

NEW EVIDENCE OF MOSCOW'S MILITARY THREAT

That the U.S. must increase its defense efforts to counter a mounting Soviet threat was confirmed yet again this week. An analysis submitted by the Defense Intelligence Agency to Congress' Joint Economic Committee, declassified and released on June 22, details the dangerous Soviet military advantage. This important study reveals that Moscow's commitment to military spending and achievement of superiority is not diminishing. Instead of leveling off or declining in the face of smaller rates of economic growth, defense spending continues to increase at its historical rate of 4 percent annually and is absorbing an ever larger share of total national resources. Military related industries receive the highest quality goods and they are given priority when it comes to capital investments. The eleventh Five Year Plan calls for a 43 percent growth in defense machinery output by 1985 which will further strengthen the Soviet military-industrial base, already the largest in the world.

While it is true that the nominal pace of Soviet military procurement may have lessened, this simply reflects the rising costs and longer production times for more sophisticated military hardware. The United States faces similar problems. It is not evidence of a slowdown of the Soviet military buildup and does not support arguments for lesser defense spending increases by the United States.

Soviet willingness to allocate the resources necessary to sustain the momentum of the military buildup despite growing costs to the civilian economy and a slower expansion of the resource base provides incontrovertible evidence that Moscow remains determined to shoulder whatever expense is required to achieve the military objective.

Throughout the 1970s, U.S. defense spending has declined in real terms while Soviet spending increased at a steady rate. This asymmetry in resource allocation has created the current conventional and strategic weapons imbalance that the Administration's program seeks to correct. Consequently, U.S. defense spending levels must not be determined by what may be short term changes in Soviet procurement patterns. The U.S. is attempting to catch up with the Soviet Union. Until it does so, the actual

size of Moscow's arsenal is more significant than the current procurement pattern.

The DIA report confirms that the Soviet Union is the world's largest weapons producer and surpasses the United States in all significant categories. This crucial fact is not changed by the slight decrease in acquisition of some weapons systems. The Soviets produced 750 tactical combat aircraft in 1981, just as they did in 1977. By comparison, the U.S. procured fewer than 300 aircraft--even below the annual attrition rate. During 1981, the Soviets produced more than twice as many tanks, 40 times more surface-to-air missiles, and three times more naval vessels than the U.S. As a result, the Soviet Union fields a growing number of modern and qualitatively improved weapons systems while the U.S. is barely able to keep its own inventory from shrinking.

In the past, the United State relied on the qualitative superiority of its weapons to offset Soviet quantitative superiority. Soviet technological advances, however, are narrowing the technological gap between both countries. Unless the U.S. can procure sufficient numbers of qualitatively superior weapons systems, it will lose its ability to counter the Soviet threat. In view of the sharp deterioration of the U.S. defense industrial infrastructure resulting from stop-and-go weapons procurement patterns in the 1970s, a sustained effort to rebuild military capabilities is imperative. The Reagan program is proposing just this. As the DIA testimony before Congress indicates, the Administration has no other choice if it is serious about ensuring national security.

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For further information:

- U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee. Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China -- 1982. Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Trade, Finance, and Security Economics. 97th Congress, 2nd Session. Part 8, June 29 and December 1, 1982.
- _____, Soviet Economy in the 1980's: Problems and Prospects, Part 1. 97th Congress, 2nd Session (December 31, 1982). Joint Committee Print.
- _____, Soviet Military Economic Relations. Proceedings of a Workshop on July 7 and 8, 1982. 97th Congress, 2nd Session. Joint Committee Print.