

EO 12958 1.5(c)<10Yrs
(C)

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: MAY 2001

~~Top Secret~~
[REDACTED]

61

Special Analysis

USSR:

Junta Faces Formidable Challenges

EO 12958 6.1(c)<10Yrs
(U)

The behavior of the coup leaders and the limited public support other members of the Soviet political elite have so far given them suggest they face significant obstacles to consolidating their power in the near term. Although the coup was preceded by much interaction among reactionary political, military, and security leaders and by some preparation of selected military units, there evidently was no broad orchestration of extremist forces. [REDACTED]

EO 12958 6.1(c)<10Yrs
(U)

The coup leaders must now weaken and isolate prodemocracy forces, prevent mass popular resistance, gain the compliance of republic and local authorities, and maintain cohesion in the armed forces and security services. The needs to avoid disrupting the harvest, energy production, transport, and food imports limit the coup leaders' maneuvering room. A strategy of massive intimidation with bloodshed might stun the opposition, but it also could easily backfire, inciting resistance and leading to military mutiny. A strategy of tailored repression might avoid radicalizing the general population, but it would give the opposition time to organize. [REDACTED]

EO 12958 6.1(c)<10Yrs
(U)

Repression Limited So Far

Coup leaders appear to be pursuing a strategy of limited repression. They are seizing control of the media, moving to restore full control over the security forces, demanding the compliance of officials at all levels, and introducing a state of emergency in some regions, apparently in the Baltic republics, Moscow, and Leningrad so far. Coup leaders have not yet arrested republic leaders, but they are moving to shut down the Baltic governments altogether. Although they are banning strikes and political demonstrations, they are trying to convey a sensitivity to political legitimacy by pledging to submit the state of emergency decree to the USSR Supreme Soviet, which is to convene next Monday. [REDACTED]

Lasting Success Unlikely

The coup leaders are in a difficult position. They are trying to parlay the popular desire for security and economic improvement into the support and legitimacy they lack. By undertaking limited repression, they have given Yel'tsin time to brand their action unconstitutional, to call for civil disobedience and a general strike, to demand that

EO 12958 6.1(c)<10Yrs
(U)

continued

~~Top Secret~~
[REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.5(c)<10Yrs
(C)

~~Top Secret~~
[REDACTED]

EO 12958 6.1(c)<10Yrs
(U)

Gorbachev be allowed to address the Supreme Soviet, to appeal to servicemen to disobey orders to shoot demonstrators, and to threaten to prosecute those who comply with the coup leaders' commands. Yel'tsin also has issued a decree demanding that Interior Ministry, KGB, and Defense Ministry units on Russian territory obey him. Major strikes in key sectors of the economy such as mining, civil disobedience, and confrontations between the public and security forces are likely and will jeopardize the coup leaders' hopes of quelling resistance while restoring economic "order." [REDACTED]

EO 12958 6.1(c)<10Yrs
(U)

If the coup leaders sense that time is working against them or that they have gained control of the levers of power, they may turn very soon to more violent repression. Such a move is unlikely to prevent an escalation of resistance in the Russian Republic and—in time—in most other republics outside Central Asia. The most likely scenarios now are either a rapid collapse of the coup or an extended struggle of popular resistance against armed strength, with the outcome depending on the loyalty to the center of the armed forces. Under the latter scenario, the chance that divisions will open in the Soviet armed forces is quite high. Over the longer term, the coup leaders probably will not succeed in creating a durable authoritarian regime able to stabilize the economy and introduce even modest economic reform. Meanwhile, the coup will accelerate the breakup of the union.
[REDACTED]

EO 12958 6.1(c)<10Yrs
(U)

~~Top Secret~~
[REDACTED]