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MICROFILMED

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MEMORANDUM

**MICRO
ONLY**

MBFR: Implications of Dropping the Requirement
for Reduction of a Soviet Tank Army

1. It has been proposed that the US amend its negotiating demand for withdrawal of a Soviet tank army with five divisions, 68,000 men, and 1,700 tanks to omit the requirement that the divisions, manpower, and tanks comprise a tank army. We have examined this shift in terms of its implications for military capabilities, negotiability, and verification.

2. We assume that neither of the negotiating options would constrain the organization or location of the residual force. That is, the Soviets would be free under either option to shift residual forces within the NGA to fill any gaps left by withdrawing units or to meet what are perceived to be military or political requirements. Under the current option, for example, the Soviets would be free to shift forces from elsewhere within

Comments and queries regarding this memorandum are welcome. They may be directed to [redacted]
Office of Strategic Research, [redacted]

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the NGA to fill the void left by the departing tank army. (In fact, we doubt that either side will accept constraints on re-locating or reorganizing its residual forces.) Under the proposed option, the reduction could be spread immediately throughout the force. Thus, either option would permit the Soviets to take the actual reductions wherever they chose.

Military Capabilities Considerations

3. The proposed option almost certainly would have less military impact, though the difference might well be minor. Dropping the requirement that the Soviets withdraw an army would allow them to retain the existing army command structure and non-divisional combat and support units that would otherwise be part of the withdrawal package. For each army these include a Scud surface-to-surface missile brigade with 12 launchers, an SA-4 brigade, an SA-2 regiment, a AAA regiment, and various engineer, motor transport, and signal units. If these remained in the NGA, the Soviets would have the same number of armies (albeit smaller), each division of which would enjoy, proportionally, a greater measure of non-divisional support than it does currently. In many ways, however, the contrast between the options in terms of overhead support is a question of Soviet convenience. Neither

option imposes limits on other than manpower and tanks, so that, even in the case of the tank army, the Soviets could reintroduce the overhead elements once they had been withdrawn.

4. The present option would require the Soviets to withdraw the 1st Guards Tank Army (4 tank and 1 motorized rifle divisions), but the proposed option would permit them to choose for themselves the mix of tank or motorized rifle divisions to be withdrawn. We doubt, however, that the Soviets would take advantage of the opportunity offered by the proposed option to substitute motorized rifle divisions for all tank divisions in a withdrawal package. The motorized rifle division has been so improved in the past several years that it now has greater overall firepower and versatility than a tank division. The Soviets might consider the motorized rifle division to be the more valuable, because of its greater utility in forcing a breakthrough in a non-nuclear conflict. Both sides now anticipate that a NATO-Warsaw Pact war would commence with a perhaps protracted period of conventional warfare.

5. The existing option would require that the Soviets take the reduction of some 18,000 non-divisional personnel in the form of integral combat and support units, many of which are required to be at a higher combat readiness than most support

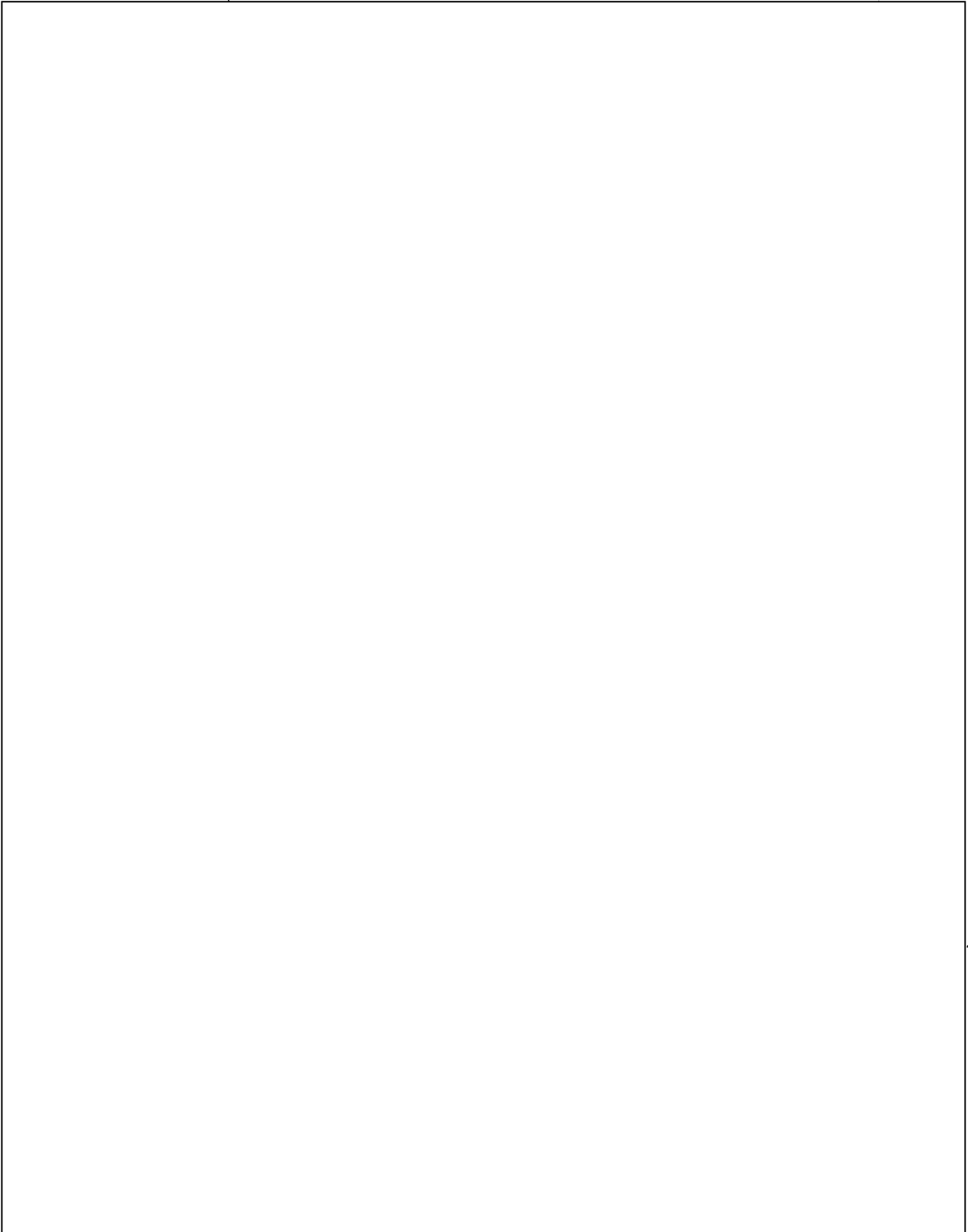
units and many of which are manned by technically trained personnel. This certainly would have a more deleterious effect on Soviet military capabilities than if these non-divisional reductions could be taken in unskilled personnel from units that were not required to be at a high state of readiness.

6. Negotiability: The Soviets probably would be more likely to accept the proposed option, because its impact on their military capabilities would be less than that of the existing option. The proposed option would leave them with an intact army command and support structure around which to reconstitute the force as they chose. Moreover, this option would provide them greater flexibility in spreading the reductions and restructuring residual forces with minimal redeployments. Rather than shift divisions from rear areas to fill the void created by withdrawal of a tank army, the Soviets probably would prefer to withdraw precisely these rearward divisions initially.

7. Verification: The verification issue is similarly two-sided, [redacted]

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