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## Cold War Intelligence



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Editor: Matthew M. Aid

This collection of 2,360 formerly classified U.S. government documents (most of them classified Top Secret or higher) is available for the first time with the declassified documentary record about the successes and failures of the U.S. intelligence community during the Cold War.

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## THE SOVIET TARGET: THE U.S. INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY VERSUS THE USSR: 1945-1991

By Matthew M. Aid

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The purpose of this unique collection is to give the reader the declassified documentary record, such as it exists as of this date, about the successes and failures of the U.S. intelligence community and its foreign partners in monitoring what was going on inside the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The reader should bear in mind that while the Cold War is over and the Soviet Union is no more, the U.S. and its European allies continue to spy on the Russian Federation to this very day because the country still is a nuclear power and a rival to the U.S. in the foreign policy arena.

Only now, twenty-two years after the end of the Cold War, is it possible to begin the arduous task of trying to tell the story in a dispassionate and objective fashion about the U.S. intelligence effort against the USSR during the Cold War. Over the past twenty years, the U.S. government has declassified tens of thousands of pages of formerly classified documents concerning its espionage efforts against the former Soviet Union from the end of World War II in 1945 until the collapse of the USSR in 1991. But the vast majority of the U.S. government's document holdings on this subject remain classified, which means that what is presented here should be regarded as an important first step, but it should not be viewed as the final word on the subject.

#### **SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION**

This document collection contains 2,360 declassified documents (21,700 pages), most of them written at the Top Secret level, concerning U.S. intelligence operations against the Soviet Union during the Cold War (1945-1991) obtained from both archival sources and dozens of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests submitted to more than two dozen U.S. government agencies.

Many of the documents you see here have only just been declassified, with over 5,000 pages of the documents contained in this collection having been released by the U.S. government since January 2012.

More than half of the declassified documents contained in this collection were obtained from more than twenty-five different records groups currently held at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) research facility at College Park, Maryland. Other declassified documents relating to U.S. intelligence and covert action operations against the USSR were obtained from the collections of the following presidential libraries in the U.S.:

- \* Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri
- \* Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas
- \* John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts
- \* Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas
- \* Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, California
- \* Gerald R. Ford Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan
- \* Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia
- \* Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California

Smaller in size but no less important were a series of documents concerning joint U.S.-British intelligence operations against the USSR, especially concerning naval reconnaissance and aerial overflights, obtained from the declassified files of the National Archives of the United Kingdom (formerly PRO) in Kew, England, which supplement the documents obtained in the U.S.

Many of the documents destined for inclusion in the Soviet document set came from my decade-long exploitation of the CIA's CREST digital database of declassified intelligence documents at the National Archive's research facility in College Park, Maryland, and to a lesser degree from materials on the CIA's "electronic FOIA reading room" collection of declassified documents at <http://www.foia.cia.gov>. The CREST database is a much maligned and underappreciated source for information about the activities of the U.S. intelligence community. Since 1999, the CIA and other branches of the U.S. intelligence community have placed over 10.4 million pages of declassified documents on the CREST system covering the period from 1945 until 1984. This document collection contains more than five hundred formerly Secret and Top Secret documents concerning the U.S. intelligence community's efforts against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. And each year the CIA adds thousands of pages of new declassified documents to the CREST database, making it an invaluable future source of information about all aspects of the work of the U.S. intelligence community, including but not limited to the Soviet Union.

And finally, documents concerning U.S. intelligence and covert action operations against the Soviet Union were obtained from the Hoover Institution Archives in Palo Alto, California, the Library of Congress Manuscript Division in Washington, D.C., the George C. Marshall Research Library in Lexington, Virginia, and the General Douglas MacArthur Memorial Library in Norfolk, Virginia.

#### **THE SOVIET UNION AS "THE MAIN TARGET"**

On April 14, 1950, the National Security Council sent to President Harry S. Truman a Top Secret report entitled NSC-68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security, which became the theoretical underpinning for the U.S. government's Cold War strategy viz the USSR. This study's principal conclusion, which appears grossly simplistic and unrealistic today because it was rooted in a fundamental lack of understanding of what was going on inside the Soviet Union, stated that "The Soviet Union, unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its own authority over the rest of the world. Any substantial further extension of the area under the domination of the Kremlin would raise the possibility that no coalition adequate to confront the Kremlin with greater strength could be assembled.... Thus unwillingly our free society finds itself mortally challenged by the Soviet system."<sup>1</sup>

From this point onwards, the Soviet Union became the U.S. intelligence community's single largest and most important target. And the USSR remained the U.S. intelligence community's "Main Target" for the next forty-one years. A Top Secret December 1951 report by the CIA to the NSC stated that "The USSR is now the center of opposition to American policy, and the one power menace to American security; thus the need for knowledge of the USSR, the orbit of its domination, and its worldwide communist organization transcends all other intelligence requirements."<sup>2</sup>

As such, the vast majority of the U.S. intelligence community's collection resources were devoted to monitoring the Soviet Union and its allies in Eastern Europe. The declassified documents contained in this collection reveal that throughout the Cold War, the U.S. intelligence community committed between 50-60 percent of its vast collection and analytic resources to covering the Soviet Union. If one includes the Warsaw Pact nations of Eastern Europe, these figures rise to approximately 60-75 percent of all resources available to the U.S. intelligence community, which are staggering figures when you take into consideration how large the U.S. intelligence community was at the time.<sup>3</sup> To give but one example of how the Soviet Union ate up most of the U.S. intelligence community's assets during the Cold War, the following declassified data reveals that the National Security Agency (NSA), the U.S. intelligence community's huge electronic eavesdropping organization, consistently devoted approximately 50 percent of its resources to the Soviet target:

\* 1949: 71 percent of all American SIGINT intercept personnel and 60 percent of all COMINT processing personnel were devoted to the “Soviet problem”.<sup>4</sup>

\* 1958: 54 percent of NSA’s SIGINT collection and analytic resources were devoted to the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup>

\* 1961: 50 percent of the personnel assigned to NSA’s SIGINT collection and analysis organization worked the Soviet target.<sup>6</sup>

\* 1968: 50 percent of all of NSA’s SIGINT collection and analytic resources were devoted to the USSR.<sup>7</sup>

## THE SOVIET TARGET

In terms of its breadth and scope, the reader can most easily navigate this document collection by examining it through two prisms. The first is the U.S. intelligence community’s efforts to physically penetrate the former Soviet Union and collect intelligence about what was going on behind the Iron Curtain. And the second prism is what American intelligence analysts were able to deduce about what the Soviets were up to from the oftentimes paltry amount of information that was being collected from inside the USSR.

To understand why the Soviet Union was such a difficult target from an intelligence perspective, one must understand the multitude of obstacles that the U.S. intelligence community and its foreign partners had to face in trying to spy on the USSR.

First, there was the sheer size of the Soviet target. At the time, the Soviet Union was the largest country in the world, covering an area of 6.65 million square miles, which made it almost three times the size of the United States. It occupied 17 percent of the world’s land mass, stretching across two continents and eleven time zones, which came to a distance of about six thousand miles running from east to west. Most of the Soviet Union lay north of the 49th Parallel (i.e. north of Vancouver, Canada). The Soviet Union’s two largest cities, Moscow and Leningrad, were on the same latitude as Edmonton, Canada and Anchorage, Alaska respectively.<sup>8</sup>

Second, the Soviet Union was a totalitarian police state with a massive, efficient, and omnipresent security and police apparatus that was designed and organized to suppress all forms of internal dissent to the communist regime, as well as prevent foreign espionage on its soil. The U.S. intelligence community quickly learned that the fearsome reputation of the Soviet intelligence and security services was well deserved.<sup>9</sup> According to a declassified December 1951 CIA intelligence assessment of the Soviet target, “Espionage directed against specific targets in the Soviet Union must elude the vast counter-espionage organization of the MGB. It must avoid spot checks of the most arbitrary and unexpected sort and seemingly irrational – almost whimsical – arrests, detentions, incarcerations, and deportations. It must allay the suspicion of the bureaucracy, the communist party faithful, and even casual citizens. After thirty-four years of dictatorship, they have perforce to associate the unusual or the surprising with the dangerous.”<sup>10</sup>

As one can imagine, the obstacles the U.S. intelligence community faced in trying to organize and operate agent networks inside the Soviet Union following World War II were massive. The Soviet regime strictly limited the issuance of travel visas to the Soviet Union to a very small number of foreign diplomats and a few reporters and officially approved visitors. Photography of anything but the most mundane subject inside the Soviet Union was strictly prohibited. Some 220,000 KGB border guards made it extremely difficult to sneak in or out of the Soviet

Union. Travel inside the Soviet Union was severely restricted for both Russians and foreigners by an internal passport system. Travel and identity papers were frequently checked by Ministry of the Interior (MVD) internal security forces and KGB counterintelligence officials, which when coupled with the KGB's large and extremely efficient counterintelligence service and a massive network of informers (stukachi) at all levels of Russian society. Foreigners were followed by the KGB whenever they ventured onto the streets of Moscow or other Eastern European cities, their phones were tapped, their mail read, their apartments and cars were bugged, and those "normal" Russians that they spoke to were questioned by the KGB. Because of the extreme difficulty of conducting covert HUMINT operations in this region of the world, the U.S. intelligence community came to refer to the Soviet Union as a "denied area".<sup>11</sup> Third, the Soviets went to extraordinary lengths to keep even the most mundane information about what was transpiring in their country secret. Information resources normally freely available elsewhere around the world, such as newspaper articles and technical journals, were largely unavailable to the Western intelligence community. Those newspapers, such as Pravda and Izvestiya, and the limited number of technical journals that were available contained very little information of intelligence value, although battalions of so-called "Kremlinologists" were still employed by the U.S. intelligence community to try and discern what they could from a close reading Russian newspapers and television/radio broadcasts. Topographical maps and even railroad timetables were treated as classified documents, no telephone directories were distributed because of what they might reveal to hostile intelligence operatives, and even talking with ordinary Russian citizens was an extremely difficult proposition. As a result, the U.S. State Department's political reporting from the U.S. embassy in Moscow was sketchy at best, based largely on what could be learned on the "Moscow cocktail party circuit" from other equally ill-informed foreign diplomats and western journalists.<sup>12</sup>

## **SPYING ON THE USSR**

### **Human Intelligence**

The U.S. intelligence community knew even before the end of World War II in 1945 that conducting traditional espionage inside Russia was an extremely difficult proposition. A 1946 report prepared by a senior American intelligence officer who had worked in Moscow during World War II came to the conclusion that "The available evidence indicates that the surveillance of foreigners within the USSR and the peculiar readiness of the Soviet administrative and police personnel to suspect all foreigners of espionage intentions or activities raises sufficient operational hazards to require postponement of such intra-USSR operations until the time when both our information and our expertise are on a very much higher level than they will be for the foreseeable future."<sup>13</sup> Although dozens of books and hundreds of articles have been written on the subject, declassified documents concerning the CIA and U.S. military's efforts to collect intelligence inside the USSR using human sources (referred to as "Human Intelligence" or HUMINT within the U.S. intelligence community) are few and far between. The CIA has consistently refused to declassify documents concerning its clandestine HUMINT efforts for decades, but has over the past twenty years released a limited number of selected documents concerning a few of its more successful operations inside the Soviet Union and Poland. There have been a few exceptions to this rule. For example, in 2003 the CIA published an unclassified article about Adolf Tolkachev, one its most important agents, who passed classified Soviet weapons secrets to the CIA for seven years until he was caught and executed. But the Agency refused to release any of the classified documents about the Tolkachev case at the time the article was released.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, this collection includes those documents that the CIA and the U.S. military have declassified to date concerning U.S. HUMINT operations inside the USSR and those directed against Soviet forces stationed in Eastern Europe. Of particular interest are the more than two dozen CIA documents concerning one of the top agents inside the USSR, Colonel Oleg Penkovskiy, who briefly spied for the CIA and the British intelligence service, MI6, from 1961 to 1962. Penkovskiy was arrested on October 22, 1962

and subsequently executed on May 16, 1963.<sup>15</sup> Despite the quality of the information that he provided, CIA analysts refused to include Penkovskiy's material in their 1961 intelligence estimates on Soviet strategic forces because he was deemed to be unreliable and his information unverifiable.<sup>16</sup> This collection includes a series of documents covering the period 1945 to 1950, which show how dependent the U.S. and British intelligence communities were on information obtained from low-level defectors and refugees who somehow managed to cross the border into the allied occupation zones in West Germany and West Berlin. Refugees fleeing to West Berlin remained a key intelligence source right up until the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.<sup>17</sup> The documents also reveal that in 1948, U.S. intelligence officials in West Germany were being forced to hide these defectors, most of whom were Soviet officers and enlisted men who had left their army units in East Germany to reach the West, because there was an unwritten agreement to return these defectors to Soviet authorities if they were caught.<sup>18</sup> Declassified documents also reveal that in the years immediately after the end of World War II, the CIA and the U.S. military were dependant on information provided by foreign government sources for much of what they knew about the Soviet military forces based in Eastern Europe. For example, in the years immediately after World War II the U.S. intelligence community was largely dependent on the British foreign intelligence service, MI6, for most of its high-level information about the Soviet Union, although much of the information the U.S. got from London was deemed to be unreliable.<sup>19</sup> The tentative beginnings of the joint Anglo-American intelligence collection effort against the Soviet Union are revealed here for the first time. Included in this collection are a number of declassified cables and memoranda which detail the first planning and coordination efforts between the CIA and the British foreign intelligence service, MI6, as they attempted to synchronize their human intelligence (HUMINT) collection efforts against the USSR.<sup>20</sup> Ironically, the declassified documents show that the British intelligence official charged with coordinating the early Anglo-American spying efforts against the USSR was none other than H.A.R. "Kim" Philby, the Soviet's top spy inside British intelligence. No doubt, the details of each and every meeting that Philby was involved in with his American counterparts found its way to Moscow in short order.<sup>21</sup> Other documents reveal that first the U.S. Army, then the CIA came to depend heavily on General Reinhard Gehlen's nascent West German intelligence organization, the Gehlen Org, for much of its intelligence information about Soviet military forces in East Germany. A 1947 US European Command (EUCOM) memorandum stated that their intelligence staff (G-2) considered the Gehlen Org "to be its most dependable and prolific source of information on Russian military intentions and strength."<sup>22</sup> The declassified documents reveal also that the Swedish intelligence services were also an extraordinarily important source of information for the US intelligence community about the USSR, particularly during the late 1940s and the 1950s.<sup>23</sup> Sweden even tacitly permitted the CIA to run agent operations into the Soviet-occupied Baltic States during the early 1950s.<sup>24</sup>

This collection includes 110 newly declassified documents concerning the CIA's disastrous attempts to infiltrate agents into the USSR from 1949 to 1954. Most of the agents were parachuted into the USSR, but the CIA also attempted to infiltrate agents into the Soviet Union both by overland infiltration routes and by landing them from submarines or torpedo boats on the Soviet coastline.

There were at least six separate CIA operations involved in trying to infiltrate agents into the USSR, each focused on a specific geographical area: Latvia (Project AECOB), Lithuania (Projects AEGEAN/AECHAMP), Estonia (Projects AEROOT/AEBASIN), Belorussia (Project AEQUOR), the Ukraine (Project AERODYNAMIC), and agent insertion operations inside Russia proper (Projects AESAURUS/AENOBLE).

The first CIA agent parachute drop behind the Iron Curtain took place on the night of September 5, 1949, when an unmarked CIA C-47 transport aircraft dropped a two-man team of agents into the Ukraine near the city of L'vov. The team never established radio contact with their CIA handlers in West Germany, and the CIA later

concluded that they had been killed shortly after landing by Soviet security forces.<sup>25</sup> Over the next five years, over eighty CIA agents, all of them Russians who had fled to the West after the end of World War II, were parachuted into the Soviet Union. The last known CIA parachute drops into the Soviet Union took place on the night of March 5-7, 1954, when three agents were dropped into Estonia. All were quickly caught by Soviet security forces.<sup>26</sup> All of these operations were failures from start to finish. The declassified CIA documents show that the loss rates among the agents sent into the USSR was almost 100 percent, and that these operations produced virtually no intelligence information of any value, leading the chief of the CIA's Soviet Russia Division, John M. Maury, to admit in 1957 that his unit's "black penetration" operations inside the Soviet Union were "strewn with disaster".<sup>27</sup> Declassified documents contained in this collection reveal that the CIA and the British foreign intelligence service, MI6, which normally worked very closely together, refused to cooperate with one another on certain key operations inside the USSR, such as the effort to penetrate the Ukraine, because of irreconcilable differences between the two countries over which émigré groups to support.<sup>28</sup> There is no question that one of the important reasons that these REDSOX "black penetration" operations failed was because the CIA and the British intelligence service, MI6, depended almost completely on unreliable Russian émigré organizations based in West Germany for their supply of agents. All of these organizations were tainted to one degree or another by the fact that prior to World War II many of these groups had engaged in terrorist activities, and during World War II many of the top leaders of these organizations collaborated with the German army or secret police.<sup>29</sup> For example, the West German-based Russian émigré organization, the People's Labor Union organization, or Narodny Trudovy Soyuz (NTS), was widely known within American and British intelligence circles to have openly collaborated with the Germans during World War II.<sup>30</sup> To one degree or another, all of these émigré groups were thoroughly penetrated by Soviet intelligence. Some of the Soviet agents were so senior that they were able to compromise many of the parachute drops inside the Soviet Union. For example, one of the top Soviet agents, Myron Matviyeyko, was given command of one of three teams of agents dropped into the western Ukraine and Poland on the night of May 14-15, 1951. Not only did he help Soviet security forces capture or kill all of the members of his team, but the other two agent teams as well. The captured agents were then turned by Soviet intelligence, radioing false information back to their MI6 controllers in West Germany for years before British intelligence finally realized that their agents were under Soviet control.<sup>31</sup> The CIA and MI6 remained uncertain about who had betrayed their agent teams until November 24, 1960, when Radio Kiev broadcast a statement by Matviyeyko admitting that he had been a KGB spy all along.<sup>32</sup> The failures of all of these CIA efforts to penetrate the USSR resulted in some very harsh critiques of the Agency's performance within the U.S. government. In a Top Secret April 1952 report sent to the NSC (which senior officials in the CIA's Clandestine Service strenuously objected to), CIA director Walter B. Smith painted a grim picture of the state of the CIA's clandestine intelligence efforts against the Soviet Union, admitting that "The Council is generally acquainted with the Central Intelligence Agency's secret operations designed to produce raw intelligence. Although we are making every effort to develop these latter sources, our experience so far has been in general disappointing. They are costly by comparison with other intelligence operations and they present in most cases a gambler's chance of obtaining really significant critical strategic information, although they consistently produce a significant quantity of useable information. We must and shall devote our best effort to their improvement and to the exploitation of every reasonable chance for penetration. On a few rare occasions there have been really brilliant accomplishments."<sup>33</sup> Another result of the CIA's failure to build agent networks inside the Soviet Union was that it forced the U.S. intelligence community to shift its resources away from the CIA and its HUMINT collection programs to a variety of technical means for collecting intelligence inside the USSR, which are described in greater detail below.

Signals Intelligence

[...]

### Reconnaissance Overflights

The question of how many U.S. and allied reconnaissance overflights of the USSR were conducted during the Cold War remains one of the most closely-guarded secrets of the U.S. intelligence community.<sup>48</sup> Declassified documents contained in this collection reveal that between 1947 and 1950, the British Royal Air Force (RAF), and the Swedish and Norwegian air forces flew a small number of shallow overflights of the USSR and the island of Spitsbergen, which was partly controlled by the Soviet Union, using reconnaissance cameras and film provided by the U.S. Air Force (USAF). These countries then forwarded to the USAF copies of the photos taken on these clandestine reconnaissance missions.<sup>49</sup> The Swedes conducted several dozen shallow overflights of the Soviet Union, principally over the Baltic States and the Kola Peninsula, using American reconnaissance cameras between 1948 and 1950.<sup>50</sup> The number of the still highly classified overflights of the USSR flown by U.S. Air Force aircraft between 1949 and 1956 remains classified for reasons that remain obscure. But the declassified documents contained in this collection confirm that the USAF and the RAF conducted at least several dozen top secret reconnaissance overflights of the USSR between May 1949 and December 1956. The documents also confirm that the USAF deliberately refused to allow the CIA to participate in these overflight operations and kept the photography taken on these missions away from CIA intelligence analysts.<sup>51</sup> These Sensitive Intelligence (SENSINT) overflights of the USSR were conducted under a strict “plausible deniability” protocol. A October 30, 1953 CIA memo revealed that President Dwight D. Eisenhower had personally approved the program of USAF SENSINT overflights shortly after he was inaugurated in January 1953, but that he had told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he did not want to know any of the details of these missions so that he could deny any knowledge of them if something went wrong. Another CIA report, dated August 1954, stated “Considerations of this highly sensitive subject [overflights] are severely limited by Presidential request. As reported in a memorandum by Admiral Carney [Admiral Robert B. Carney, Chief of Naval Operations, August 1953 - August 1955], the point is made that the President himself does not wish to be informed of overflights.”<sup>52</sup> The first officially acknowledged USAF SENSINT overflight of the USSR occurred on May 10, 1949, when an RF-80A tactical reconnaissance jet piloted by 1st Lieutenant Bryce Poe II, flew a secret penetration mission over Soviet military airfields on the Kurile Islands north of Japan. Between March and August 1950, RF-80 reconnaissance aircraft based in Japan performed nineteen more overflights of the Soviet Far East, including missions over Sakhalin Island, the Kurile Islands, and the Soviet mainland around the port city of Vladivostok. The purpose of all of these overflight missions was to document the order of battle of the Soviet Air Force in the Far East prior to, and during the early stages of the Korean War. It would appear that none of these missions were approved by President Harry S. Truman, the Secretary of Defense, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>53</sup> Only two intelligence reports derived from these Top Secret RF-80 reconnaissance overflights in the Soviet Far East has been declassified so far (probably by accident). The first, dated May 10, 1950, and the second, dated August 24, 1950, provided USAF intelligence in Washington with a detailed precis of the location of every Soviet combat aircraft on Sakhalin Island and the Kurile Islands.<sup>54</sup> Another interesting group of records contained in this collection concern the still highly classified 1952 and 1954 joint U.S. Air Force-British Royal Air Force (RAF) overflights of the western USSR known as Project JIU-JITSU. On the night of April 17-18, 1952, three simultaneous night-time overflight missions were flown by U.S.-made RB-45 reconnaissance aircraft with RAF crews: one across Germany covering the Baltic states; the second flight covering all of Belorussia; and the third covering large portions of the western Ukraine. These missions, which targeted Soviet strategic bomber bases and nearby PVO fighter intercept airfields, all returned safely to base without incident. Two years later on the night of April 28-29, 1954, the original JIU-JITSU mission was repeated. Three RB-45s flown by RAF flight crews conducted

another series of overflights of the European portion of the Soviet Union. Like the May 1952 RAF RB-45 overflights, the principal targets of these reconnaissance missions were Soviet bomber bases inside the Soviet Union.<sup>55</sup> The highly classified photo intelligence derived from these USAF and RAF overflights of the USSR was placed in a restricted access security compartment called "Sensitive Intelligence," or SENSINT.<sup>56</sup> Included in this document collection are the first declassified Top Secret SENINT intelligence reports derived from these USAF overflights, including imagery of Soviet naval bases and shipyards at Vladivostok, Soviet industrial and railroad facilities in and around the city of Vladivostok, and a number of Soviet military airfields in the Soviet Far East and Arctic regions.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps the most interesting SENSINT report contained in this collection is a 1959 Top Secret document detailing the locations of Soviet strategic surface-to-air missile sites deployed around Moscow. The imagery which formed the basis of this report was taken from cameras hidden in the bottoms of foreign commercial airliners as they circled Moscow awaiting permission to land.<sup>58</sup> This collection includes over a hundred formerly classified documents concerning the twenty-six overflight missions of the USSR and Eastern Europe performed by CIA U-2 reconnaissance plane between June 1956 and May 1960. Included among the documents are new details concerning which targets inside the USSR were covered by these missions and the CIA's net evaluations of the intelligence produced by these missions.<sup>59</sup> A number of CIA intelligence reports are included to provide the reader with a sample of the kinds of intelligence information that were produced by these U-2 overflight missions.<sup>60</sup> Also included are over a dozen formerly Top Secret memoranda describing President Dwight D. Eisenhower's personal involvement in planning and approving these missions, as well as his oft stated concerns that these missions could damage the fragile relations between the U.S. and the USSR if one of these planes were shot down, which is exactly what happened on May 1, 1960.<sup>61</sup>

### **Satellite Reconnaissance**

On August 18, 1960, just three months after Francis Gary Powers' U-2 was shot down over Sverdlovsk, the first successful CIA CORONA photo reconnaissance satellite (Mission 9009) was launched into orbit carrying a camera and twenty pounds of film. Recovered in the air over the Pacific the next day, CORONA Mission 9009 returned with 3,000 feet of film showing 1,650,000 square miles of the Soviet Union, including the locations of previously unseen Soviet bomber airfields and ballistic missile launch sites. Over the next twelve years, 145 CORONA satellites were launched into orbit, in the process replacing SIGINT as the U.S. intelligence community's top producer of intelligence information on the Soviet military.<sup>62</sup> The advent of photo reconnaissance satellites literally overnight changed the state of what the U.S. intelligence community knew about the Soviet military. The amount of information collected by each spy satellite mission was staggering, covering the entire gamut of Soviet military activities inside the USSR and Eastern Europe.<sup>63</sup> Newly declassified documents reveal that as new cameras and film delivery systems were added to each new CORONA and GAMBIT satellite launched into orbit, both the quantity and quality of the information being produced by these satellites on the Soviet military improved geometrically during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>64</sup> Most of the early CORONA satellite missions focused on locating Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launch complexes.<sup>65</sup> By September 1961, the imagery collected by these reconnaissance satellites allowed the U.S. intelligence community to issue its first comprehensive intelligence estimate on the size and location of the Soviet ICBM force, an extraordinary achievement for the time.<sup>66</sup> By the mid-1960s, the technology had improved to the point where a single individual reconnaissance satellite could cover the locations of all known or suspected Soviet ICBM silos and intermediate- and medium-range ballistic missile (IRBM/MRBM) launch sites throughout the USSR.<sup>67</sup> Included in this document collection are more than a hundred intelligence reports based on analysis of satellite reconnaissance imagery, including a 1963 report produced by the National Photographic Interpretation Center which identified all of Soviet submarine bases throughout the USSR and the number and types of submarines stationed at each base.<sup>68</sup> Another 1965 imagery analysis report identified the locations of all thirty-one Soviet strategic signals intelligence (SIGINT) collection sites.<sup>69</sup>

## INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS OF THE USSR

Unclassified publications produced by the CIA's history staff meant for wide public distribution are replete with glowing testimonials as to the importance and accuracy of the intelligence estimates on the Soviet Union produced by the Agency's corps of analysts. While it is true that the Agency's intelligence assessments on the USSR were oftentimes remarkably prescient in terms of predicting Soviet actions, declassified internal CIA documents reveal that, in fact, the CIA's analysts repeatedly erred on vitally important questions concerning Soviet political and military intentions and capabilities, and that some of these errors of fact and conclusion were costly indeed.<sup>70</sup> The internal CIA evaluations of the intelligence estimative process on the Soviet Union generally agree that on those subjects where the Agency's assessments left much to be desired, one of the principal causes for the failures was the dearth of accurate and reliable intelligence information available to the analysts, especially during the 1950s when the U.S. had few reliable intelligence sources about what was going on inside the USSR.

This was especially true in the area of the political intentions of the Kremlin throughout the Cold War. CIA internal reports confirm that on political matters, the Agency's intelligence estimates were consistently wrong, in large part because the CIA was never able to recruit an agent with access to high-level Soviet policymaking secrets, nor was the National Security Agency able to solve any of the high-level codes and ciphers used by the Kremlin to convey policy decisions except on military and economic matters. This meant that the CIA's analysts were left with the extraordinarily difficult task of trying to discern the Soviet regime's strategic intentions on the basis of virtually no first-hand information, leaving the CIA analysts to try to "guesstimate" the Kremlin's intentions based on newspaper reports and other low-level and oftentimes unreliable information.

Reflective of the U.S. intelligence community's inability to accurately gauge political conditions inside the USSR early on in the Cold War is demonstrated by the fact that the CIA experienced great difficulty trying to accurately determine the nature and extent of armed resistance and political dissent within the Soviet Union. Among the declassified documents contained in this collection are a series of intelligence reports from the 1950s that tried to assess the strength and capabilities of various anti-communist resistance movements inside the USSR and Eastern Europe, which the CIA and the U.S. military wanted to use to both collect intelligence inside the Soviet Union as well as subvert the Kremlin's authority throughout the country. Most of the early assessments, done in the late 1940s and early 1950s erroneously concluded that there was widespread armed resistance to the Soviet regime in the Ukraine, Caucasus, and the Baltic States waiting to be exploited by the U.S. and its European allies.<sup>71</sup> Included in this collection are the transcripts of high-level meetings between senior U.S. and British government and intelligence officials in London about how the two countries could best use these resistance groups to cause chaos and confusion inside the USSR and Eastern Europe.<sup>72</sup> It was not until 1957-1958 that CIA analysts finally (and reluctantly) concluded that all of the armed resistance movements it had previously believed to be operating inside the USSR had been destroyed by Soviet security forces or were no longer capable of functioning coherently because they had been thorough penetrated by Soviet intelligence.<sup>73</sup> Throughout the 1950s, a host of erroneous conclusions about the strength and capabilities of the Soviet military found their way into a number of key CIA intelligence estimates, principally because of a lack of information available to the intelligence analysts in Washington about what was actually going on inside the USSR. For example, beginning in the mid-1950s the U.S. intelligence community adopted a consensus opinion that the Soviets were ahead of the U.S. in strategic bombers and ICBMs (known to history as the "Bomber Gap" and the "Missile Gap"), despite the fact that there was little raw intelligence information to support these conclusions.<sup>74</sup> For example, despite the incontrovertible evidence from SIGINT and U-2 overflights of the USSR which showed that production of Soviet strategic bombers was far less than what had previously been believed, in January 1957

the CIA's Office of National Estimates as a matter of political expediency published a new National Intelligence Estimate, which stated that by mid-1959 the Russians would have about five hundred Bison and three hundred Bear strategic bombers, which ran completely contrary to everything the intelligence collectors were showing at the time.<sup>75</sup> Nine months later in October 1957, the CIA's Office of National Estimates once again decided to agree to a consensus intelligence estimate about the size of the Soviet strategic bomber force so as to prevent a fight with the more hawkish views of the U.S. Air Force. Despite a near total lack of hard intelligence to support the position, the CIA's Office of National Estimates agreed with the USAF position that the Russians still intended to build a massive bomber strike force, with the CIA analysts predicting that by mid-1960 the Russians would have built at least 400-600 heavy bombers. This prediction, as it would turn out, was completely wrong in that it vastly overestimated Russian intentions.<sup>76</sup> The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis is another example of a failure by the CIA's intelligence analysts to accurately estimate Soviet intentions. Recently declassified documents reveal that in September 1962, despite the preponderance of evidence from signals intelligence (SIGINT) that Soviet cargo ships were carrying weapons to Cuba, the CIA and the Pentagon's intelligence arm, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), all refused to accept this information. For example, the analysts in the CIA's Office of National Estimates (ONE) refused to believe that the Soviets would dare to send nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles to Cuba because it defied what they thought was rational behavior. A September 19, 1962 National Intelligence Estimate prepared by the CIA stated unequivocally that the possibility that the Soviets might deploy offensive missiles to Cuba was "incompatible with Soviet practice to date and with Soviet policy as we presently estimate it." Less than a month later, the analysts were shocked when a U-2 reconnaissance aircraft brought back the first pictures showing that the Russians were in the process of building launch sites for nuclear-armed ballistic missiles throughout Cuba.<sup>77</sup> Years later, CIA officials and intelligence analysts were still debating (in secret) how and why the CIA got this estimate so wrong given the growing evidence then available indicating that the Soviets were in the process of deploying offensive weapons to Cuba.<sup>78</sup> This collection includes a number of previously unpublished declassified documents concerning the intelligence aspects of the Cuban missile crisis, including a series of reports detailing how the U.S. intelligence community was able to track Soviet weapons shipments to Cuba.<sup>79</sup> Also contained in this collection are a series of detailed post-mortem reports analyzing the performance of the U.S. intelligence community during the Cuban Missile Crisis, some of which are quite critical.<sup>80</sup> There is also a surprisingly detailed declassified 1994 NSA historical article revealing just how information SIGINT was producing about Soviet military activities in Cuba prior to the situation in Cuba reaching crisis proportions in October 1962.<sup>81</sup> A recurring theme is that on many critical subjects involving the Soviet military, the U.S. intelligence community's assessments started out poorly because of a near complete lack of information available upon which to form an informed opinion about Soviet intentions and capabilities. But the introduction of new high-tech intelligence collection sensors, coupled with the implementation of improved analytic techniques, over time resulted in dramatically better intelligence assessments of Soviet military capabilities starting in the early 1960s.

One such area was on the subject of Soviet nuclear weapons research, development, testing, and production. Collection activities on Soviet nuclear weapons research activities began shortly after the end of World War II, focusing initially on the activities of the dozens of German nuclear scientists who had been taken to the USSR to work on facets of the Soviet nuclear program.<sup>82</sup> Because of a dearth of raw material to work with, the early intelligence estimates on the Soviet nuclear program were painfully bare of details and oftentimes woefully wrong about the true state of the Soviet nuclear weapons program.<sup>83</sup> But beginning in the mid-1950s and continuing through the end of the Cold War, CIA intelligence estimates on the Soviet nuclear program showed marked and sustained improvement, thanks especially to the information produced by U-2 overflights in the mid- to late-1950s and the CORONA reconnaissance satellite in the early 1960s.<sup>84</sup> Another important contributor to the U.S. intelligence community's ability to assess Soviet nuclear weapons developments was the network of

nuclear test detection stations that were constructed around the world beginning in the late 1940s, which over time became increasingly sophisticated and capable of detecting even the smallest nuclear weapons test detonations inside the USSR.<sup>85</sup> Of particular interest to the reader are the detailed declassified articles written in the 1960s and 1970s by the CIA's top nuclear intelligence specialist, Henry S. Lowenhaupt, who described how the Agency secretly located the Soviet Union's most important military nuclear reactors and monitored their activities, oftentimes using very inventive collection and analytic techniques.<sup>86</sup> Another area where the CIA's intelligence analysts over time came to excel was their effort to document the growth of the Soviet ballistic missile force using imagery obtained from the Agency's reconnaissance satellites, especially detailed coverage of each successive new generation of Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Documents contained in this collection show that prior to 1960, U.S. intelligence estimates on the size of the Soviet ICBM force, the locations of the Soviet ICBM silos, and the identities of the factories inside the USSR that were producing the missiles, was practically non-existent.<sup>87</sup> The declassified documents in this document collection confirm that much of what the U.S. intelligence community knew after World War II about the Soviet ballistic missile program came from interrogating German scientists and engineers who worked on the Soviet missile program until they were allowed to return to Germany in the mid-1950s.<sup>88</sup> Declassified documents contained in this collection show that beginning in the mid-1950s, a series of new high-tech sensors, such as new telemetry intercept systems and long-range surveillance radars, were brought to bear on the Soviet ballistic missile testing program, giving the U.S. intelligence community its first reliable information about what types of ballistic missiles the Soviets were testing, how often they were being tested, and detailed information about the capabilities of these missiles were.<sup>89</sup> During the thirty year period from 1960 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the overall quality of the CIA's intelligence assessments, particularly on military subjects, steadily improved as new high-tech collection systems and thousands of skilled and highly educated analysts were added to the arsenal of the U.S. intelligence community. Analytic mistakes were made during this time period, but nothing comparable to the "Bomber Gap" and "Missile Gap" intelligence controversies of the 1950s.

For example, the declassified documents contained in this collection demonstrate that the introduction of spy satellites beginning in 1960s dramatically improved what the U.S. intelligence knew about the Soviet strategic nuclear forces, especially their ICBM force. Between 1961 and 1963, the CORONA reconnaissance satellites were able to precisely locate every Soviet ICBM silo and intermediate- and medium-range ballistic missile launch site, find new missile silos then under construction, as well as identify all Soviet factories engaged in designing or building ballistic missiles.<sup>90</sup> Spy satellites also dramatically improved America's knowledge of the Soviet air defense system. The vast amounts of data about Soviet radar systems obtained by the first generation of American electronic intelligence (ELINT) spy satellites led to a complete overhaul of the national intelligence estimates on the Soviet air defense system beginning in the mid-1960s.<sup>91</sup> And as successive new generations of ELINT satellites were lofted in orbit during the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. intelligence community's knowledge of the strength and weaknesses of the Soviet air defense system grew by leaps and bounds.<sup>92</sup> Reconnaissance satellites were instrumental in locating all of the nuclear-hardened command bunkers that the Soviet civilian and military senior leadership would retreat to in wartime in order to direct Soviet military operations.<sup>93</sup> The ability of NSA's SIGINT network and American spy satellites to peer deep inside the USSR was critically important in allowing the U.S. intelligence community to track the massive deployment of Soviet troops to positions along the border with the People's Republic of China beginning in 1965, which reflected the increased tension between these two communist superpowers following the Sino-Soviet split in 1960.<sup>94</sup> Declassified documents reveal that the U.S. intelligence community provided Washington with excellent political and military coverage of events following the 1969 clash at Damanskiy Island on the Ussuri River between Soviet and Chinese troops, which led to the Soviets placing their military forces in the Far East on high alert.<sup>95</sup> But no matter how good the data coming from the intelligence collectors may have been, there were still instances

where the intelligence community's analysts drew the wrong conclusions from the information they were receiving. In the summer of 1968, despite the numerous indications turning up in SIGINT and other intelligence sources, the CIA's intelligence analysts at Langley refused to heed the portents and stuck by their judgement that the Soviets would not intervene militarily in Czechoslovakia because it was, in their opinion, not a rational course of action. But shortly after midnight, August 20, 1968, 15 to 16 Soviet combat divisions and supporting Warsaw Pact forces crossed the border and invaded Czechoslovakia.<sup>96</sup> The late 1970s was a troubled time for the U.S. from a political and economic perspective. But it was a very exciting time for the U.S. intelligence community in its efforts to achieve something akin to a more complete understanding of the Soviet military threat. America's electronic eavesdropping giant, NSA, finally achieved a significant breakthrough into a number of high-level Soviet encryption systems. The CIA managed to recruit a small number of important agents inside the Soviet military and in Eastern Europe. And the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), which designed and launched spy satellites into space, placed into orbit the first KH-11 KENNAN/CRYSTAL imaging satellite (December 19, 1976) and the first CHALET/VORTEX SIGINT satellite (June 10, 1978), which at the time was the largest and most advanced electronic eavesdropping satellite ever launched into space. And in August 1979, the submarine USS Parche (SSN-683) installed a large tap on an Russian underwater communications cable just off the coast of the Kola Peninsula that linked the Soviet Northern Fleet headquarters at Murmansk with other naval bases along the Kola Peninsula.<sup>97</sup> Thanks to these new high-tech intelligence collection sensors, in the late 1970s and early 1980s the U.S. intelligence community scored some notable successes. Declassified documents in this collection show that thanks to satellite reconnaissance and SIGINT data received from NSA, the U.S. intelligence community accurately predicted the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on December 25, 1979, although there was nothing that the U.S. government could do to prevent the Soviets from occupying the entire country.<sup>98</sup> And in 1980-1981, a CIA agent inside the Polish General Staff, Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski, provided the U.S. intelligence community incredibly valuable intelligence that permitted the U.S. to monitor day-to-day developments inside Poland at a time when the U.S. government and its allies in Western Europe feared that the Soviet Union would intervene militarily crush the Polish "Solidarity" (Solidarnosc) trade union and its supporters inside the country. Contained in this collection are a selection of formerly highly classified CIA reports detailing the information that Colonel Kuklinski was providing the CIA at the height of the Polish Crisis in 1981.<sup>99</sup> Also contained in this collection are a series of formerly classified intelligence assessments and reports derived from a combination of SIGINT and satellite reconnaissance on Soviet military preparations to invade Poland, which neatly complemented Colonel Kuklinski's reporting from Warsaw.<sup>100</sup> But as good as the intelligence was, there was (just like Afghanistan) nothing that the U.S. government could do to save Poland. On December 13, 1981, Polish leader General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law and moved to crush the Solidarity trade union and its supporters. Elements of ten Polish combat divisions were deployed to all major Polish cities. HUMINT and SIGINT showed that no Soviet troops took part in the enforcement of the martial law decree, and that Soviet troops in and around Poland remained at peacetime readiness levels conducting routine training activity.<sup>101</sup> Some of the CIA intelligence estimates during the administration of President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) generated more than a fair share of controversy. In July 1981, the CIA issued a report which cast some doubt as to the ability of the U.S. intelligence community to verify a strategic arms limitation agreement (SALT) with the Soviet Union.<sup>102</sup> A January 1982 CIA intelligence assessment presented a somewhat alarmist view about the Soviet work on developing a new generation of nuclear-armed strategic ballistic missiles and anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems.<sup>103</sup> A February 1982 intelligence estimate alleged that the Soviets had used chemical and/or biological weapons against anti-communist insurgents in Afghanistan and Laos, although most of the evidence was fragmentary and unreliable.<sup>104</sup> And in 1983, the intelligence community produced an assessment after the U.S. invasion of the Caribbean island of Grenada which argued that the island's government was controlled by the Soviet Union and Fidel Castro's Cuba. But again, the evidence, such as it was, was arguably pretty flimsy.<sup>105</sup> And in January 1984, the White House issued a classified

directive which found that the Soviets were not complying with a number of requirements pursuant to various arms control agreements. There was considerable dissent within the intelligence community about the veracity of some of the findings contained in this directive, but the intelligence analysts were overruled by the White House.<sup>106</sup> Controversy still swirls in the U.S. over whether the CIA and the rest of the intelligence community accurately foresaw the collapse of the Soviet Union and the break of the former Warsaw Pact states in Eastern Europe from Soviet domination. The declassified documents released to date show that beginning in 1989, the U.S. intelligence community accurately forecasted that the Soviet Union was headed into a period of political and economic crisis brought on by political instability at home and in Eastern Europe coupled with overspending on defense and security matters. The CIA also correctly found that the stability of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's government was being threatened by competing political forces within the Soviet hierarchy, especially the "Old Guard" communist party stalwarts who opposed his policy of greater openness (Glasnost) and wider diplomatic engagement and cooperation with the West (Perestroika). It also accurately forecast that the Soviet's control of Eastern Europe was weakening. But nowhere in the declassified documents reviewed to date is there any definitive statement showing that the U.S. intelligence community predicted the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the complete break of all Eastern European countries from the USSR, or that by 1991 the USSR would fall apart completely. In other words, the U.S. intelligence community's track record on this, the penultimate "Big Issue" of the Cold War, is mixed, at best.<sup>107</sup> The end of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact alliance happened so fast that probably no one could have accurately forecast it. On the night of November 9-10, 1989, East German demonstrators began tearing down the Berlin Wall. On November 19, 1989, a new Czech political party called the Civic Forum, headed by poet Vaclav Havel, called for dramatic political reforms. Czech Communist Party chairman Milos Jakes resigned the same day. In December 1989, the communist governments in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania collapsed. On March 11, 1990, Lithuania declared its independence, making it the first Soviet republic to secede from the USSR. In June 1990, the Ukraine declared its independence. On October 1, 1990, East and West Germany were reunited. In July 1991 the Warsaw Pact was formally disbanded. On August 18, 1991, communist hardliners launched a coup d'etat against President Mikhail Gorbachev. The revolt collapsed the next day when the Soviet military largely refused to back the hardliners. On December 25, 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev resigned as Russian president and the following day the USSR was dissolved. The Cold War was over.