

SOVIET ESPIONAGE AT THE UNITED NATIONS: FURTHER U.S. CURBS NEEDED

(Updating Backgrounder No. 453, "Soviet Espionage: Using the U.N. Against the U.S.," September 9, 1985.)

In the face of persistent U.N.-based espionage by the Soviets and their bloc allies, the U.S. at last has taken formal action to impede their intelligence collection capabilities. The recently passed Roth-Hyde Amendment to the Foreign Missions Act of 1982 extends existing travel restrictions on Soviet, Soviet bloc, and other U.N. diplomatic missions, such as Libya's, to U.N. Secretariat officials of those countries. The State Department, meanwhile, has ordered the Soviets to reduce the size of their overstuffed U.N. mission by 38 percent over two years, from 275 to 170. These measures are consistent with the U.S. right, under P.L. 357 (1947), to safeguard its security while hosting the United Nations. Significant loopholes in the application of these restrictions, however, still threaten U.S. security.

States the May 1985 Report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Soviet Presence in the U.N. Secretariat": "Approximately one-fourth of the Soviets in the U.N. Secretariat are intelligence officers and many more are co-opted by the KGB and GRU. All Soviets in the Secretariat must respond to KGB requests for assistance. The Soviet intelligence services use their U.N. assignments to collect information on U.N. activities; to spot, assess and recruit agents; to support worldwide intelligence operations; and to collect scientific and technical information of value to the U.S.S.R." According to the FBI, the U.N.-based Soviet intelligence officers are assisted by the intelligence services of all the East European Soviet satellites and other Soviet bloc countries such as Cuba. These missions contain roughly the same proportion of intelligence officers-to-diplomats and report directly to the KGB.

The Reagan Administration and Congress have begun to limit the threat to the U.S. by this extensive espionage network. But the travel and other restrictions placed on the Soviets and Soviet bloc personnel are a jumble of half-measures and inconsistent procedures, which even those administering them sometimes have difficulty understanding. Huge loopholes exist regarding many Soviet bloc

countries. Example: Polish, Bulgarian, Czech and East German diplomats at the U.N. now must use the State Department's Foreign Missions Service Bureau to arrange all travel outside a 25-mile radius of New York City; they need not do so if they do not stay at hotels or other commercial establishments. Nor need they give notification if they travel in official or private cars instead of by train, plane, or bus. These East bloc "diplomats," moreover, are not subject to the "closed area" restrictions that the U.S. reciprocally places on the Soviets. Thus, in just three hours they can legally drive to Fort Dix Military Reservation near Browns Mills, New Jersey, or to the submarine construction facility at Groton, Connecticut. To make matters worse, the Hungarians and Romanians are currently under no restrictions at all--a serious oversight since their intelligence services also cooperate closely with the KGB.

Even existing restrictions are difficult to enforce. U.S. officials privately admit that some Soviet and Soviet bloc personnel probably violate them with impunity. One problem is that the Soviets need only give 48-hours notice of intention to travel. Another is the U.S. tendency to grant most travel permissions. Most serious is the enormous surveillance problem posed by the roughly 1,200 Soviet and Soviet bloc diplomats in New York City--all potential security threats.

Soviet bloc violations of U.S. anti-espionage restrictions will continue until the U.S. takes further action to make it absolutely clear that curbing espionage is top priority. Such action should include:

- 1) Putting the same tight restrictions which apply to the Soviets on Cuba and all East European Soviet satellites. This is sought by S. 1901, introduced by Senators William Roth (R-DE), William Cohen (R-ME), and Sam Nunn (D-GA) and backed by Senator Bob Dole (R-KS).
- 2) Cutting back further the size of Soviet bloc U.N. missions, perhaps through devising with the U.N. a system of "reasonable ranges" for mission size, based on generally accepted U.N. criteria. There is no legitimate reason, for example, why Cuba should have more mission personnel than Britain.
- 3) Increasing the manpower and logistical support of those U.S. agencies responsible for counterintelligence and including these agencies in formulation of policy.

Though these steps would serve primarily to enhance U.S. security, they offer another potential benefit: By impeding U.N.-based espionage, they could help resurrect the U.N. Charter's vision of a genuine international civil service and reestablish some of the much compromised integrity of the Organization, a development that should be welcomed by all those concerned with the U.N.'s survival.

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