
Defense Policy

Budget cuts and summit failure open way for Soviet campaign against NATO

by Leo F. Scanlon

Even as the Bush administration was struggling to put an acceptable face on the Memorial Day summit, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze once again stole the arms control propaganda initiative, with a proposal to remove certain tactical nuclear weapons systems from Eastern Europe. The June 6 announcement came three days after the end of the summit in Washington, and caught the Bush administration flat-footed. Shevardnadze told a meeting of foreign ministers from the 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) that the Soviets plan to withdraw 60 tactical missile launchers, more than 250 atomic artillery units, and 1,500 nuclear warheads.

In typical Soviet style, specific weapons systems were not identified, leading observers to point out that the Soviets possess many outmoded tactical nuclear devices which are being replaced by advanced conventional weapons (fuel-air explosives) which have far greater accuracy and similar destructive power. In addition, the small numbers involved in the proposal could easily be accounted for by those weapons assigned to troops which Gorbachov previously pledged to remove, but has not.

The announcement is more than a propaganda gambit, however. Soviet claims of a "defensive" reorganization of their military forces are fully coherent with the offensive doctrines of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov—a fact which cannot be ignored during treaty negotiations.

Ogarkov thins out the battlefield

The May 1990 issue of *Jane's Soviet Intelligence Review* contains an article by military analyst Charles Q. Cutshaw which throws cold water on those theories which view the current Soviet reorganization as benign, or even some type of retreat. Cutshaw notes that the Ogarkov strategy is predicated on a reduction of the total military forces stationed in Europe in order to reduce the number of "targets" and to facilitate a concentration of highly mobile firepower, principally artillery. He quotes Soviet Maj. Gen. Ivan Vorobyev who writes, "It seems no longer needful to concentrate manpower and equipment too densely in a penetration area. As a result the very definition of the principle has changed. This principle must now be defined as decisive concentration of the major efforts of forces at the right moment in the most important

sector. . . . Maximum use of the might of weapons rather than troop concentrations is now first priority in locating the major efforts of forces. . . . To begin with, combat can now be undertaken with a considerably lower amount of personnel and material at shorter times . . . without nuclear weapons."

Cutshaw warns that "this aspect of the Soviet revolution in military affairs cannot be overemphasized and should be cause for concern. For NATO, it means that the troops which formerly would be concentrated prior to an attack will very likely not be: The breakthrough concentration will be conducted by firepower." He points out that although the Soviet General Staff continues to deny it, artillery battalions "in their most ready divisions have grown from 18 to 24 guns in strength." Cutshaw adds that this only underscores the ominous nature of the general reorganization now in progress.

U. S. military officials have addressed the dangerous nature of the imbalance which persists in Europe in specialist publications, but not in public statements. In August 1989, *Military Review*, the magazine of the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, ran an article by Maj. Gen. Raphael J. Hallada, chief of field artillery and commander of the U.S. Army Field Artillery Center at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in which he said:

"During just the past 15 years, the Soviets have made extensive developments in cannons—fielding two new towed and six self-propelled systems—and they have seven other cannon systems under development. They have fielded four multiple rocket launcher systems and seven target acquisition systems. They have increased their capabilities dramatically in effectiveness, mobility, survivability, range, and lethality to the point that the quality of their systems equals, or betters, ours in almost all respects. We expect their modernization to continue in this vein. In the same 15 years, our efforts have fielded only one towed howitzer, one multiple rocket launcher, and one counter fire radar system. Overall, U. S. artillery systems have declined in total numbers to approximately one-tenth that of the Warsaw Pact.

"Today, a U. S. force commander in Europe could face a 7-to-1 disadvantage in field artillery in a breakthrough sector of a main attack. A brigade commander opposing a Soviet main thrust may expect in excess of 2,000 metric tons of

ordnance delivered on him in the 45 minutes prior to meeting the attack.

"Beyond sheer numbers, current U.S. fire support to maneuver is far below that needed to carry out our doctrine in the face of our adversary. Our current fire support systems are manpower intensive, with some near a ratio of 75 men to 1 weapon. Our fleet is aging and its effectiveness deteriorating. It is costly to sustain and, in some cases, unfeasible to support. Our cannon and rocket systems are being outranged by like-caliber Soviet systems. Our target acquisition systems are limited, and our fire support command and control system is centered around a 1960s vintage computer system."

A January 1990 Congressional Budget Office study examined the effect of mutual reductions in forces as proposed in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty negotiations and showed that "treaty mania" is no panacea for these problems: "At some point after mobilization begins, the ground capability of the Warsaw Pact—as measured WEI/WUV [a war-game calculus based on several assumptions which weight heavily in favor of NATO—ed.] scores—would exceed NATO's capability by 50% or more. In the air, reductions in NATO air forces would mean that NATO would have significantly fewer aircraft; in fact Pact aircraft would outnumber NATO aircraft by one-third."

An accompanying graph shows that in the proposed CFE framework, the Soviet Union maintains a 1.2-1.3 to 1 advantage over NATO, *even without the Warsaw Pact*. The study goes on to emphasize the point raised by Cutshaw above: The Soviets "believe that they would need to achieve roughly 4-5 to 1 on selected sectors but that the ratio across the theater would not have to be high. . . .

"Soviet military historians and military scientists have concluded that a 1.5 to 1 force advantage—and even parity—across the entire theater is sufficient to enable Soviet forces to achieve a 3-4 to 1 force advantage on a few (two to four) fronts or army breakthrough sectors 20 to 40 kilometers in width and advantages of 4-8 to 1 at the tactical point of penetration."

One way to deal with this problem is to simply leave Europe—which the Bush administration and the Congress are doing. Budget cuts contemplated by the Army could take the U.S. out of the European battlefield altogether. Current plans call for abandoning the "Block 2" replacement for the M-1 Abrams tank, a move which will eliminate the U.S. as a producer of heavy tanks. The Army announced in December that it intended to pull approximately 40,000 troops and 600 main battle tanks out of Germany before 1994, an announcement which prompted one Pentagon official to tell *Defense News* that the "Army's planning ideas are dangerous."

Nonetheless, the Army plan is being implemented, and represents a major doctrinal shift in Army war-fighting policy. Previously, all the most advanced weapons were forward deployed to the frontline troops. Under the new Army plan,

these weapons will first be fielded with U.S.-based contingency forces.

While the U.S. Army does have its own long-term plan for creating smaller, more mobile and agile fighting forces, the present actions do not reflect a systematic plan, but are budget driven, and will have a destabilizing impact at a point where a premium is placed on Western military stability.

U.S.S.R. to become 'policeman of Europe'

Bush administration spokesmen, up to the level of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, obsessively repeat the shibboleth that "the collapse of the Soviet empire will increase warning time of a Soviet attack" from 10 days to as much as two years. This Pollyanna view is most effectively refuted by the words of the Soviet general quoted above. It is also useful to note that the Ogarkov revolution assumes no strategic surprise—except in the political realm. Tactical surprise is inherent with the types of forces the Soviets are now fielding in Europe.

These same spokesmen insist that the U.S. budget cuts are justified in light of the "defensive" nature of the Soviet military reorganization. But this is a propaganda term.

A technical paper by Army analyst Col. David M. Glantz puts the true meaning of "defensive strategy" in Soviet military thinking into historical perspective. Glantz reviews the long tradition of Soviet military studies of operations during the "Great Patriotic War" in which operations such as at the battle at Kursk, or the Khalkin-Gol model of 1939 operations against the Japanese, are emphasized.

The common feature of these campaigns is the use of a "defensive" force structure to conduct offensive operations. He points out that the Soviets pointedly avoid discussing the case of Manchuria, "in which a defensive force structure and posture is rapidly converted into an effective offensive one through a combination of *khitrost* (cunning), *maskirovka* (deception), and a massive covert strategic and operational regrouping of forces. . . . In a future context, this model embraces the circumstances of creeping up to war over an extended period."

Glantz asks the question, regarding Gorbachov and Ogarkov's "defensive" posture: "Is it based upon the Kursk or Khalkin-Gol models, or on yet another model?" No matter how one answers the question, it is not necessary to conclude that war will begin tomorrow in order to see that the Soviets are pursuing a systematic strategy to preserve their military position in Europe—despite their economic crisis. This, unfortunately, cannot be said of the U.S., or NATO as a whole.

Shevardnadze's intervention at the CSCE meeting occurs during a period of strategy and budget turmoil in NATO. The U.S. Congress has announced plans to cut its contribution to the NATO infrastructure fund for the second year in a row and is also moving to withdraw vital air assets from the Mediterranean theater. As Bush talks "peace" and the Congress moves toward isolation, NATO will be left to face a formidable Russian military machine.