

Another consideration affecting mobilization rates is warning time. Will NATO leaders receive advanced warning of an impending Warsaw Pact attack, and, more importantly, will they respond quickly to such warning, authorizing the mobilization of active and reserve forces? Hesitation in response - the result, for example, of ambiguous military intelligence or desires to avoid provocation - may delay the start of the process.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Warsaw Pact mobilization may be several days or several weeks advanced before the decision to mobilize is taken in the West. An analyst's assumptions regarding warning time and the response of political leaders to warning further colour his assessment of the relative balance of forces at any given point in time.

2. Other Theatre Commitments - Active and/or reserve forces currently earmarked for the Central European theatre may not be available for use in times of war. Despite timely mobilization, these forces may be required to reinforce commitments in other regions of the world. The United States, for example, maintains alliances, treaties, and Executive

---

<sup>2</sup> NATO's reaction to the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia on 20 August 1968 illustrates the procedural difficulties surrounding the timely response to warning. Upon notice of the invasion, NATO military authorities in the Central Army Group and European Command raised the alert status of their forces to the level of military vigilance, the maximum permissible without further authorization by NATO's Council of Ministers. These precautionary measures were taken as a hedge against the possibility, however slight, that military movements in Czechoslovakia were a prelude to an invasion of Western Europe. The Council of Ministers then met to decide on the authorization of alert measures beyond those already taken. Amid concerns that further military preparations might appear provocative to the Soviet Union, the Council was unable to obtain the unanimous consent of all fifteen national representatives needed for the implementation of additional alert measures. For a detailed discussion of this case, see Richard K. Betts, Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defence Planning, Washington, The Brookings Institution, 1982,