

Soviet Navy, far from being mothballed, is stronger than ever

by Argus

As U.S. arms procurements continue to draw down, the Soviet Union, giving only the appearance of a similar trend, continues to make major qualitative improvements in its armed forces. A number of defense analysts point to ongoing modernization of the Red Navy as a cardinal example of the way in which public perceptions of Moscow's "arms reductions" do not match the actual situation.

The same specialists warn that if these presently disparate U.S.-Soviet trends in arms, especially naval ones, continued, and a new Cold War broke out, the United States would be placed at serious disadvantage.

Serious observers point out, moreover, that U.S. defense expenditures in Fiscal Years 1989, 1990, and 1991 tend to favor the Navy. By FY91, the U.S. Navy will receive 43% of the arms procurements budgetary pie, which is, on the average, double the share of the other branches of service. However, at the same time, the Soviet Navy is expected to continue to make giant strides ahead of the American Navy.

Cold War will return

Writing in the respected monthly *Defense Science*, electronics warfare editor Dr. Julian S. Lake says that "if the hardliners return to power in the Soviet Union for whatever reason, it is almost certain that the 'cold war' will return. If this occurs, the probability of a 'hot war' will increase over that of pre-Gorbachov days."

The analyst further points out that "modern wars are fought with the [military] assets and weapons on hand at the time the wars start." Unfortunately, he maintains, the U.S. Navy is steadily losing its once-assumed lead over the Soviets.

The latter, he notes, are building a faster, more heavily armed, and in general a more modern fleet than that of the United States. "Under perestroika Soviet at-sea operations have been dramatically reduced. Nevertheless, new ships, submarines and naval aircraft keep coming.

"It could well be that the U.S. Navy is about to be confronted with an active, modern [Soviet] carrier capability,

the likes of which have not been seen since World War II."

In a similar vein, the maritime editor of the American Defense Preparedness Association's *National Defense* writing in the Australian *Defence 2000* monthly, notes that "much-advertised" Soviet cuts in their naval forces have been accompanied, however, by "large improvements in the [Soviet Navy's] efficiency without adversely impacting its combat potential."

The analyst, Floyd D. Kennedy, says the Soviets are shifting the focus in combat readiness from quantitative to qualitative. Restructuring of Soviet heavy industry under perestroika, he notes, is linked to improving and girding up the military. The Soviets make false claims of "naval force reductions" by retiring antiquated platforms.

In their place, however, are being built and deployed, he indicates, more efficient ships and naval aircraft: "highly sophisticated, large, modern surface combatants and submarines that are replacing their scrapped predecessors at considerably less than a one-for-one exchange ratio. The result will be a numerically smaller but more sophisticated Soviet Navy."

Soviet buildup: on sea . . .

The Soviet naval buildup, Kennedy continues, reflects a strategy of enhancing the four Red fleets' "long-range strike capability" together with the incorporation of what the Soviets call "reconnaissance strike complexes." These are near-real-time targeting systems that make possible, among other things, long-range offensive operations.

At the same time, these measures are being accompanied by a more defensive Soviet naval posture placed "close to their homeland [whose purpose it is] to counter American naval power in the shortest possible time with a dense-echeloned defense." Training exercises, Kennedy says, are being held closer to the home shores.

Yet this training, to judge by the weapons being tested, eventually is designed to carry the Soviet military "out of area." Future Soviet naval operations, this author and Dr. Lake indicate, will be based on ongoing modernization of

far-ranging Red naval aircraft. "The new major surface combatants," Kennedy says, will "soon be protected by air cover beyond the tactical radius of land-based fighters and [instead] to the sensor range of early-warning AWACS aircraft, thanks to the imminent initial operational capability of the first Tbilisi-class aircraft carrier.

"Three large-deck carriers undergoing sea trials fitting out, and under construction providing compelling evidence of the Soviet Navy's intent to improve the quality, not the quantity, of their forces."

The 1989 edition of the Pentagon's *Soviet Military Power* likewise takes note of the burgeoning Soviet naval modernization program. It further notes that recent developments in Soviet Navy deployment and training reflect overt emphases upon offensive arms and tactics as well as employing "more realistic training scenarios" together with "increased combined-arms games." In the latter, the Soviets' expanding military satellite program play key roles, as noted in recent issues of *Signal* monthly, an electronics journal, and *Strategic Review* quarterly.

As they build large-size aircraft carriers and multiple warheads on their submarine-launched long-range missiles, the Soviets seem to be girding up for missions in the Third World. Many observers predict that the coming decade or two will witness increasing outbreaks of violence in the form of "regional low-intensity conflict" (LIC). During the past month, countries like Iraq, Libya, and Syria have given no uncertain indications that they intend to use modern weapons, including missiles, poison gases, and nuclear weapons, most of which are of Soviet make, to further their goals in the Middle East, and possibly outside that region as well.

Likewise East Asia, a strong candidate for future hostilities, perhaps above the LIC level, finds at least one power, North Korea, in the process of strengthening its offensive and defensive war-making capabilities. Its international line also remains militant. Yet relations with Moscow, which touts "reasonable defense" and "new thinking" in world affairs, and defusing Third World tensions, remain close at present. Western intelligence says that it is aware of North Korea's progress toward developing nuclear and chemical warfare arms. It appears this enhancement of the North's defense has been due to covert Soviet assistance.

Most recently, however, communist-ruled Pyongyang has let Moscow know officially of its displeasure at the latter's emergent demarche toward South Korea. The Kremlin has been giving signs of its wish to establish normal relations with South Korea. That country has recently indicated that it will reciprocate any such move in the hope of doing business in the Soviet Union. Such improvement in relations was hinted strongly during the course of this spring's Moscow visit by the highest South Korean official ever to hold talks in Moscow.

As potential battlefields scattered about the world emerge as global hot-spots, the United States is fast losing its capacity

to "surge," or rev up, for unexpected hostilities, including those in remote places. As a whole, the American defense industry is beginning to shrink as industries once engaged in defense production are turning to non-defense pursuits, or they are going out of business. Once-strong defense stocks in Wall Street have long since begun to trend downwards in what some observers call their long-term decline.

That the Soviets themselves anticipate a continuation of threats of a new war in the present era of apparent good feeling was recently voiced by the commander-in-chief of the Soviet Navy, Adm. Vladimir Chernavin. "The trend toward disarmament," he said, "is not irreversible. The world situation is such that the military risks of conflict on the seas are just as great as they were before, if not greater."

In an article published in the March-April issue of the Frankfurt-based bi-monthly *Possev*, Russian emigré military analyst Georgy Bruderer notes what he calls an "evident contradiction" between Soviet civilian officials' protestations of the state's allegedly "defensist military doctrine" versus professional Soviet military writings that claim, quoting Lenin and Soviet military theorist Frunze, that the offensive constitutes the basic war tactic of the Soviet armed forces.

This, Bruderer suggests, is most obvious in Soviet naval strategy.

. . . and in space

The same picture of racing ahead in arms modernization may be seen in Soviet space activities. *Aviation Week & Space Technology* of April 9 cited Teledyne Corp.'s Dr. Nicholas Johnson's latest annual report on the Soviets in space. Johnson pointed to reports that despite a temporary drop in launch activity, the "Soviet military space program remains strong [and the Soviets] are pursuing new areas of development and innovation."

Aviation Week noted that in intelligence-gathering and military-communications satellites, the Soviets have orbiting satellites with longer lives and ever more sophisticated on-board electronics. Soviet missile early-warning satellite array, Johnson said, keeps increasing in effectiveness.

For instance, they now carry infrared detectors capable of detecting the heat from missile plumes. The first of this new generation of satellites was launched March 27. Moreover, their global network of orbiting military-communications satellites now greatly facilitate navigation by Soviet missile-carrying submarines and Soviet naval surface craft. The Soviets now also have a well-rounded, operational nuclear-powered military radar ocean-surveillance network of satellites.

The Johnson report stated that the Soviets also appear to be testing anti-missile space-borne radars associated with tracking enemy missiles. These would be used in a fully developed Soviet "Star Wars" anti-missile defense, which Gorbachov told a U.S. television interviewer in December 1987 the Soviets had been working on for some time.