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Report, Ministry of State Security (Stasi), 'About Results of Intelligence Activities to Note Indicators for a Surprise Nuclear Missile Attack'

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About results of intelligence activities to note indicators for a sudden nuclear missile attack (March 1988)

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In context of aggravation of the situation in Central America, since early March worrisome elements were noted in activities by the military-political leadership of the U.S. They were comparable to indicators for gestation of a crisis situation.

Effective March 4, travel by U.S. citizens to Panama was banned by special order from the U.S. Department of State. On March 10, 15, and 16 extraordinary meetings of the National Security Council were held. A 24-hour working schedule was introduced for the inter-agency group for Central America of the National Security Council, as well as for individual units of the Departments of Defense and State. The political decision by President Reagan in the night from March 16 to 17 to send American forces to Honduras was made under heightened security. In the U.S. Embassy in Managua diplomatic personnel and its family members were instructed about conduct in crisis situations and in case of potential evacuation.

At the NATO Council meeting held on the highest levels in Brussels in early March, most important guidelines got reaffirmed pertaining to the "flexible response" strategy, which stipulates use of nuclear weapons in case of war in Europe. Discussed were plans to modernize tactical nuclear weapons before the background of the upcoming elimination of medium- and short-range missiles. Notable was a high intensity of NATO forces' operative and combat training. During strategic command staff exercises "Crested Eagle" in Central Europe and "Dense Crop" at the bloc's Southern flank, the rapid transition from peacetimes to war mode was trained, as well as the forces' actual reinforcement through units relocated from the U.S., Canada, and France. Noted was movement by American ballistic medium-range missiles "Pershing 2" and West German operative-tactical missiles "Pershing 1A" into their launching areas.

A regular review of combat readiness of Allied NATO Forces ("Active Age") took place, whereby just on the territory of the FRG about 156,000 military personnel was on alert. During exercise "Airex" held by the French Air Force, problems were simulated pertaining to the use of French nuclear weapons in the interest of NATO.

During the course of March, major relocation of forces from the U.S. to the Far East to participate in joint American-South Korean maneuvers "Team Spirit" was registered. Strategic B-52 bombers were included in this exercise.

Measures were implemented to improve production of conventional weapons in the U.S. military-industrial complex. The Pentagon defined the most promising programs in conventional arms development in order to achieve superiority over Warsaw Treaty states. Research and development is supposed to be focused on those.

U.S. strategic oil reserves were replenished as planned and reached 543 million barrel until the end of March. The Senate Committee for Energy and Mineral Resources approved a law allowing American corporations to further geological research and exploitation of oil and gas deposits on the country's' territory. It is expected to reduce this way dependence on oil exports.

In a couple of Western states further measures are taken to explain to the population methods of protection against weapons of mass destruction. FEMA distributed in mass circulation a brochure with recommendations on how to react to alarm signals as well as on methods of protection in case of a nuclear explosion. The FRG Ministry of Interior has launched a campaign to inform the population about the tasks of civil defense.

The U.S. government has commissioned the industry to develop until 1990 a nationwide population alert system. It is supposed to function based on telephone networks, and to operate as a reserve communication channel between the country's leadership and local government agencies.

The U.S. military-political leadership has commissioned the intelligence community with the priority task of an "effective and reliable control of Soviet compliance with disarmament agreements". In Congress, there are debates about a long-term program to modernize national technological capacities to monitor compliance of provisions of the INF Treaty between the USSR and the U.S., as well as of the potential agreement about halving strategic offensive weapons. At the same time, additional measures are taken regarding counterintelligence security for American objects subject to inspections according to the treaty mentioned above.

Therefore, the worrisome actions by the highest U.S. political leadership in March were essentially related to the actual aggravation of the military-political situation in Central America.

The intense character of regular operative and combat training of NATO forces enabled the bloc's leadership to maintain military command bodies and a large troop contingent in heightened combat readiness for the entire month in all European theaters of war - what is usually the case during the fall maneuver series "Autumn Forge".

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