

Controller of 27,000 nuclear weapons not certain

## Soviets give no assurance regarding arms

WASHINGTON - The Soviet Union has given the Bush administration no direct assurances about the security of its far-flung nuclear weapons arsenal since last week's failed coup, a senior Pentagon official said Tuesday.

Pete Williams, the chief Pentagon spokesman, said U.S. officials have not pressed the Soviets on the issue, which was raised repeatedly by Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and other military leaders prior to the attempt by Communist hard-liners to overthrow Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

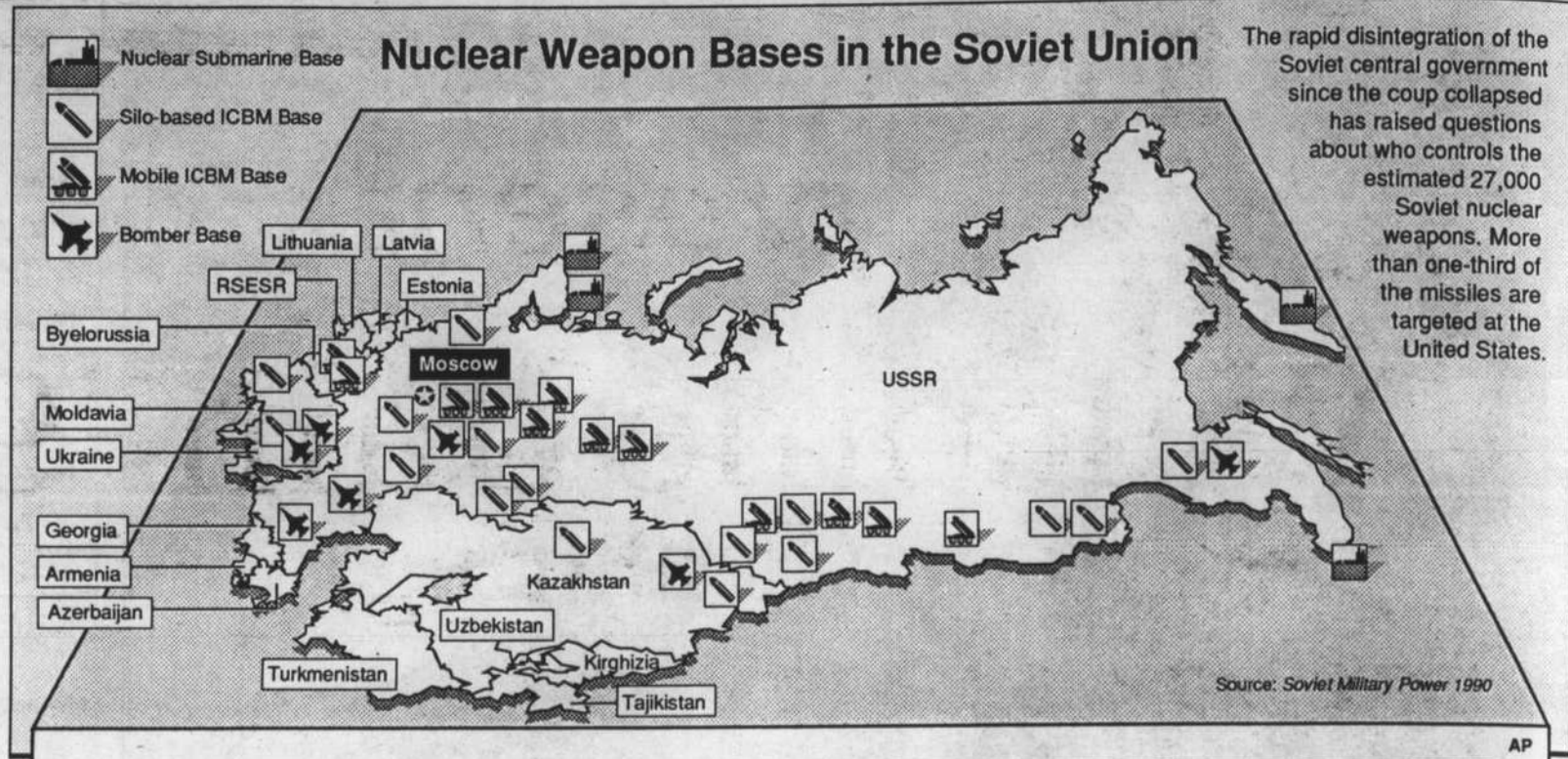
The rapid disintegration of the Soviet central government since the coup collapsed last Wednesday has raised questions about who controls the estimated 27,000 Soviet nuclear weapons, more than one-third of which are targeted at the United States.

Most Soviet nuclear weapons are based in the Russian republic. But a significant number, including ballistic missiles and bombs carried on aircraft, are in the Ukraine and other republics that are seeking to leave the union.

Williams said the administration is confident, apparently on the basis of intelligence information, that the normal Soviet chain of command for nuclear forces is intact, and that there is no increased risk of a Soviet nuclear strike.

Private U.S. analysts said Tuesday that the Soviets have taken numerous steps in recent months to limit the chance that political instability could lead to unauthorized use of the nuclear weapons.

Bruce Blair, a leading U.S. authority on Soviet nuclear weapons con-



trols, said in an interview that Soviet officials have been removing short-range nuclear weapons from storage depots in republics that have experienced ethnic or political unrest.

In testimony to the House Armed Services Committee on July 31, Blair said this and other moves have been under way at least since 1990.

"The central government seems to be busily shoring up the security of nuclear weapons and planning for contingencies that could otherwise loosen its grip on nuclear operations,"

Blair said in his testimony.

Soviet officials earlier this week disclosed that the plotters who tried to depose Gorbachev took from him a briefcase containing codes and communications equipment for launching Soviet nuclear weapons.

Williams said Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told him the Soviets had not contacted the Bush administration about the security of their nuclear weapons.

"It's not a subject we usually discuss" with the Soviets, Williams said.

Williams disclosed, however, that one week before the coup attempt, Powell received a letter dated Aug. 9 from Gen. Mikhail A. Moiseyev, then Powell's counterpart as chief of the Soviet General Staff, urging that nuclear weapons security be included in the nations' periodic military-to-military discussions.

Cheney raised the issue last October during a visit to the Soviet Union, Williams said, and was reassured by Dmitri Yazov, the defense minister who was ousted for his role in the

coup plot, that weapons security "was a matter of the very highest priority for them."

At Tuesday's meeting of the Supreme Soviet legislature, Russian republic lawmaker Anatoly Sobchak urged officials to work out nuclear control agreements with republics seeking independence. He specifically cited the Ukraine, which in its declaration of independence on Saturday claimed control of all military installations on its soil, without specifying the fate of nuclear weapons.

Coup, independent republics cause separation

## Gorbachev urges Soviet unity

MOSCOW - President Mikhail S. Gorbachev Tuesday made an appeal to the national legislature to preserve the cohesion of the Soviet Union, warning that "everything is collapsing." He threatened to resign if the union is not preserved.

As a seventh Soviet republic declared independence Tuesday and central authority in Moscow crumbled after last week's coup, Gorbachev said: "The U.S.S.R. should be maintained as a union of sovereign states."

He said he had spoken to Boris Yeltsin, the president of the Russian Federation, and that they had agreed on the need for maintaining some form of unity in the republics that comprise the Soviet Union.

"Our common point is that the U.S.S.R. should be maintained as a

union of sovereign states. Everyone is in favor of a unified defense, a unified armed forces. . .," he said.

Gorbachev, speaking forcefully and chopping the air with his hands, told lawmakers that the collapse of the Soviet Union "would threaten the lives and property of millions of people," and that he would "do everything possible to prevent our country from falling apart."

If some form of union cannot be preserved, he said, "I will resign. Nothing will be achieved if we cannot have a union."

Gorbachev spoke shortly after Moldavia became the seventh Soviet republic to declare independence. In the Moldavian capital of Kishinev, there was rejoicing after Parliament passed a declaration of independence.

Moldavia, which borders Romania, became the fifth republic since last week's coup to declare its independence.

"It's a happy day," said President Mircea Snegur after the vote. A crowd outside the Parliament building waved red-yellow-and-blue national flags.

The three Baltic republics — Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia — have been pushing for independence for almost three years and appear to be on the verge of attaining it. Lithuania formally declared itself independent in 1990, and Latvia and Estonia declared outright independence during the coup attempt last week.

The Ukraine declared independence on Saturday, and was followed a day later by Byelorussia. Georgia, in the Caucasus region, declared itself independent March 31.

## Croatia to call up all able-bodied men, no word on final effort to end fighting

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia - Croatia's president met with Yugoslav military leaders Tuesday in an apparent last-ditch effort to stop fighting in the republic from escalating into all-out war.

Croatian officials said they were ready to call up all able-bodied men for militia duty in the fighting with federal troops and Serbian insurgents.

In Belgium, meanwhile, the foreign ministers of the 12 nations in the European Community considered a proposal by France to make an effort to work out a cease-fire. At the same time, Germany and Italy urged the EC to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia if the fighting persists.

Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and his senior defense officials held talks on the Adriatic island of Brioni with the federal defense minister, Gen.

Veljko Kadijevic, and the army chief of staff, Gen. Blagoje Adzic, a Serbian hard-liner.

There were no immediate reports of any developments from the meeting.

Croatian Deputy Premier Mato Granic said the government would order a full-scale mobilization of healthy men for military service.

At least 256 people have died in fighting involving Croatian security forces, Serb guerrillas and federal soldiers since Croatia and Slovenia declared independence in tandem June 25.

Serbia's deputy premier, Budimir Kosutic, said in Belgrade that his republic would take "adequate measures" in response to a general callup in Croatia.

He didn't specify what he meant.

Serbia is Yugoslavia's largest republic and opposes independence for neighboring Croatia because of its large Serb minority. Ethnic Serbs dominate the Yugoslav army, and Croats contend the army is aiding Serb rebels in the fighting, a charge the federal military denies.

Foreign governments increasingly are accepting Croatian claims of an army bias.

Yugoslavia's eight-member collective presidency, nominal commander of the armed forces, met in Belgrade to discuss the fighting in Croatia.

The commission it appointed to enforce a now failed Aug. 7 truce warned Tuesday that the fighting was spreading toward the central state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which has a volatile ethnic mix of Muslims, Serbs and Croats.

## Texas man surrenders, admits nearly 100 heists

HOUSTON - A man who lost his oil industry job two years ago surrendered Tuesday, claiming to be the dapper "Gentleman Bandit" responsible for robbing nearly 100 people in two states.

Flanked by two attorneys, Lon Perry, 49, of Houston, waded through a group of reporters, walked up the steps of police headquarters and stood quietly at the front desk while he waited for detectives to take him away.

Perry surrendered because he had a guilty conscience over the recent arrest of another man, said Allen Isbell, one of Perry's attorneys. Michael Harvey of Cibolo was originally arrested and held for 11 days.

Isbell identified Perry as a long-time Houston resident who lost his oil industry-related job during the energy bust, became depressed because he could not get a job and turned to crime.

"We're going to have a lot of preliminaries to take care of," said Sgt. D.J. McWilliams. "The game plan is to take him to the robbery

office, make a formal confession and then we'll file charges. I won't get into any details of the case."

Perry appeared before a city magistrate, who set bail at \$20,000.

Isbell said Perry would agree to plead guilty to two aggravated robbery charges for a recommended 35-year prison sentence. The agreement would clear some 90 robberies from the books in 17 counties in Texas and Louisiana.

"It's going to take some time talking with robbery investigators," police spokesman Rick Hartley said. "Our intent is to clear as many of these cases as possible."

Victims, primarily businessmen who stayed at plush hotels in Texas and western Louisiana, had described the robber as soft-spoken and polite as he pulled a gun.

The bandit, who wore a suit, once called an ambulance for a victim who suffered a heart attack during the robbery, and called a few victims at home to see if they had recovered from the ordeal, authorities said.

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