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June 1967; at least one nuclear unit is usually included in the force.

There was an overall increase of nearly 20 percent in the number of Soviet submarine patrols beyond local fleet operating areas in 1967, but if the trend noted so far this year continues, fewer submarines will deploy in 1968.

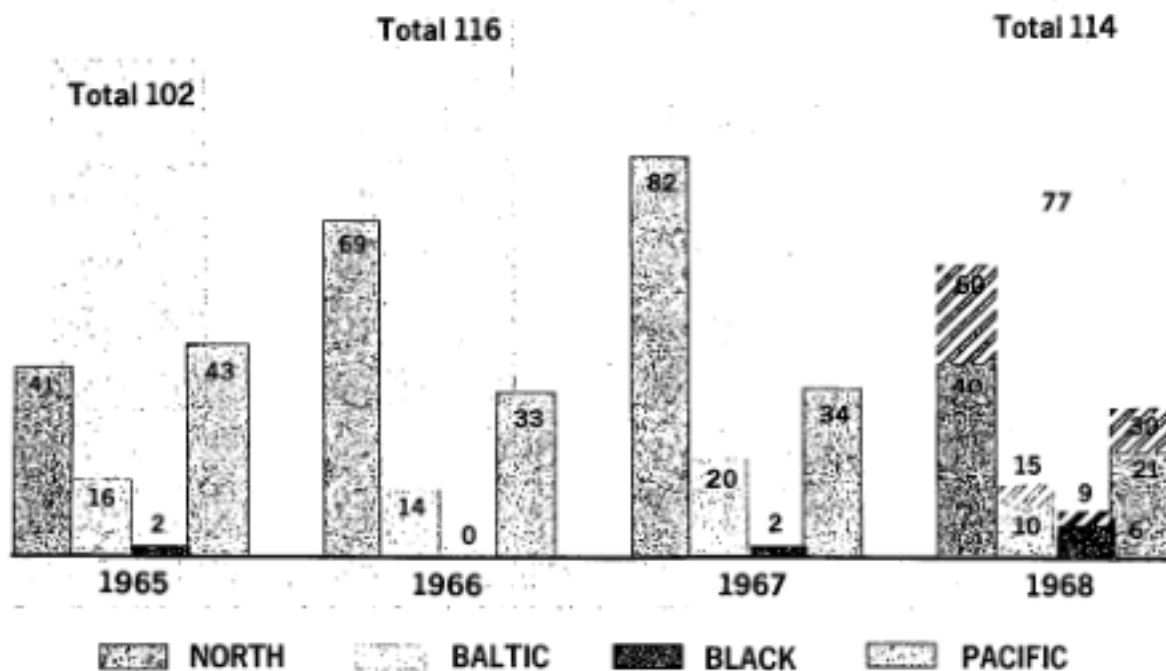
Patrols this year have been of longer duration, however, thereby resulting in more submarine time at sea.

No confirmed patrols by H-class ballistic-missile units have been noted since late 1966, and there have been periods during the past year when no Soviet ballistic-missile submarines have been on patrol in either the Atlantic or Pacific. The G-class is the only such submarine now being used for mid-ocean patrols.

Conversion and overhaul of first-generation ballistic-

Soviet Submarine Deployments 1965-1968

Total 138



Number of deployed units, not including routine interfleet transfers or fleet exercise participants.

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missile submarines and the re-assignment of their crews to new Y-class units have probably been at least partly responsible for the decline in ballistic-missile submarine activity. In addition, the loss of a G-class submarine in the Pacific in mid-March apparently resulted in a three-month standdown in patrols by these units. That incident probably caused the Soviets to implement new safety measures. Moreover, as the Soviets prepare to deploy new Y-class submarines, they may be reassessing the military value of sending their diesel-powered units into the mid-Atlantic and mid-Pacific patrol areas.

Until mid-1967, E-class cruise-missile submarines conducted regular patrols in the Atlantic. Since June 1967, patrol activity in the Atlantic has diminished; however, a series of single E-class units has been almost continuously present in the Mediterranean. Some of the submarines on recent patrols have also engaged in other activities such as hydroacoustic research and support of naval training maneuvers. J-class diesel-powered cruise-missile submarines apparently have been used primarily for peripheral defense. In late 1966, the first of these units to venture into the Mediterranean broke down and limped back to its base in the Northern Fleet. Some of the

older W-class units are equipped to launch cruise missiles, but these, too, operate only near Soviet shores and probably are being retired from service.

Recent patrols by diesel attack submarines in the Mediterranean have been extended to as long as six months through the use of Arab and Yugoslav ports for upkeep, reprovisioning, and crew recreation. Previous patrols by Soviet submarines in the Mediterranean had lasted less than two months.

Last year, a submarine support group operated for nearly six months off the west coast of Africa in a program to study the feasibility of submarine operations from a floating base. The group consisted of a submarine tender and a missile supply ship, and was assisted briefly by a survey vessel and two intelligence collection ships. Several other ships provided logistic support. Four submarines participated in the group's operations. One of these--a nuclear-powered unit--was away from home waters for more than six months.

Once the new ballistic-missile submarines go on patrol, the Soviets may make greater use of such floating support bases on the high seas. Floating base ships would be vulnerable in

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