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FBI Chief Tells Panel Soviet Bloc Spies Are Showing 'Increased Aggressiveness'

By ROBERT L. JACKSON, *Times Staff Writer*

WASHINGTON—A record number of spies from Moscow and Eastern Europe are showing "increased aggressiveness" in the United States, FBI Director William H. Webster told a Senate panel Tuesday in supporting a proposal to restrict the activities of Soviet Bloc diplomats, businessmen and journalists.

Up to 1,000 of the more than 2,500 Soviet Bloc officials posted in this country are engaged in espionage, Webster testified before the Senate Governmental Affairs investigations subcommittee.

Indeed, he said, recent cases indicate that Moscow is placing a growing burden for spying on its communist allies—including the East German, Polish and Bulgarian intelligence services—in the belief that these officials' movements are less closely monitored by the FBI.

Three Cases Cited

As examples, Webster cited the case of Californian James D. Harper Jr., sentenced to life imprisonment last year for passing missile secrets to a Polish agent, the arrest of a 68-year-old East German tourist last year on charges of transporting classified information to the Soviet Union and the recent arrest of a Bulgarian commercial officer on charges of trying to enlist a Columbia University student to spy for him.

Webster endorsed a proposal by Sens. William V. Roth Jr. (R-Del.) and Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) to restrict for the first time the movements of Eastern European diplomats and businessmen. The same curbs already apply to most Soviet officials, who are required to obtain State Department permission before leaving a 25-mile radius of their mission and who are banned from certain areas of the country.

Webster also said that newly enacted legislation sponsored by Roth, the subcommittee chairman, has been "very, very helpful" in restricting the travel of Soviet officials at the United Nations, who previously were not covered by these curbs.

At the hearing, Roth said that Eastern European spies—some under the guise of being corporate executives—"can gain access to firms producing our most sophisticated technology merely by presenting their business cards."

"Using such covers," he said, "they may also gain access to Americans' credit ratings and individual financial data as a means of determining the person's vulnerability to approach for espionage purposes. By restricting the activities of these foreign representatives, we may well be able to stem the outflow of national security information."

Citing the growth in foreign espionage activities in the United States, Webster said that the FBI has arrested 25 persons in the last

four years on charges of spying. Seventeen have been convicted, and the eight other cases are still pending, he said.

"This four-year total is the highest rate of arrest and conviction of espionage agents since World War II," the FBI director said. "And during this period the U.S. government has formally or informally expelled over 20 Soviet and Eastern Bloc intelligence officers."

He noted: "But more importantly, we have observed through our investigations an increased aggressiveness in their intelligence collection efforts."

Richard N. Perle, assistant secretary of defense for international security policy, also recommended that Congress "strictly limit the numbers and activities of Warsaw Pact visitors."

Perle said the Soviet Union, with significant help from Warsaw Pact spies, has "saved tens of thousands of man-years of scientific research through the systematic looting of Western secrets."