

**EPISODE 504**

**[00:00:02] AH:** Just to start, Kevin, I wondered if you could just tell us a little bit more about your career, some of the things that you've been up to? So just in a nutshell.

**[00:00:12] SR:** Well, I started right out of my undergraduate in the intelligence community. I started as a Russian translator working for the FBI. Actually, I remember FBI recruiters came into our Russian language classes in school. This was still during the Cold War. And they persuaded me to apply. So I started off as a Russian translator and moved from that to being an analyst, where I then worked for most of the past 30 years. Looking specifically at foreign intelligence activities, foreign intelligence services. Studying them. How they operate? How they operate against the United States in particular. I began with the FBI in the 1990s, and in the early 2000s I moved to the Department of Defense where I've been since then.

**[00:00:59] AH:** What year was it that you joined the FBI?

**[00:01:04] SR:** I joined the FBI in 1990. And I joined, initially I was at university in Utah and the FBI came to our classes saying, "We need Russian linguists," because there was still a need for that. And it wasn't long after I started working that Russian linguists were not as needed.

**[00:01:26] AH:** Bad timing, huh?

**[00:01:29] SR:** But still got to work in counterintelligence, which has been a good time.

**[00:01:34] AH:** And is it Utah that you're from? Is that where you were born and raised?

**[00:01:38] SR:** I was born and raised in Pennsylvania. And I lived in Utah. I went to school there. I went to secondary school and to university in Utah, at Brigham Young University.

**[00:01:49] AH:** How did you stumble into Russian?

**[00:01:54] SR:** I started as a chemistry major right out of high school, and Russian was just the language that I took. My university had a language requirement for all undergraduates. And I

chose Russian then because I thought it was interesting. It was more interesting then. Everyone else took Spanish. So I took Russian.

I left college for a couple of years and came back. I went to the army, to the Army National Guard, and I was sent to the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California where I studied Russian full-time for about two years. And then after that, after a couple years of being away, I went back to university and changed my major to Russian, because I had at that point taken a number of years and it made sense to continue with that. So Russian was just what I studied the most. And it became actually more interesting to me than chemistry as time went on.

**[00:02:59] AH:** Why did you make the shift from the FBI over to the Department of Defense? Was it for career purposes? Was it just a change? Was it better promotion prospects?

**[00:03:11] SR:** It was career purposes. And at the time, analysts in the FBI had a more restricted long-term career opportunity. That has since become much better after I left. But I've moved to the Department of Defense partially for longer term career opportunities, but also because the Department of Defense initially sent me overseas to an assignment in the UK where I worked for about six years. And that was an opportunity I was looking forward to as well. So both for career opportunities and for the chance to live and work in the UK.

**[00:03:49] AH:** So one of the things that I think, tell us a little bit more about that, about working under Bob Hansen.

**[00:03:57] SR:** It was interesting working for Bob Hanssen. He was a very different type of person. He didn't fit the mold of an FBI special agent very well. He was a computer hacker. He was actually very proficient with computers. This was early on. So this was in the early 90s when there really wasn't much of an Internet. But he was very capable with programming Unix systems. And he did that on his own. And he did it sometimes for the FBI too, even though they didn't always want him to.

So I was in England when his arrest was announced. So I wasn't in the United States. But I just saw his picture on the news. And I thought, "Why? Why Bob Hanssen on the news?" Then they announced the reason, and I was just floored. I mean, I had worked for him nine years previous

to that. And it was shocking at the time. But as time went on, as more came out about that case, it seemed more natural because he did have some unusual characteristic traits. And his ability to compartment his activities was fortunately unlike almost anyone else. That is a characteristic that most people probably don't want to develop, but he was able to compartment very separate pieces of his world. And I only saw a couple of those obviously. I didn't see all of them, because those things don't come out when you're at work. But there were certain parts of his world that were very different than the rest of the FBI special agents around.

**[00:05:48] AH:** Are there any particular memories or vignettes that come to mind when someone mentions the words Bob Hanssen to you?

**[00:05:57] SR:** Well, he was actually pretty nice to me. He actually treated me okay. In about 1992 time frame, when dial-up modems were still the access to the Internet, he was trying to kind of teach me to program Unix and to be a hacker like him. And he brought me a nice modem a 14.4k modem, which was much nicer than what I had. I had the cheapest that existed at the time. And he said, "I went and bought a nicer one. So here, you can have this one."

And I had no idea that the money he used to buy that nicer modem, which at the time was probably several hundred dollars, may have actually come from a Soviet handler. I would have had no reason to think that. But he just gave me a nicer modem than I had. And I thought he – With the intention just to kind of help me to improve my skills. But that's what I think of. When I saw him arrested, it was quite shocking.

**[00:07:06] AH:** So you actually were working with him sometimes on a daily basis. It wasn't just I worked in his unit and I was one of 200 people. And he may or may not have remembered my name. He was leaning over your shoulder instructing you and how to do certain parts of your job?

**[00:07:26] SR:** He was my direct supervisor. So, yes, I saw him on a daily basis. And the unit didn't have 200 people. It had maybe 15. And so, yes, I worked with Bob. With Frank Figliuzzi as well was in the same unit. So he was one of the special agents in that unit, the supervisor special agents, and I was an analyst in that unit. And so I worked on a regular basis with him, yes.

**[00:07:48] AH:** So for people that aren't part of the FBI world, just help them understand that relationship between the analyst and the special agent. So for the FBI as an intelligence analyst, its counterintelligence we're talking about.

**[00:08:06] SR:** Yes, that's correct. So basically making the links that are needed to support investigations. FBI is a primarily investigative organization. So it looks for leads to follow. And the analyst's job is to help to identify those leads based upon what's been collected and what's been already put together previously. The analyst's job in the FBI has changed a lot since I was there. And I left in 1998. So many years ago. And it is much more side by side with the agents today than it was then. There are many more analysts in the field today than there were when I was an analyst. Most analysts in the FBI then were in headquarters, which where I was.

And so that relationship has probably become much closer than it was when I was there. And that's one of the reasons that I probably left, because I was looking for a little more direct interaction. And the analysts had a little less than that at the time.

**[00:09:16] AH:** And, I mean, one of the questions that immediately comes to mind when I hear of people that worked with Bob Hanssen, did you ever reach out after all of this went down? Have you ever been tempted to write him a letter, or written him a letter even if it's to excoriate him, or berate him, or try to work out what happened? Or has it just never crossed your mind?

**[00:09:42] SR:** It hasn't crossed my mind really. No. He doesn't need me to help him suffer. I mean, he's got plenty of reason to beat himself up now. So I have not ever tried to reach out to him. He's been in federal penitentiary since – I mean, for a long time now, for 20 years now. In fact, this year, it's 20 years for his arrest. And it wouldn't have been any good for him or me to reach out to him.

**[00:10:13] AH:** To move on to the rest of your career, like tell us the sorts of things that you were doing when you were in this unit for Robert Hansen.

**[00:10:23] SR:** That unit was called the National Security Threat List Unit. It was created after the disillusion of the Soviet Union and after the Cold War was over. So I moved there after being

a Russian linguist full-time. And it was looking at how to apply counterintelligence resources in a non-Cold War environment. So looking at some non-traditional types of things that the FBI hadn't always been involved in, sort of non-traditional types of cases. So that was the types of things that I was working with Bob on.

**[00:11:02] AH:** A lot of people will know Robert Hanssen has been the fox who was inside the hen house and all those types of metaphors. Like was this focused on Russian counterintelligence operations? Or was it just a variety of different countries and regions?

**[00:11:24] SR:** It was a variety. And in fact, most of it was not Russian. He had worked Russian issues earlier in his career. But while I was working with him, it was mostly non-Russian.

**[00:11:35] AH:** Tell us a little bit more about after you leave that unit. So the rest of your time in the FBI before you make the shift over to the DoD, tell us some of the other things that you were up to.

**[00:11:50] SR:** In 1994, just after Aldrich Ames was arrested, the US government created something called the National Counterintelligence Center, which was a interagency center that coordinated counterintelligence activities across the whole federal government. And I was detailed there as an analyst for several years. And there I did kind of national level counterintelligence analysis. Looking at broader issues. Often involving those same post-Cold War concerns that I was looking at the FBI but just at an interagency national level. Actually was the primary draft on something called the First Annual Report to Congress on economic collection and industrial espionage, which has since morphed over the years. But I was the primary drafter for that first one in 1995, which was a congressionally mandated study on economic related intelligence activities.

**[00:13:02] AH:** That's something that we see increasingly in the news, industrial espionage, economic espionage. Tell us about what it was like back then and some of the things that you were up to.

**[00:13:13] SR:** Well, when the Soviet Union dissolved, the concept of economic espionage became much more prominent. There were some very famous quotes. For example, I'm sure,

you've heard there was a French official who at one point in the early 90s said, "In politics, we are allies. But in economics, we are adversaries." And those sorts of comments were gaining a lot of traction. There was a book published in early 1990s called *Friendly Spies* that looked at our allies and the activities that they conducted against us in the economic realm particularly. That was immediate post-Soviet era where a lot of counterintelligence was going. It changed after that, because other adversaries either rose to more prominence. Or more recently, traditional adversaries have risen back to prominence again.

But in the early to mid-1990s, the activities against economic collection and industrial espionage were high priorities to the point that, and I think was 1995 or 1996, the US congress passed the Economic Espionage Statute, which was new at the time, to more fully address in a legal sense the concerns of economic collection.

**[00:14:49] AH:** Tell us a little bit more about that period when you make the shift over to the DoD. Tell us the extent to which it was a continuation of what you've done before and to what extent you were doing something completely different than you.

**[00:15:04] SR:** Wherever you work, you have a customer set for your analysis, a group of decision makers who are the main customers of your analysis. And when you move from one agency to another, that customer set becomes completely different. And the requirements of that customer set become different. So the analysis that I was doing for the FBI was looking specifically at FBI interests, at investigative interests. When I moved to the Department of Defense, I was looking at the DoD interests and threats to the Department of Defense at how foreign intelligence services were operating against the DoD interest particularly in Europe where I was. So, yes, there were some differences based upon the portfolios of the agencies where I was working. But there were some commonalities as well because that common concept of looking at the threats that are posed by foreign intelligence services.

**[00:16:13] AH:** To what extent is that a different skill set to be an effective analyst for the DoD and one for the FBI? So I guess the question is, is it the same set of tools? You have to kind of re-skill somewhat? Help us understand that.

**[00:16:29] SR:** The high-level skills are pretty much exactly the same. It is critical thinking. It is clear articulation of well-founded conclusions that as analysts do anywhere. The differences are the specific product types and the delivery methods that each agency has. Each agency has a different way of packaging the material that goes to a decision maker. Any analyst needs to learn that specific expectation for packaging that their decision makers prefer. And you may even go in the same agency from one decision maker and replaced by another one. And that new person likes things delivered differently than the previous. So it's not just changing from one agency to another, although that is a large change. It can even be from one individual leader to another. So yes, there are differences, but to a great extent those differences are in the format, not the skills overall.

**[00:17:46] AH:** So you move over to the DoD. Tell us about some of the things that you're up to.

**[00:17:51] SR:** I started in DoD in early 2000's in the UK, the US military facility in the UK. And I did that for about six years. And, actually, I loved living in the UK. My children remember it very well. My wife loves it. My youngest child was born there. So it was a very enjoyable time.

I came back to the United States to an agency that no longer exists. It was then called the Counterintelligence Field Activity, which was a DoD entity that coordinated counterintelligence activities across the department. I worked there also as an analyst for several years until that agency was basically dissolved and subsumed under the Defense Intelligence Agency, which is where I've been since then.

And in DIA, I've done a number of things. Worked from the tactical, to the operational, to the strategic levels, deployments to various places, to Iraq and to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. But then also more strategic level policy types of jobs at the Pentagon. And so I've had some a varied career, but I think I've enjoyed it. And everything's kind of built on each other for the past three years or so. I've been trying to take those things I've learned over the years and to make them available to a group of graduate students at the National Intelligence University to try to kind of bring along the next generation. And that has also been one of my favorite things that I've done in my career is to teach courses and to do research that has enhanced those courses. That's kind of where I've come over the years.

**[00:19:56] AH:** Just really briefly, could you just break down the difference between tactical intelligence, operational and strategic?

**[00:20:04] SR:** It is, as I mentioned earlier, dependent upon the decision maker that you are supporting. At the tactical level, the decision maker is a low-level military official usually, a military officer, whose job is – That spans a small geographic area. Maybe on the battlefield, for example, maybe just a few hundred meters or a mile or so. A tactical level decision maker looks directly in front of him or her and is making decisions to both protect forces and to execute the mission in that small area.

At the operational level, it's bigger. It may be an entire country or an entire type of area, like counterintelligence, or counterterrorism, looking for specific targets to execute. At the strategic level, it's more at the national level. How do we at a national level make decisions to protect our country and to execute our policies in a way that keeps us safe and that keeps us strong? So basically, a very broad sense the difference between them. The tactical level, I was deployed to Iraq where I was working with kind of those decision makers kind of on the ground at their operational level. And when I was in the European theater, I was working with some specific operational entities. And when at the national level, I worked on kind of DoD level policy or in organizations. I was on a team that looked at DoD intelligence analysis policy. How does it work? How effective is it across the entire department? So that's, I guess, a very quick explanation of the difference of the levels.

**[00:22:13] AH:** And that same spirit of breaking it down, again, just super briefly, what's the National Intelligence University?

**[00:22:23] SR:** The National Intelligence University is the Intelligence Community's grad and university. There're both graduate courses. And most of the students there are graduate students. There's also a small bachelor's degree program, which is a bachelor's degree completion program. In other words, students come in who have been working toward their bachelor's degree for a number of years. They gain credits up to a certain threshold and they bring those credits with them and they finish their final year of a bachelor's degree at the National Intelligence University.

For the graduate program, we have two degrees. One's called the Masters of Science of Strategic Intelligence. The other is called the Masters of Science in Technology Intelligence, and they are for US government professionals who are interested in furthering their career with a master's degree. And so they focus on strategic level intelligence, questions. How does US intelligence support policy making? What are the major areas of emphasis, both the geographic and the functional areas of emphasis for the US intelligence community?

And so we teach students so that they can go back into their agencies and be more equipped to work at the strategic level. So that's what NIU. It is a great place for a government professional to get a graduate degree. It is actually no cost to the student. But there are certain requirements to becoming a student there. It's in a secure environment, for example. So they need to be able to have access to a secure environment, those sorts of things.

**[00:24:18] AH:** And it's only for people that are in the intelligence community?

**[00:24:22] SR:** For US government, and including sometimes some students outside the intelligence community specifically.

**[00:24:28] AH:** Tell us a little bit more about what you've been up to these past few years, because I know you've been pursuing a particular area of research that really interests you. Could you just tell us how you became interested in it and tell us what it is?

**[00:24:43] SR:** Well, that area that you're referring to is intelligence defectors. That is a topic that I've been looking at for the past five years or so, or even more than that. It began even more than that, but focused heavily on that for the past five years or so. And how I got into that really is through that counterintelligence analytic career that I've been in. As I've been in that, I've seen that the intelligence that comes from counterintelligence sources is often folded directly back into the counterintelligence world, catching spies, or monitoring, or identifying foreign intelligence activities around the world that target us. And I've had the thought that that information can be used for broader purposes as a window into the strategic priorities. We talked about strategic, those strategic priorities of a foreign power. Asking questions like where does the government place its intelligence resources? It's finite intelligence resources. It has to choose based upon its priorities where it's going to place those. What types of accesses does

that government try to obtain through human sources, or through technical sources, whatever means that government is using? And what drives the intelligence collection of that foreign country?

And by looking at that, that gives us an indicator of the overall national security priorities and the threat perceptions of that foreign government. So looking at what's on the ground and interpreting back from that, the priorities that are behind those activities, it began kind of with my counterintelligence background because I saw that information on a day-to-day basis. But I had an opportunity about 10 years ago to be what's called a Director of National Intelligence Exceptional Analyst Research Fellow. So a year-long fellowship where I got to do nothing but research, which is a luxurious opportunity to have. But it gave me a full year to concentrate on that theory of counterintelligence-derived information being used for strategic intelligence purposes.

Intelligence officer defectors were some of the sources that I looked at for that study. Along with others, I did an unclassified study looking at Soviet era intelligence collection from the early post-World War II time. I've chose that because it could be done unclassified. And many declassified sources are available from that time frame. So I looked at that Soviet intelligence collection across the board, including defectors.

Then in about 2014, I began a PhD program at King's College London. And I transitioned that research that I had already done and I focused it specifically on defectors, particularly Soviet defectors from intelligence and state security services, and use that same concept. What did they tell us about the priorities of the Soviet system at the time?

So it's kind of the thought process that led to my research. I'm continuing with that research today. We'll talk more about that as we go along. But then led to the book that I published last year called *Soviet Defectors*. And it uses that methodology, that concept of gaining the insights that defectors brought with them when they left the Soviet Union to derive those national level priorities. So that's in a nutshell where that all came from.

**[00:28:49] AH:** When we're talking about defectors, we're talking about someone who's with one organization or nation and who then moves over to a rival organization or nation? Is that correct?

**[00:29:03] SR:** That's correct. And when I talk about defectors, I mean those who actually physically moved, or not those who stayed in place but work for someone else. So not spies, for example. But I'm looking at those who actually left their home organization. Defectors can affect any organization. They can affect political parties. They can affect companies. I focused specifically on those who left the Soviet intelligence for state security service and offered themselves to what was, over various times, a rival government to the Soviet government. That was a particularly prevalent act for people to do during the Cold War. It began certainly before the Cold War, and there were numerous intelligence and state security officers from the Soviet Union who defected before the Cold War and during the war, during World War II itself. But they were particularly prominent during the Cold War. And there were defectors that went both directions. There were defectors from the Western Alliance that went to the Eastern Bloc. And defectors from the Eastern Bloc that went to the west on. Both sides of the Cold War rivalry experienced that problem.

I did a study not long ago looking at the first 20 years of the Cold War after World War II. What was the overall count? And an exact account is not possible because there will always be records that are still classified and that are not accessible, but a rough count. And roughly there were about four times as many intelligence-related defectors that went westward out of the Soviet Bloc that went eastward into the Soviet Bloc. But both sides experienced it. And those who left the Soviet Bloc certainly weren't exclusively intelligence officers. There were many types of people who defected from the Soviet era, Soviet Bloc. Dancers, and sportsmen, and journalists, and government officials. And then among them also, intelligence officers, which really were a minority of the total population.

I looked at those intelligence officers specifically because they had special access to information. And by looking at them and analyzing the information they brought with them, it gave that kind of insider insight into the national security thinking behind what they were tasked with doing.

**[00:31:40] AH:** One of the first questions that comes to mind that I was just thinking of was are most of those defectors pushed or pulled? Give us a sense of some of the motivations there. Have you analyzed that? And if you have, what did you come up with?

**[00:31:59] SR:** I have looked at motivations. And motivations – I mean, I didn't do a psychological analysis of defectors. I am not qualified to do that. But motivations, there is not a single unified motivation for all defectors. You asked, are they pushed or are they pulled? And it is a mix of both even within individuals. There will be individuals who are frustrated with their job, or with their boss, or with their wife, or with various personal reasons why people do defect. But those same personal reasons also impact people who become spies and who are recruited to stay in place. And becoming a defector goes a step beyond that. It's more dangerous. It's more risky to be a defector. And it's more conclusive to be a defector.

So to be a defector, it takes more than just disgruntlement with your life. You need to also see that there is something else somewhere else that is going to be better. You see that someone will accept you better than how you are accepted in your home organization. So for most defectors, it's a mix of push and pull. There are some who were very dissatisfied with the Stalinist system, for example, who, some because they were Leninists and they saw the purism of Leninism as being betrayed during the Stalin era. And they said, "We can't live with this betrayal of Stalin any longer." So they left.

Others were more interested in democratic principles. And they saw that what they were experiencing inside the Soviet Union wasn't meeting those democratic principles, and they sought something else. But, again, to be a defector you had to have a mix of those things to motivate you to really drive you to make such a wrenching and complete break particularly from a Soviet intelligence security service where it was very dangerous to go back to.

**[00:34:30] AH:** Whenever I think about Western defectors who went to the Soviet Union, obviously, there's a variety of experiences there. But I think of people like Philby, people like Burgess. I mean, they just weren't happy when they went there. They just never seemed to settle. Was there a similar thing when Soviet defectors came to the west? Or help us understand that two way back and forth.

**[00:34:57] SR:** There were a lot more Soviet defectors than Western defectors. So there's probably a lot greater range. There were some Soviet defectors who came to the west and had a hard time settling. Things were very new. Things are very different than what they're used to. And they had expectations on them that they never would have had to have experienced in the Soviet Union. Expectations for the level of self-responsibility that they had to take that wasn't something they really had experienced in the Soviet era and Soviet system. But there were others who sort of thrived in the west, who joined businesses, or got graduate degrees, or became consultants and used their skills and really took advantage of the skills that they brought with them to make their life better.

So there were a few Soviet intelligence officers who did redefect, who went back after, in some cases, not feeling comfortable settling and not feeling like they could survive in the west. In other cases, they may have been specifically targeted by a Soviet intelligence service and lured back as well. But in most cases, they regretted returning to the Soviet system. That they found that that was a bad decision often at the threat of their lives.

So while there were some who did have a hard time settling, the preponderance of them actually did settle quite well. There is a book written by a Russian author named Dmitri **[inaudible 00:36:44]** called *What is the Cost of Betraying One's Homeland*, who is a Russian author. So looking at Soviet intelligence defectors. And it portrays them all as miserable and having terrible lives after they defected.

There is a pretty clear propaganda message that the Russian government sends to deter or to disincentivize defection. But in reality, the majority of defectors actually said it sounds reasonably well. And I think even the Western defectors that went eastward, if you remember reading an article by Kim Philby's wife in Moscow, who said – I'm tired of everybody saying he was a sad drunk. He wasn't as sad and drunk as everyone says he was. So there is some of that kind of portrayal of traitors that goes both directions.

**[00:37:47] AH:** Give us an example of a Soviet defector that thrived, and an example of one that it just didn't work out for whatever reason. Just to throw in to relief for our listeners.

**[00:38:02] SR:** There was one defector, for example, who came to the United States in 1940 named **[inaudible 00:38:10]**. He changed his name once he came the United States. He lived under a different name. But he became a successful businessman in the United States. He actually had developed a relationship with Alan Dulles, who later became the Director of Central Intelligence. And he had some high-level support that allowed him to have some success in the United States. His wife actually settled quite successfully as well. She became a quite well-known choreographer and dance instructor in New York City. And so they settled in New York City and did quite well for themselves.

Others had a more difficult time. Igor Gouzenko, who was one of the more prominent defectors to the west. Defected in Ottawa, Canada in 1945 just at the close of World War II. And he, for the first year or so while he was being debriefed and while the investigations of his information were being conducted in the United States, and UK, and Canada, he did reasonably well. But then his life became more difficult and he did become a little more kind of inside himself. And he was known as being a difficult person when he got older.

Again, the spectrum is wide, everywhere from very successful to another. And then a case, Nikolai Khokhlov, who defected 1954, got a graduate degree, a doctoral degree at, I believe, it was University of North Carolina. And he became a professor in Southern California. And he died in the 1990s when he was quite in his older years. So he also settled in the United States reasonably well. So there's a mix.

**[00:40:07] AH:** Are we talking about defectors to the west in general or only to the United States? And if it's the west in general, did some struggle in some countries more than others? Or help us understand that picture.

**[00:40:25] SR:** My research is looking at soviet defectors wherever they went. And though the places where they went changed over time, initially, most defectors didn't come to the United States. In the early Soviet era, in the 20s and early – Particularly, most went to France because that was where the anti-Soviet Russian immigrant community was concentrated. And that was, to a great extent, what they defected to, was to that anti-Soviet cause as much as to a foreign government.

Over time, I mean, during World War II, most defectors went to Germany because that was the main enemy as that later became known to the Soviet Union at the time. So there are many who, to save themselves from German POW camps, offered themselves to the German Intelligence Services.

After World War II, the bulk of defectors went to either the United Kingdom or the United States. In the first few years after World War II, United Kingdom and the United States were probably close to equal and that that number then became much more weighted toward the United States as the Cold War went on. But some defectors – I mean, the early Cold War time, US and UK didn't really have a solid policy for handling defectors. They had to figure it out because they hadn't really had to deal with the flow of defectors that they had started receiving after the end of World War II. So they started to kind of work this out, "What do we do with these people once they get here?"

And some of them, they would arrive, they would be debriefed. And then the handling service would stash them somewhere. Would send them to South America, or to Australia. And some of them did fine there. Others of them struggled because they didn't speak , or they didn't speak Portuguese in Brazil, or they were given false identities, and the false identity really wasn't very deep. So it didn't work for them very well. Some of them just struggled. Others of them just got jobs and lived the rest of their lives as simple laborers. And they were happy to leave the strategic environment and just be a simple person for the rest of their lives, included farmers, or tram drivers, or taxi drivers and a variety of careers that people took up after they defected. And a lot of times those careers just were simple things that they wanted to stay out of the limelight.

So it wasn't really based upon a country specifically. It was more over time the Western powers developed their handling processes more specifically. And then they became more well-developed. And as they became better developed, they were able to settle defectors more effectively.

**[00:43:51] AH:** Walk us through the process of what happens to a defector. So I guess this will vary by country. But let's just say the United States. So a defector comes here. How does that all play out? I'm assuming there's an initial debriefing. And then what happens after that? Or they just have left their own devices and they can go off the radar? Or is there always a degree

of suspicion? Well, maybe they've been planted here. And when we take our eye off of the ball, they could be up to other things. How does that play out? And I recognize that this question will also depend on the level of the defector. So if it's a Soviet general, then that's going to be something different from a much lower level defector, a submarine sailor jumps off of the ship and swam to shore. Like walk us through that process. I know that there's a big story there, but help us understand that a little bit more.

**[00:44:55] SR:** A defector often had to prove bona fides initially. Have to show that they're not a plant. And interestingly, in my research, of the roughly 160 defectors from Soviet intelligence and state security services that I've looked at, about 80 of them or 90 of them in my book and then post-book defectors as well, actually, I have not seen a single plant. There were several who, once they arrived in the west, they were re-recruited and they did work for the Soviet Union after they had already arrived. But that was after they had gotten into the west. And they weren't necessarily planted that way to start with.

But even with that, there were suspicions of defectors that changed over time and changed over circumstances of the Cold War in particular. But some defectors – Well, the Soviet Union told its people that when you arrive in the west, you will be arrested, you will be treated as an enemy, and you may even be sent back. That was what the Soviet Union tried to persuade its people was the situation for defectors clearly to deter people from taking such a step for fear that they will not be received well.

The Western powers tried very hard to counter that propaganda by using defectors often in counter-propaganda. Saying, "I arrived here and I was treated well." Or, "They gave me a new job." Or, "I don't believe the things that the Soviet Union told me all these years. Now that I'm in the west, I see that the things that I've been told aren't true." So the west used them to try to persuade others to come.

And so part of what the west did was defectors basically were good for two things, for intelligence and for propaganda. So that intelligence often was initially tactical. What can you tell us that we can immediately fall back into an operation? And then sometimes it became more strategic. What does the Soviet Union think about such and such a thing? Or how does the Soviet Union approach the United or the west? So, bigger picture questions. And those tactical

questions are ones that, when a defector immediately arrived, they became obsolete quicker. And so you had to debrief a defector quickly to get that perishable information that something can be done on an actionable level soon. So that kind of first wave of debriefings tends to go pretty quickly.

Then one of the advantages of a defector over an individual who is recruited and stays in place is that you have a longer period under more secure circumstances to ask people those less perishable questions. Those questions that are at a higher level that don't change as quickly. So debriefing takes a varying amount of time, as you pointed out, depending on the level of the defector. If someone is a private who crosses the border from East to West Berlin, that debriefing may not take very long, because that private has a visibility into a very narrow range of interesting information. But if that person was a KGB case officer who had been in the intelligence service for 20 years, it may take a long time for that debriefing to be done, because that person is going to have a lot of varied information.

And a couple of good examples of that, for example, are Yuriy Rastvorov who defected in Japan in 1954 who had a long career in the KGB and its predecessor organizations, and whose debriefings did last quite a while, and who provided information that, on a tactical level, led to some immediate arrests of people in Japan of Japanese government officials who were working for the Soviet Union. But on the more strategic level, he provided information that went back a few years, but gave us ideas about how the Soviet Union was approaching the nuclear conflict, or how the Soviet Union viewed the US-Japan relationship and those kind of bigger questions. So that initial debriefing happens. The length is varied.

And then as I mentioned, the western powers learned over time that they needed to take care of that person better. Sometimes, as I said, they'd stash them somewhere to say, "Go live your life." And later on, they became much more caring because they realized that this person, it may have a difficult time settling. And if we're not careful, that person may choose to go back. And the propaganda advantage that Russia received when a person did return was substantial. And it was quite a deterrent to further defectors.

So we, we, meaning primarily the United States and the Great Britain, did try to assist those people to settle in jobs and new careers to find them a new life so that they are comfortable and that they are not regretting their decision.

**[00:51:25] AH:** Trying to get our heads around the process. Is there a specific part of the US intelligence community that would deal with defectors as primarily the FBI? And if so, is there a specialized defector debriefing unit? Or is it much more ad hoc and variegated?

**[00:51:50] SR:** I'm not going to go into a lot of details about how the US intelligence community does that. But I will say that in 1950, early on, as the United States was developing this new policy –

**[00:51:58] AH:** Sorry. That's what I mean historically. Yeah, sorry.

**[00:52:01] SR:** Yeah, history. The two were called national security council directives, intelligence directive, NSCIDs as they were called, were published in 1950. One focused primarily on defectors who defected outside the United States. And that NSCID, NSCID 13 as it was called, gave the responsibility, the US responsibility for handling those defectors to the CIA. And the companion National Security Council Intelligence Director of NSCID14 talked about defectors inside the United States and they were handled primarily by the FBI. But they also had sometimes that strategic level information that may have gone beyond just kind of internal security issues that the FBI dealt with so they would be handled jointly.

Early on, there were some growing pains and the agency is getting used to handling and sharing those defectors. I mentioned in my book an example of – No. I shared a paper that I published an example of Nikolai Khokhlov, for example, who defected in Germany. And he approached the US government in Germany. But then eventually was brought to the United States. And it was early on as that policy was developing. And the US government agencies responsible for debriefings didn't have a complete agreement on who was supposed to be in charge. So it took a little bit of negotiation to make that work. But over time, that became much more solidified and it became much more an interagency process.

So, yes. I mean, in the British system, it was even different than that because the British Intelligence community is much smaller. But it was still a mix of positive intelligence information that could come from a defector being developed by the Positive Intelligence Organization, MI6, and the Internal Security Information being developed by MI5. And so there was a handoff between the agencies in the UK as well depending upon the portfolio of the individual.

**[00:54:28] AH:** And another question that quite interests me is if you're a defector, to what extent is there a target on your back? Is that a dangerous thing to be a defector? Are you constantly looking over your shoulder? Or would that just be a propaganda, own goal, to go out and kill the defector? So I realized this will vary over time. And maybe you can speak a little bit more about the historical lineage of things like Skirpal **[inaudible 00:54:58]** and so forth?

**[00:55:05] SR:** Assassination tended to be the last resort. There were defectors who were targeted for assassination during the Cold War. I mentioned Nikolai Khokhlov a couple of times. He was actually poisoned with a radioactive substance. And he was very sick for a number of months. But he did fully recover. In an operation that looked a little bit like the Litvinenko operation of 2006. Although in Khokhlov example, he did recover.

Another defector was named **[inaudible 00:55:40]** who defected just after the end of World War II. Also, there was a poisoning directed at him. He actually felt quite guilty because the poison was somehow placed, he believes anyway, into a bowl of caviar. He and his wife were on a ship and he nicely gave his wife his caviar because he was trying to be good to her. She got very sick. It turned out that his caviar bowl was the one that was poisoned. So there were defectors who were targeted. But that tended to be the last resort.

There were other higher operations that were attempted. The first was to lure them back to the Soviet Union, because most of these defectors were tried in absentia often with a sentence of execution, particularly those who had access to such high-level classified information as intelligence officers did. They were often sentenced to execution. So the first option was to try to lure them back. And the Soviet Union was successful in doing that on a number of occasions, sometimes by coercing them by their families, by recruiting an ex-girlfriend who pleaded on the defector come back. And then the defector was arrested immediately upon arrival.

So various lures were used to bring people back. But that's the first option. The second option was to recruit them in the west or recruit them outside. This also was successful in some occasions, where particularly if someone had a job that was valuable for Soviet intelligence. If they had gotten a job in the US intelligence community, or in radio for Europe, Radio Liberty, which was a particularly high priority target for the Soviets during the Cold War. People who got jobs in those entities were often targeted for re-recruitment so that the Soviet Union could take advantage of their accesses that they had gained as defectors. Others became prominent in the Russian immigrant community. And the Soviet government sometimes often targeted them as penetrations of the Russian immigrant community. So that's the second option, is to try to recruit them for intelligence purposes.

The last option really was assassination. And that was reserved for particularly difficult defectors. Those who had been particularly embarrassing or who had been very vocal in their anti-Soviet pronouncements after defection. And that became particularly prominent when two KG assassins themselves defected, one in 1954 and one in 1961. Nikolai Khokhlov 1954 and Bogdan Stashinsky in 1961. And they both talked about their assassination missions. And that was highly embarrassing for the Soviet hierarchy. And it persuaded the Soviet leadership that assassinations could only be exercised in the most extreme cases.

Now, that didn't mean that they gave up assassination altogether. This meant that they were more careful, and they became less common. And as things like detente came along the 1970s, the assassinations actually became quite rare. Now, the fact that we see two post-Soviet defectors who we know have – Or intelligence defectors who have been the targets of assassinations, one successful, Alexander Litvinenko. And one less unsuccessful, Sergei Skripal. That is an indicator that the Putin regime is returning to Stalin era practices, that it is looking more and more like what the Stalin policies looked. Traitors to the Soviet system or to the Russian system today are seen as the worst possible type of person. Treason in the Soviet system, or the Russian system is taken very seriously.

Vladimir Putin has quoted a phrase, "There's no such thing as a former Chekist." **[Inaudible 01:00:32]**." And what he means by that is several things. One is it's kind of this esprit de corps, we are an elite organization and we're the best of the best sort of thing. That's one side of that statement. The other side of that statement is don't ever try to leave. Because if you do. we will

remember. And we will not let you forget. Serge Skripal was probably a good example of that, of someone who did betray the system by becoming a British intelligence source was then traded in a swap in 2010, but then was sent a very clear message that we have not forgotten who you are.

So there haven't been a lot of post-Soviet treason targetings. There have been other assassinations, but they have been a different type of assassinations. And those are for different reasons. Like, for example there have been a number of Chechen militants who have been targeted for assassination outside Russia in the post-Soviet era. Russia sees them very differently. They're not traitors per se. Those are military enemies. And so they are seen as legitimate military targets. The traitors like Litvinenko and and Skirpal from the Russian perspective are a rare and different type of target.

**[01:02:03] AH:** So you mentioned it's a return to the Stalinist kind of mindset. So am I right in thinking that, during the Stalin era, this was like a common tool or it was more common? But then later on in the history of the Soviet Union, say under Brezhnev and Gorbachev, there was much less of this? And then it came back under Putin? Or was it always there? Or help us understand, if it's a graph, where is the curve going?

**[01:02:35] SR:** It was never completely off the table. But it became much less common after Stalin left, after Stalin died. And when Khrushchev became the leader of the Soviet Union in 1956, he was more sensitive to those types of assassinations, operations. But he wasn't completely against them. Bogdan Stashinsky, for example, was an assassin. And he targeted and he successfully assassinated two Ukrainian nationalist leaders in Germany. One in 1957 and one in 1959 during the Khrushchev era. But again, they were kind of military targets. They were seen as legitimate targets because they represented a militant group inside the Soviet Union. Those traitor targets, such as Khokhlov, or **[inaudible 01:03:33]**, or a few others, **[inaudible 01:03:38]** who defected the UK 1971 was reportedly a target as well. That was reserved for particularly high-level information leaks.

And after the Stalin era, they did become less common. And they were much more careful. If there was any chance that the assassination was going to be tied back to the Soviet government, then that's considered a very high-risk operation. Again, they're never off the table

completely even during the Khrushchev era. There were some assassination operations conducted. But it was just not at the same level as it was during the Stalin time.

**[01:04:24] AH:** Looking at Soviet defectors, are they much more likely to come from the parts of the Soviet Union that weren't Russia? So we look at it, and proportionately there's% 80 of the defectors are non-Russian, or is that –

**[01:04:42] SR:** Actually, no. It's the other way around.

**[01:04:44] AH:** It's the other way around. And why do you think that is?

**[01:04:47] SR:** Well, I think that is because non-Russians were less represented in intelligence and security services. Not that they weren't represented at all, but they were much less represented. So the population from which to draw is much more heavily Russian.

Now, that is a difference when you're talking about illegal intelligence officers. Illegal officers were those who were sent abroad under non-Russian identities with no visible connection to the Soviet Union and who portrayed themselves as someone completely separate from the Soviet Union. There were two big categories of people that were chosen to be illegals. One was Russians who had to be trained to portray themselves as a non-Russian. And another, those who were non-Russians already who had it easier, basically. Had they spoke a foreign language already and they could naturally portray themselves as someone who it was not connected to the Soviet Union.

Amongst those illegals, there was a higher proportion of non-Russians. But that's a subset of the overall intelligence and state security officer defectors. It's just that particular population was more vulnerable because they were out there all by themselves and they didn't have an embassy to go back to. Or they used impersonal communications and they didn't have as much face-to-face connection with someone. So their non-Russian identities became more of a factor in their lives. But those who were stationed abroad or who were inside the Soviet Union under some sort of official cover at an embassy or the border guard or something like that inside the Soviet Union, they were mostly Russians. And so most of the defectors from that group were Russian.

**[01:06:47] AH:** Proportionately, are more of the defectors coming from, say, the KGB, or the GRU, or is that a pretty equal distribution compared to the overall numbers on each of those institutions?

**[01:07:03] SR:** The preponderance of defectors come from the KGB and its predecessors, the civilian subordinate organization. There are many fewer military intelligence or GRU defectors. Not that there were none, but there were just fewer. In the very early days of the Soviet Union, in the 1920s, there was a larger proportion of defectors coming from the Military Intelligence Organization. But as time went on, that proportion dropped. In fact, in my book, the last two chapters that looked at the 1945-1954 basically, the first decade after the Soviet Union. There were only four GRU defectors amongst about 30 total defectors. So they were a much smaller proportion after the World War II.

Getting into, after my book, into the 1950s, 60s, 70s and later, there was still a smaller number than the civilian subordinate. And there are some very prominent GRU defectors, people like Vladimir Rezun, who wrote under the name Viktor Suvorov, who's published a number of books about his time in the GRU. And **[inaudible 01:08:18]** who also published a book about his time in the GRU. So there are some pretty prominent GRU out there, but they are fewer. And why that is probably a much more military sense of loyalty. And the GRU was not responsible for internal security functions as the KGB was. And often what defectors from the KGB were leaving was the sense that they were tasked with spying on their own people. That was something that they didn't feel comfortable doing.

The GRU didn't have that. And so they were much more purely intelligence. Looking at foreign targets for military decision making. And they didn't have that what is in the Russians, the Chekist kind of mindset of looking for threats everywhere. So that's I think possibly a reason why there are more from the Chekist services, the KGB and its predecessors.

**[01:09:38] AH:** Tell us just a little bit more about your book. So it's available through Edinburgh University Press. Where can listeners get a hold of it? Where can they check it out? And just give them a brief synopsis of what is it you set out to do?

**[01:09:52] SR:** Well, it's in a lot of libraries. In electronic format mostly. It is available on the Edinburgh University Press Bookstore. It's also available on online bookstores, Amazon and various other bookstores. It is available in a number of libraries for checkout, particularly university libraries. A number of libraries around the world. In the United States, in Europe, in Southeast Asia, there are libraries that have gotten electronic copies of it. And that can be found on Worldcat. You just look up Kevin Riehle, Soviet defectors, and you'll find a library near you that has it.

I am working on the next volume basically. This book runs from 1924 to 1954. I'm doing the research for the second half, which goes from 1954 on. And then that that will then hopefully also be available in book form in the next year or so.

**[01:10:49] AH:** I look forward to that. Well, thanks so much for your time, Kevin. I've really appreciated speaking to you.

**[01:10:57] SR:** It's great to talk to you. And thank you for your time. And thank you for this opportunity. I love talking about this topic. It is what I – If you ever talk to a researcher about what they like to research, you'll be able to talk to them for a very long time. So this is what I enjoy discussing. So thank you for the opportunity to do that.

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