

A Watchful Eye Behind The Iron Curtain:
The U.S. Military Liaison Mission In East Germany, 1953-61.

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Abstract

Throughout the Cold War Western decision-makers, scholars, and other observers feared the outbreak of a superpower conflict in Europe – particularly in Germany. A ground of fierce superpower competition, disposition of vast Western and Soviet forces, and fault line of an apparently impenetrable Iron Curtain, Germany was perceived by contemporaries as the textbook setting for a shattering war by surprise or miscalculation. This paper demonstrates that at least part of the reason why sparks in the European “tinderbox” never exploded into a real conflict can be attributed to the existence of an important crisis-control mechanism, the bilateral Military Liaison Missions (MLMs) between Western Allied forces and the Soviet army in Germany. I draw upon formerly unavailable documents on the U.S. MLM to detail how this little-known mechanism fostered transparency and mitigated rising conflict in that vital region during the tense period of 1953-61.

Key Abbreviations Used in the Text:

AA	Anti-Aircraft (e.g., equipment)
ACC	Allied Control Council for Germany
ACDA	Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
BOB	CIA's Berlin Operations Base
BRIXMIS	British Military Liaison Mission
CBMs	Confidence-building measures
CBR	Chemical, Biological, and Radiological (e.g., material, warfare)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CINC	Commander in Chief
COMINT	Communications Intelligence
CPX	Command Post Exercise
CUSMLM	Chief of U.S. Military Liaison Mission
DCSI	Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (e.g., at USAREUR)
EAC	European Advisory Commission
EGA	East German Army
EGAF	East German Air Force
ELINT	Electronic Intelligence
FMLM	French Military Liaison Mission
GSFG	Group of Soviet Forces, Germany
GSOFG	Group of Soviet Occupation Forces, Germany
HQ	Headquarters
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MLMs	Military Liaison Missions
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OOB	Order of Battle
OSIA	On-Site Inspection Agency
POL	Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricants
PRA	Permanently Restricted Area
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (Chief of NATO), also USCINCEUR
SAM	Surface-to-air (e.g., missiles)
SERB	Soviet External Relations Bureau
SMLM	Soviet Military Liaison Mission, Frankfurt
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
TRA	Temporary Restricted Area
USAREUR	U.S. Army, Europe
USCINCEUR	See SACEUR
USEUCOM	U.S. European Command (same as EUCOM)
USFET	U.S. Forces, European Theater
USMLM	U.S. Military Liaison Mission, Potsdam
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	Warsaw Treaty Organization (Warsaw Pact)

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Introduction:

United States Military Liaison Mission as Crisis-Prevention Mechanism

“[T]hese Missions in East [Germany] are actually the ‘watchful eye’ of the Western Forces behind the Iron Curtain.”¹

The scenario most feared by Cold War policy-makers was the outbreak of a major superpower conflict in Germany. The vital political significance of Germany combined with the permanent deployment of vast Soviet and Western forces there suggested the location and means for an East-West confrontation with the potential to escalate into a devastating intercontinental war.² In the late 1940s and early 1950s, before the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) stationed nuclear weapons in Europe, there was considerable concern in the West about an all-out attack by the significantly larger Soviet Forces in Germany – the central element of Soviet military power. After the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons into NATO and into the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) by the late 1950s, the stakes were raised further.³ These technological developments were compounded by deteriorating U.S.-Soviet relations at the political level culminating in the Berlin Wall crisis in 1961 and the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962. Although the threat of an open U.S.-Soviet conflict in Germany persisted throughout the Cold War, it was never more real than during the 1950s and early 1960s. Given all the

¹ USMLM Report, February 1960, 18 (RG 319/631/35/42/1-2 Records of the Army Staff, G-2, Box 996).

² Thomas W. Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 159; Author’s interview with General John Shalikashvili (deputy CINC USAREUR 1989-91, CINC EUCOM and NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, 1992-3); Alexander L. George, David M. Bernstein, Gregory S. Parnell, and J. Phillip Rogers. “Inadvertent War in Europe: Crisis Simulation.” *A Special Report of the Center for International Security and Arms Control*, Stanford: Stanford U-Press, 1985, 1; William Ury, Beyond the Hotline, Houghton Mifflin: Boston, Mass., 1985, 36; Alexander George, “US-Soviet efforts to Cooperate in Crisis Management and Crisis Avoidance”, in A. George, Philip J. Farley, and Alexander Dallin, U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation, New York, NY: Oxford U-Press, 587; Farley, “Managing the Risks of Cooperation,” in George et al, U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation, 680. As General Shalikashvili put it, “If World War III had broken out [at any point during the Cold War], it would have broken out in Germany [because that is where] the two strongest armies [were stationed]... All U.S. and NATO military planners knew where the battles were going to occur. The battle would have been in a relatively narrow part of Germany, the north German plains, and it would have been a race for Germany’s ports because our survivability depended on our ability to bring in supplies by ships.” (Author’s interview with General Shalikashvili).

³ Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 147; Kurt Gottfried and Bruce G. Blair, Crisis Stability and Nuclear War, New York, NY: Oxford U-Press, 1988, 227. Scholars Gottfried and Blair stressed that “the intermingling of conventional and nuclear forces on both sides implies that once fighting starts there would be a serious risk of escalation to nuclear conflict.”

preconditions for conflict, many scholars have in hindsight puzzled over the reason why war never actually broke out during that incredibly tense period.

In this paper I demonstrate that part of the reason why sparks in the European tinderbox never exploded into a real conflict can be attributed to a concrete crisis-control mechanism composed of a system of bilateral Military Liaison Missions (MLMs): one U.S.-Soviet, another British-Soviet, and the third French-Soviet – the first being most important. Although the MLMs remained generally unknown to the Western public, they played a vital – and, thus far, greatly underappreciated – role in mitigating rising conflict in Germany throughout the Cold War. Never was this effect more pronounced than during the crisis-ridden period of the Eisenhower presidency, on which I focus.

Below is a discussion of existing literature on war and crisis prevention in Cold War Europe, which will provide a context for my analysis of the Military Liaison Missions. This is followed by a sketch of the literature that exists specifically on the MLMs. In closing, I explain my contribution in this field, my sources, and the structure of this work.

Review of Literature on Crisis Prevention during the Cold War

Superpower confrontation in Europe inspired a wealth of scholarly literature on war and crisis prevention, particularly after the added nuclear dimension.⁴ Although most of these analytical works stem from the 1980s, the fundamental issues they address apply just as much to the period under study here.

The literature generally distinguishes three non-exclusive approaches to Cold War crisis and war prevention: first, improvement in superpower communication, second, enhancements in mutual intelligence sharing, and third, generation of confidence-building measures (CBMs).⁵ The literature is primarily prescriptive. It proposes the three methods in response to a perceived *absence* of effective superpower cooperation in crisis-prevention. As I later show, unbeknownst to these authors, the MLMs presented an

⁴ Lynn E. Davis, a scholar of crisis management, articulated this dominant view in the field that the reason “we care about managing crises... is that we worry that crises between states that have nuclear weapons might get out of control and lead to nuclear war. Actually, before nuclear weapons, states did not care as much about managing crises.” (Lynn E. Davis, “Protocols for Signaling and Communication during a Crisis,” in Eds. Hillard Roderick with Ulla Magnusson, *Avoiding Inadvertent War: Crisis Management*, The Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, U. of Texas Press: Austin, TX, 1983, 107).

⁵ Gottfried and Blair, *Crisis Stability*, 260.

effective crisis-prevention mechanism that fulfilled the conditions they envisaged on all three counts.

I. Communication as a crisis-prevention mechanism

Scholars like Lynn E. Davis, Gottfried and Blair, William Hilsman, William L. Ury, and Barry M. Blechman advocated superpower communication as a mechanism to dispel fears or misunderstandings that could lead to a superpower crisis or even war. Davis advocated improved communication between U.S. and Soviet governments because “in a developing crisis... certain kinds of actions [like] the movement of military forces [in a] crisis area [were] open to misunderstanding,” and because exchange of information was a useful tool to dispel these negative misperceptions and to diffuse potential crises.⁶ Ury closely followed Davis’ line of reasoning. He stressed the need for U.S. and Soviet leaders to utilize communication to “reduce uncertainty” and “expectations of hostile action.”⁷ If the authors perceived superpower communication to be inadequate at the time of their writing in the 1980s, many years after the establishment of the “Hotline” in 1963, one can only imagine how much more acute the problem would have seemed to them with regard to the pre-“Hotline” Eisenhower era.

Gottfried and Blair built on Davis’ and Ury’s analyses. Instead of focusing on communication at the leadership level alone, they advocated expanding connectivity at levels below the top leadership. They argued that in Europe, where “the magnitude of the stakes [and] the proximity and lethality of... forces” amassed on either side of the East-West German border “allow little time for diplomacy should shooting ever begin,” there had to be communication between local U.S. and Soviet representatives.⁸ Local representatives could connect more quickly and effectively than national leaders who were half a world away from the events on the ground and from each other. Blechman, even more specifically than Gottfried and Blair, articulated the need for communication between the U.S. and Soviet *military* forces in Europe.⁹ This realization also came out of

⁶ Davis, “Protocols,” in Roderick, *Avoiding Inadvertent War*, 110; Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, NJ, 1976, *passim*.

⁷ William Ury, “Strategies for Nuclear Crisis Control,” in Roderick, *Avoiding Inadvertent War*, 135.

⁸ Gottfried and Blair, *Crisis Stability*, 227, 260.

⁹ Barry M. Blechman, “Efforts to Reduce the Risk of Accidental or Inadvertent War,” in George et al, *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 469, 471.

a discussion between Hilsman and Ury recorded at a 1983 conference on methods of preventing inadvertent war.

-*William L. Ury*: "... How good is our ability to communicate with the [Soviet] side? You mentioned the Hotline. Is the Hotline all that we're relying on? In times of crisis, wouldn't we want to be able to communicate at all levels, not just at the highest level, with the Soviet Union? There may be a need to communication *between the forces* in order to disentangle themselves." [emphasis added]

-*William Hilsman*: "Well, obviously, we have embassy communications which come down one level below the Hotline... But as regards our ability really to communicate at the division commander level, or at the corps commander level, there is probably no way to do that, because the systems don't extend that way."¹⁰

II. Intelligence as a crisis-prevention mechanism

Many Western scholars who advocated broadening communication between superpowers as a means of crisis prevention also underlined the need for accurate and timely intelligence about the adversary, especially one as secretive as the Soviet Union. The idea was that transparency could mitigate the chances of war by surprise or misunderstanding. Philip J. Farley stressed the inherent danger associated with "uncertainty regarding the size and character and disposition of opposing [Soviet] forces" in Europe, namely that it left the West potentially vulnerable to surprise attack.¹¹ Lynn Davis and Ernest May also highlighted the inadequacy of intelligence on both sides and its unwelcome effects of fostering mutual paranoia about surprise attack and increasing the chances of war as a result of misunderstanding.¹² William Ury elaborated on Davis and May suggesting specific intelligence items that each side needed to know about the other: the level of the opponent's military mobilization, locations of his deployed forces, direction of his troop movements, the nature of his intentions, and his military doctrine

¹⁰ Discussion of Hilsman's presentation, in Roderick, *Avoiding Inadvertent War*, 57-58. The conference where this discussion was recorded was entitled "Avoiding Inadvertent War" and took place at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas, in February 1983.

¹¹ Farley, "Managing the Risks," in George et al, *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 688.

¹² Davis, "Protocols," in Roderick, *Avoiding Inadvertent War*, 109; Ernest May, ed. *Knowing One's Enemies*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton U-Press, 1984, 4.

and tactics.¹³ For all these scholars, intelligence was not a substitute for communication between adversaries but rather a confirmation thereof and an additional safety-catch against a possible escalation into war.¹⁴

III. CBM regime as a crisis-prevention mechanism

Although the term confidence-building measures (CBMs) is of 1980s coinage and unknown to contemporaries of the Eisenhower period, it is discussed here for the clear definition it gives to a mechanism that already existed at this time and that reduced uncertainties and furnished reassurance.¹⁵ Alexander George, a pioneer of CBM-related literature, distinguished confidence-building as a method of crisis prevention by virtue of its comprehensive nature. CBM was not just a form of cooperation in communication and intelligence-sharing but all these elements combined, and more. It formalized cooperation in communication and intelligence-sharing into a standing “regime” where a tacit and verbalized set of norms delineated acceptable rules of behavior and where breach thereof could provide each side with a clearer indication of the other’s intent than either communication or intelligence could separately.¹⁶

George argued that despite its extremely intrusive nature, a CBM-type “regime” should be acceptable to the superpowers because it was “not... an end in itself” but rather “a means” to improving security in “crisis arenas.”¹⁷ Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin supported this notion by showing that the superpowers had a common incentive

¹³ Ury, *Hotline*, 37-8.

¹⁴ Ury, in Roderick, *Avoiding Inadvertent War*, 135; Davis, 110, in Roderick, *Avoiding Inadvertent War*. A large body of literature exists on the problems associated with an adversary’s concealment and deception tactics. Lynn Davis, in her piece, provides a succinct summary of the argument. She writes: “even if a common interest were to exist in managing the crisis, the United States and the Soviet Union would both have strong incentives to keep many of their activities secret, particularly those involving their military forces... Even for unintended events, information could compromise the objectives or locations of other military forces. Moreover, there would always be the question of whether to believe the information provided by the other side” (Davis, in Roderick, 110).

¹⁵ Krause, Joachim. “Prospects for Conventional Arms Control in Europe.” *Occasional Paper, Institute for East-West Studies*. Westview Press: Boulder, CO, 1988, 43.

¹⁶ George, “Research Objectives and Methods,” in George et al, *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 13; George, “Crisis Management & Avoidance,” in George et al, *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 593, 581; Gottfried and Blair, *Crisis Stability*, 300.

¹⁷ George, “Research,” in George et al, *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 3; George, “US-Soviet Efforts to Cooperate,” in George et al, 585; Gottfried and Blair, *Crisis Stability*, 309.

to cooperate because both desired to avoid war.¹⁸ Gottfried and Blair argued that this was particularly true of superpower interaction in Europe where both superpowers had vital political and military considerations at stake.¹⁹ Finally, as with his comments on the role of communication in crisis prevention, Philip Farley expressed the idea that to be meaningful CBMs had to be “incorporated in the operational structure of armed forces” rather than affecting the top levels of government alone.²⁰

Review of Literature on the Military Liaison Missions

Unknown to most of the authors who prescribed low-level communication, intelligence-gathering, and CBMs as a means to prevent the outbreak or escalation of major crises between the superpowers in Europe, a mechanism actually existed throughout the Cold War that fulfilled all their criteria and served to lower temperatures in this most inflammable region. This mechanism was comprised of a bilateral exchange of three Military Liaison Missions (MLMs) between the Soviet and Western Allied forces in West Germany and served as a communication channel, intelligence collector, and ultimately CBM throughout its period of operation, 1947-1990. The most important of the three was the U.S.-Soviet arrangement comprised of the U.S. and Soviet missions, USMLM and SMLM for short.

Very little literature exists today on the MLM mechanism. The MLMs have been almost completely overlooked by authoritative works in Cold War history, and there is very little knowledge of their existence outside of government circles. In retrospect, this is somewhat understandable given the fact that publicity about the mechanism’s existence was positively discouraged throughout the Cold War. Former officers with USMLM “for a long time... could not tell people where [they] worked,” and there may have been collaboration between the government and the press to minimize open media coverage.²¹

¹⁸ Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin, Strategy and Arms Control, 1961, cited in Kurt Campbell, “The Soldier’s Summit,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 75, Summer 1989, 77-8.

¹⁹ Gottfried and Blair, Crisis Stability, 309. George argued that despite the likely temptation to exploit a crisis situation to their advantage, leaders on both sides ultimately tend to hold back because they understand that their actions could trigger an unwanted major escalation.

²⁰ Philip J. Farley, “Arms Control and US-Soviet Security Cooperation,” in George et al, U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation, 626.

²¹ Author’s interview with Lt. Col. Bennett McCutcheon (USMLM officer, 1985-88); Author’s conversation with Lewis Franklin, Stanford University, 14 May 2004.

Only occasionally did news about the Missions escape into the public domain, generally after major incidents; as a result, most people who had ever heard about the MLMs remember them in the context of the tragic 1985 death of USMLM member Major Arthur Nicholson, rather than for their substantial contribution as a communication and intelligence channel and as a CBM.²² Now that over a decade has passed since the Berlin Wall came down and the Missions were dissolved, there is no further reason to keep a veil of secrecy over this significant organization.

The five major works that do exist on the Missions are far from exhaustive. Two come from former USMLM participants, Paul Skowronek and John Fahey, and three from researchers Dorothee Mussgnug, Tony Geraghty, and Timothy Seman.²³ Between them, none offer a concise, systematic account of the work and contribution of the bilateral MLMs or even just the U.S. component. USMLM veterans Skowronek and Fahey recall a number of fascinating stories about the U.S. Mission's experience in East Germany, but tell little about USMLM's core activity and chief contribution: intelligence-gathering. Fahey's account, as conveyed by its sensationalist title (Licensed to Spy) is an anecdotal personal memoir that does more to address the question of *how* rather than *what* intelligence was gathered and in response to what requirements. The book leaves unexplored the broader value of the USMLM mechanism. Skowronek's piece is more methodical than Fahey's, offers useful historical background on the Missions' creation, and even includes some reflections on the MLMs' contribution in the larger scheme of U.S.-Soviet relations. However these reflections are limited to generalized statements that make very little reference to specific evidence and almost border on the tautological. In Skowronek's defense, he was writing in 1975 with the Cold War still in full swing, and his freedom to disclose details on what was a sensitive U.S. intelligence mechanism was likely restricted. Today, with the Cold War over and

²² Campbell, "Soldier's Summit," 82.

²³ John A. Fahey, "Licensed to Spy," Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, MD, 2002; Paul G. Skowronek, "U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany, Since 1947," *PhD Dissertation*, University of Colorado, CO, 1975; Dorothee Mussgnug, Alliierte Militaermissionen in Deutschland, 1946-1990, Berlin, Germany: Duncker & Humblot, 2001; Tony Geraghty, Brixmis: The Untold Story of Britain's most daring Cold War Spy Mission. London, UK: Harper Collins, 1996; Timothy A. Seman, "Cold War Intelligence: The United States Military Liaison Mission in East Germany 1947-1990," *M.A. Dissertation*, The American University, Washington, D.C., 1994.

sources becoming more available, researchers should have every incentive to reveal a more inclusive story.

The three scholarly works add substantially to Fahey's and Skowronek's discussions of the MLMs. Mussnug provides some important documentation of the Mission's origins in the wartime period, Geraghty offers an insight into the Missions' operational details, while Seman traces the Missions' role as an early prototype for superpower arms control mechanisms. The problem, however, is that these accounts again skirt the details of the Mission's contribution. They each agree that it was an exceptionally valuable mechanism, but none make an argument or give evidence for the specific way in which its value came to bear. None explicitly answer the question that had supposedly led them to write about the Missions in the first place: What was the Missions' significance for the security environment in Cold War Europe? Mussnug's piece, although full of useful details, does more to overwhelm the reader with facts than to provide a unifying narrative on the Mission's work. Geraghty sheds some light on the MLM contribution in crisis periods, particularly during the Berlin Wall crisis, but, on the whole, focuses on personal accounts and operational details of the Missions' daily activities. Seman comes closest to addressing the question of the U.S. Mission's significance. Disappointingly, however, he picks up this vital question only in the last pages of his dissertation, and even there his appraisal of the Mission's value is more conceptual than evidence-based.

Besides these, few works exist that have any bearing to the MLMs. Two journal articles, by Thomas Lough and Kurt Campbell, and passing references in books on other genres comprise the entire literature set. Lough, from his position as an officer with the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, introduces the notion of the Missions' contribution to an implicit arms control regime in Europe. Peter Wyden and David E. Murphy, authors of works on the Berlin crises and Cold War intelligences services, offer a few passing insights on the Mission's role during the Berlin Wall crisis.²⁴

²⁴ Thomas S. Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.11, No. 2 (Jun 1967), 258-261; Campbell, "The Soldier's Summit," *Foreign Policy*, 76-91. The literature with references to the MLMs includes Peter Wyden's, *Wall*, New York, NY: Simon and Shuster, 1989; David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev, and George Bailey, "Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War," New Haven, CT: Yale U-Press, 1997; Klaus Eichner and Andreas Dobbert, Headquarters Germany: Die USA Geheimdienste in Deutschland, Berlin, Germany: Das Neue Berlin-Verlag Ost, 2001.

If present literature on the MLMs lacks a compelling answer to the critical question of the Missions' significance, the main reason does not seem to be neglect, for all authors stress the importance of the MLMs. The reason, rather, is lack of documentation. Researchers had no access to most classified documents on the subject, while MLM veterans may have been reluctant to divulge the most interesting information because of its sensitivity.

My Contribution and Sources

This work is not meant to provide the final definitive answer on the significance of the Missions during the Cold War in its entirety. This challenge remains to be addressed by future research.²⁵ Instead, my effort to prove the significance of the Mission mechanism is narrowed to a much more manageable analysis of the U.S. Mission (USMLM) under the two Eisenhower administrations (1953-61). The reasons for this particular approach are both a lack of documentation on the Soviet side and the special interest that the crisis-ridden period of the 1950s and early 1960s presents for a study of a possible crisis-prevention mechanism. I recognize, of course, the inherent problem in addressing only the U.S. side of the bilateral MLM arrangement, but believe that the study of one side too can serve an important purpose in shedding light on the value of this mechanism. Although the task of telling the full Soviet story remains a quest for future researchers, evidence available on the U.S. side permits certain important conclusions to be drawn about the bilateral mechanism as a whole.

I have not managed – nor, did I expect – to find evidence documenting the Mission's single-handed role in saving the world from Armageddon. Instead, I detail its tangible *contribution* to making U.S.-Soviet military relations in Europe more transparent and more conducive to preventing major crises and war. I bring to my analysis two kinds of original documents that have not been included in any previous studies and that I believe, more than any other evidence, affirms my case for USMLM's significance. The first is a collection of original USMLM reports, which I recently declassified through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The second is a set of State Department and White

²⁵ In this sense, Mussgnug's and other authors' warning holds true: "given all the currently limited availability of materials, it would be impossible to write a comprehensive history of the Missions at this time" (Mussgnug 11)

House documents that had already been declassified by the National Security Archive and was apparently overlooked by past researchers.

I draw heavily on both sets of sources to provide what is ultimately a three-tiered answer to the question of USMLM's value. First, a close analysis of the USMLM reports traces the extent to which the Missions' work fulfilled critical U.S. policy requirements with regard to East Germany. NATO and U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) requirements lists, which I reconstruct, demonstrate that USMLM's work satisfied all the critical policy needs. Second, direct assessments of the Mission's work by key contemporary policy-makers provide an even stronger affirmation of the Mission's importance, as roughly "90 percent of timely, accurate information" on the Soviet forces in Germany was believed to come from the Missions.²⁶ I conclude with a third criterion of significance, namely USMLM's overall value to the European security environment. I demonstrate that even more important than the Mission's intelligence contribution to Western decision-making was its function as a vital confidence-building measure (CBM) that had built-in incentives on both sides to refrain from provocative actions and to maintain a peaceful and crisis-free status quo.

Theorists of crisis-prevention, who pushed for a mechanism of intelligence collection, communication, and confidence-building between the vast Soviet and U.S. militaries in Europe, might have been surprised to know that just such an arrangement existed and thrived for the duration of the Cold War. What is striking, in retrospect, is that scholars were able to anticipate a mechanism without suspecting it existed, and that their works provide a strong framework for an analysis of its functions and ultimate value.

Roadmap

My examination of the USMLM will be organized in three main chapters.

The first chapter is devoted to explaining the emergence of the MLM system in the post-Second World War period and its original purpose as intended by its creators. I rely primarily on existing literature to document the manner in which the history of U.S.-

²⁶ Secret cable to Secretary of State from General Hodes, CINC USAREUR, "Importance of Huebner-Malinin Agreement," 20 June 1958 (Digital National Security Archive, BC00136).

Soviet wartime cooperation coupled with expectations of deteriorating relations after the war created a political environment conducive to the launch of the American and Soviet Missions in the spring of 1947.

Chapter Two briefly traces an important shift in USMLM's orientation in the early 1950s from its original primary role as a liaison channel to a new role as intelligence-collector, in response to changing political exigencies of the time. The chapter also begins the discussion of the Mission's work and significance in the first Eisenhower administration. For evidence I draw primarily on a collection of newly declassified "Voucher" reports, which, as I later explain, are almost certainly USMLM documents under a different name. I deduce the notable importance of USMLM's work by showing that its observations on the disposition, force, training, and equipment of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) almost exactly matched the main intelligence requirements at NATO and USAREUR and that its intelligence on Soviet military in East Germany came in the context of relatively few other sources.

Chapter Three examines the significance of USMLM during the second Eisenhower administration. It follows a similar model as the previous chapter in pitting the work of USMLM against high-level intelligence requirements and showing how well the Mission met key intelligence needs. This time, the reports I use are explicitly USMLM documents. As in the previous chapter, I again detail some evolution in the Mission's operations that made it as yet more sophisticated intelligence collector, in response to increased Soviet restrictions on its travel and growing intelligence needs in the wake of the mounting Berlin crisis.

The Conclusion brings together the various aspects of USMLM's work and significance. The chapter opens with a discussion of USMLM's contribution during the Cold War. First, it discusses the high appraisal of USMLM's work by key contemporary U.S. decision-makers or agencies and that this high appraisal stemmed primarily from the Mission's formidable immediate intelligence take. During the period under study 90 percent of all intelligence on Soviet forces in East Germany came from the MLMs and 70 percent from USMLM alone.²⁷ Next, it steps back for a retrospective assessment of the

²⁷ Secret cable to Secretary of State from General Hodes, CINCUSAREUR, "Importance of Huebner-Malinin Agreement," 20 June 1958 (Digital National Security Archive, BC00136).

Mission's contribution and concludes that even more important than its role as an intelligence collector was its role as a CBM. The chapter closes with reflections on the Mission's significance in the post-Cold War world. It demonstrates the Mission's role as a model and resource for on-site inspections that are part of present-day U.S.-Russian arms control agreements and provides policy-relevant prescriptions on the use of the remarkable MLM mechanism in contemporary situations.

Chapter 1: Origins of the Mission

The Military Liaison Missions (MLMs) in postwar Germany were a little-known but vital arrangement that acted as a critical crisis-control mechanism during the most confrontational Cold War years. My focus in this work is on the U.S. component of the bilateral U.S.-Soviet MLM arrangement, the United States Military Liaison Mission (USMLM). This chapter introduces USMLM's origins and intended purpose and sets the context for my main discussion of its important operations in later chapters. The evidence for this discussion is mostly drawn from works of other researchers. Some insights on the Soviet side are provided along the way, although these are limited due to the present inaccessibility of relevant Soviet documentation.

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first gives a brief introduction to the organizational features of USMLM. Since there are competing explanations of the functions the Mission was designed to serve, I present the most "neutral" facts taken directly out of its founding document. The second details the historical origins of the MLMs as a concept in Allied wartime agreements. The third and final section discusses how, in the postwar period, the idea of U.S.-Soviet MLMs was actually implemented into a concrete mechanism, and what purpose its creators likely had in mind for it originally.

Organizational Features of the MLMs:

The Huebner-Malinin Agreement, named after signatories Lieutenant-General Clarence R. Huebner and Colonel-General Mikhail S. Malinin – the respective deputy commanders-in-chief (CINCs) of American and Soviet forces in Germany – was signed on 5 April 1947 and created the USMLM and its Soviet counterpart (SMLM).²⁸ This U.S.-Soviet understanding became the most important of three bilateral exchanges, the other two being the analogous Soviets-British and Soviets-French arrangements.²⁹

²⁸ See Appendix for Huebner-Malinin Agreement.

²⁹ Thomas S. Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," 258. The British and French counterparts to GSFG were British Forces of the Rhine (BAOR) and the French Forces in Germany. BRIXMIS-SOXMIS were the names of the British and Soviet teams, FMLM-SMLM were the names of the French and Soviet teams.

The Huebner-Malinin Agreement delimited the organizational and functional features of the U.S.-Soviet Missions. The Military Missions were composed of 14 officers on each side, representing army, navy and air force branches, under the command of a Chief of the Mission.³⁰ They were accommodated in each other's respective zones in Germany close to the headquarters of the army to which they were accredited (Potsdam in the East for Americans, Frankfurt/Main in West Germany for Soviets).³¹ According to Clause 14 of the Agreement, the principal purpose of the U.S.-Soviet Missions was to maintain inter-zonal "liaison" – or communication – between the commanders-in-chief of the U.S. and Soviet occupying forces in Germany, U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), later U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR), and the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany (GSFG). A secondary purpose was to protect the interests of fellow nationals in the zone of accreditation.³²

Supplementing this clause was also a stipulation that granted each side "complete freedom of travel wherever and whenever it will be desired over territory... in both zones... without escort or supervision."³³ "Places of disposition of military units[,] headquarters, military government offices, [and] factories" were excluded from this proviso, but even so it is not difficult to see that the general freedom of travel was a valuable right given later restrictions on access to each other's zones, particularly of U.S. nationals to the East.³⁴ Even to contemporaries the arrangement seemed extraordinary. In October 1946 a senior official with the U.S. occupation government in Germany, Warren Chase, wrote a note to Political Advisor to the Military Governor of Germany, Robert Murphy: "... the prospect of having mission members traveling unhampered throughout the Soviet occupation zone [is] remarkable, despite certain restrictions."³⁵

³⁰ Huebner-Malinin Agreement, Clause 2.

³¹ Ibid., Clauses 6 (on Soviet location in Frankfurt) and 7 (on U.S. location in Potsdam). Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," 258. The GSFG headquarters were in Wuensdorf, close to Berlin and just outside Potsdam where the USMLM was housed; the SMLM enjoyed a similar close distance to the headquarter of U.S. Forces in Europe, both being located in or outside the city of Frankfurt/Main.

³² Ibid., Clause 14a & b. The interests sighted included, primarily, personal safety and private property.

³³ Ibid., Clause 10.

³⁴ Ibid., Clause 10.

³⁵ Mussgnug, Alliierte Militaermissionen, 20. The U.S. occupation government (OMGUS was the Office of the Military Government in Germany) existed during the years 1945-49. Within that institution, Warren Chase was head of the Political Branch of the Office of the Director of Political Affairs.

Although the British and French counterparts to the American exchange of missions with the Soviets are not the subject of this work, some differences between them are worth noting briefly. First, the U.S.-Soviet missions were the last to be created: the British spearheaded the MLM arrangement on 16 September 1946 with the Robertson-Malinin agreement, and the French representative Noiret signed two days before Huebner, on 3 April 1947.³⁶ The second major difference, perhaps related to the late establishment of the U.S.-Soviet Missions, was that the U.S.-Soviet exchange was the smallest: it consisted of 14 officers on each side as compared with 37 in the British-Soviet and 18 in the French-Soviet arrangements.³⁷ Last but not least, the U.S.-Soviet exchange was the only one to specifically bar political representatives – a provision that did not appear in the earlier British-Soviet and French-Soviet agreements.³⁸ Exactly how these differences impacted the effectiveness of the Missions has to be the subject of another study; it is enough to note, however, that these differences existed, and that the three arrangements varied in their efficacy: the U.S.-Soviet mechanism was deemed the most productive of the three.³⁹

Wartime Origins of the MLM Concept:

Most individual works on the Missions lack a coherent, logical discussion of the Missions' origins. They either overlook altogether the negotiation process preceding the Missions' establishment or, if they address it, treat it within the limited context of the international conditions that may have nudged the U.S. or the Soviet Union closer towards such an agreement.⁴⁰ Few look at the internal debates on either side. Most authors also take a rather deterministic view of the Missions' creation – a view that, I

³⁶ Mussgnug, *Alliierte Militaermissionen*, 23.

³⁷ Tony Geraghty, *Brixmis: The Untold Story of Britain's most daring Cold War Spy Mission*, 10; Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," 258.

The relatively high number of British liaison officer Geraghty cites in *Brixmis* slightly overstates the 31 allowed by the Robertson-Malinin Agreement as it includes liaison personnel of "all ranks" – presumably support personnel not engaged in liaison or touring-related activities.

³⁸ Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," 260; Huebner-Malinin agreement, Clause 2 stipulated that the missions were to be all-military, with "no political representative."

³⁹ Author's conversation with Lewis Franklin, CISAC, Stanford University, 14 May 2004.

⁴⁰ John A. Fahey, "Licensed to Spy," 2; Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," *passim*; Skowronek, "U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany, Since 1947," *PhD Dissertation, passim*. John Fahey's narrative suggests that the 1947 Agreement was a near automatic result of Germany's and Berlin's division into zones and sectors. Crucial details are left unexplored, including the fact that the Missions were set up in 1947 rather than in 1945 when the zonal boundaries were drawn.

demonstrate, is contradicted by the evidence.⁴¹ This section weaves together the positive contributions of extant narratives to provide a more balanced account of the U.S.-Soviet Missions' early history.

Although the Huebner-Malinin agreement was signed in April 1947, almost two years after the end of World War II in Europe on 12 May 1945, the foundations for Allied Military Liaison Missions were laid during the wartime period. The idea of the MLMs was conceived in late 1943 amid Allied discussions at the European Advisory Commission (EAC) about postwar control of Germany. A seminal document was a British memorandum submitted to the U.S. and Soviet EAC delegates in early 1944. Next to the famous proposal to divide the expectably defeated Germany into three (later four) zones of occupation, it included a stipulation that called upon the Allies to station token military units in each other's zones to help make it look like the occupation in each zone was "international."⁴² Washington's rejection of the concept of "token forces" pushed the proposal closer to an MLM-type arrangement for the final phrasing was amended to include an inter-zonal exchange of "units... for liaison purposes."⁴³ Interestingly, in the end it was neither the British or the Americans but the Soviets who insisted that the liaison clause be incorporated into the final "Agreement on Control Machinery in Germany" on 14 November 1944, perhaps "because they liked [the idea], or because they thought the United States liked it, or both."⁴⁴ Article II, which became the enabling clause for the future exchange of Military Liaison Missions, stipulated that "each Commander-in-Chief in his zone of occupation would have attached to him military, naval and air representatives of the other two Commanders-in-Chief for liaison duties."⁴⁵

The presence of this clause in a key Allied agreement alone did not guarantee that the Missions would be implemented automatically; ultimately, it took a great deal of persistence from individuals who anticipated their potential value to accomplish the task.

⁴¹ Mussgnug. *Allierte Militaermissionen*, 12. Mussgnug argues that in many ways the creation of the MLMs was "predictable."

⁴² *Ibid*, 12.

⁴³ Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," 259.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 259; the agreement was amended on May 1, 1945 to permit French participation and was subsequently reaffirmed by heads of state at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945.

⁴⁵ US Department of States, *US Treaties and Other International Agreements*, 1956, cited in Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," 3; Timothy Seman, "Cold War Intelligence," 14.

Strained U.S.-Soviet relations prior and, to some degree, during World War II did not create an environment conducive to military cooperation. Washington did not even have formal relations with Moscow until a decade before the war since for a long time it had refused to grant the post-1917 Soviet state recognition.⁴⁶ U.S. efforts to establish cooperation under the exigencies of war by sending in 1943 a U.S. Military Mission to the Soviet capital were characterized mostly by “frustrations,” and the Mission was disbanded soon after the war.⁴⁷ These problems were compounded by active opposition to cooperative relations by bureaucratic actors in the top ranks of the U.S. government. During the war period, the State Department pushed relentlessly for a hardline policy towards the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ Within the military establishment individuals like General Frank Howley, who led the first American administrative detachment into Berlin, fueled tensions with their personal animosity towards the Soviets.⁴⁹

Despite barriers to U.S.-Soviet military cooperation during this period, there were also parties who strongly favored it and pushed for an MLM-type arrangement. One individual in particular stood out in this regard: General Dwight Eisenhower, the commander of U.S. forces in Europe and future architect of a unified Western Allied command. While the politicians at the EAC had agreed on a MLM-type mechanism as part of a *postwar* political strategy, he had urged for an immediate establishment of

⁴⁶ Even though Washington established diplomatic relations with Moscow in the 1930s, relations were strained. The first U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, William C. Bullitt, wrote in a private letter to Roosevelt in the mid-1930s that despite his efforts to establish cooperation with the Soviet leaders he “was accomplishing nothing.” (Bullitt, in Paul G. Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany, Since 1947,” 18).

⁴⁷ According to the Chief of the U.S Military Mission to Moscow, John Deane, good intentions on which his Mission was founded – to enable coordination of the US and Soviet war efforts – foundered under many “misunderstandings, frustrations, [and] suspicions.” (Deane, John R. The Strange Alliance: The Story of our Efforts at Wartime Co-operation with Russia, New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1950, 47, 285, 31, 48, 33, 11-12, 49).

⁴⁸ Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany, Since 1947,” 25. The State Department opposed the cooperative policy towards the Soviet Union pushed from within the military, particularly commanders in Europe such as Eisenhower and Clay (both argued that “no stone should be left unturned to ensure... close cooperation and friendship [with the Soviet Union]”). State’s suspicion and antagonism grew throughout 1944-5 in step with Soviet attempts to install a communist regime in Rumania and its treatment of the Polish regime in exile. (Murphy’s report of Eisenhower’s message to State Dept, 15 November 1945, OMGUS: POLAD/458/84, in Mussnug, Alliierte Militaermissionen, 15-6).

⁴⁹ According to one account, Howley’s personal biases and hostility towards the Soviet Union “[were] largely responsible, for better or for worse, for the collapse of the joint control of Berlin by the Allied Kommandatura. [His] paranoiac hate of the Russians warped his judgment to the point that he was convinced that the Soviet Union would attack the United States.” (Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison,” 32).

liaison relations to aid *wartime* military cooperation. Since 1943, a full year before the Agreement on Control Machinery in Germany was concluded, Eisenhower argued that military liaison would generate better cooperation on key war-related matters, such as bombing campaigns, exchanges of prisoners of war and displaced persons, and day-to-day operational matters.⁵⁰ He openly stated that the most effective arrangement was an “exchange of liaison groups” between the supreme commanders of the respective U.S. and Soviet forces in the European theater rather than via special Missions in Moscow or Washington.⁵¹ Eisenhower pushed for this arrangement mostly because he felt it had the best chance of succeeding: it was most likely to be “acceptable to the Soviets.”⁵²

Other actors also kept the idea of military liaison missions alive while the war still raged. Echoing Eisenhower’s view on the high effectiveness of missions directly in the theater of military operations, the Moscow Mission cabled the War Department suggesting an urgent “establishment of liaison groups” with the Soviets.⁵³ Their contribution even in the closing stages of the war, it argued, would be in “greatly reduc[ing] chances of conflict by keeping each side posted of the other’s advance.”⁵⁴ The U.S. Army Chief of Staff in Washington also expressed support for an “exchange of missions between commanders in the field” in response to an incident in November 1944 where Allied bombers had accidentally hit contingents of the Soviet Red Army.⁵⁵

Postwar Debates and Establishment of the U.S.-Soviet MLMs:

Given Allied consensus in 1944 on the desirability of military liaison missions and the intermittent pushes for their creation after 1943 until the end of the war, one

⁵⁰ Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 12; Harry C Butcher p.55, in Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison,” 28. According to Butcher, Eisenhower had argued that “The more contact we have with the Russians the more they will understand us and the greater will be the cooperation.”

⁵¹ Top Secret memorandum for General Roberts, “Reference General Eisenhower’s views,” 19 August 1944, (RG 165/390/37/33/7, ABC Decimal File; ABC 348 UN; Box 469).

⁵² Top Secret memorandum for General Roberts, “Reference General Eisenhower’s views,” 19 August 1944, (RG 165/390/37/33/7, ABC Decimal File; ABC 348 UN; Box 469); Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 12-3. Eisenhower’s sensitivity to the Soviet position is clearly shown in a December 1944 memorandum. He suggested the following: “in the beginning these missions should be very small with the idea of avoiding suspicion on the part of the Russians. After being established, the missions themselves will be able to make a more accurate estimate of the strength they require to carry on their duties, which will be acceptable to the Russians (Mussgnug, 13).

⁵³ Top Secret cable to War Department from U.S. Military Mission, Moscow, 21 April 1945 (RG 218/190/2/15/5 Leahy File, Box 11).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 13.

might have expected the missions to have been organized soon after the war's end. Indeed, if the European Advisory Commission's Agreement of 1944 had been implemented to the letter, military liaison missions should have been set up simultaneously with the Allied Control Council for Germany (ACC) following the July-August 1945 Potsdam Conference. However, as we know, U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison Missions were not established until April 1947. The explanation for this delay lies mostly in lack of urgency and partly also, perhaps, in the nature of U.S. foreign policy that deferred, at least for the first few postwar years, to the leadership of Great Britain.⁵⁶

Following the termination of hostilities in Europe in May 1945, Allies were overwhelmed by a host of urgent problems relating to the occupation of Germany that were perceived to take priority over inter-allied military missions. Allied Control Council meetings, set up in Berlin immediately after the war's end, were already intended to serve as a clearing house for major civil and military questions in Germany. The meetings, after all, were designed to regularly bring together the three (later four) Allied Military Governors in charge of Germany's reconstruction who also happened to be the commanders-in-chief (CINCs) of the respective Allied forces in Germany.⁵⁷ The rather pessimistic view of U.S.-Soviet relations within the State Department, especially after the necessity of coordinating a joint war against Germany had passed, may also have slowed the cooperative initiative.

Nevertheless, it would not be true to say that “*nothing* was done [about the missions] for almost two years,” until 1947 (emphasis added).⁵⁸ In the months immediately after the war, efforts – at fairly high levels – were made to revive the issue. Eisenhower was instructed, probably by the War Department, in July 1945 to take up negotiations on the subject with the commanders of the other Allied forces.⁵⁹ On 14 July 1945 Eisenhower finally brought up the question with the Soviet CINC Marshall Zhukov,

⁵⁶ Lough, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison,” 259; Richard Best, *Cooperation with Like-Minded Peoples, passim*. Washington's initial postwar deference to British foreign policy lead would explain why the British-Soviet MLMs were signed first, while the Americans wavered for another half year.

⁵⁷ Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison,” 42. “Nothing was done in this regard for almost two years...”

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵⁹ Mussgnug, *Alliierte Militaermissionen*, 17.

painting in broad terms the tasks and make-up of the missions.⁶⁰ All three allies were to participate in this exchange, the number of mission members was to be limited, and the missions were to be housed near the headquarters of the foreign army to which they are accredited. Their purpose, Eisenhower told Zhukov, was “to act as a two-way liaison, transmitting my communications to you, and in turn forwarding [your] communications... to me.”⁶¹ Later that month Zhukov accepted Eisenhower’s proposal and suggested that details be worked out by their respective deputies, Generals Sokolovski and Clay.⁶²

After Eisenhower left Europe in November 1945, General Clay replaced him as a key advocate for military liaison missions. Clay’s ability to step into this role was predicated by two factors. First, he was optimistic in the initial postwar years about the future of U.S.-Soviet cooperation.⁶³ Second, he came to the job with a close working relationship with General Sokolovski, the man charged to oversee the mechanism on the Soviet side.⁶⁴ When Allied relations at the ACC – the formal channel for high-level military communications – began to deteriorate by early 1946, Sokolovski was able to persuade Clay to make more concerted efforts to push the temporarily stalled issue of the missions.⁶⁵

Clay’s task was to persuade a skeptical “Headquarters” – Commander of U.S. European Command General Joseph T. McNarney and his Chief of Staff General Harold Bull – about the necessity and practicability of establishing the MLMs.⁶⁶ In April 1946

⁶⁰ Ibid., 17. In an unnamed document in the OMGUS collection, Mussgnug cites Eisenhower as saying to Zhukov “I desire to establish a liaison mission to your headquarters in accordance with Article II of the Agreement on Control Machinery in Germany.”

⁶¹ Ibid., 17, citing National Archives document RG 260/AG 45/27/3.

⁶² Ibid., 18. It is not clear at what point the suggestion is dropped for establishing military liaison missions among *all* allied commands, as opposed to only bilaterally between the Soviets on the one hand and the three Western commands on the other.

⁶³ Smith, Jean E. ed. The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay, Germany 1945-1949, Bloomington, IN: Indiana U-Press, 1974, xxvii; Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison,” 42.

⁶⁴ Smith, Clay Papers, xxvii, 19-20; Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison,” 42; Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 16. In the summer of 1945 Clay had worked closely with General Sokolovski on a range of postwar issues and had established a working relationship – even “friendship” – with his future partner on the issue of liaison missions (Mussgnug; Smith).

⁶⁵ Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison,” 42-3; Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 18; Lough, “The Military Liaison Missions in Germany,” 259-260.

⁶⁶ Richard A. Best, Jr. “Cooperation with Like-Minded Peoples: British Influences on American Security Policy 1945-1949,” Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986, 89; “Chronology of US Ground Forces in Europe 1943-89,” United States Army, Europe. www.usarmygermany.com/Units/HqUSAREUR.

Clay presented Bull with his correspondence with Sokolovski. Bull reluctantly approved Clay's initiative adding that, although he "expect[ed] to gain little in this exchange," the liaison channel could be useful for small tasks, such as in lending assistance to U.S. agencies dealing with the Soviet Headquarters.⁶⁷ With Bull's approval, the matter was taken temporarily out of Clay's hands. There followed an exchange of letters between General McNarney and his new Soviet counterpart, Sokolovski (recently promoted to CINC GSFG), culminating in a Soviet announcement in early September 1946 that the USMLM could be received in the vicinity of Potsdam, near the Soviet military headquarters.⁶⁸ The details of the agreement on the Missions were then hashed out, again by Clay and his counterpart, until in February 1947 a draft of the bilateral agreement was finalized.⁶⁹ On 5 April it was signed by Generals Huebner and Malinin, the new U.S. and Soviet army command deputies (Clay, like Sokolovski, had in the meantime become CINC). The purpose for which USMLM was likely intended by its American founders, Clay and Huebner among others, was as a channel of communication and a collector of "civilian" intelligence – more economic and social than military.⁷⁰

General Harold Bull had served as Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Staff of U.S. Forces in European Theater (USFET) until returning to the War Department in September in 1946. (Harold R. Bull papers, 1943-68, Eisenhower Presidential Library, KS). General McNarney was U.S. military governor, Eisenhower's successor.

⁶⁷ Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 18.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 19-21.

⁷⁰ There are many reasons to believe that founders had intended this kind of an arrangement. Given the problems at the ACC, and the views expressed by Eisenhower and Clay about the need for improved cooperation and communication with the Soviets, it seems clear that liaison was a very important if not the overriding consideration at the time. This fact has been largely overlooked by previous authors; many make no distinction between the functions of USMLM in the late 1940s and in the period thereafter, implying that the Mission was from the beginning intended for aggressive military intelligence. Sources do not substantiate this. The U.S. had relatively little intelligence capacity directly after the war and we know that USMLM officers were not even formally trained in language or intelligence until the 1950s. This is not to say that the Mission did not collect any kind of intelligence. By most accounts in its first months of operation the majority of USMLM's duties entailed providing support to postwar U.S. military government missions, which, in turn, were engaged primarily in overseeing the repatriation of refugees and prisoners of war, prevention of illegal border crossings, round-up of criminals and black marketers, and sorting matters relating to denazification. They gathered some intelligence in the process, but it was mostly incidental and more social-economic than military. (Steury, Donald P. "On the Front Lines of the Cold War: Documents on the Intelligence War in Berlin, 1946 to 1961." Washington, D.C.: CIA History Staff, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1999, 2; Skowronek, "U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison," 57; Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," 260).

Chapter 2: Behind the Iron Curtain, 1953-7

The dramatic downturn in U.S.-Soviet relations after the latter part of 1947 generated significant changes in U.S. policy priorities with regard to Europe and directly affected the work of the U.S. Military Liaison Mission (USMLM). This chapter describes USMLM's reorientation from an organization focused primarily on liaison duties and on economic and social intelligence to one that collected much more sensitive and intrusive military intelligence. Relying for evidence primarily on "Voucher" reports – documents that likely stemmed from USMLM – it then details the Mission's intelligence and liaison activities in the mid-1950s. It assesses the value of USMLM's work by comparing its "product" to contemporary military and policy requirements and concludes that this value was likely quite substantial.

Reorientation in Purpose to Intelligence Collection:

The breakdown of postwar joint Allied occupation machinery for Germany, the Berlin blockade, and the division of Europe into Eastern and Western camps created an environment radically different from that which had prevailed until the spring of 1947.⁷¹ Even the key personalities within the U.S. military establishment who had in preceding years been sympathetic to improved cooperation with the Soviets – Eisenhower, Clay, Huebner – saw the prospect of friendly relations diminish. A particularly noteworthy example of this hardening was the falling out after 1948 between General Clay and his Soviet counterpart General Sokolovski, the two chief architects of cooperative military channels in the early postwar period.⁷²

On a policy level, already in the summer and fall of 1947, the growing suspicion of Moscow's intentions caused an explosion in U.S. contingency planning for the

⁷¹ Among the events that led to the creation of the Western and Eastern camps were: Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe by 1949, the founding of NATO in April 1949, the formation of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in May 1949 and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in October 1949.

⁷² Smith, *Clay Papers*, p. 709: Top Secret cable Eyes Only to Royall from Clay, Subject: Clay's meeting with Sokolovski, 28 June 1948. "I was received with marked official politeness but with evident restraint and with complete lack of the cordiality with which I am normally received by Marshall Sokolovski. For the first time in the history of our meetings, no refreshments were offered."

possibility of a Soviet “surprise attack” on Western Europe.⁷³ The new priority became improving intelligence capabilities to better understand the training and Order of Battle (OOB) of the estimated twenty-two divisions of the Group of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany (GSOFG). The GSOFG, renamed Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) in 1949, was “the vanguard of the [Red] Army” and the largest Soviet military force outside the Soviet Union, and hence a particular focus of attention.⁷⁴ Clay became one of the strongest advocates of more aggressive intelligence collection on the “capabilities [of the Soviet] enemy” so as to have accurate and timely warning of its intentions to “over-run the U.S. zone.”⁷⁵ In 1948 Clay’s deputy Huebner alerted “all [U.S.] Intelligence Agencies” in Germany to watch for “*any* indication of aggressive Soviet military action” in view of “steadily worsening... relations.”⁷⁶ This increased desire for improved intelligence reflected the stark reality that the U.S. Army had “[practically] no knowledge whatsoever about the real Soviet troop strength [and other OOB indicators] in its zone of occupation.”⁷⁷

The intelligence-gathering role of USMLM developed in step with the new requirements. It did not take long for Mission officers or their superiors to realize that their legal and theoretically unlimited access to the zone of their “potential foes” – increasingly tightened by the Soviets after 1948 – presented them with unique and “magnificent opportunities for intelligence collection.”⁷⁸ Paralleling the growing interest

⁷³ Top Secret memorandum, Headquarters EUCOM, 30 September 1947 (RG 319/270/15/31/3 Army Staff, P&O, Decimal File, 1946-8, File 381, Box 102).

⁷⁴ Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany, Since 1947,” 79; Fahey, Licensed to Spy, 3.

⁷⁵ Top Secret cable to Department of the Army, Personal for General Bradley, from CINCEUR/Clay, 6 September 1948 (RG 218/190/2/15/4 Leahy File, Box 7, Folder “Germany”); Top Secret memorandum, War Department General Staff (Operations), Washington D.C., 2 April 1948 (RG 319/270/15/31/3 Army Staff, P&O, Decimal File, 1946-8, File 381, Box 102); Top Secret report, Project No. 4882, Intelligence Division, General Staff U.S. Army, 1 June 1949 (RG 319/270/15/34/6 Army Staff P&O, Decimal File 1949-Feb. 1950, File 091 Russia, Box 165); Top Secret memorandum, War Department General Staff Operations, Washington D.C., 2 April 1948 (RG 319/270/15/31/3 Army Staff, P&O, Decimal File, 1946-8, File 381, Box 102).

It was estimated that the GSOFG could “overrun” the U.S. zone within a matter of “8 hours.” (Top Secret memorandum, War Department General Staff Operations, 2 April 1948).

⁷⁶ Top Secret cable to Director of Intelligence, HQ U.S. Air Forces Europe, Commanding General U.S. Constabulary for G-2 (Intelligence), and Commanding Officer Berlin Military Post for S-2 (Intelligence), 17 September 1948 (RG 549/490/A/8/4 Records of USAREUR< Office of the Chief of Staff, Box 406).

⁷⁷ Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 97.

⁷⁸ Fahey, Licensed to Spy, 3; Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany, Since 1947,” 59, 49. Most of the U.S. personnel that had toured the Soviet zone in the immediate postwar years in conjunction with various quadripartite missions (such as FIAT, repatriation commissions, or graves search teams,

in the GSOFG at the Pentagon, USMLM reoriented its focus after fall of 1947. Even though USMLM's official function continued to be liaison, as demonstrated by USMLM's upkeep of "cordial... relations with the Soviets" and "services in recovering people and equipment" during the Berlin blockade period, the Mission became increasingly devoted to military intelligence.⁷⁹ Diplomatic correspondence confirms this switch: after late 1947 instructions were sent by cable to USMLM requesting verification of certain Soviet installations for signs of military production.⁸⁰ Industry, as far as it related to military capabilities, was closely watched. Of particular interest were "uranium mines in southern East Germany," which, after July 1946, were deemed to contribute "significant" quantities of raw material to the Soviet nuclear weapons project.⁸¹ By 1949, all earlier proposals for "reduc[ing] the number of... liaison personnel" in the Soviet zone had been withdrawn.⁸²

Despite an early reorientation to intelligence collection by 1948-9, USMLM did not maximize this capability until the early 1950s.⁸³ There were still "big gaps in

mentioned in last chapter) had been withdrawn by 1948-1949 (see: Top Secret memorandum for C/S, Strategic Plans Branch, 22 December 1947, RG 319/270/15/31/3 Army Staff, P&O, Decimal File, 1946-8, File 381, Box 102).

According to Skowronek, "when the Russians sealed their zone to Western Allied military and civilian travel [starting in 1946-7], and later when their zone became the so-called Germany Democratic Republic (GDR)... the traveling liaison teams [became] the only outside observation of conditions" in East Germany.

⁷⁹ Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," 261.

⁸⁰ For an example of a request to USMLM, see: Confidential cable to USMLM from Robert Baker, U.S. Army Berlin, 6 November 1947 (RG 260/390/41/20/5 OMGUS, ODI Folder "Soviet Zone," Box 5) For an example of a reply from USMLM, see: Secret cable to the Office of the Director of Intelligence, OMGUS, from HQ US Military Liaison Mission to CINC of Soviet Occupied Zone of Germany, 16 March 1948; original forwarded internally within the Army Department, by Director of Intelligence to the Adjutant General, 25 March 1948 (RG 260/390/41/20/5 OMGUS, ODI Folder "Soviet Zone," Box 5).

⁸¹ Geraghty, *Brixmis*, 59; David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*. New Haven, CT: Yale U-Press, 1994, 177. As Holloway shows, in 1950 an estimated "45 per cent of Soviet uranium came from East Germany." Although contemporary U.S. intelligence services would not have had this statistic at their disposal, the common view was that the supply of uranium ore in the USSR was negligible and that East German production was, therefore, of great value.

⁸² Memorandum to Huebner from Clay, 23 June 1947. (RG 319/270/7/17/6-7 Army Staff, G-2 Messages, 1947, Germany, Box 20). The small size of the U.S.-Soviet Missions was primarily a result of vocal opposition from U.S. counterintelligence agencies to the presence of many Soviets roaming in the U.S. sector of Germany (the Soviets originally proposed the Missions to be much larger than 14 officers each). Counterintelligence did not want the Missions at all; the military pushed for their establishment with a larger number of men; the compromise was the number of officers to be limited to 14. (Interview with Lt. Col. McCutcheon, with USMLM 1985-8)

⁸³ Author's interview with Bill Spahr. Colonel (Ret.) Spahr served with USMLM 1955-8. Spahr's guess was that USMLM had begun to procure serious military intelligence around the time of the Berlin blockade.

knowledge” and experience.⁸⁴ By most accounts, the Mission’s first attempts at military espionage were “pretty amateurish,” efficient coordination with the other two Western Missions did not begin until 1948-9, and there was a critical lack of Russian-speaking officers at the USMLM until the early 1950s.⁸⁵ The fact that in 1949 America was still debating whether to “withdraw” or “remain” in Germany may have been part of the reason why these capabilities were not improved sooner.⁸⁶

The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 changed everything. Since the Communist invasion of South Korea was seen by many in Washington as a “prelude to a [Soviet] assault in Germany,” the period 1950-1 saw a dramatic expansion in the number of U.S. forces and “intelligence capabilities in the region... to anticipate attack from the East.”⁸⁷ The subsequent major shift in U.S. policy – its commitment to remain indefinitely to protect its NATO allies – thrust the USMLM into more aggressive intelligence collection.⁸⁸ USMLM was further nudged in that direction by the Soviet introduction of restrictions on Allied Mission travel in 1951 since greater persistence was now required to perform the same work.⁸⁹ Compulsory 2-year language (Russian and German) and intelligence training for “all Mission members” began in 1950-1, in addition to courses in photography and mnemonics, to enable officers assigned to “make meaningful assessments of what they observed in the Soviet zone.”⁹⁰ Existing materials suggest that it was probably towards the end of 1949 and 1950 that USMLM touring

⁸⁴ Geraghty, Brixmis, 20.

⁸⁵ Geraghty, Brixmis, 22; Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison,” 57,190. The relative inefficiency of the early intelligence collection is characterized primarily by poor coordination: fewer targets were covered in part because some were covered by more than one Mission at once while others not at all. According to Skowronek 2-year language training (Russian and German), conducted at the Army Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, began in the early 1950s.

⁸⁶ Secret memorandum for the record, P&O Branch, U.S. Army, Washington D.C., 12 December 1949 (RG 319/270/15/33 Army Staff P&O, Decimal File 1949-Feb. 1950, File 091 Germany, Box 538).

⁸⁷ Murphy, Battleground, 79, 88: U.S. forces in Europe were expanded by 1951 to 4 divisions and were allocated \$28bn additional spending.

⁸⁸ The Soviet zone of Germany was renamed in 1949 into the GDR. Since U.S. did not recognize this country until the 1970s, the present author will refer to the area by the more neutral term of East Germany.

⁸⁹ Historical synopsis of the USMLM, “The Way It Was: 1951-1954,” The USMLM Association, www.usmlm.org.

⁹⁰ Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison,” 57, 190; Fahey, Licensed to Spy, 190; Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 19. The 2-year language and intelligence training was conducted at the Army Institute for Advanced Russian Studies and European Theater Intelligence School, respectively. Skowronek notes that Soviet commandants, with whom USMLM frequently had to interact, spoke no English and were pleased to see the American liaison officer able to explain the incident in Russian.

became more coordinated, particularly with its British and the French counterparts, and that by 1950 the Mission initiated its first regular comprehensive reports.⁹¹

Organizational and Operational Features after 1953:

By the first Eisenhower administration (1953-1957), USMLM had internalized new features in keeping with its new dominant focus on intelligence collection.

The organizational changes were significant. After the dissolution of the military occupation government in Germany in 1949, USMLM began to report to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence at USAREUR, which, in turn, received its instructions “directly from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”⁹² This paralleled – and perhaps consolidated – USMLM’s switch from civilian to military intelligence collection.⁹³ In terms of personnel, the Mission grew substantially “to maximize [its] touring,” that is its car-borne intelligence gathering capacity.⁹⁴ By all accounts, after 1953, the Mission consisted of 14 officers and 26 additional non-touring personnel as compared with only 9 officers and a handful of support staff in early 1951.⁹⁵ This was the maximum allowed by the 1947 Agreement. The need to increase USMLM touring personnel was urgent. Because observation teams usually consisted of a liaison officer and an enlisted driver, even with the maximum number of “touring” officers (14) there could only be 7 cars roaming the East German countryside at any given time.⁹⁶

The expanded number of non-touring staffers also served an important purpose. They worked in USMLM’s West Berlin headquarters (established in late in 1947 by

⁹¹ Author’s interview with Bill Spahr. I differentiate here between daily or near-daily reports from individual USMLM officers to USAREUR, which existed from the very beginning, and comprehensive, thematically organized monthly documents from the organization as a whole which were distributed to numerous military agencies. It is worth noting that CINCEUR’s regular reports on GSFG military training, movements, exercises, and equipment also begin around 1950. (For CINCEUR reports, see: RG 549/490/25/23/1 Records of USAREUR, “Classified outgoing messages, 1952,” Box 260 and the boxes following).

⁹² USMLM Unit History, 1974, p.2.

USAREUR’s subordination to the Joint Chiefs was established by the President’s [Harry S. Truman] Executive Order 10062, 17 July 1949, (RG 319/270/15/33 Army Staff P&O, Decimal File 1949-Feb. 1950, File 091 Germany, Box 538).

⁹³ USAREUR Unit History 1974 p.2; “DCSI is the senior-most intelligence officer in the US Army” (Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 17).

⁹⁴ Author’s interview with Bill Spahr.

⁹⁵ Author’s interviews with Bill Spahr and Lt. Col. McCutcheon; “The Way It Was: 1951-1954,” The USMLM Association, www.usmlm.org.

⁹⁶ Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison,” 59.

Clay) and coordinated both tour planning and post-tour analysis. This function was carried out in West Berlin rather than at USMLM's "Potsdam House" because communications from East Germany were not deemed to be secure.⁹⁷ Officers submitted written reports to USAREUR after every tour, and the Berlin staff compiled these reports into a comprehensive monthly document with a wide distribution list, a practice that probably started after 1949-50.⁹⁸ The relocation of the West Berlin headquarters in 1952-53 from a small two-room apartment to a large four-story building was revealing of USMLM's expanded activity. Although some liaison personnel were always at the Potsdam House "so that mission headquarters was always staffed and available for Soviet messages," after 1952-53, tour officers took advantage of Potsdam's proximity to West Berlin to procure "supplies [or] technical equipment" and to quarter – especially if they were with dependents.⁹⁹

On the operational side, several features are worth mentioning. The early-mid 1950s period saw the replacement of Opels with the sturdier Chevrolets as USMLM's touring vehicles, the main means of Mission officer's transportation in East Germany.¹⁰⁰ The improved cars were telling of the Mission's adaptation to its augmented intelligence role since accessing remote or "restricted" installations of military interest often required tour officers to drive off asphalted roads onto forest trails, to cross streams, or to hide in a nearby ditch while observing a passing convoy.¹⁰¹ The vehicles did not have "any type of communications equipment."¹⁰² They were "standard U.S. staff sedans, painted olive drab" and "easily identifiable from license plates."¹⁰³ Touring officers, while on duty, had to wear special uniforms, again, for recognition purposes.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 102, 98.

⁹⁸ Author's interview with Bill Spahr.

⁹⁹ Skowronek, "U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison," 48; Fahey, Licensed to Spy, 11; Spahr, "The Potsdam Mission 1955-1958, A Personal Reminiscence," Unpublished manuscript, 1.

This proximity was seen as "a significant advantage" over the Soviet mission, which was "much more isolated." (Skowronek, "U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison," 49).

¹⁰⁰ Recollection of Col Adolf E. Shanze, former USMLM officer Dec. 1952-Aug. 1954, "The Way It Was: 1951-1954," The USMLM Association, www.usmlm.org.

¹⁰¹ Fahey Licensed to Spy, and Skowronek, "U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison," *passim*; Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 101.

¹⁰² Spahr, "The Potsdam Mission 1955-1958," 2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 98.

USMLM's touring was "made unannounced on the basis of the [officers'] liberty of movement" and was generally "opportunist[ic,]" to the extent that it did "not necessarily [abide by the travel routes or] targets established by the USMLM Berlin HQ" and did not have to be cleared by USAREUR.¹⁰⁵ This flexibility – and unpredictability, from the Soviet standpoint – was deemed to be crucial for successful intelligence collection. It became USMLM's unspoken rule that tours generally should not submit advance requests when visiting "places of disposition of military units[,] headquarters, military government offices, ... factories, and the like," as required in the 1947 Agreement since that would have "rendered [their visits] valueless."¹⁰⁶ In a similar way rules were also stretched by the Soviets: although in theory Mission officers had "what was in effect diplomatic immunity" and "the right to travel freely and without justification... throughout the Soviet zone (as well as all three Western zones)," in practice these rights became increasingly circumscribed by the early and mid-1950s.¹⁰⁷ There were "Soviet and East German personnel... who did not grasp the concept" of "diplomatic immunity" when dealing with Mission officers,¹⁰⁸ and when a tour had to "[stop over]night at an East German hotel" the officer was as a rule "required... to check in with the local Soviet kommandant [to request] permission."¹⁰⁹

Observing the Soviet Threat, 1953-7:

Evidence of USMLM operations during the 1953-7 period is patchy as many documents are either still classified or destroyed; nevertheless, there are sufficient fragments to piece together what might be the bigger picture. Here I draw on two main sources: documents that appear to be USMLM reports, that are taken here to be representative of the Mission's work during the early to mid-1950s, and recollections of former officers and knowledgeable contemporaries. The documents come from a newly

¹⁰⁵ Geraghty, *Brixmis*, 21-22; Seman, "Cold War Intelligence," 24; Author's interview with Bill Spahr. According to Bill Spahr, USMLM penetrations into restricted areas did not have to be cleared with USAREUR – "we went in when the opportunity presented itself" (Interview with Spahr).

¹⁰⁶ Huebner-Malinin Agreement, Clauses 10, 13; Skowronek, "U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison," 50.

¹⁰⁷ Spahr, "The Potsdam Mission 1955-1958," p.4; Mussgnug, *Allierte Militaermissionen*, 98.

¹⁰⁸ Spahr, who served with USMLM during the years 1955-8, recalls that "on some occasions, Soviet and East German personnel fired warning rounds at us" – sometimes when they were in breach of travel restrictions, but sometimes when they were not.

¹⁰⁹ Spahr, "The Potsdam Mission 1955-1958," p.2.

declassified collection of monthly (June-November 1954) reports from an agency code-named “Voucher”¹¹⁰ and seem, by virtue of content, style, and access, to be an alias for USMLM – an assumption deemed to be more than reasonable by a contemporary USMLM officer.¹¹¹ The code name can be explained by attempts, probably at USMLM’s Berlin HQ, to “control [the] distribution” of the Mission’s reports.¹¹²

One of the most important ways to assess the value of USMLM’s work is to appraise its intelligence work in terms of contemporary military and policy requirements. The aim of this section is to fill the gap in the present literature by exploring the details of USMLM’s intelligence operations in the 1953-7 period. By comparing the main interests of military and political decision-makers on the one hand with the Mission’s success in finding and observing these targets on the other, it shows that the Mission in its small way made a real contribution to America’s appraisal of the Soviet threat in Central Europe, an increasingly important arena of superpower confrontation.

¹¹⁰ All Voucher reports cited in this section come from RG 319/631/35/42/1-2 Records of the Army Staff, G-2 Intelligence, ID File 950717.

¹¹¹ Only further research can prove the case one way or another, but most of the *existing* evidence suggests that Voucher may well have been USMLM. Firstly, Voucher reports were stored in the same archives box as USMLM reports (presented in the next chapter) from a later period and resemble the latter very much in format, content, and writing-style: they provide detailed intelligence on similar military targets in East Germany, they are written accounts accompanied by photographic evidence, and they are monthly. Secondly, it is clear that Voucher is a U.S. agency associated with the military since its distribution list – very similar to USMLM’s – includes exclusively U.S. military intelligence consumers in Europe, with the first and main addressee Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (DCSI) at USAREUR (the agency to which USMLM reported) (See pp. 91-92 for a comparison of Voucher and USMLM distribution lists). Thirdly, Voucher’s distribution list includes BRIXMIS but not its U.S. equivalent, USMLM – an omission that appears strange when all the other recipients on the list are U.S. agencies – unless one assumes that Voucher itself is USMLM. Fourthly, Voucher refers to its intelligence collection method as “tour[ing]” by “Army,” “Air Force and Naval representatives,” and most of the photographic evidence attached to its reports betray that its pictures were taken from *cars* – familiar trademarks of USMLM. (Voucher report, November 1954, 16; June 1954 report, 3).

Perhaps most convincingly, though, it is difficult to see how other sources, military or civilian, could have obtained the type of detailed information reported by Voucher. Given the tight Soviet restrictions on U.S. access to East Germany it is unlikely that extensive touring and photographing of military installations in East Germany could have been accomplished by non-accredited American military officers. According to Bill Spahr, with USMLM 1955-8, there were no other military groups who could have provided detailed intelligence in East Germany and close-up photographs, “only perhaps airplanes flying along the designated air corridor between West Germany and West Berlin could have possibly photographed something along their way,” but their photographs would have been less distinct.” (Interview with Spahr) The possibility that civilian agents collected the information is refuted by evidence provided by former chief of Berlin Operations Base (BOB), CIA’s chief outpost responsible for activities in East Berlin and East Germany. BOB apparently attempted to “pursue collection of Soviet order of battle [through agents for a few months in] 1946” until “the entire net [of agents was] roll[ed] up... in March 1947;” even though a few agents still operated in East Germany in “1954-5[,] these agents’ access to Soviet military installations was extremely limited.” (Murphy, Battleground, 15, 17, 424).

¹¹² Author’s interview with Bill Spahr.

Most of the key priorities for military intelligence collection on East Germany were established locally, at USAREUR and NATO. However, because of the primacy of developments in Europe to America's security policy, the decision-making elite in Washington stayed very much engaged, as did President Eisenhower.¹¹³ Although specific targets are still classified, individual accounts recreate the broad categories of items that were of interest. A former analyst at CIA's Berlin Operations Base (BOB) recalls that the key military intelligence priorities during the mid-1950s were estimates of GSFG's "capabilities for offensive action... against Berlin[,] Germany [and] Western Europe" and "information on its activities, equipment, and personnel."¹¹⁴ Embedded in the U.S. watch list on GSFG "capabilities" was also the uranium industry in East Germany.¹¹⁵ A final, crucial objective was the anticipation of a surprise Soviet attack on Western Europe, which might be indicated by the adversary's troop training, deployment, mobilization, armament, enhancement of command, control, and communications, changes in logistics, and unusual activity related to warning alert procedures.¹¹⁶

The Mission's actual observations closely matched USAREUR's and NATO's requirements. Voucher's surveillance targets included kasernes,¹¹⁷ training areas, movement of Soviet forces, training, new weapons, and storage locations" – in other

¹¹³ Bill Spahr confirmed that details of planning were done locally, albeit with Pentagon's approval. (Interview with Bill Spahr).

With respect to Eisenhower, it will be recalled from Chapter 1 that Eisenhower was instrumental to the early efforts to establish the US-Soviet MLMs. As president, he was known to be a voracious consumer of intelligence reports and estimates, and wrote in his memoirs that "we studied [these] constantly." (Raymond Garthoff, *Assessing the Adversary*, Brookings Occasional Papers, Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1991, 3) There is evidence that he was regularly briefed specifically on the MLMs and their work (Synopsis of State and Intelligence material reported to the President: 2 February, 9 February, 13-20 February, 15 March 1960 (Digital NSA: BC 01810, BC 01816, BC 01823, BC 01844)).

¹¹⁴ Murphy, *Battleground*, 424.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 424.

¹¹⁶ Elliott, Alton L. (Lt. Col.), "The Calculus of Surprise Attack," *Air University Review*, March-April 1979 (<http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil>) This Air Force source reproduces NATO's list of tactical indicators for a surprise GSFG attack. An important caveat is that list comes from the late 1970s, although the author was assured by former USMLM officer (McCutcheon) that NATO indicators lists "did not change much over the years," even between the 1950s and the late Cold War years. (Interview with Lt. Col. McCutcheon).

Eisenhower's personal concern about the possibility of a surprise Soviet attack on Western Europe is demonstrated by his personal authorization in 1954 of a secret Technological Capabilities Panel "to investigate ways of reducing the danger of surprise attack" (John Lewis Gaddis, "The Evolution of a Reconnaissance Satellite Regime," in George et al, *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation*, 355.).

¹¹⁷ A kaserne is the German word for barracks. The term is used here because that it was used by Voucher.

words, GSFG's order of battle (OOB)¹¹⁸ and training patterns as well as signs of aberration from these patterns.¹¹⁹ These observation objectives can be broken down into the following four key categories: (1) disposition and strength of Soviet and East German forces, (2) field training including maneuvers in the field and movement toward home stations, (3) new weapons and equipment, primarily that belonging to the army and air force, and (4) POL (petroleum, oil, and lubricants sites or production plants), ordnance, dumps and storage points, and railways.¹²⁰ Each are explored in detail below.

GSFG Order of Battle

The order of battle, in particular the disposition and strength of Soviet forces in East Germany, was closely monitored. Voucher reports devoted minimal attention to the state of East German Army, which was small and displayed relatively "little... activity;" most assessments were focused on the Soviets.¹²¹ Information was sought not only about the locations but also the types of forces in question. Reports intermittently note the "identif[ication]" of a particular regiment by its specific battle name, such as "the 36th Ponton Bridge Regiment" or "68 Guards Tank Regiment."¹²² Since the Soviet military, predictably, did not volunteer this kind of information, USMLM had to infer it from indicators such as destinations of convoys, "registration numbers [of] vehicle[s] seen using a [given] barracks," number of soldiers sighted at a military headquarters, and equipment and uniforms observed at a given unit.¹²³ "Personnel replacement" and rotations were watched closely since it was noticed that new recruits from the Soviet Union were generally less well-trained than old-timers with the GSFG.¹²⁴ Kasernes were considered a particularly important source of this information since they were relatively easy to locate, access, and use for troop count – for instance, from the number of vehicles departing and arriving at the premises.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Defined in the DOD Dictionary of Military Terms as "identification, strength, command structure, and disposition of the personnel, units, and equipment" (<http://www.dtic.mil>).

¹¹⁹ Voucher report, June 1954. Generally representative of other Voucher reports.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, June-November 1954, 3.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, October 1954, 43; November 1954, 4.

¹²² *Ibid.*, October 1954, 9; August 1954, 4.

¹²³ Geraghty, *Brixmis*, 21.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, November 1954, 2.

¹²⁵ Voucher reports are full of references to estimates of troop strength at a given kaserne: a typical reference was that "the kasernes in Prenzlau, empty as of the 1st of June, are now... full to capacity"

Aside from these standard OOB features, Voucher also paid attention to the quality of Soviet troops. It observed kasernes to understand the soldiers' living conditions, fitness, and hence war potential: the "soft" indicator of an adversary's overall strength. Although the Soviet Army was judged to be "on the whole... physically fit," Voucher noted major weaknesses. Soviet soldiers were deemed to lack adequate clothing, mechanical aptitude, and "arm[ament] for individual defense against armor," and a large portion (30%) were estimated to be illiterate.¹²⁶ Such detailed knowledge of an adversary's weaknesses could have been decisive in a potential war. It was clear how to exploit inadequate protection against armor, and illiteracy – a seemingly inconsequential factor – could have translated into a U.S. advantage in technical, and specifically atomic, warfare in which soldiers had to rely on *printed* instructions rather than orders from their field commander for battle strategy.¹²⁷

GSFG Training and Maneuvers

GSFG training appears to have been the most closely watched aspect of enemy capabilities. Voucher observation of both low-level and large-scale exercises helped to establish "normal" patterns of every-day and large-scale seasonal training. These patterns provided the baseline by which to identify "abnormal," potentially threatening behavior. Large-scale exercises were particularly significant because they simulated real war and gave priceless intelligence on two major issues of concern to U.S. decision-makers: 1) the type of warfare the Soviet military expected, and 2) the ways they were prepared to fight that type of war. In the first instance, GSFG exercises showed Soviet perception of their enemy's (U.S.) capabilities and its likely strategy in war, and made it possible to infer the contingencies the Soviets *did not* expect. In the second instance,

(Voucher report, June 1954, p.16) According to a member of the British Mission, "barracks [were] visible in spite of their boundary fencing: They were surrounded by wooden palisades [and] if you drove past at a certain speed the palisade effect 'disappeared.' It became a big, open flap and you could count everything inside." (cited in Geraghty, *Brixmis*, 22).

¹²⁶ Voucher report, June 1954, 7, 9, 11.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, June 1954, 10-11. Voucher knew about atomic warfare instructions from exemplars found in training areas. For an example see USAREUR Intelligence Summary of February 1958, where a Soldier's field copy was reprinted in full. (USAREUR Intelligence Summary, 28 Feb 1958, 43. Unless otherwise stated, all USAREUR Intelligence Summaries cited in this work come from RG 549/490/25/25/6-7 Records of USAREUR, "Intelligence Publications," Box 78).

exercises illustrated the state of the GSFG's own capabilities: Soviet defense tactics and their key weaknesses, to be exploited in the event of war.

Every Voucher report contains a section on low-level training, which was year-round and which was relatively easy to observe in and around kasernes. Understanding training methods at this level was deemed important because it was the essence that determined the Army's proficiency in larger exercises and, indeed, in war. Voucher's description reveals major shortcomings in contemporary GSFG training. According to the June 1954 report, soldiers were taught "no smart, precise drill," rifle marksmanship was "poor," there was "no... training in guard duty [or] first aid," and concealment and camouflage training wasted a "large amount of labor [as a result of] poor head work."¹²⁸ In sum, squad training, which accounted for "almost all" low-level training observed, was judged to "fall... below the U.S. standard because individual training, weapons and technique are inferior to U.S. units."¹²⁹ In retrospect, this sobering assessment may appear surprising, given the hype regarding the GSFG threat at high policy levels. In this case, however, it might be comforting to consider that these "on-the-ground" appraisals may at least have helped to restrain the more exaggerated views in policy-making circles.

The quality of large-scale exercises was observed to be better than that of low-level drills. However, like low-level exercises, they were seen to "lack efficiency," thus "considerably reduc[ing] [GSFG's] combat potential."¹³⁰ Voucher looked for several specific factors: the character of the battles being simulated, the scale of operations with which the Soviets felt comfortable, and battle techniques. The magnitude and nature of the exercise was frequently estimated by sheer size of "vehicular traffic" to a training area and sometimes reconstructed by a so-called "post mortem" of the former exercise areas, for signs of the shape, depth, and direction of heavy vehicle tracks.¹³¹ Available Voucher reports on the nature of battles suggest that observed GSFG exercises were defensive rather than offensive. This intelligence was a useful window into Soviet thinking about their own strategy *and* the likely American strategy. The size of GSFG units involved in the major exercises was presumably watched in order to infer whether a

¹²⁸ Voucher report, June 1954, 7, 14, 8, 11.

¹²⁹ Ibid., June 1954, 12.

¹³⁰ Ibid., June 1954, 7, 9, 10-11.

¹³¹ Ibid., September 1954, 27, 13.

surprise attack was likely, given that a critical mass of troops was needed to mount an effective attack. In this respect Voucher would doubtless have reassured American military planners. It consistently reported that “there have been no [large scale] tactical [or] logistical exercises,” that the Soviet Army in Germany is “completely untried and apparently untrained in large scale logistics,” and that it has “no training in air transportability.”¹³²

The types of equipment and battle tactics employed in simulated combat were closely watched as they indicated the type of war the Soviets expected. “River crossing[s]... with tanks” were of great interest to Voucher because it was known that “any invasion of West Germany [would] require a series of river crossings to succeed.”¹³³ Voucher observed GSFG’s heavy emphasis on this form of exercise as well as the addition to GSFG stocks of a new amphibian tank for this purpose in early 1954. Perhaps because river crossing practices were not always confined to special “exercise areas” like tank or artillery fire drills and were consequently more elusive, Voucher frequently procured valuable intelligence about these from local East Germans, in particular “ferry operator[s],” who seemed happy to share their observations.¹³⁴ According to a former USMLM officer, during 1955-58 the Mission’s ability to monitor firing ranges diminished as ever greater firing ranges of Soviet tanks and artillery necessitated the use of subcaliber devices for safety reasons; thence, USMLM focused on the other observable criteria for training effectiveness – the soldiers’ skill in operating the machines.¹³⁵ Air support to GSFG exercises was watched by Voucher for the purpose of establishing interservice coordination.¹³⁶ “Foxholes [and] trenches” as well as “abandoned or lost equipment or papers” found in post-battle sweeps provided additional indications of strategies rehearsed during the exercise.¹³⁷

When observing large-scale exercises, members of Voucher were “particularly on the alert for evidence of training for defense against radiological war” (although signs of

¹³² Ibid., June 1954, 12, 13.

¹³³ Geraghty, *Brixmis*, 83.

¹³⁴ Voucher report, September 1954, 18 and 25.

¹³⁵ Author’s interview with Bill Spahr.

¹³⁶ Voucher report, September 1954, 3, 5.

¹³⁷ Ibid., June 1954, 16; October 1954, 3.

other Chemical, Biological, and Radiological (CBR) training were also monitored).¹³⁸ Because America's "defensive strategy" for Europe had been based – essentially since 1949 – on nuclear deterrence to counterbalance GSFG's vast conventional advantage, information about the adversary's ability to overcome the U.S. atomic deterrent was of vital importance for Washington as this impacted its own ability to defend Europe.¹³⁹ Among the adaptations for atomic warfare, Voucher noted, were "trenches [being] made narrower and deeper than heretofore" and individual soldiers being trained to fight in "more widely dispersed" positions, presumably to minimize losses from any given blast.¹⁴⁰ Despite reporting some progress in Soviet atomic training tactics, Voucher also remarked that "the old practice of mass attack has not changed" significantly enough to familiarize most soldiers with tactics of dispersal required for smart atomic warfare.¹⁴¹

Maneuvers were another key subject of interest. They generally accompanied large-scale training exercises but were distinguished from the latter in that they were not meant as a practice in weaponry but rather in movement, coordination, and strategic stationing of troops "in a position of advantage over [a simulated] enemy."¹⁴² There are two reasons why close monitoring of GSFG maneuvers may have been important: 1) to reveal the quality, speed, and mechanisms of large-scale GSFG coordination, and 2) to give early warning about a surprise attack. Although one former Mission officer expressed the view that USMLM was unlikely to have ever been in the position to provide timely tactical warning of a blitz attack by the GSFG, there is also evidence to the contrary.¹⁴³ Tour officers were able to monitor and communicate intelligence on

¹³⁸ Ibid., June 1954, 8.

¹³⁹ Although the U.S. had not yet deployed nuclear weapons in West Germany at the time of Voucher's writing in 1954 and would not do so until the spring of the following year (see "Where They Were." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 55 No. 6 (Nov-Dec 1999), p.26-35), it was committed to a nuclear-based defense of Europe through 1) NATO's strategy that since 1949 "considered... the use of nuclear weapons to defend the North Atlantic area," and 2) Eisenhower's "New Look" policy (Source: NATO Strategy Documents, 1949-69, <http://www.nato.int>). It had nuclear-capable bombers stationed in the U.K. since the early 1950s (Author's interview with General Burns).

¹⁴⁰ Voucher report, June 54, 8.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., September 1954, 3, 5; June 1954, 10.

¹⁴² DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.

¹⁴³ Interviews with Bill Spahr, Major-General (Ret.) William Burns (brigade and battalion commander with U.S. Army in Germany, 1950s-60s), Major-General Lajoie (Chief of USMLM 1983-86), and General Shalikashvili. Both Spahr and Burns argued that if the GSFG had wanted a real surprise attack, it would have taken all measures to ensure that Mission personnel was not around to observe it. In Spahr's view, the Soviets would have likely "detained us... until it was too late to witness the maneuvers." Even in the hypothetical case that someone from USMLM had managed to observe the movements, there were

GSFG's standard practices with respect to maneuvers, and observations of aberrations could have plausibly alerted USAREUR to future unwelcome developments.¹⁴⁴

Seasonal troop movements that accompanied large-scale training exercises, particularly in the summer and fall, provided USMLM with the best insight into GSFG's standard maneuver practices in the mid-1950s.¹⁴⁵ Voucher reports likewise reveal that maneuver patterns were an important priority. Considerable attention was devoted to the quality of troop coordination. This was mostly judged to be weak, as inadequacies were observed in command, control, and communication procedures, orientation training, and screening of movements during relocations.¹⁴⁶ The greatest emphasis in a given report, however, was on verifying the extent to which maneuver activity conformed to established norms. Reports make it clear that by 1954 Voucher had established what appeared to be the GSFG's annual maneuver schedule.¹⁴⁷ Voucher carefully charted the presence or absence of movements, together with their location and duration, and commented on whether these "suggest a departure from the training pattern" generally observed during the present season.¹⁴⁸ The story of a former USMLM officer indicates a similar approach.

The international situation in [October] 1956 was such that the Soviet forces in Germany remained in their garrisons [despite the fact that normally that month marked high training season.] The Suez crisis, the Hungarian events, and unrest in Poland all seemingly kept the Soviet troops in their barracks ready to move if ordered without

obstacles to communicating the news immediately to USAREUR (USMLM did not have a direct communication channel to Washington). According to Spahr, officers in the mid-1950s or at any point during the Cold War "had no radios or communication devices while on tours," if they reached the Potsdam House, their phone lines would likely have been cut, and the Soviets would have "prevented us from going to West Berlin" to communicate from USMLM's Berlin HQ. Lajoie and Shalikashvili suggest that USMLM could have delivered timely warning of a surprise attack.

¹⁴⁴ Author's interview with Major-General Roland Lajoie.

¹⁴⁵ Author's interview with Bill Spahr.

¹⁴⁶ In "motor movements... there appears to be no conception of the screened movement of a column. Units have been observed using road guides and symbols... and guides are posted at every [major intersection]. This is fine for one small unit, but would be chaos if many units had to use the same road." (Voucher, June 1954, 15).

¹⁴⁷ "In normal years, the months of September and October were months during which the Soviet Army conducted annual maneuvers..." (Spahr, "The Potsdam Mission 1955-1958"). As another example, a *September* 1954 Voucher report confidently projects that "before the middle of *October*... maneuvers will have terminated with all participating units back at their home stations" (emphasis added) (Voucher, September 1954, 8).

¹⁴⁸ Voucher report, August 1954, 8.

having to wait for the return from a training exercise.... Nevertheless we continued to tour [areas] of particular interest to USAREUR. One day... en route to our first target, as we were passing the city of Dresden on the autobahn we encountered a Soviet Pobeda sedan going in the opposite direction... when we were observed from the Soviet vehicle, the vehicle was turned around and started after us, going on the wrong way on its side of the autobahn[.] The Soviet reaction was so extraordinary that we decided to return to Dresden by another route to find out what had stimulated the passengers in the Pobeda. As we approached the city, it soon became clear that major elements of the tank division that was stationed in the city had moved... What we had discovered was the movement of some of the 20 [GSFG] divisions... to the Polish border to provide emphasis to Khrushchev's demands on Poland's new leadership headed by Wladyslaw Gomulka.¹⁴⁹

Voucher reports suggest that it was also considered important whether units had returned to their "home stations," presumably because failure to do so may be indicative of crucial dispositional changes or, more importantly still, of plans more ambitious than a simple regular exercise.¹⁵⁰ As a former Mission officer recounts, "most maneuver areas were far enough from the border that we did not feel that a given maneuver exercise [would turn into a real invasion], but we always had to be careful."¹⁵¹

The last aspect of maneuver activity that was of significance to Voucher was its effect on GSFG's disposition pattern in East Germany, the OOB. Reports frequently referenced estimates of "major dispositional changes," such as "shifting about among major elements of the 25th Guards Tank Division," and these were usually based on the failure of the particular unit to return to its kaserne after an exercises.¹⁵² To establish relocations that occurred during the low-key training season and were not as visible as large-scale exercises Voucher looked for relatively small indicators. Sightings of boxcars, howitzers, and household equipment being loaded on flat cars, soldiers on station platforms with suitcases, or "Soviet troops... shopping in Potsdam in unusual numbers, buying food, and carrying sacks [were all marked as] the tip-off for an impending move."¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Spahr, "The Potsdam Mission 1955-1958," 3-4.

¹⁵⁰ Voucher report, September 1954, 8.

¹⁵¹ Author's interview with Bill Spahr.

¹⁵² Voucher report, November 1954, 5; June 54, 16.

¹⁵³ Ibid., November 1954, 5, 11.

Weapons and Equipment

Opportunities to observe Soviet weapons and equipment frequently presented themselves in the vicinity of kasernes during or after large-scale exercises and maneuvers and at airfields. All weapons were of interest: from the latest model of “carbine-rifle [that] may alter considerably the fire power capabilities of the Soviet Army” to a “new Soviet 7-ton amphibious truck” to a “new armored vehicle [resembling a] modified... T-34 tank” to “new MIG-17 type aircraft.”¹⁵⁴ Old equipment was not forgotten either. New details were noted on otherwise familiar tanks, radar installations were treated extensively in every report with continuous updates on their numbers and locations, and “gas masks,” indicative of CBR training, drew particular attention.¹⁵⁵ Coverage of air capabilities was limited, but the progression of reports through 1954 demonstrates increasing Voucher interest in two things: the development and “increase[ing] strength” of the East German Air Force and significant numerical expansion of Soviet bomber aircraft, the IL-28s.¹⁵⁶ While the IL-28s were tactical aircraft, it is interesting to note the parallel between Voucher’s increased attention to these bombers and the perceived strategic “bomber gap” raging in Washington at this very time.¹⁵⁷ More than any other subject of interest Voucher photographed new equipment sighted in the GDR, and on some occasions also used hand-drawn “memory sketch[es]” as visual aid to its readers at USAREUR and elsewhere.¹⁵⁸

Impressive air capabilities aside, Voucher’s overall judgment about GSFG equipment was far from flattering, much like its verdict on Soviet training. Its conclusions were that “almost all equipment of the Soviet Army is comparatively old”¹⁵⁹ and that the GSFG’s “field communications instruments” – technology that is vital for waging a war – “appears to be far behind U.S. both in number and... quality.”¹⁶⁰ It is worth noting that these assessments came at a time when the conventional wisdom in Washington had been that the Soviet Union was overtaking the U.S. in terms of the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., June 54, 3; November 1954, 2; August 1954, 3.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., November 1954, 13.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., November 1954, 3, 34.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., November 1954, 34. In the November 1954 report, Voucher notes the “doubl[ing of] offensive (bomber) striking force of the [Soviet] Air Army.”

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., October 1954, 4; November 1954, 24-5.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., June 1954, 9.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., June 1954, 10.

quality of its training, equipment, and other capabilities. Because the observations were conducted on not just any Soviet force but the vanguard of Soviet military power, the weaknesses observed there doubtless helped to bring in perspective the capabilities of USSR's other forces.

Economic, Industrial, and Social Intelligence

Although USMLM's "primar[y] focus [was] Soviet order-of-battle," economic, industrial, and social intelligence on East Germany was also pursued, especially if it had any bearing on the adversary's war-faring capacity.¹⁶¹ It was already mentioned that uranium production was an important priority. The state of railway transportation and production of petroleum, oil, and lubricants also required tracking since all these capabilities served a vital transportation role in GSFG exercises and, in the case of war, could become a critical limiting factor in GSFG's capability to propel its forces into NATO territory. Voucher reported on the process of the extensive construction – or postwar reconstruction – of East German railroads at the time, noting for the most part that "construction is still proceeding at a slow rate" and that many lines were relatively primitive and not even "double-tracked."¹⁶² The poor state of the railroads presumably provided assurance to U.S. policy-makers in 1954 that a large scale Soviet attack would be delayed by at least a few more years. On POL issues, several Voucher reports indicated the likelihood of a "shortage of POL transport vehicles in the zone" as well as local fuel shortages.¹⁶³ Reports also briefly commented on industrial production of dual-use materials such as rubber, steel, electricity, and chemicals, as well as on political elections and the state of agriculture.¹⁶⁴ The magnitude of the yearly harvest was estimated, together with the quality and size of an average GSFG soldier's "rations."¹⁶⁵ A very basic "social" indicator such as the presence of "dependents... in... training area[s]" was monitored also: presumably, it was thought that if GSFG officer's families

¹⁶¹ Seman, "Cold War Intelligence," 24.

¹⁶² Voucher report, August 1954, 35-6.

¹⁶³ Ibid., November 1954, 60; August 1954, 39.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., June 1954, 32-7, 42-4.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., October 1954, 33; June 1954, 5 .

were present in East Germany, particularly near military installations, the Soviets harbored no immediate plans for war.¹⁶⁶

USMLM Unit Histories confirm that Mission officers looked for industrial-economic and social intelligence. USMLM provided intelligence on conditions in East Germany during the significant anti-Communist uprising and labor riots in June 1953.¹⁶⁷ At the same time as providing background on society that was for the most part closed to the West, the Mission was able to confirm that Soviet actions to suppress the uprising militarily were “limited” and did not threaten to escalate into a show of force or any other action that could spin out of control into a larger crisis.¹⁶⁸

Liaison:

Although the expansion of USMLM’s intelligence role downgraded the liaison function to secondary status, liaison did not disappear and deserves mention since it technically remained the Mission’s official *raison d’être*. USMLM’s liaison entailed the same two basic duties that had been envisioned in Huebner-Malinin: acting as a communication channel between the Soviet and U.S. armies in Germany and representing U.S. interests in East Germany. The Chief of the Mission (CUSMLM) was generally the main communicator and his point man for regular meetings at GSFG was the Chief of the Soviet External Relations Bureau (SERB) of the Soviet high command, although on particularly important occasions CUSMLM met directly with the CINC GSFG.¹⁶⁹ Even though few, if any, “friendships” were formed as a result of this regular interaction, “pleasant social relations” were maintained even during politically tense periods.¹⁷⁰ USMLM maintained communication with the Soviets throughout the Berlin blockade, when practically “no travel [was] allowed between Berlin and Soviet Zone except those personnel holding passes issued by [the] Soviets.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., June 1954, 20.

¹⁶⁷ Historical synopsis of the USMLM, “The Way It Was: 1951-1954,” The USMLM Association, www.usmlm.org; Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 48.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Geraghty, *Brixmis*, 40; Author’s interview with Bill Spahr.

¹⁷⁰ Mussgnug, *Alliierte Militaermissionen*, 104.

¹⁷¹ Department of the Army Top Secret “Chronology of Developments Re: Berlin Situation, Part I” (RG 319/270/15/31/3 Army Staff P&O, Decimal File 1946-8, File 381 TS, Box 103).

In the early and mid-1950s, the Mission continued with its official role as “provide[r of] direct communications between the commanders-in-chief.”¹⁷² A former USMLM officer felt that his CUSMLM Colonel Ewery Bellonby (1955-8) had made a “particular [effort to] stress... the liaison aspect” and that this “[probably] had a [positive] effect on our relations with the Soviets.”¹⁷³ Its most important effect was in lowering tensions over USMLM’s intelligence collection (which, needless to say, made the Soviets nervous), if not in lowering official restrictions on USMLM touring, which, although relatively minor compared to later years, were becoming increasingly cumbersome.¹⁷⁴ Aside from regular liaison between CUSMLM and SERB, which occurred several times a week, USMLM was instrumental in arranging “courtesy visits exchanged by the commanding general of... USAREUR... and the CINC of the [GSFG],” switching the meeting place between GSFG Headquarters at Potsdam and USAREUR HQ in Heidelberg.¹⁷⁵

The channel was also used to delicately express official reactions to contemporary political developments. For the period 1955-7, a former officer testifies that “we subtly let the Soviets know when we didn’t like something” either by not hosting parties to which the Soviets usually expected invitations or by semi-boycotting their festivities, a tactic used during the Berlin blockade and the Czechoslovakia events of 1968.¹⁷⁶

Representing the rights of US citizens was the most grim and thankless of all liaison duties, since it mostly implied “collecting dead and wounded, repatriating

¹⁷² Spahr, “The Potsdam Mission 1955-1958,” 1.

¹⁷³ Author’s interview with Bill Spahr.

¹⁷⁴ Author’s interview with Bill Spahr. The main forms of restrictions on the Missions were the Permanent Restricted Area (PRA), Temporary Restricted Area (TRA) and Mission Restriction Sign (MRS) (Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 28). They generally “prohibited the Western missions from using certain roads” and sometimes whole blocks of territory, which usually roughly corresponded to GSFG training areas (Lough, “The Military Liaison Missions in Germany,” 261; Interview with Bill Spahr).

Various factors shaped the size and duration of restrictions. In 1951, when the first restrictions appeared and Soviets “issued a map to the USMLM which showed areas totaling about 1,900 square miles [out of a total of 41,654 sq. miles] in which the mission was restricted from traveling,” the reason is generally accepted to be the Korean War (Lough 261). In 1953, part of the leniency with restrictions has been attributed by some to the fact that “the Soviets [were] in a state of political shock after Stalin’s death” (Geraghty, Brixmis, 63). The stabilization of restrictions in 1954-7 was perhaps due to improved liaison relations between USMLM and SERB.

¹⁷⁵ Spahr, “The Potsdam Mission 1955-1958,” 1.

¹⁷⁶ Author’s interview with Bill Spahr.

See Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 105-6 for description of USMLM semi-boycott of Soviet events during these two times of international tension.

prisoners and cleaning up... debris” after accidents involving U.S. civilians and military personnel in East Germany.¹⁷⁷ Many casualties involved crashed U.S. Air Force (USAF) manned aircraft, rammed or shot down while on their regular missions to reconnoiter Warsaw Pact air defenses and “identify targets” to which the U.S. nuclear bombers would deliver their strikes in the event of war.¹⁷⁸

USMLM’s Contributions 1953-7:

After presenting the details of USMLM’s work over the 1953-7 period, it seems appropriate to step back and ask whether this work in any way furthered the goals set out by the military and political decision-makers. If it can be assumed that Voucher was USMLM, did the Mission fulfill its own touring objectives as set out in the 1954 reports?

The information obtained by the Mission, as gleaned through Voucher reports and interviews with former officers, generally match USAREUR’s target list. The intelligence gathered on GSFG disposition and strength, training, maneuvers, weapons and equipment, industrial production, and socio-economic conditions paralleled quite closely official intelligence requirement on Soviet “capabilities for offensive action,” including, specifically, GSFG “activities, equipment, and personnel.”¹⁷⁹ The particular strength of Voucher’s “on-the-ground” reporting appears to have been in providing a realistic picture of the enemy’s quantitative as well as qualitative war potential, from weapons and installations to training and maneuvers to basic troop morale – its weaknesses as well as its strengths. This surely gave a more objective understanding of the enemy than a simple bean count of weapons and troops – although this too remained an important priority.¹⁸⁰ The June 1954 report counseled that “it would be extremely

¹⁷⁷ Geraghty, Brixmis, 39.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.. It will be recalled that during this period, U.S. did not have operational spy satellites – although, as Gaddis shows, they were conceived sometime in 1955 – and reconnaissance planes were the only means of obtaining information about the adversary’s territory. This was also an era when the U.S. relied on a nuclear bomber force, rather than ballistic missiles, to deliver a strike against the adversary in case of war (Gaddis, in George et al, U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation, 354-5).

¹⁷⁹ Murphy, Battleground, 424.

¹⁸⁰ The numeric strength of the GSFG was held to be important throughout the Cold War period. During the 1953-7 period in question Soviet pronouncements at this time about “reduction[s] in their armed forces... [by] 640,000 men... during 1955” heightened the need for “intelligence” to verify the truthfulness of these assertions. (Top Secret memorandum for Admiral Radford, prepared by The Joint Staff, Subject: “U.S.-USSR Observation Military Maneuvers,” 19 July 1956 (RG 218/190/2/16/3 Records of JCS, Admiral Radford File, 1953-7, Box 16).

dangerous to underestimate the combat readiness of the Soviet Army in East Germany[, but] it is... not realistic to contend that the Soviet Army is composed of ‘super men’ and is a highly efficient force.”¹⁸¹

Although contemporary USMLM officers were not provided with a NATO or USAREUR list of “indicators” of a surprise Soviet attack and were not explicitly told to look for them *per se*, the comprehensive intelligence that the Mission transmitted through its reports *contained* the basic indicators without explicitly *stating* them.¹⁸² According to a former member of USMLM, officers “just reported what [they] saw” and left it to “the Intelligence Division of USAREUR [to] put the indicators together.”¹⁸³ Simply put, the job of each USMLM officer was to spot detail – specific targets – without often knowing what other tour officers saw, where USAREUR looked at a big picture and could more easily identify patterns that amounted to one or more “indicators.”

Circumstantial factors propelled USMLM’s relative importance as intelligence gatherer in East Germany throughout this period. As Soviet controls over access to East Germany increased, the capacity or accuracy of intelligence agencies other than USMLM declined and many became dependent on USMLM for their operations. The Mission, naturally, was very effective in supplementing other *military* intelligence sources. It frequently “confirm[ed] reports from other agencies” on specific items of military interest in East Germany, and the confirmations could be negative as well as positive as demonstrated by the following Voucher report:

Voucher takes exception to the statement of the “reliable observer” and his “extremely hazy” photographs purporting to show a twin-jet fighter on Parohim airbase. To date Voucher has found no evidence to support reports of any jet fighter aircraft in the GDR... Unless specialized equipment is used it is almost impossible to determine structural differences on aircraft that are closely similar to each other at a distance.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Voucher report, June 1954, 4.

¹⁸² Author’s interview with Bill Spahr.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., October 1954, 3, 34.

Voucher's contribution to civilian intelligence during this period is more ambiguous.¹⁸⁵ Although USMLM's relations with CIA in this period were, by all accounts, "problem[atic]," there is also evidence of some collaboration.¹⁸⁶ In September 1955 USMLM played an instrumental role in helping CIA's Berlin Operations Base (BOB) to arrange a meeting between BOB men and Col. Pyotr Popov, one of most productive CIA sources in the GSFG.¹⁸⁷

The fact that USMLM was used to confirm other agencies' intelligence in itself may be a comment on its perceived high reliability. Most other intelligence on East Germany was obtained either from recruited agents or from planes flying in the West Germany-West Berlin air corridor, and the reliability of both sources was limited.¹⁸⁸ Agents were in most cases citizens of the Soviet bloc, while photographic evidence could be "hazy" and inconclusive.¹⁸⁹ USMLM, on the other hand, was staffed by Americans, operated on the ground, and could take close-up pictures and even approach objects when unobserved and tinker with the equipment.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Author's interview with Bill Spahr. Spahr "c[ould] not comment" on the nature of USMLM's interaction with civilian intelligence in East Germany.

¹⁸⁶ Murphy, Battleground, 11.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 236. At this time [1954-5] U-2 or satellite photography was not yet available, and that information from the occasional defector was receive only irregularly."

¹⁸⁹ East German sources were said to be "prone to exaggerate strength estimates of Soviet troops." (Secret urgent cable to Chief of Staff U.S. Army, Intelligence Division, from HQ EUCOM/Huebner, 18 April 1948 (RG 319/270/7/19/5 Army Staff, G-2 Messages, 1948, Germany, Box 21).

Among the other intelligence sources that the U.S. had established (in late 1940s) were SIGINT facilities in Berlin adapted to picking up information from the surrounding area of East Germany (Eichner, Headquarters Germany, 217) and the Berlin tunnel after 1954 (Murphy, Battleground, 236). In the long-term, however, both had drawbacks: the SIGINT was limited as far as covering communications at remote training areas deep inside East Germany, and the Berlin tunnel, which had originally produced "a large amount of... military intelligence as well as coverage of political and scientific-technical targets," was blown by 1956.

¹⁹⁰ Author's interview with Bill Spahr.

Chapter 3: Behind the Iron Curtain, 1957-61

The second Eisenhower administration, 1957-1961, saw a considerable deterioration in U.S.-Soviet relations and a corresponding negative effect on the U.S. Military Liaison Mission. Following the formalization of Europe's division into two military camps with the formation of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 were key events shaping the intensifying superpower standoff, including USSR's launch of the world's first ICBM and artificial satellite in 1957 and the Berlin crisis of 1958-62. The launch of sputnik and related fears regarding a potential strategic "missile gap" prompted the U.S to increase its nuclear deployment in Europe, causing the Soviet Union in turn to follow suit in 1959.¹⁹¹ The Berlin crisis, culminating in the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, marked a tremendous watershed in U.S.-Soviet political relations that at several points threatened a serious military crisis.¹⁹² Khrushchev's visit to the U.S. in the fall of 1959 ushered in a "sprit of Camp David," however the period of "thaw" in U.S.-Soviet relations was brief. It was abruptly terminated by several major events, including the notorious May 1960 U-2 incident, the abortive May 1960 quadripartite conference, and the October 1960 United Nations Summit where Khrushchev banged his shoe on the rostrum and declared to the U.S. that "We shall bury you."¹⁹³

Similarly to the last chapter, this section traces how the work of the U.S. Military Liaison Mission evolved, how it adapted to or remained separate from the general climate of superpower relations, and how its intelligence and liaison functions furthered policy goals in Europe – this time during the increasingly tense, crisis-ridden 1957-61 period. Unlike in the last chapter, however, the Mission reports I compare to contemporary intelligence needs stem explicitly from USMLM.

¹⁹¹ Dean, "Berlin in a Divided Germany," in George et al, U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation, 90. Among the specific systems deployed directly in response to the perceived "missile gap" were the Thor and Jupiter ballistic missiles.

¹⁹² Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 84-5; Christopher Andrew, For the President's Eyes Only, 1996, 240, 269; Dean, "Berlin in a Divided Germany," in George et al, 90; Slusser, Robert M. The Berlin Crisis of 1961, passim. During Berlin Wall crisis Kennedy put the chances of nuclear warfare at "about one in five." (Andrew, 269).

¹⁹³ Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 92, 89.

Organizational and Operational Features after 1957:

By the beginning of the second Eisenhower administration in January 1957 USMLM had yet again undergone a series of adaptations. These, while perhaps not as extensive as those over its first few years of operations, were significant. Many of the changes occurred in response to the intensification of restrictions on Mission travel after 1956, both through physical “tailing” and map restrictions. The duration of an average tour increased from an average of 1-2 days during mid-1950s to 2-3 and sometimes 6-7 days in the late 1950s.¹⁹⁴ The idea, apparently, was that through longer touring USMLM had better chances of losing its East German “tails” who waited outside the Potsdam House premises to “cling” on to Mission cars. Officers could also more comfortably “camp” at certain difficult-to-penetrate destinations several days at a time in order to avoid risking multiple shorter tours. Tour vehicles had undergone corresponding modifications to permit longer and more elusive touring: vehicles were equipped with additional fuel tanks, “toggle switches” for independent control of brake lights to confuse Soviet or East German “tails” at night, and in general were made “safer and more rugged” to withstand the “constant off-road beatings.”¹⁹⁵

Equipment aside, Mission officers also became more ingenious in their tour tactics in order to skirt some of the increased restrictions. Decoy teams were sent out to minimize tailing of a chosen “penetrator” team.¹⁹⁶ More inventive Mission officers discovered that if they drove along a typical Soviet wooden board fence that usually surrounded GSFG compounds “at approximately 25 mph, the cracks between the boards merged into a homogenous space that gave the USMLM tour officers a clear view of what existed behind the fence.”¹⁹⁷ Improved “inter-mission coordination” combined resources to provide “around-the-clock saturation coverage” of Soviet OOB.¹⁹⁸ More

¹⁹⁴ USMLM report, October-November 1959, 6. In one of its reports to State Department the Berlin Mission noted that a “USMLM... tour moved into area north of that restricted [just] prior to... 13 July [time when a restriction was supposed to take effect] out of which no exit possible until restriction expires [on] 21 July. Tour prepared to stay for duration.” [Confidential cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 15 July 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888)].

¹⁹⁵ Author’s interviews with Major-General Roland Lajoie and Major Nathan Barrick; Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 27; Lajoie, “The Last Casualty of the Cold War,” *The Intelligencer*, 2002, 5.

¹⁹⁶ Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 26.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26. In USMLM jargon, the phenomenon was termed the “25 mile per hour fence.”

¹⁹⁸ USMLM Report, October-November 1959, 6 (RG 319/631/35/42/1-2, Records of the Army Staff, G-2 Intel, ID File 950717, Box 995).

generally, this period saw the emergence of a unique sort of USMLM officer – the “tour type” – who was highly professional and proficient in language and diplomatic skills, who had an acute sense of “judgment” and the stamina for exciting “James Bond style cat and mouse auto chases” as well as incredibly long boring waits.¹⁹⁹

Observing the Soviet Threat, 1957-61:

As in the last chapter, this section demonstrates USMLM’s likely value through a comparison between the intelligence it supplied and the perceived intelligence needs of the U.S. military, particularly the key commands in the European theater. The 1957-61 period was characterized by some noteworthy changes in USAREUR’s and NATO’s conception of the GSFG threat. New intelligence requirements were added to the “indicator” list and the threat was perceived to be more urgent now, both because of the heightened tensions in superpower relations and because of the dramatic modernization and improvement of GSFG capabilities. In 1959 USAREUR appraised the GSFG as an “*extremely* capable, well-trained, and well-equipped group of forces” (emphasis added).²⁰⁰

Beyond advanced conventional technologies, new missile and even nuclear capabilities were now added to the U.S. military’s “watch list.” Missile technology had been in the USSR’s possession since the late 1940s, but the post-1957 perception of a frightening “missile gap” – even if the threat was more intercontinental than tactical – may have sensitized military planners to theater missile technology in the GSFG, still the largest and most modern Soviet force. By the late 1950s it was correctly suspected that the Soviets were beginning to introduce tactical nuclear weapons into the GSFG arsenal, completely changing the dynamic of any potential NATO-GSFG battle. In 1958 the “most *dangerous* threat” was perceived at NATO to be a “*surprise attack with nuclear weapons*” (emphasis added).²⁰¹ If nuclear surprise attack was the most dangerous threat, the “most *likely* circumstance leading to [war] in Europe” was believed to be “war

¹⁹⁹ Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 18; Author’s interviews with Lajoie and Spahr.

²⁰⁰ Secret USAREUR Monthly Intelligence Summary, July-September 1959, 3, 2 (RG 549/490/25/25/7 Records of USAREUR “Intelligence Publications 1950-64,” Box 79).

²⁰¹ NATO Military Planning, 2 April 1958, 2 (Public Records Office, England, DEFE 5/83; Declassified documents collection, CWIHP).

resulting from... *miscalculation*” (emphasis added).²⁰² This meant scrutinizing even harder the familiar military “indicators” – disposition, training, maneuvering, equipment, and “[detectable] build-up[s]” of forces in East Germany with the additional elements of nuclear and missile technology.²⁰³ An even sharper eye was now required to perceive differences between regular training activity and posturing. Finally, a notable change in U.S. assessment of the threat from the mid-1950s is the unprecedented attention paid to the growing East German forces.

The USMLM’s monthly reports (April 1959-June 1960) presented in this section were very similar in substance and style to the older Voucher documents. Their bulk consisted of sections on GSFG and East German Army (EGA) activities and equipment, and a section on economic, social and political intelligence on East Germany.²⁰⁴ Their main distinction from Voucher was that they were longer and included additional sections on liaison and touring conditions. The largest intelligence-related section on Soviet ground force activity was broken into 4 subsections relating to training, order of battle, technical, and anti-aircraft and electronics. The remaining three intelligence sections addressed Soviet and East German Air activity, the East German Army, and socio-economic issues. Each of the intelligence sections will be treated in the same order in the ensuing section. Liaison will be discussed separately later in this chapter.²⁰⁵

GSFG Order of Battle

The Soviet and East German OOB – the disposition, numeric strength and condition of their respective forces – was of great interest to USMLM just as to Voucher. Given the belief at NATO that “miscalculation” was the most likely trigger of war on the European continent, information on the adversary’s OOB – the disposition and level of mobilization of his troops – was of critical importance. Due to USMLM’s accumulated knowledge on enemy forces in East Germany over the years, a large part of its reports

²⁰² USAREUR Special Intelligence Estimate, 1 February 1959, 2 (RG 319, file 950871, Boxes 1155-1156; declassified document collection on CWIHP website).

²⁰³ USAREUR Intelligence Estimate, 1 January 1962 (RG 319, file 950871, Boxes 1155-1156; declassified document collection on CWIHP website).

²⁰⁴ All USMLM Reports cited in this chapter come from RG 319/631/35/42/1-2, Records of the Army Staff, G-2 Intel, ID File 950717, Box 995.

²⁰⁵ Because observations of Soviet and East German navy were scarce and generally included of military value this section will be omitted.

confirmed previously established OOB. At times, reports also made checks on suspicious installations reported by “other... sources and agencies.”²⁰⁶ As with Voucher, sometimes the Mission confirmed positively and sometimes negatively. On one occasion, for instance, it was able to show that a Soviet underground installation that had caused the suspicion of another agency was a “vegetable and fruit storage” facility rather than an ammunition storage dump.²⁰⁷ Most of all, USMLM looked for “rather unusual” changes in established patterns of mobilization or disposition of troops and equipment.²⁰⁸ Like Voucher, it paid close attention to license plates for indication of the original base of a given unit.²⁰⁹ Now and then it uncovered a previously “unlisted... small... Soviet kaserne” or provided further evidence on new camouflaged installations, in one case showing that a concealed installation was in fact a “missile site.”²¹⁰

Consistent with increasing attention to the presence of missile technology in East Germany, any OOB evidence relating to missile capabilities was of particular interest. One item to catch USMLM’s close attention was a missile corps in GSFG whose existence had been hitherto unknown. In March 1960 USMLM reported the sighting of “new Soviet insignia [with] a missile-shaped object superimposed on four crossed lightening flashes” on the uniforms of a few GSFG soldiers, which led it to suspect the “presence of a new branch of service, Rocket Troops, in the GSFG.”²¹¹ Over the next several months USMLM reported more sightings of the “new... Rocket Launchers” at various kasernes and by June already was able to confirm that a “Rocket Launcher Regiment” was indeed a new separate branch of the Soviet military and that in the GSFG it was attached to the Third Guards Army.²¹² Soviet military periodicals, to which the Mission had special access, provided an additional source to support its verdict.²¹³ The fact that the presence of the rocket launchers was given particular note in the OOB section is not surprising; it was an element that indicated increasing Soviet emphasis on missile technology and that could significantly impact the overall strength of the GSFG.

²⁰⁶ USMLM Report, January 1960, 19.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., January 1960, 20 ; August-September 1959, 45.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., May 1959, 15; August-September 1959, 46.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., July 1959, 17.

²¹⁰ Ibid., April 1959, 15-16; August-September 1959, 46, 47.

²¹¹ Ibid., March 1960, 33.

²¹² Ibid., May 1959, 15; June 1959, 22.

²¹³ Ibid., March 1960, 33.

GSFG Training and Maneuvers

GSFG training was a crucial factor on USMLM's "watch list," as it gave information on "the enemy's SOPs [standard operating procedures], maneuver methods, manpower, and form of equipment" – important considerations in a potential war.²¹⁴ Like Voucher, USMLM gave separate treatment to local and large-scale training, and differentiated various types of training by the season: high-level exercises were generally in the summer (June-July) and fall (September and October), and local at other times. At the low-level, USMLM looked to confirm that the pattern of training followed the "accepted [pattern] for this time of the year" – and it generally did.²¹⁵ Among the specific items USMLM watched for ranged from "road marches, driver schooling, [and] map exercises," to "physical training, small arms firing[,] training with gas masks," and "dummy grenade throwing" – all practiced in "[kasernes] and in adjacent training areas."²¹⁶ More advanced individual unit exercises included river crossing exercises, tank support to rifle firing, and "AA [anti-aircraft] firing details."²¹⁷ Road marches were deemed particularly rewarding for observing equipment since they exposed the troops or equipment being transported to full view, sometimes for extended periods of time.²¹⁸ Although this is not stated explicitly, USMLM's descriptions of local training make it clear that GSFG's sophistication in this area had dramatically progressed in comparison to the early or mid-1950s.

Local training was watched through the lens of how it "prepar[ed the forces] for the commencement of training" on a larger scale.²¹⁹ Seasonal maneuvers stood out as the most important observation target for USMLM since they presented "the high[est] state of combat readiness of the GSFG and... the most critical period in the event of possible hostilities against the West."²²⁰ Observations of Command Post Exercises (CPXs) were still keenly observed, particularly if they were "GSFG-wide" and thus indicative of the effectiveness of GSFG coordination and communications technology in the event of

²¹⁴ Author's interview with Bennett McCutcheon.

²¹⁵ USMLM Report, June 1960, 17.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Apr '59, 11; May 1959, 6; August-September 1959, 20; January 1960, 15, 16; May 1960, 15.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, May 1959, 7; June 1959, 18.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, July 1959, 16.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Apr '59, 11; May '59, 6.

²²⁰ USAREUR Intelligence Summary, September 1959, 2.

war.²²¹ In addition, USMLM's detection in the late 1950s of "EGA participation" in CPXs was doubtless an important piece of intelligence to U.S. military planners who were interested in understanding the effectiveness of integration among the Warsaw Pact forces and commands.²²²

Beyond the CPXs, large-scale maneuvers testing the speed and mutual support under specific conditions presented USMLM with the most detailed insight into Soviet military doctrine and capabilities. The Mission's descriptions of two such maneuvers in September 1959 are representative of the value of their study to Western observers. The first maneuver (September 16-19) was one-sided and its centerpiece was a river crossing by amphibious vehicles whose goal was to secure a bridgehead in enemy territory on the opposite river bank.²²³ The river crossing, according to USMLM, was preceded by "two simulated atomic detonations" several kilometers beyond the bridgehead and three "bombing and strafing²²⁴ run[s] by... FRESCO aircraft."²²⁵ Once the amphibious assault began it was supported by heavy artillery fire and tactical air support by "six HOUND helicopters" until the crossing site was secure.²²⁶ The second exercise (September 19-25) was two-sided and entailed an "aggressor" mounting a "surprise attack" on "defender" forces by means of crossing a major water obstacle, seizing a bridgehead, and advancing "swift[ly] into enemy territory."²²⁷ The operation was supported by heavy artillery fire (using "flash-sound simulators") and "exchange of atomic strikes... simulated by a heavy explosion [and] rising orange-red column[s]": the first in the area occupied by the aggressor and the second in the defender's area.²²⁸

Of key importance to Western military planners would have been USMLM's observations of GSFG strengths and weaknesses revealed by the exercises. Among the weaknesses observed both times were "jam-up of equipment and personnel [at] the crossing site [and] on the hostile bank," with a USMLM comment to its readers that in

²²¹ USMLM Reports, June 1959, 17, 19.

²²² Ibid., June 1959, 17.

²²³ Ibid., August-September 1959, 24.

²²⁴ Strafing is "the delivery of automatic weapons fire by aircraft on ground targets." (DOD Dictionary of Military Terms, <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>).

²²⁵ USMLM Report, August-September 1959, 26.

²²⁶ Ibid., August-September 1959, 25, 27, 24.

²²⁷ Ibid., August-September 1959, 31.

²²⁸ Ibid., August-September 1959, 33, 35.

case of war this may present “lucrative atomic and conventional artillery targets.”²²⁹ In the second exercise USMLM notes several more problems, including insufficient deployment of the defensive force,²³⁰ lack of protection on the flanks by anti-tank and infantry elements, “poor... column control,” “little enthusiasm for the maneuver” among the troops, “no effort at dispersion or camouflage” of moving columns, “no evidence of any measures taken to protect against [atomic] radiation” that had been allegedly used in battle, and an unrealistic simulation of battle casualties.²³¹ These weaknesses in training would have provided a significant picture of the adversary’s vulnerabilities in battle, most notably in atomic warfare and in air attacks on the flanks of the attacking force. Enemy strengths of interest to military planners would have been the “excellent coordination between ground and tactical air forces[,] close coordination between atomic, conventional artillery, air-borne and tactical air in river crossing operations,” and effective use of “pyrotechnics for control, movement, and location of assault element.”²³² In describing the second exercise, USMLM also notes the “excellence” of GSFG’s equipment in showing a “minimal amount of breakdown” and the “remarkable endurance” of the Soviet troops in performing a 48-hour non-stop maneuver.²³³

Besides clarifying GSFG’s tactical strengths and strategies, USMLM’s observations would have added to the military planners’ understanding of the adversary’s broader, strategic concepts and power. Firstly, they would have added to their appreciation of the fact that Soviet military doctrine was not necessarily offensive. In the September 19-25 exercise the “defender” forces won the mock battle and their tactics, despite their possible offensive appearance (as, in the first use of atomic weapons) were probably defensive in concept.²³⁴ The 16-19 September exercise may have been offensive, given its one-sided nature, but may also have presented a similar exercise in *counteroffense*. If this reading of the Soviet military doctrine was right – which,

²²⁹ Ibid., August-September 1959, 30.

²³⁰ Deployment is the “positioning of forces into a formation for battle” (DOD Dictionary of Military Terms).

²³¹ USMLM Report, August-September 1959, 38, 41, 40.

²³² Ibid., August-September 1959, 30.

²³³ Ibid., August-September 1959, 33, 41.

²³⁴ Thomas Wolfe notes that Soviet military journals in the early and mid-1960s described the point of an early nuclear strike as being “to *seize* the initiative from the enemy,” (emphasis added) implying that originally they would have been on the defensive. (Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 199).

according to experts on this time period, it was – it could have provided reassurance to NATO and USAREUR that surprise attack was indeed not the most likely cause of an East-West confrontation.²³⁵ Secondly, the observations provided confirmation of GSFG’s possession of atomic weapons by this time (the September 1959 exercises were among the first citings) and information on that army’s tactical atomic concept, in particular the GSFG’s willingness to employ nuclear weapons in battle, the quality of its troop training for this warfare, and the expected timing and placement of its attacks.²³⁶ Thirdly and related, the magnitude of Soviet nuclear capabilities would have been clarified at a time when practically no means were available to directly witness Soviet atomic explosions: USMLM’s sighting of signs denoting atomically contaminated area of some 20 square kilometers were believed to “indicate the destructive capability of Soviet tactical atomic strike.”²³⁷

Although USMLM tours were not explicitly asked to look for signs of surprise attack, arguably “[they] were doing it all the time.”²³⁸ Large maneuvers and the troops’ subsequent “return to home stations” were watched with the possibility in mind that they might turn into an actual invasion since “if [troops] are already out of [their] garrisons [and] configured in a wartime manner” they are already more than half way to launching a real assault.²³⁹ Given the unpredictability of the international situation and the greatly increased strength and mobility of the GSFG since the early 1950s, these observations would have been important to military planners who more than anything else feared a surprise nuclear attack. In the same vein, USMLM’s observations of the less common practice alerts, demonstrations, and military parades provided information that may have helped to prevent “miscalculation,” the most likely cause of war in NATO’s view. “Practice alert[s],” while rare (the first sighting ever was made in June 1959), were explicitly highlighted by USMLM for their importance, since they imitated the swift mobilization required for real war and thus opened the possibility of grave

²³⁵ According to Wolfe, Soviet literature from early 1960s “invariably ascribed war initiation to the adversary,” among the most common scenarios of being a surprise “war starting under the cover of NATO filed exercises” or “through miscalculation or accident” (Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 198).

²³⁶ USMLM Report, August-September 1959, 39, 41.

²³⁷ Ibid., August-September 1959, 41.

²³⁸ Author’s interview with George Kolt (Officer with USMLM, 1965-7).

²³⁹ USMLM Report, August-September 43; Author’s interview with Lajoie.

“miscalculation” and increased potential for rapid conflict escalation.²⁴⁰ The same was true of “demonstration[s],” that is large shows of force that utilized fake equipment to visually trick the adversary into believing that one’s side has a larger arsenal – objectively or in a given strategic location – than actually is the case.²⁴¹ If aerial reconnaissance photography could fall into this deception trap, USMLM was well placed to distinguish the difference between real and “mock-up weapons”²⁴² and prevent miscalculation.²⁴³

Weapons and Equipment

Large-scale exercises provided the perfect opportunity for USMLM to observe yet another aspect of the GSFG’s strength – its technical equipment.²⁴⁴ Given that the GSFG received the USSR’s “first line military hardware” this intelligence was extremely important.²⁴⁵ A former chief of USMLM recalled that “the introduction of new Soviet fighter aircraft, tanks, artillery or other combat systems... caused excitement within the Missions and generated some friendly competition... to get the first... quality photos.”²⁴⁶ Even though by the late 1950s and early 1960s, after years of touring, the USMLM had established the basic inventory of GSFG’s key vehicles and weapons systems, there were continual crucial additions in the area of nuclear and missile technology, and even modifications to known equipment were watched as they added to GSFG’s overall capabilities.²⁴⁷ Most items of interest were therefore not dramatically different from those in 1954: since so much of Soviet training involved tank battles and river crossings, sightings of tank modifications, new amphibious armored personnel carriers, tanks “equipped with ‘schnorkel’... breathing devices,” and glimpses at “the K-61 interior”

²⁴⁰ Ibid., June 1959, 19.

²⁴¹ Ibid., May 1959, 11; DOD Dictionary of Military Terms.

²⁴² A “mock-up” weapon is a “model, built to scale, of a... weapon, used in studying the construction of, and in testing a new development, or in teaching personnel how to operate the actual... weapon.” (DOD Dictionary of Military Terms).

²⁴³ USMLM report, May 1959, 13.

²⁴⁴ As a USMLM report notes, “the Soviets must show... their equipment when they train in the field... and [we] were on hand to record on paper and film what [we] saw.” (USMLM Report, January 1960, 19).

²⁴⁵ Author’s interview with General Shalikashvili and Major-General Lajoie.

²⁴⁶ Lajoie “The Last Casualty of the Cold War,” 8.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

were still observed with the same intensity as they had been earlier.²⁴⁸ In contrast to the Voucher reports, however, USMLM already found “Soviet equipment [to be] maintained [in] excellent condition [and] much training time devoted to [maintenance] activity.”²⁴⁹

The increasing sophistication of Soviet military technology can be seen from the greatly increased emphasis on field electronic equipment in USMLM reports, particularly their detailed descriptions of GSFG radar systems.²⁵⁰ Radars were merely detecting devices and thus in themselves rather harmless, but they suggested the presence of more significant capabilities: air defense (surface-to-air, SAM) or, more ominously, offensive (guided) missile technology.²⁵¹ In the July 1959 report USMLM noted that its recent sighting of a large unit of deflection pans, generators, and “an unusually massive piece of radar equipment [that is] apparently capable of rotating” signifies that “air-to-ground missile sites are definitely in the East Zone.”²⁵² USMLM’s particular focus on missile sightings may have been in part due to the frenzy of the late 1950s over the intercontinental “missile gap,” but was more likely due to the recent introduction of Soviet tactical missiles to East Germany in the late 1950s.²⁵³ USMLM reports from 1959 are full of “significant missile sighting[s].”²⁵⁴ Most of these were “mock-up missiles” (one batch, USMLM notes, had “extremely good likeness of the [U.S. missile] Honest John”), however there were also sightings of “missile train[s]” containing real offensive Guideline missiles.²⁵⁵ USMLM was careful to investigate the destinations of such missile trains. On one occasion it alerted USAREUR to the movement of a missile train to an area judged to be “well within striking distance of the Berlin air corridors by surface-to-air type missiles.”²⁵⁶

²⁴⁸ USMLM report, April 1959, 18; July, 17, 21.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., January 1960, 18.

²⁵⁰ Spring 1959 reports note the replacement of “TOKEN” radars for more capable “STRIKEOUT/ROCKCAKE combinations” and additions of “FLAT FACE” radars – all relatively new technology (“heretofore FLAT FACE has been observed in only one operational site in the Soviet Zone of Germany”) (USMLM Report, April 1959, 19).

²⁵¹ A radar is “a radio detection device that provides information on range, azimuth, and/or elevation of objects.” (DOD Dictionary of Military Terms).

²⁵² USMLM Report, July 1959, 21.

²⁵³ USAREUR Intelligence Summary, July 1958, 6; Author’s interview with Major-General William Burns.

²⁵⁴ USMLM Report, April 1959, 17.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., December 1959, 10; April 1959, 17.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., April 1960, 5; April 1959, 18.

If conventional missiles presented a significant threat, they paled in comparison with nuclear-tipped missiles. According to a former USMLM member, observation of CBR-related materials or training was a top priority, and this is perhaps not surprising given Eisenhower's concern that his "New Look" strategy and heavy reliance on nuclear deterrence continued to be effective.²⁵⁷ Like Voucher, USMLM was on the lookout for "CBR sightings," although on most occasions it had either "nothing to report" except for periodic cases of "CBR instruction" in kasernes.²⁵⁸ Unlike the Voucher reports, USMLM's notes have nothing to say about the status of Soviet uranium mining in East Germany, perhaps because after the early 1950s the Soviet Union began to mine "really substantial quantities" of uranium within its own territory.²⁵⁹ Former USMLM officers deny that actual tactical nuclear weapons were ever sighted since these were stored under lock and key "deep inside restricted areas."²⁶⁰ That said, however, training for atomic warfare and, especially, the employment of mock-nuclear weapons on *both* the offense (presumably, NATO) and defense (GSFG) sides indicated the end of NATO's monopoly of nuclear weapons on the European continent. The proposition also makes sense in hindsight: GSFG did begin to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in 1959, and it appears that the Mission was indirectly able to confirm this crucial development.²⁶¹

Antiaircraft and Electronics

Antiaircraft (AA) and electronics matters received notably more attention in USMLM's reports than they did in Voucher's, perhaps due to a perceived greater need to learn about Soviet air defenses with the launch of U-2 flights in 1956 or simply the interest in understanding the effectiveness of this hostile capability for the event of a

²⁵⁷ Author's interview with Bennett McCutcheon.

²⁵⁸ USMLM reports, May 1959, 16; December 1959, 8; January 1960, 18; March 1960, 21.

²⁵⁹ Author's conversation with David Holloway, CISAC, Stanford, 29 April 2004.

²⁶⁰ Author's interviews with Lajoie and Kolt. Kolt agrees that USMLM was "not in a position to track nuclear weapons" but points out that USMLM did see convoys which may have carried nuclear materials or nuclear-tipped missiles, and that although "we didn't know whether they were loaded, Soviet security measures [in particular instances] did point to sensitivity of certain activities... What was important was to watch the activities of units with known carriers (missiles or aircraft) for nuclear weapons and better understand how they operated."

²⁶¹ Author's interview with Major-General Burns.

possible war.²⁶² Closest attention was paid to anti-aircraft installations. Unlike Voucher, USMLM reports contained a large separate annex section devoted exclusively to details on the month-to-month disposition, type, and working status of anti-aircraft installations in East Germany.²⁶³ A noteworthy development captured by USMLM reports in 1959 and 1960 is the apparently rapid growth of East German Air Force (EGAF), with signs of extensive Soviet training and handover of certain AA capabilities “[into] East German hands.”²⁶⁴ This observation is supported by historical studies showing that during the late 1950s the Soviet Union indeed began to give particular attention to building up East European capabilities, especially in the area of air defenses.²⁶⁵

Soviet and East German Air Activity

A closely related item of observation was Soviet and East German air activity. Targeted airfields were “allocated routine monthly surveillance [of] flight line[s],” the types and “count [of] aircraft,” activation status of various airfields, and any “devious pattern[s] of aircraft deployments in the Soviet zone.”²⁶⁶ Establishing the air OOB was often difficult as most airfields in East Germany either lay within permanently restricted areas or were buried behind restriction signs. Ingenious tour officers were able to get past these at least in some instances by undertaking “special penetration tours” and “camp[ing]” at airfields for “extended periods of time” to gather the information they needed, rather than risking multiple tours of shorter duration.²⁶⁷ In stark contrast to the Voucher reports, which generally presented the overall state of GSFG training as fairly ineffective, USMLM assesses GSFG and EGAF air capabilities very highly. Reports note the “mobility and combat readiness of Soviet tactical air units,” their impressive “ability... to deploy off of natural surface airstrips [and] to conduct effective tactical maneuvers under minimum operating conditions,” and the notable increase in their

²⁶² Andrew, *For the President’s Eyes Only*, 223. Careful documentation of Soviet air defenses already in the late 1950s suggests that the need was perceived independently of the infamous May 1960 U-2 shoot down, although no doubt the incident galvanized previous efforts.

²⁶³ USMLM reports, April 1959, 20; July 1959, 24; May 1959, 18.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, April 1959, 20; June 1960, 26.

²⁶⁵ Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe*, 148, footnote 60.

²⁶⁶ Geraghty, *Brixmis*, 84; USMLM Report, May 1960, 27, 24.

²⁶⁷ USMLM reports, May 1959, 22, 21; August-September 1959, 54-56.

helicopter and light fighter jet inventory.²⁶⁸ It is worth mentioning here, briefly, that USMLM reports do not refer to the presence of activities of Soviet bomber planes the way Voucher reports did. This may just show that the older IL-28s had been phased out; but it may also demonstrate that the Mission was responding to current policy needs – and turned its attention to other pressing issues soon after alarmist predictions of a “bomber gap” had been scaled down in 1957-58.²⁶⁹

East German Army (EGA)

Although air force was the strongest of East German armed services, the East German Army deserves a mention because it too significantly increased in strength since the mid-1950s. Although EGA training and equipment was predictably more low-key than those of GSFG, USMLM paid increasing attention to EGA because by the late 1950s it began to receive large quantities of new equipment (including new “amphibious jeep[s]” and “new gas masks”) from the Soviets and, by 1960, was “accept[ed by GSFG] as a junior partner [with extensive access to GSFG] facilities and... joint training at a low level.”²⁷⁰ The latter development was important because, as already noted, U.S. military planners wanted to understand the cohesiveness of Warsaw Pact forces.²⁷¹ As it turned out, USMLM’s information was accurate since contemporary historical documentation shows that precisely around 1960-61 military USSR’s cooperation with Warsaw Pact countries was extended from a “primary emphasis on air defense to a more active joint role in defensive and offensive theater operations[, including] joint training.”²⁷²

Economic, Social, and Industrial Intelligence

Economic-industrial and social intelligence was generally emphasized far less by USMLM than were other forms of intelligence. Basic elements of the civil economy, including road conditions or progress of “collectivization... in East Germany” and the political outlook of German civilians, were noted in passing but this information was “lower on the scale of priorities” since, unlike military intelligence, it was easier to

²⁶⁸ Ibid., May 1959, 22; August-September 1959, 57; January 1960, 24; July 1959, 28.

²⁶⁹ Andrew, *For the President’s Eyes Only*, 224.

²⁷⁰ USMLM report, May 1959, 28, 32.

²⁷¹ Ibid., May 1960, 33.

²⁷² Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe*, 150.

collect by other means.²⁷³ While most of the economic and social intelligence was “anecdotal” – things overheard or seen, briefly, while on the road – some of the intelligence contributed to an understanding of the adversary’s war fighting capacity.²⁷⁴ This included intelligence on Soviet efforts to lay POL pipelines in various regions of East Germany in order to deliver the “large quantities of fuel necessary to support” various military exercises, and on East German railways, which were, much more than in the mid-1950s, used for movement of weapons, vehicles, and troops.²⁷⁵

Restrictions

If the military indicators USMLM managed to observe in East Germany were important, so too were those it did not. Restrictions on Mission travel, which had greatly increased since 1951 and increased even more after 1958 following the onset of the Berlin Crisis, were “often a tip off” to important military activities.²⁷⁶ Particularly significant were impositions of Temporary Restricted Areas (TRA).²⁷⁷ The TRAs generally lasted 3 to 30 days and indicated that something important was taking place in the area, whether it was transportation of particularly sensitive equipment, a large-scale exercise, or even possible preparations for war.²⁷⁸ It is very clear that Mission members themselves thought this way about the TRAs: a March 1959 report mentions that in conjunction with the “first fairly definite sighting of the rail import of Soviet Guideline missiles” USMLM is making “special efforts” to detect the possible installation of the material by watching for “unusual measures at securing [or restricting] an area.”²⁷⁹ Although the TRAs could at times be deceptive – an April 1959 report, for instance, noted that “despite the restrictions... there are no positive indicators that a large scale exercise or CPX” – they triggered a greater attentiveness to those areas by both USMLM,

²⁷³ Mussgnug, *Alliierte Militaermissionen*, 101; USMLM Report, June 1960, 36; Author’s interview with Bennett McCutcheon. According to one author, a great deal of the work that CIA’s Berlin Operations Base performed was gathering “routine economic data” on East Germany. (Wyden, 109).

²⁷⁴ Author’s interview with McCutcheon.

²⁷⁵ USMLM report, May 1959, 11, 15.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, February 1960, 6, 9, 10; Author’s interview with George Kolt.

²⁷⁷ Lough, “The Military Liaison Missions in Germany,” 261.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ USMLM report, July 1959, 20.

which organized “special penetration tours” into the areas, and other intelligence means (e.g., aerial reconnaissance).²⁸⁰

Liaison:

Although intelligence comprised USMLM’s chief function, the liaison channel was maintained and, perhaps even than in the earlier Eisenhower period, served a useful function. Its three most notable and interrelated contributions were as an additional source of intelligence, channel for military-to-military communication, and mechanism for building trust and reassurance between the Soviet and U.S. military in Europe.

The liaison channel provided two useful forms of intelligence, biographical and military. USMLM collected biographical information on individuals in the high echelons of GSFG, the Soviet External Relations Branch (SERB), and the Karlshorst Kommandatura (Occupation Government office) – everything from individual professional and educational background, to political views, manners, and physical appearance.²⁸¹ This information was used by CINC USAREUR in preparation for his meetings with the Soviet CINC; it may also have been passed on to civilian agencies that specialized in this form of intelligence.

USMLM’s liaison activities also permitted collection of military intelligence as a supplement its touring efforts. For instance, after attending GSFG’s official demobilization ceremonies of an announced 41,000 troops in 1958, USMLM confirmed that these constituted more “housecleaning... than a reduction of combat effective units” – something that many other reconnaissance means (such as aerial photography) would have been hard pressed to pick up.²⁸² At a liaison meeting with GSFG Chief of Staff General Vorontsov in May 1960, the Chief of USMLM was able to take a close look at photographs of various U.S. missiles (including the Quail, Titan, Hawk, and Snark) on the General’s desk and make note of just how much the Soviets knew about America’s

²⁸⁰ USMLM reports, April 1959, 11, 15; February 1960, 6, 9, 10; August-September 1959, 52; Author’s interviews with Bill Spahr and George Kolt.

²⁸¹ USMLM reports, June 1959, 36; February 1960, 10; March 1960, 54.

²⁸² “[T]he Soviets invited the Western Military Missions... to witness the ceremonies and alleged departure of these units... The parade consisted of some four hundred shoddy troops led by a very unmilitary appearing colonel. The equipment, while freshly painted, was either obsolescent or worn out. Experienced observers [most likely USMLM...] expressed the view that the personnel were sub-standard in appearance.” (USAREUR Intelligence Summary, 28 February 1958, p.11).

latest missile technology.²⁸³ Casual conversations at social events also proved useful: on several occasions Soviets willingly divulged information about the latest Soviet military doctrine, including its stress on “armor [as] the best means of waging nuclear warfare” and its emphasis on “great mobility” of troops.²⁸⁴ Finally, Soviet military periodicals (probably difficult to obtain by other means), which USMLM received monthly from GSFG in exchange for similar publications from the U.S., provided an additional source of military intelligence.²⁸⁵

As a means of communication between the vast Soviet and U.S. militaries stationed on Germany soil, USMLM serviced rather basic tasks such as delivery of letters and messages between USAREUR and the Soviet HQ, but also the broader, unofficial purpose of building friendlier if not more trustful military relations. The latter was particularly important as a means of taking the edge off of USMLM’s inherently provocative intelligence activities and providing a degree of reassurance during periods of high level political tensions. Many USMLM reports describe a “pleasant atmosphere” at liaison meetings and former officers recall that social events served to “soften... up” the otherwise “stiff” Soviet military.²⁸⁶

USMLM had its fair share of relatively unglamorous liaison activities, such as “arranging the clearance of special military command diesel trains” or arranging travel for through various checkpoints,²⁸⁷ and sometimes its meetings with SERB were seen as tedious and unproductive.²⁸⁸ However, on balance the channel was used by both sides to

²⁸³ USMLM report, May 1960, Annex B “Minutes of Liaison Meetings.” The missiles noted were indeed relatively recent: the Quail went into production in 1958, the Titan in 1958-9, and the Hawk in 1957. (Directory of U.S. Military Rockets and Missiles, www.designation-systems.net).

²⁸⁴ Ibid., February 1960, 26.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., August-September 1959, 82.

²⁸⁶ Author’s interview with Major-General Lajoie; USMLM Report, June 1959, 36, June 1960, Annex B. According to Lajoie, “SERB, the GSFG liaison branch with through we mostly communicated with the Soviet command, was staffed by professional counterintelligence guys, and we weren’t going to soften them up. But when we got a chance to interact with other GSFG staff elements, for instance [at the various] social gatherings, we could have cordial professional exchanges especially... when the subject turned to World War II cooperation.”

²⁸⁷ USMLM report, January 1960, 43.

²⁸⁸ There were periods, from as short as 10 days to as long as over a month, when there were “no liaison meetings” and sometimes incidents were “so serious” that it was considered best to protest “diplomatically in Moscow” rather than through the military back-channel. (Confidential cable to Bonn Embassy from Berlin Mission, 9 July 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888); Secret cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 23 June 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887)).

provide reassurance at critical times of international or local tension. During a tense 6-week standoff over USMLM's new passes that were for several reasons politically unacceptable to the U.S., the Chief of SERB "sought out" the Chief of USMLM and "talked seriously but pleasantly" about the situation in attempts to reassure the latter that his command had not meant to change anything about Missions and wanted the standoff to end.²⁸⁹ Similarly, the abortive Paris Summit Conference in May 1960 was, according to USMLM, "followed by a certain rapprochement on the part of the GSFG (as evidenced in liaison matters...)" and gave USMLM cause for a "certain optimism."²⁹⁰ Indeed, the May 1960 report remarked:

[Although] May 1960 will be long remembered as the month of the 'U-2' and the Summit Conference that was never to be[,] so far as USMLM could discern... neither of these events – given so much violent notice in the Soviet press – had the slightest effect on GSFG attitudes toward [USMLM] personnel. All contacts,... whether at official or social meetings or chance encounters during USMLM touring, were extremely cordial and friendly. It was almost as if GSFG were thoroughly insulated from all the furor... Even the 20 May forced landing of [an] USAFE C-47... was handled by the Soviets in a quiet, dignified fashion despite the obvious temptation to treat it as another "U-2."²⁹¹

The "friendly" relations gradually built between USMLM and SERB or the GSFG softened tensions over the Mission's trespassing, helped to "predispose [the Soviets to] more objective" treatment of incidents, and allowed both sides to speak more frankly – in exchanges of apologies for past incidents.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ USMLM report, March 1960, 49; Confidential cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 3 March 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887); USMLM Report, February 1960, 27.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., May 1960, 5.

²⁹¹ Ibid., May 1960, 46. (USAFE is the U.S. Air Force command in Europe)

²⁹² USMLM reports, February 1960, 18, May 1959, 36, June 1959, 16, December 1959, 27; Author's interview with Lajoie; Confidential cable to Bonn Embassy from Berlin Mission, 2 August 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888); USMLM, October-November 1959, 57.

One USMLM report describes that a Soviet official who had detained a tour was "smiling and in a friendly voice then invited the USMLM team to accompany him to the [nearby] Kommandatura," and after his charge of trespassing in a restricted area had been challenged by the U.S. officers agreed to accompany them to "retrace [their] route... to the spot where the tour had been stopped [and prove that] there were no signs." (USMLM, May 1959, 8, 10).

After one liaison meeting, CUSMLM noted that he "consider[ed] [the] mild tone of Soviet pronouncements at [the] meeting as equivalent to an apology... for recent incidents [and the] desire... to preclude future

USMLM's contributions 1957-61:

So just what contribution did the Mission make, on balance? Clearly, there were limits to USMLM's capabilities. As former CUSMLM explained, the adversary's intentions were "mostly outside the purview of USMLM" and the Mission was unable to give its superiors strategic warning on Soviet actions – only tactical warning, at best.²⁹³ Even here, the Mission's capabilities became increasingly circumscribed as the Berlin Crisis unfolded into the late 1950s and early 1960s. Restrictions on Mission travel were severely tightened after 1958 with an increase in Soviet-imposed permanent restricted areas (PRAs), temporary restricted areas (TRAs), and restrictive signs, as well as East German surveillance and tailing.²⁹⁴ PRAs and TRAs restricted "hundreds of square miles," by 1959 comprising 50% and by 1960 as much as 75% of East Germany until they were finally lifted in 1961-2. These restrictions significantly decreased the efficiency of touring and sometimes left USMLM to report an inability to witness particular exercises or movements at all.²⁹⁵

Nevertheless, even a casual review of USMLM's work over the period seems to show that it furthered some of the most pressing goals of U.S. military and political planners. The Mission connected the two sides through regular liaison and provided extensive military intelligence that fulfilled many key items on USAREUR's or NATO's "watch list" at a time when aerial reconnaissance was still very limited."²⁹⁶ Through vastly improved cooperation with the British and the French Missions after 1959²⁹⁷

incidents." (Confidential cable to Bonn Embassy from Berlin Mission, 2 August 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888)).

²⁹³ Lajoie, "The Last Casualty of the Cold War," *The Intelligencer*, 2002, 8.

²⁹⁴ USMLM reports, June 1960, 7; June 1959, 23; Apr 1959, 6; June 1960, 16.

²⁹⁵ Seman, "Cold War Intelligence," 29; Confidential cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 23 August 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888); USMLM, Apr '59, 21. An April 1959 report was in some ways indicative: USMLM wrote that "confirming data is lacking [and that] it was a stroke of fortune that even the return movement [from the exercise] was detected."

²⁹⁶ Although the first U-2 mission flew in July 1956, Eisenhower frequently "suspended" flights in order to "limit the provocation to the Kremlin," which rendered coverage sporadic at best. The first space satellite, U.S. Discoverer XIV, was not launched until August 1960 (Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, 223, 243, 249).

²⁹⁷ Although by mid-1950s there was already considerable coordination between the three allied missions, August 1959 heralded a "revised system of [coordinated] target coverage" that divided East Germany into three zones assigned on a rotational basis to each of the three Missions and permitted each Mission to obtain a "complete picture of GSFSG during a one week period." This period witnessed the establishment of a "common operations center" at USMLM Berlin Headquarters for daily meetings among the three Missions and reports began to indicate that information was obtained through "coverage by [all] three Missions" rather than USMLM alone. (USMLM reports, August-September 1959, 8, 9; June 1959, 24).

USMLM collected useful OOB information, acted as a trip-wire and was itself a “natural indicator and warning” against surprise attack.²⁹⁸ It also provided very detailed photographic evidence (“memory sketch[es]” were substituted for the “substantially... improved” photography) to U.S. planners and weapons contractors on the latest Soviet technology.²⁹⁹

A few words, also, can be added on the period immediately following Eisenhower’s departure from office. USMLM was among the few intelligence agencies to have anticipated the construction of the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961.³⁰⁰ After the Wall, the dramatic curtailment of CIA’s operations in East Germany made its intelligence role still more significant.³⁰¹ By all accounts, the Mission played a vital role during the October 1962 Cuban Missile crisis in determining whether the US-Soviet standoff would have any “repercussions in Germany.”³⁰² Several years later, unusual restrictions on its travel in East Germany’s southeastern regions anticipated the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968.³⁰³

²⁹⁸ Author’s interview with Roland Lajoie; Voucher report November 1954, 24-5; Author’s interview with Bill Spahr.

²⁹⁹ Geraghty, Brixmis, 84. Geraghty notes that while “in the early 1950s touring officers had made pencil sketches of their objectives, [by the late 1950s it was] insisted that photography would be the primary means of validating intelligence. No item was to be ‘credited unless there was a photograph to support the claim.’”

³⁰⁰ Wyden, Wall, 126; Trento, The Secret History of the CIA, 186; Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 49; Confidential cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 13 August 1961 (Digital NSA, BC 02296). Mission officers had admonished the Berlin Watch Committee on 9 August of “something enormous [about] to break,” they reported several days later the arrival of construction material in Berlin’s Eastern outskirts and deployment of Soviet tank and motorized rifle divisions at Berlin’s sector border and the city’s outskirts, and were ultimately among the first to witness the wall’s construction.

³⁰¹ Mussgnug, Alliierte Militaermissionen, 175; Wyden, Wall, 109.

³⁰² Lough, “The Military Liaison Missions in Germany,” 261.

³⁰³ Lough, 261; NY Times 21 May 1968 in Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 50.

Conclusion: Mission's Contribution and Policy Lessons

The question motivating this work was what the Mission's ultimate significance was in preventing crisis escalation and preserving a stable peaceful status quo in Cold War Europe. In the last two chapters I have shown that there is good reason to believe that the Mission played an important role in dispelling fear or misperceptions on both sides that might have triggered war in the explosive European "tinderbox." The monthly USMLM reports presented a particularly useful source for this analysis as they detailed concrete aspects of the Mission's work and demonstrated the Mission's *intrinsic* value as a mechanism that increased transparency and channeled vital U.S.-Soviet communications in a central arena of superpower competition.

Although this intrinsic value is in itself a strong affirmation of the Mission's significance, an additional question – one to which the USMLM reports do not provide an answer – would be what was the Mission's *relative* worth? In other words, was it in some way unique or more important than other sources, or was it one of many valuable mechanisms? The question is important because a demonstration of USMLM's uniqueness as a tool for crisis-prevention in Europe would raise even further the value of its contribution.

In the first part of this chapter I address the question of the Mission's relative significance during the Cold War. I draw on two separate assessments: one presenting the views of relevant contemporary policy planners or agencies, and one, evaluating the mechanism from a post-Cold War vantage point. I demonstrate that in the period under investigation, by any standard, USMLM's significance was unrivaled. It was not only the principal source of intelligence on the main adversary and threat to West European security at the time but also, in retrospect, a central confidence-building and crisis-prevention mechanism in that vital area. The second part of this chapter evaluates USMLM's contributions to international security in the post-Cold War world, as a proven resource for US-Russian arms control agreements and as a potential model for confidence-building and crisis-prevention between adversarial neighboring states today and in the future. These final reflections are meant as an illustration of the continuing relevance today of a most useful and extraordinary mechanism.

I. USMLM's contributions during the Cold War

Contemporary and present-day assessments of USMLM's work present a consensus on its critical importance during the 1953-61 period and generally. The two perspectives also differ in their emphasis on the specific qualities that made the Mission important. While contemporaries focused on USMLM's formidable intelligence capabilities, a post-Cold War observer is inclined to distinguish as the Mission's ultimate hallmark its role as a confidence-building measure.

Contemporary perceptions of USMLM's value

It would be fair to say that during the Eisenhower period most contemporaries who came into close contact with USMLM placed significant value on its work. The most tangible illustration of this view is in records of correspondence between key civilian and military agencies, including the White House, State and Defense Departments in Washington, and U.S. diplomatic and military outposts in Europe. Records of the intelligence community are as yet unavailable.

This section demonstrates the consensus about USMLM's significance among these institutions and shows that they appreciated it primarily for its *pure intelligence output*. It draws on a body of documents from the 1958-60 period, when serious limitation on Mission travel, incidents, and significant changes in the Mission's documentation, referred to as the "Pass War," forced a debate in the U.S. government about whether USMLM's contribution was valuable and worth defending.³⁰⁴ Although this debate was resolved in mid-March 1960, the record it left behind constitutes a key window into contemporary thinking about the Mission and its importance.

The Presidency:

By all accounts, President Eisenhower was regularly briefed on and personally involved in decision-making regarding USMLM. Records of the President's daily State and Intelligence Reports from the late 1950s, and particularly from the tense spring of

³⁰⁴ Confidential cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 29 June 1960 (RG 59/250/762.022, Central Decimal file 1960-3, Box 1887); USMLM report, July 1959, 40, January 1960, 11, 5; Confidential cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 16 July 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888)]; Confidential cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 16 July 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888.

1960 during the infamous Pass War, show the Mission frequently topping the agenda or being listed as one of the four or five select items briefed to the President in a given day.³⁰⁵ In a memorandum of conversation, Secretary of State Christian Herter noted that “at the President’s request” he discussed with the President the problem of the new USMLM passes and that Eisenhower offered “suggest[ions]” as to possible measures to resolve the matter.³⁰⁶ The general picture that emerges from these records is that Eisenhower was concerned about the fate of USMLM and that his interest – aside, perhaps, from a personal attachment as the mechanism’s early advocate – was rooted in the Mission’s important intelligence results. The fact that his briefings came to a large degree from intelligence agencies supports this conclusion.

Although evidence is somewhat sparser on Eisenhower’s successor, President Kennedy, it would be reasonable to assume that he too took an active interest in the intelligence work of the USMLM. In 1962 a former USMLM officer recalls being informed by his Chief at Potsdam that “some of [his intelligence reports] were useful in... discussions with President Kennedy’s envoy to Berlin.”³⁰⁷

State Department:

The State Department also valued USMLM’s intelligence product. Although during the mounting pass and restriction crisis in spring 1960 the Department was fearful of paying “too high [a] political price” for the Mission’s continuation, once the political storm had subsided Secretary Herter made it clear that USMLM’s contribution as a “primarily intelligence collector” was greatly valued and that he was “anxious to maintain” it.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Synopses of State and Intelligence material reported to the President: 2 February, 9 February, 13-20 February, 15 March 1960 (Digital NSA: BC 01810, BC 01816, BC 01823, BC 01844).

³⁰⁶ Confidential memorandum for the record by Christian A. Herter, Secretary of State, 2 February 1960 (Declassified Documents Reference System, Gale Databases, Stanford University library).

³⁰⁷ Fahey, *Licensed to Spy*, 184.

³⁰⁸ Secret cable to Bonn Embassy from State Department, 11 February 1960 (RG 59/250/762.022, Central Decimal file 1960-3, Box 1887); Confidential cable to Bonn Embassy from State Department, 1 February 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887); Secret cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 28 July 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888); Secret cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 2 March 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887); Secret cable to Bonn Embassy from Department of State, 12 August 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888); Author’s interview with Ambassador James Goodby.

Pentagon:

Washington's military establishment voiced similar views. While during the spring 1960 debacle, the Defense Department joined State in questioning the Mission's continuation, once the issue was settled it too affirmed the "value of [the] mission" in providing useful intelligence and promised to "ensure that no political agreements or negotiations... endanger [its] continuation."³⁰⁹

Bonn Embassy and Berlin Mission:

The positions of U.S. civilian and military agencies in Europe were even more explicit about the worth of USMLM's intelligence work. The U.S. Bonn Embassy's cables to State show that it closely followed USMLM's daily operations, on one occasion noting "concern" about the increase of a "[Mission-] restricted area [in] proximity to our border."³¹⁰ The State Department's Berlin Mission was even more forthcoming about the Mission's importance. At the time of the "Pass War," it counseled State to try its best to "work... out a new *modus vivendi* which will permit resumption of... normal Mission operations" since these were critical to keeping its office and many other U.S. agencies in Berlin informed about the adversary's actions and intentions with respect to the vulnerable Western outpost in the heart of the Soviet zone.³¹¹ Berlin cited the Mission's major value in providing comprehensive, high quality intelligence on East Germany and the GSF threat, despite the "quantitative loss" in its collection as a result of restrictions.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Secret cable to Bonn Embassy from State Department, "Joint State-Defense Communiqué," 5 February 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887); Secret cable to US CINCEUR, Paris, from JCS, Washington D.C., 8 February 1960 (Digital NSA, BC 01813); Secret cable to Maxwell Taylor, Chief of Staff U.S. Army, from Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, "Retention of Western Military Missions," 20 May 1959 (Digital NSA, BC 01291).

³¹⁰ Secret cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 15 July 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888).

³¹¹ Secret cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 23 June 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887).

³¹² The cable read: "Neither side can launch [a] surprise attack under present conditions without detection by [the] Missions. Despite [the] quantitative loss in Mission collection, [the] Missions still produce [adequate] information [and the] loss of take from other sources makes [the] contribution of [the] Missions even more important" (Secret cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 6 February 1960 (RG 59/250/762.022, Central Decimal file 1960-3, Box 1887)).

USAREUR and NATO:

If the Berlin Mission expressed a high opinion of USMLM, the most vocal proponents of the Potsdam Mission were the chief military agencies in the European theater, USAREUR and NATO. A look at USAREUR monthly intelligence summaries from years 1958-60 demonstrates that USMLM reports were studied very closely: their key findings from a given month were highlighted, and in parts USMLM is cited as the original source. Even a few examples demonstrate the point. USMLM's April 1959 sightings of a "missile train containing probably Guideline missiles" is clearly echoed in that month's USAREUR's Periodic Intelligence Summary in a reference to a probable "introduction into the GSFG of the 'Guideline' ... missile."³¹³ USAREUR's allusions to Soviet use of "simulated atomics" during exercises and their military doctrine's likely emphasis on "defense" also seem to have been taken directly out of USMLM reports.³¹⁴ When an area was not patrolled by the Mission due to "large restrict[ions]," USAREUR was temporarily blinded to events in that area and left only to speculate as to "probabl[e]" developments there.³¹⁵

NATO's and USAREUR's correspondence is more telling still. At the time of a new debacle over restrictions in mid-1960 NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Norstad³¹⁶ argued that the "net advantage lies in maint[aining] Western Missions as long as feasible" because of their intelligence value to his command.³¹⁷ USAREUR CINCs Generals Hodes³¹⁸ and Eddleman,³¹⁹ whose tenure coincided with the 1958-60 escalation of East-West tensions as well as frictions with the Soviets over the Mission, also agreed that "USMLM is of *very great intelligence value* to this command" and that "everything possible should be done to prevent termination of [its] activities" (emphasis added).³²⁰ In June 1958 Hodes wrote a personal note to then-

³¹³ USMLM Report, April 1959, 17; USAREUR Intelligence Summary, April-June 1959, 6.

³¹⁴ USAREUR Periodic Intelligence Summary, July-September 1959, 3, 22.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 April 1959, 7.

³¹⁶ SACEUR (and, simultaneously, US CINCEUR), November 1956-January 1963.

³¹⁷ Secret cable to State Department from Paris Embassy, 27 July 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888).

³¹⁸ General Henry I. Hodes, CINC USAREUR May 1956-March 1959.

³¹⁹ General Clyde D. Eddleman, CINC USAREUR April 1959-October 1960.

³²⁰ Confidential cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 2 August 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888); Secret memorandum to Chief of Staff U.S. Army, Washington D.C., from CINC USAREUR, 27 April 1959 (Digital NSA, BC 01291).

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, reminding him that “great care must be taken to avoid jeopardizing continuation of Huebner-Malinin agreement on which alone USMLM existence is based.”³²¹ His reasoning was that:

Roughly 90 percent of timely, accurate information re: GSFG... is secured through activities [of] U.S., British, and French Military Missions. (Roughly 70% total effort on GSFG supplied by USMLM)... Experience has proven that intelligence developed by our Military Mission is the most reliable and dependable source available to this Command in order to insure warning of indications of Soviet intention to initiate a surprise land invasion of Western Europe.³²²

This brief statement shows that USMLM was *the* vital source of intelligence on East Germany, not just one among many. It confirms yet again that USMLM reports that were presented in chapters two and three were studied closely and served, more than any other source, as a basis for USAREUR’s own intelligence estimates. The USAREUR documents, in turn, provided the most authoritative assessment of the Soviet threat in Europe and were disseminated to U.S. agencies worldwide.³²³

Hodes’ successor, General Eddleman, also considered the Mission a “vital necessity” – not just as the “only [mechanism] in the world” that allowed Western military observers to “see Soviet military forces in training on a daily basis” but as an observer specifically of the *GSFG*, “the primary, immediate threat to my command [and] NATO.”³²⁴ Even in early 1960, during the political standoff when USMLM travel was dramatically curtailed, Eddleman assessed USMLM’s intelligence to comprise “60% of all [his] military information on GSFG” and to be his best source of “useful” and “timely information on the combat readiness [and] armament” of GSFG and GDR forces.³²⁵

Before the spring 1960 debacle, Eddleman even went as far as to suggest “increasing

³²¹ Secret cable to Secretary of State from General Hodes, CINCUSAREUR, “Importance of Huebner-Malinin Agreement,” 20 June 1958 (Digital National Security Archive, BC00136).

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Over 600 copies of these reports were distributed on a monthly basis to different agencies, including the Department of Defense in Washington. (USAREUR Periodic Intelligence Summary, July-September 1959, Annex pp. 1-2).

³²⁴ Secret cable to U.S. Ambassador, Bonn, from CINC USAREUR, 2 February 1960 (Digital NSA, BC 01809).

³²⁵ Secret cable to U.S. Ambassador, Bonn, from CINC USAREUR, 2 February 1960 (Digital NSA, BC 01809).

the[ir] size and responsibilities.”³²⁶ That both Hodes’ and Eddleman’s assessments and recommendations were made in full view of all the intelligence sources available under their purview reinforces the Mission’s objective importance. The generals note that USMLM operations are “coordinated with and complement COMINT, ELINT, aerial photography, and clandestine collection.”³²⁷ USAREUR’s positive evaluation, while particularly stark during the Eisenhower period, is also apparent in later Cold War years. A former deputy Chief of USAREUR who had served in the latter part of the 1980s insisted that even though by his time U.S. planners had access to sophisticated satellite technology for information on the Soviet bloc the Mission provided “extremely useful” intelligence on the GSFG.³²⁸ To him, it was “our best source on GSFG equipment” and conduct of exercises, and it was included in “all discussions” about U.S. intelligence on GSFG’s technical equipment and doctrine.³²⁹

What emerges from this evidence is a powerful affirmation of the Mission’s critical value to America’s decision-makers. Although there is little mention of its contribution as a liaison mechanism, its pure *intelligence* intake was clearly prized across the board.

Retrospective assessment of USMLM’s contribution

Contemporary focus on USMLM’s contribution as a collector of tactical intelligence was logical given the overriding practical need for battlefield information on

³²⁶ Secret memorandum to Chief of Staff U.S. Army, Washington D.C., from CINC USAREUR, 27 April 1959 (Digital NSA, BC 01291).

³²⁷ Secret cable to U.S. Ambassador, Bonn, from CINC USAREUR, 2 February 1960 (Digital NSA, BC 01809); Secret USAREUR Special Photo Intelligence Reports No. 4-59, 5-59, and 6-59; 6 August 1959 (RG 549/490/25/25/7 Records of USAREUR, Intelligence publications, Box 79). ELINT and COMINT are, respectively, electronic and communications intelligence.

³²⁸ Author’s interviews with General Shalikashvili and Major-General Lajoie. As deputy CINC USAREUR General Shalikashvili personally “read the USMLM reports [and] often talked to [the Potsdam Mission] on the phone.” According to him, when GSFG received new equipment, “the first picture and description of it would come from USMLM – not just for USAREUR, but for U.S. in general.” General Shalikashvili also believed USMLM played an essential role in observing GSFG exercises. He noted that despite the availability of other intelligence means, such as 2 significant communication intercepts stationed in Munich and Berlin as well as satellite photography, “the best place you could be was on the ground,” where the Missions were. Lajoie affirms this noting that the Mission provided “not only the complete picture but [an] exceptionally clear view. USMLM’s reporting... literally brought down to earth all the various satellite coverage.”

³²⁹ Author’s interview with General Shalikashvili. According to General Shalikashvili, USMLM intelligence on GSFG equipment and military tactics “definitely... [contributed to] modify[ing] our own military doctrine and how we designed our equipment.”

a vast, numerically superior adversary across the border and given the Mission's unique position to provide it.³³⁰ In hindsight, however, it becomes clear that the Mission's fulfillment of immediate intelligence was only part of a larger, long-term contribution. This section demonstrates how USMLM's intelligence gathering fused with its liaison function and cooperation-oriented norms to create a useful and lasting system of mutual US-Soviet reassurance and crisis-prevention in a potentially explosive Cold War hotspot. This system, in effect, constituted what in today's language (the phrase was not yet coined at the time) would be a confidence-building measure (CBM), a mechanism for "reducing uncertainties" and delivering "credible evidence of the absence of... threats."³³¹ This CBM quality ultimately permitted the Mission to weather some of the tensest periods of the 1950s and early 1960s and to last until the end of the Cold War.³³²

USMLM as a CBM

In retrospect, USMLM fulfilled all three approaches to crisis-prevention suggested by scholarly literature and characterized by the works of Alexander George, Philip Farley, William Ury, and Gottfried and Blair, among others. The Mission served as a channel for communication between the U.S. and Soviet militaries, provided vital intelligence on the adversary's offensive-theater forces, and fostered a cooperative "regime" guided by norms that restrained each side from acting in a way that risked being perceived as provocative by the other. Since the more straightforward communication and intelligence contributions of USMLM have already been extensively covered in previous chapters, I turn here to their separate and more complex contribution as a CBM.

The Mission's intelligence and liaison functions, and its creation of accepted "rules of behavior" identified it by all parameters as an effective confidence-building

³³⁰ "Over 90 percent" of the organization's time and resources was spent on intelligence collection. (Fahey, *Licensed to Spy*, 5).

³³¹ Krause, *Prospects for Conventional Arms Control in Europe*, 43.

³³² According to former Chief of USMLM, Major-General Roland Lajoie, "all our activities – liaison and intelligence collection – amounted to confidence-building in an area of dense military activity during tense period of the Cold War. However, this was unintended: we went out there to collect intelligence on Soviet capabilities and intentions, not to generate 'CBM.' The CBM role was never intended by the drafters [of the Huebner-Malinin], but ultimately it was perhaps USMLM's greatest contribution." (Interview with Lajoie).

measure (CBM) and crisis-prevention mechanism.³³³ The intelligence and liaison activities essentially complemented and reinforced each other. USMLM's intelligence collection, while an irritant and barrier to cooperation in the short term, was a source of reassurance and transparency in the *long-term*. Liaison also provided reassurance and transparency, but more in the *short term*: USMLM's constant direct communications with the Soviets diffused the tensions caused by intrusive intelligence activities and thus ultimately ensured that the beneficial, transparency-building intelligence collection continued over the years. This interactive intelligence-liaison relationship fostered and was in turn propagated by the development of cooperative norms between the two adversaries.

1. Intelligence as a CBM over the long term

The intelligence the USMLM supplied as “the ‘watchful eye’ of the Western Forces behind the Iron Curtain” reduced uncertainties and reassured U.S. military planners about the stability of the military balance at any given point in time.³³⁴ This function served in the long term to lower temperatures in that volatile part of the world and fulfilled the task of a CBM, as envisioned by theorists like Krause and George.³³⁵ The mutual U.S.-Soviet inspection system under the MLMs lifted the uncertainty that characterized so many other spheres of U.S.-Soviet relations. Over the years, it fostered a significant level of transparency and minimized the possibility of armed conflict by “surprise” or by misunderstanding, the two scenarios deemed by NATO and USAREUR to be most dangerous or most likely. More importantly than daily “indicators” of Soviet and East German mobilization, the intelligence opened a broader understanding of GSFG capabilities, seasonal training procedures, military doctrine, and general behavioral patterns that would have been valuable not only for anticipating a conflict but also for fighting one.

³³³ See the Introduction chapter for a more detailed definition and discussion of CBMs. The main works I draw on are George's “Research Objectives and Methods” and “U.S.-Soviet Efforts to Cooperate in Crisis Management and Crisis Avoidance” in George et al, U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation and on Gottfried and Blair, Crisis Stability.

³³⁴ USMLM Report, February 1960, 18.

³³⁵ Krause, Prospects, 43.

In the long haul, USMLM's touring activity became part of the broader system of mutual reassurance. During times of high political tension, Mission officers were careful to respect restrictions so as not to unnecessarily provoke the Soviets. Soviet authorities, for their part, made efforts to respect touring activity during major international crises, including the Berlin airlift period, the East German uprisings of 1953, the Hungarian uprising of 1956, the U-2 incident, during the construction of the Berlin in August 1961, and during the Cuban Missile crisis of October 1962.³³⁶ Based on this reassuring pattern NATO and USAREUR planners and decision-makers in Washington could predict that they would be unlikely to miss "large numbers of troops... being moved into an attack posture."³³⁷

Why intelligence-gathering amounted to a CBM rather than deterrence

Before I turn to a discussion of USMLM's liaison as a component of the CBM regime, I need to address a question that may have formed in the minds of readers with regard to the intelligence function. Students of deterrence theory may wonder why the Mission's intelligence work is presented here as a CBM rather than as a tool of mutual deterrence. After all, would not each party have had an interest letting the other see its overwhelming force and thereby dissuade it from a potential attack? An argument of this sort has indeed been made and perhaps has some merit.³³⁸ However, it is also abundantly clear that deterrence could not have been a paramount consideration. If the Military Liaison Missions had been intended by each side as a reminder to the adversary of each other's impressive numerical strength, they were not only redundant but also counterproductive.

³³⁶ For confidence-building of this nature during the airlift period and the 1953 uprisings, see Historical synopsis of the USMLM, "The Way It Was: 1951-1954," The USMLM Association, www.usmlm.org. A good account of CBMs with respect to freedom of USMLM travel during the Berlin Wall crisis is provided in a cable from the Berlin Mission to the State Department on the day the crisis broke out. Berlin advised that "it is interesting to note that Western observers (... Potsdam Mission personnel in zone) encountered no difficulty[.] Volkspolizei... appeared unusually careful not to obstruct freedom of allied circulation." (Confidential cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 13 August 1961 (Digital NSA, BC 02296)). The same trend was observed during the Cuban Missile Crisis (Lough, 261). The only perceptible exception to the pattern is the Korean War period, when, by all accounts, USMLM-GSFG relations suffered a tremendous blow and led to the first *imposition* of restrictions on USMLM by Soviet authorities.

³³⁷ Skowronek, "U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany," 162.

³³⁸ Author's interview with General Major-Burns. Burns argued that "USMLM was useful from deterrence point of view [because it allowed] Soviets to see U.S. weapons [for themselves]" and become convinced that "we were not just a paper tiger... And I suppose the Soviets may have seen it the same way."

In a deterrence framework, MLMs were redundant from the Soviet point of view because the Soviets had access to the free Western press, and their military attaches in Bonn were able to construct rough force estimates. On the U.S. side, there were other intelligence sources, such as aerial reconnaissance and U.S. military attaches in Warsaw, who could have – and did – report on Soviet military trains passing in and out of East Germany by way of Poland. The availability on both sides of alternative intelligence means casts doubt on the assumption that the chief purpose of the MLMs to deter the enemy by an impressive bean count. Although the MLMs were more accurate than other intelligence mean, but they would have been far from indispensable in this regard. If the Missions were redundant as a tool of deterrence by simple numeric count, they were counterproductive as vehicles of deterrence through unannounced, close-up inspections. Close-up inspections disclosed, along with the adversaries’ conventional strength, also their major weaknesses – shown very clearly in the Mission’s mid-1950s reports. If the point was nuclear deterrence, the MLMs were completely irrelevant since ultimately neither the Soviet nor U.S. officers were ever able to gain access to those facilities.³³⁹

2. Liaison as a CBM in the near term

If USMLM’s intelligence collection served as a CBM function over the long haul, its liaison activity, even though to most contemporaries it appeared no more than a distraction and necessary cover for important intelligence activities, in fact played a vital role in ensuring daily the continued functioning of the CBM regime.³⁴⁰ Frequent

³³⁹ Author’s interviews with Roland Lajoie, George Kolt, and William Burns. Both Lajoie and Kolt confirmed that USMLM did not have access to the very secure Soviet nuclear weapons storage sites in East Germany. Major-General Burns expressed his confidence that the Soviet MLM could not have penetrated nuclear weapons facilities in the U.S. sector of Germany.

³⁴⁰ Contemporary documents and my interviews with knowledgeable individuals confirm that the liaison function was not regarded as a high priority in the 1950s and early 1960s. (Interviews with McCutcheon, General Burns, and Ambassador Goodby; Secret memorandum to Christian Herter, Secretary of State, from Ivan B. White, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, 12 August 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888)).

A USMLM report of May 1960 described liaison as resembling “the wooing of an unpredictable female by a zealous suitor, [with] the Soviet ‘maid’... sometimes sweet, once in a while witty, often aloof,... and always unpredictable.” (USMLM report, May 1960, 35) In the meantime, an August 1962 cable from USAREUR, forwarded by the Bonn Embassy to the State Department expressed concern that liaison may detract from what were perceived as the more valuable intelligence collection. The cable read: “any consideration of future use of the Allied Military Liaison Missions for increases [in] liaison functions should give weight to the fact that since the... erection of the wall these missions are the single most

meetings between USMLM and the Soviet External Relations Branch of the GSFG served to temper Soviet irritation over the Mission's provocative touring activities and to ease Soviet touring restrictions – problems that might imaginably have completely curtailed or even terminated the Mission's vital intelligence effort. The CBM function was also effected through personal meetings between the CINCs of USAREUR and GSFG, which USMLM facilitated.³⁴¹ The much-acclaimed private conference between Marshal Konev and General Clark in April 1962, for instance, resolved problems relating to incidents and restrictions in such an effective way that for at least five years thereafter “no major incidents... occurred.”³⁴²

Liaison was also used extensively for mutual reassurance at times of international crises. Before the quadripartite Operations Center for Emergencies or the famous Washington-Moscow “Hotline” were established in December 1962 and June 1963, respectively, liaison served as a channel for “quiet” verbal guarantees about each side's benign intentions at times of East-West tension, “when nobody else was talking” or else when the only talk was “vitriolic dialogue... at the highest diplomatic levels.”³⁴³ Just as the Soviets signaled benign intentions by carefully respecting USMLM freedom of travel during most crises during the 1950s and early 1960s, they went out of their way to maintain friendly liaison relations and to explain their actions and intentions to avoid

important source available to the West for determining imminence of Communist hostilities in Germany.” (cited in Mussgnug, Allierte Militaermissionen, 188-9).

³⁴¹ In a message to the new USAREUR CINC, General Freeman, GSFG CINC General Yakubovsky suggested that “two CINCs can do much in personal meeting” and invited Freeman to meet in person in the near future. (Confidential cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 12 May 1962 (RG 59/250/04/05 Central Decimal File 1960-3, File #762.0221/7-160, Box 1890)).

³⁴² Official Use Only cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 5 April 1962 (RG 59/250/04/05 Central Decimal File 1960-3, File #762.0221/7-160, Box 1890); Lough, “The Military Liaison Missions in Germany,” 261; Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany,” 98.

³⁴³ Secret cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 13 December 1962 (RG 260/390, File #3/177-2, Box 5); Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 107; Author's interview with McCutcheon; Dobrynin, In Confidence, 53, 79; Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany,” 153. There were other channels of communication, but these were either public or strictly diplomatic. The famous “confidential channel” between Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and U.S. officials in Washington did not begin until after the spring of 1962, after some of the most urgent tensions over Berlin and Germany had already calmed. And once begun, it proved ineffective as a conduit of information relating to military matters: during the Cuban Missile Crisis Dobrynin apparently had received “no... advance warning... from my government” about plans to station missiles in Cuba and was thus unable to communicate on the matter with his U.S. contacts (Dobrynin, 53, 79).

misunderstandings.³⁴⁴ In the days following the construction of the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961 the Missions were invited to an unofficial meeting with the CINC GSFG and where told that notwithstanding the recently taken “security measures,” nothing had fundamentally changed.³⁴⁵ USMLM, for its part, delivered reassurances to the Soviets. In the spring of 1962, the Chief of USMLM was dispatched by CINC USAREUR to convey to his GSFG counterpart that the 1962 U.S. Armed Forces Day parades “this year [will be] on about the same scale as in previous years” and posed no threat to the Soviets.³⁴⁶

Verbal assurances would not have had meaning without the intangible human dimension of USMLM’s liaison activity. The Missions “gave [the U.S.-Soviet standoff] a more human face” and contributed to building a certain mutual understanding, if not explicit trust, and the opportunity to speak more frankly and cooperate more readily when faced with challenges.³⁴⁷ In retrospect, Cold War scholars who believed that there was no communication between the U.S. and Soviet forces would have been surprised to know that a channel of communication existed after all and that it was based on the most reliable and direct of all communication methods: personal contact.³⁴⁸

3. Cooperative norm as a CBM

Corresponding to the final requirement of a CBM in scholarly literature was a set of cooperative norms that were characterized by USMLM’s (and SMLM’s) operations, and that had been created over time, in USMLM’s case probably by the early 1950s. In the context of a very flexible Huebner-Malinin agreement, these tacit “rules of behavior” guided both liaison and intelligence-gathering protocol and prevented each side from overstepping the thin line that separated pursuit of transparency (through intelligence collection) from inflammatory provocation. Both sides played by “unwritten rules of the

³⁴⁴ Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany,” 210; Author’s interview with General Shalikashvili.

³⁴⁵ Mussgnug, *Alliierte Militaermissionen*, 168.

³⁴⁶ Secret cable to State Department from Paris Embassy, 24 April 1962 (RG 59/250/04/05 Central Decimal File 1960-3, File #762.0221/7-160, Box 1890).

³⁴⁷ Author’s interview with Roland Lajoie.

³⁴⁸ See conversation between William Ury and William Hilsman, and comment by Philip Farley, which I discuss in the Introduction. (Roderick, 57; Farley, in George et al, 626).

game.”³⁴⁹ They were careful to resolve disputes by a code of “military honor,” their meetings were marked by a “friendly” cooperative spirit, and both sides made an effort to resolve arising disputes as quickly and quietly as possible.³⁵⁰ USMLM officers were transferred from the mission if it became apparent that their conduct was excessively provocative and objectionable to the GSFG Command, and the “Russians responded in a similar manner.”³⁵¹

This norm of cooperation also fostered a mutual interest in preserving the MLMs. The initiative to dissolve the MLMs would have been regarded as a breach of this cooperation and hence a “provocative act [and possible] prelude to war.”³⁵² This might explain why particular care was taken during periods of international crisis to respect the Missions’ travel rights and maintain cordial liaison relations, and why major disputes such as the 1960 “Pass War” were always resolved in due course.

A mutual interest in avoiding war permitted the MLMs to last

An observation that cannot go unmentioned is the Mission’s ability to weather the tense Eisenhower period, despite the pressures to force its termination at the height of the superpower standoff over Berlin, and to last until the end of the Cold War.³⁵³ The

³⁴⁹ The special efforts to play by these “unwritten rules of the game” are confirmed by all my sources and my interviews. (Interview with Lajoie; Fahey, *Licensed to Spy*, 23; Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany,” 47, 116; Confidential USAREUR Counterintelligence Summary, Office of the A/CS G-2, 15 April 1958 (RG 549/490/25/25/6-7 Records of USAREUR, Intelligence publications, Box 78); (USMLM, May 1960, Annex B “Minutes of Liaison Meetings”).

³⁵⁰ An additional example of a normative CBM was the fact that USMLM tours did not carry on-board communications. According to Lajoie, this was done because it was believed that this could have been misinterpreted by the Soviets as a communications intercept capability, which would not have been tolerated by the GSFG in the way that cameras were tacitly accepted.” (Interview with Lajoie).

³⁵¹ Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany,” 47.

³⁵² Author’s interview with Bill Spahr; Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 3; Secret USAREUR Special Intelligence Estimate, Soviet intentions and courses of action with respect to Berlin and the German problem, 17 December 1958 (RG 549/490/25/25/6-7 Records of USAREUR, Intelligence publications, Box 78).

³⁵³ It is impossible to overstress the uncertainty that had prevailed over the Mission’s existence at this difficult time – due to the inherently provocative nature of its intelligence activities but also factors external to the MLM relationship, including an independent campaign against USMLM by the East Germans. (Lajoie, “The Last Casualty of the Cold War,” *The Intelligencer*, 2002, 7; Fahey, *Licensed to Spy*, 3; Secret memorandum for the President, from Christian A. Herter, Secretary of State, “Western Military Liaison Missions in Soviet Zone of Germany,” 6 February 1960 (RG 59/250/762.022, Central Decimal file 1960-3, Box 1887); Synopsis of State and Intelligence material reported to the President, 27 July 1960 (Digital NSA, BC 01936); Secret cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 23 June 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887); Confidential cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 21 July 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888)).

question is of particular interest because an organization's ability to last was in itself perhaps an indirect measure of its success.

I argue that principal factor that accounted for the MLMs' survival against all the odds was a shared superpower interest in avoiding war in the most explosive arena of Cold War confrontation. A useful framework for thinking about this question is provided by Cold War scholars Alexander George, Thomas Schelling, Morton Halperin, and Philip Farley, who have argued that superpowers have a mutual incentive to cooperate in volatile regions, Europe in particular.³⁵⁴ As I have shown in previous chapters, military planners at NATO and USAREUR were greatly concerned about the possibility that war might erupt in the tense European "tinderbox," either by Soviet initiative or as a result of misunderstanding.³⁵⁵ Given their overriding interest in avoiding a "hot" war, they would have had a special stake in preserving the functions of USMLM as their best source of intelligence on the opponent's central forward forces. As I demonstrated earlier, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe General Norstad argued that the Missions should be maintained "as long as feasible" for their important intelligence role, and most contemporaries argue that the Mission "prevailed primarily because of the quantity and quality of [its] intelligence collection."³⁵⁶

The East German leadership's efforts to force USMLM out of the GDR, while already on the rise since 1958, grew particularly virulent in the summer of 1960. The Bonn Embassy and Berlin Mission reported that Walter Ulbricht had "criticized the Missions openly in [his] speeches" and that at one televised news conference in East Berlin he even boasted to be in possession of "war plans prepared by U.S. Military Mission." At that conference, he displayed the tour's equipment and drew attention to its maps, which had yellow highlights on the maps to indicate a given population density; he claimed that the highlighted parts were "areas earmarked by the fascist imperialists for extermination by germ warfare." (Geraghty, Brixmis, 80; Confidential cable to Bonn Embassy from Berlin Mission, 21 July 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888)).

³⁵⁴ See Introduction for fuller discussion of these authors. (George, "Research Objectives and Methods," 3; George, "US-Soviet Efforts to Cooperate," 585, 587, and George, "Factors influencing," in George et al, 670; Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin, Strategy and Arms Control, 1961, in Campbell, "Soldier's Summit," 77-8; Farley, Philip J. "Arms Control and US-Soviet Security Cooperation," in George et al, 626).

³⁵⁵ NATO Military Planning, 2 April 1958, 2 (Public Records Office, England, DEFE 5/83; Declassified documents collection, CWIHP); USAREUR Special Intelligence Estimate, 1 February 1959, 2 (RG 319, file 950871, Boxes 1155-1156; declassified document collection on CWIHP website).

³⁵⁶ Secret cable to State Department from Paris Embassy, 27 July 1960 (RG 59/250 Central Decimal File, 1960-3, #762.0221/7-160, Box 1888); Fahey, Licensed to Spy, 183; Interviews with George Kolt and General Shalikashvili.

According to General Shalikashvili, the last USAREUR chief with jurisdiction over the USMLM in the late 1980s, "all [military] in Europe – and in U.S. military in general – were very much dependent on the [Mission's intelligence] to the very last moment." (Interview with Shalikashvili).

The U.S. interest in the MLMs notwithstanding, the bilateral arrangement could not have survived as a result of one side's interest alone. Although there is still very little direct information on Soviet reasoning about the Missions, most sources suggest that the GSFG thinking mirrored that of the U.S. military: it also wanted accurate intelligence on the adversary's actions and intentions so as to prevent war by miscalculation and by surprise (i.e. by preemptive NATO attack).³⁵⁷ The strongest single piece of evidence on the fact that the Soviets were "at least as anxious [to] keep their Missions" was that they tended to react strongly to restraints imposed on their Mission personnel in response to their own restrictive measures against USMLM.³⁵⁸ GSFG interest in the Missions makes sense in light of the general state of Soviet intelligence collection in West Germany. Even with other intelligence means (military attachés – which U.S. did not have until 1974, or covert agents), Soviets had a larger area to cover than Western allies and they had to do it by themselves rather than in collaboration with allies.³⁵⁹

I contend that the powerful common interest in avoiding major war in Europe translated also into a mutual interest in preserving the MLMs. Every effort was made to keep them "unaffected by [negative] Cold War developments."³⁶⁰ Both sides tacitly agreed to exploit the flexibility of the Huebner-Malinin Agreement to create what in effect became a system of mutual inspection. A cooperative "regime" was fostered and (for the most part) carefully respected by both sides in order to avoid undesired provocation and increased likelihood of military crisis. By an unspoken agreement both

³⁵⁷ Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 198-199.

³⁵⁸ Secret cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 11 June 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887); Secret memorandum to Chief of Staff U.S. Army, Washington D.C., from CINC USAREUR, 27 April 1959 (Digital NSA, BC 01291); Confidential cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 3 March 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887).

³⁵⁹ USMLM, Feb 1960, 19; Secret cable to Secretary of State from General Hodes, CINCUSAREUR, "Importance of Huebner-Malinin Agreement," 20 June 1958 (Digital National Security Archive, BC00136); Interview with General Shalikhvili; Geraghty, Brixmis, 38; Interview with George Kolt; Gaddis, Now We Know, 136.

Some have suggested that the Soviet Mission may have "dabbled in the dangerous business of running agents... in West Germany." If this is true, the Soviets would have had a greater stake in preserving the MLMs. Still, it appears that the overriding interest was not in civilian but rather in military intelligence, with the main goal of understanding and anticipating the adversary's actions and intentions. (Geraghty, 38; Interview with George Kolt).

The Soviet Mission had a larger area to cover, as West Germany was about twice the size of East Germany. (Gaddis, 136).

³⁶⁰ Skowronek, "U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany," 47. Also, Geraghty, Brixmis, 67; Confidential cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 14 March 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887); Interviews with Ambassador Goodby, Bill Spahr and George Kolt.

U.S. and Soviet authorities sheltered the Missions' activities from unnecessary publicity, which may otherwise have left the mechanism more exposed to downturns in superpower relations.³⁶¹

II. USMLM's value in the post-Cold War world

Even if the Mission played a critical role as a tool of confidence-building and crisis-prevention in the Eisenhower period and into the late 1980s, why, aside from historical interest, should anyone care about this Cold War relic today? This section explains two ways in which USMLM – indeed the MLM mechanism as a whole – serves an important purpose in the post-Cold War world. First, its *skills* have been widely applied to on-site inspections activities for a number of pivotal post-Cold War arms control agreements. Second, its *organization and function* can be applied to current situations where neighboring states share an intense rivalry that threatens war.

USMLM's contribution to post-Cold War Arms Control

Although the operations of the Potsdam Mission ceased with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1990, the need for USMLM officers and their skills did not. This was manifested particularly strongly in the area of U.S.-Russian arms control.³⁶² Major-General Lajoie, who became the first head of the On-Site Inspection Agency (OSIA) in 1988, recalled that on-site inspections were an unprecedented task, and that he “surrounded [himself] with USMLM officers” and drew on their experience in

³⁶¹ Interviews with Roland Lajoie, George Kolt, General Shalikashvili, and Bill Spahr; Unclassified cable to State Department from Berlin Mission, 19 February 1960 (RG 59/250/762.022, Central Decimal file 1960-3, Box 1887).

The avoidance of publicity regarding the Missions was in many ways an unintended CBM. At the time, it was conditioned mostly by the fact that USMLM was an intelligence source and therefore sensitive to exposure.

In early March 1960, during the US-Soviet dispute over MLM passes, Chief of SERB insisted to the Chief of USMLM that “airing all this business in the press was not good.” Two days later, the State Department echoed the Soviet request to keep the matter low-key when it argued that “restriction [of Soviet Mission in retaliation to pass issue] should be accomplished without publicity.” (Confidential cable to State Department from Bonn Embassy, 3 March 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887); Secret cable to Bonn Embassy from Department of State, 5 March 1960 (RG 59/250 File #762.0221/3-260, Box 1887)).

³⁶² Although by all accounts most Mission officers stayed in defense intelligence, a portion of officers did go on to pursue careers in civilian intelligence. That the skills of these men were valued in this area is evident from some of their career paths. One former member of USMLM headed for a period of time the prestigious Soviet Analysis Office at the CIA.

establishing OSIA's operational procedures and in staffing his first inspector teams.³⁶³ It is perhaps not surprising that Lajoie turned to USMLM officers for help. As a former Chief of USMLM himself he understood that the MLMs were themselves a type of arms control measure, and that as a result Mission officers had the almost exact set of skills needed for OSIA inspections.

Authors have argued in the past that arms control measures were integral to the work of USMLM, both in theory and in practice.³⁶⁴ Conceptually, arms control measures have been described as a set of CBMs that stand alone without a corresponding arms control agreement – a description that captures the essence of the Mission's operations.³⁶⁵ In practice, the Missions possessed many features that are central to arms control measures, including “monitoring” activities and a general *modus operandi* as “mobile inspection teams.”³⁶⁶ The similarity did not escape Cold War contemporaries. Proposals for arms control and disarmament measures since 1955 included provisions for mobile ground surveillance teams as early warning and confidence-building measures, which, some have suggested were modeled on USMLM.³⁶⁷ In 1959 and 1960, when the Missions' existence was placed under question, there were discussions among key U.S. military planners about preserving the present missions in the form of “military ‘inspection’ teams.”³⁶⁸ According to one source, the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) explicitly looked to apply the principles of the MLM arrangement to future disarmament negotiations with the Soviet Union.³⁶⁹ This seems to have borne results in 1961 when the U.S. government proposed an exchange of military

³⁶³ Author's interview with Major-General Lajoie.

³⁶⁴ Johan J. Holst 1983, cited in Seman 52; Lough, “The Military Liaison Missions in Germany,” 258. A former officer with ACDA, Lough argued in the late 1960s that MLMs “have *been* an arms control measure.”

³⁶⁵ Johan J. Holst 1983, cited in Seman 52.

³⁶⁶ Lough, “The Military Liaison Missions in Germany,” 258; Allan S. Krass, The United States and Arms Control, 92.

³⁶⁷ Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 163; Seman, “Cold War Intelligence,” 54. In May 1955, the Soviet Union put forward a “major two-stage disarmament proposal... [that] would leave the major powers with a fixed level of conventional forces and no nuclear weapons or foreign bases.” (Wolfe, 163).

³⁶⁸ Secret memorandum to Chief of Staff U.S. Army, Washington D.C., from CINC USAREUR, 27 April 1959 (Digital NSA, BC 01291).

³⁶⁹ Skowronek, “U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany,” 97.

missions as part of its *Outline of Basic Provisions of a treaty on General and Complete Disarmament* as well as proposals in later Cold War decades.³⁷⁰

Given the fact that many of the post-Cold War arms control verification agreements were modeled at least in part on the experience of the Missions, it is not surprising that many former USMLM officers were pulled into arms control work. Their knowledge and skills developed through both liaison and intelligence-gathering activities were perfect for the job. It is also no accident that the first director of the On-Site Inspection Agency, Major-General Lajoie, had been a Chief of USMLM, or that the pilot U.S.-Soviet on-site inspection under the Stockholm agreement of 1986 was led Colonel Don O. Stovall, Lajoie's predecessor in Potsdam.³⁷¹ Lajoie confirmed that USMLM's core contribution to on-site inspection work was its experienced personnel:

In establishing OSIA, what I looked for were officers with language skills and area knowledge, but especially maturity, leadership, and, most of all, judgment; judgment in knowing how to handle situations, and to not create problems where none existed. They needed to feel comfortable in their environment, to speak fluent Russian, to be able to hold friendly side-conversations with the local commander [in charge of the site to be inspected] to put him at ease... Of course, it was also important to know the equipment,... to be able to tell an SS-20 from a T-54 tank... but the judgment was far more important... My most effective team leaders were former Mission members, and I surrounded myself with [them]. I reached for my [USMLM] alumni roster and got as many guys from the Mission as I possibly could.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ Lough, "The Military Liaison Missions in Germany," 259; Confidential memorandum to Planning Group Members from W.W. Rostow, State Department, forwarded from ACDA, "Observations Posts and Related Measures to Reduce the Risk of War," 5 September 1963 (RG 59/250/63/12/1 LOT File "Political-Military Affairs," Combined Policy Office 1961-3, Box 2); Spahr, "The Potsdam Mission 1955-1958," 5; Interview with McCutcheon; Krass, The United States and Arms Control, 43.

In 1963 ACDA discussed the possible extension of the Military Missions in Germany to the US and the USSR proper, as a "measures to reduce [the] risk of war." (Confidential memorandum "Observation Posts..."). In later years, the Missions and their *modus operandi* were apparently considered as potential models for verifications of Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) agreements underway at the time (Interviews with Spahr, McCutcheon). The CFE Treaty of 1990, the culmination of a 17-year MBFR negotiations, limited five categories of conventional military equipment, remarkably similar to those "inspected" through the years by USMLM: tanks, artillery, armored combat vehicles, helicopters, and combat aircraft (Krass).

³⁷¹ Author's interview with Lt. Col. McCutcheon; Seman, "Cold War Intelligence," 22; Krass, The United States and Arms Control, 91.

³⁷² Author's interview with Roland Lajoie.

Application of the MLM mechanism in other cases

Although in retrospect one might say that the MLMs in Germany were somewhat fortuitously set up and developed in response to the specific circumstances of Cold War Europe, the essence of the mechanism appears to be generalizable and can hold out several valuable policy lessons also for contemporary security challenges.³⁷³ Here I outline two possible options.

First, and most important, the MLMs are a model for confidence-building measures (CBMs) between neighboring states with a history of tense or openly antagonistic military relations. The goal, as in Germany, would be a regime that fosters transparency and cooperation, and can reduce the risk of surprise attack or war by miscalculation. The examples that come to mind are present-day North and South Korea, and India and Pakistan. The exchanges of liaison personnel that already exist on the Korean peninsula and between India and Pakistan have “no freedom of movement,” limiting their usefulness in times of crisis.³⁷⁴ To be more effective but still acceptable to both sides these liaison teams should be granted freedom of travel, at the very least in the border regions, where the risk of war by accident or misunderstanding is most acute. If the mechanism is kept to a military level and remains unpublicized, it will have a strong chance of being accepted and ultimately of serving a useful purpose.

Second, an MLM-based confidence-building system, if successfully established over time, may be used as an initial step towards an implicit – if not an explicit – arms control regime in both of these volatile regions. The US-Soviet MLM experience provides a clear case of this possibility, as demonstrated in a cable from the Commander-in-Chief of USAREUR to the Army Chief of Staff in Washington in April 1959:

“The Soviets have consistently objected to ‘inspection’ in... East-West negotiations on nuclear test bans, armaments, and military activity in these negotiations. Within certain

³⁷³ Lough, “The Military Liaison Missions in Germany,” 261, 258; Lajoie interview. Most experts agree that although there may be a range of cooperative military exchanges between *allies*, there is “little in the history of great power rivalries to suggest that nations might willingly allow potential *adversaries* to reconnoiter their territories” (emphasis added). The one possible exception, according to Bill Spahr, may be 1940s Korea: U.S. had liaison officers in Pyongyang and the Soviets had liaison officers in Seoul from 1946 to 1948 (the year when Republic of Korea was established) – although even here military liaison officers most likely did not have the freedom of travel that their counterparts in Germany did. (Interview with Spahr).

³⁷⁴ Goodby, E-mail correspondence with author, 8 Apr 2004.

restrictions, however, the Soviet missions in West Germany and allied missions in East Germany have been ‘observing’ each other’s military activities for years. The military liaison missions, [as] mutually recognized agencies, may therefore serve as models for similar missions in other areas and perhaps bypass Soviet objections to the term ‘inspection’ teams.”³⁷⁵

For decades, citizens of Europe, the U.S., and the Soviet Union lived in fear of a nuclear annihilation as a result of a crisis between the two gigantic superpower militaries pitched against one another in Germany. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and the Cold War ended shortly thereafter, most believed that it was little short of a miracle that the world’s tensest forty-five year standoff had ended peacefully. While chance probably did play a role in this outcome, in view of what we now are beginning to learn about military-to-military cooperation in Cold War Europe it is clear that there were also concrete “safety-checks” *against* chance outcomes, especially those that risked sending the superpower adversaries on the road to war. These “safety-checks” were the Military Liaison Missions, which from 1947-1990 served to increase transparency, confidence-building, and ultimately U.S.-Soviet cooperation in pursuit of a common goal – to avoid war.

In this work I have attempted to document how the Military Liaison Mission may have contributed – if not actually to keeping the Cold War cold in Europe – to keeping it *colder* than it might otherwise have been. In many ways, the complete story of the Military Liaison Missions is yet to be told – and it cannot be told until Soviet documentation about the mechanism becomes available to researchers. The tentative conclusions drawn here from the U.S. side of the mechanism, however, unambiguously show that the organization served an immensely important purpose – apparently for both sides – in a crucial arena of superpower confrontation. A former USMLM officer articulated his idea particularly compellingly:

³⁷⁵ Secret memorandum to Chief of Staff U.S. Army, Washington D.C., from CINC USAREUR Eddleman, 27 April 1959 (Digital NSA, BC 01291).

“Future generations will probably marvel that mighty armies faced each other for over 40 years under varying periods of international tension without a serious clash. I believe that the Potsdam missions contributed to this remarkable outcome by providing their commanders with timely and accurate information on the status of the forces to which they were accredited.”³⁷⁶

It is difficult to believe, based on all the available evidence, that Soviet documents would argue a case to the contrary.

The fact that there is still research to be done on the MLM mechanism in Germany does not mean that the concept to the extent that it is already understood cannot be adopted by policy-makers – statesmen, ambassadors, UN officials – for analogous situations in other parts of the world today. If the history of USMLM has anything to teach, it is that the relative costs of making concessions and compromises to effect this mechanism are far outweighed by the benefits derived from cooperation between two mighty adversaries in preventing devastating and unwanted war.

³⁷⁶ Spahr, “The Potsdam Mission 1955-1958,” 5.

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