

Assessing Warsaw Pact Military Forces: The Role of CIA Clandestine Reporting
Woodrow Wilson Center, 16 January, 2014
6th Floor Moynihan Board Room, 10:00AM-12:00PM

A. Ross Johnson:

Thank you very much. Welcome to everybody, to this discussion today, on the role of clandestine reporting in CIA analyses of the Warsaw Pact. And I'm glad everybody could be here today and join us after a couple of scheduling changes. Third time's a charm. And I'm sure we're going to have a great discussion. I apologize in advance that, because of some of the schedule changes, I myself will have to leave at 11:30. At that point, I'll turn over the chair to Mark Kramer. But I point out, this is not a purge [laughs]. Certainly not a North Korean style purge [laughs].

I have a few introductory remarks, and then I'm going to turn to the panel.

Let's remember today, that the European Union permits travel without border controls, from Dublin to Bouisdock [spelled phonetically]. 25 years ago, an instant ago, this region was divided into opposing camps, buttressed by military forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the most lethal concentration of opposed military force in close proximity in peace time in human history. The United States and NATO devoted vast resources to analyzing the capabilities, the strategy, the tactics of Warsaw Pact forces intended for military conflict in Europe. The U.S. and NATO intelligence agencies drew on many sources to provide policy-makers and military planners with their assessments. These included public or open-source discussions, signals intelligence, overhead imagery, defense attache reporting, and clandestine reports from Soviet and East European military and civilian insiders, both defectors and agents in place, such as prominently Oleg Penkovsky, Ryszard Kukliński. So it's this last category of intelligent sources, clandestine reporting, that is our subject today.

Our panel will discuss the latest of several releases of once-classified intelligence documents on the Warsaw Pact. These releases have been part of the CIA's historical review program series that made available topical historical collections outside the CIA's regular FOIA, MDR, and 25 year review document declassification programs. We discussed one of the earlier CIA releases on the Warsaw Pact Wartime Statutes as instruments of Soviet Control here, in this very room actually, in 2011. That was one, as today, one of many events, as Christian has mentioned, devoted to the history of the Warsaw Pact by the Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project and part of its history and public policy program. And for those not so familiar with the materials, you can find the CIA documents on www.cia.gov, and all the materials and the events at the Wilson Center related to the Warsaw Pact on www.wilsoncenter.org.

The final comment, the released CIA documents complement other once-secret materials on the Warsaw Pact from East European military archives that become available over the past 25 years.

Thanks to the efforts of many. Thanks to the efforts of the parallel history project, headed by Vojtech Mastny, who is with us today, the declassification efforts in Poland of former defense minister and now foreign minister Radosław Sikorski and many others.

The CIA documents, those that we're talking about today, and the others that have been released are of interest to historians of the Cold War on two grounds. First, for what they tell us about the CIA's understanding of the Soviet East European military complex at the time, and second, what they add to our knowledge today about the Warsaw Pact, especially given the inaccessibility of the presumed most important source of materials, the Soviet military archives in the Russian Federation.

With those introductory remarks, I turn to our panel. You have their biographies, so I won't go through them. Our presenters are Joan Bird and John Bird, both former CIA analysts, who have devoted themselves to the collection and analysis of the documents we're talking about today.

Our comments are Mark Kramer, directing the Cold War studies at Harvard, and Barry Watts, a veteran military operations analyst, now at the Center for Security Studies at Georgetown University.

Joan, please begin.

Joan Bird:

Okay. I want to start with the cover of our booklet. On the front cover is our sources, our spies, very important people that we are so glad that we had them. The front is, actually, the clandestine sources. The back is the analysis. This is the page from one CIA military analyst paper in 1968, and it's his personal view of what the plan was going to be for invading Europe in a war with NATO.

I want to tell you a little bit about these gentlemen on the cover. First of all, Popov came from a Russian peasant family. Nobody had been educated. His brother came in one day. He had no shoes, never had shoes until he went to school, and said, "You're going to go to school. You're going to be the one we get educated out of our family." And off he went, and he did very well and got into the military schools and was a major when he started working for us. He worked in the 1950's, from about '53 to '58, when he was arrested and executed.

He supplied us with a lot of information. You'll find most of his stuff, his documents, are in chapter one. And his reporting, you'll find a lot of them are one-liners, especially the TO&E's [Table of Organization and Equipment] on the tanks at the time. And that was a very important thing for the military analyst. We had no idea, and we kept hearing about a new -- John's going to tell you this, and so I shouldn't get into it -- a new tank, and he gave us information. You'll see, I put all of the TO&E things together, even though they were spread out over a time period, so that you can see how it finally came together with a lot of information for the analysts.

There is a book that's been written by somebody who worked with him when he was a spy for us. It's titled "Mole," and it's by William Hood and Peter Deriabin.

The second one is over on this side. I'm doing them chronologically. And this is Col. Penkovsky. Oleg Penkovsky. He worked with us from '61 through '62 until he was arrested and tried, and then executed. He provided us with information. It was an incredible amount, but it was current information, during the Berlin Crisis. If any of you went to the Berlin releases that NARA [spelled phonetically] does, he really helped us at that time period, to know what the Soviets wanted to have done. There's a book out about him, too, that is very good, and it's written by Jerry Schechter, and it's called "The Spy Who Saved the World," and it's because of the very dangerous time during the Berlin Crisis.

The last one is a Pole. He's a Polish military planning officer. He had the rank of colonel, and he actually was the one that did the plans for the martial law. He worked with us through the 1970's, until he escaped and came to the United States, just as they were beginning to institute the martial law. He actually provided a blizzard, actually, of documents. It was very hard to keep up, it was very hard to get the translations done, to keep current. But it kept coming, kept coming, all the way, I would say, probably through the mid '80's, maybe even longer.

As I told you about the back cover already, I wanted to tell you that based on this business of the war plan, everybody asked John as we were preparing the documents, if they could see the document that had the Soviet, or the Warsaw Pact, war plan for war with NATO. The answer then was, we didn't get one document that told us what the war plan was. They came from the sources, the analysts pulled it all together, and along about 1968, we had gotten enough information that we really began to understand what was happening. Inside the back cover is our disc. And this has all of our documents on it. We have a catalog that provides basic information, so you know what it's about. I Xeroxed it, so it's here if you want to look at it and you can see and I can explain a little bit about it. I am going to tell you how it's set up so that you can understand how to work with it. You could also, our site on the CIA website, the documents are not connected to the catalog. So it's more difficult. So you're better off if you use this right now than... The other thing you can do, is you can order them through the --

[inaudible commentary]

Joan Bird:

-- yeah, the Government Printing Office, the GPO and there's a link. You can go from there. You can tell friends that.

The essays in the booklet, which John is going to address, they provide a context for all of these documents that are in here. So they're a help for you. A guide, background, what was happening, how well we were doing with spies, how well we were doing with collecting information, all kinds of things like that. What was happening with the Russians who weren't always nice about things.

The documents are arranged chronologically by chapter. The only time that that is broken up is when there is a series of documents, like the TO&Es I told you about for the

tanks in chapter one. We pulled those out and put them in chronological order in where the date is for the first one, and then just resumed the regular chronology after that.

Let's see. Okay, I told you all that. Okay. The analysis documents are in here by the date they were published because that's the date that they would go out to the leadership in the country, you know, the military officers and the policy-makers, and Congress, and everything like that.

The clandestine documents are, well, they have two dates. They have the date of information, which is when the event happened, the document was published in the Soviet Union, or somebody told the spy something. So that's the date that that information, or that had occurred. The other date in their little paragraph, or description, is the date they were disseminated to the analyst. So that gives you an idea when the analyst first had the information. And even though the document itself might have been published 10 years earlier, we didn't have it until some spy got it for us, so...

I want to give you a little bit of information about the intelligence community documents. I have a feeling that some of you have never seen a lot of them, or many of them. But the NIE, there will be a lot of those, the National Intelligence Estimates. They're the highest form of finished national intelligence in the country. The document is to reflect the consensus of the whole community. So the disagreements are in the footnotes. And some of those are much more interesting than the original document, you'll find. All the disagreements are in those footnotes. They're intended to address important national security issues that are of continuing concern. They forecast future developments of present military economic and political situations, and they identify implications. So you find all those in a community-agreed document. There's another one, it's called a Special National Intelligence Estimate. This is one that has a short time fuse. Something has just came up, we don't know anything about it, we need to find out and get a consensus in the community about which way to go. Those happen as needed. There's a third intelligence document for the community. It's called --

[inaudible commentary]

Joan Bird:

-- Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, right. It's even more narrow issues. And there's some of all these in the catalog and in the documents.

Okay, one thing you need to know is the clandestine service reporting covers the not only human, but also technical sources. And you'll see, as you go through, the dates that they were disseminated to the analyst. So that's the dates first that they had it. They didn't have it before, and it's not their fault they didn't have it [laughs], it's because we hadn't gotten somebody that was in the right place to get it for us.

The titles, I noticed when we started making the catalog, we gathered up information about confusion from some people with the documents. And some of them didn't understand what the intelligence documents were supposed to present. The clandestine

source documents only had three different titles during the whole 30 year span that this project covers. The early one was Information Report. And it always occurred, or showed up at the top of the page if I can find -- I thought I had it here, but it's now disappeared. Anyway, the second one was Intelligence Information Report, and a third variety was Intelligence Information Special Report. That's when there was one particular spy who was providing a lot of information. And they gathered the collection together and put it out as, you'll see there are examples all over. I had some here, but I don't remember what happened to them. Probably out back here. Yes. Just for your information. These are both -- I don't have a D.O. [spelled phonetically] one. Well, sorry. I'll show you here in this thing what that looks like.

The documents that are in here from the clandestine source reporting are the documents that were actually disseminated to the analyst, in this case to DIA, because a lot of the Warsaw Pact period documents and CIA got lost in the shuffle of reorganizations and things. So we were lucky that we could get theirs to supplement ours. The D.I. all source finished intelligence analytical documents, they basically address issues that are important to the presidents, secretary of state, and the Defense Department. The titles reflect the type of analysis that it is. For example, Intelligence Research document, Intelligence Memorandum, and Intelligence reports on various subjects. There are about 150 D.I. analysis documents in this package.

We also have photographic intelligence reports. These are a blend of source reporting and analysis, because the report and interpretation of what the image they get, either photography, or satellite imagery. And then there's analysis about the buildings and things. There are about 400 or so of those in chapter five, for a good reason, which John will explain to you.

I think that I am finished. That's all that I have. I'm going to have this little book up here, and I'll be happy to talk to you. It has a catalog in it, and you can see how they're laid out. There's an explanation for each document, it might be just how we got the document, what its impact may have been, and it also tells you where the document came from, et cetera. So I'd be glad to go through it and show it to you. On the actual disc, or when you get into the thing, you click on the colored part of the description, two paragraphs, the first description, and that takes you to the document. That's why it's easier to use the discs right now.

A. Ross Johnson:

Joan, thank you very much. John, the floor is yours.

John Bird:

Okay. Would the person standing near the window tell me whether or not they can hear okay? Okay, fine. What I am about to talk about in this study, you should know that it really is what we knew when, not what we know now. And it's about CIA's collection and CIA's analysis. CIA was not the only intelligence organization in town working on the subjects, but it's our archives that we are addressing here. So for those who are here from veterans of other places, this was not meant to say that nobody else was doing

anything in Washington except CIA. As a matter of fact, the first section of the first chapter in the study, going from the period '55 to '60, CIA had no military analytic effort because of the national security council intelligence directive extent at the time relegated that to the military branches. So, for example, the Navy would do the Navy intelligence part of a national estimate, the Army would do the Army part, et cetera. CIA, in that directive, was to do economic and scientific research in intelligence analysis. So it may look strange when you look at it, but that is the reason for that. As the problems with the bomber gap and then the missile gap came along, the administration broadened that, and eventually CIA formed an office of strategic research after a few smaller organizations to address the military issues and support the National Intelligence Estimate they would process.

In the period '55 to '60, characterized by the Warsaw Treaty signing, Khrushchev made major changes in the Soviet Union. And all of this occurred with that as a background. He inherited something called the sixth five year plan, which couldn't have been completed, probably, in 15. Was kind of the culmination of all of the errors made in the planning process since World War II in the Soviet Union and was more designed to please Stalin than to actually cause the economy to run. Some people, I'm sure, thought it really did work. But Khrushchev was not one of them. And he, in fact, wanted the economy to work. He initiated, even as early as '55, changes in the military, designed to shift resources to the economy: agriculture or industrial part of the economy. And the military, yeah, was bloated at the time. They kind of did everything in large numbers without particularly fitting it in to any particular strategy or doctrine. And he saw through it. He'd probably seen through it a lot earlier and caused major changes to take place almost immediately.

He inherited, on the plus side, some major scientific achievements, seen in the west, characterized by Sputnik. But other things. The general improvements in nuclear weapons that had taken place shortly before he came in to power, and he, in the foreign policy area, made some movements uncharacteristic to Stalin that I think everybody at the time thought were designed to reduce tensions. The most obvious one was the Austrian State Treaty in '55 which caused the Russians, Americans, British, and French to withdraw from Austria and allowed that country, on a neutral basis, to be sovereign again. That was a major break in what the Soviet foreign policy had been up to that time. It looked like détente was in the wind and that the easing of the heavy hand of the Soviet Union was the way ahead for the future. Unfortunately for Khrushchev, the Poznan riots in Poland in the following year made it look like Poland was about to fall out of the block. The Soviets mobilized an army to go in. Fortunately for the Poles, they settled their problem before the Soviet army went in. Unfortunately for the Hungarians, however, when they rose up not too long afterwards, that army was used to go into Hungary. And with dramatic and tragic consequences there.

So you had the two kind of parallel paths of détente and the heavy hand of the Soviet control going at the same time.

CIA, in the meantime, had, as Joan told you, recruited this source Popov who is actually the first inside military source that the agency had. They had plenty who came out, but this one stayed in and reported on things going on inside the Soviet military, inside the Soviet military communist party apparatus, and was really invaluable, and especially because he was the only reporting source at the time.

As I mentioned, there was no analysis on this. This material went straight to the Department of Defense and the military analysts at the various branches relevant to the reporting, most of which was Army.

[inaudible commentary]

John Bird:

He provided his own, I guess you would say version of what he knew. He also provided documents. We had the field service manual that had been produced in the '40's, was still the manual that was followed by the Soviet Union that, if you read it, and it make great bedtime reading if you have insomnia, there's no mention of nuclear weapons in it. That's because it's Stalin's field service manual, and Stalin had a proscription against the discussion of use of nuclear weapons by the military. And we all thought the proscription was there because he didn't have any numbers that were relevant to the forces and he didn't want to expose himself to that.

At the end of the '50's, '58 to be exact, the Berlin Crisis intruded on this picture that I just painted, and an ultimatum was laid down, first with the Eisenhower administration, and was fended off diplomatically, and then after President Kennedy was inaugurated, it came back in the summer of 1961, at which time we know that Khrushchev thought this new young guy, unlike the ex-five-star general, could be pushed around. He made some mistakes in that respect, and fortunately at the time, because we had the second of these major sources, Oleg Penkovsky, providing us not only with the several thousand pages of documentary evidence about what the Soviets were thinking, talking about, but his own reflection of what had gone on in the higher military councils, because his patron was the chief marshal of artillery, and attended those council meetings, and often was disgusted with what occurred there, came back and, my guess is, had to tell somebody how mad he was at what they did. And Penkovsky got it and passed it to us.

During the Berlin Crisis, he reported to us that at the higher levels of the military, they did not want this crisis to go forward because they believed they were not ready at that time for the consequences if it went to conflict. That was something that was not evident in the west, and was reported to the president almost immediately by Allen Dulles, private meetings with the presidents, which was unfortunately not recorded, either in the president's diaries, nor in Allen Dulles'. We have been able to recreate it by what happened and on both the president's and Dulles' date books when they met, what happened, we know when the document came out, we know that people in the agency said that they were going to report it to the president. We assume that it happened. The president's decisions afterwards seemed to reflect what Penkovsky had said. And that happened several times before the 24th of July presidential speech. We know that the

president's military advisor reported back that the president had read it before he constructed his speech. And so we know that Penkovsky's reporting was a very important ingredient in the kind of reaction that the U.S. took with respect to the Soviet's démarches and it's a guess, I think that the strength of our reactions surprised the Russians, and the strength was due in part to the knowledge that the Soviets were concerned that we would do just that. So you can follow through those reports, three of which unfortunately have vanished someplace. They will turn up misfiled in the archives someday, I'm sure, but we have not got our hands on them. I, personally have read them in the late '60's for another purpose entirely. I know they exist [laughs].

[inaudible commentary]

John Bird:

Yes, we have people analyzing them, making reports on them, telling us they were shown, et cetera, but we do not have on our discs the reports. And I might add, on the disc, you have all of these reports. Please use the disc. You know, put it in your computer. That's where the good stuff is [laughs]. And we've had a lot of people take the booklets, read the booklet, and say "yeah, that's pretty interesting," but there's 22,000 pages of stuff on the disc, at least 800 pages of which are really good. And the others, unfortunately are translations of things written by Soviet marshals and generals. Their literary style was not something that would rival the authors of Zhivago or any place else. Nonetheless, it's what they thought.

In the '50's, even though we had one human source, we were making major developments in clandestine technical collection. U-2 is obviously clear to everybody in that respect. Was created in about a year from the start, and was used throughout the '50's until Gary Powers was shot down in May of 1960.

Even while that was going on, a much more sophisticated system called Corona, a satellite imagery system that had never been done before was created, and the first successful one happened about three months after Gary Powers was shot down. It was incredible that the progress yielded just in time for us to replace the U-2.

The Soviets were not standing still in this period. In the period of '50's I just related, they adapted nuclear weapons after Stalin, the existence of nuclear weapons through their existing military doctrine and strategy. The field service manual of 1959 reflects kind of the culmination of that adaptation. And if you read both it and the earlier one, you can see the major differences between the two.

Almost as soon as that document came out, with the imprimatur of the ministry of defense as this is what we think and will do, the key military thinkers, and with Khrushchev's prodding, began a debate to change it. And the nature of that debate fortunately we have presented to us in the documents that Penkovsky got, a series of a regular secret publication in the Soviet Union called Military Thought, and a special collection of it, still called Military Thought, but at the Soviet top secret level. And Penkovsky photographed all of those for us and provided them to us. And they showed

the division among the military of those new thinkers who thought massive nuclear strikes would solve all the military problems in the event of war that the conventional forces, at best, would just go in to kind of occupy captured territory. On the other side, you had the traditionalists who said, "Well, not so fast there, Schmidt, this thing is not going to go that well. You'll need the conventional forces in addition to the nuclear to actually win a war." The debate raged for several years. It probably didn't quiet until after Khrushchev was removed. He was clearly a sponsor. And he used this new thought to make even further inroads in the size of the military forces. Made incredibly large cuts in the size of the theater aviation. Naval fighter aviation was done away with entirely. There were no more surface ships being produced except a few that had been programmed and those were the ones that had nuclear missiles on them. His key features were long-range ballistic missiles, missiles launched from long-range aircraft, submarines, and submarines that could launch missiles. And he moved heavily-skewed military spending to that direction.

What did that mean for us? Well, we, the intelligence community reported on all of this. The Penkovsky materials were kept very secure and were not seen directly by consumers, only by analysts who would hide the source of the judgments and that's how you will see in the documents here. You won't see it saying, "Penkovsky said this or provided that" or even that Soviet military thought provided this information in documents in the '60's. It was concealed. We barely alluded to military writings. You do not want to lose sources. And we protected the sources very well. We protected [unintelligible] sources, we protected satellite imagery sources in the way we wrote. But all of that stood behind the all source documents that Joan mentioned that are in here.

There was a kind of side show called the Cuban Missile Crisis that we don't address for its strategic significance or the details of the deployment of missiles. Why we have it in this study at all is because this is a case where the Soviets actually had an expeditionary military force from A to Z starting with the IRBM force all the way down to the infantry private that had to exist someplace where they had no infrastructure. So there was no confusion about what would be provided in peace time or war time. This was what they went with. And so in 1962, because of extensive photography, we can see what these regimental teams look like. We can see what the IRBM and the MRBM forces look like when deployed. We saw a little bit about what the Navy struggled to do and never really accomplished and an air defense set up reflecting the capabilities of the Soviets at the time. So it was a snapshot that we couldn't get any place else in the world. And it's in here because it provided the basis for further analysis of Soviet theater forces.

And we had, in a sense, a snapshot of how we could find out things about the Soviet forces, U-2 photography, we actually had a little bit of satellite photography. But considering the difference in quality between the two, nobody paid much attention to it, except what it could do. And we had inside sources, the Penkovsky information that provided us the capabilities of the systems that were there. He didn't provide us anything about the deployment to Cuba. And we had low level sources, Cubans, we had refugees, we had, you know, we had a whole spectrum of the kind of sources that you can get about a Soviet military force.

A major change occurred in the U.S. with the new administration of John F. Kennedy and his secretary of defense and the influence of people like General Maxwell Taylor on the whole new strategy which relied, not on the massive use of nuclear weapons for all potential conflict scenarios, but instead, for broad spectrum of military capabilities to handle things like they had just addressed in Berlin in 1961 where we were faced in Berlin itself with our tanks and their tanks facing each other across the line, everybody who knew how many tanks stood behind each of the respective country's knew that this was, if you were a chess player, not a good deal. For every tank we had, we may have had a hundred tanks, for every tank they had, they had maybe a thousand tanks. And don't copy those numbers. They are right out of the air. But the difference in size was incredible. And Kennedy and McNamara did never want to face with that kind of calculus again and set about another tutelage of Maxwell Taylor to bring a broader array. An aside on this, in '61, one of the things that Penkovsky said would alarm the Soviets was the mobilization in the U.S., which we did. I don't know if some of you folks will recall when that happened. I was in the Army on the Czech border at the time, and got out of the Army during '61, and the National Guard division, some of them were mobilized. But a kind of a mantra at the time was, "they called up the Army and nobody came" because the system was so bad at the time, so under-funded, so poorly organized for that kind of occasion that it took about a year for that whole mobilization to complete. And at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, they were actually in the process of demobilizing some of these divisions. But for the regular army divisions that had been in that period energized, equipped, trained, organized, they became part of a force to threaten Cuba. So that was in the background.

Now in order to plan for the future Army, the future tactical Air Force, the future Navy that was relevant to the threat, McNamara turned to the National Estimates, which he found absolutely unbelievable. And he threw up his hands in despair at ever having a force that would be relevant to what was described in the National Estimates of the time. But he didn't believe them. He didn't believe that it was really so, and he believed that there must be something wrong in the process. And he wrote the director of central intelligence McCone a letter in which he said he could not understand that, why, in the NIE, it said that they had that number of well-trained divisions with excellent material and the U.S. could not afford even half that many with twice the GNP.

Actually, we had probably three times the GNP at the time, but the point was that the various estimates extent had the Soviets anywhere from 300 divisions, down to 175, maybe with 125 more in 30 days, or with 100 ready with 125 more, depending on which estimate you read, it was all over the map. And the fact is, in the intelligence community, we really didn't know. We didn't have a basis for knowing the extent, just like earlier, we had no basis for saying how many ICBM's had been deployed. Fortunately for Mr. McNamara, we now had satellite photography where we could look at the whole country and the study that he requested to be done now was the first one to be done using that satellite photography. As fuzzy as it was, we could, in fact, see that there was a military installation someplace that it in fact had a tank training range by it, or, in fact, it looked like an industrial concern that had no military relationship whatsoever. The estimate

came down sharply as a result of that. A second estimate later in the '60's using high-resolution satellite photography then provided data about the quality of those divisions: how many tanks they had, how many trucks they had, how many artillery pieces they had. Was there evidence that there was training there? Was this a cadre unit waiting to be filled by reservists coming from the economy? And we had, in the background, all the materials Penkovsky had provided us on how the Soviets thought they would go to war with these. As I mentioned, he might tell us that there were three, the materials might provide us with the information. There were three classes of divisions: a cadre class, a fully-strength class, almost ready class. But none of the written materials told us how many were in each one. We now, with the high-resolution photography, were able to fit it all together in something that made sense of the Soviet military establishment.

At the same time, we now had more information about how the Soviets, how all this setup would be used to go to war. The study kind of yielded the information in the early part of '68. We got some information from east European sources that provided us how they organized, as Joan said on the back cover of the thing, how they organized groups of armies to go to war and invade NATO. In the summer of '68, many of you will recall the spring that occurred in Prague, known as the Prague Spring, had alarmed the Soviets so much that they tried a number of different plans to implement, to cause the Czechs to back down and to be normal members of the block, failing that, they mobilized their forces. Because of what had just happened in terms of organizing our view of their organization for war and our view of what the forces were like and what they had to do to mobilize, to go to war, and what we were getting on the evidence of what was happening in the Soviet Union in the summer of '68, we actually were able to provide policy-makers with a statement that the Soviets had prepared a force larger than any they had prepared since World War II for a decision to go to war. Unfortunately, some of what we did fell on deaf ears. They, in fact, used that force in the third week of August and invaded Czechoslovakia.

That occurrence pointed out many of the shortcomings we had. One, we didn't have, with no Penkovsky, what you would call real-time turn around on evidence about when things would happen in a way that would be credible. Because you were now talking about a change from peace time to near war time. You had to have evidence for policy-makers that they felt comfortable with. And in our view, that was always a picture. And the pictures of the preparation to go into Czechoslovakia, we actually got, about four weeks after the invasion. Because that's how the satellite worked. It dumped materials, we picked them up, we processed them, we interpreted them and produced intelligence from them. That became the basis for the need for some quicker turnaround. And that's a technical, scientific issue we didn't address in this, because we're addressing the forces, not the developments in that. But we did give you a flavor of it with the U-2 and the Corona developments.

In 1970, under the influence of Henry Kissinger, in the Nixon administration we, the United States, began serious study of how to limit the Soviet force's threat to us while using arms control. We now are getting the basis for, in terms of coverage from photography and, because of the '68 invasion of Czechoslovakia, an influx of human

sources that would provide information on personnel strength, et cetera, which were needed in order to have a reasonable conventional arms control. And this just grew as the period of '70's went on, and became so strong that we were able to really aggregate force levels for the various countries, we could tell our negotiators when the Soviet side was lying, and they would lie by changing category titles. So it would exclude whole categories of their forces, and so we would catch them at it. We could provide the JCS with enough information so they could say to the administration what kind of arms control reductions they would be comfortable with, and what level of violation would not make much difference before it did make a difference, so that in doing the arms control negotiations and the verification part, you could put all of that together. Would the Soviets cheat? Well, yes and no. The Soviet Union was a big place. The United States was a big place and we could not control what everybody did. For instance, when the CFE treaty finally went into place and we presented all our data, it was discovered we had 860 more tanks in Europe than we thought we had. And that was because they were the ones that had been replaced with new tanks, and instead of moving them back to the United States, they were on somebody else's books in a big depot in Europe. Well, you know, Soviets said, "that's cheating." We said, "that's a hell of a surprise." And so those things were taken care of. And the INF, similar things happened.

[talking simultaneously]

John Bird:

In the period of the '70's, I guess we were so wealthy with information on the Soviets that only the old-timers knew that sometimes intelligence is hard work. The hard work in the '70's was going through it all, and putting it all, sifting all that chaff away from the wheat that we had, and making the kind of documents that made some difference. We were able by the end of the period to talk about, in a reasonable way, ground force's readiness, air force's readiness, naval readiness. And you had to have details about the forces and about what they attempted to do with their forces that would have been undreamed of in the late '60's or even the early '70's. And we had details about how the forces would operate, what they would do day by day in a schematic sense. We had information on the air operation that had developed during the period. Barry Watts will talk more about that because he was in the Air Force, looking from the other end of it. And it's something we could not have done before. And I urge you, please, go through the documents on the DVD and you'll see that progression. You'll see the progression in the chapters, going from one source, Popov to a plethora, going from no analysis to many documents, examining different aspects of the forces in detail. You'll see that the intelligence community did learn. It wasn't that we did the same thing over and over again. We actually improved our product in not only CIA but in the other agencies as well. And you'll have to ask the other agencies all about their stuff. We didn't do that. But once again, as I finish up, I want to say, we were really indebted to the DIA for this study because we couldn't find the highly classified clandestine source document collections that had been compartmentalized during the whole period and then disseminated to the various analytic units. The CIA had destroyed theirs, as they had a reorganization, and said, "Oh, they don't need that because it's in the archives." DIA

was about to do it when we found out about it and went over with a van and helped them get rid of all those documents. But their cooperation in this was essential and much, much appreciated. So that, I wind up there with what we have done, and in sum say yes, we got a whole lot better in collection, a whole lot better in analysis. But please use the DVD.

A. Ross Johnson:

John, thank you. And Joan and John. Fascinating. And indeed, that's the injunction. Go to the DVD, look at the documents. We turn now to Mark Kramer.

Mark Kramer:

Okay, thank you very much. Thanks, Ross. And as Ross mentioned, I'll be taking over from him in about a half an hour, but Ross at the moment is still able to ring me in. So I will try to keep my remarks relatively limited so that we do have ample time for discussion.

Both the booklet and the DVD were first made available in November 2012 at the -- I think it was already called a Cease Convention in New Orleans. Ross and I were on a panel then that had been organized by the then existing historical collections division of CIA, a division that ceased to exist as of about six or seven months ago. And I'm glad to see some of the people who worked in that office and really did an excellent job, like Peter Nyren and other of his colleagues here. And at that time, though, that booklet was released with almost no publicity. In fact, it was so quietly released at that seminar that I assumed initially that there wasn't much in it. The CIA in the past, I had sometimes been critical for releasing things with a great deal of publicity and they turned out to be somewhat disappointing, that is, they had one or two interesting things, but not all that interesting. Or materials that had already been long available, say in the presidential libraries or elsewhere. There were a few exceptions to that. Certainly the Czechoslovak 1968 collection that was released in 2010. But for the most part, I had found the problem was the opposite, that sometimes collections that were of only limited interest would be released with a considerable fanfare. So I initially set this aside, and then in late 2012, Bob Jervis, who is the head of an academic committee, a liaison committee with the CIA for declassification, and he contacted me and asked me in his [capacity] as a major scholar in the international relations specialist on U.S. foreign policy and so forth, but doesn't know that much about the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.

So he contacted me in late 2012, about a month or so after I had received the DVD and asked me whether I had looked at it, and if so, did I find it interesting. So I had said I looked at a few things but hadn't gone through it yet, so I did start at that point to go through the 22,000, actually I think it's somewhat more. I think it's about 25,000 pages. And then about three or four weeks later, I contacted him, I said, "boy, this is an extraordinarily important collection." It just amazes me that the CIA released it without doing anything to publicize that. I just can't fathom that. I still can't. And I still don't know why it was released with so little attention. I want to thank John and Joan for having been instrumental in putting the thing together and getting materials released. Let me emphasize, though, this is an extraordinarily important collection for people who are

interested in the Warsaw Pact, and Soviet military planning in all aspects of Soviet East European relations. There are materials now that I have looked up in some of the accessible former Warsaw Pact archives that I was first tipped off about here, and let me, before highlighting a few of these, just to give you an indication of what can be found here, let me mention, the question came up about translations. And in particular, see some of the sources it was mentioned Ryszard Kukliński. The Kukliński materials pertaining to martial law, at least the ones that were in the directorate of intelligence, the copies of which were there, were released about four years ago, I guess it was, or five years ago. And those did not include the ones that were only in the operations directorate. But what also wasn't released then were a large quantity, and I think it was Joan referred to it, of materials that Kukliński turned over about the Warsaw Pact and about Soviet-Polish military relations, and other very important military manuals and that sort of thing from Poland and especially from the Soviet Union. Those had been held back for a considerable while. There were many of those in this collection. And that's what first struck me. I said to Bob Jervis again when he contacted me about this, I said "Why didn't they publicize this?" We had been, you know, urging them and pestering them for years to release these and now they've done it but they didn't even tell anyone. So I still can't quite fathom that, but in any event, so those are there, for example, just to give one example would be a document, the cover memorandum is dated 17 November, 1978, and it is from Warsaw Pact military exercise that had taken place in April of 1978. So this was one instance in which the translation was provided relatively quickly.

There are other instances, for example, there's 142 page translation of a Soviet military manual that came out, I think it was about three or four years after it was first put out. Now some of that was a delay in obtaining it, but it was also a delay with the translation. It wasn't as high a priority item. You can also see, again at least in cases when I've been able to get copies of the originals, that the quality of the translations will sometimes vary, there were several translators working in the main languages, at least for Kukliński would be Russian and Polish, and some, especially one of the Polish translations, the translators was excellent, just flawless. Another one was not flawless. I won't say more. So in any case, it's something to weigh when thinking about how it affected perceptions. Sometimes the translations were less than perfect. But for the most part I didn't find anything where it egregiously skewed things. Let me highlight, then, just a few of the items in here. This came from Popov, I think, although again, you can find more about that in the extremely useful DVD, which I too would recommend. The CIA website had lost its links to these collections until about two days ago. They have been restored, but it's nowhere near as usefully organized there. That CIA website is a very valuable one, but not for this collection. This collection is much more readily used from the DVD.

This is from March 1957. Marshal Zhukov spoke to the group of Soviet forces in Germany. And this was shortly after the invasion of Hungary. And the speech he gave there, which you have to look at both the speech and then some of the supplements and corrections that were done to it as more material came in. It has some, again, just invaluable information about numerous things. For example, about the invasion of Hungary. Zhukov says, when the Hungarian army went over to the rebels, orders were given to withdraw the Soviet division from Budapest because the division had sustained

heavy losses. Now that was the first time I had ever heard that, that that was the reason. It may not have been the only reason, but it does make sense. That division had sustained heavy losses. Several hundred troops in it had been killed. So that actually makes sense, and really adds something to the historical record.

Similarly, Zhukov goes on in talking about how, when the Soviet Union brought in 12 new divisions, how it went about suppressing the revolution very quickly. Because it was a determined guerilla resistance, but they were able to suppress it. And he discusses that here. There are other things in this speech about some of the Soviet military planning. For example, I think it was John, brought up this question that Stalin had not wanted to emphasize nuclear weapons by contrast, Zhukov in his speech has a passage in which he says that any scenario in which we use military force against NATO forces will involve the use of nuclear weapons. And we may be talking in negotiations about getting rid of nuclear weapons. It's not going to affect our military planning. We're going to use nuclear weapons.

Similarly, he talks in here, because with the experience of more recent decades, we tend to think about the East German army, the National People's Army as one of the most formidable. But back at this time, in early 1957, it had been formed officially, at least, only in 1956. And it had previously existed under a different name, but was still quite new. And so he's explaining in here why the Soviet Union will not give its newest equipment to the East Germans. It is something that, again, adds to the historical record that there was very much a conscious decision at this time not to give modern equipment to the East Germans. That changed a good deal after the mid 1960's, and especially the late 1960's. Then Zhukov says, "in the event that the western powers should suddenly unleash a war, the GSFG," meaning the group of Soviet forces in Germany, "must hold out for four to six hours," which again is less than I would have envisaged, because that is the period during which the second echelon of Soviet troops will move up, equipped with all types of modern weapons. The second echelon will have the responsibility for offensive action and the experience gained in moving troops into Hungary indicates it will require four to six hours to deploy a second echelon. Four to six hours in the grand scheme of things is essentially zero, so it does indicate, you know, again, the highly offensive thrust of the planning. Because the whole purpose of that second echelon was to undertake offensive operations.

Let me also just mention one other highlight, and then I'll draw it to a close, is some of the reports, again because nuclear weapons were of such key importance to the United States to understand in Soviet military planning, there are several reports, these range from the '60's and 70's, that give very detailed numbers about Soviet tactical nuclear weapons deployment. Oh, I'm sorry, let me just add, the Zhukov speech, when I saw this, I then went to the former East German military archive where I was able to get -- there wasn't the original Russian text of the speech, but there were German notes from it that do correlate very well with what is here. There was nothing that was in conflict with it. There were a few things added, especially about East Germany, but that was pretty well it.

Now with regard to Soviet tactical nuclear weapons and the, especially the weapons deployed in the East European countries, these are often extremely difficult to pin down. But again you can find here laid out the numbers by country, by types of missile, and so forth. And in a few instances, I've been able to, -- in the East European countries, mostly I think from Hungary, from Poland, and from the Czech part, of what was former Czechoslovakia. And again, they didn't have precise numbers themselves, but would have some sense of what was deployed where. And again, these numbers tally very well with the evidence you can accumulate there. Vojtech Mastny, who was mentioned before, has also accumulated a great deal of this, and fortunately has made it available on the invaluable project that he ran, the Parallel History Project. So again, there are many ways to try to check the information that is in these documents, and overall, I find that they check out very well.

So I, too, would urge people to make use of it. Despite the lack of publicity that surrounded, or didn't surround its release, it is an extraordinarily important collection. And I'm glad that Cold War and the National History Project hosted this seminar.

A. Ross Johnson:

Mark, thank you very much, and indeed, we hope our event today will help with publicity of these very important documents. But given the time, I think I'm going to turn next to Barry for his final comment, and then with great reluctance, as I've said I have to leave, turn the chair over to Mark to keep an eye on Barry --

[laughter]

A. Ross Johnson:

-- and to moderate the discussion which can go on until 12:00, or a few minutes after. So with regret, thank you all for coming. Barry.

Barry Watts:

My perspective on all this is as a consumer of intelligence, particularly as an Air Force fighter pilot, working in project Checkmate back in the early to mid '80's. So let me begin by just saying, in general, my feelings about, or my assessment of CIA's analysis of Warsaw Pact forces. By and large in my experience back in that time frame was more accurate, particularly on technical issues than what I got from Air Force intelligence.

So let me try to explain that. And I'll begin by just making a few comments about Checkmate. When Davey Jones, General Jones came back to the United States, having been the USAFFE commander in 1974 and became chief of staff in the Air Force, he set up Checkmate down by the purple water fountain, in the basement of the Pentagon, to do operational analysis of what a Warsaw Pact-NATO conventional conflict might be like. And he used the organization to address operational kinds of issues that he was particularly interested in while he was chief of staff. And then of course starting in '78 he became chairman. And that's about the point at which I began becoming involved in these kinds of issues.

Checkmate was a small organization. Its mission was basically originally to look at a NATO-Warsaw Pact conventional conflict. You can see the kind of operational scheme up there on the slide that most of us envisioned, should a war actually begin with a Warsaw Pact attack on Western Europe. The organization, as I said, was small. It was generally manned by people who had operational flying experience, things like F-4s, in my case. It was divided into a red team and a blue team. And we were able to on the red side of the house, take operational guys from the U.S. Air Force, bring them in, really allow them over a period of time to get fairly smart on how the Soviets were likely to operate, particularly in Central Europe. In addition, the organization usually had at least one good logistics person, so we didn't get completely divorced from logistic realities, and at least one Air Force Intelligence officer. So that's a little background on Checkmate.

Now the project that I, this is a technical issue, but I think it illustrates how technical issues can have significant importance. This is the SU-24 Fencer which the Soviets began deploying around 1976. And eventually they fielded in Western Poland in the Legnica Air Army over 200 of these airplanes. What was the significance of the plane from a Soviet perspective? This is the first attack aircraft, tactical frontal aviation kind of airplane that they fielded that actually could operate at night or in weather. Up to that point, most of their air-to-mud or air-to-ground capabilities were really limited to clear air and mostly in the daytime. So this was a fairly significant step forward in terms of their modernization and capabilities at the time.

Now the issue that I got involved in when I first came to Checkmate was, what's the likely combat radius of this airplane? And the answer officially from the Air Force, the foreign technology division at Wight Patterson [Air Force Base], they looked at the airplane when it was just initially undergoing flight tests, it looked like an F-111, they analyzed the capabilities of the airplane and came up with 1,024 nautical miles as the combat radius of this thing, it could go out and come back.

Why was that important? Well, if you were in Western Poland, you were operating this airplane, and you had those kinds of legs, you could reach Lakenheath [Royal Air Force Lakenheath], for example, in the U.K. So it was fairly important to understand if it could really go that far. And of course, from joint staff planning against the possibility subsequently of a Soviet invasion of Iran, if the plane had those kinds of legs, then it could reach all the way down to the Persian Gulf from Southern Russia at the beginning of an invasion of Iran. So that was really an estimate of the legs of the airplane that led to actual JCS planning, for example against both these contingencies.

My job in Checkmate when I arrived was to take a look at whether this was really realistic. And the long and the short of it was that it probably couldn't even go half as far as the official foreign technology division assessment. I recall an episode with Air Force--well, let me just mention briefly why we thought that. One, as the airplane underwent flight tests, we began to get fuel flow data, through communications intelligence sources. And eventually we actually got a hold of the flight manual that the Russians were using for the airplane. And when you looked in the flight manual, it wasn't even remotely

close to 1,024 nautical miles. The most depressing episode in this story was when we got a bunch of the Air Force Intelligence people down into the Checkmate blue room in the basement of the Pentagon and kind of tried to hash through this. And at the end of it, I finally in frustration said to them, "look, let me get this straight: you guys in FTD know more about the actual performance of this airplane than the guys who built it and are flying it and are operating it, and writing its flight manual." And the answer that I got was, "yes sir, that's exactly right. We know more."

You probably won't be able to see this very well, but this is out of an NIE around 1979, and if you look way over on the right hand side, you can see in red some low, low, low mission profiles, which is probably what they would have had to fly if they went to war in Central Europe. And the distance to Lakenheath is about 560 nautical miles. You can see the 400 down there, which was out of the CIA document. And this was, I think, a pretty realistic estimate. There are still about 400 of these airplanes in service today, and if you go on Sukhoi's website, you'd get a low, low, low combat radius of 322 nautical miles. So this is a case where we just couldn't get Air Force Intelligence on the right page and to be sensible. And I think, you know, the NIE that contained this document was a much more realistic assessment. I'll just say, in passing, generally Checkmate, during that time frame, had very good relations with the Office of Soviet Analysis. And the reason we had intimate relations with them was that we discovered, well actually my predecessors, the red team chief discovered back in the late '70's that there were a number of CIA analysts who were Air Force Reservists. So they needed to go somewhere to log reserve time each year, and what we basically arranged was an arrangement where some of their analysts would come over to Checkmate in the summer to fill their reserve time and actually do analysis on issues that we were interested in. So we got pretty comfortable with -- there was a real relationship of trust between guys like Ray Ennis and some of the others at SOVA on tactical air issues and Warsaw Pact forces.

This brings me to the air operation. Ray Ennis, of course, was the analyst in SOVA who did the most core analysis on the Soviet air Operation. Let me just briefly, to give you an idea of what this was all about, if you go back to the early '70's, frontal aviation was kind of under the thumb of ground commanders. They were basically flying artillery. They weren't going to do anything particularly exceptional or significant in an operational or strategic level. What the Soviets realized, I think at that point, in thinking about conventional operations in Europe was, they weren't going to be able to go forward unless they could defeat NATO air forces. That was the real problem. And the other objective of trying to put together this coherent theater level Soviet air operation was they wanted to take down NATO nuclear capabilities at the same time. So that was sort of the essence in terms of the mission of the Soviet air operation. And I, well, I won't speculate too much on how successful it might have been. This does touch, however, on issues like the actual kind of training that their air crews underwent, the kind of readiness that they actually might have had in this time frame.

I'll just end by saying, by the mid '80's, I was beginning to grow increasingly of the view that if you went to war and you didn't escalate to nuclear use in Central Europe, some of the modernizations that the NATO side had deployed by then, F-15s, Cs, AOX [spelled

phonetically], F-16, A-10s, those kinds of modernizations really gave us a pretty formidable attack air capability in Central Europe. And if you scroll forward to the 1991 Gulf War and look at the F-15's actual combat performance in air-to-air combat against fighters, it was 28-0. That's fairly impressive. Helped by the AOX in that particular campaign. The thing that was really hard to quantify, however, I've got a patch up there from the Navy's Top Gun operation, which was their fighter weapon school that they founded in the middle of the Vietnam War, and a red flag from the kinds of realistic training exercises that the Air Force began conducting after the Vietnam War out on the ranges at Nellis [Air Force Base]. And I think in terms of first battle confidence, we really had a, if you will, a revolution in training affairs in the U.S. Military after the Vietnam War. So you add the modernization to the equipment, to the realistic combat training of the people who were going to fly the airplanes, and I was really increasingly comfortable, as I said, at that particular point in time by the mid to late '80's that we had a good chance of being able to hold our own in Central Europe without having to go nuclear.

I'll just close by making one brief comment about the limitations of intelligence. You may recall the Soviet military power documents that under Secretary Weinberger at the Pentagon started generating, I guess you could say to justify the Reagan defense build-up in the first Reagan administration. In '84, the Soviets published their counter, "Whence the Threat to Peace," and one of the things that struck me, and I should say Checkmate was focused strictly on conventional operations. We never got into things nuclear, but one of the claims that was made in that document by at the Soviets, which I dismissed out of hand at the time was that the Minuteman deployment in the United States was the first strike weapon. And I looked at that and thought, you know, this is pure Soviet propaganda, just trying to give us a hard time. It couldn't possibly be true. That's certainly not what we had in mind when we deployed the Minuteman in the Northern United States, but, in the early '90's, when some of the first interviews with general staff people, in particularly some of their operations analysts occurred, we understood that they had done empirical testing against missile silos and they had run their own analysis, and their conclusion was that the Minuteman silos were too close together and that you could put a large SS-18 in the middle of one of those and take out an entire complex, and in fact, it wasn't until that kind of information emerged after the Cold War was over that we really understood there were some significant things we had missed. In other words, my dismissal of the claim in "Whence the Threat to Peace" was, in fact, wrong [laughs]. As it could have been. And I will end with that particular comment.

Mark Kramer:

Okay, thanks a lot, Barry. Now we have time for about a half an hour of questions, discussion, if, yes.

Male Speaker:

[inaudible] In the famous 1956 Zhukov party speech, he says nuclear, chemical, and biological. In the '57 one, is it nuclear only?

Mark Kramer:

I'll read the passage because it's fairly brief, is Zhukov stated that "atomic weapons will definitely be used because all Soviet tactical concepts and operational planning are based upon conditions under which atomic weapons will be employed." And that it is "inconceivable that atomic weapons will not be used, regardless of talks concerning the prohibition of the use of atomic weapons." So it doesn't mention chemical and biological.

Male Speaker:

Yeah, thank you very much for the fascinating talk and making these documents available. My question is on the type of agents the CIA employed in, especially during the early Cold War. Your talk and the documents focus, I think very much on these very important high-level penetration agents, Popov, Penkovsky, Kukliński. My own work on Army Intelligence in the early Cold War, I know that Army Intelligence, they didn't really have these high-level penetration agents, but they had a host of low-level agents and got hundreds of thousands of reports, and they were able to patch together a very detailed picture of the Soviet forces in East Germany. I know that West German service, the Galen organization did the same, and they work very closely with the CIA. The Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act has made available a lot of CIA documents from the 1950's. I've looked at those, and my sense is that the CIA, too, had in addition to these high-level penetration agents a good number of low-level folks who, you know, maybe didn't work directly for Karlhorst, but, you know, they gave information, and so I was just wondering, how many did they have -- how do you see the information they provided in relation to these high-level penetration agents. Thank you.

John Bird:

Well, actually, I won't tell you how many they had. But the fact is, there were hundreds of low-level sources and many it's hard to describe as penetration sources. And there was a constant refugee flow out of the Soviet Union. For example, they kept many of the German POW's until the '50's, and they started coming out. There was a group that came to Spain that had fled to the Soviet Union during the Civil War there and now were coming out. There were a lot of people who could talk about life in the Soviet Union. And indeed, even the Soviet open source materials would talk about much of this. I didn't talk about the open source analysis that was done at the time, but in the '50's, we in fact had analysis of open source documents. They were not precisely on the forces of the Warsaw Pact, but they were at the kind of governmental level. There was an organization inside FBIS, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, called the Radio Propaganda Branch. And they had some excellent scholars there who pulled together materials that appeared in the open sources of the Soviet press and radio and gave us a high-level appreciations of changes in doctrine and strategy in the Soviet Union and of the various inter-play in the Politburo, the impact of the anti-party speech, you know, it was not something we focused on in this study. But indeed there were some. The Radio Propaganda Branch materials are all available at NARA. They have all been turned over and declassified. I'd like to say they're easy to find there, but it's harder now to find them there. We did find them, and, you know, it's maybe humorous, but we had to go to a lot of places to find CIA documents that weren't CIA, because some of them were in

wholesale, turned over to NARA, for archiving. And the FBIS materials are one example of that. They have a machine there called CREST: CIA Research something --

[talking simultaneously]

John Bird:

Yeah, anyway, it's CREST [laughs]. And it's available, and they have several workstations there that you can search, not just that kind of document, but the kinds that you'll see on the DVD. It's not a bad research tool, I mean, there are a lot of worse ones around. What's bad about it is it's only there. And at, I believe, two presidential libraries. In my view, it ought to be at every repository of official documents we have at the universities around the country. I don't think anybody's ever come to that as a problem or the solution to that. But the work has been done. It's there.

Mark Kramer:

John, I think eventually they are going to put the CREST materials, merge them with the FOIA/CIA.gov collection online, which would be ideal, because then it would be accessible to everyone. But technically, apparently because of the architecture of CREST, it's not easy to do that. And I hope it will be done within, you know, within my lifetime [laughs].

Let me also very quickly if I could add on this question of low-level penetration, because, sure, if the East German State Security Ministry, the Stasi, this was their primary vehicle. Occasionally they would have a high-level source, but their most valuable information often came from secretaries, from janitors, especially in West Germany, but also at NATO headquarters and the like. So, you know, there's no question that Western intelligence agencies would rely on similar approaches. Vojtech Mastny. Right here, right here, Vojtech.

Vojtech Mastny:

Mark, you mentioned the Parallel History Project, and so did Ross Johnson, so I would like to share with you what came as the greatest surprise to me. When we were finally able to get into the military archives of some of the Warsaw Pact countries, it was the contrast between the Soviet planning for war in Europe under Stalin and under Khrushchev and his successors. Under Stalin, the planning was essentially defensive, and then there came a change sometime during the Berlin Crisis, and the planning became offensive. And it remained so until 1985. Now John Bird mentioned here the information that he received from Penkovsky, about the discussion that was going on at this time, between the Soviet military who in the possibility of fighting a nuclear war in Europe [inaudible] or not. My question to you is, did the CIA, or anyone else, draw the conclusion that there was a basic change in the Soviet military planning from Stalin's time to the Khrushchev times, and then later on? Because that, in my opinion, is a very essential question. Because after all, it was under Stalin that the Soviet Union was regarded as a greater threat. Later on, it was less so. And yet, ironically, that was the time under Stalin that the planning was defensive. But it was later on, including the times of Detente, that it became offensive.

John Bird:

Well, that goes a little bit beyond our study, because there was no Warsaw Pact under Stalin. And in my opinion, he held all his allies in the greatest disdain. But he was conservative in his actions, using his own forces to accomplish things. He, on the other hand, used other communist forces quite liberally in a way that they were distinctly separated from the Soviet Union. Korea, Greece, all of these places had support, but they did not have Soviet forces, basically. Oh, yeah sure they had some Soviet pilots in Korea and they got shot down and we heard them on the chatter on the radio, et cetera, but it wasn't the Soviet force per se. And we surmised that the massive retaliation strategy of Dulles and Eisenhower was what Stalin was actually afraid of even before it was part of our strategy. That is, he didn't have nuclear weapons. He knew what the strength of nuclear weapons were, that in spite of the size of the forces he had, that ultimately he viewed he would lose the war with the United States because of the incredible imbalance in nuclear strike capabilities. And he died before that was really remedied.

Under Khrushchev, on the other hand, the Soviets did catch up, catch up to what they had to have, anyway. Parity is a different issue, but was it enough is always the question. And Khrushchev always seemed to be ahead of reality. If he could plan to have it in three years, he would talk about having it. And you could see that in many of the discussions that they had. And he now could see the possibility that the west would believe they couldn't succeed simply with a massive retaliation since that might be massive suicide. And so he was probably the first chink in the armor of the massive retaliations strategy of Dulles and Eisenhower and that Army strategists like Maxwell Taylor could see all along that you can't solve every problem by turning the opposing country into a glass parking lot, that there had to be something in between. And the first trial of that, in my opinion, was the Berlin Crisis in '61, where Khrushchev, in spite of everything he had said, and in spite of all he had done to the Soviet military, reducing the capabilities of the conventional forces, was relying on them for the Berlin Crisis resolution.

So, you know, I don't know if that answers your question, but that's how we could see it in what we had.

Mark Kramer:

Just a very quick word on the Stalin period, because I very much agree with Vojtech's characterization except, in Stalin's final two years, you know, as Vojtech well knows, he was undertaking a crash military build-up that did have quite an offensive orientation to it. That doesn't mean the planning changed, per se, but some of that ground work had already been laid. And what is odd, as John noted, is that Khrushchev was the one that cut back on that, especially at the end of the '50's, when he very sharply cut Soviet forces. And even though the planning remained highly offensive, the capability to carry it out actually went down a lot.

Yes, over here. Right here. And then back there. Right here.

Male Speaker:

My name is Patrick Kaminski. I'm with University of Warsaw and I currently work on reception of Rapacki's plan in the west. And in my opinion, I think that for United States policy-makers threat perception and Soviet threat played a major role, both in domestic dimension, in terms of like, public policy to get more money on defense issues in congress or in terms of international relations with allies such as maintaining NATO cohesiveness. So that's why I would like to ask about interpretation or misinterpretation of your analysis on Soviet threat or Soviet military capabilities. Interpretation or misinterpretation done by policy-makers.

Mark Kramer:

Barry, do you want to? Because you brought that up quickly, at least. Do you want to address that, or I mean, yeah, I think it would be [laughs], no U.S. policy-maker ever exaggerated Soviet military capabilities.

[laughter]

Mark Kramer:

Many policy-makers didn't care that much about the intelligence assessments. They already knew what the numbers were regardless of what the intelligence said. But anyway, let me --

Barry Watts:

Well, I mean, on either side of my Checkmate time, '81 to '85, I worked in the Office of Net Assessment for Andy Marshall and you know, I mentioned the Soviet Military Power documents, which the Office of Net Assessment played a role in, but our general inside the office reference to those documents was "the coloring book." You know, we were exaggerating, I think, Soviet power fairly consistently in those documents, although that leads to -- I mean it leads to important issues about trying to do those kinds of assessments. You know, what kind of metrics you're going to actually use. And as I alluded to in the comments that I made, you know, you could do sort of bean count comparisons and side-by-side comparisons of forces and you kind of have to do that if you're going to assess the relative capabilities of the two sides. But I think much more important were things like the actual readiness of the forces. And certainly in the '80's, my understanding, you know, aside from the Soviets being offensive, as opposed to defensive and planning a war in Central Europe, was the realization that if you did execute as the Soviets would have described it, a limited nuclear use in Central Europe, you were going to rubbleize Western Europe. Wasn't going to be much left worth having. And so my understanding was that over time, in order to meet the kind of advance rates that the Soviet general staff was interested in, it would be much better to have a protracted period of conventional combat. And things like the Operational Maneuver Group, well, and even the air operation were ways of trying to expand that conventional period and perhaps even be successful.

Now in terms of offense versus defense, I mean one of the things that I always chuckled about, both in a NATO-Warsaw Pact context, as well as in a strategic-nuclear context

was, our planning was generally against the Soviets attack, you know, get up one morning, decide it's time for nuclear war or to invade western Europe. And as best I can understand Soviet general staff planning, it was exactly the opposite. Their planning preceded from NATO attacks or the United States gets up one morning and attacks them. So there was a real asymmetry in play, because of this strangeness about dominant scenarios on both sides. John.

John Bird:

Yeah, your question can only be answered in the context of what kind of administration we had at the time, and what kind of administrations our NATO allies had. As I described, in the early '70's, we finally had a good appreciation of quantity and quality of the Warsaw Pact forces, and at that time, we also had a secretary of defense, James Schlesinger, and national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, who were interested in the defense of Europe, and interested in what we could provide them. And there was a lot of correspondence, a few examples of which we have on our DVD, where specific questions were asked by the Security Council staff or, in the case of the secretary of defense, even verbal material that resulted in their viewing that NATO could, in fact, defend itself in Europe with modest investment, because we already had committed more than enough funds, more than enough people, an effort to the defense of Europe, but we weren't getting a defensive Europe because there was a mix-match with what the Soviets -- what they had had as a force to oppose us. For example, the Soviets had a great quantity of tanks. All their writings showed that they depended on the tanks for their major offensive punch, that the rates of advance depended on how fast the armored forces could penetrate and exploit the penetration in the NATO rear areas.

NATO didn't have very many anti-tank weapons. They were investing in a lot of other things that people want to invest in in the late '60's and early '70's. At an armed forces staff college, I did a term paper in the '60's, and I wrapped up how many tanks were facing us, and counted all the anti-tank weapons, and at that moment, they had more tanks than we had anti-tank weapons. They had 106mm recoilless rifles. You know, we didn't even have that many. And Schlesinger wanted to fix all of that, and as he wanted to fix it, the word that we could defend ourselves was going out to parliaments. And that was toxic, in their view, to their defense budgets. And each of those countries sent their defense minister and their chief of service over to disabuse Secretary Schlesinger of his view that we could defend ourselves. It was an amazing, amazing situation. But I can tell you that in dealing with the intelligence agencies of our allies, they all thought that they had to have that expanded budget, that Barry described the Air Force having in our own country that showed this threat that was overwhelming. And Schlesinger was saying, and so did McNamara before him, if it's so overwhelming, we can be overwhelming for a lot less money. And in fact, they didn't believe it was overwhelming and things could be done.

I'm sorry, that's a long --

Mark Kramer:

As John mentioned, there were really some invaluable documents, I think mostly in chapter seven that illustrate exactly what he was talking about, so -- because we're near the end, I'll take two final questions. I know there's one here, and then right there. So, this gentleman here, I think it was a gentleman. Actually, I can't see -- in back there? I'm assuming against the wall.

[talking simultaneously]

Male Speaker:

I had mentioned earlier about the president's knowledge of what possibly would happen in the Hungarian crisis. How much did we know, or did the president know when solidarity came in, as far as the Warsaw Pact, their intentions, or does the DVD cover our knowledge of the Warsaw Pact strength at that particular time, during the solidarity, if they intended to go into Poland?

Mark Kramer:

Okay, and then the question over here.

Barry Watts:

The DVD covers the military aspects. It does not cover the political aspects of solidarity, as great as they were, because the military, until martial law, had not been invoked to actually use it like it was in Hungary, it never came to that. And so we didn't deal with that in this particular study.

Mark Kramer:

But I should add though, that when Douglas MacEachin did a monograph for the CIA Center for the Study of Intelligence about, oh, it must be 12 or 13 years ago, he did get released quite a few documents. And that's why they're not in this study. Because they were already released, those materials that did look at how the CIA was assessing the prospect of a Soviet invasion. Those are on the www.foia.cia.gov electronic reading room, which is really gotten to be an excellent collection now. You can find those there, and you are able to download them as PDF files [inaudible] --

Barry Watts:

Yeah, I did mean to say, we did look at the prospect of an invasion, but we did not go through the mechanics, because they didn't do it.

Mark Kramer:

And then the final question over here. There was someone toward the back, I think. Was there? Okay then, that's the person.

Female Speaker:

Okay. I have a question from the perspective of a consumer of all this. Fascinating discussion, because I was in OSD policy back in those days, and I am just wondering, are there any documents in this collection, relating to the Warsaw Pact deployments that in retrospect [inaudible] that in the late '70's that would have freed up forces to be available

for Afghanistan, the Afghanistan invasion. For instance, were there routine rotations that they would have simply replaced some forces in the Warsaw Pact, but that they held back? You know, was there something unusual, knowing what happened when the Soviets went in that we missed, but that is there?

John Bird:

The development of the Soviet Invasion Force for Afghanistan, I won't say came out of Sokolov, but it did not take away from the Soviet forces opposite NATO. We did not address it here. It has been addressed elsewhere, but I don't know what's been declassified in that set of materials. But to answer your question in the whole, Afghanistan took a lot of treasure out of the Soviet Union, but it didn't necessarily change the force posture opposite NATO, just as the build-up opposite China was not a major draw on the forces opposite NATO as opposed to the Soviet Ministry of Defense, where they had to create new forces, divert resources, et cetera, do tank production, whatever.

Mark Kramer:

Let me add also, just to add to what John has said is, Doug MacEachin again, the same former CIA analyst and deputy director of the intelligence directorate, he did a monograph also on Afghanistan, the CIA's assessment of the invasion of Afghanistan, and in connection with that, he did get some of the materials released. As John mentioned, though, that used, first of all only Soviet forces, and second of all, it initially relied on the ones in the central Asian military district, which were pulled out, not because they were unreliable, as was speculated at the time, but mostly because it was routine. That, that's how such an operation was conducted. You would rely on the locally deployed forces for the first four to six months, and then replace them with the regular units brought from the Western Soviet Union.

The invasion of Afghanistan did put a burden on the Soviet army, but only over time. As, you know, some of the problems that they encountered there with drug use, with disaffection in some cases, but overall, you know, and again this is maybe getting -- so I'm not going to pursue this much, but the Soviet army actually performed quite well in Afghanistan, overall. If you compare where NATO and U.S. forces will leave Afghanistan when they pull out this year versus where the Soviet army left Afghanistan in 1979, I don't think the comparison's very favorable for the U.S. and NATO. And now the Soviet forces, you know, came in to a situation where they were already confronted by a very active and deadly guerilla resistance, whereas U.S. forces, at least in 2002 could have pulled out, I think, and you know, looked pretty good. But anyway, that's a different subject.

So let me thank everyone and particularly to thank the participants, and especially John and Joan and others at CIA who contributed today.

[applause] [end of transcript]