**KGB**

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*For other uses, see* [*KGB (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KGB_(disambiguation))*.*

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| --- | --- |
| **Committee for State Security** | |
| **Комитет государственной безопасности** | |
| ***Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti*** | |
|  | |
| The KGB Sword-and-Shield emblem. | |
| **Agency overview** | |
| **Formed** | 20 December 1917 ([Cheka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheka)) 13 March 1954 (KGB) |
| **Preceding agency** | [MGB - Ministry for State Security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_for_State_Security_(Soviet_Union)) |
| **Dissolved** | 22 October 1991 (de facto) 3 December 1991 (de jure) |
| **Jurisdiction** | [Council of Ministers of the USSR](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Ministers_of_the_USSR) |
| **Headquarters** | [Moscow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow), [Russian SFSR](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_SFSR), [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) [55°45′31.2″N 37°37′32.16″E﻿ / ﻿55.758667°N 37.6256°E﻿ / 55.758667; 37.6256](http://stable.toolserver.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=KGB&params=55_45_31.2_N_37_37_32.16_E_type:landmark_region:RU) |

The **KGB** (КГБ, [Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language): Комитет государственной безопасности, *Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti*) was the national security agency of the [USSR](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union). The Russian pronunciation of *KGB* is ([Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language): [**Комитет государственной безопасности**​](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e0/Ru-KGB.ogg)). From 1954 until 1991, the **Committee for State Security** was the Soviet Union's premier [internal security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Security_agency), [intelligence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Espionage), and [secret police](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secret_police) organization.



The contemporary [State Security Agency of the Nation of Belarus](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=State_Security_Agency_of_the_Nation_of_Belarus&action=edit&redlink=1) uses the Russian name KGB. Linguistically, among the Western press, *KGB* denotes "secret service" in referring to the [**FSB**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Security_Service_of_the_Russian_Federation). Most information remains classified, yet two on-line documentary sources are available.

**Origins**

The **KGB** originated as the [**Cheka**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheka) (*Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya po Borbe s Kontrrevolutsiyey i Sabotazhem* – Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counterrevolutions and Sabotage) established 20 December 1917, headed by [Felix Dzerzhinsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_Dzerzhinsky), and based upon the Tsarist [Okhrana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okhrana) intelligence-security agency; the name ***Cheka*** (Extraordinary Committee) derives from the two initial letters of each word in *Chrezvychainaya Komissiya*; its agents are ***Chekists*** (*Chekisty*). In protecting the USSR's national security, the Cheka (1917–22) often changed name and structure—becoming the [State Political Directorate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Political_Directorate) (**OGPU**) in 1923; the [People's Commissariat for State Security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Commissariat_for_State_Security_(USSR)) (**NKGB**) in 1941; and the [Ministry for State Security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_for_State_Security_(USSR)) (**MGB**) in 1946, and **KGB** in 1954—yet always remaining the **Cheka**, the Sword and Shield of the Soviet Union.



Entrance of the KGB Headquarters ([Lubyanka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lubyanka))

In 1953, the ambitious [Lavrentiy Beria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavrentiy_Beria) consolidated the **MVD** ([Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Ministry_of_Internal_Affairs)) and the **MGB** into an *enlarged* **MVD**. In 1954, a year after his execution, his MVD monolith became two agencies—the MVD (secret police) and the **KGB** (espionage), solely answering to the Council of Ministers. In 1978, the KGB was re-named **KGB of the Soviet Union** (**USSR KGB**), and its Chairman was a council minister. Besides being the Union's KGB, it was the Russian republican KGB.

Established to protect the [Bolshevik Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_Revolution) (1917) and the [Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Socialist_Federal_Soviet_Republic) (1922) against imperialism and counter-revolution (1917–23), the **Cheka** also pursued revenge against the enemies of the State *and* of [Joseph Stalin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Stalin)—among them, the monarchist [White movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_movement), Ukrainian Nationalists, and [Leon Trotsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_Trotsky), defeated by way of deception. Besides Chekist cunning, early success is partly owed to the lax national security of Western countries, allowing easy [**NKVD**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NKVD) penetration of government and intelligence agencies—thus how [Melita Norwood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melita_Norwood) betrayed the British nuclear weapons program, and the [Cambridge Five](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambridge_Five) delivered [nuclear weapon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_weapon) and [Manhattan Project](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhattan_Project) secrets stolen by the scientist–spies, [Klaus Fuchs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klaus_Fuchs) and [Theodore Hall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_Hall).

During the [Cold War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War) (1945–91), the KGB maintained the one-party Soviet State by suppressing "ideological subversion" ([political dissent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_dissent)) and anti-Soviet public figures ([Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksandr_Solzhenitsyn), [Andrei Sakharov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrei_Sakharov), et al.). It kept Russia technologically-abreast of the West by collecting the British and French industrial intelligence that made feasible the [Tupolev Tu-144](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tupolev_Tu-144) [SST](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supersonic_transport) aeroplane, (the Russian [Concorde](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concorde)). It shared the infiltration of Chancellor [Willy Brandt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willy_Brandt)'s [West German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Germany) Government (1969–74) with the [East German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Democratic_Republic) [Stasi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stasi) (MfS). Yet, among its failures are the spy networks compromised in 1945 by [defectors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defector) [Elizabeth Bentley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Bentley) in the US, and the defection of SIS mole [Oleg Gordievsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oleg_Gordievsky), the London KGB legal resident, in 1985, and the loss of ideological agents because of Soviet suppression of Hungarian and Czechoslovak nationalism. Still, mercenary agents, such as the US Navy [Walker spy ring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walker_spy_ring), CIA officer [Aldrich Ames](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldrich_Ames), and FBI agent [Robert Hanssen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Hanssen) volunteered to serve KGB as moles.

The thirty-seven-year history of the **USSR KGB** ended when its Chairman, Col.-Gen. [Vladimir Kryuchkov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Kryuchkov), led the 19–21 August [1991 Soviet coup d'état attempt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991_Soviet_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat_attempt) to depose Soviet President [Mikhail Gorbachev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Gorbachev). On 23 August, Chairman Kryuchkov was arrested and replaced by Gen. [Vadim Bakatin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vadim_Bakatin), who, in October 1991, dismantled the USSR KGB into three discrete agencies: (i) the Interrepublican Security Service (national security), (ii) the Central Intelligence Service (espionage), and (iii) the Committee for Protection of the State Border (border patrol).

In the event, the Supreme Soviet formally disestablished the USSR KGB on 3 December 1991. Moreover, on 25 December 1991, the USSR metamorphosed into the [Russian Federation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Federation), that, by January 1992, had five agencies doing KGB's work: (i) the **MB** (*Ministerstvo Bezopasnosti* – Ministry of Security), (ii) the **FAPSI** (*Federal'noe agentsvo pravitel'-stvennoi sviazi i informatsii* – Federal Agency for Government Communications and Information), (iii) **GUO** (*Glavnoe upravlenie okhrany* – Main Guards Directorate), (iv) the **Border Guard Service**, and (v) the **FIS** (Foreign Intelligence Service).

On 21 December 1995, Russian Federation President [Boris Yeltsin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Yeltsin) replaced the **KGB** with two agencies the national security [**FSB**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Security_Service_of_the_Russian_Federation) (*Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti* – Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation) and the espionage [**SVR**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_Intelligence_Service_(Russia)) (*Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki* – Foreign Intelligence Service).

**Modus operandi**

Many experts consider the KGB to have been the world's most effective intelligence agency in its time. It operated [legal and illegal espionage residencies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resident_spy) in target countries where the **legal resident** spied from the Soviet embassy, and, if caught, was protected with [diplomatic immunity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diplomatic_immunity) from prosecution; at best, the compromised spy either returned to Russia or was expelled by the target country government. The **illegal resident** spied unprotected by diplomatic immunity and worked independently of the Soviet diplomatic and trade missions, (*cf.* the [non-official cover](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-official_cover) CIA agent). In its early history, the KGB valued illegal spies more than legal spies, because illegals penetrated their targets more easily. The KGB residency executed four types of espionage: (i) political, (ii) economic, (iii) military-strategic, and (iv) [disinformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disinformation), effected with "active measures" (PR Line), [counter-intelligence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-intelligence) and security (KR Line), and scientific–technologic intelligence (X Line); quotidian duties included [SIGINT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SIGINT) (RP Line) and illegal support (N Line).

At first, using the romantic and intellectual allure of "The First Worker–Peasant State" (1917), "The Fight Against [Fascism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Civil_War)" (1936–39), and the "Anti-Nazi [Great Patriotic War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Patriotic_War)" (1941–45) the Soviets recruited many idealistic, high-level Westerners as **ideological agents** . . . but the Russo–German [Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molotov-Ribbentrop_Pact) (1939) and the suppressed [Hungarian Uprising](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_Uprising) (1956) and [Prague Spring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prague_Spring) (1968) mostly ended ideological recruitment. By the 1960s and 1970s, the [Red Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Army)'s invasions and the infirm [Brezhnev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonid_Brezhnev)'s corrupt, poor leadership repelled young, left-wing radicals from the Soviet Socialist cause—so, the KGB [blackmailed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackmail) and [bribed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bribery) Westerners into spying for the Soviet Union.

The KGB classed its spies as **agents** (intelligence providers) and **controllers** (intelligence relayers). The false-identity *legend* assumed by a Russian-born illegal spy was elaborate, the life of either a "live double" (participant to the fabrication) or a "dead double" (whose identity is tailored to the spy). The agent then substantiated his or her legend by living it in a foreign country, before emigrating to the target country; thus the sending of US-bound illegal residents via the Soviet residency in [Ottawa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottawa), [Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada). Tradecraft included stealing and photographing documents, code-names, contacts, targets, and [dead letter boxes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_drop), and working as "friend of the cause" [*agents provocateur*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agent_provocateur) who infiltrate the target's group to sow dissension, influence policy, and arrange [kidnaps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kidnap) and [assassinations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination).

**History**

The **Cheka** was established to defend the [October Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_Revolution) and the nascent [Bolshevik](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolshevik) state from its enemies—principally the monarchist [White Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_movement). To ensure the Bolshevik régime's survival, it suppressed counter-revolution with domestic terror and international deception. The scope of foreign intelligence operations prompted Lenin to authorize the Cheka's creation of the **INO** (*Innostranyi Otdel* – Foreign-intelligence Department)—the precursor to the [First Chief Directorate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Chief_Directorate) (FCD) of the KGB. In 1922, Lenin's régime re-named the Cheka as the [State Political Directorate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Political_Directorate) (OGPU).

The **OGPU** expanded Soviet espionage nationally and internationally, and provided to Stalin the head personal bodyguard [Nikolai Vlasik](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Vlasik). The vagaries of Stalin's [paranoia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paranoia) influenced the OGPU's performance and direction in the 1930s, i.e. fantastic [Trotskyist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trotskyism) conspiracies, etc. Acting as his own analyst, Stalin unwisely subordinated intelligence analysis to collecting it; eventually, reports pandered to his conspiracy fantasies. The middle history of the KGB culminates in the [Great Purge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Purge) (1936–38) killings of civil, military, and government people deemed politically unreliable—among them, chairmen [Genrikh Yagoda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genrikh_Yagoda) (1938) and [Nikolai Yezhov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Yezhov) (1940); later, [Lavrentiy Beria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavrentiy_Beria) (1953) followed suit. Ironically, Yezhov denounced Yagoda for executing the Great Terror, which from 1937 to 1938 is called *Yezhovshchina*, the especially cruel "Yezhov era".

In 1941, under Chairman [Lavrentiy Beria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavrentiy_Beria), the OGPU became the **NKGB** ([People's Commissariat for State Security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Commissariat_for_State_Security), integral to the [NKVD](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NKVD)) and recovered from the Great Purge of the thirties. Yet, the NKGB unwisely continued pandering to Stalin's conspiracy fantasies—whilst simultaneously achieving its deepest penetrations of the West. Next, Foreign Minister [Vyacheslav Molotov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vyacheslav_Molotov) centralized the intelligence agencies, re-organizing the NKGB as the **KI** (*Komitet Informatsii* – Committee of Information), composed (1947–51) of the **MGB** ([Ministry for State Security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_for_State_Security)) and the **GRU** ([Foreign military Intelligence Directorate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GRU)). In practice making an ambassador head of the MGB and GRU legal residencies in his embassy; intelligence operations are under political control; the KI ended when Molotov incurred Stalin's disfavor. Despite its political end, the KI's contribution to Soviet Intelligence was reliant upon illegal residents- spies able to establish a more secure base of operations in the target country.

Moreover, expecting to succeed Stalin as leader of the USSR, the ambitious head of the **MVD** ([Ministry of Internal Affairs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Internal_Affairs)), Lavrentiy Beria merged the MGB and the MVD on Stalin's death in 1953. Anticipating a [*coup d'etat*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coup_d%27etat), the [Presidium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidium) swiftly eliminated Beria with [treasonous](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treason) charges of "criminal anti-Party and anti-state activities" and executed him. In the event, the MGB was renamed **KGB** and detached from the MVD.

Mindful of ambitious spy chiefs—and after deposing Premier [Nikita Krushchev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikita_Krushchev)—Secretary [Leonid Brezhnev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonid_Brezhnev) and the CPSU knew to manage the next over-ambitious KGB Chairman, [Aleksandr Shelepin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksandr_Shelepin) (1958–61), who facilitated Brezhnev's [Stalinist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stalinist) palace *coup d'état* against Khrushchev in 1964—despite Shelepin not then being in KGB. With political reassignments, Shelepin protégé [Vladimir Semichastny](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Semichastny) (1961–67) was sacked as KGB Chairman, and Shelepin, himself, was demoted from chairman of the Committee of Party and State Control to Trade Union Council chairman.

In the 1980s, the [glasnost](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasnost) liberalization of Soviet society provoked KGB Chairman [Vladimir Kryuchkov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Kryuchkov) (1988–91) to lead the August [1991 Soviet coup d'état attempt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991_Soviet_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat_attempt) to depose President Mikhail Gorbachev. By then, however, Soviet society's disrespect for the KGB had (among other reasons) exhausted popular support for the régime of the CPSU. The thwarted *coup d'état* ended the KGB on 6 November 1991. The KGB's successors are the secret police agency **FSB** (Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation) and the espionage agency **SVR** (Foreign Intelligence Service).

**KGB in the US**

**The world war interregnum**

That responsibility fell to the [GRU](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GRU) (military intelligence), who recruited the ideological agents [Julian Wadleigh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_Wadleigh) and [Alger Hiss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alger_Hiss), who became State Department diplomats in 1936. The NKVD's first US operation was establishing the legal residency of [Boris Bazarov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Bazarov) and the illegal residency of [Iskhak Akhmerov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iskhak_Akhmerov) in 1934. Throughout, the [Communist Party USA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_USA) (CPUSA) and its Gen.-Sec'y [Earl Browder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earl_Browder), helped NKVD recruit Americans working in government, business, and industry.

Other important, high-level ideological agents were the diplomats [Laurence Duggan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurence_Duggan) and [Michael Whitney Straight](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Whitney_Straight) in the State Department, the statistician [Harry Dexter White](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Dexter_White) in the [Treasury Department](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_the_Treasury), the economist [Lauchlin Currie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lauchlin_Currie) (an FDR advisor), and the "Silvermaster Group", headed by statistician [Greg Silvermaster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathan_Gregory_Silvermaster), in the Farm Security Administration and the Board of Economic Warfare. Moreover, when [Whittaker Chambers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whittaker_Chambers), formerly Alger Hiss's courier, approached the Roosevelt Government—to identify the Soviet spies Duggan, White, and others—he was ignored. Hence, during the [Second World War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_World_War) (1939–45)—at the [Teheran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teheran_Conference) (1943), [Yalta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yalta_Conference) (1945), and [Potsdam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potsdam_Conference) (1945) conferences—Big Three Ally Uncle Joe Stalin of the USSR, was better-informed about the war affairs of his US and UK allies, than they about his.

Soviet espionage succeeded most in collecting scientific and technologic intelligence about advances in [jet propulsion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jet_engine), [radar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radar), and [encryption](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encryption), which impressed Moscow, but stealing atomic secrets was the capstone of NKVD espionage against Anglo–American science and technology. To wit, British [Manhattan Project](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhattan_Project) team physicist [Klaus Fuchs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klaus_Fuchs) (GRU 1941) was the main agent of the [Rosenberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_and_Ethel_Rosenberg) spy ring. In 1944, the New York City residency infiltrated the top secret [Los Alamos National Laboratory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Alamos_National_Laboratory) in New Mexico, by recruiting [Theodore Hall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_Hall), a nineteen-year-old Harvard physicist.

**During the Cold War**



Former KGB member [Heydar Aliyev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heydar_Aliyev), ex–Azerbaijani President, led [Azerbaijan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azerbaijan) to independence.

The KGB failed to rebuild most of its US illegal resident networks. The aftermath of the Second [Red Scare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Scare#.27Second_Red_Scare.27_.281947.E2.80.931957.29) (1947–57), [McCarthyism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McCarthyism), and the destruction of the CPUSA hampered recruitment. The last, major illegal resident, Rudolf Abel (["Willie" Vilyam Fisher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vilyam_Genrikhovich_Fisher)) was betrayed by his assistant, [Reino Häyhänen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reino_H%C3%A4yh%C3%A4nen), in 1957.

Recruitment then emphasized mercenary agents, an approach especially successful in scientific and technical espionage—because private industry practiced lax internal security, unlike the US Government. In late 1967, the notable KGB success was the walk-in recruitment of US Navy Chief Warrant Officer [John Anthony Walker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Anthony_Walker) who individually and via the [Walker Spy Ring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Anthony_Walker) for eighteen years enabled Soviet Intelligence to decipher some one million US Navy messages, and track the US Navy.

In the late Cold War, the KGB was lucky with intelligence coups with the cases of the mercenary walk-in recruits, FBI man [Robert Hanssen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Hanssen) (1979–2001) and CIA Soviet Division officer [Aldrich Ames](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldrich_Ames) (1985).

**KGB in the Soviet Bloc**



KGB prison doors displayed in the Museum of Occupations, Tallinn, Estonia.

It was Cold War policy for the KGB of the Soviet Union and the satellite-state KGBs to extensively monitor public and private opinion, internal subversion, and possible revolutionary plots in the [Soviet Bloc](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Bloc). In supporting those Communist governments, the KGB was instrumental in crushing the [Hungarian Revolution of 1956](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_Revolution_of_1956), and the [Prague Spring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prague_Spring) of "[Socialism with a Human Face](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialism_with_a_human_face)", in 1968 Czechoslovakia.

During the Hungarian revolt, KGB chairman [Ivan Serov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Serov), personally supervised the post-invasion "normalization" of the country. In consequence, KGB monitored the satellite-state populations for occurrences of "harmful attitudes" and "hostile acts"; yet, stopping the Prague Spring, deposing a nationalist Communist government, was its greatest achievement.

The KGB prepared the Red Army's route by infiltrating to [Czechoslovakia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czechoslovakia) many illegal residents disguised as Western tourists. They were to gain the trust of and spy upon the most outspoken proponents of [Alexander Dubček](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Dub%C4%8Dek)'s new government. They were to plant subversive evidence, justifying the USSR's invasion, that right-wing groups—aided by Western intelligence agencies—were going to depose the Communist government of Czechoslovakia. Finally, the KGB prepared hardline, pro-USSR members of the [Communist Party of Czechoslovakia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_Czechoslovakia) (CPC), such as [Alois Indra](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Alois_Indra&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Vasil Biľak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasil_Bi%C4%BEak), to assume power after the Red Army's invasion. The courage of the betrayed Prague Spring leaders did not escape KGB notice; the defector [Oleg Gordievsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oleg_Gordievsky) later remarked, "It was that dreadful event, that awful day, which determined the course of my own life" (*The Sword and the Shield*, p. 261).

The KGB's Czech success in the 1960s was matched with the failed suppression of the [Solidarity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarity) labor movement in 1980s Poland. The KGB had forecast political instability consequent to the election of the priest [Karol Wojtyla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_John_Paul_II), as the first Polish Pope, John Paul II, whom they had categorized as "subversive", because of his anti-Communist sermons against the one-party PUWP régime. Despite its accurate forecast of crisis, the [Polish United Workers' Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_United_Workers%27_Party) (PUWP) hindered the KGB's destroying the nascent Solidarity-backed political movement, fearing explosive civil violence if they imposed the KGB-recommended martial law. Aided by their Polish counterpart, the [Służba Bezpieczeństwa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C5%82u%C5%BCba_Bezpiecze%C5%84stwa) (SB), the KGB successfully infiltrated spies to Solidarity and the Catholic Church, and in [Operation X](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Operation_X&action=edit&redlink=1) coordinated the [declaration of martial law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martial_law_in_Poland) with Gen. [Wojciech Jaruzelski](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wojciech_Jaruzelski) and the Polish Communist Party; however, the vacillating, conciliatory Polish approach blunted KGB effectiveness—and Solidarity then fatally weakened the Communist Polish government in 1989.

**Suppressing ideological subversion**



Monument to KGB victims, [Vilnius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vilnius), [Lithuania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithuania).

During the Cold War, the KGB actively suppressed "ideological subversion"—unorthodox political and religious ideas and the espousing dissidents. In 1967, the suppression increased under new KGB Chairman [Yuri Andropov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri_Andropov), who said all dissent threatened the [Soviet state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_state)—including anti-Communist religious movements. Most arrested dissidents were sentenced to indefinite terms in [Gulag](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulag)-administered [forced labor camps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forced_labour_camps)—where their dissension lacked the strength it might have had in public. Moreover, Yale University archive documents record that suppressing "ideological subversion" was the principal preoccupation of Yuri Andropov and [Vitali Fedorchuk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitali_Fedorchuk) when each was KGB Chairman.

After denouncing [Stalinism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stalinism) in his secret speech [On the Personality Cult and its Consequences](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Personality_Cult_and_its_Consequences) (1956), [Nikita Khrushchev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikita_Khrushchev) lessened suppression of "ideological subversion". Resultantly, critical literature re-emerged, notably the novel [*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Day_in_the_Life_of_Ivan_Denisovich) (1962), by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn; however, after Khrushchev's deposition in 1964, Leonid Brezhnev reverted the State and KGB to actively harsh suppression—routine house searches to seize documents and the continual monitoring of dissidents. To wit, in 1965, such a search-and-seizure operation yielded Solzhenitsyn (code-name PAUK, "spider") manuscripts of "slanderous fabrications", and the subversion trial of the novelists [Andrei Sinyavsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrei_Sinyavsky) and [Yuli Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuli_Daniel); Sinyavsky (alias "Abram Tertz"), and Daniel (alias "Nikolai Arzhak"), were captured after a Moscow literary-world [informant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Informant) told KGB when to find them at home.

After suppressing the Prague Spring, KGB Chairman Andropov established the Fifth Directorate to monitor dissension and eliminate dissenters. He was especially concerned with the [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksandr_Solzhenitsyn) and [Andrei Sakharov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrei_Sakharov), "Public Enemy Number One". Andropov failed to expel Solzhenitsyn before 1974; but did internally-exile Sakharov to Gorky city [Nizhny Novgorod] in 1980. KGB failed to prevent Sakharov's collecting his [Nobel Peace Prize](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Peace_Prize) in 1975, but did prevent [Yuri Orlov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri_Feodorovich_Orlov) collecting his Nobel Prize in 1978; Chairman Andropov supervised both operations.

KGB dissident-group infiltration featured *agents provocateur* pretending "sympathy to the cause", [smear campaigns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smear_campaign) against prominent dissidents, and [show trials](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Show_trial); once imprisoned, the dissident endured KGB interrogators *and* sympathetic informant-cell mates. In the event, [Mikhail Gorbachev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Gorbachev)'s [glasnost](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasnost) policies lessened persecution of dissidents; he was effecting some of the policy changes they had been demanding since the 1970s.

**Notable operations**



[KGB Headquarters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lubyanka_(KGB)) on [Lubyanka Square](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lubyanka_Square), designed by [Aleksey Schusev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksey_Schusev).

* With the [Trust Operation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trust_Operation), the OGPU successfully deceived some leaders of the right-wing, counter-revolutionary [White Guards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_movement) back to the USSR for execution.
* NKVD infiltrated and destroyed Trotskyist groups; in 1940, the Spanish agent [Ramón Mercader](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ram%C3%B3n_Mercader) assassinated Trotsky in Mexico City.
* KGB favored [active measures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Active_measures) (e.g. [disinformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disinformation)), in discrediting the USSR's enemies.
* For war-time, KGB had ready [sabotage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabotage) operations arms caches in target countries.

In the 1960s, acting upon the information of KGB defector [Anatoliy Golitsyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatoliy_Golitsyn), the CIA counter-intelligence chief, [James Jesus Angleton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Jesus_Angleton), believed KGB had [moles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mole_(espionage)) in two key places—the counter-intelligence section of CIA and the FBI's counter-intelligence department—through whom they would know of, and control, US counter-espionage to protect the moles and hamper the detection and capture of other Communist spies. Moreover, KGB counter-intelligence vetted foreign intelligence sources, so that the moles might "officially" approve an anti-CIA [double agent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_agent) as trustworthy. In retrospect, the captures of the moles [Aldrich Ames](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldrich_Ames) and [Robert Hanssen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Hanssen), proved Angleton—ignored as over-cautious—was correct, despite costing him his job at CIA, which he left in 1975.

Occasionally, the KGB [assassinated](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination) the enemies of the USSR—principally [Soviet Bloc](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Bloc) [defectors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defector), either directly or by aiding Communist country secret services—the (alleged) air-crash assassination of [Dag Hammarskjöld](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dag_Hammarskj%C3%B6ld) in 1961; the surreptitious [ricin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ricin) poisoning of the Bulgarian émigré [Georgi Markov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgi_Markov), shot with an umbrella-gun of KGB design, in 1978; and the (alleged) attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II in 1981.

The highest-ranking Communist intelligence officer to defect, Lt. Gen. [Ion Mihai Pacepa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ion_Mihai_Pacepa), said the Romanian Communist party leader [Nicolae Ceauşescu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolae_Ceau%C5%9Fescu) told him about the "ten international leaders the Kremlin killed, or tried to kill": [Laszlo Rajk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laszlo_Rajk) and [Imre Nagy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imre_Nagy) of Hungary; [Lucretiu Patrascanu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucretiu_Patrascanu) and [Gheorghiu-Dej](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gheorghiu-Dej) of Romania; [Rudolf Slansky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Slansky), the head of Czechoslovakia, and chief diplomat [Jan Masaryk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Masaryk); [Mohammad Reza Pahlavi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammad_Reza_Pahlavi), the Shah of Iran; [Palmiro Togliatti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palmiro_Togliatti) of Italy; US President [John F. Kennedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_F._Kennedy); and [Mao Zedong](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mao_Zedong) of China via [Lin Biao](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lin_Biao); and noted that "among the leaders of Moscow's satellite intelligence services, there was unanimous agreement that the KGB had been involved in the assassination of President Kennedy."

**Organization of the KGB**

**Senior staff**

The [Chairman of the KGB](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chairman_of_the_KGB), First Deputy Chairmen (1–2), Deputy Chairmen (4–6). Its policy [Collegium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collegium_(ministry)) comprised a chairman, deputy chairmen, directorate chiefs, and republican KGB chairmen.

**The Directorates**

* [**First Chief Directorate**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Chief_Directorate) (Foreign Operations) – foreign espionage.
* **Second Chief Directorate** – counter-intelligence, internal political control.
* **Third Chief Directorate** (Armed Forces) – military counter-intelligence and armed forces political surveillance.
* **Fourth Directorate** (Transportation security)
* **Fifth Chief Directorate** – censorship and internal security against artistic, political, and religious dissension; renamed "Directorate Z", protecting the Constitutional order, in 1989.
* **Sixth Directorate** (Economic Counter-intelligence, industrial security)
* **Seventh Directorate** (Surveillance) – of Soviet nationals and foreigners.
* **Eighth Chief Directorate** – monitored-managed national, foreign, and overseas communications, cryptologic equipment, and research and development.
* [**Ninth Directorate**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninth_Directorate) (Guards and KGB Protection Service) 40,000-man uniformed bodyguard for the CPSU leaders and families, guarded government installations (nuclear weapons, etc.), operated the [Moscow VIP subway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow_Metro_2), and secure Government–Party telephony. Pres. Yeltsin transformed it to the [Federal Protective Service (FPS)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Protective_Service_(Russia)).
* **Fifteenth Directorate** (Security of Government Installations)
* **Sixteenth Directorate** (SIGINT and communications interception) operated the national and government telephone and telegraph systems.
* [**Border Guards Directorate**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USSR_Border_Troops) responsible for the USSR's border troops.
* **Operations and Technology Directorate** – research laboratories for recording devices and [Laboratory 12](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laboratory_12) for poisons and drugs.

**Other units**

* KGB Personnel Department
* Secretariat of the KGB
* KGB Technical Support Staff
* KGB Finance Department
* KGB Archives
* KGB Irregulars
* Administration Department of the KGB, and
* The [CPSU](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_the_Soviet_Union) Committee.
* KGB [OSNAZ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OSNAZ), ([Spetsnaz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spetsnaz) [special operations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special_operations)) units such as:
* The [Alpha Group](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alpha_Group)
* The [Vympel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vympel), etc.
* [Kremlin Guard Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kremlin_Regiment) for the [Presidium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidium_of_the_Supreme_Soviet), *et al.*, then became the FPS.

**The KGB's evolution**

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| --- | --- |
| **Dates** | **Organization** |
| December 1917 | Cheka |
| February 1922 | Incorporated to NKVD (as GPU) |
| July 1923 | OGPU |
| July 1934 | Re-incorporated to NKVD (as GUGB) |
| February 1941 | NKGB |
| July 1941 | Re-incorporated to NKVD (as GUGB) |
| April 1943 | NKGB |
| March 1946 | MGB |
| October 1947–November 1951 | Foreign Intelligence to the KI |
| March 1953 | Merged to and enlarged MVD |
| March 1954 | KGB |
| November 1991 | FSK |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Organization** | **Chairman** | **Dates** |
| Cheka–GPU–OGPU | [Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_Edmundovich_Dzerzhinsky) | 1917–26 |
| OGPU | [Vyacheslav Rudolfovich Menzhinsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vyacheslav_Rudolfovich_Menzhinsky) | 1926–34 |
| NKVD | [Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genrikh_Grigoryevich_Yagoda) | 1934–36 |
| [Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Ivanovich_Yezhov) | 1936–38 |
| [Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavrenti_Pavlovich_Beria) | 1938–41 |
| NKGB | [Vsevolod Nikolayevich Merkulov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vsevolod_Nikolayevich_Merkulov) | 1941 (Feb–Jul) |
| NKVD | [Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavrentiy_Beria) | 1941–43 |
| NKGB–MGB | [Vsevolod Nikolayevich Merkulov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vsevolod_Nikolayevich_Merkulov) | 1943–46 |
| MGB | [Viktor Semyonovich Abakumov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor_Abakumov) | 1946–51 |
| [Semyon Denisovich Ignatyev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semyon_Ignatyev) | 1951–53 |
| [Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavrentiy_Beria) | 1953 (Mar–Jun) |
| [Sergei Nikiforovich Kruglov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Nikiforovich_Kruglov) | 1953–54 |
| KGB | [Ivan Aleksandrovich Serov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Serov) | 1954–58 |
| [Aleksandr Nikolayevich Shelepin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksandr_Nikolayevich_Shelepin) | 1958–61 |
| [Vladimir Yefimovich Semichastny](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Yefimovich_Semichastny) | 1961–67 |
| [Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri_Andropov) | 1967–82 |
| [Vitali Vasilyevich Fedorchuk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitaly_Fedorchuk) | 1982 (May–Dec) |
| [Viktor Mikhailovich Chebrikov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor_Chebrikov) | 1982–88 |
| [Vladimir Aleksandrovich Kryuchkov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Kryuchkov) | 1988–91 |
| [Vadim Viktorovich Bakatin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vadim_Bakatin) | 1991 (Aug–Nov) |

**See also**

* [Active measures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Active_measures)
* [Chronology of Soviet secret police agencies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology_of_Soviet_secret_police_agencies)
* [History of Soviet espionage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Soviet_espionage)
* [Federal Security Service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Security_Service_(Russia))
* [Foreign Intelligence Service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_Intelligence_Service_(Russia))
* [Federal Agency of Government Communications and Information](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FAPSI)
* [Federal Protective Service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Protective_Service_(Russia))
* [Mitrokhin Archive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitrokhin_Archive)
* [Numbers station](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numbers_station)
* [Presidential Security Service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_Security_Service)
* [SMERSH](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMERSH)
* [World Peace Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Peace_Council)
* [Ministry of Internal Affairs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Internal_Affairs_(Russia))
* [KGB victim memorials](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KGB_victim_memorials)
* [Eastern Bloc politics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Bloc_politics)

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