



CONSEIL DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD  
 NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL



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EXEMPLAIRE N° 447  
 COPY

**NATO SECRET**

ORIGINAL: FRENCH/ENGLISH  
3rd December 1982

DOCUMENT  
C-M(82)81(Final)

REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

MARCH - OCTOBER 1982

Note by the Secretary General

At its meeting on 25 November 1982, the Council, after having examined the report prepared by the Ad Hoc Group on the Mediterranean, agreed that it would be submitted to Ministers under Item II of the Agenda of the Ministerial meeting.

(Signed) Joseph M.A.H. LUNS

This document consists of: 12 pages  
 Annex I of: 6 pages  
 Annex II of: 1 page  
 Annex III of: 1 page

NATO,  
 1110 Brussels.

N A T O    S E C R E T

N A T O   S E C R E T

-2-

C-M(82)81(Final)

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

MARCH - OCTOBER 1982

1. Following the Ministerial Meeting held on 17th and 18th May 1982, the Council in Permanent Session was instructed to continue its consultations on the situation in the Mediterranean and to report back at the next Ministerial Meeting. In accordance with these instructions, the Council have arranged for the preparation of the following report.

2. This report sets out to assess the extent of Soviet penetration in the Mediterranean area over the past six months. Being part of a continuing review it should be read in conjunction with the previous reports. Some situations remain stable; the relevant comments accordingly continue to hold good and need not be repeated.

I. SOVIET PENETRATION IN THE REGION

3. In the Middle East, the USSR remains chiefly concerned to regain a more central rôle in Arab-Israel affairs and in particular to ensure that it is represented in any negotiations on a Middle East settlement. It is hampered by its lack of any relations with Israel, over which only the United States can hope to wield any influence - a strategic and political fact recognized by many Arab States. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon demonstrated the Soviet inability to make any effective intervention and, although Moscow moved quickly to replace Syrian losses, the hostilities called the effectiveness of Soviet weaponry seriously into question; these factors have weakened considerably Moscow's influence in the Arab world, including within the PLO.

4. In the overall political context, the USSR was faced with the settlement proposals of the Fez Arab Summit Conference, issued on 9th September and President Reagan's initiative of 1st September. Mr. Brezhnev clearly felt obliged to make a public Soviet response to try to regain a larger rôle and so produced his own six points for a Middle Eastern settlement on 15th September. His proposal that the UN Security Council or its permanent members guarantee a Middle East settlement supplemented rather than superseded the now traditional Soviet call for an international conference at which all parties would be represented. Such a conference remains a Soviet objective for the longer term. The desiderata listed by the six points were strikingly similar to those produced by the Fez Arab Summit, for which Moscow has expressed its support. While the Arab States can therefore hardly dissent from the Soviet proposals, they see little practical value in them and there is some feeling that their very similarity to Fez makes them redundant. In general, Arab leaders recognize the importance of the Reagan initiative and see the Soviet proposals as only the latest and rather unimpressive Soviet effort to regain an active part in the Arab-Israel issue. Soviet comment on President Reagan's initiative remains consistently hostile.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-2-

N A T O   S E C R E T

C-M(82)81(Final)

-3-

II. MALTESE FOREIGN POLICY

5. Malta aims to pursue its foreign policy on the basis of neutrality and through the Non-Aligned Movement which it joined in 1973. Its attitude to the two blocs is one of formal equidistance. It aims to obtain maximum economic advantage both from Western countries and the Soviet bloc playing off the will of the former to counter penetration by the latter. Since his election eleven years ago Mintoff has sought to draw Malta away from exclusive attachment to the Western world. This had led him gradually to grant the concessions Moscow has demanded in the way of diplomatic, political and economic relations. Further acknowledgements of Malta's neutrality have been granted by Senegal and Tunisia (April 1982) and by Iran (September 1982).

Maltese-Libyan relations

6. The Maltese Government has always shown interest in maintaining political and economic relations with Libya, so as to guarantee energy supplies to the island. These relations reached their highest level in March 1980 when the two Heads of State signed a broad agreement covering also defence aspects through which Libya would have supplied all necessary help for the defence of Malta. The agreement, however, collapsed just a few weeks after its signing because of Qadhafi's unconcealed intention to introduce his own troops on the island. A Libyan radio broadcasting station had nevertheless been set up in Malta and Qadhafi had already demanded the use of Arabic as an official language, as part of an attempt to spread his influence.

7. After the visit by Mintoff to Tripoli at the end of April 1980, Libyan oil supplies were interrupted and with them economic and trade relations. Afterwards, Libyan-Maltese relations further deteriorated over the controversy surrounding the definition of the continental shelf. They have improved recently, following a visit paid by Qadhafi to Malta (13th March 1982) and that by a delegation headed by the Libyan Minister of Foreign Affairs (19th March). On this occasion Malta and Libya agreed that the controversy over the continental shelf would be referred to the International Court of Justice. The visit to Tripoli at the beginning of June by the Maltese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trigona, resulted in the signature of an agreement on technical co-operation. The two countries apparently wish to re-establish an atmosphere of understanding and collaboration not only in the economic and commercial fields (with activation of exchanges and execution of development projects through joint ventures), but also through improved political co-operation.

Relations between Malta and Eastern European countries

8. The growing relations between Malta and the Soviet Union have been confirmed by last January's visit of the Maltese Minister of Foreign Affairs to Moscow and by the signature of a cultural agreement (18th March 1982) and visits by trade (March), friendship (June) and trade union (August) delegations.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-3-

N A T O   S E C R E T

-4-

C-M(82)81(Final)

9. An air services agreement has been reached with Bulgaria which provides for a weekly stop by BALKAN AIR at La Valetta. The favourable trend of relations between Malta and Bulgaria has been underlined by the visit to Sofia of the President of the Maltese Republic Agatha Barbara (April 1982) and by the visit by the Maltese Minister of Industry Grima, the result of which has been the signature of a commercial agreement for the creation of joint ventures. There have also been agreements on shipbuilding and cement (April 1982). A Maltese delegation visited Bulgaria in July 1982 consisting of Prime Minister Mintoff, Foreign Minister Trigona and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economic Development Abela, and resulted in the signature of a number of commercial and economic agreements.

10. Relations with Czechoslovakia have intensified. The Czechoslovak Government has sent doctors, who are important to the Maltese health system. A Czechoslovak trade delegation visited Malta in May 1982.

III. THE MIDDLE EASTEgypt

11. There is no change in Egypt's concern over the threat posed to the region by the Soviet Union and its surrogates, nor in its continuing commitment to work with the United States to resist that threat. Notwithstanding the Egyptian leadership's fundamental distrust of Soviet aims, President Mubarak can be expected to take cautious steps to improve the cool Egyptian-Soviet relationship which had become seriously strained due to the personal animosity of former President Sadat. That no such steps have occurred in the last six months is probably a reflection more of Egyptian preoccupation with regional events than of a change in Egyptian policy.

12. In general, Mubarak is seeking to avoid confrontation in his foreign relations, particularly in matters of form. Permitting the return of a Soviet ambassador and perhaps sending an Egyptian ambassador to Moscow would be totally consistent with such a policy. It would also help Mubarak at home in responding to those who argue that close relations with the United States bear too high a cost to Egypt, and that in addition to isolation from other Arab States, Egypt has unnecessarily cut itself off from even modest contacts with the other superpower.

13. There does not seem to be any threat to the solid foundation of US-Egyptian relations, or to Washington's key interests in Egypt and the region, from any step Cairo is likely to take. Moreover, given Egypt's past experience with the Soviets, its security services will monitor very closely the activities of any Soviet personnel, diplomatic or otherwise, allowed into the country.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-4-

N A T O   S E C R E T

C-M(82)81(Final)

-5-

14. Economic and technical co-operation between Egypt and the Soviet Union is confined to the temporary presence of a few score Soviet experts and to the delivery of spare parts for enterprises set up in the past with Soviet aid. On the other hand, after declining in absolute value for several years, trade between the two countries began to expand again in 1980 and will probably increase by a further 20% in 1982. Egypt is currently the Soviet Union's principal African customer and ranks second among its African suppliers but its trade with the USSR accounts only for some 4% and 1% respectively of its total exports and imports. Egypt's trade with the Eastern European countries is roughly of the same order and should remain at present levels given in particular the conclusion of new trading agreements with the GDR and Hungary.

#### Syria

15. Despite strains in Soviet-Syrian relations that arose in the first weeks of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Damascus and Moscow evidently have concluded that there are advantages for both in maintaining a co-operative relationship.

16. During the military crisis in Lebanon, the Soviet Union began to replace Syrian battlefield losses. All major ground equipment has been replaced plus substantial numbers of aircraft. In addition advanced air intercept and command and control electronics equipment has been provided. Militarily Syria is now better off in quantity and quality than it was prior to the conflict, which is an indication of Moscow's decision to repair both Syrian military strength and Soviet-Syrian relations. Although willing to help Syria improve its military capability for self-defence, the USSR has always been unwilling to provide armaments of sufficient quantity to encourage Syrian offensive action against Israel. Rather, the Soviet's primary aim is to preserve their own position in Syria, their main client in the region, in order to buttress their diplomatic efforts to assure themselves a rôle in Middle East deliberations. Soviet attempts to mend fences with Syria have also included a lengthy and widely publicised visit of a Soviet parliamentary delegation to Damascus in August, and Gromyko's meeting with Foreign Minister Khaddam during the first week of the 37th UNGA.

17. Nothing came of Syrian proposals for an understanding on "strategic co-operation" as an extension of the 1980 Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation, which the Soviet Union insists does not apply to Syrian activities in third countries, i.e. Lebanon. The Syrians evidently remain unwilling to grant access to military facilities that the USSR have been seeking. The Soviets continue to avoid any commitment to Syria's defence which might lead them into confrontation with the United States or Israel.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-5-

N A T O   S E C R E T

-6-

C-M(82)81(Final)

18. Although Damascus realises that it is dependant on the USSR for arms supplies, its humiliation at Israel's hands with those Soviet weapons and the Soviet refusal to protect Syrian interests in Lebanon may be leading Syria to reconsider its relations with the West. It is therefore likely to try to maintain its relationship with the USSR at the present level while simultaneously attempting to improve ties with Western countries.

19. Trade between Syria and the USSR increased by over 60% in 1981. Co-operation with the Eastern European countries which, in relative terms, is much greater than that with the Soviet Union, is continuing mainly on the basis of existing agreements. For the present there is no hint of any change, where economic co-operation is concerned, in Syria's present policy of geographical diversification, with a strong bias towards the West.

20. Economic relations with Iraq deteriorated recently following the closure of the border between the two countries, the shutdown of the Syrian pipeline carrying Iraqi oil to the Mediterranean and the total suspension of oil imports from Iraq. To compensate for this, Syria has entered into an agreement with Iran for the purchase of oil in exchange for phosphates. This has led moderate Arab countries of the Gulf to consider reducing or withdrawing their financial aid to Syria, estimated at \$1.2 billion. Such a step would have serious repercussions on the Syrian economy. It could lead not only to internal unrest but oblige Assad to rely even more on trade relations with the Communist bloc and place in question his attempt to develop economic co-operation with Western states.

Iraq

21. The destruction of the Persian Gulf oil terminal and the recent closure of the terminals on the Syrian and Lebanese coasts have reduced Iraqi exports, which consist mainly of oil, by about 80% (compared with mid-1980); in contrast, its imports have risen sharply. This turn of events was reflected in Iraqi trade with the USSR in 1981 when sales tailed off completely and purchases rose by 90%. While it is true that Iraq thus becomes the Soviet Union's main client among the developing countries, trade between the two countries nevertheless accounts for less than 5% of total imports. In addition, the very substantial economic and technical aid recently provided by the USSR to help develop new Iraqi oil fields will increase even further following the adoption of the top-priority project for the joint development of the huge find at Kurnah.

22. Although the USSR cut back direct exports of arms to Iraq at an early stage of the Gulf war, exports of arms from Eastern Europe continued or even increased. Recently, Saddam Hussein has stated publicly that the USSR has shipped large quantities of military equipment to Iraq.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-6-

N A T O S E C R E T

C-M(82)81(Final)

-7-

23. On the other hand, Iraq is still one of the main beneficiaries, among the developing countries, of economic and technical aid from the Eastern European countries. New co-operative agreements have been signed with the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Poland which has a large number of experts (about 6,000 and 8,000) in Iraq. None the less, the economic presence of the Eastern European countries in Iraq is still relatively modest by comparison with the West.

24. Despite the cost of the war and the fall in export earnings, Iraq was able, until early 1982, to press on with a huge investment programme funded by a 50% withdrawal from its monetary reserves and by loans and grants worth \$30 billion from the Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar). However, since these countries are tending for the present, to reduce their financial aid because of a substantial fall in their own oil revenues, Iraq has had to tighten its belt and has been forced to shelve new investment contracts except in certain areas to which it has assigned priority. It may be concluded therefore, that, in the short term, Communist country investments in Iraq will remain at roughly their present level. In the longer term, and assuming that its oil terminals become operational again but that the international oil market remains depressed, Iraq will have to rely on its economic partners - both in the East and in the West - to find takers for its oil.

#### Jordan

25. The tempo of Soviet-Jordanian exchanges picked up in the past six months. During this period, Jordan and the Soviet Union exchanged visits by officially sponsored "friendship delegations". In late June King Hussein went to Moscow, where he met Foreign Minister Gromyko and Premier Tikhonov but not, as he had expected, President Brezhnev, and this was an irritation. And, most important, the first deliveries of the Soviet air defence equipment for which Jordan contracted in late 1981 were made in August.

26. Despite the apparent increase in Soviet-Jordanian contacts, King Hussein has not changed his pro-Western orientation. Like others in the Middle East, he was not impressed by Soviet actions in defence of the Arab cause during Israel's invasion of Lebanon. He is still keen to purchase advanced military equipment from Western sources. Finally, he has shown great interest in negotiating an Arab-Israeli settlement on the basis of President Reagan's 1st September proposals and has recently entered into a renewed dialogue with PLO representatives.

#### Libya

27. After the failure of the OAU Summit in Tripoli and following the events in Lebanon as well as the Summit meeting in Fez in which Libya did not take part, Qadhafi has been largely

N A T O S E C R E T

-7-

N A T O   S E C R E T

-8-

C-M(82)81(Final)

isolated in the Arab world as well as in Africa. In order no doubt to distract attention from this situation, he visited Communist countries twice in September and October 1982 (CSSR with the conclusion of a friendship treaty, Poland, Bulgaria and China; a visit to the Soviet Union did not take place). At the present time, Libyan diplomatic activities appear to be concentrated on the attempt to organize the OAU Summit meeting in Tripoli this year after all, for which realistic prospects of success have now developed. Qadhafi's presidency would very probably exercise a moderating effect on his actions in the African region. Soviet-Libyan relations were strained by Qadhafi's criticism of Soviet passivity over the war in Lebanon, but are unlikely to have been permanently damaged since Libya still has no alternative to Soviet arms deliveries, and the Soviet Union is also interested in not closing the door towards Libya. For instance, naval visits and the deployment of naval aircraft have continued to take place. Nevertheless, Qadhafi's erratic policy is bound to give some grounds for irritation on the Soviet side.

28. There have been no fresh developments over economic and technical co-operation between Libya and the USSR. Plans for the construction of a nuclear power station by the Russians, undertaken on the basis of previous agreements, are now almost ready. Trade between the two countries - mainly in the shape of Libyan imports - has grown significantly in recent years. Even though Libya is now the Soviet Union's main African supplier and ranks second among its African customers, its exchanges with the USSR none the less only account for about 0.5% of its overall trade. Its procurements from the Eastern countries are greater in relative terms (almost 3% of its total imports) and are paid for with Libyan oil. Apart from that, industrial co-operation agreements have been signed with Yugoslavia and Hungary as well as with Poland which at one time was particularly active in Libya. Given the fall in Libya's oil receipts, however, which has caused difficulties in repaying its arms debts to the Soviet Union, it is hardly likely that there will be any growth in its economic co-operation with other countries and consequently it would seem that the Communist countries will continue to be far less well represented in this respect than the West.

IV. MAGHREB COUNTRIESAlgeria

29. Even if allowance is made for a recent trade agreement between Czechoslovakia and Algeria, the level of trade between the latter on the one hand and the USSR and the Eastern European countries on the other hand is extremely low, to the point where it accounts for only 2 to 2.5% of Algeria's overall trade. The recent signature of co-operation agreements with the USSR, funded at least in part by a Soviet credit of \$430 million granted in 1981, will make little difference to the Soviet Union's very modest

N A T O   S E C R E T

-8-



N A T O   S E C R E T

C-M(82)81(Final)

-9-

contribution to international economic aid to Algeria. This is likewise true of the Eastern European countries, some of which recently entered into various small-scale co-operation agreements with Algeria.

Morocco

30. Economic co-operation between Morocco and the East, which has been very limited so far, remains unchanged. On the other hand, trade between those countries and Morocco is fairly substantial, accounting as it does for about 8% of the latter's exports and 4% of its imports. After the EEC, the USSR is Morocco's best customer for lemons. 55% of its imports of oranges come from Morocco.

Tunisia

31. A Soviet Parliamentary delegation to Tunisia in September 1982 does not appear to have brought any change in the attitude of cautious reserve towards the Soviet Union and the Communist countries which has been consistently maintained by Tunisia. The Tunisian Authorities continue to show a greater readiness to turn towards the West to strengthen the country's defences in the face of what is felt to be a Libyan threat.

32. Notwithstanding a recent trade agreement between Romania and Tunisia, trade with the Communist countries is minimal. The level of financial and technical assistance from the USSR is extremely low and is based on a co-operation agreement signed in 1976. It was under this agreement that a start was made on the joint construction of a dam at an estimated cost of \$11 million which will probably be funded from a Soviet credit of \$46 million likewise granted in 1976.

V. THE BALKANSYugoslavia

33. The Yugoslav leadership has successfully navigated the period following Tito's death and has continued to embrace Tito's concept of active non-alignment in foreign affairs and equidistance between the two blocs. The principle of collective leadership and periodical rotation, already established when Tito was still alive, continues to be in force, as the comprehensive changes in state presidency, government and party leadership in 1982 bear witness. On the other hand, differences of approach within the leadership, for example with regard to the method of coping with the very serious economic situation, have become more obvious in the course of recent months.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-9-

N A T O   S E C R E T

-10-

C-M(82)81(Final)

34. The events in Kosovo have brought to the fore the political problems involved in coping with unequal development in the country's different regions, exacerbated by historic controversies and ethnic antagonisms. Though the Kosovo issue is primarily an internal Yugoslav problem it is not without repercussions abroad. It has resurfaced as an element of dispute in Yugoslav-Albanian relations which has compromised the earlier progress towards a more relaxed relationship, and could offer openings for Soviet diplomacy.

35. There was no significant change in the geographical pattern of Yugoslavia's foreign trade in the early months of 1982. About half of its exports still go to the Communist countries (34% to the USSR alone) whereas 24% of its imports, which have dipped slightly, come from those countries. Early in 1982, the USSR and Yugoslavia signed a number of contracts under which the latter will supply a variety of ships during 1984 and 1985. The value of these sales, estimated at \$500 million, will amount to about 15% of total Yugoslav deliveries to the USSR in 1981.

Albania

36. Despite repeated Soviet calls for normalization of Soviet-Albanian relations in the interests of "socialism and world peace", the Albanians continue to reject "revisionist" Moscow. The most recent refusal came in a 15th September speech by the Vice-Chairman of the General Council of the Democratic Front of Albania, Ramiz Alia, which decried Soviet aggression in Afghanistan, its "plotting and undermining stand" in the Middle East and its revisionism in general. (The United States came in for equally hostile criticism).

37. Little change in this position is envisaged as long as Hoxha remains in power, although splits may appear after his departure. If a pro-Soviet group were to emerge, for example during a period of instability, some openings could be provided for the re-establishment of Soviet influence, possibly including a military element, which could threaten both Yugoslavia's stability and NATO's strategic and security interests in the Balkans and the Adriatic. Nevertheless, at present there is no concrete sign which indicates a fundamental change in policy after Hoxha's death.

38. The death of Shehu and his replacement by Carcani has made no difference to economic and commercial relations between the USSR and Albania which have been virtually suspended for several years. Relations between Albania and Yugoslavia, which had improved after a period of strain at the end of 1981, could suffer as a result of the Kosovo events. Up to now, however, the controversy over these events has not affected the improvements achieved, for

N A T O   S E C R E T

-10-

N A T O   S E C R E T

C-M(82)81(Final)

-11-

example, in certain common areas of transport. There is reason to hope that the political disputes and controversies between the two countries will not grow to the point where they will jeopardise improvements in other areas.

Proposal for a de-nuclearized zone in the Balkans

39. Since 1981 Bulgaria has revived the Romanian proposal in favour of creating a de-nuclearized zone in the Balkans. The reactions of other Communist countries in the region have varied considerably. Albania has turned down the proposal. Romania has supported the Bulgarian call for a summit to discuss the idea of a Balkan Nuclear Free Zone, even though it is more narrowly defined than the Romanian concept of turning the Balkans into "an area of peace, co-operation and neighbourly relations which would be free of nuclear weapons". This goes far beyond nuclear disarmament pure and simple. The Yugoslavs are distrustful of the Bulgarian proposal which is clearly well favoured by Moscow. While they cannot but welcome a proposal which is in line with one of the traditional and priority targets of the Non-Aligned Movement, namely nuclear disarmament, it does not seem to the Yugoslavs to go far enough in enhancing their security. They advocate a far broader scheme both in geographical terms (bringing in the whole of Europe and the Mediterranean) and in terms of its objectives (not only nuclear weapons but also all armed forces including conventional forces).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

40. Politically the Soviet Union lost ground with the Arabs over the war in Lebanon. It failed to give effective support to the PLO, and its military equipment did not perform well in the hands of the Syrians. Despite Brezhnev's six-point plan, Moscow seems destined for the time being to stay on the sidelines of the mainstream of diplomatic activity, waiting for opportunities it might be able to exploit while seeking to promote distrust between the United States and the Arab countries.

41. There have been no significant advances in Soviet penetration elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, the gradually increasing ties between Malta and the Soviet Union will need to be carefully monitored. Libya was isolated within the Arab camp as a result of the war in Lebanon. Strains have also developed in Qadhafi's relations with Moscow over Libya's difficulties in paying for military purchases but military co-operation remains close. In spite of the efforts made by the central authority in Yugoslavia, inherent ethnic problems and a serious economic situation give rise to concern over the long-term prospects for internal stability. Any deterioration could offer openings for the Soviet Union to exploit.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-11-

N A T O   S E C R E T

-12-

C-M(82)81(Final)

42. The strength of the SOVMEDRON surface fleet was slightly enhanced during the height of the Lebanese crisis, but the principal Soviet reactions were to demonstrate moral support for Syria and maintain a high level of surveillance throughout the crisis. The submarine force level remained below average through most of the period. The Soviet Union has now replaced most of the equipment losses sustained by Syria during the Lebanese crisis. Port visits have again increased to non-NATO Mediterranean ports.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-12-

N A T O   S E C R E T

-1-

ANNEX I to  
C-M(82)81(Final)

SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION

Composition and Strength of the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron (SOVMEDRON)

1. During the period under review the normal composition of the SOVMEDRON appears to have been 9-11 surface combatants, 7 submarines and 25-30 auxiliaries. The total number of units varied between 40-50.

2. The level of average surface ship strength was below that for 1981, except for periods of concentrated surveillance activity during NATO exercises and limited augmentation during the Lebanese crisis. There was even a period at the beginning of March, when there were no destroyers or dedicated surface-to-surface missile fitted ships in this SOVMEDRON.

3. Whereas a MOSKVA class was present throughout the same period in 1981, it is noted that this year between the end of April and mid-July no ships of the MOSKVA or KIEV types were in the Mediterranean. The KIEV was involved in Northern Fleet activities until she transitted to the Black Sea, August/September; MOSKVA was preparing for her visit to West Africa and LENINGRAD was in the Black Sea.

4. The only amphibious asset in the Mediterranean between March and mid-July was a new construction ROPUCHA LST in transit to the Far East.

5. In response to the Lebanese situation there was a general movement of SOVMEDRON assets towards the Eastern Mediterranean. Whereas some combatants patrolled off the Syrian coast it was notable that major combatants maintained a presence in or very near Tartus throughout July, August and most of September. This presence included the flagship, SVERDLOV cruiser "ADMIRAL USACHOV", SVERDLOV cruiser "ZHDANOV"; and the KYNDA cruiser "GROZNIY" which, in company with a MOD KOTLIN destroyer, augmented the SOVMEDRON between mid-June and mid-September. The amphibious assets, comprising a ROPUCHA and ALLIGATOR LST, reported to have troops and equipment embarked, also stayed in or near Tartus between mid-July and the end of August. MOSKVA returned from a West African cruise in mid-July and exercised off Libya before returning to the Black Sea on 20th August. She did not approach the eastern Mediterranean but was available should the need arise for amphibious lift. The replenishment ship BEREZINA transferred to the Northern Fleet in June, after a yard period in the Black Sea, in company with the hospital ship YENISEV. They returned to the Mediterranean at the end of July and YENISEV visited Tartus for ten days in August before transferring to Bizerta where she remains.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-1-

N A T O   S E C R E T

ANNEX I to  
C-M(82)81(Final)

-2-

6. The number of diesel submarine assets tended to be lower than last year in both FOXTROT and TANGO classes. The pattern of FOXTROT refits in Tivat and maintenance periods for both FOXTROT and TANGO submarines in Tartus followed, in all cases, by a patrol before returning to the Northern Fleet, continued. At certain periods it is likely that only two submarines were available for patrol duties. The ROMEO class diesel submarine which arrived in Algeria in February under the Soviet flag is now wearing the Algerian flag.

7. A CHARLIE or ECHO class SSGN was on station throughout the period although it was noted that during July to September ECHO class SSGNs carried out very short patrols. No JULIETT SSGs have deployed to the Mediterranean during 1982. A VICTOR class SSN returned to the Northern Fleet in March without relief, and there was no SSN presence until early June when a VICTOR entered the Mediterranean and remained on patrol until mid-July. This SSN also returned to the Northern Fleet without relief.

8. The reasons for the lack of nuclear powered submarines and/or missile carrying assets is not clear. However, it is noted that the deployment of the VICTOR class SSN, and the short deployments of the ECHO class SSGNs, coincided with the augmentation of the SOVMEDRON by the KYNDA class cruiser at a time when there was an increase in US naval presence and a lack of Soviet surface assets at the height of the Lebanese crisis.

9. Transits of the Mediterranean accounted for some fluctuation in numbers, but there was some increase in auxiliary support between July and September to complement the enhanced surface combatants' strength. Not only was there the symbolic Soviet presence in and off Tartus, but the full range of Soviet surface and sub-surface assets was used for intensive surveillance activities against NATO Maritime exercises.

10. Exercise activity during the period under review was low-key, elementary in nature and, in the main, of short duration. Particular highlights included:

- (a) Live Gunnery Exercise in the Gulf of Sirte with possible ASW support by MAY aircraft deployed to Libya.
- (b) A 9-day deployment in June by a joint Soviet/Bulgarian task force for ASW exercises in the Southern Aegean/Crete area. This was the third year in succession for joint exercise activity.
- (c) ASW exercises in July by MOSKVA controlling, it is believed for the first time, a combination of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-2-

N A T O    S E C R E T

-3-

ANNEX I to  
C-M(82)81(Final)

- (d) A series of ASW exercises was conducted between 16th and 24th October in areas to the north of Libya, interspersed by visits to Tripoli. Units involved were SVERDLOV cruiser, 2 KRIVAK frigates and a PETYA class frigate. MAY ASW aircraft were active on at least two occasions and it is probable that a diesel and a nuclear submarine were also involved during the overall period. It is also believed that on 16th-17th October Libyan units may, for the first time, have carried out combined exercises with the Soviet units.

11. Survey activity was almost non-existent, but this is not unusual for the time of year as naval research activity in the Mediterranean tends to be at a low level during the summer months.

Soviet Aircraft Activity

12. Soviet naval aviation activities are still limited by lack of facilities, but there were three deployments by pairs of MAY ASW aircraft to Libya during the period. These aircraft were observed to fly up to eight hour sorties, support ASW exercises and, as previously mentioned, operate in conjunction with helicopters controlled by the MOSKVA.

13. The KIEV entered the Mediterranean 18th August and stayed in the Central area until she entered the Black Sea on 22nd September. Her short stay in the Mediterranean gave the SOVMEDRON a fixed wing capability.

Soviet visits, use of ports, shipyards and anchorages

14. Maintenance and logistic activities have continued on a routine basis in the four main anchorages: HAMMAMET, SOLLUM, KITHERA and CAPE ANDREAS.

Yugoslavia

15. The FOXTROT SS in Tivat for overhaul was replaced by another FOXTROT in May. The latter's overhaul should be completed shortly to comply with the Yugoslav rule that these yard periods not exceed six months. A BORIS CHILIKIN replenishment ship is also currently in Tivat for yard work.

16. The MOSKVA, a KRIVAK frigate, FOXTROT SS and the BORIS CHILIKIN oiler visited RIJEKA 12th-19th April. Between 5th and 15th June the Commander of the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron (COMSOVMEDRON) visited Dubrovnik aboard a SVERDLOV cruiser, accompanied by a MOD KOTLIN destroyer, a FOXTROT SS and an oiler. A naval visit to Dubrovnik was scheduled for 28th October to 2nd November. Units appeared to be transiting towards the Adriatic but turned south for the Solum anchorage. The reason for the cancellation of the visit at this time is not known.

N A T O    S E C R E T

-3-

N A T O   S E C R E T

ANNEX I. to  
C-M(82)81(Final)

-4-

Syria

17. Diesel submarine maintenance continued throughout the period and the normal submarine support vessels were present. In addition the importance the Soviets attached to a presence in the area was amply demonstrated by the quality of naval presence in Tartus and off the Syrian coast during the Lebanese crisis.

18. COMSOVMEDRON spent most of July, August and September aboard his flagship in Tartus. He also transferred his flag from ZHDANOV to AD. USHAKOV in that port. The KYNDA class cruiser which augmented the SOVMEDRON stayed in Tartus and a changing combination of destroyers, frigates, minesweepers, LSTs and auxiliaries all contributed to the visible Soviet presence in the area.

Tunisia

19. Auxiliary maintenance continued in Bizerta throughout the period. Between 16th and 23rd July a KRESTA cruiser and 2 KRIVAK frigates visited Bizerta. This was the first formal ship visit since April 1981. A further visit was made by a GRISHA and PETYA frigate between 30th August/4th September.

Libya

20. The visits to Tobruk, which commenced in October 1981, continued during the current period. The 4th formal visit was made by 2 KRIVAK frigates and a FOXTROT diesel submarine in April/May, followed by 2 MIRKA class frigates June/July and a KASHIN class guided missile destroyer accompanied by a KRIVAK frigate in September. COMSOVMEDRON arrived in Tripoli on 18th October on board a PETYA class frigate. Other associated naval vessels called at the port intermittently up to 24th October between exercise operations. It is not known whether COMSOVMEDRON stayed in Tripoli during the whole period.

Malta

21. No reports concerning use of yard facilities or port calls by Soviet naval or merchant vessels were received during the period.

Merchant ships

22. Six merchant ships have been, or are currently, in Mediterranean ports for yard work. The practice of using non-aligned or Western ports seems to be established and may be expected to continue.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-4-



N A T O   S E C R E T

-5-

ANNEX I to  
C-M(82)81(Final)Use of Suez Canal

23. Apart from some exports, most of the transfers were relief ships on a one-for-one basis and the level of transits appeared to be normal.

Montreux Convention

24. The Soviets continue to use "contingency declarations", often only partially honoured, which allows them to deploy in an emergency.

25. One TANGO and one FOXTROT SS entered the Mediterranean from the Black Sea during the period. The latter, presumed to have arrived in the Black Sea via the Inland Waterways, is currently in Tivat for overhaul.

Soviet and Warsaw Pact arms deliveries

26. The Soviets delivered replacement equipment to Syria during July, August and September to cover most of the losses sustained in Lebanon. Deliveries were made by sea and air, the latter deliveries including almost 100 recorded flights by Soviet heavy transports. Libya also delivered some of its Soviet origin equipment to Syria.

27. Medium transports from Warsaw Pact countries continue deliveries by air to Libya and Algeria at above average rates.

Assessment

28. During the early portion of the period the SOVMEDRON carried out routine exercises, surveillance, visits and maintenance in accordance with established patterns. It would appear that at the time of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon the Soviet Navy's commitments were such that COMSOVMEDRON had to rely upon in-place surface assets until late July. Nuclear submarine support was provided by a single unit and, in the case of the ECHO II SSGNs, of short duration.

29. It is assessed that the general move of major combatants, including the flagship, to Tartus demonstrated the Soviets' desire to show their concern and provide moral support for Syria. COMSOVMEDRON's use of a wide range of surface units for surveillance and patrol tasks ensured that all aspects of the conflict were fully monitored.

30. The number of arms deliveries by air to Syria would indicate a degree of replacement for equipment losses sustained during the Lebanese crisis. However, the size of the airlift was much smaller than those of 1967 and 1973. The almost total replacement of equipment losses would indicate the Soviet intention to continue to give moral support to Syria.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-5-

N A T O   S E C R E T

ANNEX I to  
C-M(82)81(Final)

-6-

31. The continued ship visits and deployments of MAY ASW aircraft to Libya, as well as the recent joint exercise, indicate a continuing close military operation.

32. It is too early to make an assessment regarding the importance of the two ship visits to Tunisia.

33. At the end of the period SOVMEDRON had returned to pre-Lebanon levels and resumed normal exercise, surveillance and maintenance practices.

N A T O   S E C R E T

-6-

N A T O   S E C R E T

-1-

ANNEX II to  
C-M(82)81 (Final)

AVERAGE COMPOSITION OF SOVMEDRON

	<u>MAR 81</u> <u>AUG 81</u>	<u>SEP 81</u> <u>FEB 82</u>	<u>MAR 82</u> <u>AUG 82</u>
<u>Submarines</u>			
Cruiser missile, nuclear	1	1-2	1
Cruise missile, diesel	1	0	0
Attack, nuclear	1	1-0	1-0
Attack, diesel	6	7	6*
Submarine Total -	9	9	6
<u>Surface Combatants</u>			
H/C cruisers	1	1	1-0
Missile cruisers	1	1	1-2
Light cruisers	0	0	1
Destroyers	3	4-5	1-3
Missile Frigates	1	1-2	3-4
Frigates	3	2-1	3-2
Minesweepers	2	2	1-2
Amphib. ships	0	0	0-2
Combatants Total -	11	9-12	11-16
Intelligence Collectors	2	2-3	2-3
Survey Ships	4	4	3-7
Auxiliaries	22	18-23	17-20
Auxiliary Total -	28	24-31	22-30
Grand Total -	48	45-50	40-50

\* 1 ROMEO class in Algeria

N A T O   S E C R E T

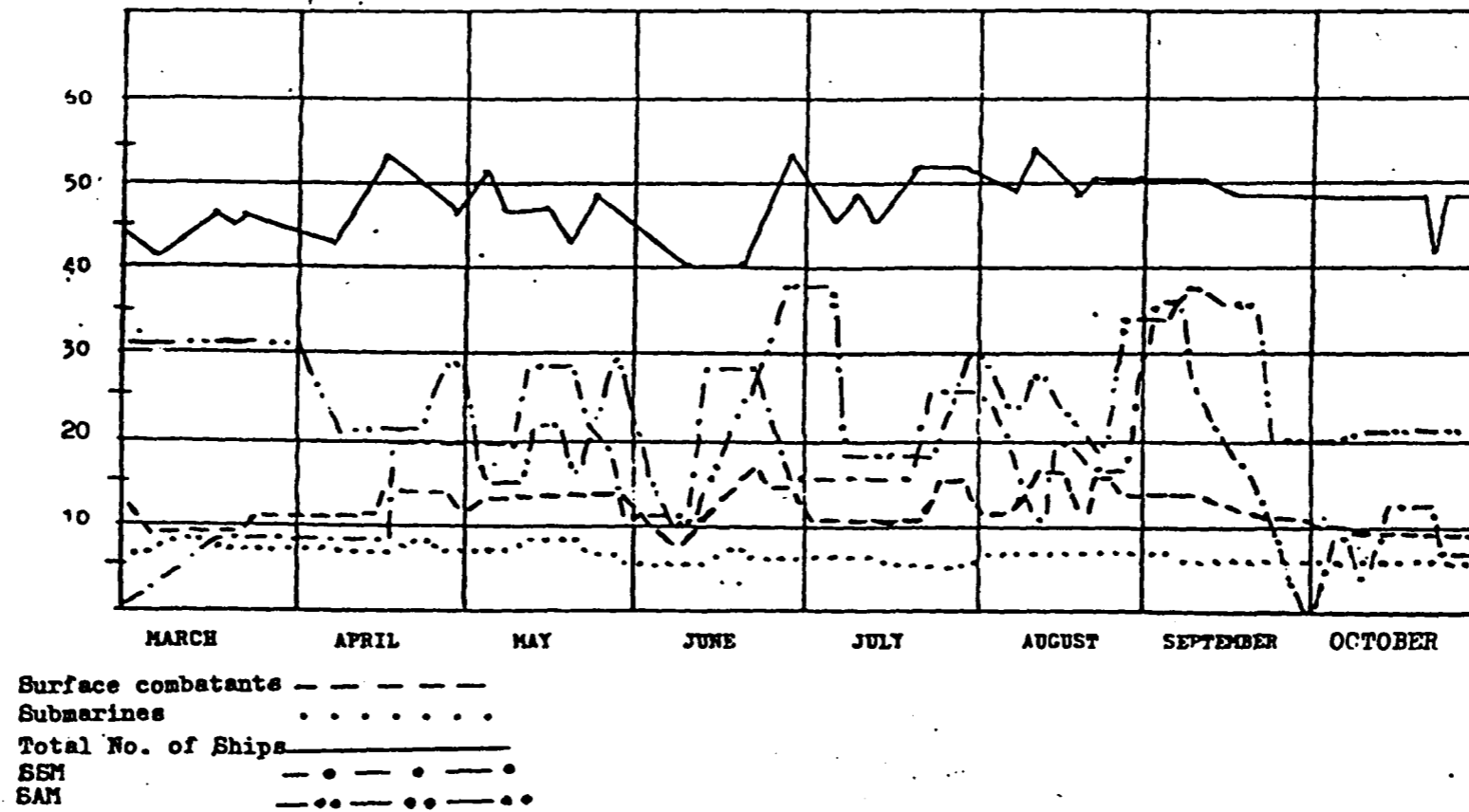
-1-

N A T O   S E C R E T

ANNEX III to  
C-M(82)81(Final)

SOVMEDRON COMPOSITION

MARCH 1982 - OCTOBER 1982



N A T O   S E C R E T