

RUSSIA MAY HAVE POSITIONED NUCLEAR BOMBS IN US

Stanislav Lunev, a former colonel who defected from an elite military intelligence unit of the former Soviet Union in early 1992 from the Russian Intelligence Agency (GRU), testified before the House National Security Committee (HNSC) that it is possible that Russia has smuggled nuclear suitcase bombs into the US to use in the event of war.

Lunev is the author of a new book, *Through the Eyes of the Enemy*, that states that the Russian military and intelligence organizations still regard the US as a threat and continue to plan for World War III scenarios in which Russia and the US oppose each other.

Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.), who presided over the hearing, called for the administration to do more to ensure the US is prepared for this threat from Russia. Specifically, Weldon, who is the chairman of the HNSC research and development panel, promoted the idea of spending more money on a Wide Area Tracking System (WATS) intended to detect smuggled nuclear devices.

The technology is under development at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory.

"Given the shocking possibility that Russian nuclear suitcase bombs may even now be smuggled into the United States, I hope the Clinton administration reverses its neglect of the experimental WATS" system, Weldon said.

Because Lunev has had his identity altered under the federal witness protection program, he testified yesterday behind a screen that blocked observers from viewing his face.

Lunev said he worked as a spy inside the United States from 1988 until early 1992, under cover of a Tass newspaper correspondent. During that time, he said, one of his responsibilities was to identify possible places in the Washington area for placement of tactical nuclear bombs. Lunev said he decided to write the book revealing Russian secrets after he was diagnosed with cancer.

He indicated that he now has less reason to fear retribution from his former colleagues. "If I am to be killed, it will only be in advance of the cancer," he said. "I have nothing to lose right now."

The Soviet Union developed portable nuclear tactical devices for its special operations forces, Lunev said. The devices are small enough to fit in a suitcase, though Lunev said it would be a "very heavy" case. Most likely, Lunev said, Russian agents would seek to transport the devices in a way that would not attract attention-using, for example, a carrier that looked like a picnic basket or golf bag.

Russia most likely would smuggle the devices into the United States using the same type of methods that drug runners use, Lunev said. If these simpler methods failed, Russia could deliver the technology by air, propelling a package from a reconnaissance plane to a remote location for later retrieval by Russian agents, or by sea, using an oceanographic research ship to deliver the equipment to a sparsely populated coastline.

Under questioning, Lunev said he does not know if Russia has positioned portable nuclear weapons in the United States. "It is possible that they are here because they are not inside Russia," he said.

Suitcase Weapons

A congressional delegation that Weldon led to Russia first learned in May 1997 that Russia had developed nuclear suitcase weapons and that dozens of them are missing.

Lunev said the US is underestimating the threat that Russia poses today. Not only does Russia still seek to learn US military secrets, but it is actively engaged in industrial espionage, he said.

"Russian intelligence activity against this country is much more active than it was in the time of the former Soviet Union's existence," Lunev said. He suggested that Russia still has plans to eliminate US civilian leaders and the military chain of command in event of war.

Lunev also stated that the Russian government is heavily infiltrated by the Russian mafia. "The government is penetrated by Russian mafia so deeply it was possible a few years ago to say the Russian government is simply a criminal state," he said.

Rep. Owen Pickett (D-Va.) asked how Lunev could have reliable information about the plans of the Russian military and intelligence organizations, given that he defected six years ago. Lunev replied that he maintains "my own contacts with some people."

Pickett also suggested that maintaining portable nuclear devices in the US would be difficult because the devices would require regular maintenance and possible replacement every few months. This activity could compromise their location, Pickett said.

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