



A NEW ERA OF RUSSIAN INTELLIGENCE

Repercussions from the War in Ukraine

Numerous geopolitical factors are contributing to the need for Russian intelligence services to revamp their global strategies.

First, the war in Ukraine has both increased Russia's demand for foreign technology and expertise and made it more challenging for Russia to obtain these resources due to economic and diplomatic isolation.

The war in Ukraine is also causing Russia to grapple with numerous sanctions and export controls imposed by the US, EU, and other allies.

These new circumstances are depriving the country of many dual-use products essential for sustaining the war and its economy, causing Russia to fall further behind the West in crucial technologies such as quantum, additive manufacturing, and augmented reality.

In addition, Russia is contending with the effects of a brain drain. According to the French Institute of International Relations, approximately one million Russians have left their homeland, with the majority being young, well-educated individuals who would have otherwise contributed to Russia's advanced industries.

Shifting Strategies For Russian Intelligence

To navigate this compromising situation, the Russian intelligence services have adjusted their strategy.

Traditionally, there has been a relatively clear division of focus among the three primary Russian intelligence organizations:

- The Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) focuses on foreign intelligence
- The Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (GRU) focuses on military intelligence
- The Federal Security Service (FSB) focuses on domestic security

Now, the division of focus among the intelligence units has blurred as Russia's entire intelligence apparatus is deeply involved in sustaining the war in Ukraine. They are increasingly relying on individuals, including non-Russians, amateur operatives, and those under non-diplomatic cover to collect foreign technology and intelligence. Recently, these individuals have included professionals from various fields, including oil and gas workers, professors, hockey players, and others.

In The News

OCTOBER 2022

José Assis Giammaria was arrested in Norway on suspicion of spying for Russia. After a year of silence, Giammaria admitted his identity as Mikhail Mikushin. While posing as Brazilian-born José Assis Giammaria, Mikushin worked as a research volunteer at a university in Tromsø, Norway, focusing on "hybrid threats." Prior to coming to Norway, he received his bachelor's degree in political science from Carleton University in Ottawa in 2015 and his master's degree in strategic studies from the University of Calgary in 2018. The Norwegian government is continuing to work to confirm Mikushin's identity as a senior Russian military intelligence officer, an officer of the GRU.

FEBRUARY 2023

British officials arrested five London-based Bulgarian nationals for collecting information for Russia and illegally monitoring Russian exiles in the area between August 2020 and February 2023. They are currently waiting for their trial, which is to begin in October 2024.

MARCH 2023

Artem Uss, a Russian businessman and the son of a former Russian governor, escaped from house arrest in Italy with the assistance of Vladimir Jovancic, a national of Bosnia and Herzegovina residing in Serbia. Uss was facing extradition to the United States for his involvement in the illegal trafficking of semiconductors used in the construction of ballistic missiles and various other weapons, some of which were deployed in the conflict in Ukraine. Vladimir Jovancic was arrested in Croatia in December 2023 on charges of obstructing justice and aiding the escape from custody. The United States is currently seeking his extradition.

APRIL 2023

Swedish authorities arrested a Russian national, who remains unidentified, on suspicion of conducting "industrial espionage." At the time of the arrest, the individual was working at an oil refinery belonging to the Swedish oil company Preem.

JUNE 2023

The Polish authorities arrested a Russian national on accusations of spying for the Russian government. At the time of his arrest, the individual, identified by Russian state media as Maxim Sergeyev, was approximately 20 years old and had been playing for a professional hockey team in Poland. Polish authorities alleged that Sergeyev was a member of a "spy ring" consisting of individuals from several countries in Eastern Europe who had been engaged in gathering intelligence for Russia and in monitoring the flow of military equipment from Poland to Ukraine.

Navigating Russia's New Tactics

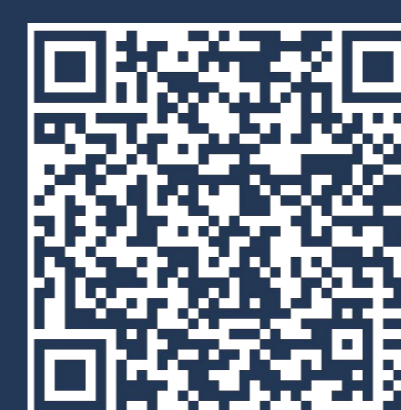
Today, Russia finds itself in a difficult position. Amid its isolation, brain drain, and a longer-than-expected war in Ukraine, Russia desperately needs high technology from abroad. At the same time, Russia's traditional intelligence gathering network has been dismantled by expulsions, intense scrutiny of visa applicants, and general increased difficulty in traveling between the West and Russia.

But Russia is adapting, and their aggressive new tactics to obtain foreign technology and expertise is cause for alarm for all Western countries, companies, and their allies. Russia is more frequently leveraging individuals abroad already in place and individuals with non-traditional covers to gather vital technology and intelligence.

Individuals with existing relationships to Russia's economic statecraft machine are at the greatest risk, as Russia may attempt to first leverage them to rebuild its intelligence network. Russia may seek to establish contact with these individuals, possibly via social media or other networks, to open communication.

Individuals who have previously attended events, such as conferences and forums, in Russia or with Russian attendees should assume the Russian intelligence services are aware of them. Additionally, the Russian government is continuing efforts to maintain outreach to its academic diaspora through programs such as the Mega-Grant, which provides funding for foreign researchers to come to Russian and operate labs.

As Russia becomes more desperate for foreign technology, organizations should be vigilant in ensuring that their talent, technology, and supply chains are fortified against Russian economic espionage and sanctions evasion schemes.



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