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The Soviet "War Scare"

President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board

February 15, 1990

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Never, perhaps, in the postwar decades has the situation in the world been as explosive and, hence, more difficult and unfavorable as in the first half of the 1980's.

Mikhail Gorbachev
February 1986

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Executive Summary

From the late 1970's to the mid-1980's, the military forces and intelligence services of the Soviet Union were redirected in ways that suggested that the Soviet leadership was seriously concerned about the possibility of a sudden strike launched by the United States and its NATO allies. These changes were accompanied by leadership statements -- some public, but many made in secret meetings -- arguing that the US was seeking strategic superiority in order to be able to launch a nuclear first strike. These actions and statements are often referred to as the period of the "war scare."

The changes in Soviet military and intelligence arrangements included: improvements of Warsaw Pact combat readiness (by recalling reservists, lengthening service times, increasing draft ages, and abolishing many draft deferments), an unprecedented emphasis on civil defense exercises, an end of military support for gathering the harvest (last seen prior to the 1968 Czech invasion), the forward deployment of unusual numbers of SPETSNAZ forces, increased readiness of Soviet ballistic missile submarines and forward deployed nuclear capable aircraft, massive military exercises that for the first time emphasized surviving and responding to a sudden enemy strike, a new agreement among Warsaw Pact countries that gave Soviet leaders authority in the event of an attack to unilaterally commit Pact forces, creation within the GRU of a new directorate to run networks of illegal agents abroad, an urgent KGB (and some satellite services') requirement that gave the highest priority the gathering of politico-military indicators of US/NATO preparations for a sudden nuclear attack, establishment of a special warning condition to alert Soviet forces that a surprise enemy strike using weapons of mass destruction was in progress, and the creation of a special KGB unit to manage a

computer program (the VRYAN model) that would objectively measure the correlation of forces and warn when Soviet relative strength had declined to the point that a preemptive Soviet attack might be justified.

During the November 1983 NATO "Able Archer" nuclear release exercise, the Soviets implemented military and intelligence activities that previously were seen only during actual crises. These included: placing Soviet air forces in Germany and Poland on heightened alert, 3.3(b)(3); (b)(3) 3.3(b)(3); (b)(3)

The meaning of these events obviously was of crucial importance to American and NATO policymakers. If they were simply parts of a Soviet propaganda campaign designed to intimidate the US, deter it from deploying improved weapons, and arouse US domestic opposition to foreign policy initiatives, then they would not be of crucial significance. If they reflected an internal Soviet power struggle -- for example, a contest between conservatives and pragmatists, or an effort to avoid blame for Soviet economic failures by pointing to (exaggerated) military threats -- then they could not be ignored, but they would not imply a fundamental change in Soviet strategy. But if these events were expressions of a genuine belief on the part of Soviet leaders that the US was planning a nuclear first strike, causing the Soviet military to prepare for such an eventuality -- by, for example, readying itself for a preemptive strike of its own -- then the "war scare" was a cause for real concern.

During the past year, the President's Foreign Intelligence

Advisory Board has carefully reviewed the events of that period to learn what we (the U.S. intelligence community) knew, when we knew it, and how we interpreted it. The Board has read hundreds of documents, conducted more than 75 interviews with American and British officials, and studied the series of National Intelligence Estimates (NIE's) and other intelligence assessments that have attempted over the last six years to interpret the war scare data. Additionally, we have offered our own interpretation of the war scare events.

We believe that the Soviets perceived that the correlation of forces had turned against the USSR, that the US was seeking military superiority, and that the chances of the US launching a nuclear first strike -- perhaps under cover of a routine training exercise -- were growing. We also believe that the US intelligence community did not at the time, and for several years afterwards, attach sufficient weight to the possibility that the war scare was real. As a result, the President was given assessments of Soviet attitudes and actions that understated the risks to the United States. Moreover, these assessments did not lead us to reevaluate our own military and intelligence actions that might be perceived by the Soviets as signaling war preparations.

In two separate Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE's) in May and August of 1984, the intelligence community said: "We believe strongly that Soviet actions are not inspired by, and Soviet leaders do not perceive, a genuine danger of imminent conflict or confrontation with the United States." Soviet statements to the contrary were judged to be "propaganda."

The Board believes that the evidence then did not, and certainly does not now, support such categoric conclusions. Even without the benefit of subsequent reporting and looking at the 1984 analysis of then available information, the tone of the intelligence judgments was not adequate to the needs of the President.

A strongly stated interpretation was defended by explaining away facts inconsistent with it and by failing to subject that interpretation to a comparative risk assessment. In time, analysts' views changed. In an annex to a February 1988 NIE, analysts declared: "During the late 1970's and early 1980's there were increasing Soviet concerns about the drift in superpower relations, which some in the Soviet leadership felt indicated an increased threat of war and increased likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons. These concerns were shaped in part by a Soviet perception that the correlation of forces was shifting against the Soviet Union and that the United States was taking steps to achieve military superiority." The Soviets' VRYAN program was evaluated as part of an effort to collect data and subject it to computer analysis in a way that would warn the USSR when the US had achieved decisive military superiority.

Reporting from a variety of 3.3(b)(1) sources, including Oleg Gordiyevskiy (a senior KGB officer who once served as second in command in the London Residency and who has since defected to Great Britain), taken as a whole, strongly indicates that there was in fact a genuine belief among key members of the Soviet leadership that the United States had embarked on a program of achieving decisive military superiority that might prompt a sudden nuclear missile attack on the USSR.

Although some details of that belief became known only recently, there was at the time evidence -- from secret directives and speeches by Soviet authorities -- that a major change in Soviet political and strategic thinking had probably occurred. For example, we knew by 1984 at the latest that a Soviet general had interpreted President Carter's PD-59 as preparing US strategic forces for a preemptive strike, that the Head of the KGB's First Chief Directorate, General Kryuchkov had told key subordinates that the KGB must work to prevent the US from launching a surprise attack, that KGB and Czechoslovak intelligence Residencies had been

tasked to gather information on US preparations for war, and that missile submarines had been placed on shortened readiness times.

Many of these facts were summarized in a memorandum from the National Intelligence Officer for Warning (NIO/W) to DCI William Casey in June 1984, a memo that Casey then forwarded to the President. 3.3(b)(1) 3.3(b)(1) Neither the NIO/W nor the altered the official position of the intelligence community as expressed in the May 1984 SNIE and as reasserted, in almost identical language, in the August 1984 SNIE.

Analysts will always have legitimate disagreements over the meaning of inevitably incomplete and uncertain intelligence reports. Moreover, part of the confidence that PFIAB has in its own assessment of the war scare derives from information not known at the time. Our purpose in presenting this report is not so much to criticize the conclusions of the 1984 SNIE's as to raise questions about the ways these estimates were made and subsequently reassessed.

In cases of great importance to the survival of our nation, and especially where there is important contradictory evidence, the Board believes that intelligence estimates must be cast in terms of alternative scenarios that are subjected to comparative risk assessments. This is the critical defect in the war scare episode. By "alternative scenarios," we mean a full statement of each major, possible interpretation of a set of intelligence indicators. In this case, these scenarios might have included the following:

1. Soviet leaders had not changed their strategic thinking but were attempting by means of propaganda and intelligence deceptions to slow the US military build-up, prevent the deployment of

new weapons, and isolate the US from its allies.

2. Soviet leaders may or may not have changed their strategic thinking, but a power struggle among Kremlin factions and the need to deflect blame for poor economic conditions made it useful to exaggerate the military intentions and capabilities of the US.

3. Soviet leaders had changed their strategic thinking and, in fact, believed that the US was attempting to gain decisive strategic superiority in order, possibly, to launch a nuclear first strike.

By "comparative risk assessment," we mean assigning two kinds of weights to each scenario: one that estimates the probability that the scenario is correct and another that assesses the risk to the United States if it wrongly rejects a scenario that is, in fact, correct.

In 1984, one might reasonably have given the highest probability of being correct to the first or second scenario (even though, as we argue in this report, we believe that would have been an error). But having done this, it would surely have been clear even then that if the third scenario was in fact correct and we acted as if it were wrong, the risks to the United States would have been very great -- greater than if we had rejected a correct first or second scenario. As it happened, the military officers in charge of the Able Archer exercise minimized this risk by doing nothing in the face of evidence that parts of the Soviet armed forces were moving to an unusual level of alert. But these officers acted correctly out of instinct, not informed guidance, for in the years leading up to Able Archer they had received no guidance as to the possible significance of apparent changes in Soviet military and political thinking.

By urging that some major estimates be based on a comparative

assessment of fully developed alternative scenarios, we are not arguing for "competitive analyses" or greater use of dissenting opinions. An intelligence estimate is not the product of a governmental debating society in which institutional rivals try to outdo one another in their display of advocacy skills. We are arguing instead for adopting the view that since it is very hard to understand the present, much less predict the future, it is a mistake to act as if we can. On the most important issues, it is difficult if not impossible to say with confidence that we know what is happening or will happen. We can, however, say that there are a small number of possibilities, each of which has a (rough) probability and each of which presents to the policymaker likely risks and opportunities.

When analysts attempt to arrive at a single strong conclusion, they not only run the risk of being wrong, they run two additional and perhaps more worrisome risks. They are likely to underestimate the possibility of change (the safest prediction is always that tomorrow will be like today) and they are likely to rely on mirror-imaging (our adversaries think the way we do). In this era of unprecedented, breakneck change, the first error grows in importance. And since we cannot know what individuals will next hold power in the USSR or when, it is an especially grave error to assume that since we know the US is not going to start World War III, the next leaders of the Kremlin will also believe that -- and act on that belief.

In short, our criticism of the 1984 SNIE's, though in part substantive, is in larger part procedural. We do not think there is any simple organizational change that will correct that procedure. If strategic intelligence estimates are to give policymakers a better sense of risks and opportunities, it will only happen if policymakers insist that that is what they want and refuse to accept anything less.

This review of the war scare period also suggests another lesson. It is quite clear to the Board that during the critical years when the Kremlin was reassessing US intentions, the US intelligence community did not react quickly to or think deeply about the early signs of that change. The war scare indicators began appearing in the early 1980's; the first estimate to address this was not written until 1984. At the time it was written, the US knew very little about Kremlin decisionmaking. [redacted] 3.3(b)(1) [redacted] the SNIE authors wrote confidently about "Soviet leadership intentions."

We recommend that the National Security Council oversee a reassessment of the intelligence community's understanding of Soviet military and political decisionmaking, both in general terms and in light of the judgments made in the 1984 estimates. Our own leadership needs far better intelligence reporting on and assessments of the mindset of the Soviet leadership -- its ideological/political instincts and perceptions. As part of this reassessment, it should exploit the current opening in the Iron Curtain to interview past and present East Bloc and Soviet officials about the sources and consequences of the war scare in order to obtain a better understanding of the perceptions and inner conflicts of Soviet decisionmakers.

Finally, we suggest that the US review the way in which it manages military exercises, its own intelligence collection efforts, [redacted] 3.3(b)(1) [redacted] 3.3(b)(1) to insure that these are carried out in a way that is responsive to indications and warning for war.

In 1983 we may have inadvertently placed our relations with the Soviet Union on a hair trigger. Though the current thaw in US-Soviet relations suggests that neither side is likely in the near

term to reach for that trigger, events are moving so fast that it would be unwise to assume that Soviet leaders will not in the future act, from misunderstanding or malevolence, in ways that puts the peace in jeopardy.

PART I US HANDLING OF THE "WAR SCARE": THE ESTIMATIVE PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

The Board has divided its presentation into two parts. The first (Part One) deals with a review of what the US (and the British) thought about the war scare both at the time and subsequently. It also summarizes some of the key characteristics of the estimative process and offers our conclusions for improvement. The second half (Part Two) summarizes the evidence that leads to the conclusion that the Soviet leadership genuinely developed a "war scare" in the early 1980's. We believe this to be a plausible version of events based upon new information as well as a reconsideration of evidence known then. Inevitably, there is some duplication between the two parts, but this is necessary in order to tell the story in an orderly way.

Part One, then, is a summation of what we knew, when we knew it, and how we interpreted it. It is not a competitive estimate. Rather than catalog the actual events in detail, we chose to summarize them and to focus instead on how the intelligence community reacted, as manifested in its analysis. Our conclusions mirror our profound dismay at what we believe to be the intelligence community's single largest failing -- the failure to provide policymakers with an adequate understanding of the risks and consequences associated with alternate scenarios involving uncertain events of grave import.

There were many other directions that we, given unlimited time, would have liked to embark. Intelligence issues that impacted upon our review of the war scare are identified in the

final section of Part One. We regret that these important issues received short shrift; we encourage a complete review of them so that US indications and warning might be improved as we enter into the evermore complex, polycentric, and uncertain 1990's.

EARLY PERCEPTIONS OF THE SOVIET "WAR SCARE"

As the Carter years wound to a close, America's bilateral relationship with the USSR was on the downswing from the earlier detente. The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan brought bitter NATO condemnation, and SALT II languished unratified. As the new Republican Administration took up the reins, President Reagan announced in his State of the Union speech a major peacetime military buildup. By May 1981, the "era of self-doubt," personified by the failed Iran hostage rescue attempt, had ended. United States foreign policy took on a new assertiveness: President Reagan declared that arms control treaties were no substitute for military preparedness and characterized the Soviet Union as an "evil force," the antithesis of the US. Soviet meddling in Afghanistan, Poland, Central America, and elsewhere increasingly proved a constant irritant to the new Administration, and seemed only to reinforce its "get tough" posture.

Recriminations flew between Moscow and Washington, and relations continued to slide. As the Administration settled into its first term, an intense "war scare" theme began to emerge in the Soviet media and in private fora, accompanied by anomalous and often provocative USSR behavior.

At first, such activity was easily dismissed as predictable Soviet responses to US efforts to deploy INF missiles in Europe in order to counter Soviet SS-20's and to modernize its strategic and conventional forces. United States officials understandably were suspicious of Soviet motivations as Washington struggled to gain public support in Western Europe and in the US for these force

improvements.[1]

In 1983, Soviet rhetoric had sharpened. Moscow had accused President Reagan and his advisors of "madness," "extremism," and "criminality" in the conduct of relations with the USSR. The United States was portrayed as a nation singularly pursuing a first-strike nuclear capability as a prelude to eradicating communism. Westerners, including some well-known experts on the Soviet Union, reported alarming conversations with Soviet citizens and officials that indicated a large portion of the Soviet population believed nuclear war was dangerously close. As diplomatic relations ebbed to near a postwar low, US analysts attributed Soviet anxieties and belligerence to a number of factors: initiation of INF deployments; a strong US posture in the START talks; US action in Grenada; deployment of Marines in Lebanon; US aid to insurgencies against Soviet client regimes; the Reagan Administration's perceived political "exploitation" of the KAL shootdown; and the Administration's perceived unwillingness to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Soviet regime or to treat the Kremlin with the "superpower" deference it desired.[2]

Moreover, US analysts concluded that certain developments could have heightened Moscow's uncertainties about its long-term geostrategic position:

o A possible adverse shift in the overall strategic balance, precipitated by resolute US moves to significantly bolster its strategic posture as well as its conventional capabilities.

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[1]US officials detected a vigorous Soviet "active measures" campaign intended to thwart US strategic objectives.

[2]Grey Hodnett's memorandum of Dec. 22, 1983, entitled "Soviet Thinking on the Possibility of Armed Confrontation with the United States," Foreign Policy Issues Branch, Policy Analysis Division, Office of Soviet Analysis, Central Intelligence Agency.

o The perceived lower priority accorded by the Reagan Administration to arms control negotiations, as "evidenced" by its unwillingness to accommodate Soviet interests and its apparent intention to proceed with weapons programs Moscow may have thought were on hold.

o The end of the "Vietnam syndrome" and readiness of Washington to use force once again in the Third World, either by supporting insurgencies against Soviet client regimes, as in Nicaragua, or acting directly, as in Lebanon and Grenada.[3]

Although US analysts aptly identified signs of emotional and paranoid Soviet behavior and offered an analysis of the potential causes, they reasoned that Moscow was fundamentally concerned not about any hypothetical near-term US nuclear attack, but about possible shifts in the strategic balance five-to-ten years hence. It was easy to distrust the USSR, they reasoned, because Soviet leaders had many plausible motives for trying to cleverly manipulate Western perceptions:

o To foster the "peace movement" in Western Europe so as to derail INF deployments and encourage neutrality within NATO.

o To portray President Reagan as an incompetent warmonger so as to deepen cleavages among nations in the West.

o To increase public pressure in the United States for providing a more conciliatory posture toward the USSR via lower defense spending, arms control concessions, and less "interventionist" policies.

Analysts also estimated that, for the Soviets, the Reagan Administration was the "least loved of any US Administration since

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[3]Ibid.

that of President Truman." It would be just like them to try to "undercut the President's reelection prospects."[4] Thus, the abnormal, emotional Soviet behavior could be, and was, viewed essentially in political terms in minor analytical products.

At the same time, US analysts often tended to characterize Soviet leadership decisionmaking as rational, even omnipotent. United States intelligence clearly did not have sufficient sources to derive a precise picture of the Kremlin's decisionmaking process, nor did it have a thorough understanding of the aging leadership's strengths and weaknesses. United States analysts, nevertheless, described Soviet policy as "driven by prudent calculation of interests and dogged pursuit of long-term objectives, even in the face of great adversity, rather than by sudden swells of fear or anger." Furthermore, analysts concluded that, "However disturbed Soviet policymakers might be by the Reagan Administration, they also have a sense of the USSR's strengths and of [US] vulnerabilities . . . the perception from the Kremlin is by no means one of unrelieved gloom." Moscow's economic problems, while described as "taut," were judged not likely to deter them from accelerating the pace of military spending to challenge the US.[5]

Undeterred by what was termed the "Soviet propaganda campaign" and very concerned about the threat posed by the large numbers of SS-20 deployments, America continued to firm up her defenses by, for example, deploying cruise missiles and Pershings in Europe, adopting a forward-based military strategy, embarking on a path of force modernization and improved readiness, and invigorating a strong "continuity in government" strategy designed to protect US leadership during a nuclear exchange.

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

As the second Reagan/Bush campaign swung into high gear, US intelligence analysts began to compile solid evidence from within the Soviet bureaucracy of growing concern about nuclear war:

o In a briefing to Soviet and East European officials in the fall of 1983, a Soviet diplomat warned that the world was on the brink of war.

o Immediately following Brezhnev's death, KGB and GRU Residencies in Soviet missions abroad received orders to monitor US installations for indications of US military mobilization.

o Shortly after the second inauguration, Moscow enjoined KGB Residencies worldwide to work to detect any sign that the United States and its allies were about to unleash a first strike on the USSR. Already in mid-1981, reporting on possible US preparations to launch a first strike had been added to KGB collection requirements worldwide. In early 1983, Moscow warned KGB residencies that the United States was positioning itself for war.

o In early 1983, Soviet military intelligence, the GRU, created a new directorate to organize and manage "illegal" agent networks worldwide. The urgency of this move reportedly reflected perceptions of an increased threat of war. 3.3(b)(1) 3.3(b)(1) working-level officers treated the subject of wartime confrontation seriously, because they believed war could break out at any moment. 3.3(b)(1) 3.3(b)(1) while preparedness for war was not a new notion, it had taken on a sense of urgency not seen in the past. Directives from GRU Headquarters constantly reminded field elements to prepare for war. As a result, all Residency operations were geared to work under both peacetime and wartime conditions.

o 3.3(b)(1)

3.3(b)(1) had been tasked with obtaining information on a major NATO exercise (believed to be Able Archer 83). This order reportedly followed from a high-priority requirement 3.3(b)(1) by Moscow a year before to look for any indication of US preparations for a nuclear first strike. Warsaw Pact leaders reportedly were convinced that the Reagan Administration was actively preparing for nuclear war and was capable of launching such an attack.

3.3(b)(1)

By the fall of 1983, the beat of Soviet "war scare" drums was almost lost in the cacophony of the international thunderstorm. Massive demonstrations erupted in Germany and other NATO countries to protest the INF deployments. The Soviets shot down KAL-007; the Marine barracks in Beirut was bombed; and the US invaded Grenada.

Against this backdrop, NATO held its annual command post exercise to practice nuclear release procedures in early November, 1983. This recurring exercise, known as Able Archer, included NATO forces from Turkey to England. Although past Able Archer exercises were monitored by Soviet intelligence, the reaction by Warsaw Pact military forces and intelligence services to the 1983 exercise was unprecedented. Air armies in East Germany and Poland were placed on alert.

3.3(b)(3); (b)(3)

3.3(b)(3); (b)(3)

At the same time, the Soviets conducted significantly more reconnaissance flights than in previous years, and sent special intelligence requirements to KGB

and GRU Residencies in western countries to report any unusual military activity that might signal an impending NATO surprise attack.

This abnormal Soviet behavior to the annual, announced Able Archer 83 exercise sounded no alarm bells in the US Indications and Warning system. United States commanders on the scene were not aware of any pronounced superpower tension, and the Soviet activities were not seen in their totality until long after the exercise was over. For example, while the US detected a "heightened readiness" among some Soviet air force divisions, the extent of the alert as well 3.3(b)(3); (b)(3) 3.3(b)(3); (b)(3) was not known until two weeks had passed after the completion of the exercise. The Soviet air force standdown had been in effect for nearly a week before fully armed MIG-23 aircraft were noted on air defense alert in East Germany.

There were plenty of reasons why the Soviet military response to Able Archer was missed; there was no context by which to judge the behavior. First, Moscow's "war scare" activity was not yet the focus of intelligence or policy attention. Additionally, Soviet intelligence requirements against the exercise, 3.3(b)(1) 3.3(b)(1) were not learned until long Moreover, the air standdown was not at first perceived abnormally because it occurred during the Soviet Revolution holiday; about midway through the exercise, 3.3(b)(3); (b)(3) Despite the late-developing information, the intelligence community evaluated the Soviet response as unusual but not militarily significant. Analysts reasoned that more indicators should have been detected if the Soviets were seriously concerned about a NATO

attack.[6]

But beyond the puzzling Soviet reaction to the Able Archer 83 exercise, US analysts, by spring of 1984, had also detected a clear trend: Soviet forces, over the past decade, had "made an effort to respond more rapidly to the threat of war and to develop the capability to manage all aspects of a nuclear war."[7] In fact, Soviet exercise activity in 1983 highlighted "the continued testing of concepts necessary for avoiding surprise attack . . . ." Common to all these exercises were the themes of continued concern over force readiness and vulnerability to attack; ensuring that dispersal and launch orders were complied with; and testing what previously had been paper or small-scale wartime concepts under actual operational conditions using larger numbers of forces. Analysts estimated that the attainment of the above objectives could increase the Soviet military's capability to respond quickly to an enemy surprise attack or launch an attack of their own.

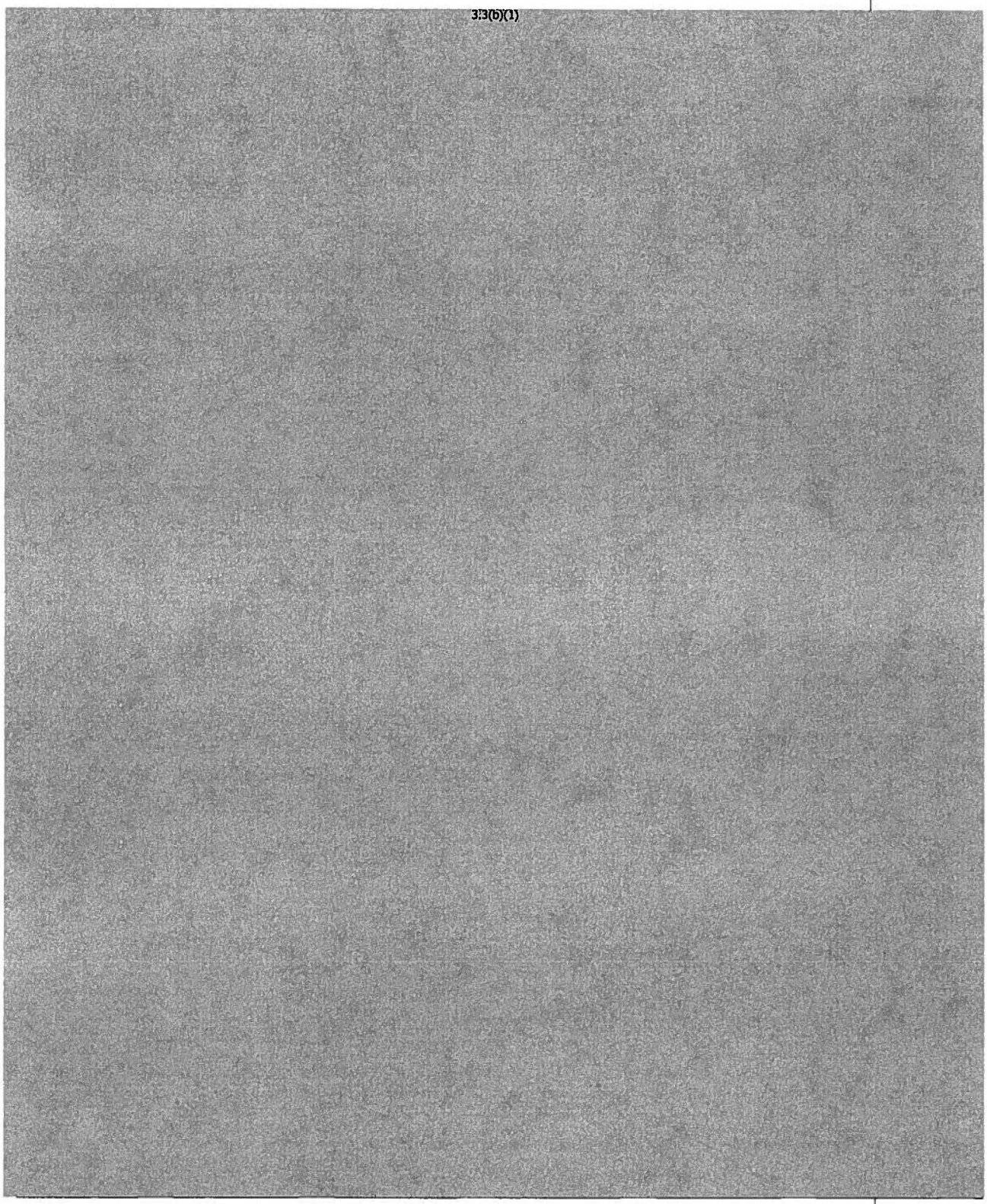
BRITISH ASSESSMENT

By March, 1984, the issue of the war scare broke into Allied relationships. 3.3(b)(1)

[redacted]

[6]In fact, a potentially dangerous analytic assumption was also apparently at work. Despite indications of increased readiness with some units, other units upon which no positive intelligence existed regarding readiness were assumed to have not increased readiness.

[7]SNIE 11-10-84 "Implications of Recent Military-Political Activities."



Despite -- or perhaps because of -- its disturbing message,

the 3.3(b)(1) report was not well received in the US intelligence community 3.3(b)(1) 3.3(b)(1) Additionally, some officials in the British Ministry of Defense were also skeptical.

The British Foreign Ministry, however, was sure that something was amiss. The British Ambassador to the US paid a visit to the State Department's Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Lawrence Eagleburger, to discuss the issue. But according to the responsible briefing official from State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), INR's position at the time (and thus State's position) was that the Soviets were pursuing a massive propaganda campaign. The INR officer presented to Eagleburger a skeptical version of events, designed, in his words, to "discourage the British." The British case apparently was not helped by the Ambassador's presentation; he was not entirely clear about events, and his intelligence aide most familiar with the war scare was out of country. There was even suspicion in some American quarters that the Foreign Office was simply capitalizing on a good political occasion to force President Reagan to tone down his rhetoric and delay deployments of the INF missiles. Thus, the Foreign Office's expressions of worry fell on deaf ears.

US PERCEPTIONS ENTRENCHED

In May 1984, US intelligence addressed for the first time in a national estimate the possibility that the Soviets were fearful of a preemptive first US nuclear strike -- a full six months after the Able Archer NATO exercise. Despite the evidence of secret directives and speeches by Soviet authorities to prepare for sudden nuclear attack and of unique Soviet military activities,

3.3(b)(1)

the issue was not treated as an evolutionary process. In fact, several intelligence officers told the Board that the estimate was undertaken essentially to explain a series of short-term abnormal events, rather than to examine the accumulated long-term reporting on the war scare. In the estimate's "Key Judgments," the intelligence community noted, "During the past several months, a number of coincident Soviet activities have created concern that they reflect abnormal Soviet fear of conflict with the United States, belligerent intent that might risk conflict, or some other underlying Soviet purpose." The "coincident" activities consisted of:

- o Large-scale military exercises -- including a major naval exercise in the Norwegian Sea, unprecedented SS-20 launch activity, and large-scale SSBN dispersal;

- o Preparations for air operations against Afghanistan;

- o Attempts to change the air corridor regime in Berlin;

- o New military measures described as responsive to NATO INF deployments; and

- o Shrill propaganda attributing a heightened danger of war to US behavior.

United States analysts categorically concluded: "We believe strongly that Soviet actions are not inspired by, and Soviet leaders do not perceive, a genuine danger of imminent conflict or confrontation with the United States. This judgment is based on the absence of force-wide combat readiness or other war preparation moves in the USSR, and the absence of a tone of fear or belligerence [redacted] 3.3(b)(3); (b)(3)