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# NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

Soviet Policy in Asia

Annex

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The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, and the NSA.

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**Abstaining:**

The Assistant General Manager, Atomic Energy Commission, and the Assistant to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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NIE 11-9-71

SOVIET POLICY IN ASIA

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## THE SINO-SOVIET MILITARY BALANCE

### A. The Soviet Side

1. *Strategic Forces.* The Soviets have long possessed massive strategic offensive and defensive capabilities which could be employed against China in the event of full-scale war. Any Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) could be targeted against China. There are more than 200 heavy and medium bombers in the Far East Long Range Air Army (FELRAA), and sufficient airfield space in the eastern USSR to accommodate about 500 more bombers from other Long Range Aviation (LRA) units. These bombers could deliver either conventional or nuclear strikes on Chinese strategic targets. The Soviet Pacific Fleet headquartered at Vladivostok has about 150 major surface combatant ships and submarines, and more than 250 combat aircraft and helicopters. Soviet air defenses (PVO) within about 300 miles of the Chinese border include about 500 interceptor aircraft and about 200 occupied surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites (SA-2, SA-3, and SA-5). In addition, the Soviets have begun to deploy SA-4 missile units to the border region. These can be used either in their primary role for defense of ground forces or for defense of critical areas.

2. We can identify certain changes in Soviet strategic forces over the past few years which seem to be related to Soviet concern for China. About 27 to 36 SS-12 (Scaleboard, 500-mile range) mobile ballistic missile launchers have been deployed in the border area since early 1967. (On the other hand, within the last two years the Strategic Rocket Force (SRF) has removed about 40 medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missile (MRBM/IRBM) launchers from the Soviet Far East.) It is also clear that the Long Range Air Force has devoted increased attention to China-oriented operations. The headquarters of the FELRAA was recently relocated to the Trans-Baikal area. Also it is believed that in the past year or so, bombers have engaged in exercise activity simulating China as a target.

3. *Border Guards and General Purpose Forces.* There are some 70,000 KGB Border Guards stationed along the Chinese border. The Border Guards are well-trained and equipped. They are deployed along the entire border and to some extent cover gaps between major ground force concentrations. They bore the brunt of the fighting during the frontier clashes of the 1960s.

4. The Soviet ground and tactical air forces have undergone the most striking changes di-

rectly attributable to the China problem. At present the Soviets have about 40 ground force divisions in the border regions and in Mongolia in locations which indicate they are primarily earmarked for operations against China. This figure is nearly triple the number in the same area in 1965, when the buildup began. The area itself embraces the present Central Asian, Trans-Baikal, and most of the Far Eastern Military Districts (MDs), plus Mongolia. Four divisions in the Siberian MD are available for use as reinforcements to the border region if required. In addition there are about seven divisions in the Turkestan MD, and three in the Far Eastern MD, which also probably would be available.

5. In general, we believe that the ground forces are prepared for defensive and—without reinforcement—limited offensive contingencies. Only a few divisions are fully combat ready. Among those which are not, some lack one or more regiments, but most have one or more combat regiments and some combat support elements sufficiently manned and equipped for immediate commitment. They lack varying amounts of combat and logistical equipment, and probably manpower. For the most part, the understrength divisions are being developed. In the forces located in the southern Primorskiy Kray, conventional field artillery support is at a higher level than that found in forces opposing NATO.

6. The forces are well prepared to conduct tactical nuclear war. In addition to the previously mentioned Scaleboards, there are four brigades of 150 mile Scud missiles and a unit of four 300 mile Shaddock cruise-missile launchers. Most of the divisions have free rocket over ground (FROG) battalions of 3 or 4 launchers with a firing range of 19 to 38 miles, depending on the model.

7. More than 800 combat aircraft and some 300 helicopters assigned to tactical air forces (TAF) are available to support the ground

forces in the border area. Excluding helicopters, this represents an increase of about 600 TAF aircraft since 1965. More than 100 of these TAF aircraft are capable of carrying out nuclear missions.

8. With respect to logistics, there appears to be sufficient depot capacity to permit stockpiling of enough ammunition to sustain the ground and TAFs for about 60 days and enough petroleum for 120 days. The Trans-Siberian Railroad, if utilized only for military traffic, could transport the equivalent of 3 divisions per day on the section west of Lake Baikal and slightly less east of it. It would take, by rail, nearly three weeks to bring existing forces to their full offensive combat strength. In an emergency the Soviets could sustain an airlift of approximately 10,000 men and 4,300 metric tons of cargo a day from the European USSR to the border area, but could handle only a small number of military vehicles. Soviet airlift capability will increase substantially with the expected rise in the inventory of AN-22 heavy transports—which can carry almost any type of ground force equipment. The Soviet merchant marine has substantial sealift capability. At present, however, it takes about 45 days sailing time (at 15 knots) from either Odessa or Leningrad to Vladivostok. With the Suez Canal open, it would still take about 25 days from Odessa, or 35 days from Leningrad.

9. The existing build up of forces near China probably has slowed the modernization of Soviet forces in the west. Some types of modern equipment, such as the T-62 medium tank and the FROG-7 tactical missile system, have been delivered to some Soviet units near China while Soviet forces in Eastern Europe were not yet fully equipped with these items. Other types of military equipment have been assigned to the China border in significant numbers prior to their deployment west of the Urals. Some pilots and certain

other specially qualified military personnel have been assigned on a priority basis to the China border area.

10. In sum, the combined manpower of KGB Border Guards, Ground Forces and TAF in all the MDs mentioned above (Turkestan, Central Asian, Siberian, Trans-Baikal, and Far East), and in Mongolia, probably is on the order of 500,000. There are some 40,000 Mongolian troops, mainly ground forces and border guards. There are in addition substantial numbers of personnel manning other units in the area—PVO, LRA, SRF, and the Pacific Fleet.

#### B. The Chinese Side

11. *Strategic Forces.* Although the very modest Chinese strategic offensive capabilities are growing, no operational ballistic surface-to-surface missile (SSM) sites have yet been identified. The Chinese apparently have conducted troop training on the MRBM which could be targeted on almost all major Soviet cities in Soviet east Central Area (e.g., Tashkent, Alma-Ata), Siberia (e.g., Novosibirsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk), and the Far East (e.g., Chita, Khabarovsk, Komsomolsk, Vladivostok). This MRBM, however, probably is a cryogenic system and may be deployed only in limited numbers.

12. The Chinese have also been testing and conducting training with a missile in the IRBM class, which they may ultimately deploy in silos. The exact range and payload capabilities of this missile have not yet been determined. But it seems probable the missile will be able to reach some Soviet cities west of the Urals. The Chinese also are working on an ICBM system; we remain uncertain regarding its state of development. In any event, by the mid-1970s, the Chinese could have a mixed force of deployed strategic missiles, probably totaling something well short of 100 launchers. This total might include some ICBMs.

13. The Chinese have about a dozen obsolete (propeller-driven) TU-4 bombers, over 300 IL-28 jet light bombers, and over 30 TU-16 jet medium bombers. It is probable that the TU-16s are assigned a strategic nuclear mission. (The IL-28 could deliver fission weapons or possibly thermonuclear weapons;

TU-16 production began in 1968, and the Chinese could build up a force of some 200 TU-16s by the mid-1970s. The TU-16s could deliver three megaton bombs to Soviet targets within range,<sup>1</sup> although they would be highly vulnerable to Soviet air defenses.

14. Although the Chinese have undertaken an extensive shipbuilding program, they will not for some time constitute a significant threat to the USSR. The Chinese Navy (CCN) is primarily a coastal defense force with about 40 submarines, backed up by over 30 Osa/Komar type patrol boats, constituting the majority of its attack force. Current construction of a Chinese designed destroyer along with additional submarines and guided missile patrol boats will increase the CCN's coastal defensive capabilities over the next five years. These programs currently being pursued reflect Peking's concern regarding the vulnerability of China's long maritime frontier and the need for an adequate seaward defense.

15. Chinese air defenses remain thin but not negligible. Prior to 1965 the Chinese had less than 12 operational SAM (CSA-1) units. There are now about 35 operational CSA-1 units in China, of which 20 are in the Hsian, Peking

<sup>1</sup>TU-16 operating radii are as follows: maximum coverage with normal load (6,600 pounds) is 1,650 miles with no refueling, 2,300 miles with one refueling; maximum coverage with maximum load (20,000 pounds) is 1,300 miles with no refueling, 1,950 miles with one refueling.

and Shenyang Air Districts.<sup>2</sup> Prior to 1965 few Chinese SAM units were used to deter reconnaissance overflights. The present pattern appears to emphasize defense of key strategic areas, such as Peking, Lanchou, and other nuclear, missile, and population centers. Despite the continuing increase in numbers, Chinese SAM capabilities will remain modest over the next five years.

16. The Chinese have improved their radar coverage near the Soviet and Mongolian borders over the last several years. In addition, Chinese-manufactured jet fighters are being added to the fighter inventory. Many of the fighters have been assigned to the three northern Air Districts since 1965. These changes, however, should be considered more as a modernization and natural upgrading, rather than urgent increases in areas immediately adjacent to the border. The Chinese Air Force probably could not thwart a large-scale Soviet bomber attack, but could make repeated attacks costly.

17. *General Purpose Forces.* China's principal advantage over the USSR is the obvious one of military manpower potential. Chinese reaction to the Soviet military buildup, in terms of redeployment of their own ground force divisions, has been relatively modest. In 1965, in the area encompassed by the present four northern MRs there were some 65 divisions. By 1969 this figure had been reduced to about 60 as the result of withdrawals from the Shenyang MR during the Cultural Revolution. Since the border incidents, the Chinese have deployed units northward, so that there are about 70 divisions in the four MRs. The change since 1969 indicates that

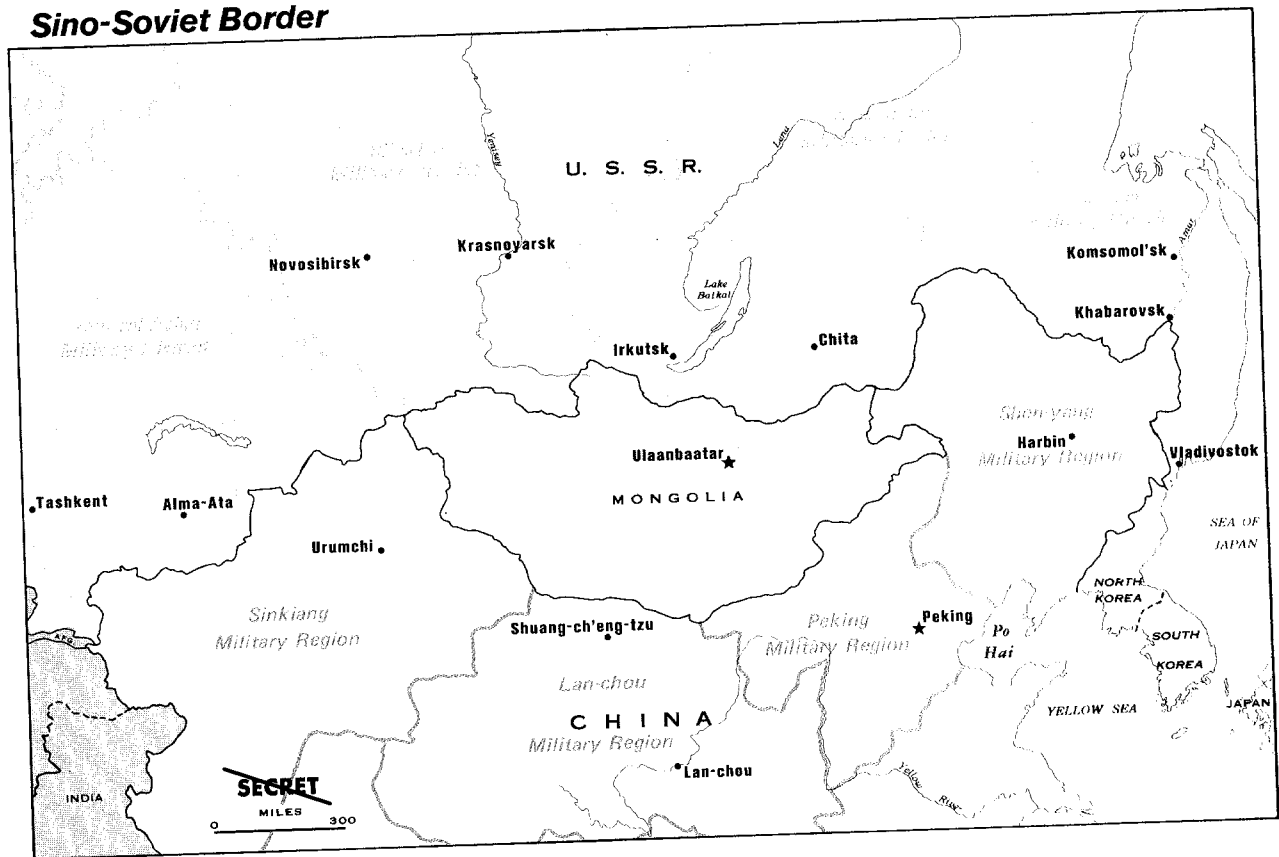
<sup>2</sup> These three Air Districts cover the same area as the four northern Military Regions (MRs).

the Chinese have made a limited response to the overall Soviet threat. Overall Chinese Communist Army troop strength in the four MRs bordering the USSR and Mongolia numbers about 1 million. To date, no major military elements have moved to the border itself; instead the bulk of ground force deployments and construction of defense positions are well back from the border (200 to 500 miles). Chinese strategy seems based on defense in depth involving harassment of invaders as they move into China. This strategy may envisage some role played by elements of two paramilitary organizations, the Production and Construction Corps (PCC) and the Armed Militia. Despite the impressive size of these forces, however, we do not believe they would be capable of conducting an effective defense against a large-scale Soviet invasion.

18. A Chinese ground force division is believed to have nearly 14,000 men at full strength; its Soviet counterpart at full strength has about 10,000 or less. But the best of the Chinese divisions in those four MRs are believed to have barely a third of the artillery and wheeled vehicles, and a sixth of the tracked vehicles of their Soviet counterparts across the border. The Chinese are developing and manufacturing their own armored personnel carriers and at least two different types of tanks. Even so, it is doubtful the Chinese could do much to overcome the qualitative disparity between their divisions and the Soviet counterparts prior to the mid-1970s.

19. The Chinese have emphasized strategic requirements in their nuclear weapons program, and apparently have not provided their ground or air forces with tactical nuclear weapons. Moreover, weapons systems comparable to the Soviet FROG or Scud are not known to exist in the CCA inventory.

## Sino-Soviet Border



### Estimated Total Soviet and Chinese Military Strengths

	USSR	CHINA
Personnel		
- On active duty	3,778,000	3,000,000*
- Reaching military age annually	2,319,000	9,000,000
- Fit for military service	49,000,000	113,000,000
Ground force divisions	161+	179
Aircraft in operational units	11,900	4,600+
Naval combatants	2,000+	1,000

\*Not including Production and Construction Corps or Armed Militia.



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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22 April 1971

MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS OF NIE 11-9-71: SOVIET POLICY IN ASIA

1. Your attention is directed to the separate issuance of a TOP SECRET Annex to this National Intelligence Estimate. The title of the Annex is "The Sino-Soviet Military Balance"

2. In the Annex, page 4, paragraph 15, please change the third sentence to read: "Prior to 1965 the few Chinese SAM units available were used primarily to deter reconnaissance overflights."

JOHN HUIZENGA  
Director  
National Estimates

# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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