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NAVAL FACILITIES IN EGYPT PRIOR TO THE
JUNE WAR OF 1967

George S. Dragnich

Center for Naval Analyses
Arlington, Virginia

July 1974

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THE SOVIET UNION'S QUEST FOR ACCESS TO NAVAL FACILITIES IN EGYPT PRIOR TO THE JUNE WAR OF 1967

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to identify and elucidate Soviet attempts to secure access to naval facilities in Egypt before the June War of 1967. As far as possible, it describes the methods which the Soviets employed towards that end. The study also seeks to explain why the USSR perceived a need for those facilities, and attempts to identify landmarks in the Soviet effort to obtain access to them. Although Admiral Gorshkov's trip to Egypt in 1961 marks the first clear expression of that endeavor, Soviet behavior during three Middle Eastern crises had already shaped Egyptian perceptions of the Soviet Navy. Thus, the study also examines the Suez crisis of 1956, the Syrian-Turkish crisis of 1957, and the Lebanon crisis of 1958 for the light which they shed on Egypt's subsequent response to Soviet persuasion and pressure for access to its naval facilities. Where relevant to this question, Egyptian views of the Sixth Fleet and other Western naval forces are examined as well.

Soviet-Egyptian dealings on the issue of naval facilities represent a classic example of superpower-Third World relations. In this instance, the superpower sought to satisfy its own strategic interests; and the Third World state tried to get as much as it could from the superpower, without having to compromise its sovereignty. Too often, analyses of Soviet attempts to secure military privileges in Third World states dwell too heavily on Soviet interests and

intentions, with scant attention being paid to the interests and aims of those Third World states directly concerned. This case study demonstrates that a superpower's persistence and generous military and economic aid are not always enough to overcome a Third World state's renitence if the latter feels its interests threatened by the superpower's intent.

The June War of 1967 was chosen as the end date for this study because it brought about a whole new set of circumstances which radically affected the relative bargaining positions of the two parties. As this study attempts to show, the Soviet naval presence established in Egypt after that event was not a result of earlier Soviet efforts to attain that objective; rather it reflected Egypt's desperate need to obtain Soviet re-equipment of its armed forces in the wake of its disastrous defeat.

BACKGROUND TO SOVIET NAVAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Western attempts to prove the continuity of Soviet naval policy with the Tsarist period invariably cite the Russian Navy's historical experience in the Mediterranean. Interestingly, the Soviets themselves claim a heritage from much of the Russian Navy's history, especially as it pertains to that sea. For example, the head of the Soviet Navy, Admiral of the Fleet S. G. Gorshkov, has glowingly written of one such period:¹

The stay [1769-1774] of the Russian Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea is an outstanding example of autonomous operations by a large naval formation completely cut off from its home ports, which increased the international prestige of Russia and evoked warm sympathy toward her by all the peoples of the Mediterranean Sea basin.

Understandably, then, Soviet naval historians reject Western evaluations which downgrade the military effectiveness of Tsarist naval ventures. As they concern the Mediterranean, these negative evaluations² are viewed as a deliberate effort by "bourgeois historians....to convince the present day reader of the 'traditional' weakness of the Russian fleet, that it is somehow incapable of justifying the hopes of the Arab nations."³ In fact, the Soviet Union's first attempt at naval diplomacy in the Middle East ended almost as quickly as it began. In September 1928, the training ship Vega called at Algiers, where its cadets distributed communist literature to Europeans and native Algerians alike and tried to assemble crowds for pro-Soviet rallies. In response, the French colonial authorities there withdrew the Vega's landing permit, and the ship left Algiers two days ahead of its scheduled departure.⁴

Soviet warships first appeared in the Mediterranean during the 1920s and 1930s, in order to visit European ports.⁵ But the Soviet Navy's inability to intervene during the Spanish Civil War--even after a Soviet merchant ship was sunk--demonstrated just how illusory a credible Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean was at that time. There was no more Soviet naval activity in the

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region until after Stalin's death in 1953. The first real opportunity to use naval diplomacy in the Middle East came while Stalin was still alive, and it was declined.

In January 1952, during a period of acute Anglo-Egyptian tension over the Suez Canal, thirty-three Soviet fishing trawlers and their depot ship arrived at Port Said for a south-bound transit of the Canal on their way to Vladivostok. Egyptian demonstrators waiting on the quays welcomed them and then marched through the city carrying portraits of Stalin and shouting pro-Soviet and anti-British slogans. Egyptian authorities, departing from established practice, indicated that they had no objection to the Soviet sailors going ashore while their ships waited to transit the Canal.⁶

Less than five months earlier, the Egyptian Government had rejected a British proposal for a naval goodwill visit to Alexandria, and, less than three months earlier, the U.K. had exacerbated Egypt's anglophobia by anchoring a cruiser at the northern end of the Canal "...contrary to all customs and without advising port authorities."⁷ That warship was still there and had taken over some of the Canal's operations from striking Egyptian workers. Under these circumstances, Egypt would probably have even welcomed a Soviet naval visit. But, although Pravda noted the demonstrations and espoused the Egyptian cause,⁸ the Soviet maritime contingent studiously avoided any overt sign of support. The Soviets only allowed the ships' captains and first mates ashore, and these avoided all political activity.

Typically, this reflected Stalin's caution about involving the USSR directly in the region. Political considerations may have included the fact that Egypt still had a monarchy and that the anti-British movement was a national rather than class struggle. Moreover, Egypt's outlawed Communist Party was too weak to exert significant influence over that movement. Military considerations may have included the fact that Egypt's borders were not contiguous with those of the USSR, and that most of the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet was operating near Egypt.

The first Soviet naval visit in the Mediterranean in the post-Stalin period was to a Soviet bloc state, and appears to have served a specific politico-military objective. The cruiser Admiral Nahkimov and two destroyers -- the first Black Sea Fleet warships to enter the Mediterranean since the 1930s -- visited Albania, May 31-June 4, 1954. Their visit, led by the commander of the Black Sea Fleet (then Vice-Admiral S. G. Gorshkov), reassured that isolated Soviet bloc state of the USSR's continued protection. And Albania's leader, Enver Hoxha, thanked the visiting warships for bolstering his country's strength and spirits.⁹

THE CZECH ARMS DEAL OF 1955

In September 1955, President Nasser delivered a sharp blow to Western influence in the region when he announced that he was buying arms from communist Czechoslovakia. According to Muhammad Hassanein Haykal (Nasser's confidant and editor of Al-Ahram), part of the U.S. response was to send Kermit Roosevelt to Cairo, where he told Haykal

that the U.S. might impose a naval blockade of Egypt in order to prevent ships from arriving with arms. At this very time, Haykal has written,¹⁰ President Nasser was conferring with the Egyptian Ambassador to Washington (then on leave in Cairo). The Egyptian Ambassador is reported to have brought up the Sixth Fleet's presence in the Mediterranean, to which Nasser replied: "What can the U.S. Sixth Fleet do to us?" The Ambassador answered: "It may prevent the ships from coming to us." Nasser's response was: "There is nothing on our ships. If it stops the ships of others, the Sixth Fleet will have the others to deal with and not us." While this story may be apocryphal, it does illustrate Egypt's apparent perception that the Sixth Fleet's flexibility and capabilities were restricted, that the Soviet Union could curtail the United States' application of naval power, and that President Nasser felt that he could use the USSR as a buffer against the West.

The Czech arms deal, itself a major departure from traditional Soviet foreign policy, opened up an avenue for increased Soviet influence in the area. In the naval sector, the 1955 agreement provided for the delivery of two destroyers, smaller surface vessels, and six submarines. Four T-43 class fleet minesweepers from Poland, and at least twelve P-6 class motor torpedo boats from Czechoslovakia, were delivered to Alexandria in April 1956; two Skory class destroyers were delivered to the same port in June 1956.

THE SUEZ CRISIS OF 1956

The USSR was cautiously using middlemen to implement its military assistance policy in the Middle East. In spite of this, the first mention of possible direct Soviet naval influence in the area came that summer, during the Suez crisis of 1956. It is impossible to determine the exact connection, but, as suggested above, the Czech arms deal probably created an expectation in the minds of certain Arab leaders that they could use Soviet military power as a lever against the West.

On August 3, 1956, the Soviet Communist Party newspaper, Pravda, criticized the British government's military buildup associated with the Suez Canal dispute.¹¹ On August 4, the London Times reported the imminent departure from the U.K. of three British aircraft carriers for an "unstated destination."¹² That evening, in a broadcast entitled "Gunboat Diplomacy Must Not Be Repeated," Radio Moscow's Arabic language program warned that the Western military activity was designed to "...intimidate Egypt."¹³ On August 6, Cairo newspapers bannerlined reports from Damascus that the USSR had asked permission of Arab governments for Soviet warships to visit their ports beginning August 15, the day before the Suez Conference was scheduled to open in London.¹⁴ Although the Athens "Our Cyprus" radio program stated that the Egyptian Ambassador to Greece had "confirmed" that Soviet warships might visit Egypt,¹⁵ the Soviet Embassy in Damascus denied all knowledge of such a proposal, and the Syrian Foreign Ministry denied having received any communication

from the USSR to that effect.¹⁶

Very likely, the reports were the result of serious concern brought on by threatening Western naval movements. The Soviet Northern and Baltic Fleets were making a series of naval visits to Northern Europe (the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway) at the time, and perhaps this, combined with the USSR's vocal support of the Egyptian position, sparked speculation that the Black Sea Fleet might visit Arab ports. But it is unlikely that the USSR would have willingly assumed the considerable military and political risks associated with such a venture. What is important for this study, however, is Egypt's apparent perception that the Soviet Navy might be able to serve Egyptian foreign policy objectives. This is indicated by both the prominence that these reports received in the Egyptian press, and by the fact that the Egyptian state radio's international program, "Voice of the Arabs," also carried the Syrian reports.¹⁷

If, in 1956, that perception remained an unfulfilled expectation, the abortive Anglo-French invasion of Egypt, and the resulting Soviet threats against the U.K. and France, did leave many Egyptians with the feeling that the West was no longer free to exercise traditional gunboat diplomacy as it had in the past. The Egyptian Economic and Political Review noted of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in 1957:¹⁸

Its super carriers and guided missile cruisers lose their capacity to impress by their very invitation to the Russians, spectacularly accepted by these, to go one better; what with their intercontinental missiles and Sputniks the Soviets seem to have successfully stolen the 6th Fleet's thunder. In the process even the 6th Fleet's role as a somewhat blundering political and diplomatic weapon has been neutralized without the firing of a single shot.

SOVIET BLOC NAVAL AID TO EGYPT IN 1957, AND THE SOVIET NAVY'S
TRANSIT OF THE SUEZ CANAL

Beginning very early in 1957, future Egyptian submarine crews began training at the Polish naval base of Oxywie (near Gdynia). About six months later, in June 1957, Egypt's first three Soviet built submarines -- two modern ocean-going "W"s and one coastal "MV" -- arrived in Alexandria.

About one week later (June 23, 1957), in a move which may have been timed to occur soon after the above event, two Soviet destroyers and a tanker from the Black Sea Fleet began a south-bound transit through the Suez Canal. These ships, which were taken through the Canal by Soviet pilots working for the Suez Canal Authority,¹⁹ were the first Soviet naval vessels to transit that waterway since 1924.²⁰ One month later, after they had reached the Pacific Ocean, the USSR formally closed most of Peter the Great Bay at Vladivostok to foreign shipping. The Soviet Union surely appreciated Egypt's strategic position astride the Suez Canal long before

then, but its apparent decision in 1957 to strengthen its naval presence in the Pacific made Egypt's friendship more important.

THE SYRIAN-TURKISH BORDER CRISIS OF 1957, AND THE FIRST SOVIET WARSHIP VISIT TO AN ARAB STATE

The Soviet warships which transited the Suez Canal in 1957 did not make any port calls in the region; the first Soviet warship visit to an Arab state took place that September, to Syria. On September 21, 1957, the cruiser Zhdanov and destroyer Svobodni from the Baltic Fleet arrived in Latakia. The detachment was commanded by Vice-Admiral V. F. Kotov, First Deputy C-in-C of the Baltic Fleet, and had just visited the Yugoslav naval base at Split.

Before its arrival in Syria, the Egyptian press exaggerated the size of the Soviet force to include a cruiser, three destroyers, and several submarines equipped with guided missiles.²¹ As with the previous year's unfounded reports about the Soviet Navy, this was reported in the context of Western naval movements in the area. According to Al-Akhbar, Soviet Defense Minister Zhukov had written to the pro-Soviet Syrian Defense Minister, Khalid al-Azm, suggesting that Soviet warships pay a friendly visit to Syria. Syria's reported response was that it would welcome such a visit "...at any time and in any circumstance."²² The actual timing and circumstance of the visit are especially relevant because it overlapped a period of Syrian-Turkish border tension.

The Soviet decision to seek Syrian permission for a naval visit appears to have been made only after the detachment had

already reached the Mediterranean,²³ by which time the Syrian-Turkish crisis had surfaced. But even if the visit had been planned well in advance, the fact that the USSR maintained a vituperative propaganda campaign against Turkey during the port call indicates that it was willing to have the visit perceived as a gesture of Soviet support for Syria. The Damascus newspaper, Al-Nour, had, early in September, optimistically declared: "Furthermore, there is a big Power which will support Syria and any self-liberated state against foreign aggression. This Power has fleets in the Mediterranean and sufficient inter-continental missiles to wipe out the 85 ships [the Sixth Fleet] which America boasts about."²⁴ Radio Cairo Domestic Service had carried the Al-Nour article, and now some of the Egyptian press saw the Soviet Navy's visit as a clear sign of Soviet support.²⁵ The USSR, itself, fostered this impression. Radio Moscow's Arabic language program followed its announcement of the detachment's arrival in Latakia with broadcasts assailing the Sixth Fleet's "demonstrations" in the Mediterranean. And specific broadcasts, such as "The Zhdanov and the Sixth Fleet,"²⁶ during the ships' visit left no doubt as to the political character of the port call.

The official nature of the visit can be seen in the fact that Admiral Kotov reviewed Syrian cadets at the Homs military academy and met with President Kuwatli during his visit. At a dinner in Damascus, Defense Minister al-Azm bestowed decorations from the

Syrian Government upon the Soviet naval officers. The Soviet Charge d' Affairs also gave a reception for Admiral Kotov and his staff.

Most official Soviet naval visits last no more than five days. In contrast, the detachment stayed in Syria for ten days. Although it was announced before their arrival that they would stay that long, ²⁷ the Soviet units left Latakia just after the crisis appeared to have abated.²⁸ This may not have been coincidence, since Moscow had been largely responsible for maintaining the crisis at an artificially high level.

In any case, the crisis had only subsided temporarily. The USSR unexpectedly reopened the issue on October 7 and sought to portray it as a major international crisis. During this more internationally tense phase of the Syrian-Turkish crisis, the USSR did not send its naval forces back into the area -- even though it used Black Sea Fleet exercises* and a bellicose statement from that fleet's commander, Admiral Kasatonov, to demonstrate Soviet concern.²⁹ Such a move would have been feasible since the cruiser Kuibyshev and two escorting destroyers were in the eastern Mediterranean at the time. ³⁰

Thus, while the USSR appeared willing to use naval visits as an instrument of foreign policy in 1957, there appears to have been definite limits governing their utilization in this role. In this specific case, the Soviets may have felt that such visits pass the

*Radio Cairo Domestic Service (October 24, 1957) did report Red Star's announcement of these exercises.

point of diminishing returns once a regional crisis begins to be played out in the international arena, and they may have been concerned that the risks attending such a venture might quickly outweigh the limited value that a token force would represent if the crisis escalated. NATO naval forces (including the Sixth Fleet) were operating near Turkey on maneuvers regularly scheduled for that time of year. There was nothing inherently hostile in their deployment, which might explain the USSR's willingness to have made a naval visit to Syria during the first phase of the crisis; but their presence there during the more dangerous second phase might have made another such visit too risky.

THE LEBANESE CRISIS OF 1958

The Suez crisis of 1956 had left Egypt with the feeling that the Western powers' ability and resolve to use their naval forces as instruments of crisis management had been irreparably weakened. The Soviet Navy's port call to Syria the following year probably left some Arab leaders with the impression that the USSR would use its navy as a counter-force should the Western powers nonetheless try again. Egyptian perceptions of U.S., British, and Soviet naval deployments during the Lebanese crisis of 1958 -- prior to the actual U.S. intervention -- can be explained in this context.

When the Lebanese internal crisis broke out in May 1958, the U.S. and U.K. sent their naval forces into the eastern Mediterranean. Cairo's Al-Akhbar confidently noted:³¹

The show of force, on which imperialism relies, has become out of date. It was tried during the aggression on Port Said and ended in disappointment. It was tried in the attempt to destroy Syria and threaten it, and its result was also a complete failure....The appearance of fleets and destroyers no longer frightens the people. This Sixth Fleet appeared before, and a short time ago, but it retreated followed by waves of defeat.

But, as U.S. and British naval forces intensified their operations in the eastern Mediterranean, Egyptian news media evidenced concern that the West might intervene after all. Al-Ahram said on June 19: "The British fleet is preparing and concentrating its forces to proceed to Lebanon....It did not learn a lesson at Port Said....It has forgotten everything."³² On June 21, Egypt's official newspaper, Al-Gomhuriya, inveighed against the "...repeated provocative movements undertaken by America's Sixth Fleet near the eastern coast of the Mediterranean."³³

The expectation engendered by the USSR's behavior during the Syrian-Turkish crisis, that the Soviet Navy would block any future Western attempt at naval intervention, surfaced three days later. On June 24, the Egyptian press gave unusual prominence to a UPI dispatch from Copenhagen reporting the westward movement of Soviet naval units through the Baltic, "probably" to counter the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.³⁴ Included in that day's headlines were: "Russian Fleet Moves as a Countermeasure to Sixth Fleet Maneuvers" and "Guided Missile Carrier Moves with Fleet Units."³⁵ Radio Cairo

Domestic Service commented: "When the Western fleets steam in the Mediterranean, the Eastern fleets move too, to maintain the balance of power."³⁶ In fact, the Soviet naval movements in the Baltic appear to have been connected with a Northern Fleet exercise.

When the U.S. intervened in Lebanon the following month, the Egyptian response could best be described as stunned. President Nasser was visiting President Tito in Yugoslavia when the Marines landed, and immediately flew to Moscow. Haykal, who accompanied him on that journey, later wrote (1965) that Premier Khrushchev told Nasser: "...to be frank, the Soviet Union is not ready for a clash with the West, the result of which would be uncertain." According to Haykal, the Soviet leader offered to announce that the USSR was holding maneuvers (normally scheduled for that time of year) along its southern borders, but cautioned President Nasser:³⁷

I do not care whether the West imagines that we are preparing for more than maneuvers. But I do care that you yourself should not be led to believe anything....maybe you expected more from us?

The Soviet Union's naval response to the U.S. intervention was minimal. The Black Sea Fleet carried on its regularly scheduled maneuvers, albeit with greater fanfare than usual. In late August, the Soviet Union moved four submarines and a submarine tender from the north to Albania; but the transfer does not appear to have been directly related to the U.S. operation in Lebanon. The deployment was unheralded by Soviet media, the vessels' pace was leisurely,³⁸ and they went directly and unobtrusively to the Soviet naval base at Vlone, Albania.

Had they come one or two months earlier, their politico-military impact would have been substantial; but, coming a week after the U.S. had already begun its troop withdrawals from Lebanon, that impact was virtually nil. In late June, an Egyptian press headline had declared: "Russian Submarines in Albania Supplied with Atomic Missiles."³⁹ Now, the Arab press completely ignored their presence.

On November 29, over a month after the last American troops had been withdrawn from Lebanon, a Soviet naval detachment consisting of four destroyers, three tugs, and a cargo ship began a south-bound transit through the Suez Canal.⁴⁰ As with the submarines, their appearance in the Mediterranean a few months earlier would have created quite a stir; instead, their significance lay in the importance that the Suez Canal would eventually assume for Soviet naval deployments east of Suez.

The United States' resolve in 1958, and the Soviet Union's failure to act effectively in the face of it, left a lasting impression on President Nasser. From that time on, he had to consider the Sixth Fleet a very real factor in foreign policy decisions. Had the USSR been able to create the impression -- as it had during the 1957 Syrian-Turkish crisis -- that its navy (or its military power in general) had deterred the Sixth Fleet, Egypt would probably have been a good deal more receptive to Soviet efforts in later years to obtain access to Egyptian naval facilities. Instead, the USSR's failure to satisfy the expectations which it had fostered in 1956 and 1957 seriously undermined its credibility in the Middle East.

1959-1961: STRAINED SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS

The USSR had delivered three more "W" class submarines to Egypt in January 1958, and on January 1, 1959 it delivered an additional three "W"s -- bringing the total Egyptian submarine inventory to nine, all from the USSR. On January 18, 1959, the USSR and Egypt signed an agreement for the construction of a shipyard at Alexandria. That same month, however, the USSR's relations with Egypt deteriorated sharply in response to the UAR's open campaign (initiated in December 1958) against Egyptian and Syrian communists. As a result of this development, Soviet military assistance to Egypt was apparently suspended for a time. In any case, it is doubtful that the USSR had any tangible desire at that time to use Egyptian naval facilities, since its naval base in Albania was certainly adequate.

In September 1960, the Soviet Navy conducted its first major exercise in the Mediterranean. Some 20 vessels, including at least ten submarines (eight from Albania and two from the Black Sea) took part in maneuvers in the Aegean Sea.⁴¹ Their contingency scenario appears to have been an attack on seaborne NATO reinforcements to Turkey in the event of war.⁴² This exercise indicated a probable intention by the USSR to step up its naval activity in the Mediterranean; but, with their base in Albania, the Soviets demonstrated no

visible concern about access to Egyptian facilities. Had they foreseen an eventual need for the latter, they would surely have been more generous three months later, when they negotiated a new arms agreement with Egypt.

A Chinese military mission visited the UAR (both Egypt and Syria) in October 1960. While there, it met with the commander of the UAR Navy, Vice-Admiral Sulayman Izzat, and inspected Egyptian warships and naval facilities (including a naval training center).⁴³ This may have encouraged Admiral Izzat to increase his "shopping list" when he went to Moscow as a member of an Egyptian military delegation in December 1960. He is reported to have asked the head of the Soviet Navy, Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, to arrange Soviet financing for the construction of a naval base at Abu Qir Bay (east of Alexandria), and to sell Egypt shipborne missiles and other sophisticated weapons.⁴⁴

Gorshkov apparently gave him friendly words and some promises; but, in terms of materiel, Admiral Izzat went back to Cairo empty-handed. The USSR sought, instead, to improve Egypt's handling of what it already had. Some two hundred East Germans (mostly submariners) were sent to Egypt in 1961 to replace Poles who had been instructing Egypt's Navy⁴⁵. But, if the USSR had not counted on needing access to Egyptian naval facilities, it had not counted on being thrown out of its Albanian naval base in May 1961 either.

Even so, the USSR showed no immediate interest in Egyptian naval facilities, probably because its break with Albania was not yet complete.

The Soviet-Egyptian estrangement remained in effect as Soviet criticism of the UAR's treatment of Arab communists continued unabated. Finally, in June 1961, Egypt opened up a propaganda campaign of its own, aimed directly at the Soviet media assailing Egypt. This, and "progressive" Egyptian economic reforms initiated in July 1961, tempered Soviet criticism somewhat; but the USSR again antagonized Egypt by being the first major state to recognize Syria when the latter seceded from the UAR on September 28, 1961. East Germany and Bulgaria recognized Syria the same day (October 7) as the USSR. In mid-October, a Bulgarian delegation visiting the Middle East dropped Egypt from its itinerary,⁴⁶ which included Iraq, Syria, and Tunisia (three of the Arab states most hostile to President Nasser). On December 15, Haykal wrote in Al-Ahram that Soviet aid to Egypt had been given out of self interest.⁴⁷ In this context, Admiral Gorshkov's visit to Egypt in December 1961 was poorly timed.

ADMIRAL GORSHKOV'S VISIT TO EGYPT, DECEMBER 1961

That Admiral Gorshkov did visit Egypt at this time is one indication of the loss that the Soviet Navy must have been feeling from its expulsion from Albania. By then, the USSR had obviously given up hope of regaining its base there. On December 11, the day before Gorshkov arrived in Egypt, it announced that it was withdrawing its entire diplomatic and trade missions from Albania.

The participation of Albanian-based submarines in the Soviet Navy's September 1960 exercise in the Aegean Sea had demonstrated the value of a Mediterranean base in the event of a NATO-Warsaw Pact war. Similarly, the USSR's desire for basing or access rights to naval facilities in the Mediterranean becomes more understandable when one appreciates the Soviet Navy's concern that its Black Sea Fleet not be bottled up behind the Turkish Straits during such a contingency.⁴⁸ The loss of their naval base at Vlonë was made even more acute by the fact that the Soviets had apparently decided by this time in favor of forward naval deployments for strategic defense.⁴⁹ Warships capable of meeting enemy attack aircraft carriers (CVAs) on the high seas had recently begun to enter the Soviet Navy's inventory.⁵⁰ And some Soviet defense planners were also probably concerned about the eventual deployment of Polaris submarines to the Mediterranean, since that sea was a logical area for Western SSBNs to target the USSR. These considerations probably mitigated reservations that some Kremlin political leaders must have had about sending Gorshkov to Egypt at this juncture.*

*It should be remembered that, except for Egypt, there was really nowhere else in the Mediterranean for the Soviet Navy to go. Although Syria and Algeria would be wooed in later years for access to their naval facilities, neither offered a realistic alternative to Egypt in late 1961. Syria was too unstable and, having just left the UAR, too much of an unknown. Algeria had not yet become independent, and it was obvious that France would retain a naval base there once it did.

Once having approved Gorshkov's trip, however, there were certain factors which made that December the best month for the visit. The Egyptian Navy was due that month to receive additional Soviet-built naval units (probably a minesweeper and motor torpedo boats) which would take part in the "Victory Day" celebrations at Port Said later in December. The latter event, which honored Egypt's stand against "Western imperialism" in 1956, held great potential for emphasizing Soviet-Egyptian solidarity. Both factors could be exploited to ease the way for Gorshkov's visit. The actual step of getting him invited may not have been too difficult. Formally, Gorshkov went to Egypt at Admiral Izzat's invitation;⁵¹ but this may have been a standing invitation which Izzat, as a matter of protocol, had probably issued to Gorshkov when he had visited the latter in Moscow.

Admiral Gorshkov took along a mission of eight senior officers, and flew to Cairo on December 12. The party appears to have been well received. A naval parade was organized in Gorshkov's honor, and Gorshkov hosted a banquet in Alexandria honoring Admiral Izzat, during which the latter thanked the USSR for its "noble help" to the UAR. Gorshkov visited naval training centers and the UAR Naval College in Alexandria, attended naval exercises there, and then went to Port Said, where he laid wreaths on the grave of the Egyptian Unknown Soldier and on the communal grave of Russian seamen who fell during World War I. Following that, he and his mission went to Cairo where they visited a nearby military factory.

This easily met the requirements of a traditional courtesy visit, and was accomplished by December 18. But Gorshkov also met separately with Marshal Amer (the head of Egypt's armed forces) and President Nasser on December 20. He attended the "Victory Day" ceremonies at Port Said on December 23, and visited the High Dam at Aswan sometime during the latter part of his stay. It is significant that when Gorshkov had arrived in Egypt on December 12, it had been announced that he would only be there for ten days;⁵² but he did not leave until December 25.

No Egyptian or Soviet statement was ever made about the purpose of this long visit, but Gorshkov appears to have been laying the groundwork for closer Soviet-Egyptian naval cooperation which, at a later date, might have facilitated Soviet access to Egyptian naval facilities. To have openly sought the latter then would have been inopportune; Soviet-Egyptian relations were still strained, and President Nasser was firmly wedded to the principles on non-alignment in 1961. When Israeli newspapers charged that Gorshkov was negotiating for a naval base, the UAR Embassy in Washington called the Israeli reports "completely erroneous", and said that Egypt's policy of "positive neutrality" ruled out any kind of alliance.⁵³ But if Admiral Gorshkov did not openly seek access to Egyptian naval facilities, to replace those lost in Albania, his ultimate goal must have been transparent to the Egyptians. The latter appear to have fully realized the USSR's predicament; on December 13, the day after Gorshkov arrived in Egypt, the UAR Ambassador to Albania returned to Cairo for five days of consultations with UAR Foreign Ministry officials about the current situation in Albania.⁵⁴

1962: INCREASED SOVIET NAVAL AID

The Gorshkov group apparently agreed to approve credit sales of additional naval vessels. In January 1962, two "W" class submarines and two Skory class destroyers arrived in Alexandria. The latter were the first Soviet destroyers to be transferred to the Egyptian Navy since two others of this class had been turned over in June 1956. Also in 1962, one or two T-301 class inshore minesweepers, one S.O.1 class sub-chaser, and three Komar class guided missile patrol boats were delivered to Egypt.⁵⁵ The delivery of the Komar boats was especially significant, since these had only entered the Soviet Navy's own inventory around 1959, and marked a quantum jump in the weapons system potential of the Egyptian Navy. As such, they are an important indicator of the degree to which the USSR sought to ingratiate itself with Egypt.

1963: SOVIET FORWARD DEPLOYMENTS, THE U.S. DEPLOYMENT OF POLARIS MISSILE SUBMARINES TO THE MEDITERRANEAN, AND THE USSR'S REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO EGYPTIAN NAVAL FACILITIES

Admiral Gorshkov wrote of forward deployments in Red Star, February 5, 1963:⁵⁶

In the last war, naval operations took place mainly near the shore and were confined, for the most part, to operative and tactical cooperation with the army. Today, taking into account the intentions of the aggressors and the role given to their navies in the plan for a nuclear attack against the socialist countries, we must be prepared to reply to them with crushing blows on naval and land objectives over the entire area of the world's seas.

The first concrete steps in this direction were almost unidentifiable as such. Significantly, they appeared at around the same time as

Gorshkov's article. In the northern Pacific, Soviet medium-range TU-16 "Badger" aircraft overflew the CVA Kitty Hawk between January 27 and February 3 and the CVA Princeton between February 13 and February 16, 1963. In the eastern Atlantic, TU-95 "Bears" overflew the CVA Enterprise on February 12 and February 13 -- the first time that these Soviet long-range aircraft had conducted such an overflight. On February 22, four TU-95s overflew the CVA Forrestal southeast of the Azores Islands. On March 16, four TU-95s overflew the CVA Constellation some 600 miles southwest of Midway Island -- the first such TU-95 overflight in the Pacific. By late March 1963, some U.S. defense analysts had recognized these overflights to be part of a calculated and deliberate global program, and not isolated incidents as had been first thought.⁵⁷ However, the fledgling Soviet effort to establish the capability to counter U.S. naval strategic forces far from the USSR suffered a serious setback that same month.

On March 30, the United States announced that a Polaris SSBN was on patrol in the Mediterranean. On April 12, the Pentagon announced that a second Polaris SSBN had taken station there, and that a third would arrive later in the month.⁵⁸ This development seriously undermined the Soviet Navy's attempt to establish meaningful forward deployments, since its existing resources were still insufficient to check even the lesser strategic threat posed by the Sixth Fleet's attack aircraft carriers. In order to maintain a permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean to meet this challenge (both

SSBNs and CVAs) the USSR needed access to naval facilities in the region itself -- at least until its hard-pressed naval expansion program could render such facilities redundant.

Radio Moscow, in several broadcasts that April, warned the Arab World of the dangers inherent in the deployment of SSBNs to the Mediterranean; the "danger of their nuclear tragedy" remained a frequent subject of Radio Moscow's Arabic language program for the next few months. The Arabs were told: "Two of these Polaris submarines have arrived in the Mediterranean and are now maneuvering near the Arab coasts."⁵⁹ On May 20, the USSR formally proposed that the Mediterranean be declared a nuclear-free zone. When President Nasser told Le Monde that summer that he supported the Soviet proposal, Radio Moscow promptly emphasized the fact to the rest of the Arab World.⁶⁰

The USSR's pressing need to secure access to Egyptian naval facilities may have also been a factor behind its expanded military assistance program in Egypt. In June 1963, the two states concluded their largest arms agreement reached before the June War of 1967. In the naval sector, it provided for the delivery of two submarines, two destroyers, over thirty Komar and Osa missile boats, and various lesser vessels.⁶¹

The closer state of Soviet-Egyptian cooperation may have led the USSR to believe that Egypt might now permit the Soviet Navy to use Egyptian naval facilities; but it was to be disappointed on this matter. President Nasser told U.S. Ambassador John S. Badeau late

in 1963 that the Soviets had approached him -- presumably that year -- about access to naval facilities in Egypt, but that he had rejected their overture.⁶²

1964: PREMIER KHRUSHCHEV'S VISIT TO EGYPT, AND THE SOVIET NAVY'S FIRST SUSTAINED DEPLOYMENT TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

Premier Khrushchev's visit to Egypt in May 1964 reflected a major Soviet attempt to increase the USSR's influence there and in the region as a whole. But, while this appears to have been the visit's main purpose, Khrushchev showed concern for Soviet strategic interests as well. It is very important to note that, while in Egypt, he portrayed the U.S. naval presence in the Mediterranean as a threat to the region itself. In a speech in Port Said on May 19 he declared:⁶³ "The realization of the plan for stationing submarines equipped with Polaris missiles in the Mediterranean can become a great threat to the security of this area." He went on to say in the same passage:

The colonialists now want to use aircraft carriers and other warships against the national liberation movement of the peoples, to bring the policies of neutrality and non-alignment into range of their ships' guns and missiles....The imperialists want, with the aid of aircraft carrier diplomacy, to restore reactionary regimes in the countries of Asia and Africa.

This same theme--indicating Soviet concern about the United States' strategic threat in the Mediterranean--was reiterated two months later, when the USSR encouraged, and sent observers to, the July 1964 Algiers Conference on the Denuclearization of the Mediterranean.⁶⁴ Radio Moscow, in an Arabic language program lauding

the Algiers Conference, warned:⁶⁵

The atomic weapons which the USA and its allies are bringing to the Mediterranean must not only be regarded as fraught with the threat of tragedy, but also as a challenge to the countries of the Mediterranean--including the Arabs.

By characterizing Western naval forces as a common adversary, the Soviets may have been trying to gain Arab acceptance of a permanent Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean. Such an acceptance would have facilitated Soviet attempts to obtain the use of Egyptian and other Arab naval facilities.

In June 1964, one month after Khrushchev had warned the Arabs of the threat which Western navies posed to their independence, the Soviet surface fleet began its first sustained deployment to the Mediterranean. At the conclusion of its cruise, Izvestia intimated that the Soviet Navy would return to the Mediterranean, "...not for the purpose of saber-rattling and intimidating the peoples, as the United States Sixth Fleet is doing, but to improve its naval and combat skills."⁶⁶ In fact, the 1964 cruise marked the beginning of a definite trend, culminating in the permanent Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean today. That the Soviet Navy's Mediterranean deployment was seasonal then was largely due to its inexperience with replenishment at sea, long a standard feature of the U.S. and British navies. And, unlike the Sixth Fleet, which could count on NATO facilities to make small but necessary repairs, the Soviet Navy had no such facilities available to it in the Mediterranean.

ADMIRAL GORSHKOV'S MARCH 1965 VISIT TO EGYPT, AND THE SOVIET
NAVY'S FIRST PORT CALL AT A MAJOR EGYPTIAN PORT

On March 10, 1965, Admiral Gorshkov arrived in Egypt at the head of another Soviet naval delegation. During his ten day stay, he visited naval installations in Alexandria, the Egyptian air force academy, the Aswan Dam, and the Nasser Higher Military Academy. He also paid a second visit to the latter institution in order to deliver a lecture on modern science and naval operations. He did not meet with President Nasser, as in 1961, but did pay another call on Marshal Amer.

While his visit appears to have been motivated by strategic interests, it is significant that the USSR chose to use his trip for political "state interests" as well. East Germany's Walter Ulbricht had just visited Egypt and Admiral Gorshkov declared in a speech at Aswan that the Soviet Government and press had clearly defined their attitude towards the ensuing crisis between Cairo and Bonn.⁶⁷ Gorshkov's speech, which also praised President Nasser and Soviet-Egyptian cooperation, has been one of his very few ventures into purely foreign policy matters.

Whether or not Gorshkov raised the issue of Soviet access to Egyptian naval facilities during his visit can only be a matter for conjecture. Having been rebuffed before, the USSR probably assumed a more gradualist approach. For example, Gorshkov might have sought Egyptian permission for the Soviet Navy to use the anchorage at the Gulf of Sallum. Located on Egypt's Mediterranean coast near the Libyan border, with a natural but underdeveloped harbor, Sallum had

the low visibility necessary to alleviate at least some of Egypt's sensitivity about a foreign naval presence. In April 1966, the New York Times reported that Soviet naval vessels had, sometime in the past, made covert calls at Sallum, where they had allowed their crews a brief chance to stretch their legs ashore.⁶⁸

There is also a good chance that Gorshkov discussed regular port calls, since the Soviet Navy made its first visit to a major Egyptian port that fall. Considering the increased level of Soviet military assistance (and the Egyptian desire to obtain still more), Egypt must have agreed -- albeit with some reluctance -- to this naval visit in order to help insure continued Soviet aid. An Egyptian military delegation went to the USSR in August 1965* and returned twenty-five days later with the last major Soviet-Egyptian arms agreement reached before the June War of 1967. Soviet naval vessels called at Port Said, after the delegation's return, in September.

The visit of two destroyers, two submarines, and a submarine tender to Port Said was low-keyed, reflecting Egyptian sensitivity in this matter. No publicity (Egyptian or Soviet) surrounded the visit, and the choice of Port Said was itself probably a conscious Egyptian decision. Port Said was not Egypt's primary port, and the city's population was accustomed to seeing foreign warships there because of the Suez Canal.

In December 1965, then First Deputy Minister of Defense Grechko went to Egypt at the head of a military delegation which

*President Nasser was in Moscow for five days during the delegation's visit. It was his first trip to the USSR since 1958.

included Admiral Sergeyev, then Chief of Staff of Soviet Naval Forces. During its visit, the delegation saw Alexandria and then went aboard Nasser's presidential yacht, which took them to Port Said and various Red Sea ports. One of the areas on the Red Sea coast which the delegation visited was Ra's Banas, where the USSR had helped develop a fishing port under a March 1964 agreement. Khrushchev had visited the area in May 1964, and it had been subsequently closed to Western diplomats. Grechko's visit there increased speculation that the Soviets wanted to use it to support intelligence trawlers (AGIs) in order to monitor Western fleet movements in the Indian Ocean.⁶⁹

1966: THE SOVIET NAVY'S SECOND VISIT TO A MAJOR EGYPTIAN PORT, ADMIRAL GORSHKOV'S THIRD VISIT, AND THE SOVIET NAVY'S FIRST "OFFICIAL" VISIT TO EGYPT.

Two months later, Admiral Izzat paid another visit (February 11-23, 1966) to the Soviet Union, at Admiral Gorshkov's invitation. This time he came alone, rather than as a subordinate member of a larger delegation. He met with Gorshkov and Minister of Defense Malinovsky in Moscow, and then went to Sevastopol where he visited warships of the Black Sea Fleet.⁷⁰

The following month, the Soviet Navy made its second overt port call to Egypt. Five vessels from the Black Sea Fleet -- the guided missile cruiser Dzerzhinsky, a destroyer, two submarines, and an oiler -- visited Port Said, March 20-25. The cruiser docked in front of the Suez Canal Authority building, and visits were exchanged between the Governor of Port Said and the Soviet commanding officer.

Soviet crewmen were allowed to visit the city, and engaged in various sports activities with Egyptian naval personnel. This port call received discreet local publicity, and contemporary Western analysis suggested that this reflected Egypt's policy to gradually accustom its people to regard such visits as routine.⁷¹

That Soviet access to Egyptian ports or naval facilities was still a prominent and undecided issue in Soviet-Egyptian relations at this time, however, can be seen in the inclusion of Admiral Gorshkov in Premier Kosygin's delegation to Egypt in May 1966. Gorshkov's presence becomes all the more conspicuous when one notes that the other members of Kosygin's delegation were the Soviet Foreign Minister, the Minister of Power and Electrification, and the Chairman of the State Committee for External Economic Relations of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

Gorshkov's business in Egypt appears to have been of the highest order. The Soviet-Egyptian joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of Kosygin's visit lists Admiral Gorshkov as one of the participants in the Nasser-Kosygin talks; the only Egyptian military officer so listed was Marshal Amer, Egypt's First Vice-President and commander of its armed forces.⁷² Gorshkov's presence would seem to indicate that the Soviet Navy's access to Egyptian ports was still in contention, and that Admiral Izzat's visit to the USSR in February had left the issue unresolved.

By sending Gorshkov to Egypt under Kosygin's aegis, the Soviets could be sure that their case would be heard at the highest

level. Like Khrushchev before him, Kosygin portrayed the U.S. naval presence in the Mediterranean as a threat to Arab states. In a speech to Egypt's National Assembly, he said: "Warships of states situated far from the shores of the Mediterranean are constantly cruising on the waters of this sea. At present, imperialism is hoping to gain a new foothold in the Near and Middle East."⁷³

Moreover, the delegation's economic weight strengthened Gorshkov's hand.⁷⁴ Egypt was suffering from a more serious hard currency shortage than usual, and needed relief from its debts, as well as additional economic assistance. Contemporary press accounts reported Nasser and Kosygin locked in hard bargaining, with Soviet access to Egyptian naval facilities as one of the possible issues at stake.⁷⁵

Gorshkov's immediate goal was probably to secure a firm agreement from Cairo which would have allowed Soviet warships to make regular calls at Egyptian ports without having to obtain permission for each visit. The fact that there was only a single publicized Soviet naval visit to Egypt between the March 1966 port call and the June War of 1967 would seem to indicate that the Egyptians were, for the most part, still holding firm. The single publicized port call in August 1966, however, was the first "official" Soviet naval visit to Egypt. As a necessary step towards winning Egypt's acceptance of a permanent Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean, it must have offered Gorshkov some compensation.

A simple, but clever, face-saving gesture for Egypt cleared the way for the visit. On June 27, 1966, two Egyptian Soviet-built destroyers arrived at Sevastopol for a three day goodwill visit -- the first, and only, such visit in Egyptian history. Thus, the USSR's first official naval visit to Egypt was made less than two months later "...to return a friendly visit."⁷⁶

The United States, for its part, had already reacted to the Soviet Navy's March port call. In an apparent attempt to test Egypt's impartiality, the U.S. had requested a port call by two ships of the Sixth Fleet at Alexandria for early May. Egypt rejected the request, and cited the previously scheduled visits of President Tito and Premier Kosygin in May as the reason for its refusal. However, Egypt was reported to have suggested October 1966 as an acceptable time for the visit.⁷⁷ The fact that the requested visit had only been "deferred," rather than rejected outright, indicated some intention to demonstrate impartiality; but the Egyptian position hardened again in June 1966.

On June 1, 1966, Radio Cairo's "Voice of the Arabs" alleged that the U.S. and Tunisia had concluded a secret agreement giving the U.S. base rights at the former French naval base at Bizerte.⁷⁸ When an earlier Cairo press report, which had appeared before Gorshkov's visit in May, charged that the U.S. was negotiating with Tunisia for that base, some Western observers had interpreted this as a possible advance justification for a similar Egyptian concession to the USSR.⁷⁹ But such an interpretation does not take

into account President Nasser's proclivity to believe the worst of Tunisia's President Bourguiba and his suspicion that the U.S. was backing pro-Western regimes in order to establish rivals to him in the Middle East.

More serious (and probably more genuine) Egyptian concern surfaced later that same June. Al-Ahram observed (June 21) that at the same time that the U.S. was extending support to Saudi Arabia's King Faisal and Jordan's King Hussein, "...we see the U.S. Sixth Fleet sailing about in the eastern Mediterranean because Syria's attempt at rectifying its stand toward Arab causes has begun to arouse the imperialist forces."⁸⁰ In context, a left wing faction of the Ba'th party had taken power in Syria in February 1966, and was actively supporting Palestinian guerrilla raids into Israel. Apparently, the Sixth Fleet's deployment to the eastern Mediterranean raised the spectre of another U.S. intervention (as in 1958) in the region.

On June 24, Haykal wrote his weekly article in Al-Ahram as an open letter to King Faisal, then in Washington. Haykal denied that Egypt had given the USSR naval bases and asserted that "...the UAR cannot possibly permit anyone to establish any military or naval bases on its soil or its shores." Moreover, he accused the U.S. of having focused attention on this issue in order that "...the outcry

about the myth of the Soviet naval bases will frighten us so that we will hasten to permit the U.S. Sixth Fleet to call at some of our ports, so that we can prove our neutrality". But, according to Haykal:81

We will not allow the U.S. Sixth Fleet to visit our ports....We will not permit it to visit our shores, not because of alignment against you [presumably the U.S. or Saudi Arabia] or in favor of the Soviet Union, but from an attitude springing from the position of patriotism and nationalism and from the concept of freedom and independence.

In our opinion, there is a difference between the Soviet Fleet and the U.S. Sixth Fleet. The Soviet Union has no fleet in the Mediterranean, only occasional units passing through which do not threaten us, but which come flying flags of friendship. But the U.S. Sixth Fleet is stationed in the Mediterranean. From extensive past experience, we have found that the Sixth Fleet moves to threaten Arab nationalism. Furthermore, the main officially declared aim of its presence in the Mediterranean is to protect Israel. Thus, it is an unfriendly fleet. This is how we feel, and so long as this is our feeling, not a single one of its units will be permitted to enter any Egyptian port.

Because of his close association with President Nasser, Haykal's weekly articles in Al-Ahram during the Nasser era were always closely scrutinized. This particular article is especially important for what it says, and does not say, about the U.S. and Soviet naval presences in the Mediterranean. Most obviously, it indicated that Egypt had decided not to permit the Sixth Fleet to

visit Egypt after all. But it would be superficial to attribute this decision to Soviet influence. More likely, it reflected President Nasser's chagrin with the United States' backing of King Faisal's "Islamic Alliance" scheme, which Nasser perceived as a deliberate threat to his position in the Arab World. Added to this, the volatile Arab-Israeli dispute had brought U.S. support of Israel back into the limelight.

Haykal's discussion of the Soviet Navy in the same paragraph, however, was probably related to the upcoming Soviet naval visit to Egypt. As close as Haykal was to Nasser, he must have known of the planned port call. This segment of his article was probably designed to offset unfavorable publicity which would likely arise when Egypt refused the U.S. permission for a similar visit.

But there is no indication in Haykal's article that Egypt had granted the Soviet Navy unhindered access to its ports. On the contrary, the Soviet Navy was acceptable for the very reason that it had "...no fleet in the Mediterranean, only occasional units passing through..." Haykal is an astute writer, one who chooses his words very carefully. It is highly unlikely that he would have used the Arabic word abirah (literally, "transitory") to describe Soviet naval activity in the Mediterranean if Egypt had already granted the USSR the wherewithal to maintain a permanent naval presence there.

Soviet intentions, of course, were another matter. Strong evidence exists that the USSR attached considerable political

importance to its first official naval visit to Egypt. It should be pointed out that the Soviets carefully and clearly delineate between "official" and "business" naval visits. By doing so, they are able to use their naval forces to demonstrate political intent, when they so desire. The Egyptian press, apparently unschooled in this subtlety, had referred to the March 1966 visit to Port Said as an official visit, but the commander of the Soviet naval detachment visiting Egypt in August 1966 said that his was the first official Soviet naval visit to that country.⁸² Significantly, the August port call was at Alexandria, rather than at Port Said. The political impact of such a visit is greater at a city like Alexandria, and this is probably one reason why neither of the Soviet Navy's first two regular port calls-- at Port Said -- were "official."

The importance to the Soviets of the August port call can be seen in the fact that the detachment was commanded by Vice Admiral G. Chernobay, Chief of Staff of the Black Sea Fleet. The Soviets appear to carefully select politically astute officers to head their official naval visits. Admiral Chernobay had already proven adept at handling important Soviet affairs in the Third World, having been decorated by the Indonesian Government in 1964 "...in recognition of his service in strengthening and developing the Indonesian Navy."⁸³ He was seen off at Sevastopol by the First Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea Fleet and by the Head of the Black Sea Political Board.⁸⁴

Admiral Chernobay left the USSR on August 1 aboard the guided missile destroyer (DDGS) Boikii, and was joined by the other units of his detachment in the Mediterranean in accordance with a pre-arranged plan.⁸⁵ These other units were the destroyer escort Pantera, the depot ship Magomet Gadzhiev, and two submarines. It may be significant that two submarines were present during all three known Soviet naval visits to Egypt. The Soviet Navy's most pressing need for Egyptian naval facilities was probably -- as it had been in Albania before -- for its submarines' use. Thus, the inclusion of the latter in each visit may have been designed to acclimate Egyptians to their presence. The choice of the Magomet Gadzhiev -- from all the available depot ships in the Black Sea Fleet -- is interesting because it was named for a Soviet officer who had come from one of the USSR's Muslim republics (Magomet is the transliterated Russian spelling of Muhammad). The Soviets have assiduously exploited their Muslim population in their dealings with the Middle East, and the presence of this ship during the first official Soviet naval visit to Egypt may not have been coincidental.

Admiral Chernobay's detachment arrived in Alexandria on August 6, and left on the morning of August 11. While in port, the ships' crews toured Alexandria and met with Egyptian sailors; a Soviet naval brass band also gave performances in the town. But, in addition to these traditional activities, Admiral Chernobay was

an honorary guest at the official opening ceremony of the Alexandria branch of the UAR-USSR Friendship Society.⁸⁶ Since the Soviets tend to use their official naval visits for political ends, the two events probably reflect deliberate timing.

The question of timing and circumstance is also very important in that Admiral Chernobay announced at a press conference aboard the Boikii that the USSR was going to maintain a permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean -- in order to counter U.S. harassment of Soviet ships there, and in order to satisfy a security requirement.⁸⁷ This was the first official Soviet statement that the USSR's naval presence in the Mediterranean was to be permanent, and the fact that it was made in Alexandria is highly relevant. Whether or not it reflected Soviet confidence that, at long last, the Soviet Navy would be able to make regular use of Egyptian ports is difficult to say. Having finally passed the milestone of their first official naval visit there, this is certainly possible, but, if so, it reflected misplaced confidence.

As the man most responsible for ridding Egypt of the last vestiges of British colonialism, President Nasser was in no mood to grant the Soviet Navy exceptional privileges in Alexandria or any other Egyptian port. Nasser could not forget that Egypt's diplomatic independence from the U.K. in 1936 had been marred for years by treaty stipulations which had allowed the Royal Navy to transfer its Mediterranean headquarters from Malta to Alexandria. While the Soviet

naval detachment was still in port, he told students at Alexandria University: "...all that has been said about Alexandria becoming a base or supply base for the Russian fleet is nonsense."⁸⁸ As their expulsion from Egypt in July 1972 bore out, the Soviets never fully appreciated Egypt's sensitivity on this issue.

In what was widely thought to be an attempt to discount Western speculation that it had granted bases to the Soviet Navy, Egypt instituted a remarkable "open port" policy in the period immediately following the Soviet Navy's August 1966 visit. On August 16, three Turkish destroyers arrived in Alexandria for a four day visit. By itself, this visit was not unexpected; the invitation had been issued soon after the Sevastopol-bound Egyptian destroyers had called at Istanbul in June. Moreover, it could be viewed as a logical outgrowth of Egyptian-Turkish relations, which had been steadily improving since their nadir during the Cyprus crisis of 1964. But, as a port call from a NATO country, the visit took on added significance when, on the day that the Turkish detachment left, the Egyptian press disclosed that a French warship would also visit Alexandria.

That visit (August 25-28), by a single destroyer escort, was low-keyed; but the fact that it occurred at all is surprising.⁸⁹ Although Franco-Egyptian relations had been showing definite signs of improvement since the beginning of the year, France's Middle Eastern policy still tended to be pro-Israeli (three French destroyers paid a one week port call at Haifa in November 1966). It was

the first French naval visit to Egypt since the Anglo-French invasion of 1956.* The most startling reversal of Egypt's port call policy, however, came when the U.S. Embassy in Cairo announced on August 22 that two Sixth Fleet destroyers would visit Port Said early in September.⁹⁰

On September 2, slightly over two months after the editor of Al-Ahram had written that Egypt would not permit Sixth Fleet vessels to visit Egyptian ports, the Sixth Fleet destroyers Jonas Ingram and Stribling steamed into Port Said for a three day visit. It was the first time that a U.S. naval vessel had been in an Egyptian port since the destroyer Soley had picked up an emergency food shipment for Kenya from Alexandria in 1962; it was the first regular U.S. naval visit to Egypt since 1954.⁹¹

To keep the port call in perspective, it should be noted that it was made at Port Said, not at Alexandria, as had been requested the previous spring. Furthermore, the BBC Monitoring Service failed to pick up any mention of the visit by Radio Cairo.⁹² But even if the Egyptian Government was trying to down-play this obvious policy reversal to its own people -- as it appears to have been doing -- it was still an extraordinary move. As recently as late July 1966, Yemen (which followed Cairo's foreign policy direction at the time) had rejected a U.S. request for a naval visit to Hodeida.⁹³

*There were no more French naval visits to Egypt until June 1974, when two French minesweepers arrived at Port Said to take part in the clearing of the Suez Canal.

The explanation that Egypt's sudden "open port" policy represented a deliberate effort to discourage Western speculation about Soviet naval access to Egyptian ports falls short by itself. Egypt's stated policy, after all, was to ignore such speculation. As noted earlier, Haykal's June 24, 1966 article in Al-Ahram had specifically accused the U.S. of trying to force Egypt into just such a policy by spreading stories of a Soviet naval presence in Egypt. Haykal had declared: "If we issued a denial about all the stories fabricated about us, we will spend a lifetime doing nothing but issuing denials"⁹⁴ After President Nasser had told students at Alexandria University (August 1966) that talk of Soviet naval bases in Egypt was "nonsense," he went on to say: "It is our policy not to reply to such talk.... We shall not reply to such talk. We shall not answer those who spread such talk."⁹⁵ Furthermore, the current state of U.S.-Egyptian relations did not seem to warrant the visit.⁹⁶ Thus, there appears to have been no positive incentive to have allowed Sixth Fleet units to visit Egypt at that time.

It is this writer's conclusion, however, that there was a negative factor -- from the USSR -- to warrant this dramatic step.

John S. Badeau (U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, 1961-1964) has written:⁹⁷

The assumption on which some Arab states have felt free to develop close ties with the Soviets in such vital matters as the supply of arms and large economic assistance has been that if these connections should lead to the brink of Soviet control, the United States would act to prevent the tumble over the edge. Hence the surprisingly muted Arab criticism of the "imperialist" Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean which is recognized (although seldom publicly admitted) as a final barrier against overt Soviet action.

Although Arab criticism of the Sixth Fleet became a good deal more frequent after the June War of 1967 (Dr. Badeau's book was begun before that event), Badeau's analysis can be applied to this period to obtain a credible explanation for Egypt's behavior in August and September of 1966.

It is quite possible that Egypt, itself, may have become alarmed at Soviet expectations, which the USSR may have felt were reasonable now that it had finally been permitted to make its first official naval visit there. The Soviets may have felt that it was time for Egypt to show some tangible gratitude for all of the naval and other military aid which it had received from the USSR, especially that year. The Soviet Navy had transferred a "R" class submarine to Egypt in February 1966, and had replaced two of Egypt's "W" class boats with two "R"s in May 1966;* a total of five of these more modern submarines were delivered by the end of the year. In addition, four to five Komar guided missile patrol boats were added to Egypt's existing inventory of three by the end of 1966. More importantly, ten to twelve of the more advanced OSA guided missile patrol boats were delivered in 1966. Other deliveries that year included rocket assault ships of the Polnocny class, several utility landing craft of the MP-SMB 1 type, and Okhensky class fleet tugs.⁹⁸

The events of July 1972 showed just how capable the Soviets were of taking too much for granted in Egypt, and this may very well have been the case at this juncture. When Admiral Chernobay announced in Alexandria that the USSR was going to establish a permanent naval

*It may be significant that the February 1966 transfer occurred the same month that Admiral Izzat visited the USSR, and that the May 1966 transfer occurred the same month that Admiral Gorshkov visited Egypt.

presence in the Mediterranean -- in direct contradiction to Haykal's earlier description of the Soviet Navy's Mediterranean presence --, the Egyptians must have asked themselves just how the Soviets expected to accomplish that, without using Egyptian ports.

After the first official Soviet naval visit to Egypt, one might normally have expected to have seen more frequent Soviet port calls there. Instead, there were no publicized Soviet naval visits to Egypt until after the June War of 1967, even though there were enough Soviet warships in the Mediterranean during that period to have, technically, justified numerous visits. Turkish Straits data indicates that a cruiser and destroyers from the Black Sea Fleet were in the Mediterranean as late as the middle of December 1966, and back again as early as the end of February 1967.⁹⁹

Two Bulgarian Riga class destroyer escorts, however, did visit Egypt in late October 1966. In context, the head of the Bulgarian Navy had already flown to Egypt as a member of a Bulgarian military delegation. The warships flew his flag, and their port call appears to have been directly related to the signing of an Egyptian-Bulgarian military-cultural agreement. As such, it is a singularly unusual visit. It has been the only Warsaw Pact warship visit (except for the USSR) to any Arab state--even though there have been a number of military agreements signed between members of this group and various Arab states. Moreover, Bulgarian warships were a rarity in the Mediterranean at the time.¹⁰⁰

One possible explanation for the visit is that it might have been made at Soviet urging, and represented a surrogate Soviet naval

visit. If the USSR and Egypt were stalemated over the future of Soviet naval visits, the USSR might have felt that the Bulgarian port call could serve as a wedge to keep the option of more frequent Soviet visits alive. Because of the impending agreement with Bulgaria, it would have been difficult for Egypt to have refused the visit. But, although the port call was covered by Bulgarian news media,¹⁰¹ this writer's research has failed to uncover any mention of it by Egyptian news media--even though the latter did give normal coverage to the concurrent visit of the Bulgarian military delegation.

In late November 1966, Admiral Izzat accompanied Marshal Amer to the USSR. Ostensibly, the visit was in response to an invitation issued during Kosygin's visit to Egypt the previous May. But the Arab-Israeli dispute had heated up considerably early that November, and a Soviet propaganda program broadcast to the Middle East just before Amer's visit stressed this connection.¹⁰² Thus, one might have expected some new arms agreement to have been reached, but this does not appear to have been the case. It is impossible to tell to what degree Soviet-Egyptian differences might have been a factor, but Egypt's apparent reluctance to allow the Soviet Navy regular use of its ports may have played a part.

ADMIRAL GORSHKOV'S JANUARY 1967 VISIT TO EGYPT

In late January 1967, Admiral Gorshkov stopped over in Egypt on his return from Ethiopia. He had gone to the latter country to attend its annual Navy Days celebration, and it has been suggested that his attendance at that event was a cover for his trip to Egypt.¹⁰³

Little is known about his visit beyond the fact that he was met by Admiral Izzat at Cairo airport on the evening of January 28, and was seen off by Admiral Izzat and Air Chief Marshal Mahmud* on January 31.¹⁰⁴ The visit was much shorter than his previous trips to Egypt, and is peculiar in other respects as well. It was, ostensibly, a sidelight to another trip; Egypt had been the sole objective of his previous visits to the region. And the USSR made no mention of his presence in Egypt, even though TASS had reported his departure for, and arrival at, Ethiopia;¹⁰⁵ his three previous visits to Egypt had been reported by Soviet news media.

Using the overall pattern of Soviet military personnel visits to Third World states as a guide, Gorshkov's January 1967 trip to Egypt appears to have been a sensitive business visit -- probably related to a Soviet-Egyptian stalemate over the future of Soviet naval visits. There is some evidence that the Soviet Navy was planning a major winter deployment to the Mediterranean that February,¹⁰⁶

*There is no obvious reason why the Air Chief Marshal should have helped Admiral Izzat see Admiral Gorshkov off. Perhaps, during his visit, Gorshkov had also sought permission for Soviet naval aviation to operate out of Egypt. It should be remembered that after the June War Egyptian-based TU-16 "Badger" bombers--with Egyptian markings but flown by Soviet crews--conducted regular surveillance of Sixth Fleet vessels.

and Gorshkov may have been trying to arrange for some of the ships to call at Egyptian ports or to use anchorages off the Egyptian coast. The absence of any publicized Soviet port calls to Egypt until after the June War, however, would seem to indicate that his mission was unsuccessful. Soon after Gorshkov's departure, in an apparent attempt to lessen its naval dependence upon the USSR, Egypt agreed to extend its military cooperation with India to naval matters.¹⁰⁷ And, on February 22, President Nasser again rejected Western news reports that he had given the USSR naval bases in Egypt.¹⁰⁸

THE JUNE WAR OF 1967

Before and after Egypt's "maximum alert" on May 14, the USSR made a number of statements linking Sixth Fleet moves with anti-Arab intentions.¹⁰⁹ But in all of these statements, this writer has not found a single reference to the Soviet Navy -- in the Mediterranean or anywhere else. The Soviet Navy did, in fact, react to Anglo-American naval movements in the Mediterranean; but its cautiousness in doing so was in keeping with the Soviet media's omission of any reference to it. The Soviet Navy began shadowing British and American aircraft carriers with small vessels fairly early in the crisis, but did not upgrade these "tattletails" with more powerful warships until June 2.¹¹⁰ On May 22, the USSR notified Turkey that it intended to transit ten warships through the Turkish Straits.¹¹¹ In accordance with Article 13 of the Montreux Convention, the transits could have

begun on May 30; instead, only one auxiliary went through, on May 31. Destroyers -- the first Soviet warships to go through -- did not transit the Straits until June 3.¹¹²

Although the Western press was filled with speculation about their import, the Arab news media appeared considerably less impressed with Soviet naval movements in the Mediterranean. Egyptian rhetoric against Anglo-American naval movements was profuse, but Egyptian reporting of the Soviet naval presence appears to have been limited to a few actual statements that Soviet warships were shadowing the Sixth Fleet.¹¹³ No statements appeared, as they had during the Lebanon crisis of 1958, to declare that the Soviet Navy would deter the Western fleets. It has been observed that the Arab view of the USSR at this time paralleled Arab perceptions of the U.S. just prior to the latter's intervention in Lebanon in 1958 -- that the one superpower was capable only of words because it feared the reaction of the other if it attempted military action.¹¹⁴

When foreign journalists asked President Nasser, at his news conference of May 28, about reports of U.S. plans to send Sixth Fleet Marines to Israel -- and whether Egypt would ask the USSR to intervene -- Nasser replied: "Naturally the dispatch of U.S. Marine units to Israel to protect it when it attacks us will be considered an act of aggression against us and the Arab nation.... We will not request any of the friendly states to intervene, but we will leave them to decide for themselves."¹¹⁵ When war actually broke out, the Soviet

Navy's behavior appeared to reflect indifference towards the Arabs' fate. Although the Soviet Navy later (much later) claimed to have had a hand in limiting the conflict,¹¹⁶ it would have been difficult for the Arabs to have imagined a more awesome defeat.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE JUNE WAR, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE IN EGYPT

Paradoxically, the June War of 1967 brought the USSR what it had been unable to obtain through years of its own effort. President Nasser, in order to re-equip Egypt's decimated armed forces, had to forgo any semblance of a meaningful bargaining posture with the Soviets -- even though the latter's behavior during the war did not warrant special privileges. The Soviets were able to demand, and get, concessions which would have been unheard of before the war. They also capitalized on Egypt's fear of continued Israeli raids by making naval visits to Alexandria and Port Said in order to "deter" Israel from attacking those ports.¹¹⁷ By late December 1967, Red Star was able to write: "Visits of Soviet warships to the UAR have become traditional."¹¹⁸

CONCLUSION

Had it not been for the cataclysmic effect of the June War on Soviet-Egyptian relations, it is doubtful that the USSR would have ever obtained the regular use of Egyptian naval facilities which virtually fell into its lap after that event. From Egypt's perspective, the Soviet naval presence which was established after the war shared

no meaningful continuity with the pre-war period. Admiral Gorshkov's four visits and the Soviet Navy's port calls before the June War had failed to originate any trend which could have logically culminated in a permanent Soviet naval presence there.

While it is not within the purview of this study to examine the origins of the June War of 1967, it is relevant to note that its findings could be used to support the highly controversial theory that the USSR wanted Egypt to lose that conflict.¹¹⁹ Specifically, the USSR's abortive attempt before the June War to secure regular access to Egyptian naval facilities provides at least one plausible motive for such an attitude on the part of the Soviets. Certainly, the high degree of Soviet naval oriented activity vis-a-vis Egypt indicates that access to Egyptian naval facilities was a prime consideration of Soviet policy there well before 1967.

In retrospect, Admiral Gorshkov's series of four visits to Egypt (1961, 1965, 1966, and 1967) was unparalleled. He had made only one previous visit outside of the Soviet bloc, to Indonesia in October 1961.* And, except for his visit to Ethiopia in January 1967, Egypt is the only foreign country which he is known to have visited from October 1961 until his April 1967 visit to Yugoslavia.¹²⁰ Moreover, Egypt and Indonesia were by far the largest non-communist recipients of Soviet naval aid during the period under study; and Egypt especially stood out after Soviet

*Like Egypt, Indonesia occupied an important place in the USSR's "out-of-area" naval strategy.

military assistance to Indonesia. was cut-off in the wake of that country's anti-communist coup in 1965. Soviet naval assistance to Egypt is all the more conspicuous when one remembers that the Arab-Israeli dispute did not acquire a significant naval dimension until after the June War.

In fact, one is struck by the amount of military assistance (naval and otherwise) which the USSR gave Egypt, for such a long time, for so little in return. The USSR's military assistance program in Egypt before the June War has been commonly viewed in terms of a superpower struggle for influence in the Middle East; and the 1955 arms agreement and subsequent military aid up to Admiral Gorshkov's visit in 1961 can legitimately be viewed in this context. But the extent and characteristics of Soviet military aid--especially in the naval sector--to Egypt after that period make sense only if it served goals of much higher priority than those assumed by the simple influence theory.¹²¹ By 1967, Soviet military assistance to Egypt had long since passed the point of diminishing returns from the standpoint of furthering Soviet influence in the Middle East; Egypt, itself, was taking much more than it was giving.

There were, however, sufficient Soviet strategic interests involved to have justified the military assistance program which had evolved by that time. Foremost among these was the direct threat to the USSR, posed first by the Sixth Fleet's attack aircraft carriers in the late 1950s¹²² and then by Polaris SSBNs, as

well, in the 1960s. Because existing Soviet naval forces were, both qualitatively and quantitatively, insufficient to meet this challenge, the USSR needed access to naval facilities in the Mediterranean region itself. It is doubtful that the Soviets wanted more (i.e., sovereign bases) than this, since their intensive shipbuilding program during this period indicates that they viewed such an arrangement primarily as a makeshift alternative to a larger and more capable navy. But the latter could only be created over time; some indication of the difference that access to naval facilities in Egypt would have made to Soviet naval operations then can be seen in the intensity and duration of the naval activity which the USSR was able to sustain in the Mediterranean after it actually obtained access to those facilities following Egypt's defeat in the June War of 1967.

Because the stakes it was playing for were so high, the USSR proved willing to continue its considerable military assistance program there, even though the odds became increasingly poor that Egypt would satisfy the Soviet Navy's need for access to naval facilities in the region. Whether or not the USSR would have maintained that program at the same level once its own naval expansion program rendered those facilities redundant--or if it had been able to secure such facilities elsewhere in the Mediterranean--is questionable. The June War of 1967 so changed the parameters of the Soviet Union's involvement in the Middle East that it is virtually impossible to tell. It is likely, though, that, by the time

of the June War, the USSR had come to the conclusion that it was never going to get the full cooperation it sought from Nasser's Egypt in this matter. Egypt no longer represented the only realistic possibility, and the Soviet Navy's attention to Algeria, Syria, and Yugoslavia--especially from 1966 through the first half of 1967¹²³ --indicates that the USSR had already begun to seek alternative ports of call.

POSTSCRIPT

On April 3, 1974, in a speech in Alexandria, President Sadat said that Egypt and the USSR had concluded a five year formal agreement in March 1968 on the Soviet Navy's access to "facilities on the Mediterranean."¹²⁴ Ironically, the editor of Look magazine had asked President Nasser in March 1968 if the latter would offer the Soviets naval "bases," and Nasser replied: "That question has never been brought up by their side or ours."¹²⁵

President Sadat had already revealed, in a speech in January 1971,¹²⁶ that Nasser had granted the Soviet Navy access to Egyptian naval facilities in 1968, but Sadat left the impression then and at other times that this arrangement was an informal and unwritten mutual understanding. In addition to being drawn up for five years, Sadat disclosed in his April 1974 speech that the 1968 agreement called for the two parties to decide three months before its expiration whether or not to renew it. Accordingly, in December 1972, Sadat had Field Marshal Isma'il call "the Russian general"

at the Soviet Embassy in Cairo and "...tell him that we had decided, on our part, to extend the facilities for another period." It is clear from the context of Sadat's speech, however, that this demarche carried with it a veiled threat not to renew the agreement if the USSR did not increase the quality and quantity of its arms deliveries to Egypt.

This appears to have had its desired effect, since the first Soviet military delegation to visit Egypt since the expulsion of Soviet advisors in July 1972 arrived in Cairo on February 1, 1973. A new arms deal was concluded that same month and Soviet arms deliveries began to reflect a willingness to meet Egyptian demands for more and better materiel. Thus the Soviet naval presence in Egypt appears to have been a major factor in the USSR's decision to revive its extensive military assistance to Egypt in 1973. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the Soviet Navy's use of Egyptian naval facilities was the USSR's most valuable, if not its only, strategic asset in that country after July 1972.

Although President Sadat indicated in his April 1974 speech that the 1968 facilities agreement had been renewed in 1973, he cast doubt on the future of that arrangement three weeks later when he told C. L. Sulzberger of the New York Times that the whole question of foreign naval access to Egyptian ports was under review and that Egypt might grant similar privileges to other foreign fleets (including the Sixth Fleet) as well.¹²⁷

REFERENCES

1. From the second installment of Admiral Gorshkov's 1972 series, "Navies in War and Peace," in Morskoi Sbornik. Translated and reprinted in the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, C (February 1974), p. 33.
2. See, for example: René Mertens, "The Soviet fleet in Arab politics," The New Middle East, No. 14 (November 1969), 21-25. A more favorable interpretation of the Russian Navy's Mediterranean experience can be found in: Boris Guriel, "Two Hundred Years of Russian Interest in the Mediterranean," The New Middle East, No. 2 (November 1969), 35-41.
3. Captain 2nd Rank I. Bobkov, Candidate of Historical Sciences, "Presence of Soviet Fleet in Mediterranean Examined," Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal, No. 9 (September 1970), pp. 34-37. Translated and reprinted in Translations of USSR Military Affairs, Joint Publications Research Service, No. 51712, November 4, 1970, p. 11.
4. Le Figaro, September 27, 1928, p. 5; London Times, September 27, 1928, p. 4.
5. Two Soviet destroyers called at Istanbul and Naples in September 1925. A cruiser and gunboat from the Black Sea Fleet called at Istanbul in October 1928, but did not enter the Mediterranean. In January 1930, the USSR transferred a battleship and cruiser-minelayer from the Baltic to the Black Sea Fleet in defiance of the London Naval Conference (then underway), to which the USSR had not been invited. In September 1930, a cruiser and two destroyers from the Black Sea Fleet called at Istanbul, Piraeus (Athens), and Messina, Italy. A Soviet cruiser and two destroyers called at Naples in October 1933.
6. New York Times, January 9, 1952, p. 6.
7. New York Times (quoting an Egyptian Government statement), October 19, 1951, p. 5.
8. Pravda, January 25, 1952.
9. New York Times, June 4, 1954, p. 2. The detachment returned to the Black Sea on June 6, 1954.
10. Al-Ahram, broadcast by Radio Cairo Domestic Service, April 14, 1967. This article was one in a series which Haykal wrote on U.S.-Egyptian relations.

11. London Times, August 4, 1956, p. 5.
12. London Times, August 4, 1956, p. 6.
13. Radio Moscow, in Arabic, to the Arab World, August 4, 1956.
14. New York Times, August 6, 1956, p. 3.
15. Radio Athens "Our Cyprus," August 6, 1956.
16. New York Times, August 8, 1956, p. 2.
17. Radio Cairo "Voice of the Arabs," August 6, 1956.
18. "Gun Boat Diplomacy or the Impotence of Sea [Power] in the Eastern Mediterranean," The Egyptian Economic & Political Review, IV (2nd Series), No. 1 (December 1957), p. 20.
19. London Times, June 24, 1957, p. 9.
20. The only Soviet naval transit of the Suez Canal prior to 1957 had been on August 21, 1924, when the combination training and fisheries protection vessel Vorovsky passed through on its way to Vladivostok. London Times, August 22, 1924, p. 10.
21. Middle East News Agency (quoting Al-Ahram), September 19, 1957; London Times (quoting Al-Akhbar), September 20, 1957, p. 8.
22. London Times (quoting Al-Akhbar), September 20, 1957, p. 8.
23. When the detachment had left the Baltic Fleet on August 31, Pravda had only announced that it would be visiting Yugoslavia. The naval visit to Syria was not announced by Radio Moscow until the night of September 18, when the detachment was already en-route there from Yugoslavia. Furthermore, Syrian Defense Minister al-Azm stated that the Soviet naval units had been invited to visit Syria "...on the occasion of their presence in the Mediterranean." New York Times, September 8, 1957, p. 23; Radio Moscow, September 18, 1957; Radio Damascus, September 19, 1957.
24. Radio Cairo Domestic Service (quoting Al-Nour), September 5, 1957.
25. Some of the headlines in the Egyptian press on September 20, 1957 were: "Soviet Navy Arrives in Syria;" "Soviet Ship Challenges NATO Navies and Enters Maneuver Area;" "Official American Spokesman Announces That Had the Soviet Ship Been Hit World War Would Have Broken Out." Radio Cairo Domestic Service "Press Review," September 20, 1957.

26. Radio Moscow, in Arabic, to the Arab World, September 22, 1957.
27. Middle East News Agency (quoting Al-Ahram) September 19, 1957.
28. J.M. Mackintosh, Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 227.
29. Ibid. p. 229
30. The detachment, which was commanded by a rear admiral, had taken Marshal Zhukov to Yugoslavia. After the warships had put him ashore in Zadar, they had visited the Yugoslav ports of Split and Dubrovnik. Zhukov flew back to Moscow, and the detachment was returning to Sevastopol during this phase of the Syrian-Turkish crisis. Because it was set up to make port calls, and because it was unencumbered by Marshal Zhukov, the detachment could have easily visited Syria at this time.
31. Al-Akhbar, May 18, 1958.
32. Al-Ahram, June 19, 1958.
33. Al-Gomhuriya, June 21, 1958.
34. The judgment that the Egyptian press gave "unusual prominence" to the Soviet naval moves is a BBC Monitoring Service evaluation. BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part IV, Daily Series No. 585, June 26, 1958, p. i.
35. Radio Cairo Domestic Service "Press Review," June 24, 1958.
36. Radio Cairo Domestic Service, June 24, 1958.
37. Al-Ahram, January 22, 1965.
38. London Times, August 22, 1958, p. 7.
39. Radio Cairo Domestic Service "Press Review," June 25, 1958.
40. New York Times, November 29, 1958, p. 12.
41. London Times, September 19, 1960, p. 11.
42. Michael McGwire, "The Mediterranean and Soviet naval interests," International Journal, XXVII (Autumn 1972), p. 522.
43. Radio Damascus, October 10, 1960.

44. Izat may have also asked Gorshkov for three submarines and two large destroyers or light cruisers. Middle East Mirror, December 3, 1960, p. 3; Leo Heiman, "The Soviet Navy and Egyptian Bases," Jewish Frontier, XXIX (June 1962), p. 19. Heiman, an Israeli journalist, was an Israeli naval reservist at the time, and his article appears to reflect the Israeli Navy's views.
45. George Lenczowski, Soviet Advances in the Middle East, (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972), p. 148.
46. Yitzhak Oron, (The Reuven Shiloah Research Center), ed., Middle East Record, Vol. II, 1961 (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University & Israel Program for Scientific Translations), p. 661.
47. Al-Ahram, December 15, 1961.
48. A statement by the Royal Navy's Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean that NATO had plans for preventing the exit of Soviet naval forces through the Turkish Straits in time of war was the subject of a Pravda interview with Admiral Gorshkov published on February 2, 1962. Current Digest of the Soviet Press, XIV (February 28, 1962), p. 28.
49. Michael McGwire. "The background to Soviet naval developments," The World Today, XXVII (March 1971), p. 100.
50. In describing that year's annual Fleet Review at Leningrad, TASS (July 30, 1961) noted:

Also shown, for the first time, were rocket-carrying cruisers [DDGSs], destined for the destruction of large surface ships, such as aircraft carriers and cruisers. These ships are capable of making long voyages.
51. TASS, December 12, 1961.
52. Middle East News Agency, December 12, 1961.
53. New York Times, December 30, 1961, p. 5.
54. Middle East News Agency, December 14, 1961.
55. The figures for Soviet naval deliveries to Egypt in 1962 were drawn from various issues of Jane's Fighting Ships.
56. Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, "The Great Tasks of the Soviet Navy," Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star), February 5, 1963.

57. New York Times (Hanson Baldwin), March 23, 1963, p. 6.
58. New York Times, April 13, 1963, p. 2.
59. Radio Moscow, in Arabic, to the Arab World, May 15, 1963.
60. Radio Moscow, in Arabic, to the Arab World, July 7, 1963.
61. Lenczowski, Soviet Advances in the Middle East, p. 148.
62. Oral information obtained from Dr. John S. Badeau, April 1974. The author is, of course, very grateful for this information. He should also like to acknowledge his considerable academic debt to Dr. Badeau, his professor for two courses on Egyptian history at Georgetown University.
63. Premier Khrushchev's speech in Port Said, broadcast live by Radio Cairo Domestic Service and Radio Cairo "Voice of the Arabs," May 19, 1964.
64. The Algiers Appeal, issued at the conclusion of the conference, called for the evacuation "...of all nuclear weapons and all means of their delivery..." from the Mediterranean area. Radio Algiers Domestic Service, July 9, 1964.
65. Radio Moscow, in Arabic, to the Arab World, July 9, 1964.
66. TASS (quoting Izvestia), July 18, 1964.
67. Egyptian Gazette, March 20, 1965, p. 3.
68. New York Times (Hedrick Smith), April 5, 1966, p. 10.
69. New York Times, April 5, 1966, p. 10; London Times, May 11, 1966, p. 8.
70. TASS, February 12, 1966; Radio Moscow Domestic Service, February 12, 1966; Radio Moscow Domestic Service, February 16, 1966.
71. New York Times, April 5, 1966, p. 10.
72. Radio Cairo Domestic Service, May 18, 1966; Radio Moscow, in Arabic, to the Arab World, May 18, 1966.
73. Premier Kosygin's speech to Egypt's National Assembly, broadcast live by Radio Cairo Domestic Service and Radio Cairo "Voice of the Arabs," May 17, 1966.

74. It is significant that the only economic aid which Kosygin appears to have freely offered was maritime oriented. He reportedly told the Director of the Suez Canal Authority: "If you want help in building ships, we are ready to cooperate with you." New York Times, May 16, 1966, p. 8.
75. London Times, May 18, 1966, p. 8.
76. TASS, August 1, 1966.
77. New York Times, May 24, 1966, p. 9.
78. Radio Cairo "Voice of the Arabs," June 1, 1966.
79. New York Times, May 11, 1966, p. 8.
80. Al-Ahram, June 21, 1966.
81. Al-Ahram, June 24, 1966.
82. Le Monde, August 11, 1966, p. 4.
83. TASS, May 16, 1964.
84. Radio Kiev Domestic Service, August 2, 1966.
85. Ibid.
86. A photograph of the event shows Admiral Chernobay in the front row, seated between the Governor of Alexandria and the Minister of the High Dam. Egyptian Gazette, August 11, 1966, p. 3.
87. Le Monde, August 11, 1966, p. 4.
88. President Nasser's answer to a question from an Egyptian student, Alexandria University, August 7, 1966. Radio Cairo Domestic Service, August 8, 1966.
89. The Alsacien was returning to Toulon after a tour of duty in Djibouti. [La Revue Maritime, No. 236 (October 1966), p. 1230.] Although it had to pass through the Suez Canal to get to Alexandria, the memories of the Anglo-French invasion of 1956 obviously made Port Said unacceptable as a port of call.

90. Although the U.S. had made the request the previous spring, State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey stated that Egypt had only formally replied to it "...a few days ago." "Transcript of Press and Radio News Briefing, August 23, 1966, 12:34 P.M.," Daily News Conferences, XL, No. 165 (Washington: Office of Press Relations, Department of State).
91. New York Times, August 8, 1966, p. 2; Le Monde, September 4-5, 1966.
92. BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part IV, No. 2258, September 7, 1966, p. i.
93. New York Times, August 8, 1966, p. 2; London Times, August 18, 1966, p. 8.
94. Al-Ahram, June 24, 1966.
95. Radio Cairo Domestic Service, August 8, 1966.
96. Diplomatic relations between the two states had been especially cool since the U.S. PL-480 wheat aid agreement with Egypt had expired on June 30, 1966. On August 23, State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey had specifically declined to characterize the upcoming naval visit as a reversal or turning point in the strained U.S.-Egyptian relations. McCloskey, "Transcript of Press and Radio News Briefing, August 23, 1966."
97. John S. Badeau, The American Approach to the Arab World (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) p. 15.
98. The figures and dates for Soviet naval deliveries to Egypt in 1966 were drawn from various issues of Jane's Fighting Ships.
99. République Turque, Rapport Annuel sur le Mouvement des Navires à travers les Détroits Turcs, 1966 (Ankara: Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, January 1967); Rapport Annuel...1967. The author gratefully acknowledges his debt to Dr. Harry N. Howard of the Middle East Institute, who generously allowed the former to use his private collection of these reports.
100. Bulgarian warships have periodically exercised with the Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean since the spring of 1969. But Turkish Straits data indicates that there were no Bulgarian warships in the Mediterranean between this port call and May 1969; and the last time that anything larger than a minesweeper had been in the Mediterranean was in 1957, when a Bulgarian destroyer carried a governmental delegation to Albania.

101. Sofia BTA, October 27, 1966.
102. "The present visit to the Soviet Union by UAR First Vice President Abdul Hakim Amer is especially important if we take into consideration that it is taking place under tense international conditions resulting from the expansion of imperialist and reactionary aggression." Radio Moscow, in Arabic, to the Arab World, November 21, 1966.
103. MccGwire, "The Mediterranean and Soviet naval interests," p. 525. Although Soviet (and U.S.) naval units traditionally attend Ethiopia's Navy Days, it has been Admiral Gorshkov's only visit to that state.
104. Egyptian Gazette, January 29, 1967, p. 3; Egyptian Gazette, February 1, 1967, p. 3.
105. TASS, January 20, 1967.
106. According to the highly regarded Istanbul newspaper Cumhuriyet (February 20, 1967), which closely covers Soviet naval transits through the Turkish Straits, the USSR notified Turkey that it intended to transit twenty warships (two cruisers, eight destroyers, eight escorts, and two minesweepers) during the last week of February. Turkish Straits data [Rapport Annuel...1967], however, indicates that only one cruiser, three destroyers, and one minesweeper entered the Mediterranean from the Black Sea that week. The USSR's practice of issuing false declarations ("contingency scheduling") in order to circumvent the Montreux Convention is a post-June War development. Thus, the Soviet Navy appears to have genuinely planned, and then rejected, a major winter deployment that year. It is interesting, and perhaps significant, that President Nasser's February 22 statement that Egypt had not granted the USSR naval bases falls between the date that the USSR would have had to have notified Turkey of its intended transits and the date of the actual transits.
107. Indian Express, February 10, 1967, p. 7. Ironically, Egypt had approached India once before in order to lessen its dependence upon another world power (i.e., the U.K.) for naval assistance. New York Times, February 27, 1954, p. 3.
108. President Nasser's speech at Cairo University on the anniversary of the 1958 Egyptian union with Syria, broadcast live by Radio Cairo Domestic Service, February 22, 1967.

109. For example, for the period from May 14 until the outbreak of hostilities on June 5, this writer has found seven such broadcasts from TASS, five from Radio Moscow Domestic Service, and three from Radio Moscow's Arabic language program beamed to the Middle East. Similar statements linking Anglo-American naval moves to the Arab-Israeli crisis were broadcast on Radio Moscow's U.K. and North America programs.
110. New York Times, June 3, 1967, p. 31; New York Times, June 4, 1967, p. 4.
111. New York Times, May 31, 1967, p. 16. According to the Egyptian Gazette (May 31, 1967, p. 1) five of the warships were to be of large tonnage, and five were to be destroyers and patrol boats.
112. Rapport Annuel...1967.
113. For example: "Meanwhile, more units of the Soviet Fleet pass through the Dardanelles to the Mediterranean to shadow the U.S. Sixth Fleet." Radio Cairo Domestic Service, June 1, 1967.
114. James Cable, "Political Applications of Limited Naval Force," in The Soviet Union in Europe and the Near East: Her Capabilities and Intentions (London: Royal United Service Institution, 1970), p. 57.
115. President Nasser's news conference, broadcast live by Radio Cairo Domestic Service, May 28, 1967.
116. "And if that aggression was soon curbed, if the war in the Middle East did not grow from a local into a big one, a definite part of the credit goes to the Soviet Navy." Admiral of the Fleet V. Kasatonov, First Deputy C-in-C of the Soviet Navy, "The Mediterranean is not an American Lake," Soviet Military Review, No. 1 (January 1969), p. 54.
117. In an interview with Radio Jerusalem, then Israeli Chief of Staff Major General Rabin expressed the opinion that the presence of Soviet warships in Alexandria and Port Said was only a deterrent measure. [Radio Jerusalem Domestic Service, July 21, 1967.] As long as the Soviets took this limited, and purely defensive, posture--leaving the rest of Egypt open to attack--the Israelis appeared to have had little trouble adapting to the Soviet presence.

118. Egypt was the only state mentioned by name in the context of Soviet port calls. Translation and condensation of three articles written on December 27, 28, & 30, 1967 by a special correspondent to Red Star, "Future Role of Soviet Navy," Survival, X (March 1968), p. 80.
119. The leading proponent of this view is Sir John Glubb. His arguments are set forth in his monograph The Middle East Crisis: A Personal Interpretation (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1967).
120. McGwire, "The Mediterranean and Soviet naval interests," p. 525.
121. For a detailed analysis of motivational forces behind the USSR's military assistance program in Egypt, see Gur Ofer's "The Economic Burden of Soviet Involvement in the Middle East," in The U.S.S.R. and the Middle East, ed. by Michael Confino and Shimon Shamir (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973), pp. 215-246.
122. Beginning with the CVA Forrestal's deployment to the Mediterranean in February 1957, the Sixth Fleet had the A3D "Sky-warrior," a twin-jet bomber capable of carrying nuclear bombs 1,400 miles without refueling. "If Little Wars Come: U.S. Sixth Fleet - The Punch Behind the Doctrine," Newsweek, February 11, 1957, p. 49.
123. The USSR delivered Komar guided missile patrol boats to Algeria and Syria during this period. Soviet naval units paid their first visit to Algeria in April 1966, and Admiral Chernobay led a second group of naval units there in November 1966. Admiral Gorshkov led a naval delegation to Yugoslavia in April 1967, less than a month after five Soviet naval units had paid a four day "informal" visit to Split.
124. President Sadat's speech at the conference of the Egyptian Students Federation at Alexandria University, carried live by Radio Cairo Domestic Service, April 3, 1974.
125. Look, March 19, 1968, p. 64.
126. Reportage of President Sadat's speech to a political conference at Cairo University on January 8, 1971. Radio Cairo Domestic Service, January 8, 1971.
127. New York Times, April 22, 1974, p. 7.

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- PP 1**
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