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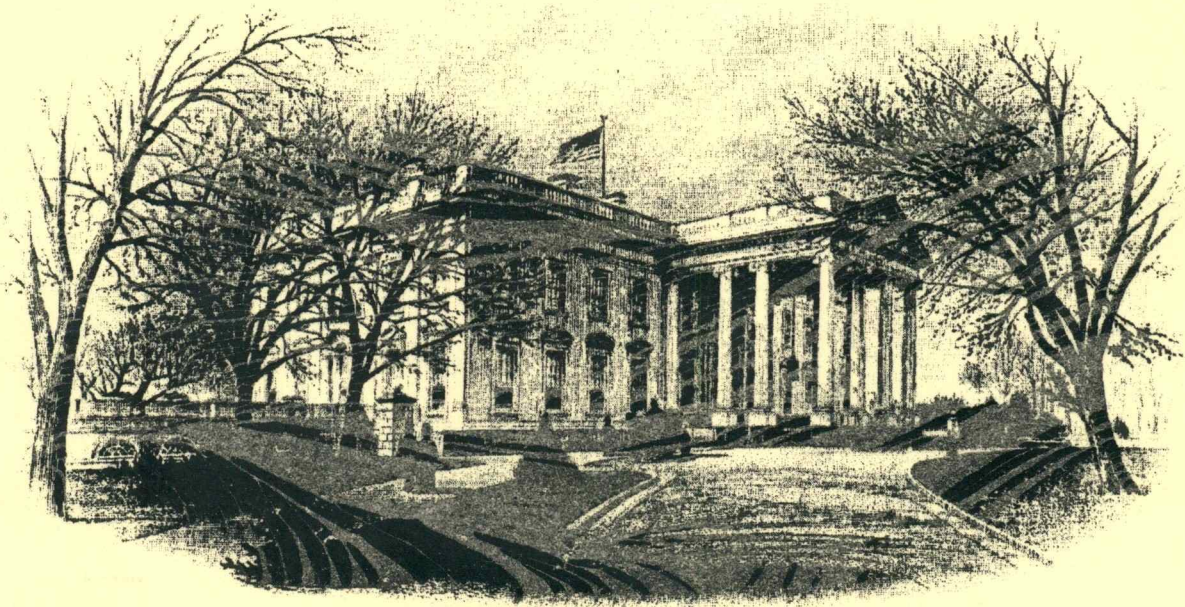
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GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT

MEDIA ARTICLES



OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1988

October 1988

White House Puts Stock in What Robert Gates Says About Soviets—and Maybe They Do, Too

By GERALD F. SEIB

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON — When Robert Gates talks, Mikhail Gorbachev listens. He doesn't always like what he hears, but he listens.

Mr. Gates is a longtime U.S. Sovietologist who now is President Bush's deputy national security adviser. A relatively low-profile official at home, Mr. Gates was amazed to discover on a May visit to the Kremlin that Mr. Gorbachev was thoroughly familiar with his speeches analyzing the enormous obstacles imperiling Gorbachev-era reforms.

And while critics at home chide Mr. Gates for being overly skeptical in gauging the chances that Mr. Gorbachev's reforms will succeed, he insists Kremlin leaders themselves actually share much of his analysis. "Without getting specific, when I was in Moscow I was told by senior Soviets that my appraisal of the problems they face was a pretty accurate one," says the silver-haired former deputy director of Central Intelligence.

The fact that the Soviets are tuned in to Mr. Gates underscores the important behind-the-scenes role he is assuming in the Bush administration—a role that is likely to grow as the administration heads toward a strategic-arms treaty and a superpower summit. Mr. Gates has spent much of his career dissecting twists and turns in the Soviet system, and now he is perhaps the administration's main Soviet analyst.

Within the White House, he is regarded as National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft's "alter ego" and recently was promoted to the highest internal staff rank. He often is one of a handful of top aides invited into the Oval Office for the informal sessions at which President Bush likes to make sensitive foreign-policy decisions.

"When we're in there, there are five or six of us, and Gates tends to be part of that group," says White House Chief of Staff John Sununu. Indeed, when five officials stepped into the president's office Tuesday afternoon to brief him on a coup attempt in Panama, Mr. Gates was among them.



Robert Gates

When Secretary of State James Baker met Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in Wyoming two weeks ago, Mr. Gates sat at Mr. Baker's side. Progress there propelled U.S.-Soviet relations to center stage: The superpowers agreed on a summit meeting, likely to be held around May, between Mr. Bush and Mr. Gorbachev. Both sides say there's a good chance by then they will finish an historic treaty to cut strategic arsenals in half.

As a result, there will be a new focus in coming months on the administration's system for making East-West policy decisions, a system in which the dapper, good-natured Mr. Gates is an important cog. Thus, a look at Mr. Gates helps illustrate the approach the Bush team will be taking—an approach that some Democrats recently have branded as either too timid or too hard-line.

"I prefer to think of myself as a realist in terms of what's going on inside the Soviet Union," Mr. Gates says. "But I think there are also some very important opportunities for the United States that we should be moving on, and I think we're doing that."

Mr. Gates, 46 years old, is a native Kansan who developed a deep interest in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in college. He joined the Central Intelligence Agency as an analyst in 1966, later spent five years on assignment to the National Security Council staff and eventually became deputy director of the CIA.

When CIA director William Casey became fatally ill in 1987, President Reagan nominated Mr. Gates to replace him. But the nomination was later withdrawn when it was imperiled by lingering congressional anger over the CIA's role in the Iran-Contra affair.

Soviet-Watcher From a Distance

Despite his long interest in the Soviet Union, Mr. Gates couldn't actually visit the country until this year, when he left the intelligence business and moved into his new role as Mr. Scowcroft's deputy. In this job, Mr. Gates filters all paper work churned out by the foreign-policy bureaucracy before it reaches Mr. Scowcroft. And he heads an obscure but important group in the administration called the Deputies Committee, a panel of top aides at the State Department, Pentagon, CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that debates important

national-security decisions.

Mr. Gates, a dedicated jogger who often rises before dawn to do his running, has adopted an open and genial style with other staffers that contrasts with the stealthy image normally associated with a former intelligence officer. And on Soviet affairs, Mr. Gates and Mr. Scowcroft seem to complement each other: While Mr. Scowcroft likes to discuss the complexities of arms-control issues, Mr. Gates prefers talking about the sweep of Soviet and Russian history and politics.

In essence, Mr. Gates says that while all top administration aides are in "harmony" in hoping Mr. Gorbachev's reforms succeed, history raises doubts about how deep or lasting changes in Moscow actually will be. In an April speech, for instance, Mr. Gates asserted that "for 70 years we repeatedly have seen a system in crisis proclaim reform and turn to the West for help, while the essential features of their system at the end of the day remain unchanged."

In particular, Mr. Gates says Mr. Gorbachev faces breathtaking problems in overcoming centuries of Russian reliance on the state as the source of all economic life. "I see the contrast between what has happened in the political arena in the Soviet Union and the economic problems, which seem to get only worse," Mr. Gates says in an interview. Because of the obstacles, he adds, "there already have been significant tactical retreats on the economic side. Significant elements of economic reform have essentially been put off indefinitely."

Minimal U.S. Influence

Yet through it all, Mr. Gates maintains, Soviet strategic modernization continues.

"If I have a difference, it's not really with people inside the administration but some people outside the administration who believe that, somehow, the United States can make a significant difference in terms of Gorbachev's success in carrying out these reforms," he says. "Whether reform succeeds or not depends almost entirely on internal decisions and structural changes in the Soviet Union." Mr. Gates says the U.S. is offering what limited help it can by fostering good superpower relations, which enhance Mr. Gorbachev's stature, and by proposing deep conventional-

ESSAY | William Safire

Reading Bush's Mind

Mustn't get overconfident. That Sasso fella will stop at nothing, and is pumping the rumors of me being a civil libertine. And I hear Lloyd Bentsen has something more respectable up his sleeve.

Still, I have to think ahead. Who would I appoint to what? I sent out 80,000 personal notes as Vice President, and now they'll all want jobs.

Jim Baker wants the State Department and Nick Brady wants to stay on at Treasury; they're Bush people so that's fine, though I'd sure like to spring a surprise.

Defense will be a tough call. John Tower would be good at holding off the budget-cutters in Congress, but with Baker at State that would start "Texas mafia" talk. (Reminds me: Peter O'Donnell for the Republican National Committee, because Lee Atwater wants to stay on the outside.) Jack Kemp to the Pentagon, maybe — he'd be switchable to Treasury in a few years when I move Nick to the Fed.

Brent Scowcroft is a man I trust on national security matters, but it would be a mistake to have a general at Defense, and I don't want any "second tours" at the N.S.C. Put him at C.I.A.? That's a thought, backed up with Don Gregg and Bob Kimmitt. But what about Bob Gates, who can still taste my old job at Langley? Gates

and I see eye to eye on Gorbachev, but the Congress was down on him for Director of Central Intelligence.

Bill Webster may be good for the Supreme Court — he's been a judge. I'll keep Dick Thornburgh as Attorney General until the first Court vacancy, then move him up and make Dick Wiley A.G. For legal counsel near me, I'll appoint Boyden Gray.

That brings me close to home, to White House Chief of Staff. Craig Fuller may make it in the second term, but I need a heavyweight there right away. John Sununu would be the first Governor of New Hampshire to head the White House staff since Sherman Adams. If he prefers Commerce, I'll find something else for Walter Curley.

But that doesn't solve Chief of Staff. Dick Darman? Baker would like him there, but Dick wants O.M.B. and would be good with those budget details. Bob Teeter? Jim Pinkerton? They're more Domestic Council types. Bob Zoellick is solid and I want him in close, but the Chief should be an Old Pro.

Like Jim Schlesinger or — come to

think of it, Brent Scowcroft would be good there, with Gates moving up at C.I.A. or Ambassador Jim Lilley moving back in.

This is fun. Henry Catto would be good to put a sense of pride back in U.S.I.A. But what about Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs? Colin Powell is there now; he's black and military, and I want him in the field on the fast track to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

Rick Burt has been in training for the N.S.C. job all his life and I don't hold ambition against him. I'll put Dennis Ross in as Rick's Deputy to watch him, and to cool off the Israelis when they have conniptions over John Tower.

I can keep my promise about a Hispanic in the Cabinet with Lauro Cavazos continuing as Education Secretary. I also want a conservative black like Thad Garrett or Bill Allen. If Alan Keyes doesn't win the Senate race in Maryland, he'd make a fine Ambassador to the U.N.

Women. No more tokenism. Rep. Lynn Martin can have just about any Cabinet slot she wants, even Veterans

Affairs, and I have another winner — a real manager — in Ann McLaughlin, the Labor Secretary; maybe I'll move Ann to head O.M.B. or bring her in as White House Chief of Staff. Debbie Steelman is an

Standing
under the
plum tree.

other woman who could handle a Cabinet post on the domestic side, and Margaret Tutweiler should move out of Jim Baker's shadow.

Anne Armstrong's kids are grown, maybe she's ready for Washington full time. Speechwriter Peggy Noonan wants to take care of her baby and finish her book, which means we may have to provide on-site day care at the White House. For Press Secretary, Pete Teeley wants back in, but the job belongs to Sheila Tate.

I wish I knew a terrific female economist. I'll tell Mike Boskin and Larry Lindsay to pick a talented woman as the third member of the Council, who can move up and take the heat in case of a recession.

Gee, I haven't even begun to think of ambassadorial appointments. Bob Mosbacher to the Court of St. James's, Jocelyn Strauss to Barbados, Jeane Kirkpatrick to Paris. And — heh — Al Haig to Bangladesh.

Not a word about this to a soul; mustn't get overconfident. If anybody asks, I'm not even thinking about a cast of characters in my show. That would be bad luck. □

Crisis-Management Committee Slated By White House After Panama Review

By GERALD F. SEIB

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—The White House has decided, as a result of an internal review of its activities during the failed coup in Panama, that it automatically will convene a designated crisis-management committee to coordinate its handling of future emergencies.

But despite the collapse of the coup, the White House has concluded that the national-security decision-making system otherwise needs only "fine-tuning," a senior administration official said.

Some other minor changes will be made to improve communications among second-level officials, which administration aides acknowledge were dangerously faulty at some points during the Panama crisis. "Underneath the principal [officials], the lateral communication wasn't too great," said the senior administration official.

For instance, the White House has decided that in future emergencies, officials from such agencies as the State Department, the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency automatically will be summoned to the White House Situation Room to coordinate the flow of information from overseas cables and telephone calls to top Bush aides. White House aides are concerned that different agencies had different versions of information at some points in the Panama crisis.

And the White House has decided that its sophisticated capabilities to conduct teleconferences bringing together numerous officials weren't used enough in the crisis.

The changes called for in the review, conducted by National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, amount to minor tinkering with the Bush administration's decision-making system. Senior aides consider them "procedural and organizational changes," one said. Critics of the administration are bound to argue that the changes don't go far enough to correct flaws in government coordination or to ensure better contingency planning.

Still, they represent a move toward a more structured decision-making system than President Bush has preferred so far. Mr. Bush is more comfortable making decisions in informal gatherings with a handful of his top advisers, rather than in structured meetings with officials from many agencies.

The senior official said the changes indicate that the president needs a "slightly" more structured decision-making system. More importantly, he said, "what we need to do is ensure a little more formalized backup just under him."

Mr. Bush will designate the so-called Deputies Committee, an already existing panel consisting of the second-highest officials at the State Department, Pentagon, Central Intelligence Agency and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to serve as his crisis-management team. The committee's chairman is Robert Gates, who is Mr. Scowcroft's deputy on the National Security Council staff.

The Deputies Committee already meets regularly to handle routine national-security business, and officials previously had considered it the group that would coordinate the administration's handling of emergencies. But the panel never was convened during the Panama crisis.

As a result of the review of that affair, officials said, Mr. Bush is likely to amend the secret, formal directive with which he set up his decision-making system to provide that the Deputies Committee automatically will be called to the White House whenever he declares that a crisis exists. The president also is likely to specify precisely which officials will sit on the committee to handle a crisis.

The White House has concluded that Mr. Bush and other top administration officials made decisions based on correct information during the Panama crisis, largely because of direct phone links between the Oval Office and U.S. military commanders and diplomats in Panama.

But officials say the review found that at lower levels, the bureaucracy had dangerously skewed or incomplete information. At one point, for instance, officials in the State Department and the CIA thought the Panamanian officers leading the coup were offering to turn Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega over to the U.S. But President Bush and White House aides thought—correctly, the administration now insists—that the rebels refused to turn the leader over.

Administration aides also implied the White House has begun considering new plans for destabilizing Mr. Noriega. "One of the things we'll be looking at are ways to increase his anxiety," a senior official said. The U.S., he added, may "do things to indicate that he is vulnerable and that he needs to keep looking over his shoulder."

Bush to Tell Congress of Covert Plans

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27 — President Bush has agreed to give Congress notice within days of nearly all covert operations, but has insisted on retaining the right to withhold such information in some instances, Administration officials and legislators said on Thursday night.

After months of negotiations between the White House and Senate, Mr. Bush agreed for the first time to define what is meant by the existing law requiring the President to provide "timely notice" of operations.

The issue arose as a result of the Iran-contra affair, and lawmakers had been pressing for legislation that would have subjected all covert operations to reporting within 48 hours.

Lawmakers said they agreed to drop this insistence in exchange for a letter, to be sent to the Senate shortly by Mr. Bush, that would say the President would disclose most operations within "a few days" and would hold back for longer periods only when he asserts his constitutional prerogatives to manage foreign policy.

Even as one dispute about intelligence policy was settled, another was joined. The Senate panel today sent forward a 1990 spending bill that would set up an independent inspector general at the Central Intelligence Agency.

The C.I.A. has vigorously fought the measure, and William H. Webster, the Director of Central Intelligence, is said to be prepared to recommend that Mr. Bush veto the bill if it passes in its current form.

The issue of notification of Congress on covert operations arose after it became clear in late 1986 that President Reagan failed to tell Congress for nearly 10 months about the covert sales of arms to Iran.

In 1988, the Senate passed a bill sponsored by Senator William S. Cohen, the Maine Republican, that required the President to disclose all covert operations to Congress within 48 hours. The measure failed to pass the House and Senator Cohen has spent much of the last year trying to work out a compromise with the White House.

At one point, Senator Cohen and Brent Scowcroft, the national security adviser, had hammered out a letter for Mr. Bush to sign that agreed in principle that Congress should be notified of all operations.

This deal fell apart when White House lawyers objected to any infringement on Presidential authority. Senator Cohen then put a provision in the 1990 spending bill that would block the C.I.A. from using its contingency fund — the main source of money for covert operations — for underwriting activities kept from Congress.

In an interview tonight, Senator Cohen, the vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee, said he had dropped that provision in exchange for the letter from Mr. Bush. He asserted that the practical effect of Mr. Bush's agreement would be to force the President to notify Congress of all covert operations.

Number of Other Rules

The lawmakers, he said, "would take a dim view" of any insistence on his constitutional authority to withhold such information.

The intelligence-spending measure includes a number of other rules for covert operations prompted by the Iran-contra affair. Those include the requirement that all operations be authorized by a written order, or finding, signed by the President. It also says that no finding can be written to cover activities that have already taken place, as was done by the Reagan Administration.

The Washington Post

The New York Times

The Washington Times

The Wall Street Journal

The Christian Science Monitor

New York Daily News

USA Today

The Chicago Tribune

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