

Soviet military threat grows against NATO's north and south flanks

by Konstantin George

The Soviet strategic posture following the U.S. presidential elections was announced by Col. Gen. Vladimir Vyshenkov, chief of staff of the Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces, in a speech on Nov. 16, three days before the celebration of Artillery and Strategic Rocket Troops Day. While the U.S. State Department is hailing the resumption of arms-control talks as an indication that the Russians are ready to "deal," Vyshenkov declared bluntly that the purpose of the Soviet missile forces is to launch a nuclear first strike to "destroy all enemy targets simultaneously at the beginning of a conflict, thus creating a free environment for other branches of the Soviet Army to move." Vyshenkov's statement was widely circulated through a TASS release quoted by Reuters.

Vyshenkov's statement exposes as total hypocrisy the Soviet "peace" propaganda campaign which purports to endorse the principle of "Non-First-Use" of nuclear weapons in any conflict. It also refutes the public-relations claim of Soviet political leaders that the U.S.S.R. does not have a strategic doctrine of nuclear war-fighting and war-winning.

The nuclear strike intimidation policy was echoed in the holiday celebrations by Col. Gen. Yu. Yashin, deputy to Marshal Vladimir Tolubko, the commander of the Soviet Missile Forces. Yashin also underscored the doctrine of a precision nuclear strike against all key NATO military targets: "Our ground- and sea-based ballistic missiles are designed to deliver powerful nuclear warheads on the military-strategic targets of the enemy. These missiles . . . unleash enormous destruction and can successfully overcome countermeasures of anti-missile defenses and deliver precision strikes against the aggressor." Yashin's mention of overcoming anti-missile defenses refers to the obsolete system of anti-missile missiles. This is the first time the Soviet military has publicly flaunted the fact that it has such an offensive capability; although no surprise, it tears down once and for all the claims of U.S. Lt. Gen. Danny Graham and his inane "High Frontier" program.

Days after these Soviet generals spoke, on Nov. 20, U.S. intelligence officials concluded that some of the European Theater Soviet SS-20 intermediate-range missile bases were

being converted to house the new precision missile, the SS-X-25, a fully mobile intercontinental-range ballistic missile.

These developments are matched by a detectable and significant expansion of the Soviet campaign of expansion and intimidation, particularly on the weakened northern and southern flanks of NATO.

The Balkans and the Mediterranean

At the center of a highly significant series of recent diplomatic and related moves is Marshal of the Soviet Union and First Deputy Defense Minister Sergei Sokolov. Sokolov, who appears to have taken over as acting defense minister with the onset of Dmitrii Ustinov's severe illness, delivered the military speech at the Nov. 7 holiday in Moscow.

As *EIR* reported on Nov. 13, Sokolov has assumed the role of commander in chief of the Eastern Theater of War, embracing minimally all wartime military operations in the Indian Subcontinent and Asian-Pacific regions. Sokolov was thus moved in to a companion position to former Chief of the General Staff Nikolai Ogarkov, now functioning as commander in chief of the Western Theater of War, responsible for all wartime operations against the United States and NATO. It is clear from the following chain of events that Sokolov is also playing a key coordinating role for Soviet operations in the Balkan-Mediterranean Theater.

On Nov. 19, the Libyan Deputy Defense Minister and Commander in Chief of the Libyan Army, Gen. Abu Bakr Younes Jaber, arrived in Moscow and was received by Marshal Sokolov. Sokolov also chaired the meetings of General Younes with Soviet military leaders, including, Chief of the General Staff Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, Chief of Air Defense and Marshal of Aviation Koldunov, Air Force Commander and Marshal of Aviation Kutakhov, Navy Commander Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, and Deputy Vice-Admiral Grishin. From the Army, the brass included Colonel General Grinkevich, serving under Marshal Petrov, commander of the land forces (Grinkevich was on an extended unpublicized visit to Finland during the summer), and Lieutenant-General Borisov (till last month the commander of the Central Group

of Soviet Forces in Czechoslovakia, and promoted to an as yet unannounced post in Moscow).

On Oct. 1, Sokolov chaired important military discussions with a senior Romanian delegation led by Lieutenant-General Ceaucescu, a relative of the Romanian head of state. According to *Jane's Defense Weekly* of Oct. 27, the issue discussed with the Romanians was "the conduct of military operations against Turkey in the context of a regional local war." This meeting signaled with finality that the days of "independent maneuvering room" for Moscow's satraps in the Balkans are gone. This verdict was finalized by the just concluded Romanian Party Congress, where President Ceaucescu announced that Romania would extend its Warsaw Pact membership—months before the May 1985 expiration date—and pledged "closer economic ties" with the Soviet Union and the Comecon. Vladimir Shcherbitskii, Soviet Politburo member and chief of the party in the Ukraine, the region of the U.S.S.R. bordering on Romania, led the Soviet delegation to the Party Congress, and hailed the "close ties" between the two countries and Romania's "growing economic integration" with the Soviet Union.

The process of increased Romanian military integration into the Warsaw Pact began in spring 1984 with the Warsaw Pact exercises "Soyuz '84," where Soviet and Bulgarian forces simulated the capture of the Turkish Straits in a blitzkrieg surgical strike. The Romanian General Staff participated in that exercise and in Warsaw Pact maneuvers in Czechoslovakia in September, and participated in the staff exercises in more than a token manner.

The Soviet consolidation in the Balkans and the plotting with Libya are occurring against the backdrop of a Soviet Fleet buildup in the Mediterranean, cited by Western defense sources. In addition to more ships being dispatched from the Black Sea Fleet, the Soviet carrier *Leningrad* moved early in November from the Red Sea through the Suez Canal back into the Mediterranean, where it had been in the summer. Then the island state of Malta, controlling the "narrows" of the Central Mediterranean, refused to renew its defense treaty with NATO member Italy. Timed with this move, Libyan madman Qaddafi visited the island.

Add to this the pro-Soviet axis of Libya, Syria, and Greece that is coming together now, and the gravity of the threatened strategic collapse in the Mediterranean sector becomes apparent.

The Soviet threat to the northern flank of NATO is no less grave.

Target: Scandinavia

Top-level Norwegian defense sources are concerned that the Soviet Union could seize at any time that large mass of strategic, though undefended, Norwegian territory called Spitzbergen (Svalbard in Norwegian), located in the Arctic Ocean well to the north of North Cape. Spitzbergen, though sovereign Norwegian territory and thus part of NATO, is by a 1920s treaty a demilitarized region, and open to all signers

of the treaty for purposes of economic exploitation (at present, primarily coal mines). The Soviet Union and the United States were both among the signatories to that treaty.

The population of the territory consists of 2,000 Soviet coal miners plus hundreds of "service" and "research" personnel, as against only 1,000 Norwegian miners. The Soviet "settlers" maintain regular sea and air supply shuttle contact with the Kola Peninsula of the Soviet Union, without any Norwegian Customs inspection, while the various Russian settlements on the island are serviced by Soviet helicopters. With such men and infrastructure, the Soviets could seize the territory any day they chose to do so.

Such preparations are well advanced. As one top Norwegian defense source told this writer during a recent stay in Norway and Sweden, the Soviets recently moved into Spitzbergen seven Mi-24 "Hind" helicopter gunships, "painted in the Aeroflot colors, but with the rocket holders still mounted, so the rockets could be mounted on the copters instantly." What most worries the Norwegians is that the Spitzbergen surgical strike/territorial seizure option for the Soviets entails almost no risk in terms of NATO and U.S. military counter-moves. As one Norwegian source expressed it, "It is by far the least risky of any Soviet military moves against NATO territory."

The Soviet threat has become so acute that it was featured on Nov. 22 in the *Wall Street Journal*, with the warning that the Soviets "may grab Svalbard or Iceland" and that a Soviet attack on the northern flank is "more likely . . . than in the center region" of Europe. This is in one sense true, but it covers up the fact that the northern flank also includes the northernmost part of West Germany, Schleswig-Holstein, one of the most likely targets in Europe for a Soviet surgical-strike attack.

As one Norwegian defense researcher stressed to me: "The U.S.A., as a signatory to the International Treaty on Spitzbergen, has the right to send American citizens there to work and live under the economic exploitation clauses of the treaty. It makes a hell of a difference to the Soviets in terms of risk incurred whether Svalbard is populated only by 1,000 Norwegians, or by 1,000 Norwegians joined by 1,000 American citizens."

The Soviet blackmail against Norway is complemented by the threat to all of the Scandinavian peninsula. As a retired high-ranking officer of the Norwegian Army recently emphasized to *EIR*, it is confirmed intelligence (though no one will print it) that the Soviet Armed Forces of the Baltic and the Leningrad Military Districts, which face Finland, Sweden, and Norway, have all been equipped with the same modern precision short- and medium-range missiles supplied to the Soviet Armed Forces in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and the other Soviet formations in Eastern Europe—the SS-21 (120 km), SS-23 (600 km), and SS-22 (1,000 km).

Thus every NATO and Swedish military and logistical target is covered by precision Soviet nuclear warheads, all within a few minutes' strike time of these targets.