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CIA Ex-Director Warns Of Soviet Arms Aims

By THOMAS W. OTTENAD
A Washington Correspondent
of the Post-Dispatch

WASHINGTON, Jan. 26 — The former head of American intelligence says there are "worrisome signs" that the Soviet Union "is doing more than just trying to catch up" with the United States in military power.

George H. Bush, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, expressed doubt whether the Russians' "prime objective" in international relations is to relax tensions with the free world.

At breakfast yesterday with a small group of reporters, Bush pointed to higher estimates of Soviet defense spending as cause for concern about Russian intentions.

Referring to recent American intelligence figures doubling earlier estimates of the percentage of the Soviet gross national product devoted to defense, Bush asked:

"If tensions have been relaxed, why are they burdening the economy to that extent?"

Bush refused to discuss details of a recent CIA study that is said to have concluded that the Russians are seeking superiority over United States military forces.

He said the revised estimates of higher Soviet spending did not necessarily mean that the Russians had more tanks, planes and other weapons than was thought previously.

"I think we were correct on the numbers of missiles, ships and so on," he explained. "But the cost is higher than we thought." He said he did not know why the CIA had underestimated Russian spending.

His major worry, he stressed, concerns the Russian intent that may be indicated by this greater level of spending.

Former CIA official Lyman Kirkpatrick said elsewhere yesterday that the United States must become aware of the meaning of the Soviet buildup of a vast civil defense system to protect "key elements of the population."

"This information will be the basis of the upcoming round of Strategic Arms Limitations Talks, and if we make a mistake it could be catastrophic."

Bush said he had not seen "any signs that make me feel relaxed" about the Russian interest in reducing tensions with the West. He said he was "somewhat reserved in my optimism" about the Soviet attitude toward nuclear disarmament.

"Let's hope it is more than rhetorical," he said.

Bush disputed reports that members of the intelligence community had helped organize opposition that led to the withdrawal of President Jimmy Carter's choice of Theodore C. Sorensen to be director of central intelligence.

Bush said he "never heard of" intelligence officials acting against Sorensen's nomination. On inquiring into the matter, he said, he was unable to learn the identity of any such opponents.

He expressed confidence that efforts to clean up had succeeded after the CIA disclosures of abuses, including spying on American citizens.

Bush, who was former national chairman of the Republican Party and was regarded last year as a possible vice-presidential running mate for President Gerald R. Ford, indicated interest in resuming a political career.

He said he no longer believed, as he did upon accepting the CIA appointment, that the intelligence position probably ended any long-term political goals.