

# FBI is set to open first office in Moscow today

By Nigel Stephenson  
REUTERS

MOSCOW — The head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation said yesterday that the opening of the first FBI office in Russia was a mere step toward what he hoped would be much greater law enforcement cooperation with nations of the former Soviet bloc.

The office opening in Moscow today, with its two FBI agents, "is really the first step," FBI Director Louis Freeh said in a satellite interview from Moscow on the NBC program *Meet the Press* monitored in Washington.

"It's the first building block of a lot of other things that have to happen" to clear the way for combating organized crime in the former Soviet bloc and keep it from spreading abroad, Freeh said.

He said future steps should include, among other things, the negotiation

of a U.S.-Russian extradition treaty and a legal assistance treaty, under which the two countries would exchange evidence and witnesses used in criminal prosecutions.

He also cited a need to overcome the Cold War rivalries that made the spy-catching FBI and the Soviet police deadly enemies for nearly 50 years.

"The world has gotten too small and too dangerous and the nature of crime has become so transnational that we need to go where the crime is before it gets here . . ." Freeh added, referring to the United States.

Freeh, on a tour of central and eastern Europe, flew in late Saturday for discussions with Russian leaders — including Interior Minister Viktor Yerin and counter-intelligence chief Sergei Stepashin.

A key issue during his visit, which winds up tomorrow, will be how to prevent the possible theft of the for-

mer Soviet Union's nuclear weapons for sale to guerrilla groups.

Stepashin, quoted by the Itar-Tass news agency, said last week he did not believe in such a threat and he would press Freeh to substantiate his allegations.

On *Meet the Press*, Freeh said he looked forward to meeting Stepashin and reaffirmed the U.S. view that the possible theft and diversion of nuclear materials is a very serious threat to the world.

"We don't want to wait — and neither do the Russian police, for the first large-scale diversion of these materials, which could be used for great destruction in Russia, in the United States, or anywhere else," the FBI director said.

On his arrival in Moscow, Freeh told reporters: "The primary purpose of our meetings here in the next few days is to make sure we are better

organized than the organized crime people we are fighting."

Freeh, the first FBI chief to visit Russia, said his fact-finding mission would focus on ways to combat the spread of organized crime and drug trafficking in Russia and Europe.

He said there was growing evidence that Russian criminal groups were combining with others to break the law in the United States. "Transnational criminal organizations are threatening all of our economies as well as our democracies," he said.

Freeh said Ukraine could become more important as a transit point for the drugs trade and discussed security around Ukraine's nuclear arsenal — the world's third largest.

But Hryhory Omelchenko, head of parliament's commission on organized crime, said criminal groups in Ukraine had never had access to nuclear weapons or their components.

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