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\$5 Billion Plan Aims to Protect U.S. Embassies

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 28 — The State Department has proposed a five-year, \$5.5 billion program to overhaul security at its embassies and to counter Soviet-bloc espionage overseas, department officials said today.

They said the new proposal, now awaiting approval of the Office of Management and Budget, included money to replace more than half of the 200 Soviet citizens who work for the United States Embassy in Moscow and for the consulate in Leningrad.

The decision stems from the recommendations of a special advisory panel headed by Adm. Bobby R. Inman, former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, as well as from Congressional pressure, the officials said.

Arthur A. Hartman, the United States Ambassador in Moscow, was reported to be unenthusiastic about the plan. He was said to fear that it might make it more difficult for the embassy to function effectively, while not necessarily thwarting Soviet espionage efforts. Moreover, Mr. Hartman was said to be concerned that new American contract employees would become "targets of opportunity" for Soviet efforts at enticement.

In the coming week, the State Department plans to use unspent funds to award a first contract, under which an American company would hire 22 American maintenance supervisors and workers to go to Moscow to replace Soviet nationals.

Later this year an additional contract, for up to 60 American translators, supply clerks, consular clerks and workmen is to be signed with an American company. All the American contract employees will require security clearances before they will be sent to Moscow, the department said.

Similar steps are to be taken to phase out local employees in other American embassies in Warsaw Pact countries, the officials said.

A Congressional source said that Ambassador Hartman, in a private meeting last week on Capitol Hill, remarked that Soviet surveillance of the embassy in Moscow is so extensive that substituting Americans for Russian employees would have only the most marginal effect. He joked that having Soviet agents on the premises sometimes makes it easier to communicate with the Soviet leadership.

The Ambassador, to illustrate an example of the presence of Soviet agents, said that he believed his Soviet driver was a colonel in the K.G.B., the Soviet intelligence and internal-security agency.

There are no current plans to replace the embassy's corps of Soviet drivers with American chauffeurs, the State Department said. American Embassy officers often drive by themselves when going to places they do not want Soviet officials to know about, officials said.

The decision to substitute Americans for Russian employees was made by Secretary of State George P. Shultz earlier this year, officials said.

Renovations Included

The \$5.5 billion program includes about \$3.5 billion to replace or renovate more than 300 buildings and offices abroad to make them safer against terrorist attacks. The \$3.5 billion figure was cited by the State Department last June after the release of the Inman report, and the special \$5.5 billion bill is called "the Inman supplemental Budget request."

In recent months, during which there have been many news articles about espionage agents and defectors, some members of Congress have become particularly concerned about the number of Soviet citizens assigned to posts in the United States and the number of Soviet nationals working for the United States in Moscow. Traditionally, the United States hires local residents for staff jobs abroad for ease of management, to save on costs and to prevent the embassy from becoming isolated from its surroundings.

By comparison, Soviet embassies in Washington and elsewhere are staffed almost exclusively by Soviet citizens, even in the most menial jobs.

Limit on Soviet Personnel

A State Department official said that after Soviet forces swept into Afghanistan in 1979, the United States set a total of 320 as the maximum number of Soviet employees allowed at the embassy here and the consulate in San Francisco. The Soviet Union now is just below the limit, he said, with about 270 employees in Washington and fewer than 50 in San Francisco.

The United States has assigned fewer than 200 Americans to Moscow and Leningrad, he said, and there are 200 Soviet nationals in the two missions. Several hundred more Soviet nationals work at the Soviet mission to the United Nations, but the department does not count them when it makes its comparisons.

In addition, several hundred Soviet citizens work at the United Nations Secretariat, he said.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which regards all Soviet and East European citizens in this country as potential spies, no matter where they work, is alarmed at the disparity in the number of Soviet-bloc citizens in this country when compared to the number of Americans in Moscow.

Congressional Moves

Representative James A. Courter, Republican of New Jersey, has submitted a bill that would bar all Soviet citizens from working at the United States Embassy and consulate in the Soviet Union after Sept. 20, 1986. The State Department opposes this bill. Mr. Hartman, in a talk with Mr. Courter and his staff, argued against barring all Russians from working for the embassy, according to Philip Peters, legislative director for Mr. Courter.

According to Mr. Peters, Mr. Hartman argued that some of the new Americans might become compromised. But he said that the Congressman believed that "if you have 100 Americans and five are compromised, it is not the same as having 100 K.G.B."

Another measure, already incorporated into law, was co-sponsored by Senators Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat of Vermont, and William S. Cohen, Republican of Maine. It limits the number of Soviet diplomatic and consular personnel in the United States to "substantial equivalence" with the number of official Americans in the Soviet Union — in other words, to a number within 5 percent of the number of Americans.

Limited Access at Embassy

State Department officials stressed that no Soviet employees are permitted in any part of the American Embassy above the ground floor, where consular and informational activities are run. A new embassy chancery is nearing completion, and no Soviet personnel will be allowed in that building at all because non-sensitive offices will be in another part of the embassy grounds.

Soviet nationals working in the embassy now handle a number of jobs. They include laborers who move crates, auto mechanics and clerks who order theater and travel tickets for embassy personnel. Other Soviet nationals work for the administrative section of the embassy, dealing with Soviet organizations in such tasks as handling accounts with Soviet utilities.