

**THE "LESSONS" OF THE CUBAN
MISSILE CRISIS FOR WARSAW
PACT NUCLEAR OPERATIONS**

by Mark Kramer

The role of the Warsaw Pact in the Cuban Missile Crisis was negligible. All evidence suggests that the Soviet Union neither consulted nor even informed its East European allies about the installation of medium-range and tactical nuclear missiles in Cuba before the deployments were revealed by the U.S. government.¹ Nor did the Soviet leadership consult its Warsaw Pact allies about the removal of the missiles. Although the Pact declared a joint military alert on 23 October 1962 (the day after President John F. Kennedy's televised revelation of the Soviet missile deployments), the alert had no more than a symbolic impact and was carried out solely at Moscow's behest.² The joint alert was formally cancelled on 21 November 1962, the same day that the Soviet Union ended its own unilateral alert (and a day after the U.S. naval

blockade of Cuba was lifted).³ So peripheral was the alliance to the Soviet Union's handling of the crisis that it was not until long after the matter had been resolved that the Soviet Prime Minister, Anastas Mikoyan, bothered to inform the East European governments about the Soviet Union's motives for deploying and withdrawing the missiles.⁴

That the Warsaw Pact was of only marginal significance during the Cuban Missile Crisis hardly comes as a great surprise. In 1962 the Pact was still little more than a paper organization and had not yet acquired a meaningful role in Soviet military strategy.⁵ Moreover, the crisis was far outside the European theater, and East European leaders had resisted Soviet efforts to extend the alliance's purview beyond the continent. Despite fears that the showdown over Cuba might spark a NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation in Berlin, the situation in Germany remained calm throughout the crisis.⁶ Hence, the standoff in the Caribbean was a matter for the Soviet Union to handle on its own, not a matter for the Warsaw Pact.

Despite the near-irrelevance of the

Warsaw Pact during the crisis, the events of October 1962 did have important effects on the alliance, particularly on the nuclear command-and-control arrangements that were established in the mid-1960s. This article will draw on recent disclosures from the East German, Czechoslovak, Polish, and Hungarian archives to show how the Cuban missile crisis influenced Warsaw Pact nuclear operations. No definitive judgments about this matter are yet possible because the most crucial documents are all in Moscow, and the archival situation in Russia is still highly unsatisfactory.⁷ Nevertheless, enough evidence has emerged from East-Central Europe to permit several tentative conclusions.

The article will begin by briefly reviewing the "lessons" that the Cuban Missile Crisis offered for Soviet nuclear weapons deployments abroad. It will then delineate the command-and-control arrangements that were set up in the mid-1960s for Warsaw Pact nuclear operations, and examine the East European states' unsuccessful efforts to alter those arrangements. The article

WARSAW PACT "LESSONS"

continued from page 59

will conclude with some observations about the legacy of the Cuban missile crisis for Warsaw Pact nuclear operations, a legacy that endured until the Pact itself collapsed in 1990-91.

"Lessons" of the Cuban Missile Crisis

Several features of the Cuban missile crisis were of direct relevance to subsequent Soviet nuclear deployments in Eastern Europe. The "lessons" that Soviet officials derived from the crisis were of course not the only factor (or even the most important factor) shaping the Warsaw Pact's nuclear command structure, but they seem to have been of considerable influence, at least implicitly. Although Soviet leaders had been concerned well before the Cuban Missile Crisis about the difficulty of retaining secure control over nuclear weapons and about the danger of unauthorized actions, the crisis put these risks into a whole new light.⁸ By underscoring how easily control could be lost, the crisis inevitably bolstered Moscow's determination to ensure strict centralized command over all nuclear operations, including nuclear operations conducted by the Warsaw Pact.

One of the most disconcerting lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis from the Soviet perspective was the potential for nuclear weapons to be misused if the aims of local actors were not identical to Soviet goals. It is now known that at the height of the crisis Fidel Castro sent a top-secret cable to Moscow urging the Soviet Union to launch a nuclear strike against the United States if U.S. forces invaded Cuba.⁹ Castro apparently had been led to believe that the Soviet Union would be willing to go to war—and risk its own destruction—in defense of Cuba. Nikita Khrushchev's response to Castro's plea indicates that the Soviet leader had no intention of ordering the use of nuclear weapons, regardless of what happened to Cuba.

For Khrushchev, this episode was especially unnerving because he initially had given serious consideration to providing Castro with direct command over Soviet forces in Cuba, including the nuclear-capable Frog ("Luna") missiles and Il-28 aircraft.¹⁰ (Only the medium-range SS-4 and SS-5 missiles would have been left under Moscow's command.) As it turned out,

Khrushchev decided not to give Castro any direct jurisdiction over Soviet tactical nuclear forces; indeed, the draft treaty on military cooperation between the Soviet Union and Cuba, which was due to take effect once the presence of the Soviet missiles in Cuba was publicly revealed at the end of October, would have left the "military units of the two states under the command of their respective governments."¹¹ Even so, the Cuban leader's message on 26 October 1962 still struck a raw nerve in Moscow.¹² It was a vivid reminder of the dangers that might have resulted if the Soviet Union had delegated any responsibility for nuclear operations.

A related lesson about the dangers posed by local actors pertained to the role of the commander of Soviet forces in Cuba, Army-General Issa Pliev, who was chosen for the post because of his long-standing and very close friendship with both Khrushchev and the Soviet Defense Minister, Marshal Rodion Malinovskii.¹³ At no time during the crisis did Pliev have authority to order the use of either medium-range or tactical nuclear missiles, but it is now known that several weeks before the crisis—in the late summer of 1962—Malinovskii had considered the possibility of giving Pliev pre-delegated authority to order the use of tactical missiles against invading U.S. troops if Pliev's lines of communication with Moscow had been severed and all other means of defense against an invasion had proven insufficient. A written order to this effect was prepared on 8 September 1962, but in the end Malinovskii declined to sign it. Thus, at the time of the crisis Pliev had no independent authority to order the use of nuclear weapons or even to order that nuclear warheads, which were stored separately from the missiles, be released for possible employment. The limitations on Pliev's scope of action during the crisis were reinforced by two cables transmitted by Malinovskii on October 22 and 25, which "categorically" prohibited any use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances without explicit authorization from Moscow.¹⁴

The strictures imposed by the Soviet leadership held up well during the crisis, as the procedural safeguards for nuclear operations proved sufficient to forestall any untoward incidents.¹⁵ For the most part, Khrushchev's and Malinovskii's faith in Pliev was well-founded. Nevertheless, it is clear that Pliev wanted to ease some of the proce-

dural restrictions—at least for tactical missiles—even after he received the two telegrams "categorically" forbidding him to order the issuance or use of nuclear weapons without express authorization. On October 26 he sent a cable to Moscow in which he apparently mentioned that Castro wanted him to prepare for a nuclear strike and that, as a result, he had decided it was time to move nuclear warheads closer to the missiles (though without actually issuing them to the missile units). Pliev then requested that his decision be approved and that he be given due authority to order the preparation of tactical missiles for launch if, as appeared imminent, U.S. troops invaded the island. Soviet leaders immediately turned down both of his requests and reemphasized that no actions involving nuclear weapons were to be undertaken without direct authorization from Moscow.¹⁶

Still, the very fact that Pliev sought to have the restrictions lifted, and his seeming willingness to use tactical nuclear weapons if necessary, provided a sobering indication of the risks entailed in giving discretion to local commanders. The risks would have been especially acute in this instance because there were no technical safeguards on the nuclear weapons in Cuba to serve as a fallback in case Pliev (or someone else) attempted to circumvent the procedural safeguards.¹⁷ This is not to say that it would have been easy for Pliev to evade the procedural limits—to do so he would have had to obtain cooperation from troops all along the chain of command—but there was no technical barrier per se to unauthorized actions.

Thus, one of the clear lessons of the crisis was the need not only to maintain stringent procedural safeguards for all Soviet nuclear forces, but also to equip those forces with elaborate technical devices that would prevent unauthorized or accidental launches. This applied above all to nuclear weapons deployed abroad, where the lines of communication were more vulnerable to being severed or disrupted.¹⁸

One further lesson from the Cuban Missile Crisis, which reinforced the perceived need for strict, centralized control over all nuclear operations, was the role that accidents played. The most conspicuous instance came on October 27 when an American U-2 reconnaissance aircraft was shot down over Cuba.¹⁹ The rules of engagement for Soviet troops in Cuba did not permit the

WHEN AND WHY ROMANIA DISTANCED ITSELF FROM THE WARSAW PACT

by Raymond L. Garthoff

In April 1964, the Romanian leadership issued a declaration in which it first expressed public dissatisfaction with the Warsaw Pact. Georghiu Dej, and after 1965 his successor Nicolae Ceausescu, increasingly distanced themselves from the Pact and Moscow's leadership, although without challenging the Soviet Union. Romania ceased to participate actively in the military command of the Warsaw Pact after 1969. All of this small slice of history has, of course, been well known. It has not been known why Romania launched itself on that path at that particular time. Above all, it has not heretofore been known that even earlier Romania essentially repudiated its allegiance obligations in a secret approach to the United States government in October 1963, promising neutrality in case of the outbreak of war. This was a stunning, unilateral breach of the central obligation of Warsaw Pact alliance membership, which Romania nominally maintained until the very end, when the Pact dissolved in 1991.

What precisely happened, and why? The precipitating event was the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. The tensions generated by that crisis had reverberations throughout Europe. No country wanted to be brought into a war over the issue of Soviet missiles in Cuba. But while members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact dutifully gave public support to the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively, some did so with considerable trepidation. And in Bucharest, the leadership decided after that crisis that it would seek to disengage itself from any automatic involvement if their superpower alliance leader, the Soviet Union, again assumed such risks.

Romanian-American relations at that time were minimal. Nonetheless, when Romanian Foreign Minister Corneliu Manescu asked to meet with the Secretary of State Dean Rusk, when both were in New

York for the opening of the UN General Assembly in the fall of 1963, a routine meeting was arranged for October 4. Manescu then arranged a private meeting with Rusk, attended only by an interpreter. It was the first opportunity after the crisis nearly a year earlier for the Romanian leadership to approach the United States government at this level.

Manescu told Rusk that Romania had not been consulted over the Soviet decision to place nuclear missiles in Cuba, and was not therefore a party to the dispute. The Romanian government wanted the United States to understand that Romania would remain neutral in any conflict generated by such actions as the Soviet deployment of nuclear missiles in Cuba, and sought assurances that in the event of hostilities arising

in Romania and offered the United States any opportunity it wished to verify that fact. (The absence of nuclear weapons accorded with U.S. intelligence, and the United States did not pursue the verification offer.)

In view of the sensitivity of the matter, any knowledge of this exchange was very closely held in Washington, and no doubt in Bucharest. It was not divulged to NATO governments. So far as is known, the Soviet leadership did not learn of it—although that remains to be determined from the Soviet archives. It did not “leak” in thirty years. I do not know if there is today any written account in either American or Romanian archives.

I was told about the exchange by Dean Rusk soon after it occurred, and I reconfirmed this account of it with him in 1990. It seemed to me that with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the overthrow of the Romanian government, and the reunification of Europe, the matter is now safely history, and should become a footnote to the historical record.

It may be instructive, as well as interesting, history. For example, as far as I am aware no one has ever speculated on a relationship between the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Romanian actions in distancing themselves from the Warsaw Pact. It is also interesting to reflect that despite that crisis and other severe trials, the two alliances did hold together throughout the Cold War, and with relatively

little evident concern over the risks involved, even in other countries hosting nuclear weapons of the superpowers. Thus, remarkable as was the Romanian case, it was the sole exception to alliance solidarity—assuming the archives or informed officials do not have any other case, on one side or the other, to reveal.

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from such a situation, the United States would not strike Romania on the mistaken assumption that it would be allied with the Soviet Union in such a war.

Secretary Rusk in response indicated that the United States would take into account any country that did not participate in or permit its territory to be used in military actions against the United States or its allies. In this connection, he said that it would be important for the United States to know whether there were nuclear weapons on Romanian soil, and that if the United States were given assurance that there were none, that fact would be taken into account in U.S. targeting. The Romanians subsequently responded that there were no nuclear weapons

downing of American planes except those carrying out an attack.²⁰ When the U-2 was shot down, no one in Moscow was quite sure what had happened—Khrushchev and most others mistakenly thought that Castro had ordered Soviet troops to fire at the plane—but everyone was certain that further incidents of this sort might cause the crisis to spin out of control. The risks posed by accidents would have been especially great if the local commander (i.e., Pliev) had been given independent authority to order the use of nuclear weapons. After all, Pliev and other officers based in Cuba, whose lives were directly at risk during the crisis, were naturally inclined to overreact to unintended “provocations” from the opposing side. To the extent that such overreactions could not be avoided in future crises, it was essential that the consequences be minimized and that further escalation be prevented. Obviously, it would be vastly more difficult to regain any semblance of control if local actors “accidentally” resorted to the use of nuclear weapons.

Hence, the accidents that occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis underscored the need for rigid safeguards, both procedural and technical, to preclude the use of Soviet nuclear weapons except in the most dire emergency. This lesson, like the others that Khrushchev and his colleagues derived from the crisis, survived the change of leadership in Moscow in October 1964. Although Leonid Brezhnev altered many aspects of Khrushchev’s military policies, he was just as determined as his predecessor to retain stringent political control over Soviet nuclear forces.

Nuclear Operations and the Warsaw Pact

Nuclear weapons first became an issue for the Warsaw Pact in mid-1958 when, allegedly in response to deployments by NATO, Khrushchev warned that the Pact would be “compelled by force of circumstance to consider stationing [tactical nuclear] missiles in the German Democratic Republic, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.”²¹ Shortly thereafter, the Czechoslovak, East German, and Polish armed forces began receiving nuclear-capable aircraft and surface-to-surface missiles from the Soviet Union.²² The Bulgarian and Hungarian armies also soon obtained nuclear-capable aircraft and missiles from Moscow; and

even the Romanian military was eventually supplied with nuclear-capable Frog-7 and Scud-B missiles. In all cases, the deployment of these delivery vehicles was well under way by the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The new East European weapons were officially described as components of the “Warsaw Pact’s joint nuclear forces” and were later used for simulated nuclear strikes during Pact exercises, but all nuclear warheads for the delivery systems remained under exclusive Soviet control, and the delivery vehicles themselves would have come under direct Soviet command if they had ever been equipped with warheads during a crisis. Moreover, the thousands of tactical nuclear weapons deployed by Soviet forces on East European territory were not subject to any sort of “dual-key” arrangement along the lines that NATO established in the mid-1960s. Whenever Warsaw Pact exercises included combat techniques for nuclear warfare (as they routinely did from early 1962 on), the decision on when to “go nuclear” was left entirely to the Soviet High Command.²³ In every respect, then, the East European governments had no say in the use of the Pact’s “joint” nuclear arsenal.

The exclusivity of Soviet command was reinforced by secret agreements that the Soviet Union concluded in the early to mid-1960s with Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland regarding the storage of nuclear warheads in those countries. Although all the agreements were bilateral, they were described as coming “within the framework of the Warsaw Pact.” The first such agreements were signed with East Germany and Czechoslovakia before the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Soviet-East German agreements, signed at various intervals in the early 1960s, covered some 16 storage sites, all of which were controlled exclusively by special troops assigned to the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany.²⁴ The East German authorities had no say at all in the location or maintenance of these facilities, not to mention the use of the munitions stored there. Soviet agreements with Czechoslovakia were somewhat more complicated because no Soviet troops had been present on Czechoslovak territory since the end of 1945. Two preliminary agreements were signed in August 1961 and February 1962 entitling the Soviet Union to dispatch nuclear warheads immediately to Czechoslovakia in the event

of an emergency.²⁵ After the Cuban Missile Crisis, those two agreements were supplanted by a much more far-reaching “Treaty Between the Governments of the USSR and CSSR on Measures to Increase the Combat Readiness of Missile Forces,” which was signed by Malinovskii and his Czechoslovak counterpart, Army-General Bohumir Lomsky, in December 1965.²⁶ The treaty provided for the permanent stationing of Soviet nuclear warheads at three sites in western Czechoslovakia.

This third agreement with Czechoslovakia was concluded just after the Soviet Union had worked out a similar arrangement with Hungary.²⁷ The Soviet-Hungarian agreement was signed by Brezhnev and the Hungarian leader, Janos Kadar, and was kept secret from almost all other Hungarian officials. Much the same was true of an agreement that the Soviet Union concluded with Poland in early 1967.²⁸ Only a few top Polish officials were permitted to find out about the document. The Soviet agreements with all four countries covered nuclear warheads slated for use on delivery vehicles belonging to Soviet troops stationed in those countries. Some of the warheads were also intended for weapons deployed by the local armies, but in that case the delivery vehicles would have been transferred to direct Soviet command. Under the new agreements East European officials had no role in the use of the Pact’s “joint” nuclear arsenal, nor any control over the reinforced storage bunkers for nuclear warheads (or even the housing for elite units assigned to guard the bunkers). A senior East European military official later confirmed that “the procedures for the defense and protection of these special-purpose storage centers for nuclear warheads were such that no one from our side had permission to enter, and even Soviet officials who were not directly responsible for guarding and operating the buildings were not allowed in.”²⁹

Thus, by the late 1960s the Soviet and East European governments had forged a nuclear command-and-control structure for the Warsaw Pact that gave exclusive say to the Soviet Union. Even before the Cuban Missile Crisis, Soviet leaders had been inclined to move in this direction, but the crisis greatly accelerated the trend and effectively ruled out anything less than complete control in Moscow.

Intra-Pact Debate about Nuclear "Sharing"

The effects of the Cuban Missile Crisis could also be felt, if only implicitly, when the Soviet Union had to deal with complaints from its allies about the Pact's nuclear arrangements. The lack of East European input proved unsatisfactory to several of the allied governments, who urged that they be given some kind of role in nuclear-release authorization. Their concerns were prompted in part by changes in Soviet military doctrine in the mid-1960s, which seemed to open the way for a nuclear or conventional war confined to Europe. Under Khrushchev, Soviet military doctrine had long been predicated on the assumption that any war in Europe would rapidly escalate to an all-out nuclear exchange between the superpowers; but by the time Khrushchev was ousted in October 1964, Soviet military theorists had already begun to imply that a European conflict need not escalate to the level of strategic nuclear war.³⁰ Under Brezhnev, Soviet military analyses of limited warfare in Europe, including the selective use of tactical nuclear weapons, grew far more explicit and elaborate.³¹ Although this doctrinal shift made sense from the Soviet perspective, it stirred unease among East European leaders, who feared that their countries might be used as tactical nuclear battlegrounds without their having the slightest say in it.

The issue became a source of contention at the January 1965 meeting of the Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee, where the assembled leaders discussed NATO's plans to create a Multi-Lateral Force (MLF) that would supposedly give West Germany access to nuclear-armed missiles. The PCC warned that if an MLF were formed and the West Germans were included, the Warsaw Pact would have to resort to "defensive measures and *corresponding steps*."³² The nature of these "corresponding steps" was never specified, but Romanian and Czechoslovak officials at the meeting maintained that the obvious solution was for the Soviet Union to grant its Warsaw Pact allies a direct say in the use of nuclear weapons stationed on East European soil.³³ The Romanians were especially insistent on having responsibility shared for *all* Warsaw Pact nuclear systems, including those deployed with the various Groups of Soviet Forces. Brezhnev and his colleagues,

however, were averse to any steps that would even marginally erode the Soviet Union's exclusive authority to order nuclear strikes, and it soon became clear during the meeting that Soviet views on such matters would prevail. As a result, the PCC communiqué simply called for both German states to forswear nuclear weapons, proposed the creation of a nuclear-free zone in central Europe, and advocated a freeze on all nuclear stockpiles.³⁴ The implication was that arrangements within the Warsaw Pact were best left unchanged.

That stance was reaffirmed over the next few months in a series of conspicuous Soviet declarations that "the Warsaw Pact is dependent on the *Soviet* strategic missile forces" and that "the security of all socialist countries is reliably guaranteed by the nuclear missile strength of *the Soviet Union*."³⁵ The same message was conveyed later in the year by the joint "October Storm" military exercises in East Germany, which featured simulated nuclear strikes authorized solely by the USSR.³⁶ In the meantime, the Soviet monopoly over allied nuclear weapons procedures was being reinforced by the series of agreements signed with Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland, as discussed above. The codification of exclusive Soviet control over nuclear weapons deployed in the other Warsaw Pact countries all but eliminated any basis for the East European governments to seek a role in the alliance's nuclear command structure.

Yet even after the Soviet Union tried to put the matter to rest, controversy persisted within the Warsaw Pact about the allocation of responsibility for tactical nuclear weapons. At a closed meeting of Pact leaders in East Berlin in February 1966, Romania again pressed for greater East European participation in all aspects of allied military planning, and was again rebuffed.³⁷ A few months later, the Czechoslovak Defense Minister, Army-General Bohumir Lomsky, publicly declared that the East European states should be given increased responsibility for the full range of issues confronting the Warsaw Pact.³⁸ That same week, a detailed Romanian proposal for modifications to the alliance was leaked to the French Communist newspaper, *L'Humanite*; the document called for, among other things, an East European role in any decisions involving the potential use of nuclear weapons.³⁹ Subsequently, at the July 1966 session of the PCC in Bucharest,

officials from Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary renewed their bid for "greater rights of co-determination in planning and implementing common coalition matters," including (by implication) the use of nuclear weapons.⁴⁰

As on previous occasions, however, the Soviet Union resisted whatever pressure was exerted for the sharing of nuclear-release authority. In September 1966, a few months after the Bucharest conference, the Warsaw Pact conducted huge "Vltava" exercises, which included simulated nuclear strikes under exclusive Soviet control.⁴¹ The same arrangement was preserved in all subsequent Pact maneuvers involving simulated nuclear exchanges. Thus, well before the signing of the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty put a symbolic end to the whole nuclear-sharing debate, the Soviet Union had firmly established its exclusive, centralized control over the Warsaw Pact's "joint" nuclear forces and operations.

The Lessons of the Crisis and Allied Nuclear Arrangements

The legacy of the Cuban Missile Crisis helped ensure that the intra-Warsaw Pact debate in the mid-1960s did not bring about any change in the alliance's nuclear command-and-control structure. Had it not been for the dangers that were so clearly revealed by the events of October 1962, Soviet leaders might have been willing to consider an arrangement for the Warsaw Pact similar to the "dual-key" system that NATO adopted. When Operation "Anadyr" was first being planned in the late spring of 1962, Khrushchev had toyed with the idea of giving Fidel Castro broad command over Soviet tactical nuclear weapons in Cuba as well as over all non-nuclear forces on the island. Ultimately, Khrushchev decided not to share or delegate any responsibility for the nuclear-capable weapons based in Cuba, but the very fact that the issue was considered at all suggests that if the Cuban Missile Crisis had not intervened, the Soviet Union might have been receptive to some form of nuclear "sharing" with its East European allies. Indeed, a "dual-key" arrangement for the Warsaw Pact, which would not have provided any independent authority to the East European countries, could easily have been justified as a response to NATO's policy and as a useful means of strengthening allied cohesion. But after October 1962, when Soviet leaders

drew a number of lessons about the risks of even sharing, much less delegating, nuclear authority, the prospects of adopting a “dual-key” system for the Warsaw Pact essentially vanished.

Although Moscow’s willingness to share control over the Warsaw Pact’s “joint” nuclear arsenal would have been sharply constrained even before October 1962 by the lack of permissive-action links (PALs) and other use-denial mechanisms on Soviet nuclear weapons, that factor alone would not have been decisive if the Cuban Missile Crisis had not occurred. After all, when Soviet officials seriously contemplated allotting partial nuclear authority to Castro in 1962, that was long before Soviet tactical weapons were equipped with PALs. The physical separation of warheads from delivery vehicles, as had been planned for the missiles based in Cuba, was regarded at the time as a sufficient (if cumbersome) barrier against unauthorized actions. That approach had long been used for tactical weapons deployed by Soviet forces in Eastern Europe, and it would have been just as efficacious if a “dual-key” system had been adopted—that is, if the East European armies had been given control over the Pact’s nuclear-capable delivery vehicles. Not until after the Cuban Missile Crisis was the option of relying solely on the physical separation of warheads and delivery vehicles deemed inadequate. In the latter half of the 1960s, the Soviet Union began incorporating electronic use-denial features into its strategic missiles, and the same was true of Soviet tactical weapons by the early to mid-1970s. Concerns in Moscow about the physical security of nuclear weapons were hardly negligible before October 1962—in part because of the possibility that requisite procedures might not be followed—but it was not until after the Cuban Missile Crisis that Soviet leaders fully appreciated the magnitude of this risk.

The Cuban Missile Crisis also heightened Soviet concerns about the particular dangers posed by crises. To be sure, Soviet leaders were hardly complacent before October 1962 about the need to maintain tight political control over nuclear operations; indeed, the stringent centralization of nuclear command was a consistent theme in Soviet military planning. Even so, it was not until after the Cuban Missile Crisis—and especially in light of the unexpected interven-

tions by Fidel Castro—that this factor became a paramount reason to deny any share of nuclear-release authorization to the East European governments. Although East European officials could not have ordered the use of nuclear weapons on their own, they might have inadvertently (or deliberately) taken steps in a crisis that would have caused NATO governments to believe that a Warsaw Pact nuclear strike was forthcoming (regardless of what actual Soviet intentions were). That, in turn, might have triggered a preemptive nuclear attack by NATO. Only by excluding the East European states altogether from the nuclear-release process could the Soviet Union avoid the unintended escalation of a crisis.

The risks posed by a “dual-key” arrangement could have been mitigated if the Soviet Union had built in extra procedural and technical safeguards, but this in turn would have created operational problems for Soviet troops who might one day have been ordered to use the weapons. If a future conflict had become so dire that Soviet leaders had decided to authorize the employment of tactical nuclear weapons, they would have wanted their orders to be carried out as fast as possible, before the situation on the battlefield had changed. By contrast, East European political and military officials might have been hesitant about ordering the nuclear destruction of a site in Western Europe, not least because the launch of nuclear weapons against West European targets might well have provoked retaliatory strikes by NATO against East European sites. The problem would have been especially salient in the case of East German officials who would have been asked to go along with nuclear strikes against targets in West Germany. Thus, even though Soviet officials could have developed a hedge against the risks that emerged during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the safeguards needed for this purpose would have been extremely burdensome, depriving the Pact of the ability to respond in a timely manner. From the Soviet perspective, it made far more sense to circumvent the problem entirely by eschewing any form of shared authority.

It is ironic that the Cuban Missile Crisis, which barely involved the Warsaw Pact at all, would have had such an important long-term effect on the alliance. It is also ironic that the actions of a third party, Fidel Castro, posed one of the greatest dangers during an

event that has traditionally been depicted as a bilateral U.S.-Soviet confrontation. Not only must the Cuban Missile Crisis be thought of as a “triangular” showdown; its repercussions can now be seen to have been at least as great for Soviet allies, notably Cuba and Eastern Europe, as for the Soviet Union itself.

1. This statement is based on a perusal of documents from the East German, Czechoslovak, and Polish archives. See, e.g., “Odvolanie opatreni v zavislosti s usnesenim VKO UV KSC, 25.10.62 (Karibska krize),” 25 October 1962 (Top Secret), in *Vojensky Historicky Archiv (VHA) Praha, Fond (F.) Ministerstvo Narodni Obrany (MNO) CSSR, 1962, Operacni sprava Generalniho stabu cs. armady (GS/OS), 8/25.*
2. “V shtabe Ob”edinennykh Vooruzhenykh Sil stran Varshavskogo Dogovora,” *Pravda* (Moscow), 23 October 1962, p. 1. For the effects of the alert from 27 October through 23 November, see the series of top-secret memoranda to the CPSU CC Presidium from Soviet Defense Minister Rodion Malinovskii and the Chief of the Soviet General Staff, Mikhail Zakharov, 5 November 1962, 17 November 1962, and 24 November 1962, in *Tsentr Khraneniya Sovremennoi Dokumentatsii (TsKhSD), F. 89. Opis’ (Op.) 28, Delo (D.) 14, Listy (L.) 1-8.*
3. “V shtabe Ob”edinennykh vooruzhenykh sil stran Varshavskogo Dogovora,” *Krasnaya zvezda* (Moscow), 22 November 1962, p. 1.
4. See the account by the Hungarian charge d’affaires in Washington, D.C. in October 1962 (who later defected), Janos Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers: The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 137.
5. “Razvitie voennogo iskusstva v usloviyakh vedeniya raketno-yadernoi voyny po sovremennym predstavleniyam,” Report No. 24762s (TOP SECRET) from Col.-General P. Ivashutin, chief of the Soviet General Staff’s Main Intelligence Directorate, to Marshal M. V. Zakharov, head of the General Staff Military Academy, 28 August 1964, in *Tsentr’nyi arkhiv Ministerstva obrony (TsAMO), Delo (D.) 158, esp. Listy (L.) 352-353, 411-412, 423, and 400.* I am grateful to Matthew Evangelista for providing me with a copy of this document.
6. This point is stressed in the top-secret cables adduced in note 2 *supra*.
7. On the state of the Russian archives, see Mark Kramer, “Archival Research in Moscow: Progress and Pitfalls,” *CWIHP Bulletin* 3 (Fall 1993), 1, 14-39.
8. “Razvitie voennogo iskusstva v usloviyakh vedeniya raketno-yadernoi voyny po sovremennym predstavleniyam,” pp. 332-333.
9. “Obmen poslaniyami mezhdu N. S. Khrushchevym i F. Kastro v dni Karibskogo krizisa 1962 goda,” *Vestnik Ministersva inostrannykh del SSSR* (Moscow) 24 (31 December 1990), 67-80, esp. 71-73.
10. *Ibid.*, 73-75. This point was reemphasized to Castro by Prime Minister Mikoyan during their conversations in November 1962. See “Zapis’ besedy A. I. Mikoyana s prem’er-ministrom revolyutsionnogo pravitel’sva Kuby F. Kastro,” 12 November 1962 (Top Secret) and “Obesedakh A. I. Mikoyana s F. Kastro,” 20 November 1962 (Top Secret), both published in *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn’* (Moscow) 11-12 (November-December 1992), 143-147 and 147-150, respectively. See esp. 149.
11. It should be noted, however, that a decision to send

901-A4 nuclear warheads and 407-N6 bombs to Cuba for the Frogs and Il-28s was not finalized until 8 September 1962, by which time Khrushchev may already have changed his mind about the command-and-control arrangements. See "Nachal'niku 12 glavnykh upravleniya Ministerstva oborony," 8 September 1962 (Top Secret), Memorandum from Defense Minister R. Malinovskii and Chief of the General Staff M. Zakharov, in TsAMO, "Dokumenty po meropriyatiyu 'Anadyr'," F. 16, Op. 3753. It is eminently possible that the nuclear-capable weapons would not have been equipped with nuclear warheads if they had been placed under Castro's command.

12. "Dogovor mezhdu pravitel'stvom Respubliki Kuby i pravitel'stvom Soyuzha Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik o voennom sotrudnichestve i vzaimnoi oborone," undated, Article 10.

13. See Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Vospominaniya* (Moscow: typescript, 1966-1970), Vol. IV, "Karibskii krizis," esp. p. 12. I am grateful to Khrushchev's son, Sergei, for providing me with a copy of the 3,600-page transcript of his father's memoirs. For an English translation of most of the account about the Cuban Missile Crisis, see *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes*, trans. and ed. by Jerrold L. Schecter and Vyacheslav V. Luchkov (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 170-183.

14. Maj.-General (ret.) V. Makarevskii, "Oprem'ere N. S. Khrushcheva, marshale G. K. Zhukove i generale I. A. Plieve," *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya* (Moscow) 8-9 (August-September 1994), 197. Makarevskii served for many years under Pliev's command. Pliev's close friendship with Khrushchev and Malinovskii is overlooked in the jaundiced assessment offered by General Anatolii Gribkov in *Operation ANADYR: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Chicago: Edition Q, 1994), 25-26.

15. "Komanduyushchemu gruppoi sovetskikh voisk na o. Kuba," 8 September 1962 (Top Secret), in TsAMO, "Dokumenty po meropriyatiyu 'Anadyr'," GSU GSh, F. 16, Op. 3753; reproduced in *Operation ANADYR*, 183. For a discussion of this matter and relevant citations, see Mark Kramer, "Tactical Nuclear Weapons, Soviet Command Authority, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *CWIHP Bulletin* 3 (Fall 1993), 40-46, esp. 42-43, 46.

16. "Trostnik—tovarishchu Pavlovu," No. 4/389 (Top Secret) from R. Malinovskii (Direktor), 22 October 1962, reproduced in *Operation ANADYR*, 181. This directive was reaffirmed three days later after a request for clarification from Pliev; see Lieut.-Col. Anatolii Dokuchaev, "100-dnevnyi yadernyi kruiuz," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 6 November 1992, 2. See also Sergei Pavlenko, "Bezmyannye motostrelki otravlyalis' na Kubu 'stoyat' nasmert'," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 29 December 1994, p. 4. For further discussion and relevant citations, see Kramer, "Tactical Nuclear Weapons, Soviet Command Authority, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," 45-46.

17. In early 1994, General Anatolii Gribkov claimed that Pliev not only wanted to move several nuclear warheads out of storage on 26 October 1962, but had actually issued orders to that effect without authorization from Moscow. See *Operation ANADYR*, 63, and Gribkov comments at a 5 April 1994 meeting at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C., organized by the Cold War International History Project. However, Gribkov produced no evidence to back up his assertion that warheads were actually moved out, and in a lengthy interview with the present author in Moscow on 29 September 1994 he said he could not be certain that Pliev had given such an order. Gribkov's initial

claim had already been contradicted by the Soviet officer who was in charge of the "central nuclear base" (i.e., the storage site for all nuclear warheads) in Cuba during the crisis, Colonel Nikolai Beloborodov, who testified in late 1992 that "nuclear weapons could have been used only if the missile officers had received orders via their own chain-of-command from the General Staff, and only if we, the officers responsible for storing and operating warheads, had received our own special codes. At no point did I receive any signals to issue warheads for either the medium-range missiles or the tactical weapons." See Dokuchaev, "100-dnevnyi yadernyi kruiuz," 2. Beloborodov reemphasized this point several times during an interview with the author in Moscow on 28 September 1994: "No nuclear munitions of any type, whether for the medium-range or the tactical weapons, were ever moved (*byly dostavleny*) out of storage during the crisis. Nor could they have been moved without my knowledge." Beloborodov's account was endorsed by General Leonid Garbuz, the deputy commander of Soviet forces in Cuba in 1962, in an interview that same day in Moscow.

18. The exact contents of Pliev's telegram on the 26th are unknown, but the numbering of telegrams that are available makes clear that he sent at least two that day, the second of which is the one in question. (His first telegram on the 26th, which was declassified in October 1992, pertained only to air defense operations against possible U.S. air strikes.) The text of the Soviet leadership's response to Pliev's second cable is available (see next note), and, combined with retrospective comments by ex-Soviet officials, it suggests that Pliev referred to Castro's efforts and requested authority to move the warheads (though not yet authority for actual use).

19. "Trostnik—tovarishchu Pavlovu," No. 76639 (Top Secret), 27 October 1962, reproduced in *Operation ANADYR*, 182. See also Kramer, "Tactical Nuclear Weapons, Soviet Command Authority, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," 46; and Pavlenko, "Bezmyannye motostrelki otravlyalis' na Kubu," 4.

20. Marshal V. F. Tolubko, "Glavnaya raketnaya sila strany," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 19 November 1963, 1.

21. See Khrushchev's comments on this point in *Vospominaniya*, Vol. IV, "Karibskii krizis," p. 18.

22. Army-General Yu. P. Maksimov et al., eds., *Raketnye voiska strategicheskogo naznacheniya: Voennistoricheskii trud* (Moscow: Nauka, 1992), 109-110. Detailed first-hand accounts by high-ranking Soviet air defense personnel who took part in the shootdown are available in "Voina ozhidalas' rassvetom," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 13 May 1993, 2.

23. The rules of engagement are spelled out briefly in the cable from Malinovskii to Pliev, as cited in Dokuchaev, "100-dnevnyi yadernyi kruiuz," 2. More elaborate rules are specified in documents now stored in the Russian General Staff archive; see "Dokumenty po meropriyatiyu 'Anadyr'," in GSU GSh, F. 16, Op. 3753, D. 1, Korebka 3573.

24. Khrushchev, *Vospominaniya*, Vol. IV, "Karibskii krizis," pp. 17-18.

25. "Vystuplenie glavy Sovetskoi delegatsii Predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov SSSR N. S. Khrushcheva na Soveshchaniy Politicheskogo Konsul'tativnogo Komiteta gosudarstv-uchastnikov Varshavskogo Dogovora 24 maya 1958 goda," *Pravda*, 27 May 1958, p. 3.

26. Thomas Wolfe, *Soviet Power in Europe, 1945-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 150-151, 487-489.

27. Der Bundesminister der Verteidigung, *Militarische*

Planungen des Warschauer Paktes in Zentraleuropa: Eine Studie, February 1992, p. 5; for an English translation, see Mark Kramer, trans. and annot., "Warsaw Pact Military Planning in Central Europe: Revelations From the East German Archives," *CWIHP Bulletin* 2 (Fall 1992), 1, 13-19.

28. Militarisches Zwischenarchiv (Potsdam), VA-Strausberg/29555/Box 155.

29. "Dohoda CSSR-ZSSR o vzajemnykh dodavkakh vyzbroje a voj. techniky v rr. 1963-1965," in VHA Praha, F. Sekretariat MNO, 1960-1962, OS/GS, 26/2.

30. "Dogovor mezhdu pravitel'stvami SSSR i ChSSR o merakh povysheniya boegotovnosti raketnykh voisk," 15 December 1965, in VHA Praha, F. Sekretariat MNO, 1960-1962, OS/GS, 2/16.

31. See the reports on "Hungary: USSR Nuclear Weapons Formerly Stored in Country," translated in U.S. Joint Publications Research Service, *Nuclear Proliferation*, JPRS-TND-91-007, 20 May 1991, pp. 14-16.

32. "Opzedsiewzieciu majacym na celu podwyzszenie gotowsci bojowej wojska," 25 February 1967, in Centralny Archiwum Wojskowy, Paczka 6, Tom 234.

33. Interview with chief of the Czechoslovak General Staff, Major-General Karel Pezl, in Jan Bauer, "Jaderna munice: Asi tady byla," *Ceske a moravskoslezske zemedelske noviny* (Prague), 4 July 1991, p. 1.

34. See, for example, Col.-General I. Glebov, "Razvitie operativnogo iskusstva," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 2 April 1964, pp. 2-3; and Col.-General S. M. Shtemenko, "Sukhoputnye voiska v sovremennoi voine i ikh boevaya podgotovka," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 3 January 1963, 2-3. See also Marshal V. D. Sokolovskii et al., *Voennaya strategiya*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 373-374. This theme is also evident in "Razvitie voennogo iskusstva v usloviyakh vedeniya raketno-yadernoi voiny po sovremennym predstavleniyam," *passim*.

35. See, for example, Col.-General N. Lomov, "Vliyanie Sovetskoi voennoi doktriny na razvitie voennogo iskusstva," *Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil* 21 (November 1965), 16-24.

36. Cited in "Rech' tovarishcha L. I. Brezhneva," *Pravda*, 25 September 1965, p. 2 (emphasis added).

37. "Stenografische Niederschrift der Konferenz der kommunistischen und Arbeiterparteien die Staaten des Warschauer Vertrages," January 1965 (Top Secret), in Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMDB), Zentrales Parteiarchiv (ZPA) der SED, J IV, 2/202/130.

38. "O zasedanii Politicheskogo konsul'tativnogo komiteta gosudarstv-uchastnikov Varshavskogo Dogovora o druzhbe, sotrudnichestve i vzaimnoi pomoshchi," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 21 January 1965, 1. See also Colonel V. F. Samoilenko, *Osnova boevogo soyuza: Internatsionalizm kak faktor oboronnoi moshchi sotsialisticheskogo sodruzhestva* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1981), 259.

39. See, for example, Marshal R. Ya. Malinovskii, "Moguchii strazh bezopasnosti narodov," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 13 May 1965, 3; Marshal A. A. Grechko, "Nadezhnyi shchit mira i bezopasnosti narodov," *Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil*, No. 9 (May 1965), 13; and Marshal A. A. Grechko, "Boevoi soyz bratskikh narodov," *Pravda*, 13 May 1965, 1. (emphases added)

40. "Informatsionnaya sprava o vysledkakh cviceniya 'Oktobrova Burka,'" 16-22 October 1965 (Top Secret), in VHA Praha, F. Hlavna Politicka Sprava (HPS), 1965, HPS 1/2.

41. "Konferenz der kommunistischen und Arbeiterparteien die Staaten des Warschauer Vertrages:

continued on page 160

WARSAW PACT "LESSONS"

continued from page 115

- Stenografische Niederschrift," February 1966 (Top Secret), in SAPMDB, ZPA, IV 27/208/85.
42. "Oplot mira i sotsializma," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 14 May 1966, 5.
43. "La Roumanie n'a formule aucune demande en ce qui concerne le Pacte de Varsovie: Mise au Point du ministere des Affaires etrangeres a Bucarest," *L'Humanite* (Paris), 19 May 1966, 3.
44. "Stenografische Niederschrift des Treffens fuhrender Repräsentanten der Bruderstaaten des Warschauer Vertrages," July 1966 (Top Secret), in SAPMDB, ZPA, IV 2/202/431.
45. "Komplexny material: Cvicenie 'VLTAVA'," in VHA Praha, F. HPS, 1966, HPS 30/2; and "Vyhodnotenie cvicenia 'VLTAVA'," VHA Praha, F. Sekretariat MNO, 1966, OS/GS, 4/2.
46. Maksimov et al., eds., *Raketnye voiska strategicheskogo naznacheniya*, 125-126.
47. Sec, e.g., *ibid.*, 125-126. See also "Razvitie voennogo iskusstva v usloviyakh vedeniya raketno-yadernoi voyny po sovremennym predstavleniyam," pp. 325-334.
48. See *ibid.*, 330-336 and *passim*.

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CLINTON EXECUTIVE ORDER

continued from page 143

- ation of state of the art technology within a U.S. weapon system;
- (5) reveal actual U.S. military war plans that remain in effect;
- (6) reveal information that would seriously and demonstrably impair relations between the United States and a foreign government, or seriously and demonstrably undermine ongoing diplomatic activities of the United States;
- (7) reveal information that would clearly and demonstrably impair the current ability of United States Government officials to protect the President, Vice President, or other officials for whom protections services, in the interest of national security, are authorized;
- (8) reveal information that would seriously and demonstrably impair current national security emergency preparedness plans; or
- (9) violate a statute, treaty, or international agreement.

[Ed. note: For the full text of E.O. 12958, see the *Federal Register*, 20 April 1995 (60 *Federal Register*, pp. 19825-19843).]

CARTER-BREZHNEV

continued from page 154

presented the dual American proposal in his talks in Moscow with Soviet leaders, in particular Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko, on 28-30 March 1977. The Soviet side flatly rejected both variants in the American initiative, insisting on strict adherence to the Vladivostok framework and refusing to table a counter-proposal.

The dispute quickly broke into public view in a series of dueling press conferences. On March 30, Vance told reporters in Moscow that "the Soviets told us they had examined our two proposals and did not find either acceptable. They proposed nothing new on their side." In Washington the same day, Carter defended the proposals as a "fair, balanced" route to a "substantial reduction" in nuclear arms. Next, in his own, unusual press conference, Gromyko angrily denounced the proposals Vance delivered as a "cheap and shady maneuver" to seek U.S. nuclear superiority, described as "basically false" Carter's claim that Vance had presented a "broad disarmament program," and complained, "One cannot talk about stability when a new leadership arrives and crosses out all that has been achieved before."

Those interested in additional information on this acrimonious episode in U.S.-Soviet relations and the SALT II negotiations may wish to consult, in addition to the memoirs of former officials (including Carter, Vance, Brzezinski, Kornienko, et al.), the accounts by Strobe Talbott, Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II (New York: Harper & Row, 1979; Raymond L. Garthoff, Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994), esp. 883-94; and forthcoming publications emerging from the Carter-Brezhnev Project.]

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1. [Ed. note: The texts of those messages, as well as Harriman's related records of conversation with Carter, can be found in the Harriman Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.]

2. [Ed. note: The State Department had protested the arrest on February 3 of Aleksandr Ginzburg, a prominent dissident, for alleged currency violations.]

3. [Ed. note: Evidently an allusion to Carter's supportive letter to Andrei Sakharov, disclosed on February 17, 1977.]

4. [Ed. note: When shown this translation by the editor of the CWIHP *Bulletin* during an informal discussion at the May 1977 Carter-Brezhnev conference in Georgia, Vance denied the accuracy of the comments attributed to him here by Dobrynin, saying that perhaps the Soviet Ambassador had exaggerated his response.]

5. [Ed. note: Evidently a reference to the use of the "hot line" for this letter noted by G. M. Kornienko in his introduction.]