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9/15/51
HR70-14

12 Sep 51
CIR

SPECIAL ARTICLE

EVIDENCE OF A "SOVIET PUPPET FORCE" FOR KOREA IS INCONCLUSIVE

Early in 1951 the first reports were received of Communist intentions to form an "International Volunteer Army" -- referred to as a "Soviet Puppet Force" -- for service in the Korean War. While no conclusive confirmation has yet been received of the presence of such an independent tactical force in Manchuria or Korea, the cumulative impact of reports on this subject, makes it imperative to consider the available evidence. On the basis of this evidence, still inconclusive, the existence of such a force cannot be established, nor can it be entirely discounted.

A synthesis of reports on the Soviet Puppet Force points to ground, air and naval arms. Infantry and cavalry strength is allegedly composed of troops from Communist China (separate from Chinese "Volunteers" currently engaged in Korea), North Koreans, Mongols, and unrepatriated Japanese prisoners of war. Supporting and technical components are reportedly drawn from the USSR and from the European Satellite countries.

The alleged air arm is reported to be predominantly Soviet, with European Satellite and Mongolian personnel included. Naval forces are reportedly composed almost entirely of undersea craft. In all a total of 23 countries, both Communist and non-Communist, have been claimed, at one time or another to have nationals involved in the Puppet Force.

The confirmed Soviet behind-the-lines contribution to the Korean War in the form of flight control, communications, and supply is already on such a scale that, regardless, of whether the Soviet Puppet Force now exists as a bona fide striking force, a highly integrated headquarters would be needed to coordinate it.

This headquarters may exist at Mukden, Manchuria:

which now appears to be just over the border on the Soviet side. It would seem, therefore that the command structure exists for a puppet force of any size or composition.

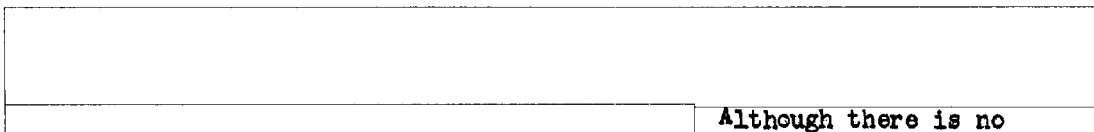
There are many reports of the presence of military personnel other than North Korean and Communist Chinese in Korea or Manchuria. Several thousand Soviet troops already perform rear area combat support duties. At least two Soviet air regiments have been operating in the Korean-Manchurian theater. Although these units have not been definitely identified in battle, Soviet pilots have been positively identified as

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: 22-Mar-2010

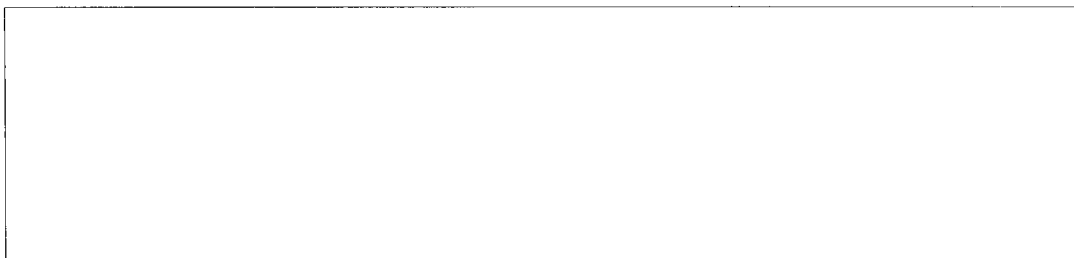
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engaging in combat flights over Korea.



Although there is no confirmation, it is probable that Soviet rear area units such as signal, engineer, and quartermaster troops are also in Korea.

These organized units are over and above the extensive Soviet advisory group identified at most major North Korean ground, air, and naval headquarters. Three Eastern European Satellite countries, Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary, have been represented in Korea by medical units. The "volunteer" medical unit from the USSR has reportedly arrived for duty in Korea. It is possible, of course, that the sole purpose of all these activities is to remedy the deficiencies of the Communist forces already in action.



Balanced against these convincing factors are a number of equally sound negative indicators. Primary among these is the lack of even one eye-witness report from prisoners of war or other sources to attest to the existence of such a tactical force as the Soviet Puppet Force is purported to be. Furthermore, there have been no reports from anywhere outside of China or Korea on the outward movement of "volunteers" other than medical personnel.

If the Soviet Puppet Force exists, whether as a command framework with only supporting functions or as a fully integrated striking force, it could be the mechanism for expanding Soviet assistance in Korea to any scale the Kremlin considered desirable. It might well absorb the new and well-equipped Chinese divisions believed to have been built up in Manchuria.

The original North Korean striking force had Russian equipment; the Chinese committed last winter were ill-equipped, and relied on surprise and weight of numbers. Russia is reported to have been in the process of reorganizing and arming 30 Chinese divisions since early last year, which up to the present, at least, have never been committed.

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Militarily, Communist forces in Korea were not capable of a decisive victory without substantial air, armored and artillery support. It is similarly evident that it was not within the immediate capability of the Communist forces in Korea, rich as they are in infantry, to supply either the trained personnel or the equipment for these decisive arms. These deficiencies have recently been remedied to some extent. The mechanism of a Soviet Puppet Force would permit the rapid introduction of the necessary numbers of technical or other personnel under the guise of "volunteers."

It would be a risk for the Soviet Union to proclaim that Russian troops, even as "volunteers," were fighting with the Chinese Communists and North Koreans. The Kremlin, however, might accept the risk of a general war in the hope of continuing limited hostilities in Asia with minimum danger of retaliation against Russia itself.

Both the Soviet Union and Communist China have reacted to the recent FECOM press release on the presence of a Soviet Puppet Force in Korea by denying categorically that such a force exists or even that "Caucasians," other than embassy personnel and news correspondents, are on the scene. Since Soviet personnel have been identified in increasing numbers in Korea, these quick categorical denials would seem to indicate either that Russia is determined to remain uninvolved, or that the time is not yet ripe from the Communist point of view to reveal the presence of any new force in Korea.

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