

DECLASSIFIED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE
INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)
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NSP 89A/1

27 October 1969

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Possible Communist Reactions to US Military Readiness Tests.

1. CIA has cooperated with DIA in maintaining an all-source watch on Soviet, Warsaw Pact, and Asian Communist military actions which might be in reaction to the US military readiness tests which began on 13 October. Of the military measures observed, only a few were sufficiently unusual to be considered as possible responses to the US readiness posture. Analysis of the reasons behind these military measures is complicated by Soviet awareness of exercise High Heels, by Operation Deep Furrow in the Aegean area, by the crises in Lebanon and Somalia, and by the possibility that some of the Chinese and Soviet measures in the Far East may be related to each other rather than to the US posture.

2. A list of the noteworthy Communist military measures follows:

13 October--One hour and 57 minutes after the SAC standdown began,

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COMMENT: Because this action occurred less than two hours after the SAC standdown began and since it was apparently localized in the Far East, we doubt that it was a reaction to the US readiness test.

15 October--

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COMMENT: This predates actions taken by CINCEUR in the US readiness tests and probably reflects Soviet interest in exercise High Heels which began on 14 October and of which the Soviets were aware.

15-18 October--

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COMMENT: US Naval Task Force 71 began operations in the Sea of Japan on 16 October. This would be sufficient cause for increased Soviet activity in the area. [redacted]

16 October to the present [redacted]

COMMENT: This activity may reflect interest in the SAC standdown or the CINCEUR standdown of 16-17 October, or perhaps both.

18 October to the present [redacted]

COMMENT: We do not know the purpose of the Chinese alert. [redacted]

[redacted] and covers the opening of Sino-Soviet border talks on 20 October. It also coincides with press stories of a US military readiness test based on the sudden breaking off of port visits by the USS Yorktown and Newport News and the deployment of Task Force 71 exercises into the Sea of Japan. Thus the Chinese action could be in response to either Soviet or US actions or both or this alert may be the result of considerations of which we are not yet aware.

19-24 October-- [redacted]

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There is no reason to connect this with the US readiness tests.

21 October--Two Soviet Navy missile ships were in the Red Sea en route to the Egyptian port of Safaga for a visit scheduled to begin on 24 October. On 21 October the two ships had reversed course and headed out of the Red Sea. They subsequently rendezvoused with several other Soviet ships near the island of Socotra off Somalia.

COMMENT: On 17 October three US Naval ships sailed to rendezvous in the Gulf of Aden off Somalia. The Soviets were almost certainly aware of their presence, which they may have associated with the 15 October assassination of the Somali president and the coup d'etat there on 21 October. Thus, although the movement of the Soviet ships was probably at least in part a reaction to the presence of the three US ships, it took place in the context of a local situation rather than as a reaction to a world-wide US military alert posture.

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3. Conclusions: Of the many Communist military actions noted, only the [redacted] activity seems clearly related to the US military readiness tests. And even this might be directed less at the world-wide US posture than at the specific operations of High Heels, Deep Furrow, Task Force 71, and the tensions in the Middle East. All of the other actions seem best explained by other considerations.

There has been no reflection of acute concern by the Soviets such as a nationwide military stand-down or general alert in the USSR. There has been no reflection of the US military alert posture in Soviet or Chinese news media or in diplomatic activity.