By Fred Burton and Scott Stewart

Over the past several months Stratfor written quite a bit about the Russian resurgence. This discussion predates Russia's military action in Georgia. Indeed, we have discussed the revival of Russian power since at least 2005, the implications of the FSB's return since April and the potential return of the Cold War since March.

After the Aug. 7 confrontation between Georgia and Russia and the Sept. 10 deployment of Russian strategic bombers in Venezuela, (see blog and video clip Blackjacks over Cuba) there is little doubt that Russia is reasserting itself and that we are entering a period of heightened geopolitical tension between Russia and the United States. This period of tension is, as forecast, beginning to resemble the Cold War - though as we have noted in previous analyses, the new version will be distinctly different.

It is very important to remember that while the hallmark of the Cold War was espionage, the efforts of the intelligence agencies engaged in the Cold War were far broader. Intelligence agencies like the CIA and KGB also took part in vast propaganda campaigns, sponsored coups and widely used proxies to cause problems for their opponent. Sometimes the proxies were used directly against the opponent, as with Soviet support for the North Koreans and North Vietnamese against the United States, or U.S. support of Islamist rebels in Afghanistan.

In other cases, the proxies were used indirectly to cause problems for the opposing country and its allies in a broader attempt to expand or defend one side's geographic and ideological sphere of influence. Because of this, we saw the KGB supporting Marxist insurgents from Mexico to Manila and the United States supporting anti-communist militants in places such as Nicaragua and Angola.

This history means it is highly likely that as the present period of U.S.-Russian tensions progresses, the conflict will manifest itself not only through increased espionage activity, but also in the increased use of militant proxies.

We've seen a steady uptick in covert intelligence activity since former KGB officer Vladimir Putin took the helm in Russia and turned Moscow's focus back to Cold War tactics. Over the past few years we've witnessed, among other things, the poisoning of Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko and of former KGB officer and Kremlin critic Alexander Litvinenko in London.

With a former KGB man in charge, it is no surprise that the Russians would fall back into old habits, including the use of militant proxies. In fact, the former KGB officers who carried out the technical side of setting up relationships, establishing arms trading, etc. with these militant proxies during the Cold War now occupy critical positions in the Kremlin. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin - who has been very active in his diplomatic trips recently - used to be the

KGB's primary covert arms conduit to Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, as was noted in Part 1.

Because of these factors, much can be learned about what types of activities the Russians might engage in by reviewing Soviet activities during the Cold War.

Soviet use of militant proxies

During the Cold War, the Soviets, like the Americans, were very busy trying to export their ideology to the rest of the world. A basic tenet of Marxist thought is that class transcends national boundaries and that the proletariat everywhere needs to be freed from the tyranny of the capitalist class. Marxist thought also holds that politics and economics are evolutionary, and that the natural evolution of societies leads to the replacement of exploitative capitalist systems with superior communist systems.

Essentially, this view sees capitalism as inherently flawed and destined to destroy itself, only to be replaced by a more just and fair society. This evolutionary process can, however, be helped along by revolutionary action. Such a belief system meant that communists in places like the Soviet Union were ideologically motivated to support communist movements in other parts of the world out of communist solidarity.

This expansionist concept was captured by the anthem of the communist and socialist world, "L'Internationale." It was widely put into action through institutions such as the Communist International, or Comintern, which was founded in 1919 and committed to using "all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and for the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of the State."

From a nonphilosophical perspective, there also was much to be gained geopolitically in practical terms during the Cold War by expanding the Soviet sphere of influence and working to diminish that of the United States. Indeed, a number of geopolitical imperatives drove the conflict between Russia and the United States, and these imperatives transcended ideology. Ideology was merely an accelerant feeding the flames of a conflict spawned by geopolitics. Many key leaders on both sides of the Cold War were driven more by realpolitik than by ideology.

Operating in this atmosphere, the KGB was very busy. Inside the United States, they sought to recruit agents to provide intelligence and act as agents of influence. They also sought to encourage or fund many domestic U.S. groups that could cause problems for Washington. These groups ranged from Marxist Puerto Rican separatist groups, such as the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional and Los Macheteros, to anti-Vietnam War groups, which were responsible for much civil unrest and later spawned militant factions like the Weathermen. Files released after the fall of the Soviet Union showed that most U.S. scholars underestimated the breadth and depth of KGB efforts inside the United States.

But the extent of Soviet efforts should not have been a surprise. The KGB had a distinct

advantage in this realm over the United States because of the long and very active history of Soviet intelligence agencies such as the Cheka. At a time when the U.S. government was shutting down espionage efforts because "gentlemen don't read other gentlemen's mail," the Soviets' NKVD was involved in all forms of skullduggery.

Outside the United States, the KGB was also quite busy working against U.S. interests. In addition to supporting Marxist insurgencies and sponsoring coups, the Soviets directly intervened in places like Afghanistan and Hungary to sustain communist allies who had come to power. The KGB and its very active allies, like the East German Stasi, the Cuban DGI and the Bulgarian Committee for State Security, were also very busy creating and training terrorist groups.

In a process that somewhat resembles the recruiting process used by jihadist groups, the KGB and its sister services identified likely recruits, indoctrinated them and then sent them to training camps where they received advanced training in terrorist tradecraft, including surveillance, use of small arms, bombmaking and document forgery. Some of this training occurred on military bases in East Germany or Cuba, but Marxist groups established training camps in other places, such as South Yemen, Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, Iraq, Syria and Libya, where prospective recruits were taught guerrilla warfare and urban terrorism.

In the spirit of "L'Internationale," it was not uncommon to find Japanese Red Army members living and training at a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine camp in Lebanon, or for Irish Republican Army members to teach German Red Army Faction or Italian Red Brigade members how to make improvised explosive mixtures and improvised ordnance at camps in Libya or South Yemen. Of course, while most of these groups went through ideological indoctrination, not all of them bought into it. Some of them merely tolerated the ideology as the price for access to Soviet cash, training and weapons.

Trainers from the Soviet Union, Cuba, East Germany and other countries also would visit insurgent training camps in South and Central America, Africa and Asia in their efforts to spread the armed revolution. The Cubans were very active in Latin America and the Caribbean and fairly active in Africa.

They also were part of a large international arms-trafficking circle in which Soviet money was sent to Cuba, Cuban sugar was sent to Vietnam, and arms from Vietnam were sent to Latin American Marxist groups. This arms trade was not just hypothetical: In many attacks on U.S. interests or allies in South and Central America from the 1970s to the 1990s, traces conducted on U.S.-manufactured ordnance such as LAW rockets and hand grenades conclusively tied the ordnance used in the attacks to lots that were either abandoned by the United States in Vietnam, or provided to the South Vietnamese and later captured by the North Vietnamese Army.

Today's environment

Fast-forward to 2008. Russia is no longer a Soviet republic in league with a number of other communist republics. Today, Russia is technically a constitutional democracy with a

semicapitalist economic system; it is no longer a model communist society or the shining light of Marxist achievement. In spite of these ideological changes, the same geopolitical imperatives that drove the Soviet Union and the United States to the Cold War are still quite real, and they are pushing these powers toward conflict. And in this conflict, the Russians will reach for the same tools they wielded so deftly during the Cold War.

In the new conflict, Russia can be expected to reach out to some of its old radical contacts across the world. Many of these contacts, like Ahmed Jabril and Sabri al-Bana (aka Abu Nidal), are now dead, and many other radicals from the 1970s and 1980s, such as Carlos the Jackal and the core members of groups ranging from the Japanese Red Army to the Greek group November 17, have been caught and imprisoned. Additionally, most of the KGB's old contacts who remain alive and out of prison are getting on in years. This means any current Russian efforts will not focus on convincing geriatric former militants to pick up their arms once more, but instead will focus on using them to reach younger militants cut from the same cloth - militants who likely remain under the radar of Western intelligence.

The Soviet collapse and the end of its patronage system hit Marxist insurgent and militant groups very hard. Many of these groups were forced to search for alternative forms of funding and became engaged in kidnapping, narcotics trafficking and extortion. Other groups simply folded under the strain. While many of these groups were left high and dry by the demise of the Soviet Union, and while the Russians are no longer the ideological vanguard of the international Marxist movement, many remaining Marxist groups - such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the New People's Army (NPA) in the Philippines - would certainly welcome funding, training and weapons.

In Latin America, this undoubtedly will be coordinated with the Nicaraguans and Venezuelans, who along with Bolivia appear to be replacing Cuba as Russia's footholds in the region. In addition to reactivating contacts with the FARC and remnants of other Marxist groups in South America, we anticipate that the Russians will also step up activities with Marxist groups in Mexico. Elsewhere in North America, they could resume their support of the radical left in the United States and with radical elements of the Quebecois separatist movement in Canada.

In Eurasia and the Middle East, the places that really strike us as sites where the Russians will try to become active again are Lebanon and Turkey. During the Cold War, the KGB was very involved in Turkey and supported a number of radical left-wing groups, from the rural Kurdistan Workers' Party to the urban Dev Sol. Turkey's left-wing community remains very active and is ripe for Russian exploitation.

We also believe the Russians can be expected to reconnect with radical left-wing groups and individuals in places like Italy and Greece, which still maintain very active such groups. Given the U.S. involvement in counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines, the Russians could also renew contact with the NPA there.

In Russia today, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin stands as a model for strong authoritarian leadership emphasizing a healthy dose of nationalism and pride in one's own nation. As such, he could appeal to a whole variety of Bolivarian movements, like those in Venezuela, Bolivia

and Ecuador. Furthermore, the Russians will certainly attempt to appeal to Slavic nationalism through pan-Slavic ideology, particularly in places like Bulgaria and Serbia, where there are well-organized ultranationalist movements and even political parties.

Another consideration is that ideological change in Russia could mean Moscow will reach out to radical groups that the KGB traditionally did not deal with. While many KGB officers didn't completely buy in to communist ideology, the Communist credo did serve as both a point of attraction and a limiting factor in terms of whom the Soviets dealt with. Since the Russian state is no longer bound by Soviet ideology -- it is really all about power and profit these days -- that constraint is gone. The Russians are now free to deal with a lot of people and do a lot of things they could not do in Soviet times.

For example, former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke is very popular in Moscow and very well-connected there, as are a number of other American white nationalists. There are also close contacts between various neo-Nazi, skinhead and nationalist groups in Europe and their Russian counterparts. These contacts could be a very easy way for the Russians to make contact with and support radical elements of the far-right in places like the United States, Ukraine, the Baltic states and Germany.

There is also a distinct possibility that through their relationship with the FARC, the Russians could gain entree to open a dialogue with some of the more radical elements of the Latin American drug trafficking organizations, including the hyperviolent Mexican cartels. Even Central American drug trafficking groups like Los Kaibiles, who began life strongly anti-communist, might be willing to accept weapons and funding from "democratic" Russians. Considering that Los Kaibiles are now quite mercenary, they also just might be willing to undertake specific attacks if their price point is met. Many Russian organized criminal groups are closely linked to the Kremlin and are a tool Putin and company are already using. These groups could be used to act as an interface with organized criminal groups elsewhere.

In this new-old front, the Russian SVR's activities will need to be studied carefully. Militant arms caches and ordnance used in attacks will need to be carefully reviewed for potential links to Russia, and potential militant training camps will need to be watched. Doing so will require quite a bit of adjustment for the U.S. intelligence community, which has spent so much effort over the past seven years focusing on the jihadist threat.