

Real news about spies not out yet

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The most important news about the steady stream of spy scandals that has shaken America is the news that has not yet come out. What we can now discern emerging from the wreckage of U.S. national security is a period of deep uncertainty, confusion and mounting strategic danger.

Over the past decade East Bloc spies have managed to acquire much of the key data on the U.S. "national means of verification," the spy satellites and electronic listening stations that provide U.S. defence planners with 85% of their information on Soviet military activities. Wholesale penetration of the top secret national security agency has given the Soviets detailed knowledge of what precisely the U.S. knows about Soviet capabilities, what its satellites can see and what its electronic monitors can hear.

The massive loss of U.S. defence technology and breaking of its codes has been a disaster. Far worse, however, American defence planners must now face the awful realization that much of what they know about the Soviet Union may well be false.

And it is this same suspect data that the U.S. has used for decades to formulate its strategic defence, political and arms reduction policies.

One example will suffice. U.S. satellites and electronic monitoring provide most of the Pentagon's data on Soviet Backfire bombers. The U.S. currently accepts Moscow's claim that these aircraft are medium ranged and thus not strategic weapons. But it is quite conceivable that the Soviets, having learned how U.S. monitors work, have also been able to feed them wrong information, either by electronic spoofing or by visual deception. The Backfires may actually be able to reach the U.S.; today no one can be certain.

The Soviets much favor deception techniques, such as using dummy aircraft and missiles, camouflage and false radar emitters. Knowing what the U.S. spy satellites can see also tells the Soviets what these satellites cannot see — and it is in these visual or electronic blind spots that missiles and other equipment can be hidden.

What this means, shockingly, is that much of the U.S. perception of Soviet mili-

tary power may be false. In fact, U.S. intelligence gathering agencies, such as the CIA and NSA, may have been fed false data for decades. The USSR could, for instance, have far more missiles, bombers and submarines than the West suspects, all neatly hidden away from the eyes of space cameras.

In Geneva the U.S. could be conducting arms reduction talks based on a bogus estimation of Soviet strength, using absolutely false information fed to the U.S. by the KGB. Disinformation, the delivery of fake information designed to confuse an enemy, is something of a KGB art form.

We may now be seeing the longest lasting, most complex and certainly most brilliant disinformation campaign of modern times, as deeply worried U.S. strategists furiously review a decade's information on the USSR, not knowing what is true and what is not.

Has the U.S. been building defences against threats that do not really exist? Has it been ignoring other hidden threats? Are its assumptions about Kremlin policy, strategy and objectives dead wrong? All of

a sudden, vital information from the vast, multi-billion dollar U.S. intelligence network may no longer be reliable. And it is upon this information that the U.S. bases its life-and-death strategic decisions.

Now that U.S. intelligence sources have been so deeply compromised, it would be extremely unwise, even perilous, for Washington to enter into any arms reduction negotiations with the USSR. Partially blinded and deafened, the U.S. simply cannot afford to rely on questionable data in making crucially important decisions affecting world security.

Instead, the U.S. should tell the Soviets in simple words that no arms agreements will be made without on-sight physical inspection, conducted by experts who must be free to move about the Soviet Union at will. Such a method, long rejected by the USSR, will not give complete assurance of compliance with arms agreements, but at least it will be more reliable than the current fatally flawed system. Until we can again rely on our intelligence technology, we are better off resorting to the old Eyeball Mark I system.