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U.S. Is Hopeful Summit Plans Will Go Ahead

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 8 — The United States expressed guarded confidence today that the cutback ordered in the Soviet missions to the United Nations would not damage relations with Moscow or present new problems in arranging the next summit meeting.

A State Department official said the United States had decided to act because of concern within the Administration and Congress that it was becoming difficult to keep track of potential spies. President Reagan, after the spy cases last year, had committed himself to reducing the Soviet presence.

In Moscow, the Soviet Government press agency Tass called the American action an "unprecedented" and "hostile" move that violated United States commitments as the host country for United Nations headquarters.

U.N. Studying the Legalties

At the United Nations, high-level officials said they were looking into the legality of the United States order cutting the personnel of the three Soviet missions to the United Nations from 275 to 170 by April 1988.

In Washington, officials said a task force had been working for several months on the problem posed by the large staffs of the Soviet Union, the Ukraine and Byelorussia. High among the factors was a concern that the Federal Bureau of Investigation could not keep track of so many people from the Soviet bloc.

The officials acknowledged that the action could result in Soviet retaliation or in delaying the next meeting between President Reagan and Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader. But the officials said the United States was eager to limit the impact.

"We see no reason why this step should impair U.S.-Soviet relations," Charles E. Redman, a State Department spokesman, said.

"The size of the U.N. missions is not connected to U.S.-Soviet bilateral relations. We look forward to improving our efforts to build on the results of last November's Geneva summit. There is no reason why this action should affect the prospects for the next summit."

On the legal issue, Bruce Ammerman, another State Department spokesman, said: "Limiting the Soviet

United Nations missions to a reasonable size is consistent with the United States Government's obligations under the agreement by which the U.N. put its headquarters in New York and under international law."

He said there was no legal provision that "explicitly deals with the question of the size of the mission of U.N. members."

Timing Is Called Awkward

A State Department official conceded that the timing of the cutback order was awkward since it came during efforts to arrange the next summit meeting.

The Soviet Union has yet to respond to a United States proposal that the next meeting be held in Washington in June or July.

"No time is perfect," the official said.

Officials expressed hope that the American order would not affect the atmosphere in Washington when Anatoly F. Dobrynin, who has joined the Soviet leadership after serving here as Ambassador for 24 years, returns this month to say goodbye and presumably to convey messages about the future.

The United States has also been hoping that Foreign Minister Eduard A. Shevardnadze of the Soviet Union will come here to prepare for the next summit meeting.

Soviet Consulate Will Open

Although the personnel of the Soviet missions to the United Nations are to be cut by nearly 40 percent in two years, the Soviet Union will be permitted to open a new New York mission that is accredited to the United States, State Department officials said.

The new mission is a consulate being established under an accord providing for a Soviet consulate in New York and a United States consulate in Kiev. The Soviet consulate in New York will operate out of the building on East 67th Street that houses the three missions to the United Nations.

Under arrangements that gave rise to the United Nations after World War II, the Soviet Union is represented not only by a delegation from its central government, but also by delegations from two of its 15 constituent republics, the Ukraine and Byelorussia. They were admitted on the ground that they had suffered particularly from the German invasion of the Soviet Union during the war.

The State Department said the American staff for the Kiev consulate has been chosen and work was proceeding on a building in Kiev.

American officials said that they had originally decided not to make a public announcement of the cutbacks, which were confirmed only after the action began to be known at the United Nations.

"Once we began briefing the U.N. about the move, we knew it would leak, but we did not want to draw particular attention to it ourselves," an official said. "If it had not leaked, we were prepared not to have said a word. We were decidedly not trying to embarrass Moscow."

Reduction Through Attrition

He added that the Soviet Union had been told that the cuts could be accomplished by attrition.

"This is not a case where we are kicking out a lot of Russians, and they are lining up at the airport waiting for a plane," he said. "We gave them a timetable by which certain cuts have to be made, the first in October, and by their regular turnover, they can meet the new limits without particular hardship."

He added that if the Russians refused to meet the limit, the number of visas issued would be restricted to the new totals set by the United States.

Recently, the United States put additional travel rules into effect for Soviet-bloc officials to make it easier for the F.B.I. to keep track of them.

In the Soviet Union, the Government's Committee for State Security, the K.G.B., similarly keeps track of the movements of American personnel.

State Department officials said that, in addition to opening the New York and Kiev consulates, progress was being made in other areas discussed at the last summit meeting.

Pan American Airways and Aeroflot will resume direct air service between the two countries next month, and a delegation from the United States Information Agency is going to Moscow next week to seek agreements on people-to-people exchanges.

Soviet Sees U.S. Violation

By SERGE SCHMEMANN

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, March 8 — The Soviet Government press agency Tass today characterized the American order as an "unprecedented" and "hostile" move that violated the United States' commitments as the host country for United Nations headquarters.

Apparently alluding to Washington's charges of espionage among staff members of the Soviet missions, the Government press agency said that the action had been taken "under far-fetched and groundless pretexts."

"It is obviously aimed at further undermining the United Nations, Tass said, adding, "A whole number of countries have been voicing quite justified doubts about the expediency of having the United Nations' headquarters in the United States."

Alluding to previous United States actions to curb the movements of personnel from Soviet-bloc nations and a number of other countries, Tass said the order was part of a series against "socialist states and developing countries whose policies do not suit the White House."

It recalled that Washington had already limited the movements of United Nations employees from the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Iran, Cuba and Libya to a 25-mile radius of Manhattan.