**GRU**

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| **GRU Generalnogo Shtaba** | |
| ***Glavnoje Razvedyvatel'noje Upravlenije*** | |
| ***Главное Разведывательное Управление*** | |
|  | |
| GRU emblem (unofficial) and sleeve ensign | |
| **Agency overview** | |
| **Formed** | 1918 |
| **Jurisdiction** | [Government of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_Russia) |
| **Agency executive** | [Lt. Gen.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lt._Gen.) [Alexander Shlyakhturov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Shlyakhturov), Director |

**GRU** or *Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye* is the acronym for the foreign military intelligence directorate of the [General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Staff_of_the_Armed_Forces_of_the_Russian_Federation), (formerly the [Red Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Army) General Staff of the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union)). *GRU* is the [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language) [transliteration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transliteration_of_Russian_into_English) of the [Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language) [acronym](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acronym) **ГРУ**, which stands for "Главное Разведывательное Управление", meaning **Main Intelligence Directorate** of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff. The full name is GRU GSh (GRU Generalnovo Shtaba (or "GenShtaba"), [i.e.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Id_est) "GRU of the General Staff").

The GRU is Russia's largest foreign intelligence agency. It deploys six times as many agents in foreign countries as the [SVR](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_Intelligence_Service_(Russia)), which is the [KGB](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KGB) intelligence successor. It also commanded 25,000 [spetsnaz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spetsnaz) troops in 1997.

The current GRU Director is [General of the Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_of_the_Army_(Russia)) [Alexander Shlyakhturov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Shlyakhturov).

**History**

The GRU was created on October 21, 1918 under the sponsorship of [Leon Trotsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_Trotsky), who was then the civilian overseer of the Red Army; it was originally known as the Registration Directorate (*Registrupravlenie*, or RU). [Simon Aralov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Aralov) was its first head. In his history of the early years of the GRU, Raymond W. Leonard writes:

"As originally established, the Registration Department was not directly subordinate to the General Staff (at the time called the Red Army Field Staff — *Polevoi Shtab*). Administratively, it was the Third Department of the Field Staff's Operations Directorate. In July 1920, the RU was made the second of four main departments in the Operations Directorate. Until 1921, it was usually called the *Registraupr* (Registration Department). That year, following the [Soviet-Polish War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish%E2%80%93Soviet_War), it was elevated in status to become the Second (Intelligence) Directorate of the Red Army Staff, and was thereafter known as the *Razvedupr*. This probably resulted from its new primary peacetime responsibilities as the main source of foreign intelligence for the Soviet leadership.

As part of a major re-organization of the Red Army, sometime in 1925 or 1926 the RU became the Fourth (Intelligence) Directorate of the Red Army Staff, and was thereafter also known simply as the "Fourth Department." Throughout most of the interwar period, the men and women who worked for Red Army Intelligence called it either the Fourth Department, the Intelligence Service, the *Razvedupr*, or the RU.[...] As a result of the re-organization [in 1926], carried out in part to break up Trotsky's hold on the army, the Fourth Department seems to have been placed directly under the control of the State Defense Council (Gosudarstvennaia komissiia oborony, or GKO), the successor of the RVSR. Thereafter its analysis and reports went directly to the GKO and Politburo, even apparently bypassing the Red Army Staff."

It was given the task of handling all [military intelligence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_intelligence), particularly the collection of intelligence of military or political significance from sources outside the Soviet Union. The GRU operated residencies all over the world, along with the [SIGINT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SIGINT) (signals intelligence) [station in Lourdes, Cuba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lourdes_SIGINT_Station), and throughout the former [Soviet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) bloc countries, especially in [Lithuania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithuania), [Latvia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latvia), and [Estonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia).

The first head of the GRU was [Janis Karlovich Berzin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C4%81nis_B%C4%93rzi%C5%86%C5%A1_(military)), a Latvian Communist and former member of the [Cheka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheka), who remained in the post until 28 November 1937, when he was arrested and subsequently liquidated during Stalin's [purges](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Purge).

The GRU was well-known in the Soviet government for its fierce independence from rival power blocs, even the [CPSU](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_the_Soviet_Union) and [KGB](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KGB). At the time of the GRU's creation, Lenin infuriated the [Cheka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheka) (predecessor of the KGB) by ordering it not to interfere with the GRU's operations. Nonetheless, the Cheka infiltrated the GRU in 1919. This planted the seed for a fierce rivalry between the two agencies, which were both engaged in espionage, and was even more intense than the rivalry between the [FBI](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FBI) and [CIA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CIA) in America would be in a future time.

The existence of the GRU was not publicized during the Soviet era, although documents concerning it became available in the West in the late 1920s and it was mentioned in the 1931 memoirs of the first [OGPU](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OGPU) defector, Georges Agabekov, and described in detail in the 1939 autobiography (*I Was Stalin's Agent*) of [Walter Krivitsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Krivitsky), the most senior Red Army intelligence officer ever to defect. It became widely known in Russia, and the [West](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_world) outside the narrow confines of the [intelligence community](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligence_community), during [perestroika](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perestroika), in part thanks to the writings of "[Viktor Suvorov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor_Suvorov)" ([Vladimir Rezun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Rezun)), a GRU agent who defected to [Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) in 1978, and wrote about his experiences in the Soviet military and intelligence services. According to Suvorov, even the [General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Secretary_of_the_Central_Committee_of_the_Communist_Party_of_the_Soviet_Union) couldn't enter GRU headquarters without going through a security screening.

The GRU is still a very important part of the Russian Federation's intelligence services, especially since it was never split up like the KGB was. The KGB was dissolved after aiding a [failed coup in 1991](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_coup_attempt_of_1991) against the then Soviet leader [Mikhail Gorbachev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Gorbachev). It has since been divided into the [SVR (Foreign Intelligence Service)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_Intelligence_Service_(Russia)) and the [FSB (Federal Security Service)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Security_Service_of_the_Russian_Federation).

**Activities**

According to the [Federation of American Scientists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation_of_American_Scientists): "...Though sometimes compared to the US [Defense Intelligence Agency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense_Intelligence_Agency), [the GRU's] activities encompass those performed by nearly all joint US military intelligence agencies as well as other national US organizations. The GRU gathers [human intelligence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HUMINT) through military attaches and foreign agents. It also maintains significant [signals intelligence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SIGINT) and [imagery reconnaissance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IMINT) and [satellite imagery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IMINT) capabilities." GRU Space Intelligence Directorate had put more than 130 [SIGINT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SIGINT) satellites into orbit. GRU and KGB [SIGINT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SIGINT) network employed about 350,000 specialists.

According to GRU defector [Stanislav Lunev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanislav_Lunev), "Though most Americans do not realize it, America is penetrated by Russian military intelligence to the extent that arms caches lie in wait for use by Russian special forces". He also described a possibility that compact [tactical nuclear weapons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tactical_nuclear_weapons) known as "[suitcase bombs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suitcase_bomb)" are hidden in the US and noted that "the most sensitive activity of the GRU is gathering intelligence on American leaders, and there is only one purpose for this intelligence: targeting information for [spetsnaz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spetsnaz) (special forces) assassination squads [in the event of war]". The American leaders will be easily assassinated using the "[suitcase bombs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suitcase_bomb)", according to Lunev. GRU is "one of the primary instructors of terrorists worldwide" according to Lunev Terrorist [Shamil Basayev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamil_Basayev) reportedly worked for this organization.

During the [2006 Georgian-Russian espionage controversy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Georgian-Russian_espionage_controversy) several officers (allegedly working for GRU) were accused by the Georgian authorities of preparations to commit [sabotage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabotage) and [terrorist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorist) acts such as arson. GRU detachments from [Chechnya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chechnya) were transferred to [Lebanon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon) independently of the [United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Interim_Force_in_Lebanon) after the [2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Israel-Lebanon_conflict) "to improve Russia’s image in the Arab world", according to [Sergei Ivanov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Ivanov). [Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zelimkhan_Yandarbiyev) was assassinated by two GRU officers. GRU officers have also been accused of creating criminal [death squads](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_squads).

**Miscellaneous**



A [Spetsnaz GRU](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spetsnaz_GRU) unit prepares for a helicopter mission at [Kabul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabul) airport in [Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_war_in_Afghanistan) in 1988. Photo by [Mikhail Evstafiev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Evstafiev).

**Chechnya**

[Dmitry Kozak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dmitry_Kozak) and [Vladislav Surkov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladislav_Surkov) from the [Putin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Putin) administration reportedly served in GRU. Two Chechen former [warlords](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warlords) [Said-Magomed Kakiev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Said-Magomed_Kakiev) and [Sulim Yamadayev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulim_Yamadayev) are commanders of [Special Battalions Vostok and Zapad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special_Battalions_Vostok_and_Zapad) ("East" and "West") that are controlled by the GRU. Each battalion included close to a thousand fighters, until their disbandment in 2008.

**Baranov**

In 2002, Bill Powell wrote *Treason*, an account of the experiences of former GRU colonel [Vyacheslav Baranov](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vyacheslav_Baranov&action=edit&redlink=1). Baranov had been recruited by the [CIA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CIA) and agreed to spy for them, but was betrayed to the Russians by a [mole](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mole_(espionage)) in either the [FBI](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FBI) or the CIA and spent five years in prison before being released. The identity of the mole remains unknown to this day, although speculation has mounted that it could have been [Robert Hanssen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Hanssen).

**Historic agents**

* [Whittaker Chambers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whittaker_Chambers), an American journalist and ex-GRU agent who broke with Communism in 1938
* [George Koval](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Koval), a scientist who stole atomic secrets from the Manhattan Project.
* [Eugene Franklin Coleman](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Eugene_Franklin_Coleman&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Arvid Jacobson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arvid_Jacobson)
* [Joseph Milton Bernstein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Milton_Bernstein)
* [Boris Bukov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Bukov)
* [Lydia Stahl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydia_Stahl)
* [Robert Osman](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Robert_Osman&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Harold Glasser](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Glasser)
* [Mary Jane Keeney](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Jane_Keeney) and [Philip Keeney](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Keeney)
* [Hede Massing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hede_Massing)
* [Irving Charles Velson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irving_Charles_Velson), [Brooklyn Navy Yard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn_Navy_Yard); [American Labor Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Labor_Party) candidate for New York State Senate
* [William Spiegel](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=William_Spiegel&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Vincent Reno](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_Reno)
* [Ward Pigman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ward_Pigman)
* [Richard Sorge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Sorge)
* [Tanner Greimann](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tanner_Greimann&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Adam Priess](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Adam_Priess&action=edit&redlink=1)

**GRU "Illegals"**

* [Boris Devyatkin](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Boris_Devyatkin&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Moishe Stern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manfred_Stern)
* [Joshua Tamer](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Joshua_Tamer&action=edit&redlink=1)
* [Alfred Tilton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Tilton)
* [Alexander Ulanovsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Ulanovsky)
* [Ignacy Witczak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignacy_Witczak)
* [Yakov Grigorev](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Yakov_Grigorev&action=edit&redlink=1)

**Naval GRU**

* [Jack Fahy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Fahy) (Naval GRU), Office of the [Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coordinator_of_Inter-American_Affairs); [Board of Economic Warfare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Board_of_Economic_Warfare); [United States Department of the Interior](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_the_Interior)
* [Edna Patterson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edna_Patterson) Naval GRU, served in US August 1943 to 1956

**GRU defectors**

* [Viktor Suvorov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor_Suvorov) (Vladimir Bogdanovich Resun)
* [Stanislav Lunev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanislav_Lunev)
* [Oleg Penkovsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oleg_Penkovsky), a GRU officer who played an important role during the [Cuban Missile Crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Missile_Crisis)
* [Igor Gouzenko](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igor_Gouzenko), a GRU cipher clerk who defected in Canada
* [Walter Krivitsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Krivitsky), a GRU defector who predicted that [Stalin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stalin) and [Hitler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hitler) would conclude a [Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi-Soviet_non-aggression_pact)
* [Juliet Poyntz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juliet_Poyntz), a founding member of the [Communist Party of the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_the_United_States), allegedly killed for an attempt to defect
* [Iavor Entchev](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Iavor_Entchev&action=edit&redlink=1), a communist member of GRU; defected to United States during Cold War.

**Further reading**

* [David M. Glantz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_M._Glantz). *Soviet military intelligence in war.* Cass series on Soviet military theory and practice ; 3. London: Cass, 1990. [ISBN 0-7146-3374-7](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0714633747), [ISBN 0-7146-4076-X](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/071464076X)
* Raymond W. Leonard. *Secret soldiers of the revolution: Soviet military intelligence, 1918-1933.* Westport, Conn.; London: Greenwood Press, 1999. [ISBN 0-313-30990-6](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0313309906)
* [Stanislav Lunev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanislav_Lunev). *Through the Eyes of the Enemy: The Autobiography of Stanislav Lunev*, Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1998. [ISBN 0-89526-390-4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0895263904)
* [Viktor Suvorov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor_Suvorov) [*Aquarium*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquarium_(Suvorov)) (Аквариум), 1985, Hamish Hamilton Ltd, [ISBN 0-241-11545-0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0241115450)
* Viktor Suvorov *Inside Soviet Military Intelligence*, 1984, [ISBN 0-02-615510-9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0026155109)
* Viktor Suvorov *Spetsnaz*, 1987, Hamish Hamilton Ltd, [ISBN 0-241-11961-8](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0241119618)

**External links**

* [Reuters factbox on GRU](http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE53N3K820090424)
* [The Cold War International History Project (CWIHP)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=topics.documents&group_id=511603) for new evidence on Soviet espionage in the United States from GRU/KGB archival sources
* [History of military intelligence](http://www.agentura.ru/english/dosie/gru/story/) from the Agentura.ru project (in English)
* [Information from FAS.org](http://www.fas.org/irp/world/russia/gru/index.html)
* [Another FAS site](http://fas.org/irp/world/russia/fbis/IntelligenceGRU.html)
* [President Putin visits new GRU headquarters](http://en.rian.ru/photolents/20061109/55488751.html)
* [GRU High Command and leading GRU officers](http://militera.lib.ru/research/suvorov8/25.html)
* [Ivan Ilyichev – Head of GRU](http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20060509/93522495.html)
* [GRU structure](http://www.sadcom.com/PINS/gru.htm)

**See also**

* [Farewell Dossier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farewell_Dossier)
* [Vatutinki](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatutinki)
* [Active measures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Active_measures)
* [SMERSH](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMERSH)
* [Leopold Trepper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopold_Trepper), an organizer of the [Soviet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet) [spy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spy) ring [Rote Kapelle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Orchestra_(spy)) (Red Orchestra) prior to [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II)
* [Pavel Sudoplatov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pavel_Sudoplatov)
* Nuclear [suitcase bomb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suitcase_bomb)

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