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Defense Special Assessment

8 November 1991

USSR: Soviet Nuclear Weapons Outside the Russian Republic (U)

Major Points

~~(S//NF)~~ Up to 7,800 nuclear weapons could still be located in the non-Russian republics and Baltic States. Approximately 30 percent of these weapons are on strategic missile launchers and the remainder are maintained in 83 highly secured storage facilities.

~~(S//NF)~~ There is no direct evidence that large numbers of nuclear weapons have been withdrawn to the Russian Republic since the attempted coup in August. Intelligence data, ~~(S//NF)~~ indicates that Soviet nuclear weapons storage sites outside of the Russian Republic remain active, normal training exercises are occurring, and site security is intact.

~~(S//NF)~~ Despite the lack of firm indications of weapons withdrawals, it is possible that some nuclear weapons have been relocated. Given the rising concerns over the sharing of control of nuclear weapons between the center, Russia, and the non-Russian republics, a clandestine removal of the weapons to Russia would be the central government's most desirable option.

Discussion

~~(S//NF)~~ Up to 7,800 nuclear weapons, representing 25 percent of the Soviet nuclear weapons stockpile, could still be located in the non-Russian republics and Baltic States. Approximately 30 percent of these weapons are on strategic missile launchers and the remainder are maintained in 83 highly secured storage facilities. Six of these sites are large central depots under the direct control of the Ministry of Defense and capable of storing hundreds of nuclear weapons. The other 77 sites are relatively small nuclear weapons storage sites (NWSSs) generally collocated with military units and operationally subordinate to the military force they support. A typical NWSS is capable of storing up to 100 nuclear weapons. In addition, nuclear weapons storage/handling facilities are located at 132 surface-to-air missile (SAM) launch and support sites outside the Russian Republic. There is, however, conflicting evidence over whether warheads have ever been stored in these facilities.

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(S//NF) Since the attempted coup in August, contradictory statements have been made by the central and republic governments regarding the disposition of nuclear weapons outside the Russian Republic. Soviet Minister of Defense Shaposhnikov has said that all tactical nuclear weapons would be removed from Ukraine to Russia within 9 months to a year as part of President Gorbachev's response to the Bush nuclear reduction initiative. General Major P. Falin, First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Carpathian MD, on the other hand, has denied that any withdrawals have occurred and said that no such withdrawals would be possible without the consent and assistance of Ukrainian Republic officials. The Ukrainian Defense Minister, Col Gen Morozov, moreover, recently stated that removal of weapons currently deployed in Ukraine would not be permitted prior to their destruction. Kazakhstan has also indicated a desire to retain nuclear weapons on republic territory, at least until their value as a bargaining chip is diminished.

August coup attempt. Intelligence [redacted] indicates that the disposition of the Soviet nuclear weapons stockpile has not changed significantly. There is also no conclusive evidence that the Soviets have begun a massive effort to withdraw large numbers of weapons to the Russian Republic. [redacted] the nuclear weapons storage sites outside of the Russian Republic continue to be occupied by Soviet forces, normal training and operations appear to be occurring as in the past, and no changes in security have been detected. [redacted]

(S//NF) Despite the lack of firm indications of weapons withdrawals, it is possible that some nuclear weapons have been relocated. Conclusive indicators of weapons withdrawals are very difficult to identify [redacted] primarily due to Soviet operational security. Weapons transfers normally occur during hours of darkness or when they are not susceptible to detection [redacted]

In the past our ability to monitor large scale weapons movements has been largely unsuccessful. For example, no nuclear warhead transfers were detected from storage sites supporting missiles eliminated under the INF agreement. Many of these sites appeared operational [redacted] but were found to be empty upon onsite inspection. Additionally, monitoring of the Soviet withdrawal of nuclear weapons from eastern Germany earlier this year was possible only because the Soviets were required to notify the German government in advance of munitions transfers. Heretofore, sites were not considered deactivated unless the Soviets had abandoned the site, or major pieces of equipment, security fences, or buildings had been removed from the site, signatures which may not present themselves in the current scenario.

Outlook

(S//NF) Given the potential role of nuclear weapons as a political football in a three-way struggle between the central government, Russia, and the non-Russian republics, a clandestine removal of the weapons to Russia would be the most desirable option for the central government. Under the current circumstances we would not expect the Soviets to acknowledge that withdrawal was under way. In addition to political considerations there is the increased vulnerability to unauthorized seizure or accident during movement. In a logistics transfer the most effective security measure is

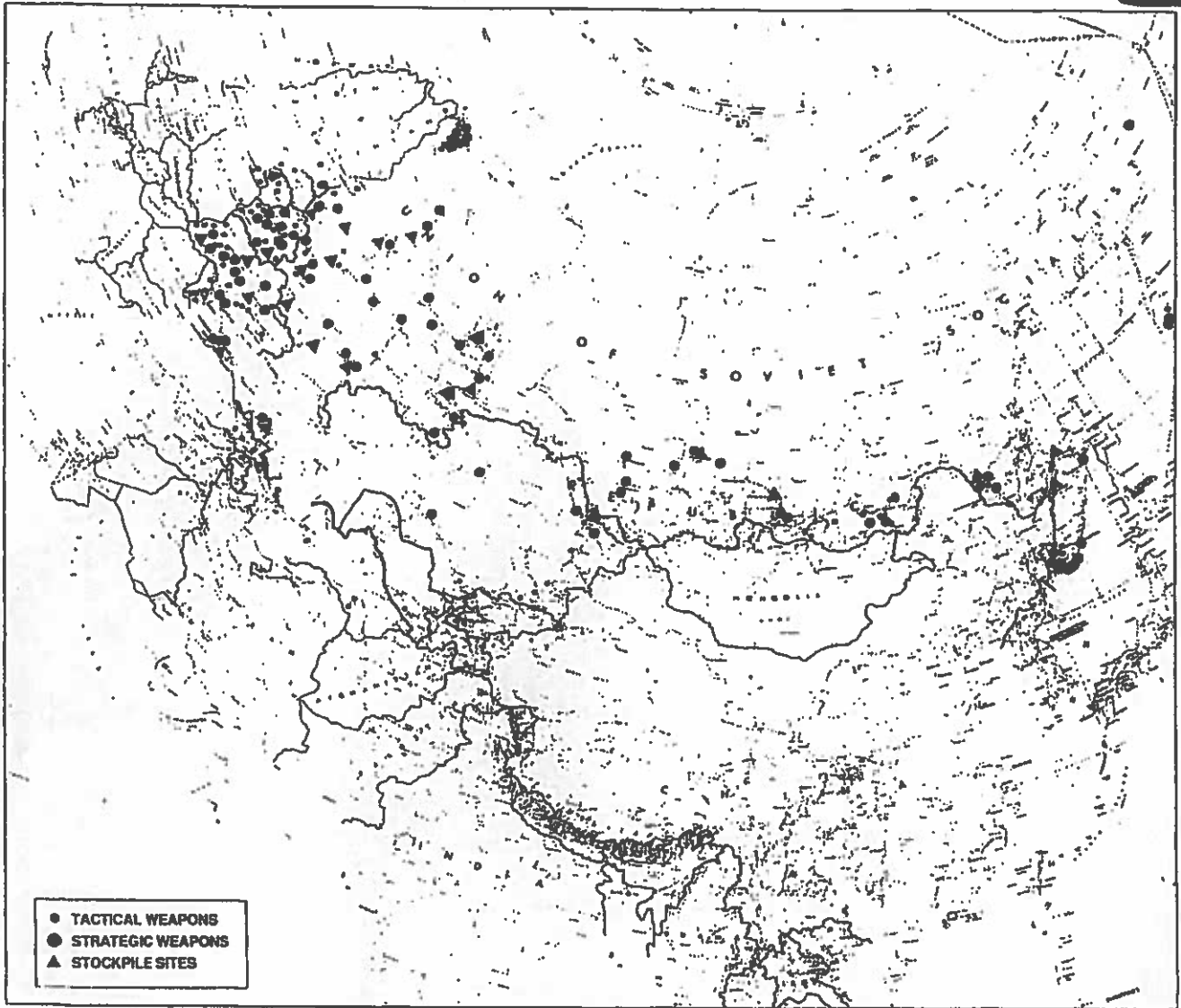
Soviet Nuclear Weapons Storage Sites in the USSR

Republic	Total	Central Depots	Tactical NWSS	Strategic NWSS
Russia	117	21	54	42
Nonrussian Republics:	83*	6	53*	24
Ukraine	35	4	21	10
Belorus	20	1	10	9
Kazakhstan	11	1	6	4
Lithuania	4	0	3	1
Latvia	2	0	2	0
Estonia	1	0	1	0
Armenia	(1*)	0	(1*)	0
Azerbaijan	(2*)	0	(2*)	0
Georgia	4	0	4	0
Moldova	2	0	2	0
Kirghizia	0	0	0	0
Tajikistan	0	0	0	0
Turkmenistan	3	0	3	0
Uzbekistan	1	0	1	0
Total	200*	27	107*	66

* The three NWSS in Azerbaijan and Armenia have been deactivated and no longer contain nuclear weapons.

(S//NF) The Intelligence Community has mounted a massive collection and analytical effort to monitor the status of Soviet nuclear weapons since the

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strict compartmentation of information to conceal the operation from everyone outside of the operation, including the involved republics and foreign intelligence. If the central government can withdraw nuclear weapons to the Russian Republic at a gradual pace over an extended period of time, employing standard operational security measures, detection of weapons movements will be very difficult, if not

impossible. If the government is forced to make a rapid withdrawal because of a deteriorating political situation, then the chances of detection are much greater.

Prepared by: [REDACTED]

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