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Central Intelligence Agency

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Major General Oleg Kalugin and the American POW Issue (U)

KGB Major General Oleg Danilovich Kalugin, a 30-year KGB veteran and the highest-ranking such officer ever to openly criticize the Soviet state security organization, was "retired" in March 1990 after several run-ins with the organization's leadership and the publication of an article, without clearance, obliquely criticizing the KGB for its operations abroad. Kalugin has recently drawn heavy attention in the United States and worldwide for his allegations concerning Soviet interrogation of US POWs in Vietnam in the late 1970s. According to Kalugin, the KGB met with three American POWs--a senior naval officer, an air force pilot, and a suspected CIA agent--in 1977 or 1978, shortly after Hanoi signed a formal agreement with the USSR on intelligence cooperation. Such meetings would have taken place four to five years after all US prisoners of war in Vietnam were to have been repatriated. Kalugin claims that the interrogations were aimed principally at recruitment, and that efforts to contact at least one of the POWs continued, but without success, after the Vietnamese reported that the POW had been released to the United States. (C)

Claims Unsubstantiated

Kalugin's claims remain unsubstantiated and contain several inconsistencies. His information rests largely in the public domain and he has so far provided no evidence to support his allegations. According to US Embassy reports, neither Kalugin nor Oleg Nechiporenko, the ex-KGB officer Kalugin has named as the leader of the 1977-78 interrogations, are currently able to pinpoint the exact dates of the interrogations. Moreover, while Kalugin maintains that three persons were interrogated, he has noted that Nechiporenko can recall questioning only two American POWs in Vietnam. According to Embassy officials, Kalugin believes that Nechiporenko, by virtue of his participation in the meetings, may be able, and willing, to provide more accurate and detailed information regarding the interrogations. On NBC's 6 January *Today Show*, however, Nechiporenko admitted to interrogating one American in 1973, but denied speaking to any Americans after this date. Kalugin now charges that Nechiporenko has changed his story. (C)

...and Refuted by KGB Successor Organization

Kalugin's statements raise again, rather than answer, longstanding questions concerning KGB involvement with American POWs in Vietnam. His allegations were refuted in early January by the staff of the Russian External Intelligence Service Press Bureau, which claims to have conducted a thorough investigation into the matter.

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Kalugin's statements, however, may deserve attention, given his recently enhanced status as a committed democrat--during the coup, he along with Yel'tsin and others remained at the Russian White House--and his extensive background in intelligence affairs. (C [])

Outspoken Critic of KGB and Its Leader

In June 1990 Oleg Kalugin emerged from the shadows of Soviet counterintelligence operations into the public spotlight as one of the most strident public critics of the KGB and its then-ongoing public relations campaign. Speaking before the Moscow Congress of the Democratic Platform, a group of CPSU members who supported Western-style reform, Kalugin charged that the KGB "with the knowledge and approval of the Party, interferes in all affairs of the government and public life." He portrayed the KGB as a major obstacle to democratization and called for the depoliticization of the service, a reduction in its size, and the disbanding of those structures still engaged in political surveillance. Kalugin harshly criticized KGB Chairman Kryuchkov, his longtime boss, for his efforts to sell the same old KGB as new and improved, as well as for mismanagement that permitted the defection to the West of such top Soviet intelligence officers as Oleg Gordiyevskiy. Kalugin maintained that he was voicing his concerns in public only because his efforts within the system, including an early 1987 letter to Gorbachev, had been unsuccessful. His accusations were acutely embarrassing to the Soviet leadership and to the KGB itself. (C [])

The KGB Strikes Back

The KGB rejected Kalugin's charges and raised questions about his character, insisting that he was attempting to begin a political career by making use of the domestic and foreign media. In June 1990, Kalugin was denied his rank and all of his honors--he was stripped of his rank by the USSR Council of Ministers "for actions besmirching the honor and dignity of a member of state security organs, his state awards by a decree of the USSR President at the request of the KGB, and his badge "Honored State Security Functionary" on Kryuchkov's orders. In July, the USSR Procurator's Office instituted criminal proceedings against him for disseminating "information constituting a state secret" in his public pronouncement and interviews. (C [])

Career

In 1975, at age 41, Kalugin became the youngest general in the KGB. His career included two tours under press and diplomatic cover in the US during the 1960s--he speaks fluent English--and an assignment as Chief of the KGB Foreign Counterintelligence Directorate from the mid-1970s until about 1980. Kalugin showed a liberal bent to his contacts abroad throughout his KGB career and, since his first scathing open attacks on the organization, he appears to be living out that image. After Kalugin quit the Communist Party, he was elected USSR People's Deputy from Krasnodar Kray in the fall of 1990. He subsequently announced his desire to join the Interregional Deputies Group--the first and largest political faction in the USSR Supreme Soviet but, citing his need for independence, he refused to join any other political party. (C [])

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Following the failed August coup attempt, all criminal charges against Kalugin were dropped and Gorbachev reinstated his rank and awards. In late August Kalugin was identified as an unofficial adviser to Vadim Bakatin, who was appointed KGB head and tasked with a major overhaul of the institution shortly after Gorbachev's return from the Crimea. In a November interview, Bakatin described Kalugin as "a man with a sense of responsibility and a really democratic spirit." Kalugin, however, was rejected by the RSFSR Supreme Soviet in his bid for a seat in the post-coup "transitional" USSR Supreme Soviet's Council of the Republics. He is currently engaged in promoting his new book on the August coup which Turner Publishing Inc. (a subsidiary of Turner Broadcasting) is releasing. (C)

7. The fate of U.S. POW/MIAs and the lack of reform in the KGB are only two of the issues on which Kalugin has spoken out over the past year. The following provides a brief chronological overview of his comments on other subjects, beginning with his most recent:

On Current Sources of Instability in the Soviet Union:

Instead of a coup against the center...the military could become embroiled in local and regional conflicts where inter-ethnic strife and economic hardship (are) most severe...."Regional coups" will be a real possibility and local military commanders could become embroiled in local disputes. (U.S. Embassy report, Oct 91)

The "explosive situation" that has arisen in the sphere of interethnic relations in the Soviet Union poses a great danger for the entire world. It cannot be ruled out that individual groups of extremists will seek to take possession of tactical nuclear weapons scattered on the territory of the Soviet Union. (Address, Paris Colloquium on World Terrorism, 20 Nov 91)

On the Post-Coup Creation of a Union:

Such a union will be a "confederation of independent states, in which economic interests will prevail.... At the same time structures will be created to organize joint defense and solve ecological, transport, and communications problems...The union (will) in the final analysis be created on a healthier and fundamentally new basis." (Interview, Moscow TASS Intl Service, 2 Sep 91)

On the Post-Coup KGB:

"All key figures in the committee's leadership must be removed immediately and an investigation initiated in order to establish their guilt. The KGB archives must also be declassified, studied, and published so that we can learn lessons for the future." (Interview, Moscow IAN, 27 Aug 91)

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~On the Pre-Coup Yeltsin:

"He is a man of decision and sincerity. I like him. He certainly will be elected the President of the Russian Republic." (Interview, Tokyo Asahi Shimbun, 2 Apr 91)

On the Pre-Coup Soviet Political Situation:

"I think that the country today is seeing the death throes of a power which is losing the ground from under its feet. This is what gives rise to ill-thought-out decrees, to attempts to introduce elements of a state of emergency. All of these are indications of further political instability in the leadership and in the Party....I am convinced (however) that our society today is sufficiently mature to ensure that any attempt at dictatorship would meet with a worthy response. Even if there is defeat it will be purely temporary."
(Interview, Moscow Radio Rossii Network, 8 Feb 91)

On the Pre-Coup Gorbachev:

"The KGB has a great deal of influence over (Gorbachev) because it has become Gorbachev's main source of information on domestic and foreign issues.... This is why Gorbachev's view of what is happening in the country is the KGB's view, which is deplorable. The KGB is a conservative organization that is trying to protect what still remains of the old ideology. He knows more about the black market than the democratic movement because, for obvious reasons, the KGB gives him information out of context."
(Interview, Sao Paulo Folha de Sao Paulo, 12 Feb 91) (C)

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