THE CLANDESTINE INTRODUCTION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION INTO THE US

THE PROBLEM

To assess Soviet capabilities for the clandestine introduction and delivery of weapons of mass destruction in the US; and to estimate the likelihood of Soviet resort to this method of attack over the next few years.[1]

CONCLUSIONS

A. We have no evidence of Soviet plans or intentions regarding the clandestine introduction of weapons of mass destruction. The Soviets are, however, capable of introducing such weapons into the US. Because clandestine production of biological and chemical agents in the US is both feasible and less risky than their clandestine introduction, we conclude that the Soviets probably would consider only nuclear weapons for clandestine introduction. (*Paras. 1–5*)

B. We believe that the Soviets almost certainly would not contemplate the use of clandestinely delivered nuclear weapons except as a supplement to other weapons in the context of general war. We have estimated elsewhere[2] that the Soviets do not plan deliberately to initiate such a war. Although they might see certain advantages in the clandestine use of nuclear weapons if they decided deliberately to initiate an attack in a period of low tension, they probably would not wish to prejudice

[1] Herein we are concerned only with the clandestine introduction of weapons of mass destruction into the US prior to the initiation of hostilities.

[2] See, for example, paragraph 18 of NIE 11-9-62, "Trends in Soviet Foreign Policy," dated 2 May 1962.

the element of surprise on which this course of action relies. In the case of pre-emptive attack, introduction concurrent with a decision to pre-empt would be very difficult. Introduction on a contingent basis would run the risk of discovery and this risk would multiply with the number of weapons and the length of time that they were in the US. *(Paras. 7–8)*

C. Even as the Soviets build larger missile forces capable of attacking the US, they may see a continued requirement for clandestine nuclear attack in conjunction with long-range attack. Although a wide variety of US targets would be vulnerable to clandestine nuclear attack, we believe that the Soviets probably would focus on the feasibility of attacking targets for which their missile systems are inappropriate because of a requirement for extreme accuracy or the desire to deny warning time. Targets in this category might be key command and control facilities and possibly some manned alert forces. We believe that the Soviets would consider that only a small number of US targets could be attacked with greater advantage by clandestinely placed nuclear weapons than by nuclear weapons delivered by other means. But in view of the growing number and dispersal of US delivery vehicles, the Soviets probably recognize that it would be impracticable for them to mount a clandestine nuclear attack on a sufficient number of them to reduce substantially the weight of a US strike. *(Paras. 9–10)*

D. Although the Soviets are capable of introducing nuclear weapons clandestinely into the US, we believe that the limited advantages of this course of action, when weighed against the consequences of possible detection, make it unlikely that the Soviets will do so. However, there cannot be complete assurance that the USSR will not attempt the clandestine introduction of nuclear weapons into the US.[3] *(Para. 12)*

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[3] The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; and the Director of the National Security Agency, do not concur in this paragraph. They feel that as long as the Soviets have the capability for clandestine nuclear attack against selected important targets in the US, with minimal risk, there is not enough evidence to make the judgment that such an attack is unlikely.

DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. We have no evidence of Soviet plans or intentions regarding the clandestine introduction of mass destruction weapons into the US. Our estimate of the likelihood that the USSR would resort to this form of attack is based upon considerations of Soviet capabilities for clandestine attacks, probable Soviet views regarding the relationship of such attacks to other Soviet capabilities for general war, the types of targets that could be clandestinely attacked with advantage, and the risks attendant upon clandestine attack.

II. CAPABILITIES

2. The USSR can produce a variety of nuclear, chemical, and probably biological weapons of mass destruction suitable for clandestine introduction into the US.

a. *Nuclear.* The USSR can produce nuclear devices ranging in yield from one kiloton or less to about 100 MT. To facilitate clandestine introduction, devices yielding up to about 100-300 KT could be designed to break down into a number of relatively simple and transportable components. Not much technical skill would be required to reassemble and maintain a low-yield device (10 KT or less). Greater skill would be required to reassemble a device yielding 100-300 KT, once assembled it could be transported in the luggage compartment of an automobile. The size, weight, and complexity of megaton devices would preclude their use except when transported by a vehicle such as a ship or a truck.

b. *Chemical.* The USSR has an extensive chemical warfare program which could produce a variety of chemical agents suitable for clandestine introduction into the US. However, large quantities would be required to obtain effective concentrations on most types of targets, and delivery with precise timing would be subject to unpredictable conditions of wind and weather. Nevertheless, chemical agents could be used effectively on a small scale against personnel in key installations. A supply of nerve gases ample for this purpose could be clandestinely produced in the US without great difficulty or great risk of detection. Psychogenic agents could not readily be produced in the US and would probably have to be introduced clandestinely. We believe, however, that the possible advantages of psychogenic agents over nerve agents would not be sufficient in the Soviet view to warrant the risk of clandestine introduction.

c. *Biological.* Although we know little of the Soviet biological warfare program, we believe that the USSR can produce biological agents

and introduce them clandestinely into the US without great difficulty or great risk of detection. Biological agents could be delivered without immediate detection and the source of attack would be difficult to identify. Such agents could be used to contaminate water and food supplies or key government buildings. However, the delayed action of biological agents renders them unsuitable for use in situations requiring an immediate or precisely timed effect. Appropriate agents can be produced in the US without great difficulty or risk.

3. In view of the relative ease of manufacturing biological warfare agents in the US, we think it unlikely that the Soviets would find it necessary to introduce such agents clandestinely. Chemical warfare agents would be difficult to introduce and deliver in quantities sufficient to obtain effective concentrations on extensive target areas, while the smaller amounts necessary for selective attacks could be produced in the US. For these reasons, the following discussion is limited to a consideration of the clandestine introduction of nuclear weapons.

4. We do not know how many people are available to the Soviets for the clandestine introduction of nuclear weapons into the US, but it is unlikely that this factor would limit Soviet capabilities. We know that the Soviet intelligence services have assigned a high priority to the development of sabotage capabilities in the US; should the Soviets undertake the clandestine introduction of nuclear weapons, they almost certainly would employ the highly trained and reliable agents of these services. They could also employ diplomatic personnel.

5. Nuclear weapons yielding up to 300 KT could be brought into the US by a variety of means such as by ground or air transport across land borders or at points along US seacoasts. The difficulties of introducing megaton weapons into the US, even in a disassembled state, are probably sufficiently great to seriously discourage such attempts. Moreover, megaton devices could be brought into US waters in submarines or merchant ships and detonated without removal from the ship. Such devices could also be carried in by fishing boats or similar small craft to which transfer had been made at sea.

III. CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING SOVIET INTENTIONS

6. The Soviets almost certainly recognize the serious consequences which would result from the detection of an attempt to introduce and deploy nuclear weapons in the US. Despite all Soviet precautions, there would always be some risk of detection, arising not only from specific US security measures but also from the chance of a US penetration of the clandestine apparatus, the defection of an agent, or sheer accident. The Soviets would expect detection to produce a political crisis of the first magnitude, and to preclude any chance of achieving surprise. In

their view, it might even precipitate a US pre-emptive attack which would be disastrous for the USSR.

7. We believe that the USSR almost certainly would not contemplate the use of clandestinely delivered nuclear weapons except as a supplement to other weapons in the context of general war. We have estimated elsewhere* that the Soviets do not plan deliberately to initiate such a war. While we cannot completely exclude the possibility that the USSR might deliberately launch a surprise attack, our evidence on forces being built and our judgment of general Soviet policy lead us to regard this as an extremely unlikely course of action over the next few years. To meet the requirements for pre-emptive and retaliatory attack, the Soviets are seeking to gear their capabilities against the US in such a way as to enable them to go into action on very short notice. In considering clandestine attack as a supplement to other weapons, therefore, the Soviets would weigh their ability to initiate such attack rapidly and with little preparation, and in close coordination with the main weight of attack.

8. We have examined the probable Soviet view of clandestine attack in the case of a deliberate Soviet initiation of general war and in the case of a Soviet pre-emptive attack.

a. *Deliberate Initiation.* The Soviets might see certain advantages in the clandestine use of nuclear weapons if they decided deliberately to initiate attack in a period of low tension. Weapons would be in the US a relatively short time before use, thereby minimizing the risk of discovery. In addition, the Soviets could expect that the levels of US security precautions and alertness would not have been raised. Nevertheless, we believe that the USSR would recognize that an attempt to introduce nuclear weapons clandestinely would inevitably involve the risk of jeopardizing the element of surprise on which this course of action relies.

b. *Pre-emptive Attack.* It would be very difficult for the USSR to introduce nuclear weapons into the US for use in a pre-emptive attack.† By definition, the circumstances would not allow sufficient time for the introduction and delivery of such weapons after a decision to pre-empt. Moreover, the USSR would not be likely to conclude that a US attack was imminent unless the situation were so tense that the US, on its part, would be taking extraordinary security precautions which would greatly increase the risk that subsidiary clandestine operations would compromise the main Soviet effort. To be prepared to use clandestinely

*See, for example, paragraph 18 of NIE 11-9-62, "Trends in Soviet Foreign Policy," dated 2 May 1962.

†Pre-emptive attack is defined as an attack with immediately available forces designed to *seize* the strategic initiative from an enemy who is himself preparing imminently to attack.

introduced nuclear weapons in this case, the USSR would therefore have to accept the risks of maintaining weapons in the US over a period of time. We believe that the Soviets would recognize that the risks of discovery would multiply with the number of weapons and the length of time that they were in the US. The USSR almost certainly would not attempt to maintain more than a small number of nuclear weapons, if any, in the US for an indefinite period.[6]

IV. EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST VARIOUS TARGETS

9. Even as the Soviets build larger missile forces capable of attacking the US, they may see a continued requirement for clandestine nuclear attack in conjunction with long-range attack. Although a wide variety of US targets would be vulnerable to clandestine nuclear attack, we believe that the Soviets probably would focus on the feasibility of attacking targets for which their missile systems are inappropriate because of a requirement for extreme accuracy or the desire to deny warning time. Targets in this category might be key command and control facilities and possibly some manned alert forces. We believe that the Soviets would consider that only a small number of US targets could be attacked with greater advantage by clandestinely placed nuclear weapons than by nuclear weapons delivered by other means.

10. The Soviets probably recognize that US security measures provide a considerably higher level of protection against penetration of strategic bases than against delivery of clandestine attacks at the perimeters of such installations. The detonation of a 300 KT nuclear device could cripple aircraft on the ground at a distance of several miles. A Minuteman launch control center (hardened to 1,000 psi) would be vulnerable to a surface burst of a 300 KT weapon at a distance of 950 feet.[7] But in view of the growing number and dispersal of US delivery vehicles, the Soviets probably recognize that it would be impracticable for them to mount a clandestine nuclear attack on a sufficient number of them to reduce substantially the weight of a US strike.

11. The Soviets might believe that key US Government officials and command centers could be attacked by clandestinely introduced nuclear weapons with greater advantage than by missiles. Nuclear weapons in the 100-300 KT range could be used in such an attack. Under existing practices with respect to diplomatic immunity, the USSR would incur no appreciable risk of detection in assembling suitable nuclear

[6] This objection to advance clandestine introduction of nuclear weapons for a preemptive attack would also apply to preparation for a retaliatory attack.

[7] The Soviets are almost certainly aware that Minuteman control mechanisms are such that the destruction of one launch center could not be counted upon to prevent the firing of the 10 missiles that it controls. Interconnecting controls are provided so that any one of the five launch control centers associated with a squadron of 50 Minuteman silos could launch the entire squadron.

devices in diplomatic premises such as the Soviet Embassy in Washington. The principal advantage of such an attack would be its denial of warning time and the minimal risk of discovery. However, the Soviets could never be sure that key US officials would be vulnerable at a predetermined time of detonation, or that a successful clandestine nuclear attack against Washington, for example, would significantly delay a US decision to release nuclear strike forces.

V. LIKELIHOOD OF CLANDESTINE NUCLEAR ATTACK

12. Although the Soviets are capable of introducing nuclear weapons clandestinely into the US, we believe that the limited advantages of this course of action, when weighed against the consequences of possible detection, make it unlikely that the Soviets will do so. However, there cannot be complete assurance that the USSR will not attempt the clandestine introduction of nuclear weapons into the US.*

*The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; and the Director of the National Security Agency, do not concur in this paragraph. They feel that as long as the Soviets have the capability for clandestine nuclear attack against selected important targets in the US, with minimal risk, there is not enough evidence to make the judgment that such an attack is unlikely.