

300 FBI spy chasers to attack street gang crime



WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI will reassign 300 agents now chasing spies to investigate street gangs in major cities plagued by an upsurge in violent crime, Attorney General William P. Barr said Thursday.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the demise of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe will allow the largest reallocation of FBI manpower in the bureau's history, Barr said.

"Some of the intelligence services that used to operate

against the United States are no longer in existence," Barr said. "The very substantial resources we are keeping in counterintelligence work are fully sufficient to protect the national security interests of the United States," he said.

The 300 agents will be redeployed to help authorities in 39 cities investigate street gangs blamed for the rising tide of drug killings and drive-by shootings in recent years.

The Bush administration will propose transferring more counterintelligence agents to

violent crime investigations in its fiscal 1993 budget, which will soon be sent to Congress, Barr said.

Tougher federal sentences without parole for racketeering, drug trafficking and firearms violations mean that gang members can be put behind bars for longer periods than they would under "revolving-door justice" dispensed by many state courts, Barr said.

"Our message to gang members and leaders is this: When we throw the federal book at you, it will be a knockout

blow," Barr said. "There will be no bail, no probation, no parole and you will be a long time in a federal penitentiary."

Nationwide, there are more than 300,000 members of street gangs.

Barr said estimates vary widely from city to city about how much gangs contribute to violent crime. But the attorney general suggested that the prosecution of four street gangs in Philadelphia may have contributed to the decline in the number of murders in that city.

In 1989, FBI Director William

S. Sessions made attacking violent crime a nationwide priority for the FBI. The redeployment follows an 11 percent increase in violent crime reported to local police from 1989 to 1990. Violent crime increased 5 percent in the first six months of 1991, according to FBI figures.

Twenty-two agents will be sent to Los Angeles to join the 75 already investigating violent crime. The FBI in New York City, where 77 agents are assigned to the program, will get an extra 22 agents.

In Atlanta, where federal authorities on Thursday arrested 15 members of the "I Refuse Posse," the FBI field office will get an additional 10 agents.

The number of FBI agents assigned to counterintelligence is classified but one law enforcement source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the reductions amount to 15 percent to 20 percent of the bureau's spy-chasing force.

Bushwhacked by two-thirds

WASHINGTON (AP)—Two-thirds of Americans surveyed disapprove of the way President Bush is handling the economy, and 39 percent are unhappy with his job as president in general, a CBS-New York Times poll said Thursday.

Nearly half, 48 percent, said they approve of Bush's performance as president, with 39 percent disapproving. Bush's approval rating dropped from 51 percent in a similar poll conducted in November.

Two-thirds, or 67 percent, said they were unhappy with the White House's handling of the economy. Only 23 percent said they approved.

The poll was composed of a telephone interviews conducted Jan. 6-8 of 1,376 adults selected randomly across the country. It has a margin of error of plus or minus three points.

Thirty percent of those questioned said the economy is the most important problem facing the country. But respondents were split equally on who could best solve economic problems, with 32 percent saying Bush would do a better job and 32 percent saying a Democrat would do better.

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