

## **PREVENTING ALL WASHINGTON FROM BECOMING A SOVIET EAVESDROPPING ZONE**

The Marine scandal at the American embassy in Moscow highlights concern about U.S. vulnerability to Soviet espionage. A major problem, for example, is the new U.S. embassy being built in Moscow; it is riddled with Soviet snooping devices. As great a threat to U.S. security is the new Soviet embassy nearing completion in Washington, D.C.; it is located on one of the capital's highest points, thus enabling receivers in the embassy to intercept telecommunications in Washington.

The Reagan Administration should act immediately to resolve these security problems. It should deny the Soviets the use of their new Washington embassy and force them to find an alternative site that poses no threat to the U.S.

**Listening in on the Pentagon.** It was the Nixon Administration, in 1972, which concluded the agreement under which the two new embassies are being built. From the very beginning, U.S. intelligence experts have been worried about the strategic location of the Soviet embassy. Perched atop Mt. Alto, one of Washington's highest hills, and crammed with a variety of highly sophisticated listening devices, the new Soviet embassy is perfectly situated to eavesdrop on most of official Washington. The Soviets' extremely sensitive directional sensors, for example, can detect and "read" sound vibrations on window panes miles away. The embassy building also contains directional microphones and microwave receivers to pick up telephone transmissions. From the embassy, the White House, Pentagon, CIA, and both Houses of Congress will be within range of Soviet surveillance sensors. Neither telephone calls nor private conversations will be secure in any of these buildings. In short, the Mt. Alto site turns most of Washington into a KGB eavesdropping zone.

That is not all. The Soviets also have rendered the new American embassy in Moscow uninhabitable. The building is infested with an unprecedented array of surveillance hardware. The Soviet electronic sabotage of the new American embassy may be so complete that the only way for the U.S. to ensure that it has a secure embassy in Moscow is to demolish the \$200 million structure and build a new one.

**Void the Agreement.** Legislation introduced by New Jersey Republican James Courter calls on the Reagan Administration to abandon the sabotaged U.S. embassy building and begin constructing another, this time with American labor and materials and under close U.S. supervision.

Legislative solutions to deal with the Soviet embassy in Washington have also been proposed. Senator Steve Symms, the Idaho Republican, and Congressman Richard Arme, the Texas Republican, have introduced bills to require the Reagan Administration to void the current embassy agreements and negotiate new accords that would move the Soviet embassy to a lower site in Washington. Such legislation is the minimal step that the U.S. could take to reduce the espionage threat posed by the Soviet mission in Washington. In addition, the Reagan Administration should instruct Moscow to reduce the size of its diplomatic mission in Washington. The Administration similarly should move to cut the size of East European embassy staffs in Washington.

No doubt the passage of the Symms-Arme legislation will prompt cries of outrage from the Soviets. Compensation for the seized embassy building will be demanded. Under the circumstances, it would seem fair to give them what is left of the mutilated Moscow embassy. After all, they've spent so much effort to "improve" it. Alternatively, the Soviets could be compensated by the sale of the Mt. Alto property.

**State Department to Blame.** The problems with the new embassies and the Marine guards clearly are the fault of the State Department. The hurried and careless negotiations that gave the Soviets a prime location in Washington and the poorly supervised construction that allowed the Soviets to cripple the U.S. embassy in Moscow are further evidence of a major problem with the conduct of U.S. foreign policy: the State Department does not properly view the Soviet Union as a threat. Blame can be spread widely at the State Department, but those particularly at fault are former U.S. Ambassador in Moscow Arthur Hartman, Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security Robert E. Lamb, and Under Secretary of State for Management Ronald I. Spiers, who ultimately is responsible for U.S. embassy security. Congress thus should demand an investigation of the State Department's role in the embarrassing cases of the new embassies and the Marine guard scandal.

In the meantime, the Soviets should not be allowed to occupy their new Mt. Alto embassy. If the Soviets truly need a new embassy building, they should be given a new site for it. What may be more prudent is for the U.S. and Soviet diplomatic missions to each other's country to be trimmed to fit their existing quarters.

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For further information:

William Safire, "Who Lost Mount Alto," The New York Times, September 22, 1985, p. E21.

"Soviet Spring--A Scandal at State," The Heritage Foundation National Security Record, April 1987.