

'Soviet Military Power': another wishful coverup

by Leo F. Scanlon

The 1989 edition of *Soviet Military Power*, published annually by the U.S. Department of Defense, is a ludicrous attempt by the administration of President George Bush to cover a growling Russian bear with a tattered, and all too small sheep's costume. The attempted illusionist's trick begins on the cover of the publication: on the front, a color picture of Soviet armored troops crossing a bridge during their "withdrawal" from Afghanistan; on the back, the same picture, reversed, with the color washed out, and the soldiers and tanks fading into the background. The pages in between obscure the dramatic and fast-paced revolution in technology and tactics which is now under way within the Soviet military machine.

Since the accession of the Bush administration, the U.S. military and intelligence community has operated under the constraints of a gag order which has declared the most elementary facts regarding the Soviet military threat to be classified material. The few illuminating facts about the state of Soviet military art which somehow managed to slip by the book's political editors, are buried within paragraphs upon paragraphs of political science jargon, equivocal analysis, and outright prevarications, which culminate in an outrageous exercise wherein the economies of the allied nations in Europe and Asia are evaluated as a threat equal to Soviet research and development programs.

Soviet military does disappearing act

One of the more remarkable features of *SMP 1989* is the amount of material coverage of Soviet military capabilities which has simply disappeared from the pages. *SMP 1987* contained a discussion of the training and doctrine which shapes the deployment of Soviet *spetsnaz* forces—the special forces which would be deployed behind enemy lines before the major offensive, in order to paralyze the key logistical centers with bombs, radio-frequency, and biological weapons. But the current edition does not even show the word *spetsnaz* in its index.

Similarly, previous editions contained elaborate presentations on the military doctrine shaping Soviet theater deployments, complete with appropriate maps and charts. The current edition begins this section, much reduced as well,

with a long introduction cataloging the "reductions" announced by Gorbachov in December 1988, and then offers speculation on Gorbachov's reasons for undertaking such a plan. The reasoning implies that Soviet budget calculations are constrained in the manner of the Pentagon's programs, that theater force reorganizations are being calculated on the basis of "resource availability," and so on.

The story is very plausibly told, and if enough copies of *SMP 1989* are translated into Russian, the theory may even catch on there. But despite this, a few bare facts presented in *SMP 1989* demonstrate that the apparatus to support and sustain the Ogarkov war plans are largely in place in Europe today.

Theater forces

The Pentagon analysts state a simple fact: "Currently, the Soviets are initiating changes designed to produce a Soviet force significantly reduced in size but with its combat capability maintained or even improved. They hope to achieve this capability through continuous equipment modernization, qualitative improvements in training, leadership, morale, and discipline, and enhancement of command and control capabilities."

The changed capabilities of the Soviet strike forces will be backed up by "increasingly capable logistics transport means, mobile repair shops, pipeline-laying vehicles, materiel-handling equipment, and other specialized rear service items. The Soviets also have restructured their logistic support units . . . to improve mobility and control. The Soviets also upgraded their transport base with high-capacity motor vehicles, . . . combined supply resources and transport assets under a single commander," and have stockpiled large amounts of supplies and material to supplement the prepositioned stocks in each theater. "The ammunition stockpile which the [Warsaw] Pact has augmented over the past decade comprises over three million tons in the Western TVD [Theater of Military Operations] alone and is still growing." Recent apparent slackening in the rate of growth of these stockpiles "has more to do with the Soviets attaining their stockpile objectives than with any decision by Gorbachov. These levels will likely remain, since Gorbachov's an-

nounced troop reductions did not address cuts in Soviet operational-strategic logistical stocks.”

Ground forces

The logistical apparatus is designed to supply highly mobile ground forces which are mechanized and armored with the latest model Soviet equipment. This includes the formidable T-80 main battle tank. U.S. Representative Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), who led a delegation to the Soviet Union last summer, reported that the T-80 was sighted wearing three layers of reactive armor, a development which military experts claim will make the tank immune to all NATO anti-tank weapons. The modernization has also “included the introduction of late-model tanks, self-propelled artillery, multiple rocket launchers, and infantry fighting vehicles.” According to *SMP 1989*, “The emphasis on mobility continued with self-propelled artillery, and heavy mortars replacing older but still capable towed systems.”

The mobile units are well-equipped on the air defense front, having received a “new self-propelled gun (probably the 30mm 2S6) replacing the ZSU 23-4, and with the SA-16 replacing or supplementing the SA-7 and SA-14 systems. At the army level, SA-11 and SA-X-12B Giant” surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems supplement the SA-4 system, “while improved versions of the divisional SA-6 and SA-8 systems were fielded. The . . . Giant variant has some capability against certain types of ballistic missiles.”

Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov, addressing a Pentagon press conference during his recent U.S. tour, laughed at a reporter who asked what threat the B-2 Stealth bomber posed to Soviet forces. Yazov boasted that his air defense forces can handle any threat—and the boast is not idle. The Soviet air defense apparatus is the most lethal ever developed.

The front-line fighter-interceptors (pictured in mass production on the cover) stunned observers when their capabilities were displayed at the recent Paris air show. The Soviet air forces are organized around a frequent rotation system designed to keep one fully prepared plane in reserve, and one plane in the maintenance shop for every fighter on the line. This system is often said to indicate shoddy workmanship or poor reliability in Soviet production lines; in fact, it is designed to support intense, sustained blitzkrieg strikes by the ground forces.

Gorbachov has offered reductions in these air capabilities, but *SMP 1989* is forced to admit that, “If only excess or older aircraft are eliminated, the effect will be minimal.” The publication goes on to point out: “There have been no indications of reductions in the prestocked air logistics assets such as aviation fuel, ammunition, and spare parts. In fact, during the past decade aviation fuel stocks have been substantially increased and runways lengthened at the Western Group of Forces airfields. Ammunition stocks have also increased.”

These preparatory capabilities should be compared with the situation facing NATO tactical air forces. U.S. Air Force and defense industry officials admit that Soviet air defense capabilities—especially the look-down/shoot-down systems installed on the latest fighters—have stripped the cover off NATO deep-penetration tactics. Air attacks behind Warsaw Pact lines can be accomplished only by flying “on the deck” below radar. Highly effective propaganda campaigns have so restricted practice for such missions that many fighter pilots consider the tactical air mission virtually impossible for NATO. An article in *Air Force* magazine, published by the U.S. Air Force Association, reports that Soviet developments in the field of electronic warfare measures have outflanked a full decade of research by U.S. specialists.

And it is not only the fighters which are being stripped of defenses by Soviet developments: The bases from which they fly are so poorly defended that any fighter fortunate enough to scramble in the face of a Pact attack will not likely have a place to land at the end of its mission. The U.S. Air Force has scheduled tests which are expected to prove that no air base in Western Europe could survive actual combat for any meaningful length of time.

Theater nuclear forces and the INF hoax

According to Soviet war plans, Soviet ground forces and their accompanying air cover will be preceded by barrages unleashed by the rocket forces. *SMP 1989* explains that “the Soviets’ intermediate-range nuclear systems—the road-transportable SS-4 Sandal MRBM and road-mobile SS-20 Saber IRBM—are currently integral components of the Soviet strategic nuclear forces. These systems have the capability to attack all European soft point or area targets.”

As for the hoax known as the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, *SMP 1989* shamefacedly admits that, “Based on Soviet targeting goals and nuclear strike force missions in Eurasia, it is likely that the Soviets determined they could compensate for the elimination of INF forces by retargeting other strategic and tactical nuclear delivery systems. Many of the SS-20’s targets can be covered by ICBMs and SLBMs supplemented by aviation assets. The SS-11 and SS-19 ICBMs, as well as all SLBMs deployed in Soviet-protected bastions, will provide target coverage through the mid-1990s, with SS-24s and SS-25s potentially available as well. Even after INF and START treaty reductions, the Soviets will likely be able to satisfy their critical tactical, theater, and intercontinental targeting requirements as effectively as with their current arsenal due to the ongoing modernization of their strategic forces.” The report adds the ridiculous understatement: “The Soviets also recognize that the INF treaty has caused some dissension within the NATO Alliance.”

The fraud of START negotiations

It has been mentioned that anti-ballistic missile (ABM)-capable mobile missiles are deployed at the Army level of

Soviet ground forces. It is also well known that the battle management radar system for the Moscow ABM installation (the only one in the world) is being expanded, and the latest intelligence reports indicate that the final links in that system have been powered up and tested. Passive defense preparations (shelters and civil defense planning) are integrated into the structure of Soviet industry and political command systems. Consequently, as *SMP 1989* points out, "The Soviet Union has a target base approximately twice as large as the

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U.S. base Soviet nuclear planners have to cover. This means that the Soviets can, by having roughly the same number of warheads as the United States, plan on having more warheads than the United States after a nuclear exchange."

The talks on a Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (START) are designed by the Soviets to produce just such a result, thereby securing their overwhelming military superiority in Europe. By relieving the burden on their intercontinental targeting, the remaining rocket capability can emphasize the European priority.

The Soviets have doggedly pressed for the elimination of the U.S. Navy's cruise missile capability, a strategy which also aims at protecting the Eurasian land mass from any U.S.-based threat. The recent assignment of additional AKULA-class submarines to the North Atlantic theater is only one illustration of the Soviet commitment to defending the European choke points with the most advanced capabilities. On all fronts, the "reductions" of Soviet forces—trumpeted by the U.S. news media as signs of peace—are each components of war-winning strategy for Soviet forces in Europe.

This superiority extends out into space as well. U.S. Air Force Gen. John Piotrowski has made speech after speech—all unpublicized in the mass media—warning in no uncertain terms that the Soviets have achieved control of space in military terms. Not only do they command weapons that could knock out vital command and communication satellites within minutes of the start of hostilities, but they have stockpiled replacements for each of their military satellites at multiple launch sites throughout Russia. This capability is unmatched by the West.

Gen. George Monahan, director of what remains of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative program, has announced that congressional budget cuts have placed the directed ener-

gy systems in limbo, and will limit the United States to deployment of strategically insignificant kinetic-kill systems. The sabotage of U.S. space efforts by budget cuts is providing the ultimate in breathing room for the Soviet command.

Disappearing radio frequency weapons

The most significant omissions from *SMP 1989* are in the critical area of Soviet research and deployment of directed energy weapons. Previous editions showed photographs and renderings of strategic and tactical laser systems, and discussed research efforts in the area of electromagnetic effect weapons, along with the power sources and propulsion technologies that define the cutting edge of Soviet military research. The entire subject is reduced to a general discussion of radio electronic combat.

When asked about this at the press conference where *SMP 1989* was released, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney said, "I guess I'd refer you to one of our experts in terms of why that particular change was made. It's not an editorial decision that I made. I wouldn't read any special significance into it other than that we've got to cram as much as we can into a small amount of space."

But perhaps most ominous is the elimination of any significant discussion of Soviet technological developments in the military and civilian fields. "I'm not sure how much of this is classified, and that's why I have to be a little cautious in terms of how I proceed," said Cheney, when asked about this omission. His remark underlines complaints voiced by military organizations, that the administration is actively suppressing the most elementary facts about the Soviet threat, in order to win support for its arms-reduction negotiating policy.

U.S. forces to disappear as well

Such omissions, in conjunction with repeated mis-reporting of the intent and effect of Soviet restructuring measures, open the issue of whether the United States intends to maintain any significant military presence in the European theater. Secretary Cheney indicated that the question is under study: "Let's assume we're successful in negotiating a conventional force reduction agreement with the Warsaw Pact. Then what are our requirements going to be after that? What additional steps might we want to take? . . . So, yes, there is work going forward to look at where we would be in that post-CFE [Conventional Forces Europe] environment."

American strategists admit that the military budget crisis is only a reflection of a disastrous collapse of the real U.S. economy. They console themselves by pointing to horror stories about the similar crisis racking the Russian Empire. Behind the equivocations and diplomatic dissimulations, *Soviet Military Power 1989* shows that the Russian command has a military strategy to meet their crisis in the time-honored Russian tradition—through conquest.