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Washington, D.C. 20520

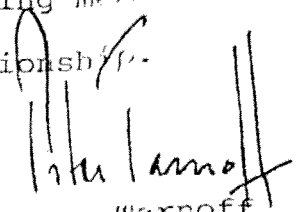
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MEMORANDUM FOR DR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Soviet-Cuban Military Relationship

Transmitted herewith for your information  
is a copy of a recent briefing memorandum on the  
Soviet-Cuban Military Relationship.

  
Peter Tarnoff  
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

"Changes in the Soviet-Cuban  
Military Relationship"

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XGDS-2

NSA review completed

State Department review completed



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

S/S

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September 15, 1978

TO: The Secretary

FROM: INR - William G. Bowdler *WGB*

Changes in the Soviet-Cuban Military Relationship  
(A Follow-up Report)

Summary

An increase in Soviet military activities in Cuba since 1977 appears to be related to other significant changes that have occurred since 1975 in the international affairs aspects of the Soviet-Cuban relationship. Evidence leads us to suggest a good possibility that Moscow and Havana have decided to intensify and regularize their military ties with a view to enhancing their capability to carry out future joint operations in Africa or elsewhere in the Third World. This upgrading of the Soviet-Cuban military relationship seems to have begun in early 1976 (around the end of the conventional phase of the Angolan War) and is being implemented in cautious, incremental steps.

The collaboration is apparently not aimed directly at impairing the security of the continental US. However, it implies Moscow's greater self-confidence in exploiting its alliance with Cuba freely, even in a Western Hemisphere context, in order to promote Soviet interests. US moves last year toward a modus vivendi with Castro despite Cuba's continuing military involvement in Angola may have encouraged a belief in Moscow that the US would or could do little to prevent a closer Soviet-Cuban military relationship in any other area, even if such a relationship seemed to bring the US-USSR understanding of 1962 into some question.

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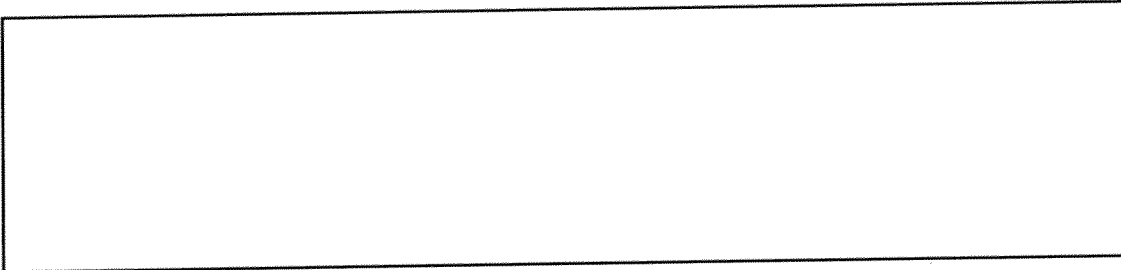
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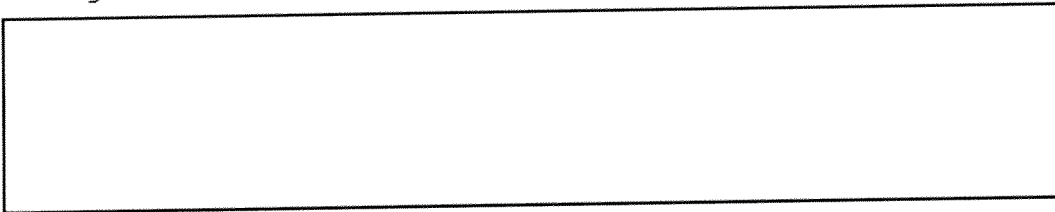
New Military Activities

Since the middle of last year, we have noted some changes in Soviet military activity in Cuba from the pattern established from the mid-1960s on.



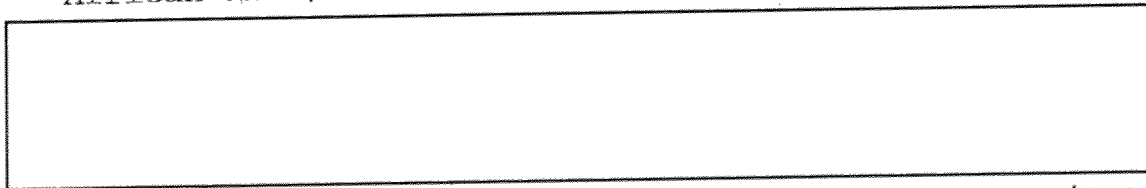
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--Soviet arms deliveries to Cuba reached a nine-year high in 1977 with the pace this year about the same. The decision to increase military assistance was probably made in 1976 since we estimate that it takes at least six months to begin deliveries following an agreement.



Other significant Soviet military activities in Cuba during the past year include:

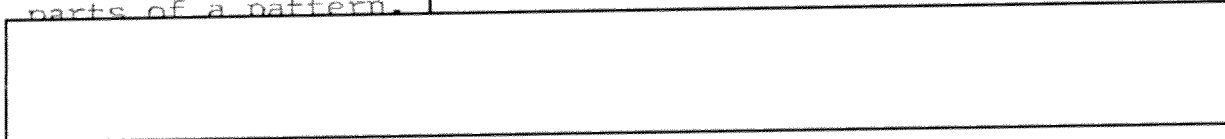
- delivery of the HIP-E ground assault helicopter and of both interceptor and ground attack variants of the MiG-23;
- more frequent Soviet naval deployments in the vicinity of Cuba, some of which then proceeded to the West African area; and



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All of these developments do not necessarily constitute parts of a pattern.

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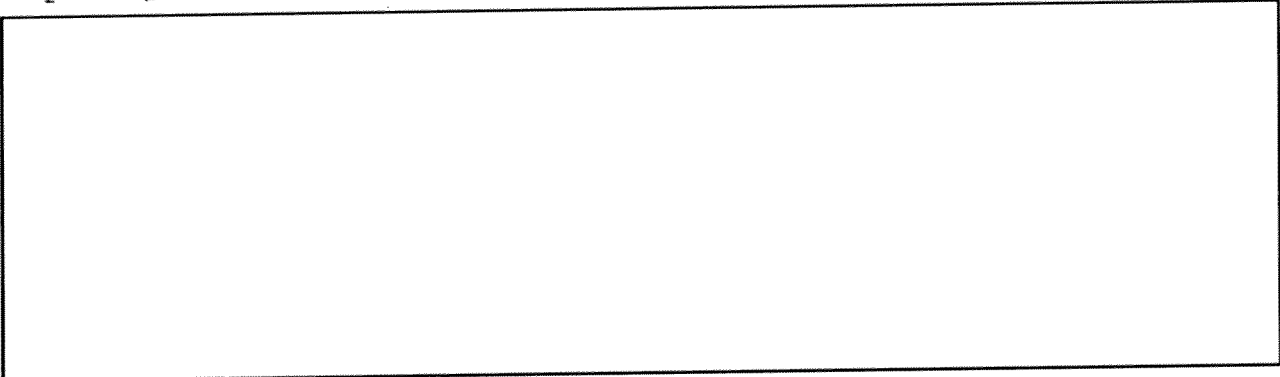
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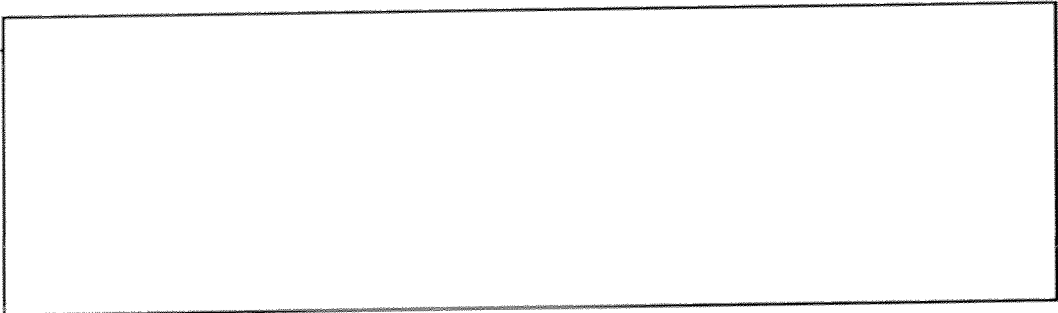
Other developments apparently represent a distinct departure. Until the arrival of the MiG-23s, the Cuban Air Force had been flying virtually the same type of aircraft which it has had for 15 years--long after the Soviets provided more advanced models to several countries in the Middle East. The Soviet failure to provide more sophisticated aircraft to Cuba seemed to us to be part of a conscious policy to avoid alarming the US. (25X1)



#### A Closer Military Relationship?

Heretofore, Soviet military assistance to the Cuban Armed Forces has been designed to fit the latter's primarily defensive role--presumably against the threat of a hostile US or US-supported force. After the Cuban success in Angola in 1976, the Soviets apparently decided to modernize Cuba's arm's inventory and to upgrade Cuban combat capabilities, probably in anticipation of future joint military operations in Africa or elsewhere. The sharp increase in arms deliveries during 1977 and 1978, and particularly the recent introduction of two variants of the MiG-23 and the HIP-E armed assault helicopter, are probably a reflection of that decision, as well as a form of compensation for Cuba's military efforts in Africa.

It also seems likely that the Soviets have decided to expand joint military activities within Cuba as well as abroad.



(25X1)

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### The US-Soviet Understandings

While the Soviet military activities in Cuba are most probably not motivated by a deliberate intention in Moscow to probe the gray areas of the 1962 Kennedy-Khrushchev "understanding," with its Kissinger-Dobrynin corollary of 1970, top Soviet officials would almost certainly expect the US to examine the Soviet presence in that context. The new developments that we are seeing do not suggest any abrupt transformation in the Soviet military role in Cuba, which, since 1962, has not posed a direct threat to the continental US. Rather, we are watching slow, cautious, incremental changes that will allow for some attention to US sensitivities before the USSR becomes finally committed to any one move.

If Moscow is faced with signs of US displeasure at these developments, such as expressions of American concern or assertions of violations of the 1962 or 1970 "understandings", we do not think that it would be likely to desist from its current military program in Cuba. Not only are there ambiguities in the terms resulting from the 1962 crisis, but the USSR will feel that its improved worldwide military posture since then, as well as explicit US recognition of some sort of Soviet parity in superpower terms, has made the old "understandings" outmoded. Thus, the Soviets would probably assert firmly their legal right to have whatever

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relations they chose with another independent nation (Cuba). Such a stance would, however, almost certainly not lead to any provocative acceleration in what has been a gradual build-up. Nor would the Soviet declarative position preclude some Soviet unilateral flexibility -- intended to accommodate to a degree its overall relationship with Washington -- in the eventual scope and nature of Soviet military activity in Cuba.

A Final Caveat

We emphasize that the foregoing analysis represents speculative but logical interpretations, rather than firm conclusions. We -- and the rest of the Intelligence Community -- will continue to monitor this problem closely and will keep you informed of new data or analysis.

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9/15/78

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