

**POTENTIAL THREATS TO AMERICAN
SECURITY IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA**



**HEARINGS
BEFORE THE
DEFENSE POLICY PANEL
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED SECOND CONGRESS**

FIRST SESSION

**HEARINGS HELD
DECEMBER 10, 11, AND 13, 1991**



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EMERGING SITUATION IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION AND AROUND THE WORLD

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
DEFENSE POLICY PANEL,
Washington, DC, Tuesday, December 10, 1991.

The panel met, pursuant to call, at 9:30 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Les Aspin (chairman of the panel) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. LES ASPIN, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WISCONSIN, CHAIRMAN, DEFENSE POLICY PANEL

The CHAIRMAN. The meeting will come to order.

We welcome you all to a Defense Policy Panel hearing on the future threats to the U.S. military, and our witness this morning is Dr. Robert Gates, his first appearance before us as head of the CIA. We welcome him very much, and of course, we are very pleased to have him, because not only is he the head of the CIA, but he is a long-standing expert in the area of the Soviet Union, and a lot of interest in the statements that he is going to make to us this morning.

The ground rules are, you will make an opening statement, and then after that, we will clear the room and go into the classified, closed session for questions and answers.

Let me just put this thing into a little bit of context, and then call on Bill Dickinson.

Basically, Dr. Gates, what we are doing here in this set of hearings is two things: We are interested in two kinds of fundamental themes, or two different fundamental issues. One is, of course, what is going on in the Soviet Union; and of course, the headlines in the daily papers raise a lot of questions about what has been happening.

We are interested in what is going on in the Soviet Union, because we are interested, of course, in the security of the United States and the dangers to nuclear weapons in the Soviet Union, control over those nuclear weapons, chaos, and the problems that might come out of chaos, of a social situation, of food and medicine shortages.

The House and the Senate, as you know, our committees tried to put into the bill some money to help the Soviet Union. We granted the political difficulties had to withdraw on that, but came back with some legislation before the session ended that did something in a way of—not as much as we originally planned, but something in the way of help for the Soviet Union.

It is those kinds of issues that that legislation was seeking to address. We are interested in that. So, the whole one set of questions is the question about what is going on in the Soviet Union.

The second whole set of questions that we are interested in, of course, is trying to get some handle on where we ought to be going with our defense budget. This is, in a sense, the opening hearing on the 1993 defense bill. The question about where are we going with defense in this country in the light of changes that are going on in the Soviet Union, but of course, in other parts of the world also, and what does it all mean?

Let me lay on you a theory, that basically is seems to me that we have had a couple of—that maybe we are having two revolutions in the Soviet Union. The first revolution happened in 1989, and ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall. That was kind of revolution No. 1.

There was the demise of the Warsaw Pact. In light of that revolution, the administration came up with a base force concept, the 5-year build-down, 25 percent cut, et cetera.

Then, in August of 1991, perhaps there was a second revolution, which was the failed coup. Maybe we are seeing in these days the end of that period. Maybe the second revolution period started on August 19th and is ending today with the—if Gorbachev leaves office.

Basically, the second revolution—if the first revolution took the Warsaw Pact out of our defense equation, maybe this second revolution has taken the whole Soviet Union out of our defense equation.

The question that this panel is faced with is the question of what do the changes that are going on now in the Soviet Union say about the threat that the United States is facing, and what does it do to our defense plans?

In particular, what will it do to the base force concept, the 5-year build-down, et cetera? That is not your area, but the first part of it is your area, which is what is going on to the threats to the United States, and how is that changing, and how does that change in light of events that began on August 19th and maybe ending today as we speak, if Gorbachev is leaving office, the total dissolution of the Soviet Union as a threat to the United States, the second revolution as it were; and what does that mean to the sort of defenses that we ought to plan, the defense budget that we ought to put together, the equipment that we ought to buy, and the forces that we ought to plan for.

So, two broad areas. Defense 1993 and beyond, Soviet Union. Those are the two areas. Dr. Gates, we are really very, very pleased to see you here today. You are somebody that I think a lot of us have respected and have followed your statements on these issues over the years.

You have got a lot of credibility with our panel, and we welcome you here this morning.

Bill Dickinson.

STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM L. DICKINSON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ALABAMA, RANKING MINORITY MEMBER, DEFENSE POLICY PANEL

Mr. DICKINSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me join with you in welcoming a long-time friend and acquaintance, Bob Gates, here today. My congratulations to you in your new position.

In the past, all of my dealings with our witness this morning have always been frank, forthcoming, both traits which will be important in his new position.

But if I really needed to know something, and I felt like I was being given a nonpartisan line, but would get the straight story, I would not hesitate to ask Bob Gates.

Dr. Gates, I understand that you have been asked to give us a broad overview of what is going on in the 1990s, and I guess this is one of the most dramatic and traumatic and fast-moving times in the history of the world.

How any of us can stay on top of it on a day-to-day basis—actually, what has occurred in the last few years is almost unbelievable. I do a great deal of reading, in particular about scenarios dealing with espionage and spies and stuff. I don't think any writer would ever have dared to set forth a scenario as to what actually has happened, because it would be too unbelievable. He couldn't sell it.

But, in fact, it has happened, and is happening right now. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, flying apart, and it is on a day-to-day basis. We read the paper today, watch CNN today, to see what the latest results are.

Today, as the chairman has alluded, perhaps Mr. Gorbachev will announce his resignation; one of his aides is reported to have said that. On the other hand, he just yesterday made a strong statement saying that the actions of the three republics were illegal, and they couldn't do it, indicating that he would stay aboard.

Who could dream that the dissolution and the downfall of the evil empire, as it has been termed, to perhaps lead to a more threatening circumstance for us in that we, even with the dissolution, we don't know where the nuclear weapons are, who controls them.

Will they be on the black market at some point? At least they were under control and we could deal with a single focal point up until this point in history. We don't know what to expect in the future.

So, I know you are not a soothsayer, and you didn't bring your crystal ball, but I know that you are as knowledgeable as anybody can be on the subject. We would really look forward to hearing your testimony here today.

It is very meaningful to us, especially as we start a new budget cycle and have to decide what is in the future for our defense establishment; what should our defense posture be; in effect, how much is enough, and we don't know.

So, thank you for your presence here, and we look forward with interest to your statement.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Gates, the floor is yours, sir.

STATEMENT OF DR. ROBERT M. GATES, DIRECTOR, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, ACCOMPANIED BY DAVID ARMSTRONG, NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, GENERAL PURPOSE FORCES; ROBERT BLACKWELL, NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, U.S.S.R.; LAWRENCE GERSHWIN, NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, STRATEGIC PROGRAMS; AND GORDON OEHLER, NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND PROLIFERATION

Dr. GATES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Dickinson, members of the panel.

It is indicative of the nature of the pace of events that we face that what I thought was a bold and forward-leaning statement last Saturday had to be significantly revised by Monday, and to take into account the events of Sunday.

So, things are moving at an extraordinary pace. The most different task that falls to those of us in intelligence is to see the world as it is, not as we or others would wish it to be.

Today, even the most hard-eyed realist must see a world transformed. A world where, at staggering cost in lives and treasure, communism has at least been defeated.

At the same time, the old verities that have guided this country's national security policies for the last 45 years have disappeared in an historical instant. Communism everywhere is dead or dying; a number of long-standing regional conflicts are coming to an end; the cold war is over; the Soviet Communist Party has expired, mortally wounded by its own hand; and the forces of real reform are at last ascendant in what was the Soviet Union.

Still, as ever, there are challenges, concerns, and risks. In the former Soviet Union, we see a remarkable historical paradox. The collapse of the Soviet and Russian empire offers the promise of democracy and economic transformation.

The danger of war in Europe or a nuclear holocaust has so diminished that in the popular mind, they seem almost as distant as the Pearl Harbor anniversary we observed a few days ago.

Yet, a disintegrating union faces multiple internal crises, the collapse of central authority, potentially large-scale civil disorder, and unraveling of social discipline; while it still possesses some 30,000 nuclear weapons, the most powerful of which continue to be aimed at us.

There is no precedent, as I indicated a few days ago, for an empire as vast as that of Russia or the Soviet Union imploding so suddenly. The demise of far smaller, far younger empires has shattered the peace, disturbed the social order, and rearranged the international scene so fundamentally as to be grasped only by historians at decades' remove. The lesson of history impels us to point out the dangers as well as the opportunities when empires die.

Beyond the borders of Russia and the newly sovereign republics lie other challenges to peace, to international order, and thus to us.

Foremost among these is the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and related delivery systems. More than 20 nations have or are acquiring weapons of mass destruction, forging arsenals of such destructive capacity as to defy all reason. Arsenals

all too often in the hands of megalomaniacs, strong men of proven inhumanity, or weak, unstable, or illegitimate governments.

The prospects for the development of democracy and market economies in Eastern Europe are promising, but ethnic and territorial disputes, long bottled up by Stalinist regimes, have bubbled to the surface, threatening political stability and civil war.

While the winds of change are blowing throughout East Asia, communist totalitarian regimes remain in place in China, North Korea and Vietnam.

Despite unprecedented opportunities for peacemaking in the Middle East, the potential for bloody conflict there remains high. While Secretary Baker and the negotiators work to leash the dogs of war, many states in the region are feverishly developing weapons of mass destruction.

Throughout the world, a heartening trend toward political pluralism is evident, but the roots of democracy are shallow and fragile, and they could easily be destroyed by economic misery, sectarian hostility, or regional conflict.

It is a small world, they used to say. In truth, the world is even smaller today. Events in places we used to consider remote insistently engage our attention: the danger of nuclear war between India and Pakistan; the reality of civil war in Yugoslavia; the process of peacemaking in Cambodia and the Middle East; the need to reverse a coup in Haiti; the question of how best to help blacks and whites in South Africa learn to cooperate in building a new nation.

Such concerns and crises, along with others, will come to our national doorstep whether we like it or not.

History is not over. It simply has been frozen and now is thawing with a vengeance Americans ignore at their peril. After 80 years of war and revolution, the nationalist, ethnic, border, and resource conflicts of a long-ago world confront us anew, even as we seek to accommodate and adjust to the revolutionary forces set loose by the demise of communism.

As the events of the past 3 days have demonstrated, nowhere is the progression of events more confusing, the pace of change more hurtling, or the conjunction of opportunities and dangers more evident than in the former Soviet Union.

Nowhere is a favorable resolution—that is, the emergence of stable, friendly, competent democracies in Russia, Ukraine, and the other former Soviet Republics—more vital to the interests of the United States; indeed, of the whole world.

The communist old guard's suicidal attempt to turn back the clock last August in fact brought the prompt collapse of the Soviet Government and the breakup of the country.

The newly sovereign republics vary in political complexion, and they seem to be interested in somehow coming together to form a very loose confederation. But none of them, either individually or collectively, have the desire or ability to pose as great a threat to U.S. security as did the U.S.S.R. for so many decades.

Indeed, most Republics of the former U.S.S.R. are trying to reduce their defense burdens, join western economic and security structures, and forge cooperative relationships with the United States.

Nevertheless, the situation is dangerously unstable. All of the former Soviet Republics face enormous economic, social and political problems that will make the transition to democracy and a market economy difficult and potentially dangerous.

The economy is in a free fall, with no prospects for reversal in sight. Severe economic conditions—including substantial shortages of food and fuel in some areas, the disintegration of the Armed Forces, and ongoing ethnic conflict—will combine this winter to produce the most significant civil disorder in the former U.S.S.R. since the Bolsheviks consolidated power.

Russian President Yeltsin has articulated bold economic reform plans, but it remains to be seen whether he can carry them out. Market reform will be accompanied by inflation and unemployment that could general a social explosion, endangering the stability of fledgling democratic governments.

The possibility cannot be ruled out that such circumstances could produce a return to authoritarian government; whether led by reformers desperate to feed the people and stave off an explosion, or by nationalists driven by a xenophobic, atavistic vision of Russia.

On balance, the events of the past 2 years, and especially the past 3 months, give us considerable hope and optimism for the long term about Russia and the other republics.

For the first time since 1917, the future is open to them, and their leaders clearly want to strengthen democracy and establish market economies. In the near to middle term, however, we are deeply concerned that the enormous economic and social challenges facing most of these new democratic forces may overwhelm them.

I will now turn to the specific questions on military matters that you asked me to address.

The threat from Soviet conventional forces is shrinking daily. It is important, though, to distinguish between their near-term capabilities and their long-term potential.

The capabilities and potential of the former Soviet forces depend on the current and future military policies of the new Republic governments. These governments seem to attach a relatively low priority to maintaining—much less rebuilding—conventional forces beyond those deemed necessary for a bedrock defense capability in what they view as a low-threat environment.

As a result, Soviet general purpose forces are losing cohesion. Readiness is at its lowest level in decades. Training has been disrupted. Food and fuel are scarce. Housing shortages are undermining morale and discipline.

Operational deployments of naval ships continue to decline. Vital maintenance is being deferred. Ethnic troubles are growing, and the reliability of the troops is dubious, particularly for internal missions.

Already low manning levels are declining. It is questionable whether the Republics could generate the reserve manpower needed to flesh out skeletal units. In any case, a large-scale mobilization would be hampered by the deteriorating transportation and distribution systems.

Indeed, while a centralized command and control system continues to operate, political and economic collapse is beginning to frag-

ment the military into elements loyal to the Republics or simply devoted to self-preservation. Our most likely scenario is for the continued decay and breakup of the Soviet Armed Forces.

Frankly, I cannot envision any realistic scenario in which a major conventional military threat to neighboring states would emerge from the former U.S.S.R. within the next year or so.

Instead, as Soviet leaders themselves have warned, over the next year or two, there may be a greater possibility of conflict in or between various successor Republics. Such a conflict would probably be preceded by a period during which indicators—such as increasing political turmoil or unbearable economic privation—would provide some warning.

Longer range forecasts should be made with great diffidence in the wake of the collapse of this huge empire and in the midst of the ensuing political, economic and social revolution.

Yet, it is necessary both for us and for you to look beyond the next year or two. We must acknowledge the possibility that a new conventional military threat could reemerge in the former Soviet territory, particularly in Russia.

This possibility is low, if the successor Republics continue their current political and economic direction, which is one reason we wish them well. If, however, autocratic, xenophobic, aggressive regimes emerge from the current privation and turmoil, they might well rebuild their conventional forces and come to constitute a renewed threat. In this event, warning indicators would be abundant.

The evolving threat from Soviet strategic nuclear weapons remains a top intelligence priority. Throughout the 1980s, the Soviets made great strides in modernizing and improving their strategic offensive and defensive forces. We had projected a continuation of this trend through the 1990s.

Over the past couple of years, as economic deterioration worsened and military spending was increasingly curtailed, we thought it likely that strategic forces would take some hits. Accordingly, we projected the cancellation of some major programs.

Nevertheless, we had evidence that the Soviets had five new strategic ballistic missiles under development, and we marveled at their ability to push ahead with these programs in the face of looming economic disaster.

Well, things clearly have changed. Gorbachev has announced the cancellation of two of the ICBM programs—one was a road-mobile missile, the other a rail-mobile missile—though production of the new SS-18 MOD-5 ICBM and of the road-mobile SS-25 continues for now. A military spokesman said recently that no more ballistic missile submarines will be built during the next 5 years.

Earlier, we judged that the Soviets would preserve and protect their strategic programs because of their symbolic importance as much as their deterrent value. But it is increasingly hard to see how Russia or other Republics with strategic nuclear weapons will be able to continue the modernization effort—or even why they would want to, given the rapid dissipation of tensions with the West.

Therefore, we should not be surprised if most or all Soviet plans for Soviet strategic offensive force modernization are abandoned for the foreseeable future. This is clearly not what the military wants

to happen, only a reflection of the likely priorities of Republic leaders and economic facts of life.

We expect that, as Gorbachev has already announced, the successor nuclear powers will reduce their strategic forces below START levels during the 1990s. It is unlikely that these forces, whether controlled by Russia or some joint authority, could be sustained at START levels, given that the technical and operational support capabilities are deteriorating along with the rest of the infrastructure.

Many Russian and Ukrainian leaders have already indicated a desire to slash strategic forces, believing it is not worth the cost and effort to maintain them at levels even close to those allowed by START.

They may not, however, be able to cut these forces as far as they, or we, would like. Dismantling strategic weapons is difficult and costly. Moreover, Soviet dismantling facilities are very limited and located only in Russia.

Even if only a diminished stock of strategic weapons eventually is retained in former Soviet territory, they would still be capable of devastating the United States and other countries.

Therefore, as long as there is any possibility that the turmoil in the region could stimulate the emergence of a new, hostile regime, the remaining strategic weapons will be of concern.

Of more immediate concern is the possibility that the Soviets will not be able to maintain adequate safeguards in the process of reducing and dismantling much of their arsenal of 30,000 nuclear weapons.

For now, the center retains control over those weapons through an elaborate and effective system operated by the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff. But the center is evaporating before our eyes. Those who designed the control system never anticipated this.

About two-thirds of the Soviet nuclear weapons are in Russia. Thousands of weapons, however, remain in other Republics. Most appear to be at well-secured installations.

We face a period of uncertainty, however, as Russia and other Republics sort out possession of the weapons, and establish new structures and procedures for controlling and operating them.

Another sobering thought: None of the governments of these new nuclear powers is yet bound by commitments made by the old Soviet Union, though all claim they will abide by and ratify these agreements.

The Soviet nuclear control system has relied on capable people under strong discipline following sound procedures at the command and operating levels. But these people are subject to many of the same economic problems and nationalist aspirations as their civilian countrymen.

Even robust physical security and use-control measures become ineffective if the guards or their commanders are suborned, corrupted or simply disappear.

The balance of your questions deal with broader issues than the ramifications of developments in the former U.S.S.R.

Of these issues, the accelerating proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons in other countries around the world is

probably of gravest concern. The more countries that possess such weapons—even if acquired for deterrent purposes—the greater the likelihood that such weapons will be used.

Only Soviet and Chinese missiles now threaten United States territory, and we do not expect any increased risk from the special weapons of other countries in a conventional military sense for at least another decade. In contrast, the threat to Europe, the Middle East and Asia is growing.

U.S. or allied forces deployed abroad could face an increased threat of air-delivered nuclear weapons before the end of the decade. Some inaccurate but serviceable ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads are likely to be fielded by a number of countries in coming years.

Several countries possess missiles and rockets that could carry nuclear warheads. If any of those countries could obtain a few nuclear warheads—from a renegade Soviet element, for example—it would instantly become a nuclear power.

Most countries in the Middle East have chemical weapon development programs, and some already have stockpiles suitable for employment against civilians or poorly defended military targets. Currently, their delivery systems are rudimentary, but over the next decade, we expect chemical-tipped mobile short-range missiles to become widespread from North Africa through South Asia.

China and North Korea may sell other countries longer range missiles or the technology to produce them. Acquisition of such missiles by countries that have special weapons would expand and accelerate the special weapons arms race that is already under way in the Middle East and South Asia.

Let me say a word about the former Soviet Union as a new source of proliferation. Like the rest of the former Soviet defense industries, enterprises involved in special weapons and missile programs that face cuts in military funding may well try to stay in business by selling equipment, materials, and services in the international marketplace.

The hunger for hard currency could take precedence over proliferation concerns, particularly among Republic and local governments with high concentrations of defense industry and little else that is marketable.

Tens of thousands of scientists, engineers, and medical doctors are emigrating annually from the former Soviet Union. Some have expertise applicable to special weapons and missiles. Most of these emigrants will prefer to settle in Israel or the West, but some may find a better market for their expertise in Third World countries trying to acquire or improve special weapons capabilities.

The world's most significant military forces, aside from Soviet and allied forces, belong to China, India, and North Korea. Only China has the capability to attack United States territory, though the North Koreans can bring formidable capabilities to bear on United States forces stationed in South Korea.

The Chinese have deployed a small force of nuclear-tipped ICBMs, some of which are aimed at the United States; they plan to deploy additional strategic and regional nuclear forces in the 1990s.

We expect the Chinese to continue to modernize their missile forces. The shorter range missiles, purportedly with conventional

warheads, are being marketed abroad to earn hard currency. New Chinese missiles, including a mobile ICBM, will probably be fielded during the 1990s.

The technological sophistication of the global military threat to United States interests in coming years will be lower than we projected before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, many foreign military forces will acquire advanced Soviet and Western weaponry, which we expect will be available at bargain prices.

Many countries already market sophisticated weapons and military technology, and several Soviet successor countries are likely to join them. Even if Republic Governments retain tight control over their arsenals, economic conditions will tempt them to sell weapons to the highest hard-currency bidder.

Turmoil in the region will increase the possibility of unauthorized arms transfers to groups inside and outside the former U.S.S.R. In addition, we may well see the leakage of highly sophisticated Soviet "conventional" military technology and equipment such as stealth, or lasers or thermal-imaging technology.

For these and other reasons, foreign military capabilities will expand considerably in coming years, possibly in directions not now anticipated. The range of conditions under which these capabilities might be used is much wider than we were accustomed to in the past, when the main threat was from the Soviet Union and we understood it well.

Keeping track of burgeoning foreign military capabilities will be one of our greatest challenges in the years ahead. The potential for technological surprise in the Third World is growing, as restrictions on foreign access to military-related technology are progressively loosened.

The chances that major force will be used against United States interests in Europe and other parts of the world where Soviet influence was strong have been greatly reduced by the collapse of the Soviet empire.

The emerging new states of the former Soviet region are friendly, at least for now. The international communist movement is dead. All around the world, left-wing insurgencies are running out of steam, and formerly pro-Soviet governments are seeking to develop closer ties to the West.

Communism staggers on only in a handful of countries dominated by aging leaders preoccupied with retaining power rather than with promoting ideology abroad.

These developments are certainly encouraging. They seem to point to a better future. But we are not there yet. As you deliberate in the months ahead, consider just how unpredictable the future has become.

Think about how fast events are moving; the prospects for turbulence and instability in the central Eurasian arsenal that used to be a country; the problematic disposition of nearly 30,000 nuclear weapons; the volatility of the Middle East and South Asia; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; nuclear development programs in countries hostile to our principles and interests; and the centrifugal forces of nationalist and ethnic hostility that threaten instability or even civil war on several continents.

I close on this note, to reinforce the point that the collapse of communism has enormously reduced the chance of a major war, but day to day, the world remains a rough neighborhood, and it is getting rougher; and, like it or not, nearly all nations see the United States, the sole superpower, as the principal force for peace and stability.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared remarks for this open session. I and my colleagues will be happy to answer any questions in closed session.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Gates, thank you very much.

We will now have a temporary recess while we clear the room.

[Whereupon, at 10:15 a.m., the panel proceeded in executive session.]