, such as unloading sides of beef or cement bags from a truck. Work is accompanied by constant harassment from guards, who refer to prisoners as “brig rats.” Typically, they force prisoners to shovel snow and then move it

from one corner to another. Ten minutes are allowed for lunch before a return to work details. After a five-minute dinner break, work continues until 2300 hours when prisoners are returned to their cells. [redacted]

Prisoners sleep on boards, which are stacked outside to freeze during the day. No blankets are provided and cells are unheated—forcing prisoners to huddle together for warmth. For punishment, guards will fill a cell with water and remove bed boards so that prisoners cannot sit on the floor. [redacted]

Suicides are common in some brigs, which has led to speculation among sailors that some are actually murders committed by guards. [redacted]

In addition to the brig, the Soviet Navy is known to use “disciplinary battalions” to punish serious offenses such as striking an officer, murder, rape, or being AWOL for extended periods. We have little information on the disciplinary battalions, though emigres describe them as “horrible places” that are worse than the brig. Time served in these units is considered “lost time,” which must be made up through an extension of enlistment. Offenders who return to duty from disciplinary battalions are usually described as cowed and broken. Their value to the Navy is probably minimal, aside from serving as a warning to other sailors. [redacted]

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prior to foreign deployments and is called on to investigate incidences of political dissent and nationalism in the Navy. [redacted]

There is an ill-defined overlap between the responsibilities of naval political and KGB officers in monitoring naval personnel for signs of potential antiregime activities. We believe the KGB may be employed in special cases as a doublecheck on a crew's political reliability. Although we have no evidence to confirm this, it would be in keeping with the distrustful nature of the Soviet leadership and its tendency toward redundant responsibilities for discipline among various organizational components. Alternatively, there may be some cooperation between the naval political and KGB components, and it would not be unreasonable to imagine a political officer's being one of the KGB resident's agents aboard ship. [redacted]

Punitive measures taken by one component of the naval discipline system do not necessarily rule out additional action from another component. Thus it is possible that a seaman convicted of a crime could be reduced in rank by his commanding officer, expelled from the party by a political commission, sent to the brig by the procuracy, and finally beaten by his warrant officer. [redacted]

Despite the multiple controls on sailors and the strict regimentation of their activities, the Soviet Navy is beset by discipline problems. Conscripts often seem motivated to work mostly out of fear of punishment. As soon as their supervision is gone, work stops. Some Western observers of Soviet operations at sea noted Soviet sailors standing around idly with their hands in their pockets so frequently that they dubbed the practice "HIP" for "hand-in-pocket syndrome." They speculated that Soviet sailors may be trained in this behavior because it occurred regularly whenever there was work to be done above deck. [redacted]

More severe disciplinary problems, such as theft, assaults, drinking on duty, and AWOL cases, are a continuing problem. Commanders often attempt to cover up violations in order to receive high ratings for their unit's performance. This generally continues

until an incident occurs that makes higher authorities aware that problems exist and an investigation is started. Those caught are punished, and political officers are ordered to address the problems through additional "political instruction," which usually means lectures. Things usually return to business as usual, and the cycle begins again. [redacted]

Coverups

The Navy's personnel system strongly encourages commanders to cover up discipline infractions and unit performance problems. Soviet military writings state that, according to Navy policy, "the very fact that a breach of discipline occurs on board a ship is evidence of deficiencies in either the organization of the shipboard routine or the education and indoctrination of sailors or both." Reporting problems indicate to naval authorities that things are not well and can cause a ship to lose its standing in the socialist competitions, which, in turn, can cost a commander promotions, academy appointments, and other career advancements. [redacted]

A double standard exists regarding the reporting of unit problems. Officially, officers are told to be honest and can be punished if caught falsifying reports. In reality, things operate much differently. A military press article described an example—the case of an idealistic young lieutenant who decided to "report the true state of affairs" in his unit. The ship's commanding officer admonished him by asking, "And do you think they'll thank you for a report like that?" [redacted]

Evidence from a variety of sources indicates that coverups of discipline and unit performance problems are a widespread and recurring problem in the Navy. Emigres and press articles have referred to many cases of falsification of unit maintenance schedules, air traffic control logs, and records on personnel drinking problems and AWOL sailors. Several emigres have related instances of officers providing sailors with test questions and answers before an exam so they would look good in front of fleet inspectors. Although press articles indicate that naval authorities

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Figure 12. Two Views of the Soviet Sailor. A Soviet Navy photo (top); Western observations of a Soviet submarine crew in the Mediterranean (bottom).

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are concerned about coverups, they appear unable to correct the problem. [redacted]

Discipline Problems

The Navy is plagued by the same types of problems that trouble Soviet society in general—alcoholism, corruption, poor work habits, and absenteeism. Military discipline and close regimentation of sailors' activities control these problems somewhat, but naval authorities still have trouble keeping them from affecting readiness. [redacted]

Alcoholism. Heavy drinking has been part of the Russian culture for centuries. [redacted]

Soviet studies link alcohol to 80 to 85 percent of all the crimes committed in the USSR. It is also linked to many of the Navy's discipline problems. [redacted]

Emigres indicate that, in general, the Soviet Navy is strict regarding the use of alcohol on duty and disapproves of, but reluctantly tolerates, it off duty. Commanders' policies vary greatly, however, with some being virtually "dry" while others tolerate widespread drinking both on and off duty. [redacted]

Emigres report that all Soviet naval vessels except submarines are officially "dry." In recognition of their elite status and demanding duties, submariners are allowed one glass of wine or shot of vodka per day while at sea. Emigres report that alcohol abuse is not a problem among submarine crews at sea because of both strict discipline and a sense of pride and elitism. [redacted]

Many emigres report strict unit punishment for alcohol abuse. One reported that sailors could be given six months in a disciplinary battalion if an officer even suspected the use of alcohol on duty, while a defector said one of the principal reasons for his defection was that he was found drunk at his post during an exercise; he was apparently afraid of the consequences when his ship returned to the USSR. Typically, sailors who return from liberty intoxicated are given a 10- to 15-day brig term, and those who commit crimes while drunk can be sentenced to five additional days. [redacted]

Despite the remote location and tough discipline of many units, naval authorities find it difficult to control alcohol problems. Emigres indicate that the primary interests of young conscripts are women and alcohol, and, since remote locations and restrictive leave policies make it difficult to meet women, drinking is about the only remaining recreation. In many units, alcohol is the principal medium of exchange. [redacted]

The Soviet Navy uses alcohol extensively for equipment maintenance, but emigres indicate that very little of it finds its way to the equipment. Sailors in some units regularly draw 15 to 20 times the amounts authorized for cleaning equipment and consume all of it, using water or gasoline for cleaning. On one ship, there reportedly was a system for distributing the cleaning alcohol based on rank. Cleaning fluids and other substances with alcohol bases are sometimes filtered through gas masks (rendering the masks useless) and then consumed (sometimes rendering the sailor useless). According to emigres and press articles, the toxic substances consumed include deicing fluid, varnish, lacquer, glue, antifreeze, brake fluid, and solvent. [redacted]

Parents contribute to the problem by mailing vodka to their sons in the Navy, according to emigres. Soviet press articles have criticized the practice, but some parents apparently consider it their duty to try to ease the discomforts of their sons' service time. [redacted]

Some units have a lax attitude toward alcohol abuse—with predictable consequences. Emigres have described officers willing to overlook drinking on duty. Alcohol abuse by naval personnel has been linked to aircraft and vehicle crashes, fighting, insubordination, theft of state property, black-market activities, and the inability of servicemen to perform their duties. [redacted]

In general, officers are less likely than either warrant officers or conscripts to abuse alcohol on duty. Citations for drinking offenses can seriously damage an officer's career, and press articles reveal that officers have been cashiered for alcoholism. [redacted]

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Nevertheless, emigres have indicated that heavy drinking was tolerated in an elite helicopter unit, despite crashes by drunk pilots. Pilots must now undergo a medical exam before each flight to certify that they are not affected by alcohol. If an accident inquiry showed that alcohol was a factor, the doctor would be liable along with the pilot. [redacted]

Emigres indicate that, as a group, warrant officers are most likely to have severe alcohol problems. This is probably a result of their having significantly more spending money and personal freedom than conscripts, while lacking the officers' professionalism and concern over career prospects. [redacted]

Drug Abuse. Drug abuse does not appear to be a significant problem in the Soviet Navy because drugs are not as readily available as alcohol, and because most sailors come from cultural backgrounds in which alcohol use is more acceptable than drug use. There is evidence from emigres of limited drug use, mostly among Central Asian conscripts who are sometimes mailed drugs from home. Most sailors, however, never come into contact with them. [redacted]

Theft and Corruption. Startling instances of graft and personal use of state property go unnoticed in the Soviet system, according to Soviet press articles and emigres. A good example of this problem appeared in a 1983 *Red Star* article—the case of a submarine commander who used his crew to work in civilian industry. He was caught when a political officer noticed he had purchased three new cars in two years, prompting an investigation. Emigres report that officers sometimes allow their men to be used by civilian factories and then order them to steal construction materials, vehicle parts, and food for the unit. Such practices are common in Soviet society, so it is unlikely the Navy will be able to eliminate them. [redacted]

Frustrated by low pay, sailors sometimes sell state property, particularly vehicle parts and clothing, on the black market to raise money to buy vodka, according to emigres. Theft of small arms is rare, although they are sometimes illegally “borrowed” for

hunting. Such petty crimes probably do not have a serious impact on readiness, although they are a nuisance to officials. [redacted]

Fighting. Although fighting is a recurring discipline problem for the Navy, it probably has no significant effect on readiness. We know from emigres that mass brawls occur from time to time, mostly in naval construction units, where racial tensions are higher and the personnel generally of a lower class than elsewhere in the Navy. Not surprisingly, small fights between sailors occur regularly and often involve alcohol or harassment of new recruits. [redacted]

Desertion, AWOL, and Suicide. Despite the spartan living conditions in much of the Navy, desertion does not appear to be a serious problem, according to strong emigre evidence. There are several probable reasons, including strict controls on personal travel and relocation in the USSR that make it easy for authorities to track down deserters. Punishment for those caught is severe—usually a sentence to a disciplinary battalion. Moreover, at many bases in remote areas there is simply nowhere for a deserter to go. An emigre who served in the Northern Fleet reported that two deserters from his unit were found dead from exposure, even though they fled during the summer. [redacted]

Unauthorized or overextended liberty is a common problem in home ports, according to emigres. Boredom is a strong incentive for going AWOL, and emigres indicate it is an offense that typically carries a light punishment (such as extra duties). In some units, officers apparently make little effort to stop sailors from sneaking off base at night, and, throughout the Navy, warrant officers can usually be bribed for a pass. In foreign ports, however, discipline is strict and sailors are not allowed ashore without an official escort. [redacted]

Suicides in the Soviet Navy probably occur most often in remote areas because of the isolation of sailors and their families. Few emigres report any direct

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knowledge of suicides in their units, however, which indicates that they probably occur infrequently. []

The Ethnic Factor

Ethnic conflict among sailors does not appear to be a serious problem for the Soviet Navy. Occasional outbreaks of violence between Slavs and Central Asians occur, but they are usually confined to construction units. The majority of emigres, and particularly those who served in combat units, describe a state of relative ethnic harmony (despite the fact that many emigres are themselves from minority groups). []

The Soviet press states that one of the functions of military service is to assist in the Sovietization of the diverse ethnic groups that make up the Soviet empire. Emigres indicate, however, that the Navy is only interested in controlling minority peoples, getting from them whatever useful labor it can. []

Little attempt is made to accommodate minorities in the Soviet Navy. All orders are given in Russian, and the use of other languages on duty is forbidden. No Russian-language instruction is available, and those who cannot speak the language when drafted are assigned menial jobs where they are forced to learn a dozen or so basic Russian words so they can follow orders. []

The Soviet press in 1984 made several references to Central Asians being admitted to higher naval schools and indicated that entrance requirements may have been lowered for minority applicants. Although exceptional candidates will probably be taken into the naval officer corps—with fanfare over the “socialist brothers joining in the common defense against capitalists”—we think it unlikely that the Navy will pursue an active US-style affirmative action program. []

Most Central Asian ethnic groups are poorly qualified for naval service, lacking Russian-language skills and adequate schooling or premilitary training. Many of them prefer to avoid occupations in high-technology

fields. Moreover, joining the officer corps essentially means accepting Russification and a career closely associated with the central government—a prospect which many non-Slavs find distasteful. []

Naval authorities are apparently distrustful of non-Slavic ethnic groups, and most sensitive or critical Navy billets are reserved for personnel of Slavic origin. Emigres report that submariners—even the conscripts—are almost exclusively Slavic, and sailors of Jewish or Baltic extraction are sometimes transferred from vessels visiting foreign ports. []

The Soviets apparently believe such discrimination is justified. It may be influenced by memories of ethnic groups during World War II collaborating with the Germans or proving to be unreliable fighters. Moreover, we know from emigres that incidences of dissent by various ethnic groups have occurred in the Navy, and these probably fan traditional suspicions of ethnic reliability. []

We do not believe the Soviet Navy’s inability to integrate or co-opt non-Slavic ethnic groups into positions of responsibility will have a significant effect on its combat readiness. We believe, however, that such policies will make it more difficult for the Navy to respond to recruiting problems associated with the changing demographic composition of the USSR. They will also deny the Navy the services of technologically proficient Western minorities—Germans, Jews, and Baltic peoples—for sophisticated combat units. []

Reserve Personnel

As a result of infrequent and poor-quality peacetime training, most reserve personnel would probably be of limited value to the Navy in combat operations—a factor that degrades the Navy’s ability to fight a protracted war at sea. Reserve forces appear to be regarded by the naval leadership more as a peacetime auxiliary work force than as a wartime combat reserve. This neglect of the reserves may reflect a Soviet

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view that a conventional war with the West will be brief, so there is little point in diverting resources from regular Navy programs to prepare for the replacement of wartime casualties. [redacted]

The Navy draws its reserve personnel from discharged conscripts, career sailors, and ROTC graduates. Some ROTC personnel never serve a regular tour in the Navy, so their military experience is limited to what they receive in initial training and occasional reserve callups. One emigre described reserve officer training school as a "boring charm school" where students and faculty were indifferent and discipline was practically nonexistent. Everyone graduated, regardless of performance, because any failures would reflect poorly on the instructors. [redacted]

Emigres indicate that callups for naval reserve training or temporary duty occur irregularly and infrequently. One reservist, for example, served only one month of active duty in 18 years. Typically, personnel are recalled once or twice, usually within 10 years of entering the reserves, and serve from one to three months. Reservists from large cities near naval facilities appear more likely to be recalled on a regular basis, generally for about eight to 40 hours of evening classes per year. [redacted]

The quality of naval reserve training is poor, according to emigres. Training at sea is rare (one officer received his first shipboard duty 19 years after receiving his reserve commission), and reservists tend to be ignored by regulars, who do not take them seriously and do not have the time to supervise their activities. Reservists often receive no military training during callups, but instead perform manual labor for the Navy. The Soviet press has made references to the use of reservists to work on "urgent construction for the nation," and emigres have indicated that construction tradesmen are the personnel most often recalled. [redacted]

Morale among reservists is low, as many believe their services are neither needed nor appreciated by the regular Navy and that time spent on reserve duty is wasted. Some reservists, however, view reserve duty as something of a vacation, since discipline among reservists tends to be lax. [redacted]

Classroom instruction for reservists tends to consist of lectures on theoretical and political topics. Instructors apparently care little about these classes, and one former student said officers view reserve teaching assignments primarily as an excuse for late-night drinking in the officers' club. [redacted]

The poor training received by naval reservists would probably limit their wartime utility to construction and rear-area support. The Navy could recall officers and other men who had been recently discharged in the hope they would remember enough from their service experience to make them useful in combat assignments. Without retraining, most of these individuals would only be useful in the same billet and ship class in which they had previously served because of their narrowly specialized backgrounds. [redacted]

Merchant marine personnel—many of whom have served in the regular Navy or received ROTC training—would probably be of some value in billets related to their civilian work, such as surface navigation or nonnuclear engineering. But they would also require retraining to effectively perform many combat tasks. As a result, the Soviet Navy could find itself unable to quickly replace personnel losses in billets that are essential to submarine, ASW, and surface attack forces. [redacted]

Implications

We believe the Navy's personnel system, despite its many weaknesses, is adequate to support the limited naval operations required by Soviet war plans. The Soviets have taken personnel limitations into account in developing equipment, tactics, and operating procedures. Their war plans do not require most of their naval units to conduct operations as complex and demanding as those expected of US and other Western navies. Most of their fleet is intended to conduct defensive operations lasting only a few weeks, in waters relatively close to Soviet shore facilities, and characterized by setpiece combat situations. Under such conditions, personnel problems that would be serious in other navies would be viewed as less so for the Soviets. [redacted]

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If a war with the West became a prolonged conflict, however, involving repeated combat situations over large areas and placing a premium on tactical imagination and flexibility, we believe the personnel shortcomings would make it difficult for the Soviet Navy to adjust. [redacted]

If the Navy is forced to fight such a war, the strain on its personnel will greatly reduce its effectiveness—potentially negating many of the technological and quantitative gains made in recent years. Western planners may be able to exploit the vulnerabilities of Soviet naval personnel by tailoring operations to take advantage of the following weaknesses. [redacted]

Low Sustainability

A lack of emphasis on training in at-sea equipment repair, safety, and damage control, together with almost total reliance on officers to operate ships, means Soviet naval units will have less endurance than their Western counterparts. If forced to conduct prolonged sea deployments, they will be more likely to suffer casualties from maintenance problems and mistakes made by fatigued officers or less qualified relief personnel. [redacted]

Slow Reaction Capability

Because of unrealistic peacetime training, the tight control of ships by higher authorities, and a general lack of initiative by tactical commanders, Soviet naval units will probably encounter greater difficulty in reacting quickly to enemy actions than would Western forces in comparable situations. If opponents can keep combat operations moving quickly, emphasizing unpredictable and unexpected actions and the disruption of Soviet command communications, Soviet commanders will be forced to deviate from their plans and make rapid, on-the-spot tactical decisions—a behavior not emphasized in their training. [redacted]

Predictable Operating Patterns

The naval personnel system strongly encourages commanders to conduct operations “by the book” with no room for individual flair or variations. By studying Soviet methods, Western planners may be able to identify behavior patterns that can serve as a tipoff to Soviet intentions in battle. Rigidity and intolerance of

deviation from established norms make the Soviet Navy more susceptible to such operations analysis than Western forces. [redacted]

Prospects

The Soviet naval personnel system has been resistant to change over the years. It is likely to face an increasing demand for quality personnel, however, with the continued introduction of more sophisticated equipment. In addition, recent fleet-level exercises suggest the Soviets are considering wartime operations that will place increased demands on personnel—for instance, to operate conventional takeoff and landing aircraft carriers, to manage large surface task groups, and to extend sea control and sea denial areas farther from the USSR. Weaknesses in their personnel system may become more pronounced under such circumstances. [redacted]

Demographics trends—particularly the declining proportion of Slavs in the draft-age population—will also pressure the Navy’s personnel system. We believe the Soviets will deal with this problem by tightening restrictions on military service deferments and possibly by improving preinduction training of Soviet youths. [redacted]

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