

FOUR STEPS FOR HALTING U.N.-BASED SPYING AGAINST THE UNITED STATES

That the Soviet Union uses the United Nations as a base for espionage against the U.S. and the West has been known for some time. This was confirmed yet again on August 23rd in New York City when the FBI arrested, on charges of espionage, Gennadiy Fedorovich Zakharov of the Soviet Union. His cover, it seems, has been his job with the U.N.'s Center for Science and Technology for Development. Zakharov is but one of some 1,200 Soviet and Soviet bloc nationals employed by the U.N. and the missions to the U.N. The FBI estimates that at least one-third and probably over one-half engage in espionage. According to some experts, every Soviet bloc employee at the U.N. is involved with Soviet intelligence services in one way or another. Including the employee's spouse or adult dependent, whom intelligence experts believe undertake various espionage assignments, the figure of potential U.N.-based security threats to the U.S. jumps to 2,400.

While the FBI budget for counterespionage against U.N.-based spies is classified information, it is possible to estimate what the U.S. would have to spend to counter all of it. According to the FBI office in New York and other counterintelligence experts, there should be at least one FBI agent assigned around the clock (with the necessary technical backup) for each identified Soviet bloc agent, plus one FBI agent per ten Soviet bloc U.N.-related employees who have not yet been identified as intelligence agents. The cost of this to U.S. taxpayers would be about \$384,000,000--simply because the U.N. happens to be headquartered in New York City. Bearing the cost of U.N.-based espionage should be considered part of the U.S. contribution to the U.N.

The USSR considers espionage, particularly directed against the U.S., to be a high priority. Among the many Soviet military projects that benefited from Western technology and products obtained through espionage are phased-array radar, computerized aircraft weapons-control systems, fiberglass air-tanks for submarines, and space-based photoreconnaissance systems.

A large contingent of Soviet and Soviet bloc personnel connected with the U.N. collects such material. Zakharov, for example, was arrested and is being charged for obtaining data on precision aircraft engine components, radar parts, robotics, and artificial intelligence computer programs. In exchange, he paid \$35,000.

Soviet bloc U.N.-based espionage also reaches across the U.S. To deal with this, Congress recently passed the Roth-Hyde Amendment to the Foreign Missions Act of 1982. The Amendment subjects most U.N. Soviet bloc personnel, as well as those from Iran and Libya, to the same travel restrictions that apply to their respective nationals in diplomatic missions. This means that future Zakharovs or East Germans or other Soviet bloc citizens working for the U.N. are limited to a radius of 25 miles around New York City. Because it is very difficult for the U.S. to monitor these movements, the terms of the Amendment probably are violated frequently.

To help control the damage inflicted on the U.S. by spies based at the U.N., at least four steps are needed:

- o Limit all Soviet bloc diplomats and U.N. employees to the five boroughs of New York City. This would make it more difficult for them to elude the FBI.

- o U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar should appoint a committee to address the issue and should consult with the FBI on how best to fight the problem. Misuse of the U.N. by spies is a U.N. problem which the U.N. should help solve. Article 100 of the U.N. Charter specifically prohibits espionage by U.N. employees by barring them from seeking or receiving instructions from any government.

- o Congress should hold hearings to determine the extent of the espionage problem in the U.N. and should then appoint a committee to estimate how to address the problem. The FBI's budget should be increased to allow more effective counterespionage operations on U.N.-based spying.

- o Congress should consider cutting the U.S. contribution to the U.N. by the amount the U.S. must spend to protect itself from U.N.-based spying.

Juliana Geran Pilon, Ph.D.
Senior Policy Analyst

For further information:

Charles M. Lichenstein, "Soviet Espionage: Using the U.N. Against the U.S.," Heritage Foundation Background No. 453, September 9, 1985.

Arkady Shevchenko, Breaking With Moscow (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).