

# PARALLEL HISTORY PROJECT ON NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT (PHP)

## Allied Military Liaison Missions, 1946-1990

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**Please note:** This issue of the PHP Publication Series offers highlights from a much larger online document collection. Please consult the PHP website for all the documents in their original language and other features: [http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php/collections/coll\\_mlm.htm](http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php/collections/coll_mlm.htm).

The PHP has published a number of document collections on various aspects of the security-related history of the cold war: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php>.

## 1) Introduction, by Christopher Winkler

### Between Conflict and Gentlemen's Agreement: The Military Liaison Missions of the Western Allies in Potsdam

#### 1 Introductory Remarks

The Military Liaison Missions (MLM) of the United States, Great Britain and France were located in the East German town of Potsdam near Berlin from 1946/47 through 1990. They were accredited with the High Command of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG). Consisting of 14 (U.S.), 31 (Great Britain) and 18 (France) accredited members, by the 1980s they received logistic support from nearby West Berlin by a force of several hundred American, British, and French military personnel. Conversely, the Soviet Union had established three respective liaison missions with the high commands of the Western allies' forces in West Germany (as they are basically no Soviet documents accessible pertaining to their MLM activities they will have to be mostly ignored in the course of this article [1]). All liaison missions had been established respectively by bilateral agreements as legal and effective bodies of military intelligence. At the same time, they were a politically sensitive and, in every regard, extraordinary relict of four-power control over all of Germany. [2]

#### 2 Military and Intelligence Relevance

Western MLM played an important role through comprehensive collection of information to obtain realistic situation reports about the presumed military adversary. Permanent surveillance of indications on heightened tensions and the GSFG's and the East German Army's [NVA] order of battle, provided military leaders of western countries with comparatively reliable information on potential of, and 'activities' by, the presumable adversary stationed on the GDR territory of observation. [3] Rising importance was attributed to these western activities during tension periods like, for example, in the second Berlin crisis (1958-1963), the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, or in the context of unrests in the People's Republic of Poland at the beginning of the 1980s. [4] Though MLM naturally were not capable of making contributions to the analysis of Soviet intentions, they nevertheless figured until 1990 as an important component of western allies' early-warning systems against a potential Soviet conventional surprise attack in Central Europe. [5] During the period of heightened cold war tensions in the early 1980s, intelligence gathering with respect to modernized arms technologies again acquired an increasingly dominant role in the MLM's daily business. [6]

Furthermore, the MLM were commissioned to undertake several other assignments. Contingent upon historical period and concrete political situation, those could vary and raise or decline in importance. Such assignments were results of MLM functions within the intelligence community of the western military alliance. Foremost they were concentrated on areas where since the early 1960s increasingly dominant means of signal intelligence (SIGINT) proved to be ineffective or of lesser reliability.

Hence MLM members were almost the only western military personnel that not just observed and documented military technology, but also examined its modes of functioning and on-site use. Obviously MLM were uniquely suited to report on situations only to be gained through on-site presence, like issues of morale and atmospherics in armed forces, training capabilities, and details of military movements. Such information was indispensable as to be confirmed intelligence, like the scanning of friend-foe detection systems, firing signals, or “on-site inspections” and documentation of suspicious moves acquired by other intelligence services. Not the least, stealing and removal of military equipment of interest were also of high importance. An increasingly forced pursued of activity in the 1970s and 1980s consisted in secret exploitation of Soviet garbage dumps. Information gained from these sources became during the 1980s a valuable and always entirely reliable source for western intelligence services. [7] According to, yet non-verifiable, statements by former members of U.S. MLM, the American budget saved “billions of dollars” through the acquisition of information on Soviet military technology by the means outlined above. [8]

In at least one case, the contacting by MLM members of an important western agent within Soviet military intelligence can be documented. [9] Noteworthy in this context is the fact that the U.S. MLM carried a codename during the mid-fifties (“VOUCHER”). This indicates potentially, but not necessary, significance in terms of an integration into intelligence work and structures *beyond* the legally covered “observation activity” in the widest sense. [10] Concrete details, however, are (understandably) missing in declassified records. A former veteran of the British Mission (BRIXMIS) contends in his memoirs how during his term in the 1980s extensive intelligence work had been conducted. [11] Although he does not provide details to prove his assertions. [12] It is rather unlikely, however, that western military leaderships responsible for and in charge of MLM would have consented to a clandestine use by civilian authorities or western intelligence services. Such would have jeopardized legal MLM positions and thrown a highly valuable source of information into turmoil. It is hardly coincidental that the former GDR Ministry for State Security (an organization rarely charged with incompetence) was unable to prove in any documented case whether western MLM were involved in “clandestine activities”, despite most intense efforts and many indications in those respects. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, however, for the moment it must be assumed that clandestine intelligence activities by western MLM in the GDR were a rare exception - if they occurred at all between the 1960s and the 1980s. It can hardly be underestimated to what advantage the existence of MLM offered the opportunity to protect other intelligence sources. Since “the other side” was respectively aware of the MLM's existence and activities and ultimately tolerated them, intelligence results from other sources that were supposed to be made public for political reasons were used as if gathered by the missions. [13]

And last but not least: In summarizing the still incompletely addressed MLM functions and tasks, as described above, results amount exactly to a feature the USSR always fought against in different areas and fields of disarmament talks and negotiations for decades: Ultimately the MLM acted *de facto* as mobile on-site inspection teams with very extensive authority. [14]

This last point leads to one of the central questions surrounding the western MLM during the cold war: Why in the world did the Soviet tolerate their activities? Here I am going to resist the temptation of extensive speculations or logically deducted assumptions based on indications not conclusively proven. Also I will not indulge into assessing such assumptions. Some of them, at least, I will nevertheless mention below.

A widely-held convincing assumption is that the main reason for the Soviets to tolerate the western spearheads in the East was to preserve the effects and relevance of their own respective

missions in West Germany. [15] In such a context of explanation, one could emphasize the importance of USSR missions mainly and simply by an unquenched Soviet thirst for “razvedka”. Or one asserts that these Soviet missions were indeed holding an essential position within the USSR's intelligence system since they were used as an almost perfect cover for “residenturas”. [16] As plausible as this line of argumentation may seem, it is not satisfactory given the above mentioned steadfast and, in western perspective, destructive Soviet refusal during the course of disarmament talks to accept on-site inspection and verification. That the USSR then tolerated, in the form of western MLM, such reciprocal verification instruments in the GDR raises questions and suspicions. After all, this was the territory where their most efficient and modernized armed forces were deployed and the center of the “western theater of war” consisting of three fronts in wartime. If there would be possible clear-cut answers to those questions, some currently dominating theories on the cold war, Soviet military doctrine, and the strategy regarding Germany, might have to be discussed again. Therefore one must assume that, besides concern about intelligence assets like her missions in West Germany, the Soviet Union had other reasons of similar, if not higher, importance to tolerate the western missions on GDR territory. [17]

### 3 Political and Legal Ramifications

Besides the already striking fact of Soviet tolerance of those “legal” western intelligence residences and their relevance and importance in military and intelligence matters, there is the complex legal and political dimension of institutions like “Military Liaison Missions”. This dimension becomes apparent when looking at the unchanged situation of the missions after the foundation of both German states in 1949, as well as after their accession to the United Nations in 1973 and beyond until 1990. The MLM operated on an extremely complicated and anything but unambiguous legal basis.

- The missions had no official contact whatsoever with the subjects of international law, i.e. the two German states, on which territory they operated
- They were accredited with military forces deployed in both German states according to bilateral agreements and were enjoying certain rights within those two sovereign states
- They claimed immunity, and it was granted them comprehensively; they ignored the sovereignty of both German states granting them this very immunity more consequently than any “conventional” diplomats would have dared

While there are several analyses of the legal status of Berlin, until today there is no legal assessment of implications in terms of international and public law pertaining to the presence and activities of MLM in both German states. [18] Despite the prevailing legal vacuum, some issues are important to be closer looked at. Legal fundamentals of existence and activities of MLM markedly differed from the western allies' rights in and around Berlin. This fact has been so far ignored. It is not at all related to the exclusive rights that all four victorious World War II allies had reserved for themselves when they handed over sovereignty to their respective German allies in 1949 and 1955.

a) Allied rights concerning Berlin derived directly from

- the tripartite (later quadripartite) Agreement of the European Advisory Commission (EAC) in London 1944
- the right of occupation
- and the subsequent joint takeover of sovereignty in Germany on 5 June 1945

b) Thus these rights were not contingent on arbitrariness and decisions by one of the four allies. This stipulated that these rights could

- neither be restricted or denied unilaterally
- nor be awarded to a third party since this would have immediately affected the rights of the other agreement partners resp. allies. Since this legal fundament was rather unequivocal, despite differing interpretations on individual clauses, the Soviet Union never dared in contrast to her differently sounding public propaganda to restrict fundamental rights of the western allies in and around Berlin – all that in spite of heavy pressure by their most important ally, the GDR.
- The legal foundations of MLM, however, consisted of
  - bilateral agreements which were
  - negotiated between lower-ranking military institutions (chiefs of staff of occupation armies respectively deputy supreme commanders)
  - and therefore were subject to cancellation in principle (in one case, namely the U.S.-Soviet agreement, the provision of change was even explicitly stated [19])

Not the least, the legal positions of all sides involved were quite different:

- The GDR held the opinion that the de facto cessation of major parts of the London and Potsdam Agreements, the breakdown of the Allied Control Council in Berlin, and the formation of two German states, had voided the basis for the existence of three MLM on her territory. So the GDR emphasized her temporary tolerance of the missions out of political and alliance-related considerations, but denied any recognition of the missions and their claimed rights. Though the GDR was aware of different legal foundations of the Berlin situation and the existence of MLM, it considered both of them as politically and legally expired “relicts of the Second World War”. [20]
- Somewhat strangely the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) resisted the acceptance of Soviet MLM in the beginning by using similar arguments. It hinted at the incompatibility of their existence with international law – which is indeed the case. Only later the FRG subordinated her criticism under military and intelligence interests of her three western allies, following requests addressed to the FRG in this regard. Even later she recognized the political advantage inherent in the missions as undeniable relicts of allied authority over Germany as a whole within the context of the unresolved German question. [21] Indeed Adenauer explicitly issued his acceptance, though still with reservations. [22]
- Hesitancy also characterized the positions of the three western allies themselves. In the early and mid-1950s, they were skeptical whether the FRG would tolerate the presence of the Soviet missions. [23] Only when confronting the GDR and USSR, the United States, Great Britain and France insisted on the position that MLM were an exclusive subject of discussion between the Western Allies and the USSR.

- From an historical perspective, the most interesting viewpoint was represented by the USSR. This was due to the simple reason that her real, and implicit, point of view was identical with that of the western allies. At the same time, the USSR stated in public constantly the finality of the German question and provided political cover to their East German ally. The Soviet Union also displayed a similar strategy regarding the question of Berlin. But, as shown above, the Berlin situation was fundamentally different from the legal basis for MLM. This means, the USSR could have abolished the MLM and ceased their activities without running the risk of a war or even a major diplomatic scandal. Not without reason, the United States expected during various situations in the cold war exactly such a move by the Soviets. The fact that it did never materialize, testifies to the political sensitivity of the continuing MLM existence – a cunning Gentlemen's Agreement between adversaries at the expense of the GDR.

Thus the MLM of the four victorious allied powers in Germany are anything but an exceptional, and far from marginal, phenomenon of the cold war. Still there is basically no published academic literature on the subject. [24] One reason might be that even experts are hardly aware of the MLM. Or people have heard about them and belittle their importance. Despite its significance, the subject is mostly ignored even when obviously mentioned in relevant records. [25] In any case, research on MLM is going to meet difficulties in terms of access to relevant material due to the heavy involvement of military and intelligence agencies prone to keep their documents classified.

## 4 Documents

Nonetheless the three western MLM in the Soviet Zone and GDR are at least a rewarding field of research. Besides some recently declassified, partially relevant monthly reports of the U.S. MLM, further records have so far been hardly, or not at all, examined. Of special interest in our case are documents from the former Ministry for State Security (MfS) of the GDR. Representative documents are to be found in the appendix. I want to refrain deliberately from commenting on most of them in this introduction. First of all, the documents are mostly self-explanatory, and secondly, a thorough academic commentary will have to be reserved for a future monography.

Selected documents touch upon the position of the Soviet Union on the “German question” as well as on military and operational intelligence topics. They demonstrate not only the GDR's positions vis-à-vis the MLM, but also document the conflicts the GDR had with Moscow in this context. It is of particular interest how those conflicts were eventually “solved”, i.e. through authoritative decisions by the supreme authorities in Moscow. The frequently emphasized and partially overstated autonomy of the GDR hit here, where fundamental Soviet interests were involved, its unequivocal dead end. Selected documents make abundantly clear how the GDR never had at any stage of her struggle against the MLM any realistic prospect of success in overcoming Soviet interests, despite tentative attempts in this regard during the second Berlin crisis between 1958 and 1963. Here the “tail did not wag the dog”, but “the dog was wagging its tail”.

Furthermore we obtain a brief glimpse into operative details of the MLM's military intelligence work as well as into that of their adversaries in the MfS units. The latter lead us to conclusions about the MLM's intelligence relevance for the West, as well as to those results concerning assumptions about Soviet policy to counter the effects of the missions.



Special comments, however, will have to be provided here only in case of two documents. They are concerned with two deaths suffered by western MLM members in the GDR in 1984 and 1985 that have become subject to far-reaching speculations.

There is the less well-known death of the French Sergeant Mariotti who was killed in a car accident during a blocking exercise by MfS and NVA in 1984. Neither the East German nor the French side had any apparent interest to publicize the case so that there were no significant political consequences or repercussions. According to press reports, the case became only public because of a leaked indiscretion in Bonn. [26] Since one of the parties involved, namely the GDR, did not entertain official contacts with the MLM, it would have been rather problematic for the French side to make the death of Mariotti a political issue. Official partner for the MLM was the Supreme Command of the Soviet forces in the GDR.

Notwithstanding political convictions and ideological battles, and applying a most sober and thorough analysis of the sources, the attached documents as well as still unpublished material warrant convincingly only one conclusion: Mariotti's death was an accident. Ignoring for the moment the overall legality of blocking operations by GDR organs, there only remains one question: Was Mariotti at fault, as the MfS documents indicate, or was it the fault of the driver of an East German army truck? Neither of these versions can be reconstructed with certainty based on available documentation. [27] At least, Mariotti was neither an "assassination victim" nor was it a "doctored accident", nor did "stasi henchmen" strive to get rid of "unwelcome western observers". [28]

Somewhat different is the case of the U.S. MLM member Arthur Nicholson shot in March 1985. [29] The violent death of the U.S. Major created huge waves at the time and threatened to jeopardize the incipient process of détente between the U.S. and the USSR after Michail Gorbachev's accession to power and a lingering turn during the second administration of Ronald Reagan. The American officer, accompanied by a sergeant during a routine tour, had been targeted and shot by a Soviet security guard in a restricted area though he had been recognized as a MLM member. [30] Nicholson was denied first aid and died at the spot. The latter, as well as the fact that he could easily have been apprehended later and maybe expelled as "persona non grata", makes the shooting look senseless and brutal – though the guard's action was in accordance with the Soviet law on the protection of military bases. [31] The published annual U.S. MLM report of 1985 reveals many so far unknown details, e.g. the content of a conversation between the American and Soviet Supreme Commander, but is essentially identical with the version provided by Lajoie in 2002. [32] The document presented here [and provided in English translation in addition to the German original] is interesting insofar, as it presents a so far unpublished informal Soviet version of the incident - which is in many points identical with the American version.

*[Translated from German by Bernd Schaefer]*

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## Notes

[1] For a first glimpse into activities of the Soviet mission in West Germany, based on anonymous time witnesses and, in part, bizarre press coverage: Klaus Behling, *Spione in Uniform. Die Alliierten Militärmissionen in Deutschland* [Spies in Uniform. The Allied Military Missions in Germany], Stuttgart: Hohenheim 2004 . The only existing publication in Russian is a brief newspaper article: Aleksandr Furs, "Polnomochija i ogranichenija. Poleznyi istoricheskij opyt dejatel'nosti voennyh missij svjazi." In: *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* (15 September 2000). See: [http://nvo.ng.ru/printed/history/2000-09-15/5\\_opyt.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/printed/history/2000-09-15/5_opyt.html) . Attempts by the author to establish contacts with the Moscow Institute for Military History were rejected in September 2004 upon mentioning the subject: Such research would warrant permission by the Chief of the General Staff. Former members of Soviet missions do not want to become cited and are not available for interviews.

[2] For the three original agreements: Dorothee Mussgnug, *Alliierte Militärmissionen in Deutschland 1946-1990* [Allied Military Missions in Germany, 1946-1990], Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001, p. 230-235.

[3] Such 'activities' included: Threatening maneuvers, as well as absence thereof; practical implementation of maneuvers; open, or allegedly secret, increase of armed forces. On the marginal importance of the East German Army NVA in this context see: Christopher Winkler, "Die NVA im Blick westallierter Militärs? Die Militärverbindungsmissionen" [NVA in Western Military Allies' Focus? The Military Liaison Missions], in: *Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR. Forschungsfelder, Ergebnisse, Perspektiven* [Military, State, and Society in the GDR. Research Areas, Results, Perspectives], ed. Hans Ehlert and Matthias Rogg, Berlin: Ch. Links, 2004, p. 97-112.

[4] Unfortunately these years among the otherwise released annual reports of the U.S. MLM are still classified: *U.S. Military Liaison Mission to the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany: Annual Histories* , ed. History Office of U.S. Army Europe ( <http://www.history.hqusareur.army.mil/uslmanual.html> ). Cf. also the inaccessible annual U.S. MLM report from 1961, archived in the U.S. Army Center of Military History, due to "CIA equities".

[5] With the emergence of technologically advanced means of intelligence operations covering vast areas, and otherwise increasing mobility of armed forces on both sides, this early-warning function almost naturally decreased with time to lower priority. It became geared towards detection of verifiable long-term logistical preparations, and lost its initial character to alert to immediate activities.

[6] U.S. Military Liaison Mission to the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany: Annual Histories, 1983-1988.

[7] Ibid. Some stir had been caused by "dumpster diving" stories of a former British MLM member about so-called "Operation Tomahawk": Steve Gibson, *The Last Mission behind the Iron Curtain* , Phoenix Mill etc.: Sutton Publishing, 1998, pp. 65-66, 75, 77, 201.

[8] Interview by the author with former members of U.S. MLM on 24 July 2004 in Washington D.C. Transcript with the author.

[9] George Bailey/Sergey Kondraschow/David Murphy, *Die unsichtbare Front. Der Krieg der Geheimdienste im geteilten Berlin* [Battleground Berlin. CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War], Berlin: Propyläen, 1997, pp. 360ff.

[10] Circular from the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff (ACS), G-2: "Special Handling of Certain Intelligence Correspondence", 21 April 1954. In: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 549, Records of the United States Army of Europe (USAREUR), Records of the ACS (G-2) Int, General Correspondence, 1953-1955, 1954 Segment, 350.09 1954; see also: Circular from the Office of the ACS, G-2: "Use of Code Word VOUCHER", 21 April 1954.

[11] Gibson, *Last Mission*, pp. 98, 133, 216.

[12] It has to be taken into account that existing memoirs, or popular one-sided third-party accounts not naming sources (e.g. Tony Geraghty, *Beyond the Frontline: The Untold Exploits of Britain's Most Daring Cold War Spy Mission*, London: Harper Collins, 1996), or eyewitnesses' accounts in general, partially testify to an impressive amount of misjudgments, retroactive self-aggrandizement, and frequent inadvertent sensationalization of one's own actions and "adventures". This seems to correspond with the desire to publish a book on this subject. For memoirs see: Claude H. Dewhurst, *In nächster Berührung mit der Sowjet-Besatzungsgruppe. Beobachtungen des Chefs der Britischen Militärmission hinter dem Eisernen Vorhang (1951-1953)* [Close Contact with Soviet Occupation Forces. Observations by the Chief of Brixmis behind the Iron Curtain], Lippoldsberg: 1955; Paul G. Skowronek, *U.S.-Soviet Military Liaison in Germany since 1947*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1976; Daniel Trastour, *La Guerre sans Armes*, Paris: Editions des écrivains, 2001; John A. Fahey, *Licensed to Spy. With the Top Secret Military Liaison Mission in East Germany*, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002; Gibson, *Last Mission*; David Wilson, *The Sun of Things*, Staplehurst 2002.

[13] A prominent example is certainly the series "Soviet Military Power" published during the 1980s by the U.S. Department of Defense. This partially distorted image of an across-the-board high-technology Soviet army, as presented in these publications, was rather propagandistic than informative. Parts of the series addressing the conventional Soviet threat were doubtlessly based to a considerable extent on material collected by MLM in East Germany. See: "Soviet Military Power", ed. U.S. Department of Defense, Washington D.C., 1981-1990.

[14] On the U.S. MLM's functions within the later "On-Site Inspection Agency": Joseph P. Harahan/John C. Kuhn, *On-Site Inspections under the CFE Treaty*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 1996.

[15] See Geraghty, *Beyond the Frontline*, and Gibson, *Last Mission*.

[16] There are many indications that the Soviet missions were exactly that: Viktor Suvorov, *GRU. Die Speerspitze*, Düsseldorf 1988, pp. 79, 94ff., 118; C.B. Critchley, "In Contact. Reminiscences of Brixmis, 1946-49 and 1955-1960, in ed. Nigel N. Wylde, *The Story of Brixmis 1946-1990*, publisher and year n.a., chapter 4/section 3. See also the article on the spectacular escape of GDR nuclear agent Rainer Fülle with support by the Soviet MLM in Baden-Baden: *Der Spiegel* 40 (1981), S. 130-134.

[17] Christopher Winkler, "Die Westmächte und ihre militärischen Verbindungsmissionen in Potsdam" [Western Powers and their MLM in Potsdam], in ed. Alliiertenmuseum Berlin, *Mission erfüllt. Die militärischen Verbindungsmissionen der Westmächte in Potsdam von 1946-1990* [Mission Accomplished. The MLM of Western Powers in Potsdam from 1946-1990], Berlin 2004, pp. 15-34.

[18] Udo Wetzlaugk, *Die Alliierten in Berlin*, Berlin: BWV, 1988.

[19] See Paragraph 15 of the so-called Huebner-Malinin Agreement: Mussgnug, *Alliierte Militärmissionen*, pp. 233-235.

[20] See pars pro toto for many internal legal GDR expertises: *Der Status der Militärverbindungsmissionen (MVM) und der Militärinspektionen (MI) der drei Westmächte. Die rechtlichen Grundlagen der politisch-operativen Arbeit zur vorbeugenden Verhinderung, Aufdeckung und Bekämpfung subversiver Aktivitäten und anderer Rechtsverletzungen der MVM und MI* [Status of MLM and Military Inspections/MI of the three Western Powers. Legal Basis of Political-Operative Intelligence Work to Preempt, Detect, and Fight Subversive Activities and other Legal Violations of MLM and MI], 15 October 1975, in: BStU, ZA, MfS-JHS 21481, Bl. 1-62.

[21] Mussgnug, *Alliierte Militärmissionen*, pp. 38f.

[22] Significantly Adenauer's personal reservations were not of legal nature, but based on fear that Soviet missions could cause unrest in the FRG by increased propaganda activity. See McCloy to HICOG Frankfurt, 12 July 1951, in: NARA, RG 548, Records of USAREUR, Headquarters European Command, Secretary of the General Staff, Administration Branch, General Correspondence 1946-1951, 1951 Segment, 322.01.

[23] Mussgnug, *Alliierte Militärmissionen*, pp. 36f.

[24] See the only comprehensive attempt based on limited sources: Mussgnug, *Alliierte Militärmissionen*. For the 1950s see a recent master's thesis: Anya Vodopyanov, *A Watchful Eye Behind the Iron Curtain. The U.S. Military Liaison Mission in East Germany, 1953-1961*, Stanford University, M.A. Thesis 2004:

[http://cisac.stanford.edu/docs/honorsprogram/honors\\_sched\\_readings.php](http://cisac.stanford.edu/docs/honorsprogram/honors_sched_readings.php).

It is also worth mentioning that the formerly declassified and long-time ago commissioned report by a former member of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, using a wide range of sources, has now disappeared from the Library of Congress and cannot be tracked down:

Thomas S. Lough, *The Origins of the Military Liaison Missions in Germany*, Washington D.C. 1965.

[25] The most recent example is the publication by U.S. historian Hope M. Harrison on East German-Soviet relations between 1953 and 1961. The book is heavily based on Ulbricht's papers in the Federal Archive in Berlin. Though other researchers having examined these papers years ago reached the conclusion that the MLM were the "close enemies" of the SED leadership in East Berlin (Michael Lemke, *Die Berlinkrise 1958 bis 1963*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995, p. 209), and although the Ulbricht papers amply demonstrate the far from unimportant role of the MLM in bilateral relations between the USSR and the GDR at the time, for inexplicable reasons Harrison does not even mention them once: Hope M. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall. Soviet-East German Relations 1953-1961*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

[26] "Ein französischer Unteroffizier in der DDR getötet" (A French Sergeant Killed in the GDR), in: *Le Matin*, 31 March 1984; "Paris glaubt an ‚Nadelstiche‘ aus Ostberlin" (Paris Believes in Provocations from East Berlin), *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1 April 1984.

[27] See in contrast: Matthias Heisig, *Gefährliche Begegnungen. Autos, Blockierungen und der Tod von Philippe Mariotti* [Dangerous Encounters. Cars, Blockings, and the Death of Philippe Mariotti], in ed. Alliiertenmuseum, *Mission erfüllt*, pp. 99-122. Heisig concedes the accident but attempts to prove by all means that it was solely caused by the MfS.

[28] All quotes from: Brigitta Voigt, "Stasi-Mission: Blockieren. Der DDR-Geheimdienst jagte die Kontrolleure der westlichen Militärmissionen – mit tödlichen Folgen [Stasi Mission: Blocking. GDR Intelligence Hunted the Inspectors of Western MLM – with Deadly Consequences]", in "Focus", 4/2004, pp. 38-39. This coverage by a German news magazine, seconded by the Allied Museum



in Berlin, is a pinnacle of journalistic non-seriousness and deliberate distortion by quoting document snippets.

[29] See the report by the former U.S. MLM chief: Roland Lajoie, "The Last Casualty of the Cold War", in: *The Intelligencer* (Journal of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers) XIII (2002), Spring/Summer, Number 1. See also the less informative and in part flawed contributions: John J. Miller, "Our Last Cold War Casualty and a Hero of the Age", in: *National Review*, 5 April 2004, and by the same author: "The Last Cold War Casualty. The Heroic Story of Major Nicholson", in: *National Review*, 24 March 2005; Helmut Trotnow, "Schüsse in Techentin. Hintergründe zum Tod von Major Arthur D. Nicholson [Shots in Techentin. Behind the Death of Major Arthur D. Nicholson]", in ed. Alliiertenmuseum, *Mission erfüllt*, pp. 123-134.

[30] It was of no avail whether Nicholson had entered a permanently restricted area ("ständiges Sperrgebiet"), or a temporarily restricted area ("zeitweiliges Sperrgebiet"), or none of such. He had visited a "place of disposition of military units" which was explicitly forbidden to MLM according to Paragraph 10 of the Huebner-Malinin Agreement. Furthermore he was pursuing intelligence work.

[31] Cf. also the high number of casualties as a consequence of similar actions by Soviet guards towards GDR civilians: Volker Koop, *Zwischen Recht und Willkür. Die Rote Armee in Deutschland*, Bonn: Bouvier, 1996.

[32] U.S. Military Liaison to the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (25 th Annual Report 1985).

## 2) The Military Liaison Missions in Germany During the Cold War: Documents and Interpretations, by Gen. William E. Odom

Christopher Winkler's interpretations of the role, purpose, and survival of the several military liaison missions between the occupying powers in Germany through the Cold War provides an excellent launch for more research on the military liaison missions in Germany. A pioneer, he is to be much congratulated, especially because I believe he has moved the history of these organizations from the level of anecdotal to serious history.

A few veterans of USMLM began thinking about writing a serious history of the missions during the late 1990s, but never got very far. I say "serious history" because most of what we knew that had already been published was mostly "war stories" about gathering intelligence overtly in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany. Indeed, life in USMLM, FMLM, and BRIXMIS was filled with danger and excitement. Chases, close-calls in avoiding terrible car wrecks, the dangers of the kind that killed Major Nicholson of USMLM, and many other such things provide endless stories that could be recounted. We saw a great danger that histories of the missions could turn out to be nothing more than a string of tales of those adventures. A few might be entertaining, and also convey something of the realities that duty in the missions involved, but more than a few could become boring very quickly.

We also recognized the danger of exaggerating the accomplishments of the missions. Some successes in intelligence collection turned out to be fairly important, but they hardly justify the claim that has been informally made by a few veterans that the missions played a major role in winning the Cold War.

Winkler has committed none of these errors. He identifies some important questions, ones that can begin to put the military missions into the larger context of the Cold War in Europe. His essay includes all of the issues that have occurred to me and a few more. Yet I am not satisfied that he

has exhausted the possibilities. As more documents become available, they will almost certainly prompt a few interested historians to ask additional questions and to alter, modify, or expand the ones that Winkler has asked. And some may be dropped as not very important.

Winkler addresses one issue that was almost constantly in the minds of US, British, and French commanders of forces in Germany: Why did Moscow allow these liaison missions to continue to exist? Their initial and public purpose – facilitating the joint occupation of Germany by four allied armies – had become increasingly unnecessary. Soviet intelligence seemed to have much better access for judging the capabilities of NATO forces in Germany than did the intelligence services of the United States, Britain, and France.

The staffs of allied commanders in the German Federal Republic considered most of the answers that Winkler addresses in his essay, but they never reached a consensus on a single answer that I can recall from the mid-1960s.

I do not, however, find very plausible Winkler's dismissal of the Soviet missions in West Germany as "almost perfect cover or 'resindenturas'" because of the Soviet refusal to accept "on-site inspection and verification" for arms control. That refusal came very late – in the 1980s – and Moscow could have easily dissolved the missions in the 1950s or 1960s long before arms control verification was on anyone's mind in Moscow or in the West. Nor am I sure that he is correct in saying that the Western missions were able to see the Soviet military's most advanced technology in East Germany. Many critical intelligence collection requirements were not and could not be met in East Germany. And a few of them were met inside the Soviet Union. He probably has not, therefore, put to rest this question about why Moscow tolerated the missions. That will require access to Soviet documents and testimony. Even if we had such evidence, however, the answer still might remain unclear. It probably changed from time to time. Or it may be very simple, but not in the documents. For example, Soviet leaders were not noted for disbanding any international machinery once it was in place. They paralyzed many such organizations, ignored them for periods of time, or used them rarely, but they did not normally abolish or abandon them. This propensity itself may explain their tolerance for the military liaison missions. And it probably reduced the likelihood that abolishing them was ever proposed at a high level in Moscow.

The East German government, of course, did raise abolishing them at a high level, according to Winkler's research. In fact, his treatment of this issue is the first I have seen that is based on more than pure speculation. His tentative answers must be taken seriously, but there is the danger of failing to understand that abolition of the missions, if it was ever seriously considered by the Soviet central committee and politburo would not be in isolation from the larger complex of East-West linkages in Europe. That context could easily support a strong case for retaining the missions at any time throughout the Cold War.

In any event, Christopher Winkler brings the skills of a competent historian to his task, and he is opening the way and pointing out the important directions for additional research. Finally, he reminds us that all Soviet documents and most US documents from these missions have yet to be declassified. Thus, there is more "opening up" work to be done on sources.

*Lieutenant General WILLIAM E. ODOM, US Army, retired in 1988 as the director of the National Security Agency. Today he is director of national security studies at the Hudson Institute (Washington, DC) and a professor (adjunct) of political science at Yale University. His book, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*, was published by Yale University Press in 1998. He served in the US Military Liaison Mission from July 1964 to July 1966.*



3) Sample Document : Information on Incident with Members of the US Military Mission in Techentin (District of Schwerin)

(handwritten note: MfS, Office Neiber)

Main Division VIII  
Division Chief

Berlin, 26 March 1985

Deputy Minister  
Comrade Lieutenant General Neiber

**I n f o r m a t i o n**

On the incident with members of the United States Military Liaison Mission in Techentin (Ludwigslust), District of Schwerin.

Intelligence data and information by the Soviets in charge have clearly outlined the following:

Vehicle No. [ ]<sup>1</sup> of the United States MLM left on 24 March 1985 at 10.11 a.m. the United States MLM in Potsdam and headed in the direction of Techentin (Ludwigslust) in the district of Schwerin; passengers were:

Major N i c h o l s o n,  
Born on: [ ]<sup>1</sup> 1947

Sergeant S c h a t z  
Born on: [ ]<sup>1</sup>

In this area they followed a convoy of tanks from the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) and conducted reconnaissance.

At around 3.40 p.m. the vehicle entered the GSFG tank shooting range which is located approximately 100 meters left of the road from Techentin to Dömitz, opposite the tank regiment in Techentin. The shooting range is accessible from several directions marked with military warning signs 'Stop! – Firing zone' and guarded by a Soviet guard.

When the vehicle showed up, the Soviet guard was at the edge of the shooting range in the forest and observed the vehicle that stopped in immediate proximity to the tank sheds. After a short stop, the vehicle proceeded in direction of the road Techentin-Dömitz . At that moment, the Soviet guard did not make himself visible to the members of the USMLM.

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<sup>1</sup> Information on document excised due to classification.

After about ten minutes the vehicle entered the shooting range once more and stopped approximately 30 meters in front of the tank sheds. Major Nicholson left the vehicle, approached the tank sheds, tried to open them, and took photographs. These actions were observed by the Soviet guard. At 3.55 p.m. the guard acted according to his instructions. After a warning call not acknowledged by Nicholson, the guard fired a warning shot. Nicholson ignored it and sprinted directly to his vehicle. He still did not stop when ordered. Thereafter the Soviet guard fired a targeted shot, Nicholson went down about three meters in front of his vehicle. Sergeant Schatz was prevented by the Soviet guard to leave the vehicle. Nicholson died at the place of action.

Since 5 May 1982 Nicholson was a member of the accredited personnel of the USMLM. He graduated from the U.S. Russian Institute in Garmisch-Partenkirchen (FRG) and took an Advanced Course Officer Specialities 36 (intelligence and counterintelligence) during the years 1977 and 1978. Until recently he served as Production's Officer in the Army operations' department of the USMLM. So far he had violated fifteen times permanently restricted areas, and during 32 intelligence gathering trips he ignored once or several times signs restricting MLM access. In line with the common practice of members of USMLM, he frequently violated GDR traffic rules. Twice he had a collision with a private car of a GDR citizen. In both cases Nicholson offered, though without success, to the GDR citizen a compensation payment in GDR Marks in order to avoid official recording of the accident.

A friendly officer secured the tracks of the vehicle at the scene and also Nicholson's camera. The developed film shows pictures of the scene, as well as of other espionage activities. The Soviet comrades blocked the vehicle No. 23 of the USMLM until the chief of the USMLM arrived. Before that, Sergeant Schatz was interrogated by the Soviet commander to find out what had happened. At that occasion he confirmed the information by the Soviet guard on the course of events. During the official interrogation - with the chief of the USMLM present - he refused to make any statement concerning the incident.

Colonel Lajoie, Chief of the USMLM, and the members of the USMLM, Lieutenant []<sup>1</sup> and Sergeant []<sup>1</sup> entered the GDR by vehicle No. 20 after having been notified by the foreign policy division of the staff of the GSFG at around 6 p.m, and arrived at the scene at around 10 p.m. The chronology of the incident was reconstructed and documented. At around 11 p.m. the body of Major Nicholson was removed by a Soviet ambulance and taken to the Soviet hospital in Potsdam (Voltaireweg). The USMLM team member []<sup>1</sup> was also sitting in the ambulance.

The chief of USMLM, as well as the other USMLM member present, returned at the same time to Potsdam using vehicles Nos. 20 and 23. From 11.59 p.m. to 00.09 a.m. Colonel Lajoie made a phone call from a highway gas station to the USMLM residence in Potsdam. He reported the incident. At 1.36 p.m. on 25 March 1985 vehicles No. 20

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with Lajoie and Schatz as passengers, and No. 23 with []<sup>1</sup> as passenger, left the GDR at the border checkpoint Glienicke Bridge towards West Berlin.

Following the order of the military prosecutor, the body was examined and x-rayed at the Soviet hospital. The x-rays of the body were finished at around 12 o'clock in the presence of a medic from the US army. The jeep and another accompanying vehicle of the USMLM entered the border checkpoint Glienicke Bridge at 5.06 p.m. After passing the marked borderline on the bridge, both vehicles stopped. The jeep was opened and the body – transported on a stretcher – was going to be covered with an American flag. Sixteen members of the U.S. Army formed a guard of honor and saluted. The ceremony was recorded by four camera teams.

According to the Soviet side, no other persons gained knowledge of the incident at the shooting range in Techentin. Intelligence sources suggest that the American, as well as the Soviet side, were not interested in any publicity. Since 25 March 1985 the mass media of the West (among them DPA, AP, RIAS, ARD, ZDF, SFB) reported increasingly on the incident.

On 25 March 1985 the journalists []<sup>1</sup> (DPA) and []<sup>1</sup> (DPA) respectively spent the time from 3.03 p.m. to 3.30 pm and from 4.00 p.m. to 4.17 p.m. within the restricted area of the USMLM quarters in Potsdam. They were shooting photos of the entrance area and of the flagpole at half-mast. Journalist []<sup>1</sup> (AP) spent the time from 5.05 p.m. to 5.20 p.m. within the area of the object. He tried to enter the object, but was sent off by members of the USMLM with the remark 'no comment'.

The following operative measures were taken with respect to the situation:

1. Enforced control of USMLM intelligence teams during their excursions on GDR territory
2. Surveillance of phone calls made from the USMLM in Potsdam in this matter by means of Unit 26 of Division 5 in the Main department VIII; collecting reactions and opinions of members of the USMLM through our agents within the USMLM.
3. Enforced control of movements and actions within the restricted area of the USMLM in Potsdam, especially vis-à-vis Western mass media journalists.

*[translated by Bernd Schäfer for the PHP]*

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