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**Interagency
Intelligence
Memorandum**

**CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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*Implications for US-Soviet Relations
of Certain Soviet Activities*

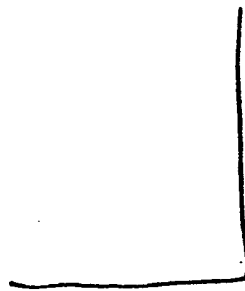
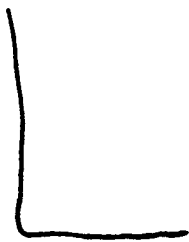
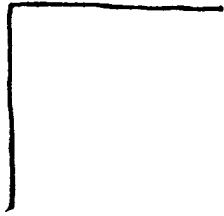
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25 June 1976

INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM*

IMPLICATIONS FOR US-SOVIET RELATIONS OF
CERTAIN SOVIET ACTIVITIES

1. In recent months several instances of Soviet behavior -- notably resumption of antisatellite testing, failure to comply with agreed procedures implementing the ICBM dismantling provisions of the Interim Agreement, and increased microwave irradiation of the US Embassy -- have raised questions about Moscow's specific motives and about broader Soviet intentions regarding the US. This paper:

- summarizes available information about these and other recent examples of puzzling Soviet military and intelligence activity;
- suggests explanations for their occurrence;
- places them in the context of overall bilateral relations; and
- addresses possible implications for Soviet policy toward the US.

2. We conclude that:

- a. The occurrence of these activities probably does not presage a major shift in general Soviet policy toward the US.
- b. The decisions to pursue most of these activities were taken primarily for operational and intelligence reasons. The Soviets have, nevertheless, been willing to

* *This memorandum was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for USSR and Eastern Europe and coordinated among CIA, DIA, State/INR and NSA.*

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do things that they knew in advance would arouse US concern. (It remains unclear which echelons made which decisions.)

- c. These activities are consistent with reduced Soviet expectations for detente with the US and with the less restrained stance that has characterized Soviet behavior during the last year or two.
- d. Moscow remains committed to its general detente line in relations with Washington, but we would not rule out other troublesome activities, particularly in the intelligence/counterintelligence field, during the coming months.

3. Even at the best of times, Soviet behavior has never been entirely consistent, satisfactory, or explicable from US perspective. Recent years have seen no slackening of the USSR's overall military programs or research and development efforts. But during the early years of Moscow's "peace program," Soviet forbearance and readiness to make tactical compromises were often in evidence. Brezhnev received Nixon in 1972 despite US bombing of Haiphong; the Soviets opened the emigration tap in the early 1970s; they toned down their anti-US propaganda to match their new image of reasonableness. The Soviet Union entered into bilateral arms limitation agreements and began to pursue, inter alia, a closer economic relationship. To promote its detente objectives, Moscow may also have decided to exercise restraint in certain military, intelligence, and counterintelligence activities.

4. Events of the last year or so, however, have led to some Soviet reappraisal. Although stable relations with the US still offer a number of advantages to the USSR, access to US grain being but one, Moscow is clearly disappointed with the trend in bilateral affairs. Since the Vladivostok summit in November 1974, the high water mark of Ford-Brezhnev relations:

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- The Soviets in December 1974 found the US Government unable to persuade Congress to authorize large credits and most-favored-nation trade status on acceptable terms.
 - A perception of US obduracy on the Backfire bomber and strategic cruise missile issues since Vladivostok raised Soviet suspicions about Washington's intentions to honor the understandings reached there.
 - The Soviets blame the US as well as Egypt for further reverses in the Middle East in September 1975 (Sinai II) and March of this year (abrogation of the Soviet-Egyptian friendship pact).
 - Strong US and allied pressure on Moscow to comply with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki accord has soured Soviet gains at their long-sought European Security Conference last August.
 - The Soviets became aware that US popular reaction to their role in Portugal and particularly in Angola was undermining US support for detente.
 - The rising anti-Soviet tone of the US presidential campaign led in March 1976 to the administration's dropping of the term "detente" and further raised Moscow's qualms about the extent of US commitment to a policy of easing tensions.
5. Other instances of friction and frustration could be added to this list.

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Antisatellite Tests*

6. In February 1976, the USSR resumed testing its antisatellite system. The last successful test of the Soviet system occurred in December 1971, five months prior to completion of the SALT I agreements, which accepted the use of national technical means to monitor arms limitation accords. In September 1972 the Soviets launched a target vehicle, but failed to follow it with an interceptor satellite, raising the possibility that political considerations intervened. No further launches occurred during the following three years [

7. [

] On February 12, 1976, they successfully placed a target vehicle in orbit but failed four days later to complete an attempted intercept. On their second try, on April 13, they successfully intercepted the target at the completion of the interceptor's first revolution.

8. The prime purpose of this exercise was to test a capability to attack a satellite on the first revolution (within 100 minutes of launch) of the interceptor vehicle. All Soviet tests prior to 1976

* *The technical evidence relating to these tests has been examined by the Weapon and Space Systems Intelligence Committee of the National Foreign Intelligence Board. The findings of that committee (representing State, CIA, DIA, NSA, Army, Navy, and Air Force, and with the participation of the National Reconnaissance Office and the Defense Special Missile and Astronautics Center) are presented in detail in "An Interim Assessment of the USSR's 1976 Satellite Interceptor Test Series," May 1976, TOP SECRET*

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involved intercept on the second rather than the first revolution. The practical consequence of this capability is a substantial reduction in warning time and consequent shrinkage of the period available to take countermeasures.

9. Assessment of the full significance of the latest tests is complicated, however [

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10. The resumption of the interceptor flight test program, in a profile achieving a one-revolution encounter, underscores the potential threat to our photoreconnaissance program. We believe that the Soviet tests in February and April more than likely were not intended to produce a time conjunction with US satellites. Nevertheless, Soviet officials at some level must have been aware of the geometry of the US satellite orbits. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that the time conjunction in the February test was intended. [

] In addition, the Soviets

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may in fact have known that they were resuming testing in a manner which could focus US attention on the vulnerability of its photoreconnaissance satellites.

11. Uncertainties regarding Soviet premeditation in the precise timing of the new ASAT tests are largely matters of degree, not of kind. The resumption of testing per se is the more significant aspect of the new series, raising the larger question -- why did the Soviets, after a four-year hiatus, resume a program that they knew would cause the US concern? This question is given additional sharpness because of the likelihood that those responsible for the USSR's anti-satellite program may have been ready for several years to carry out antisatellite tests. Among the possible answers are:

- The timing may be due simply to the fact that the specific one-revolution capability tested this year was not previously ready for testing.
- The US is making greater use of intelligence satellites, in tactical exercises related to war fighting as well as in strategic collection. The USSR knows that US capabilities will improve further in the near term and, furthermore, that the US increasingly depends on fewer, more productive satellites. This may have increased the military priority behind the Soviet antisatellite program. The Soviets may also have intended to remind the US that Moscow is in a position to obstruct US satellite reconnaissance.
- The Soviets may intend to develop an interceptor program at another major launch center, Plesetsk, as limited evidence suggests. For technical reasons related to tracking radars, only a one-revolution intercept can be made from Plesetsk. The Soviets may have deemed it necessary to test that capability from Tyuratam before relocating.

- China, which last successfully launched a satellite in 1971, launched three more, believed to be prototype reconnaissance vehicles, in the second half of 1975.
- More broadly, Soviet disillusionment with the course of bilateral relations may have overcome earlier reluctance to risk an adverse US reaction to ASAT testing.

Microwaves in Moscow

12. The microwave irradiation of the US Embassy in Moscow involves a similar puzzle as to why the Soviets chose the time they did to step up their effort. The irradiation phenomenon is not new; consistent with their traditional obsession about foreign intelligence activity the Soviets have for years been attempting to interfere with foreign monitoring and to increase the security of their own communications. There is good evidence that beginning in 1973 they installed and tested additional equipment designed to effect jamming of greatly increased strength and duration. (It is possible that these signals are used in attempts to technically penetrate the Embassy.) Until last year, however, employment of this greater capability was withheld. That hold was evidently first relaxed in May 1975, when the level of radiation rose sharply, and again in October when a further increase was detected.

13. The reason for the decision to proceed remains obscure. It may have been influenced by one or more of the following:

- Soviet embarrassment and dismay caused by US press accounts over the past several years, but especially during the summer of 1975, alluding to a US capability to intercept microwave communications in Moscow -- plus concerns over their actual vulnerability -- and by other widely publicized US intelligence "successes" such as the Glomar Explorer and US submarine penetrations of Soviet waters.

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-- Erosion of Soviet inhibitions as early detente expectations ebbed.

ICBM Dismantling

14. In late March 1976 the Soviets officially acknowledged their failure to meet the ICBM dismantling and destruction schedule required by agreed procedures implementing the Interim Agreement. Moscow is well aware of US sensitivity on compliance issues and last December devoted an authoritative Pravda "Observer" article to a rebuttal of US public charges of Soviet violations. [] indicates that at about the same time, between late December and late January, dismantling activity that had begun earlier all but ceased, indicating a deliberate decision at some level.

15. The reason for that decision is obscure. The 51 SS-7s involved are of marginal military potential; many of the launch sites had already been deactivated for reasons unrelated to SALT limitations. Official Soviet references to technical problems are unsubstantiated and not plausible. We note that regardless of environmental or resource constraints, Soviet ICBM modernization and conversion programs continued apace throughout the dismantling standdown. [] mid-April to mid-May indicates that dismantling has resumed and could have been completed, as subsequently claimed, by June 1. But clear and admitted non-compliance with a negotiated obligation, even if only temporary, is highly unusual Soviet behavior.

16. One possible clue lies in the sharp tone of Soviet spokesmen at the most recent session of the Standing Consultative Commission, an element of rancor notably absent from previous sessions. The Soviet negotiators were particularly exercised about US failure to remove an acknowledged impediment to Soviet technical means of verification, namely the environmental covers used during the upgrading of Minuteman silos.

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17. The Soviets first mentioned their problem with the Minuteman shelters in mid-1973; they raised the issue formally at the special SCC session devoted to compliance questions in January 1975. The US continues to employ these temporary shelters and has enlarged them twice, in 1973 and 1975, since the Interim Agreement was signed in May 1972. It is possible that Moscow believed that its dismantling slowdown would prove an effective object lesson to the US, although as recently as this spring the Soviet SCC commissioner expressly denounced any attempt to link one compliance issue to another.

18. Subsequent dismantling suggests that Moscow does not wish to see the SALT process disrupted. Nevertheless, the Soviets appear dubious about the chances for a SALT II agreement this year and are probably concerned that the Interim Agreement could lapse without a replacement. Thus Soviet officials at some level may have been unwilling to continue a dismantling program that could eventually amount to unilateral force reduction.

19. Neither of these explanations is fully satisfactory, nor are others which have been advanced. The dismantling slowdown remains the least explicable of recent unusual Soviet activities.

Other Activities

20. Two additional activities, falling within the general time frame of the three examined above, may carry implications for Soviet policy toward the US.*

* We have looked at other recent Soviet activities including:

- Testing this year of the normally MIRVed SS-17 and SS-19 ICBMs with single warheads.
- Construction last year on the Kamchatka Peninsula of an ABM tracking radar seen previously only at the ABM test range at Sary Shagan.
- Acceleration of conversion of SS-9 silos to accommodate the larger, more modern SS-18 ICBM.

Our examination persuades us that these activities probably involve routine Soviet pursuits such as improving and refining existing military capabilities. They do not in themselves appear to presage any notable shift in policy.

- Appearance at the Vladimirovka advanced weapons research center since October 1975 of a new possible long-range cruise missile.
- Renewed penetrations of the Alaskan air defense zone, beginning in February 1975, by Bear D reconnaissance aircraft.

21. The possible cruise missile displayed at Vladimirovka (the Soviets have made no effort to shield it from US reconnaissance) may well represent a reaction to US strategic cruise missile programs. US reluctance to prohibit the strategic cruise missile is, in Soviet eyes, a serious impediment to a new SALT agreement. Appearance of the Vladimirovka object, if it is a cruise missile rather than a target or reconnaissance drone, probably is meant to reinforce public and private Soviet warnings that US deployment of such a new strategic weapon would provoke a Soviet response.

22. Close-in Soviet reconnoitering of Alaska is, like the ASAT testing, an activity which the Soviets suspended for a number of years, then resumed. Prior to 1975, the Soviets made eleven penetrations of the Alaskan air defense zone, the last in 1969. Apart from an isolated flight in February 1975, none was undertaken until last winter, when five were made in the December-February period, a sixth in May, and another in June (none closer than 30 miles off the coast).

23. There is no obvious explanation for the decision to renew these flights. They may be related to generally bolder and more active air- and sea-borne reconnaissance programs by the Soviets observed during the last year.

Political Considerations

24. There is no doubt that detente remains the official line. Brezhnev made that explicit in February at the 25th Party Congress. []

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Soviets continue to cooperate with the US on various matters; successful negotiation of a complex agreement on peaceful nuclear explosions is one recent example. They continue to urge greater collaboration on a range of other subjects.

25. On the other hand, expressions of concern about trends in the US have become standard fare for Soviet spokesmen. Despite his profession of faith in detente, Brezhnev took a sober stance on relations with the US in his February speech and has strengthened that note in subsequent remarks. Soviet media have since become increasingly critical of Washington, taking a harsher view of the Ford administration. Moscow appears confused about the course of the presidential campaign, but is clearly fearful that US policy toward the USSR is likely to stiffen regardless of the outcome in November.

Some Hypotheses

26. With this as background, several possibilities suggest themselves:

27. First, we may be over-interpreting the evidence. It is possible that these recent Soviet activities represent an accumulation of individual program decisions with the effect of a generally more aggressive Soviet stance but without a prior general decision to that end. In Soviet eyes certain of these activities, e.g., irradiation of the Moscow embassy, probably bear more of a defensive than offensive character.

28. If, on the other hand, the Soviets are deliberately removing previous restraints on a variety of military, intelligence, and counterintelligence programs, it may reflect a feeling in Moscow that, in the light of deteriorating bilateral relations, decisions concerning national security matters must

give greater weight to direct Soviet interests and less to US reactions. Under this interpretation, the troubling activities we have examined could reflect:

- the policy of a united Politburo;
- the inconsistent actions of a divided leadership;
- initiatives taken without full Politburo knowledge or approval, or even with no Politburo member being informed in advance.

29. On the face of it, the Moscow leadership appears basically united on current foreign and defense policy. Brezhnev has traditionally been at pains to develop a consensus on these issues. In the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, it is easy to conclude that the leadership has been essentially in step during the transition to the blunter, less accommodating policy we have seen.

30. On the other hand, we do occasionally glimpse signs of disagreement on foreign policy issues. There is some evidence, for example, that the Soviet leaders were divided last summer on at least certain aspects of Moscow's involvement in Angola. In a more recent example of possible pulling and hauling in the Kremlin, the carefully drafted May Day slogans of the party Central Committee this year omitted the usual call to make detente "irreversible." The phrase was subsequently restored to good standing in both Pravda and Izvestia, but the impression remains of differing Soviet views of the viability of detente. We have also seen suggestions that the Politburo operates less cohesively when Brezhnev is sidelined by physical problems, as he has been repeatedly since late 1974. In any event, we cannot dismiss the possibility that most, if not all of the troubling departures from recent Soviet practice represent a partial shift in the Politburo balance with respect to policy toward the US.

31. The Politburo-level representation of the ministries of foreign affairs and defense and of the KGB suggests that at least one Politburo member was involved in deciding on most of the activities examined. We know that the Politburo's sieve has a surprisingly fine mesh. Nevertheless, the possibility cannot be dismissed that in some cases military or intelligence authorities have acted without top-level approval with the leadership becoming aware -- or fully aware -- only after the fact. The military, for example, might have been particularly agitated about the prospect that ICBM dismantling required of the USSR, but not of the US, could prove so disadvantageous if SALT II failed that it suspended destruction activities on its own, or gave some deceptive explanation. To extend this speculation, behavior of this sort, once discovered, might have contributed to the appointment of a civilian to succeed Marshal Grechko as Defense Minister. While we can only theorize about specific episodes of this sort, we have good evidence of recent communist party resolve to strengthen its supervision over the military.

Further Possibilities

32. Moscow may make some moves in the near future intended to shore up relations. Indeed in recent weeks the USSR has publicly reemphasized its interest in an early SALT II agreement and moved in a positive direction on the issue of throwweight definition, signed a treaty on peaceful nuclear explosions, and tabled data on Warsaw Pact personnel levels in the MBFR talks. Nevertheless, we can raise as examples a number of unwelcome possibilities similar to the activities examined in this paper that are less sensitive to US concerns. The Soviets might:

- adopt additional concealment and deception measures, including more extensive encryption of missile telemetry.
- expand active countermeasures to Western SIGINT collection.

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- conduct further antisatellite tests, perhaps at other altitudes.
- raise the level of harassment of US citizens in the USSR, especially in reciprocity for anti-Soviet actions in the US.
- react more strongly to US destroyer incursions in peripheral areas such as the Black Sea and Sea of Okhotsk.

33. Other possibilities could entail in terms of substance or degree more serious departures from past Soviet policy:

- further instances of slippage behind their ICBM dismantling obligations (which increase as they launch additional modern ballistic missile submarines).
- demonstration, if not deployment, of a mobile ICBM.
- direct involvement in Southern Africa or the Middle East.
- acceleration of Soviet ABM research and development programs.

34. Finally, we would not underestimate the Soviets' capacity for ineptitude or miscalculation. Their willingness to put themselves in unambiguous violation of the agreed procedures implementing the Interim Agreement during a US campaign debate over Soviet behavior is difficult to interpret in any other fashion, whatever their tactical aim. We cannot rule out similar misreadings of the US or lack of adequate forethought in coming months.

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