
Defense Report

AUSA



Who Leads Whom

Included in the arguments which swirled around Washington during and after the firing of former Secretary of Defense Schlesinger was one concerning the real impact of Soviet Defense spending. Dr. Schlesinger said the USSR is outspending the US for defense. His opponents said that Schlesinger's spending comparison methodology was not necessarily valid.

The Schlesinger position is that since 1968, using 1968 dollars as a basis, the Soviets have been increasing their defense expenditures at a rate of 3-5 per cent per year while the US in the same period has been reducing its defense expenditures by about the same amount. Schlesinger did not say whether this disparity has put the Soviets ahead of the US in across the board military capabilities as of today. He has said that if the trends continue the USSR will be clearly ahead across the board in 5, 7, or 10 years.

Schlesinger's opponents say that the method used by the US Intelligence Community to compute Soviet spending may be faulty.

Dr. Schlesinger's rebuttal: Arguing about the method of calculation used in estimating Soviet expenditures is irrelevant. No one argues that the Soviets have reached nuclear parity with the US, and the growth of Soviet conventional forces as compared to the US can be proved by simply looking at the facts. As he told his opponents in a recent debate in Washington, "you are entitled to your own views, but you are not entitled to your own facts."

The facts are: Since 1968 the Soviet military has increased in strength to 4 million men, up from slightly over 3 million. The US has dropped from 3 million to 2.1 million which gives the USSR twice as many men. On average from 1972 to 1974 the Soviets produced 3,000 tanks per year; the US—462. They produced annually 1200 cannon; the US—170; 930 tactical aircraft compared to 540 in the US; 39 Navy ships per year compared to 11.

Although Dr. Schlesinger is gone; the facts still are facing us. And the tide runs inexorably against us.