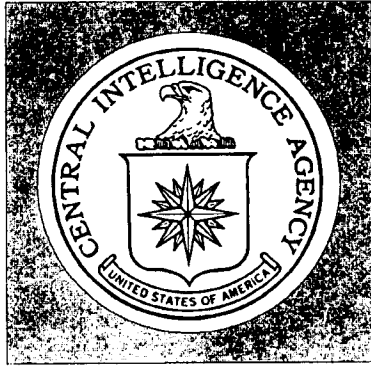
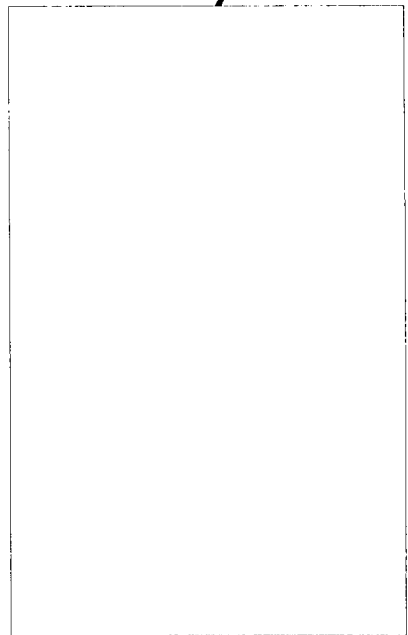


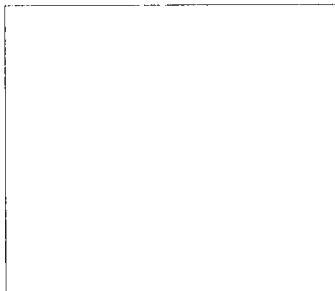
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

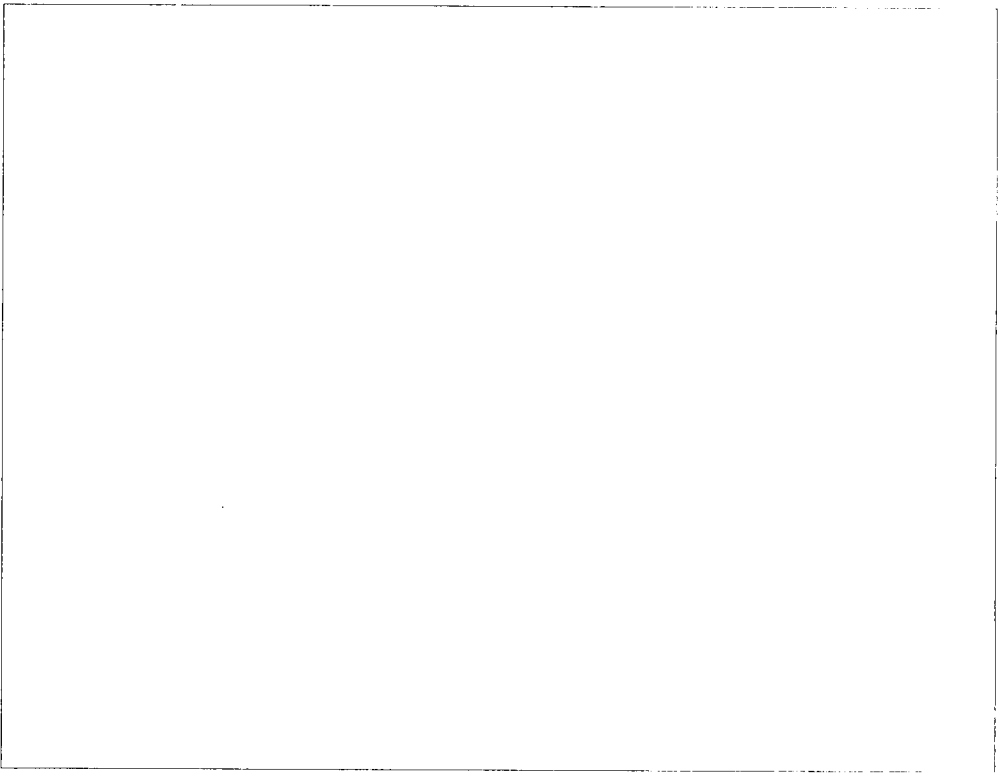
*Effect of the Czech Crisis on
Soviet Military Capabilities in Europe*



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Copy No. 234
SR IM 69-8
March 1969





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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
14 March 1969

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Effect of the Czech Crisis on
Soviet Military Capabilities in Europe

Summary

The Soviet Union's capability for military initiatives in the Central European region is probably less at this point than it was before the Czechoslovak crisis. The decline has come about through the loss of Czechoslovakia's armed forces as a compliant and capable adjunct to Kremlin strategy, and the failure of the Soviets so far to compensate for this loss.

Before the crisis, the Czech armed forces were responsible for operations against NATO on the left flank of the Warsaw Pact forward line, at least until Soviet reinforcements could be brought in from the Carpathian Military District.

Events of the past year, however, have largely nullified the value of the Czech forces for Soviet military initiatives. Their reliability in such situations is doubtful and their combat effectiveness has been seriously eroded.

At the same time, Soviet forces in the western USSR slated to reinforce units opposing NATO's central region have been drawn down to provide an occupation force which, as now constituted, contributes little to Soviet offensive capabilities.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Strategic Research and coordinated with the Offices of Current Intelligence and National Estimates.

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In the July-September 1968 period, the Soviets had enhanced their military posture in the Central European region through extensive mobilization of reduced-strength divisions and forward deployment. This gain has proved to be temporary and has been largely dissipated by demobilization of troops and vehicles called up prior to the intervention, and by the return home of the bulk of the intervention force.

Most of the 40,000 to 50,000 Soviet troops now in Czechoslovakia appear to be in specially organized units which are of less than divisional size and lack some of the combat and support elements normally found in Soviet divisions. The size, configuration, and deployment of these units indicate that the Soviets view the present troops primarily as an occupation force and not as part of their offensive capability against NATO.

It is unlikely that the Kremlin foresaw a diminution of the Warsaw Pact's military posture opposite NATO as a consequence of the intervention. Soviet leaders probably underestimated the difficulty of installing a pro-Soviet regime in Prague which would acquiesce in the establishment of a large Soviet military presence in Czechoslovakia and perhaps eventually restore the reliability of the Czech armed forces.

Unwilling to install a puppet regime by force or to install an occupation authority, the Soviets have found themselves entangled in a process of bargaining and pressure with the Dubcek regime. Although Czechoslovak leverage is limited, the evidence suggests that the size and disposition of the Soviet forces has been one of the areas in which Moscow has had to compromise. This same evidence also suggests that strategic concerns about the Warsaw Pact posture against NATO were less important in precipitating the invasion than the USSR's anxieties over the political implications of Czechoslovakia's pre-August course.

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The Soviet Presence in Czechoslovakia

1. In the weeks following the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, there were both political and military reasons to believe that the Soviets would maintain large, combat-ready forces in the country for an extended period. The Czechoslovak Army, it was reasoned, could no longer be counted upon to fulfill its role in Warsaw Pact war plans as a spearhead for initial offensive action against the central region of NATO.

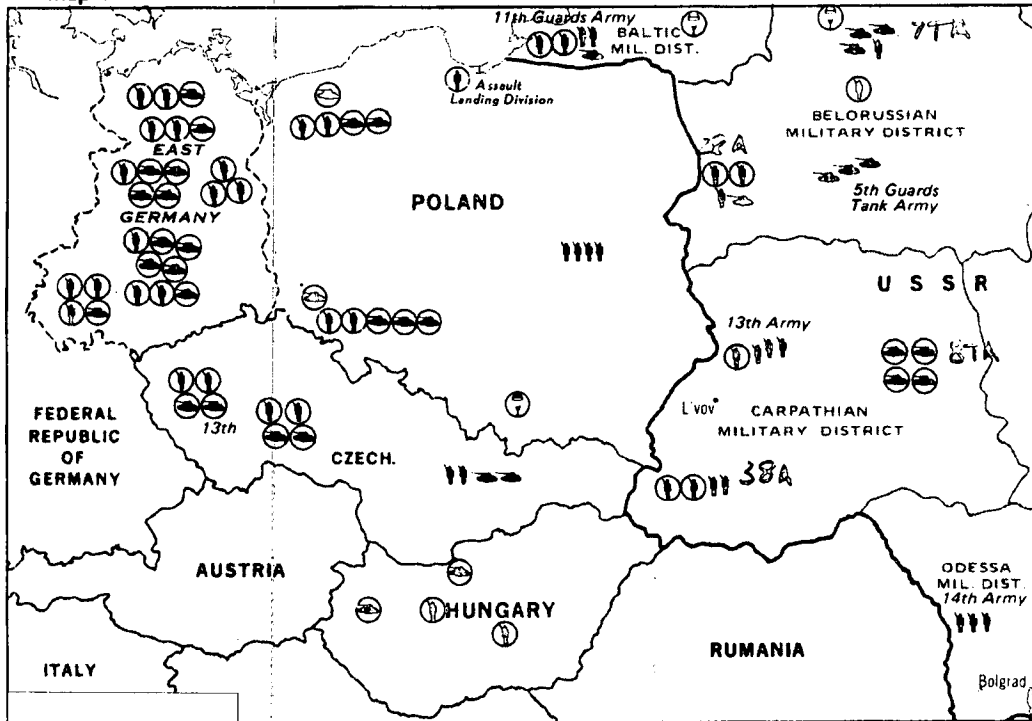
2. The Soviets seemed to have a strong incentive to fill this vacuum by retaining as many as eight combat-ready divisions in Czechoslovakia, at least until the Czechs again could be considered reliable allies, and perhaps permanently. A number of reports from Prague and other Eastern European capitals supported this view, and the Soviets themselves initially justified their intervention on the grounds that Czechoslovakia could no longer be counted on to fulfill its Warsaw Pact commitments.

3. As it turned out, however, the Soviets quickly abandoned this idea, if indeed they ever held it at all. By mid-October, they had begun withdrawing most of the 24 Soviet and five Eastern European divisions which had made up the intervention force. By late November, only a small all-Soviet force--collectively called the Central Group of Forces (CGF)--remained in Czechoslovakia. (See series of maps on next two pages.)

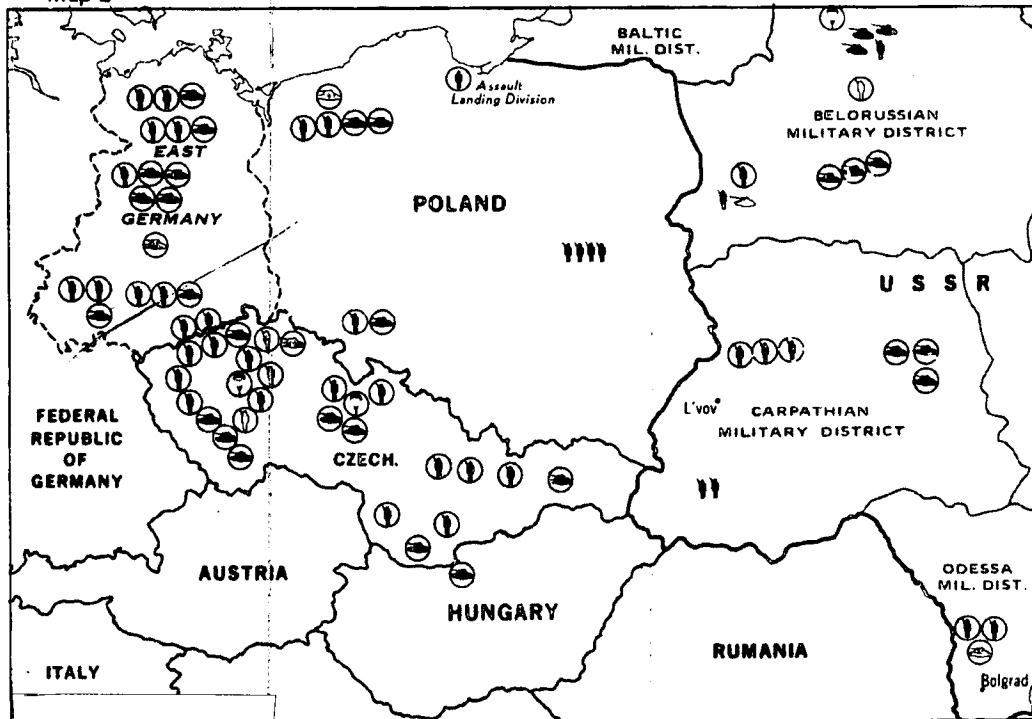
4. Accumulating evidence on the size, configuration, and deployment of the Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia suggests that they are intended--at least for now--to be primarily an occupation force rather than an operational force opposing NATO.

5. The clearest evidence is the deployment pattern of the Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia. Units are strung out across the northern part of the country, with a few additional units in the southeast near the Hungarian border. The western region opposite West Germany and Austria remains free of Soviet troops, while Czech forces are still

Map 1



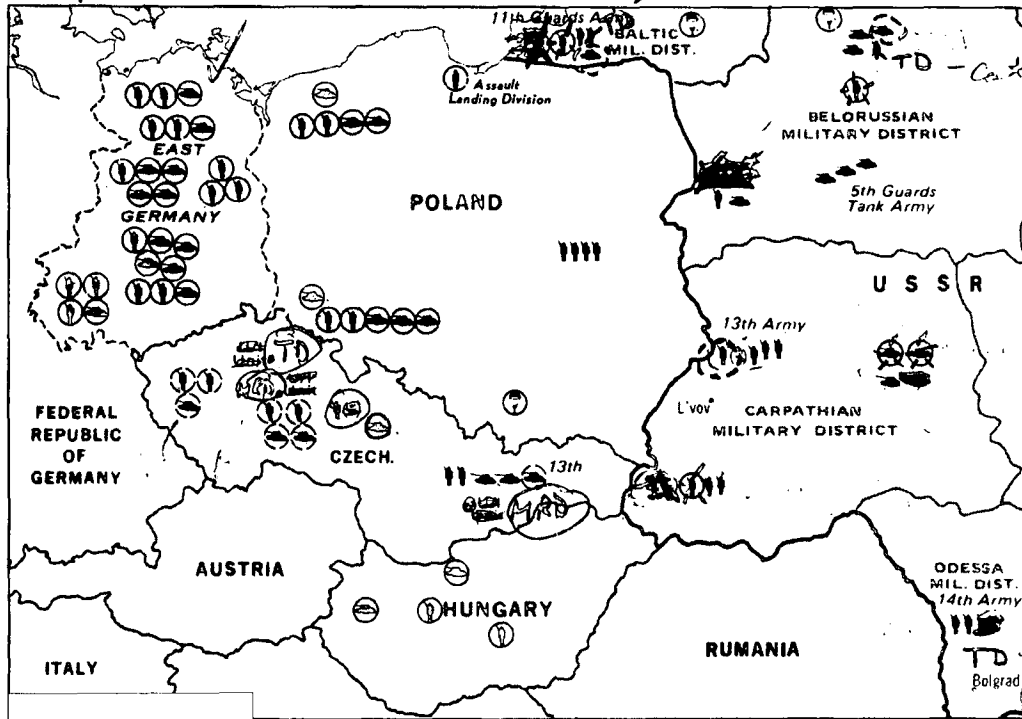
Map 2



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See map 94617 on facing page for legend.
Czech forces not shown on Map 2.

Map 3



* Kras
10 Cat II
(Tank)
(3 MR)

Motorized Rifle Division	Tank Division	Airborne Division
(circle with vertical line)	(circle with horizontal line)	(circle with vertical line)
(circle with vertical line)	(circle with horizontal line)	(circle with vertical line)
(circle with vertical line)	(circle with horizontal line)	(circle with vertical line)

Soviet forces are shown in red
 (-) Less than division strength
 * Elements of this division may be among the U/I units in Czechoslovakia
 Soviet-allied forces are shown in black
 Czechoslovak forces are shown in blue
 Army area

Map 1

In early 1968 there were 26 Soviet combat-ready divisions in Eastern Europe--20 in East Germany, 2 in Poland, and 4 in Hungary. In addition, 33 divisions of other Warsaw Pact countries were disposed opposite the central region of NATO. Of these divisions, 25 were at combat strength--6 East German, 11 Polish, and 8 Czech. Located in the four military districts of the western USSR were 34 additional Soviet divisions, 14 of which were at combat strength--3 in the Baltic, 4 in the Belorussian, and 7 in the Carpathian Military Districts.

Map 2

By mid-September 1968, at the peak of the Czech intervention, some 29 Soviet and allied East European divisions were either in Czechoslovakia or near the Czechoslovak-East German border and supporting the intervention. These included 8 from the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, 1 from the Soviet forces in Poland, 3 from the Soviet forces in Hungary, about 12 from the western USSR, 4 Polish divisions, and 1 composite division made up of units from Bulgaria and Hungary. Some 13 understrength Soviet divisions in the western USSR were raised to combat strength in July 1968 and at least 3 of these were used against Czechoslovakia.

Map 3

By early 1969 all of the ground forces involved in the intervention except about 3 Soviet divisions from the western USSR had been returned to their previous locations. The Soviet ground elements remaining in Czechoslovakia probably consist of 1 virtually complete tank division and 3 or possibly 4 combat units that would approximate 2 additional divisions if combined. The identification of all but 1 of these combat groupings is uncertain. With the possible exception of 1 division from the Odessa Military District which may still have elements among those remaining in Czechoslovakia, all the understrength Soviet divisions which had been mobilized in connection with the crisis had been demobilized by early 1969. A combat-ready Czech tank division was shifted from the Prague area to the eastern part of the country and its current status is uncertain.

[REDACTED]

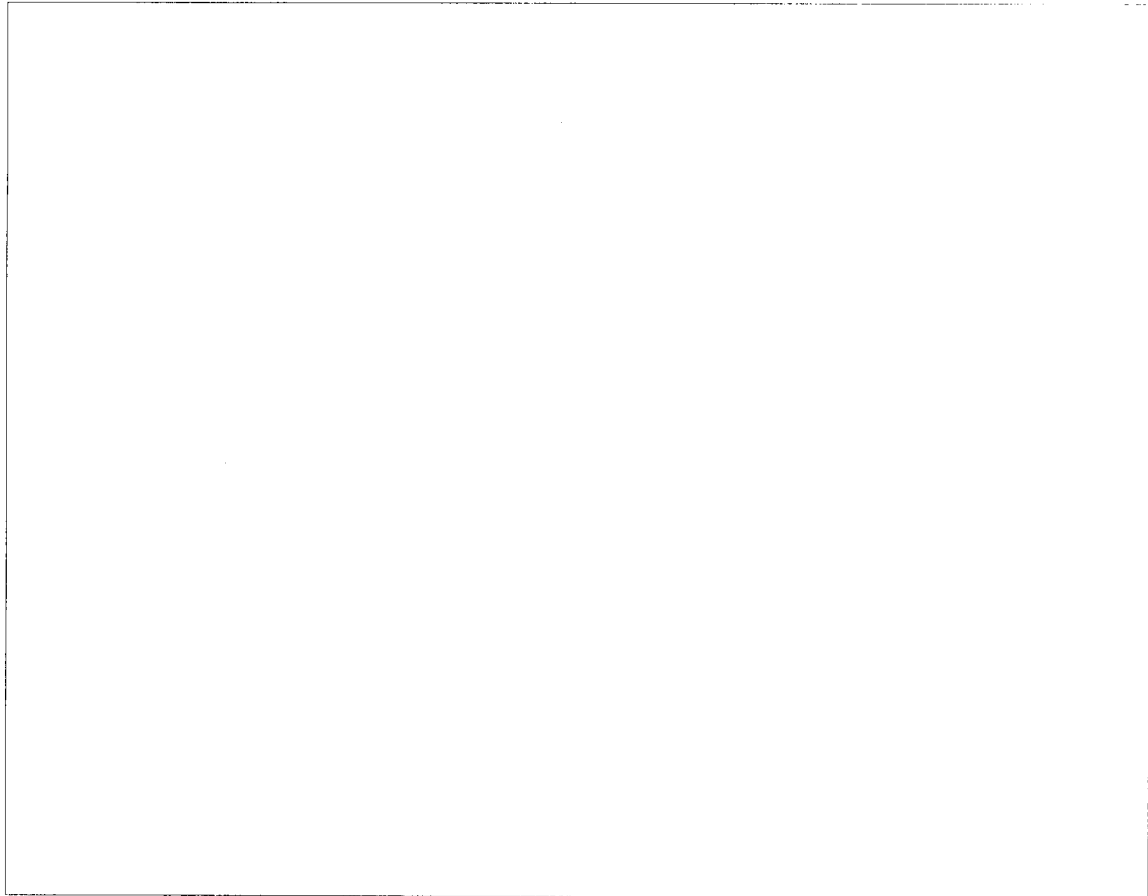
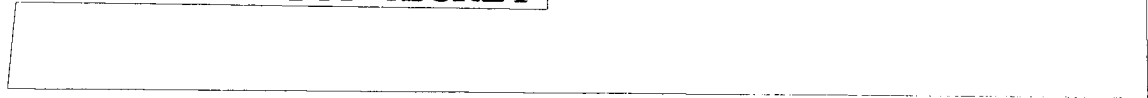
in place there. This deployment appears designed for two missions: to permit the quick application of force in major Czech cities, and to secure the lines of communication to East Germany, Poland, and Hungary, from which additional Soviet troops could be introduced should the need arise.

6. The size and configuration of the Soviet units in Czechoslovakia are difficult to judge accurately because of unresolved anomalies and contradictions [REDACTED]

~~A detailed review and analysis of this evidence are presented in the Annex.~~ The picture which emerged from ~~this~~ analysis, however, tends to support the thesis that the Soviet units in Czechoslovakia are not now configured as a combat-ready force capable of taking the offensive against NATO.

7. The Soviet ground elements in Czechoslovakia probably consist of ^{the major maneuver elements of one} ~~one complete~~ tank division and three or possibly four units of less than divisional size. These smaller units may be either specially organized brigade-size units or stripped-down divisions. The entire force probably has 40,000 to 50,000 men and, if assembled, would approximate three standard Soviet divisions.

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12. Most of the units making up the CGF probably came from the Carpathian and Odessa Military Districts. It is possible, however, that a few of the unidentified units are elements left behind by Soviet divisions which have returned to East Germany or to the Baltic Military District.

13. The CGF has no tactical air army. In this respect, it is unlike other Soviet groups of forces and military districts organized for tactical operations. The only Soviet aircraft in Czechoslovakia are some 75 interceptors--about two regiments.

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The Czech Armed Forces

14. Prior to the intervention, the Czech armed forces figured heavily in the Warsaw Pact's posture against NATO. With eight combat-ready divisions and some 600 tactical aircraft, they were considered the most modern and effective military forces in the Pact, aside from those of the USSR.

15. In the Pact's war plans, Czechoslovakia was responsible for providing one of the fronts which would conduct initial operations against NATO's central region until Soviet reinforcements could be moved up from the western USSR.

the mission of the Czech front at the outbreak of war would be to launch an offensive through southern Germany and seize crossings over the Rhine.

16. In view of the continuing Czech defiance of Soviet efforts to repress the liberalization impulse and the bitterness engendered by the intervention, the Soviets probably no longer consider the Czech armed forces reliable elements in Soviet war planning for initiatives against NATO.

17. There is, moreover, evidence that the combat effectiveness of the Czech forces at this time is at a low point because of personnel reductions, poor morale, and the removal of a combat-ready tank division from western Czechoslovakia to the eastern part of the country.

18. In September 1968, the Czech government announced a change in conscription procedures. Previously all eligible males were called up in the autumn. In 1968, however, "only a majority" were called up in the autumn, with "the rest" to be called in April 1969. Nothing was said about extending the term of those conscripts due for release, and they probably were discharged on schedule. If so, the net result would be a decline of about 20 percent in total personnel strength.

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19. The effectiveness of the Czech armed forces is further eroded by a low state of morale. Observations [REDACTED] indicate that the Czech military has been seriously demoralized by the ambiguity of its situation.

20. Another indicator of a declining role for the Czech army was the removal of the Czech 13th Tank Division from its garrison north of Prague into eastern Czechoslovakia to make room for the Soviet occupation forces. The current personnel strength of this division is unknown, but its removal to a rear area previously occupied only by low-strength Czech units suggests that it may no longer be maintained in a ready status.

The Soviet Demobilization

21. In preparing for the intervention, the Soviets carried out their largest mobilization since World War II. About 130,000 reservists and 15,000 to 20,000 civilian vehicles were called up, mainly between mid-July and early August 1968. They were used to fill out some 13 Category II divisions* and bring them up to combat strength, to complete the support elements of the five reduced-strength field armies which were involved, and to establish the rear services organization required to support the forward deployment and invasion.

22. These additional forces probably have been almost entirely demobilized. The release of some personnel and vehicles began by late October, as the 11th Guards Army, which had moved up to the East German - Czechoslovak border region to backstop the intervention force, returned to its home base in the Baltic Military District. Analysis [REDACTED] [REDACTED] also indicates that at least one division of the 14th Army in the Odessa Military District was

* A Category II division requires an additional 4,000 to 5,000 men and 600 to 1,000 wheeled vehicles to reach combat strength.

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demobilized by late January. This army's three Category II divisions had been brought to combat strength in July and August, and one of them--the 48th Motorized Rifle Division from Bolgrad--participated in the intervention. Elements of this division were still absent from their garrison in late January and are probably still in Czechoslovakia.

23. The 48th Motorized Rifle Division was temporarily replaced at its home garrison in Bolgrad by an unidentified tank division, possibly from the Kiev Military District. This tank division--which evidently had been mobilized from Category II status--was bivouacked in the Bolgrad training area [redacted]

[redacted] It was no longer there in late December, and presumably it had returned to its normal station and demobilized. Aside from the participation by the 48th Division in the intervention, the maintenance of the 14th Army at full combat strength during the autumn of 1968 was probably intended to keep pressure on Rumania and Yugoslavia.

24. At least one Category II division of the 13th Army in the Carpathian Military District was evidently still mobilized in early December, but analysis [redacted] indicates that this division subsequently reverted to a reduced-strength status.

25. One other army--the 5th Guards Tank Army in the Belorussian Military District--was also mobilized prior to the intervention. [redacted] its three Category II divisions [redacted]

have remained in their home garrisons and that their activity is normal. It is likely that this army also has demobilized.

Present Capabilities

26. Taking all these developments into consideration, it is concluded that the Soviet and Warsaw Pact capability for military initiatives against NATO has decreased from what it was prior to the crisis buildup.

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27. The Soviets almost certainly cannot count on Czechoslovakia's eight divisions as a compliant force ready to carry out any action directed by the Kremlin. With probably only one full division and three or four units of less than divisional size, the Soviet forces remaining in Czechoslovakia fall short of filling this breach, particularly since they appear to be configured and deployed primarily for occupation duty. And the demobilization of the Soviet units in the USSR which were built up to support the intervention, coupled with the fact that some units are still in Czechoslovakia, leaves Soviet forces in the western USSR with somewhat less capability for reinforcement in Central Europe than they had before the intervention.

28. It is unlikely that the Kremlin foresaw a diminution of the Warsaw Pact's military posture opposite NATO as a consequence of the intervention. Soviet leaders probably underestimated the difficulty of installing a pro-Soviet regime in Prague which would acquiesce in the establishment of a large Soviet military presence in Czechoslovakia and perhaps eventually restore the reliability of the Czech armed forces.

29. Unwilling to install a puppet regime by force or to install an occupation authority, the Soviets have found themselves entangled in a process of bargaining and pressure with the Dubcek regime. Although Czechoslovak leverage is limited, the evidence suggests that the size and disposition of the Soviet forces has been one of the areas in which Moscow has had to compromise. This same evidence also suggests that strategic concerns about the Warsaw Pact posture against NATO were less important in precipitating the invasion than the USSR's anxieties over the political implications of Czechoslovakia's pre-August course.

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