

GRU: Obscure Part of Russian Intelligence

Konstantin Preobrazhensky*

Intelligence expert and Senior Fellow at Gerard Group International, USA

Abbreviations: GRU: Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Army; KGB: Committee of State Security of the Soviet Union; SVR: Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation; FSB: Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation; counter-intelligence

Introduction

There are two main intelligence services in today's Russia: SVR and GRU. The first one is *Sluzhba Vneshnei Razvedki*, Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. It is nothing but the renamed former First Chief Directorate of the KGB, which has managed intelligence for decades. Its activities are world known thanks to a lot of defectors and analysts, both American and Russian. They all have published a lot of books and articles about SVR and its predecessor, KGB.

The second one is GRU, *Glavnoe Razvedytnoe Upravlenie*, Russian Military Intelligence. It is a part of the Defense Ministry. Its full name is much longer: The Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Army.

It has retained its Soviet name and has not suffered any special changes since then. Moreover, it is a sort of relic of the Soviet times. That is why its interior situation has been kept so secret. Its officers are more patriotic than those of the KGB/SVR: the number of the GRU defectors is much smaller. And Western writers have not devoted to it as many books as to the KGB. Simply because they are not so much aware of GRU, the most obscure part of Russian intelligence.

The current article is based not only on the published sources, but also on the author's personal experience of contacting and interviewing very many GRU officers during his own KGB service in 1976-1991. It has disclosed some unknown aspects and methods of the Russian military intelligence.

GRU and KGB: Rivalry and Fusion

Both GRU (Russian Military Intelligence) and SVR (Russian Foreign Intelligence Service) have performed the same main strategic functions:

1. Political Intelligence.
2. Scientific and Technical Intelligence (industrial espionage).
3. Illegal Intelligence.

They have become the sphere of constant rivalry and competition.

But there is only one function allowed only to the KGB and its successor, SVR: Exterior Counter-Intelligence.

It has been aimed at securing the activities by all the Russian intelligence agencies, including the GRU. For this purpose, it is recruiting collaborators at the foreign intelligence services and unmasking traitors among their Russian colleagues, officers of both KGB and GRU. But the GRU has not been allowed to secure itself by maintaining its own counter-intelligence.

When the GRU officers are working abroad, they are monitored by the Directorate "K" (counter-intelligence) of the SVR. Those who serve

inside Russia are infiltrated by the Directorate of Military Counter-Intelligence of the FSB (Federal Security Service, inheritor to the KGB) [1].

On the other hand, there also is a function solely performed by the GRU. It is the battlefield intelligence, which has not been managed by the KGB and its successors, SVR and FSB.

The battlefield intelligence is run in the peacetime too. In preparation of the future war, the GRU officers all over the world are obliged to arrange the illegal weapon and ammunition dumps in the territory of the many foreign countries.

It is a risky operation. The group of Russian diplomats secretly drives to the forest or rural area to bury rifles, machine-guns and other weapons. They have to be in a rush, or they might be disclosed by the local-counterintelligence service. It is a hard job.

But it is not damaging the SVR's interests at all and cannot become the arena of rivalry. Moreover, it has saved the GRU top bureaucracy from the massive dismissal by the SVR officers in 2001, when Sergei Ivanov, a KGB/FSB General, was appointed Minister of Defense. (Formally, he was considered a retired General, but in fact has remained acting. The same is good for his senior mate, Vladimir Putin).

Sergei Ivanov wanted to appoint his FSB colleagues to the leading GRU positions, but they have demonstrated a lack of knowledge of the specifically army problems including the combatant intelligence. And they got reluctant to study it. They did not want to be appointed the GRU leaders [2]. The military service is much harder than that in the FSB. Even for their Generals.

The analysts are calling GRU the mostly closed Russian intelligence service as it does not even manage its own press-service [3].

But, according to its status, the GRU is not eligible to have it! Because it is not an independent ministry, while both FSB and SVR are enjoying ministerial ranks. Formally, GRU is nothing but one of the numerous Chief Directorates of the General Staff of the Defense Ministry. It has not even been directly subordinated to the Russian Minister of Defense! The direct Head of GRU is officer #2 of the Defense Ministry: the Head of the General Staff! It means that the status of GRU is two steps lower than that of SVR or FSB! That is why, those foreign journalists who have questions about GRU, must address them to the

*Corresponding author: Konstantin Preobrazhensky, Intelligence expert and Senior Fellow, 30 Washington Street, Apt 418, Brighton, MA 02135, USA, E-mail: k_preobrazhensky@yahoo.com

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Press Service of Russian Defense Ministry. The question is if they get the correct answer.

That is why, the Head of GRU cannot even enjoy the privilege of direct report to the Russian President. The two people are in between: the Head of the General Staff and the Defense Minister [4].

Since December 2011, the GRU is headed by Major General Igor Sergun. His personal data is kept secret. He has replaced Colonel General Alexander Shlyakhturov (1947), appointed in April, 2009. He was the former Deputy Head of the GRU, responsible for strategic intelligence. His predecessor, General of the Army Valentin Korabelnikov (1946), was managing GRU for over 11 years, since 1997 up to 2009. He was the second longest Head of the GRU after General of the Army Peter Ivashutin, who had been the GRU Head for almost quarter of the 20th century! (1963-1987).

According to the Russian "Kommersant" newspaper, Valentine Korabelnikov's resignation in April 2009 might be connected with his disagreement with the governmental plans of reforming and reducing the GRU [5].

The Difference in Status of GRU and KGB (Today's SVR)

It is made clear based on the following example:

"The KGB station is located on the upper floor of the every Russian Embassy, while the GRU is one floor down. The KGB is more merciful to its officers; their wages are higher, and also, the KGB compensates their parking and some other expenses, while the GRU officers have been generally deprived of this privilege. That is why the foreigners are surprised to see some members of the Russian Embassy parking their cars at the paid parking lots while some of their colleagues are avoiding it by an unknown reason. Those diplomats are leaving their cars in the streets and rushing out from the store every five minutes in fear of their cars been towed away.

These unhappy people are the GRU officers. The foreign counter-intelligence services easily disclose them based on it.

But still it is not the main distinction. It is following: the KGB officers are eligible to recruit their GRU colleagues as collaborators, but not vice versa! This circumstance is still unknown. The overseas appointments of the GRU officers must be approved by the KGB/FSB. The young officers cannot even join GRU and be sent to the intelligence schools without being permitted by the FSB military counter-intelligence department in the regiment they are serving! FSB should confirm their political loyalty before allowing them to join the GRU. The price of this permission is their recruitment as FSB agents. Upon completion their study at the GRU intelligence schools, they are dispatched to the Russian Embassies and other missions as covered GRU staff officers. At same time, most of them also the secret FSB collaborators and informants. While Russian Army secures the national safety, its own safety is secured by the FSB.

That is why, the KGB/SVR/FSB officers and their GRU colleagues in the Russian embassies are very rarely making friends in spite of doing the same job. The GRU officers are afraid of being spied by the KGB inheritors, while those "inheritors" themselves are afraid of being spied by their GRU counterparts. They know that the GRU officers might spy on them on behalf of their own employer, SVR/FSB [6].

During the Second World War, the GRU was working in close contact with the NKVD, predecessor of the KGB. For example, in March 1941, both intelligence services have jointly carried out a successful operation aimed at the overthrowing the pro-German government of Yugoslavia. For the whole period of war, GRU and NKVD were managing a joint network of foreign agents in Europe [7].

The steady system of two separate intelligence services, equilibrating each other, has been finally formed only after the end of Stalin's era. It was done by the Central Committee of the Communist Party in order to secure itself from the coup inspired by each of them.

Though the GRU was monitored by the KGB, still both organizations were equally subordinated to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. In case of emergency, the Central Committee was able to control KGB using GRU.

Hiring Criteria

The famous GRU defector and writer, Victor Suvorov, has described the GRU hiring criteria in his book, "Inside Soviet Military Intelligence" as following: "The KGB is quite happy to choose the sons of high-ranking, serving KGB officers, but the GRU devotes its attentions largely to the proletarian ten per cent" [8].

The future GRU officers should never defect to America. That is the presumption of the recruiting department of the GRU personnel directorate. That is why, the main criteria of hiring the young GRU officers is their patriotism, the verbal declaration of which is not enough. They should be guaranteed against defecting in the future.

According to the familiar GRU officers whom I have interviewed, the GRU candidates are recruited among the ordinary combatant officers. GRU has avoided the intellectually developed young officers fluent in foreign languages. Such people have been thought to be unreliable. They might be fond of Western freedoms and could defect.

The Personnel Departments are searching those officers who do not want to serve abroad!

This search is not very hard. Simply a lot of young officers of excellent service are called one by one to the Personnel Department and offered the job abroad.

Some officers respond in the following way: "Oh, no! I have been promised a transfer to another military district with a good promotion! And also I cannot speak foreign languages! I have never been abroad and I am not interested in moving there!"

Such kind of answer is regarded superb! Sometimes such officers get moved to the GRU forcibly!

Actually, there are a lot of young officers in the Russian Army who have no idea of living abroad. They are descendants of the poor peasantry families. Such people have an overwhelming majority of those entering military schools.

Though the Russian Army service is very hard and full of deprivations, the peasants' life has been much harder! They consider very prestigious the careers of the military officers, which are despised by the young men enjoying prosperous life of the large cities.

Being put into the Military-Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Army, the "proletarians" get acquainted with the diplomatic protocol, which seems to them very strange. Many of them have no facilities for

foreign languages. Upon coming to the Russian Embassies all over the world they retain the military behavior manner, oftenly speak in extremely loud voices, making their civil colleagues laugh.

Job Evaluation Criteria

The GRU methods of activities are more aggressive and rude than that of the SVR. They think they are at war even at the peace time, while the SVR officers do not think so at all. The SVR is entrusting them some job in the form of tasks, not orders. The task is not supposed to be necessarily accomplished, while the order is to be carried out by all means. The GRU prefers ordering.

Their activities' criteria are dictated by the spirit of war, when it does not matter in what way you have gained the victory. Some GRU officers have told me that that their evaluation system is based on score like at school. It has been confirmed by the famous Russian military analyst, Pavel Fengelgauer, saying that "GRU is practicing the score system of the evaluation of operative officers based on the number of the recruited agents and their quality, and also on the quality of the information obtained" [9].

And nobody cares how the GRU officer had obtained this information. He may even buy it legally or half-legally. For example, in the 1980s, in Tokyo, I have frequently met the groups of the GRU officers at the large electronic goods wholesale market, "Akikhabara". They told me later that they had managed to purchase there even some parts and components of American military computers and jets. Each of those parts has brought a few points to their scores.

The KGB Scientific and Technical Intelligence Directorate "T" has even proclaimed the following slogan: "The intelligence officer must not be a thief!"

Conclusions

GRU has combined all the existing types of intelligence - strategic, illegal, technical, economic, space and battlefield. Its officers are

recruited not from the families of Russian ruling elite, but from common people. The role of GRU in Putin's Russia is growing up. It is confirmed by the fact that in 2000, GRU was awarded, for the first time, an all-national professional feast day – the Day of military intelligence officer. Such a feast day did not exist even in the Soviet period. It is celebrated on November 5, when in 1918, Red Army has got its first intelligence unit.

Rivalry between GRU and intelligence of KGB/SVR, which was characteristic for the Soviet period, has vanished, after Russia got a KGB President, and KGB officers and their collaborators engaged leading governmental positions including Army.

GRU has retained its status of the most closed and secret intelligence service. The extent of secrecy is growing: for example, now we do not know even the biography of the Head of GRU, Igor Sergun, while the biographies of his predecessors were more or less known.

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