

GRU INTELLIGENCE CENTRES

GRU intelligence centres recruit agents in foreign countries to prepare Russian military operations.

The GRU's intelligence centres do not only work against countries bordering Russia but also gather information on other European nations.

The GRU's intelligence centres recruit people with access to classified information - but also ordinary citizens - to have them observe sites of interest to the GRU or carry out other more mundane tasks.

Russian military intelligence, known as the GRU (*Glavnoye (Razvedyvatelnoye) Upravlenie Generalnogo Shtaba Vooruzhennykh Sil RF*), collects information for Russia's political and military leadership on countries and alliances of countries that Russia considers its adversaries or likely adversaries. One of the distinctive features of Russian military intelligence compared with its counterparts in other countries is that, in addition to military intelligence, it also gathers information on the target countries' and regions' economy, politics, technology and ecology. Different intelligence disciplines and working methods are used to gather intelligence.

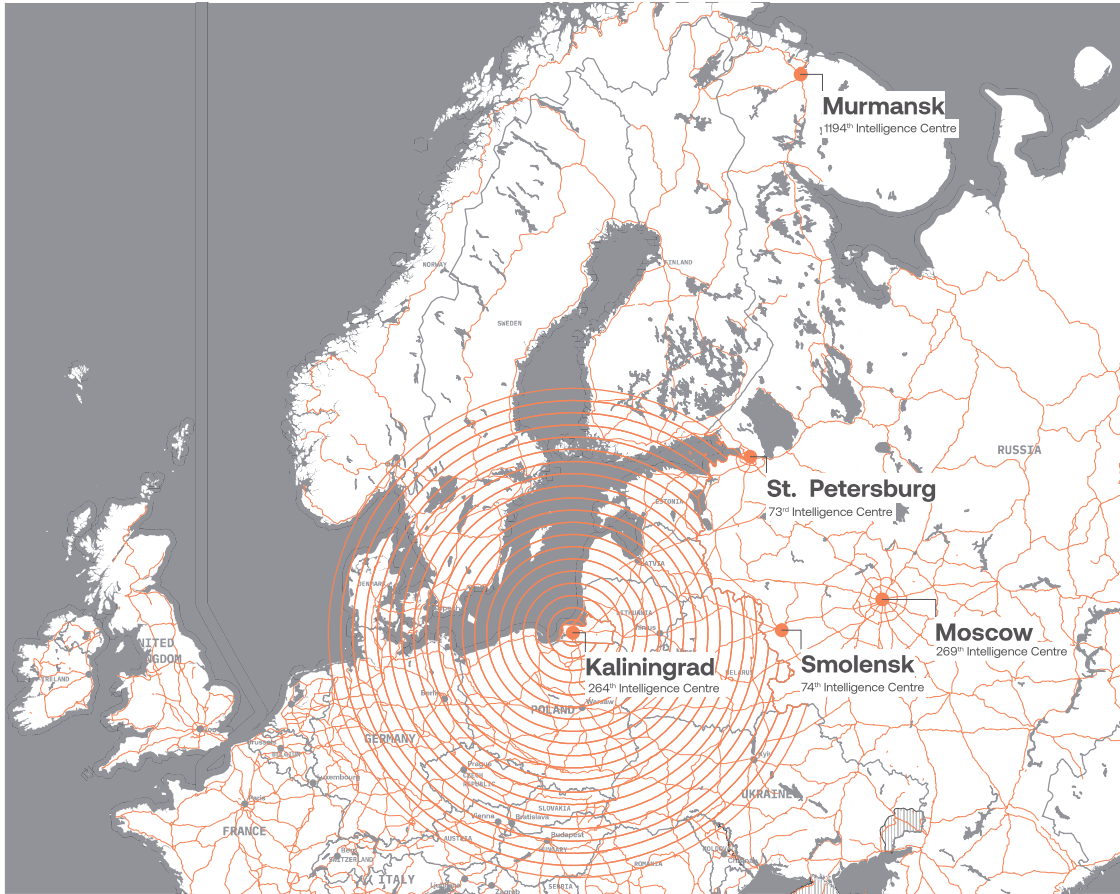
The GRU spies on countries Russia considers its adversaries.

Like other Russian special services, the GRU conducts intelligence operations against foreign countries both on the territory of the target country and on Russia's own soil (known as "intelligence from the territory"). In the target country, intelligence activities are mainly carried out by intelligence officers working in the Russian embassy (known as the "legal *rezidentura*") or otherwise undercover ("non-traditional cover").



Head of GRU's 15th directorate, Major General Dmitri Pronyagin.

Source: Aleksandr Ryzhman/
Komsomolskaya Pravda.Krasnodar



Five intelligence centres in Western Russia have been operating against Europe for decades:

- the 73rd Intelligence Centre in St Petersburg
- the 264th Intelligence Centre in Kaliningrad,
- the 74th Intelligence Centre in Smolensk,
- the 269th Intelligence Centre in Moscow
- the 1194th Intelligence Centre in Murmansk

GRU's area of responsibility is estimated to be 1,500 km from the Russian border; the presence of agents in more distant locations cannot be ruled out either.

Intelligence from the territory includes cyber and influence operations that have been extensively covered in Western media, as well as signals intelligence and other technical intelligence. Still, traditional human intelligence (HUMINT), or information gathering through human sources, has not disappeared from the GRU's toolbox.

The GRU's human intelligence (*agenturnaya razvedka*, "agent intelligence") is divided into two categories: strategic agent intelligence (*strategicheskaya agenturnaya razvedka*, SAR), which covers for example legal *rezidenturas* and illegals, and operational agent intelligence (*operativnaya agenturnaya razvedka*, OAR).

The main task of operational agent intelligence, curated by the 15th Directorate of the GRU, is to prepare and support Russian military operations abroad using operational-tactical intelligence gathered on the target country. Networks of agents gather the intelligence. With the help of the information provided by the agent networks, the GRU maps the status and developments within the armed forces in the target country, particularly developments related to NATO presence. Information is also collected on the target country's key institutions, critical infrastructure, political situation and public sentiment.

The GRU intelligence centres' area of responsibility west of Russia extends from Scandinavia and the Balkans to Western Europe. Since 2014, the intelligence centres have been operating particularly intensively against Ukraine.

The recruited agents are mostly male, regularly visit Russia and speak fluent Russian.

Broadly speaking, the intelligence centres' networks include two types of agents: those permanently residing abroad and those in Russia. The recruited foreign nationals are primarily men who regularly visit Russia, speak fluent Russian, have a positive or at least neutral attitude towards the current Russian regime and are capable of performing intelligence tasks. The identification of suitable candidates, the cultivation of potential agents and their recruitment, training and further handling is generally carried out inside Russia

to ensure the safety of the operational officers. During the meetings set up in Russia, the agent hands over the information gathered and receives new tasks and instructions, while the handler also collects information about the agent. If an agent no longer has the opportunity to visit Russia, the intelligence centre can arrange a meeting in a third country. To carry out their tasks, the GRU intelligence centres cooperate with other security authorities in Russia, including the FSB, the ministry of the interior, the border guard and the migration service.

Operational officers at the GRU intelligence centres assign tasks to agents depending on their capabilities and access to information. The tasks range from seemingly innocent activities, such as monitoring media and public sentiment in the target country or buying maps, dictionaries and other freely available material, to observing military sites or critical infrastructure and stealing classified information. The agent forwards gathered materials electronically or hands them over to the handler at a meeting in Russia. In the event of a war or similar threat, a communications agent (a permanent resident of Russia) with radio equipment may be dispatched from Russia to agents living abroad to ensure that information is quickly transmitted even if other channels are disrupted.

Since 2014, the intelligence centres have also been organising "agent-combat groups" deployed against Ukraine to carry out bombings and assassinations and prepare arms caches for activation when receiving a signal from Russia (for example, in the event of a major outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Ukraine).

In Ukraine, intelligence centres have organised bombings and murders and prepared arms caches.

Intelligence centres also recruit agents among residents of Russia. These agents receive special training so that they are ready to deploy to a target country in the event of, or in the run-up to, a conflict where they will carry out intelligence tasks (in particular observation) and also prepare to perform diversions or other special tasks. They can operate abroad in groups or as individual agents and are equipped,

How GRU intelligence centres recruit agents

1. Targeting

An intelligence officer identifies foreign residents that regularly visit Russia, would be able to collect information on the intelligence objects and would be motivated to work for Russian special services. Comprehensive information is collected about the potential recruits, which is in turn used to assess their potential motivation and suitability for intelligence work.

2. Cultivation

The basis of successful recruitment is a trusting relationship between the intelligence officer and the target, which may take years to develop. If necessary, intelligence centres set traps to “compromise” the target so they would feel indebted to the person who has “saved” them from a difficult situation. In this stage, the target is usually not yet aware they are communicating with an intelligence officer.

3. Recruitment

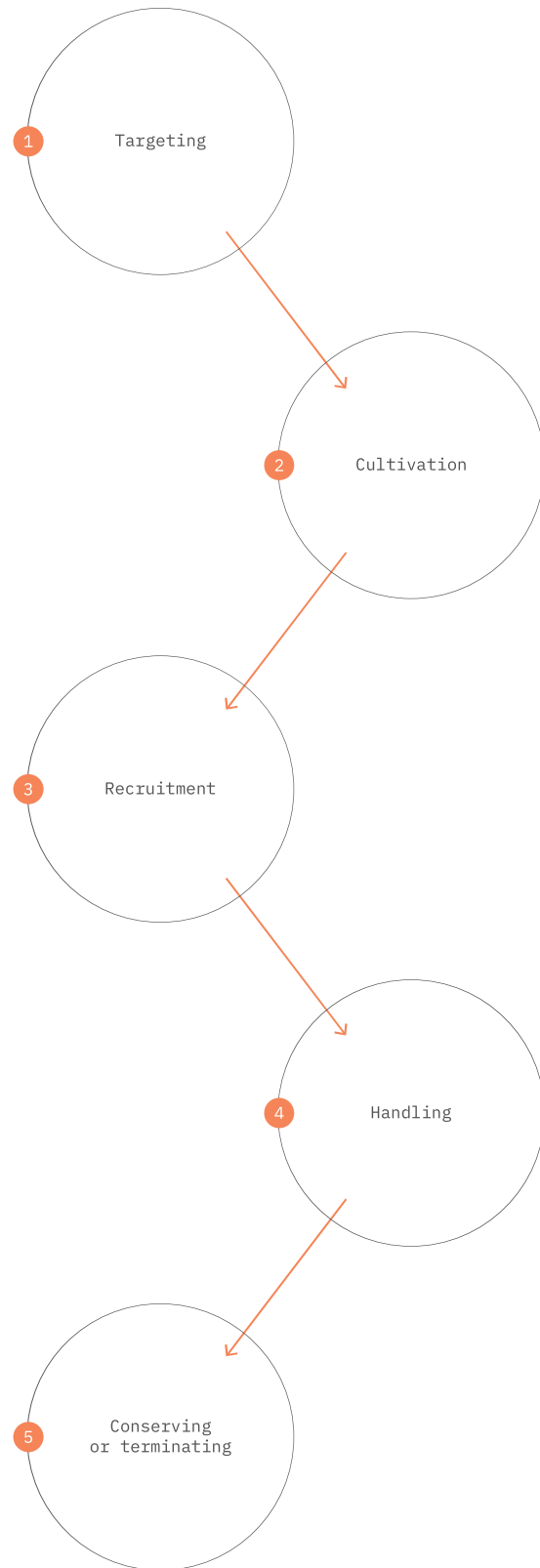
After the relationship with the target has been established, the intelligence officer proposes collaboration. Should the target agree, the agent relationship is generally fixed in writing, and the target becomes an agent for the GRU’s operational agent intelligence.

4. Handling

The agent receives training and instructions from the handler as to what and how to do, and also communication equipment and information regarding the next meeting. The agent forwards the collected information electronically and/or hands them over during a meeting with the handler in Russia.

5. Conserving or terminating

There may be various reasons for halting (conserving) or terminating the agent relationship: the agent may turn out to be incapable of gathering intelligence or lose access to the information of interest. The relationship with the agent may also be terminated due to the security situation or changes in Russia’s intelligence focus. The agent can not be certain they would be looked after in case of an emergency.





A poster photographed in Russia to celebrate 5 November – the anniversary of Russia's military intelligence service. Even though the GRU claims on the poster that they can see the invisible and hear the inaudible, their own operational security often lets them down.

Source: social media

among other things, with radio transceivers to communicate with their intelligence centre.

The intelligence centres in Kaliningrad and Murmansk also recruit agents from among seamen (known as a “ship agent”, *sudovoi agent*). Among other activities, ship agents carry out visual reconnaissance in port cities worldwide.

Agents generally receive negligible financial remuneration for their assignments or even perform them free of charge. Many operational officers at the intelligence centres are corrupt and keep some of the agents' pay for themselves.

Over the past decade, effective cooperation between intelligence services of NATO member states and partners has led to consistent identification and conviction of agents of GRU intelligence centres in countries bordering Russia.

In our assessment, despite the failures of the GRU, operational agent intelligence remains a persistent threat to the security of Russia's neighbouring countries. Undoubtedly, Russia's intelligence centres will learn from their mistakes, improve their *modus operandi* and continue to conduct operational agent intelligence, which is why we wish to draw the attention of our partner countries and people travelling in Russia to this threat.