

The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

SP - 129/84  
20 June 1984  
Copy 9

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH: Chairman, National Intelligence Council <sup>8</sup>

FROM: Lawrence K. Gershwin  
National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs

SUBJECT: Soviet Nuclear Weapons Stockpile

1. Several newspaper articles (see attached) and television news have carried reports on the Soviet nuclear weapons stockpile. The newspaper articles create the impression of a reversal in a basic intelligence judgment. This is not correct.

--The claim has been made, and continues to be true, that the Soviets lead us in strategic launchers, but that we lead in deployed strategic warheads. This point has often been made in public discussion. I would note, however, that our strategic warhead lead has narrowed and is small today.

--The relative sizes of the nuclear weapons stockpile, which includes strategic and tactical warheads, has never been part of this issue and has not been publicized. Now, because the numbers were revealed, it is being confused with the strategic warheads story.

2. I have a further concern: the estimate of the Soviet nuclear weapon stockpile is highly uncertain. DIA [redacted] and CIA's DDI are roughly in agreement on the numbers, but I believe there is a great uncertainty in the total number as well as the assessed rate of increase. [redacted]

[redacted] The size of the uncertainty is noted by the Washington Times, which cites a range of from 18,000 to 41,000 warheads, with a best estimate of 34,000. In my opinion, with an uncertainty this large, it is not right to categorically state that the Soviets lead us in nuclear warheads.

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SUBJECT: Soviet Nuclear Weapons Stockpile



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*Lawrence K. Gershwin*

Lawrence K. Gershwin

Attachment

SP - 129/84

SUBJECT: Soviet Nuclear Weapons Stockpile

Distribution:

- Cy 1 - DCI
- 2 - DDCI
- 3 - ER
- 4 - Chm/NIC
- 5 - VChm/NIC (Meyer)
- 6 - D/SOVA
- 7 - D/OSWR
- 8 - NIO/SP
- 9 - NIC/Registry

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# CURRENT NEWS

## PART I - EARLY BIRD EDITION - 0730



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NEW YORK TIMES 18 JUNE 1984 Pg. 8

## Soviet Said to Lead U.S. by 8,000 Warheads

By RICHARD HALLORAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 17 — The Soviet Union has moved ahead of the United States in numbers of nuclear warheads, according to a new Defense Department estimate.

Obtained by advocates of arms control, the estimate indicates that the Soviet Union has about 34,000 nuclear warheads for its bombers, long-range and medium-range missiles, artillery and cruise missiles.

The United States, by comparison, has 28,000 warheads.

The new estimate, prepared under the auspices of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Atomic Affairs, Richard L. Wagner, shows that the Soviet Union overtook the United States in nuclear warheads more than five years ago.

Until now, both government and private estimates of nuclear arsenals have reported the United States with a greater stockpile of nuclear warheads and the Soviet Union with a larger number of means of delivery, primarily in missiles.

A spokesman for the Defense Department confirmed that the Pentagon had determined that the Soviet Union had overtaken the United States in numbers of nuclear warheads. But he declined to discuss specific numbers either for the Soviet Union or the United States.

The spokesman said the new estimate, which shows that the Soviet Union reached equality with the United States in warheads in 1978, was based on recent intelligence assumptions and assessments that he said were more "sophisticated" than earlier versions.

President Reagan may have alluded to the new estimate in London on June 10 when he was asked about a large gathering by antinuclear protesters. Mr. Reagan said he wondered whether any of the London demonstrators "stopped to think that no one is demonstrating, and they're not demonstrating, in the nation that has the most nuclear weapons of all" — meaning the Soviet Union.

Mr. Wagner used the new estimate in testimony during a closed session of a Congressional committee in March, displaying a chart that showed a rise in the number of Soviet nuclear warheads since 1965 while the number of United States warheads gradually declined.

The chart Mr. Wagner displayed was obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by William M. Arkin, a specialist in nuclear arms at the Institute

WARHEADS...Pg. 2

WASHINGTON POST 18 JUNE 1984 Pg. 18

## Soviets Leading in Warheads, Pentagon Claims in Reversal

By Rick Atkinson

Washington Post Staff Writer

In an abrupt contradiction of conventional wisdom about the nuclear arms race, the Defense Department now says the Soviet Union has many more warheads in its arsenal than the United States.

A chart presented by a senior Pentagon official in closed testimony before a House Appropriations subcommittee on March 14 shows that the Soviets' nuclear stockpile surpassed that of the United States in 1978.

Furthermore, as depicted by Richard L. Wagner Jr., assistant for atomic energy to the defense secretary, the Soviets' warhead total now exceeds the all-time U.S. high in 1967, when the United States possessed about 31,000 warheads. Most experts have estimated that the Soviets have more delivery vehicles—such as missiles and bombers—but that the United States has more or about an equal number of warheads, about 25,000. The figures are classified.

Wagner's analysis is disclosed in an article by nuclear weapons specialists William M. Arkin and Jeffrey I. Sands scheduled for publication today in "Arms Control Today."

Arkin and Sands suggest that "this warhead gap appears contrived" in an effort "to bolster defense spending and shoot down arms control proposals."

But Wagner's chart shows a sharp and steady increase for the Soviet stockpile since 1965, compared with an equally steady decrease for the United States since 1976. No numbers are affixed to the trend lines.

PENTAGON...Pg. 2

BALTIMORE SUN

18 JUNE 1984 Pg. 1

## Europeans failing NATO goal

BRUSSELS (Reuter) — U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has sent a classified report to Congress saying West European defense spending is falling well below NATO's goal of a 3 percent annual real increase, NATO sources said yesterday.

The "burden-sharing" report has provided fresh ammunition for senators who want to link the continued presence of 350,000 U.S. troops in Western Europe to greater defense efforts by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, they said.

One source said the report, which the Pentagon is required to give Congress each year, said West European military spending rose on average by just over 1 percent after inflation last year.

The Senate is due to discuss amendments to the U.S. defense budget this week. They call for gradual cuts in American forces unless European governments agree to boost their own defense efforts and funding for joint NATO infrastructure programs.

The sources said senior U.S. NATO officials were lobbying strongly against the amendments as possibly counter-productive.

A Pentagon spokesman refused to comment on either the Weinberger report or the proposed amendments.

NATO GOAL...Pg. 2

Helen Young, Chief, Current News Branch, 697-8765 Daniel Friedman, Assistant Chief  
For special research services or information call Harry Zubkoff, Chief, News Clipping & Analysis Service, 695-2884

In a statement responding to Reuter questions yesterday, the U.S. mission to NATO said: "While we support the objective that all allies need to spend more to strengthen NATO's conventional defenses, we are opposed in principle to any move designed to shock the Europeans into spending more. We believe such a move would not accomplish the aim its proponents apparently have."

A senior U.S. NATO official said: "The way to get the Europeans to do more is not for us to threaten to do less."

The sources said officials had told congressmen that many European allies faced severe budgetary constraints and were trying hard to maintain defense while cutting welfare spending.

#### PENTAGON... Cont 'd

which show a wide gap by 1983 between the two stockpiles.

Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Don Brownlee said the warhead gap had "probably not" been disclosed officially before Wagner's testimony although "we've alluded to it before," a statement Arkin questioned in an interview.

President Reagan apparently alluded to a warhead gap on June 10 in London when he said of anti-nuclear demonstrators, "Hadn't any of them stopped to think that no one is demonstrating, and they're not demonstrating in the nation that has the most nuclear weapons of all [the Soviet Union]."

Arkin and Sands contend that the Pentagon's estimates could be exaggerated because they are calculated from unproved assumptions that the Soviets have placed multiple warheads on nuclear systems capable of carrying more than one. The estimates also assume that the Soviets have large numbers of nuclear "reloads" available, for example, for submarines, and that Soviet systems that can be used for either conventional or nuclear weapons are being used for the latter, the authors add.

"Our estimate of their stockpile is not 'worst case'... but a best estimate," Brownlee replied. "What Wagner was showing is that they are in fact ahead of us."

If the Soviet buildup is as dramatic as the Pentagon implies, Arkin and Sands said, defense officials "are being surprisingly cautious."

for Policy Studies here, and Jeffrey I. Sands, a researcher at the National Resources Defense Council.

The politics of the new estimate has begun to cut two ways. The Reagan Administration has used the estimate, as in confidential briefings to Congress, to argue that the Soviet Union is leading the arms race and thus the United States must expand and modernize its nuclear arms, including development of the MX missile.

Advocates on arms control, many of whom are critical of the Reagan Administration, are beginning to use the new estimate to underscore the pace of the arms race and the urgency of negotiations to bring the arms race under control.

Mr. Arkin and Mr. Sands make that argument in an article they wrote for the June issue of Arms Control Today, published by the Arms Control Association. The association describes itself as a nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting understanding of arms control and disarmament.

A spokesman for the Pentagon said that Mr. Wagner sought to justify the President's program to modernize the United States nuclear force. The most contentious issue there has been the intercontinental ballistic missile known as MX, or Peacekeeper.

#### Restrictions by Congress

That program has been continued under restrictions imposed by the House and it barely survived a Senate vote last week.

Mr. Wagner argued that the buildup of the Soviet Union's nuclear stockpile was unabated and would continue, since the Soviet capacity to produce warheads was so great, unless the United States displayed the ability to match Moscow if need be.

Mr. Arkin and Mr. Sands are also collaborating on a data book about Soviet nuclear weapons. In their article, they estimate that the Soviet stockpile of warheads ranges from 21,400 to 41,250, about half of them built since 1979.

The maximum figure, they explain, reflects an assumption that all Soviet missiles able to carry multiple independent re-entry warheads are indeed armed to the limit. In addition, they assume all silos able to be reloaded have warheads available for reloading and that artillery pieces and missiles able to fire both nuclear and conventional warheads have a full supply of nuclear warheads.

The minimum figure would reflect an assumption that the Soviet Union has assembled only enough warheads to load its weapons with the minimum number of warheads they are able to carry or fire.

Mr. Arkin and Mr. Sands asserted that the Defense Department had inflated the figures and called that a "warhead gap."

The spokesman for the Defense Department said that, in addition to the factors cited by Mr. Arkin and Mr. Sands, the Pentagon has other sources of information used to arrive at its new estimate. He declined to elaborate because those methods are top secret.

## Stockpile estimates vary widely

The Pentagon believes the Soviet Union's atomic stockpile ranges from 18,000 to 41,000 warheads, according to an analysis by two private nuclear weapons specialists.

If the higher figure is accurate, it would mean the Soviet stockpile is far larger than the estimated U.S. total of 25,000 to 26,000 warheads for weapons from battlefield to intercontinental range, William M. Arkin and Jeffrey Sands said in a study released yesterday.

Their estimates were published by the Arms Control Association, a private organization that has been critical of the Reagan administration's arms control and defense policies.

The possible size of the Soviet stockpile varies widely because the Kremlin has never published any information about how many nuclear warheads it has, Mr. Arkin and Mr. Sands said.

Similarly, the U.S. warhead total is only an estimate because it is Pentagon policy not to comment on the size of the American stockpile. But officials have not contradicted estimates that the U.S. total of nuclear weapons ranges from 25,000 to 26,000, a figure that has been widely quoted.

## KAL plane spying, says report

LONDON — The South Korean airliner shot down by Soviet fighters last September was on an intelligence mission to test Soviet radar reactions, according to a defense magazine quoted by the weekly Sunday Observer newspaper.

The Boeing 747 was steered deliberately into Soviet airspace so that Western intelligence could monitor the resulting Soviet radar and electronic signals, said the British magazine, Defense Attache. Britain's Economist magazine, which reported the Defense Attache story Friday, called it "the strongest case yet that Korean Air Lines flight 007 was involved in an intelligence-collection mission."

"The points raised [by Defense Attache] were all addressed at the time. We denied then any kind of intelligence gathering involvement in the incident," State Department spokeswoman Anita Stockman said yesterday.

## 3 Americans Killed in Sinai

### In Test Flight of a Helicopter

WASHINGTON, June 16 (UPI) — Three American servicemen, members of the multinational peacekeeping force in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, were killed Friday when a helicopter crashed being tested after repairs, an Army spokesman, Lieut. Col Phillip Ferguson, announced here.

Colonel Ferguson said he did not know the precise site of the crash or the cause.

The victims were identified as Chief Warrant Officer Charles Hurt, the pilot; Staff Sgt. Donald Chavis and Pvt. Ricardo Tornero. Their hometowns could not be learned immediately.

Colonel Ferguson said the Army's Aviation Safety Board would investigate the crash. "At this time, no foul play is suspected," he said.