

Stasi Guidelines on the Development and Management of “Operational Cases” (1976)

Abstract

These guidelines by Erich Mielke, head of the East German secret police [*Stasi*], begin by describing the need for proactive measures to protect the GDR from “hostile-negative forces” that could impede its “societal development” or threaten its safety and security. The document provides guidance for developing and managing “operational cases” involving internal surveillance. It lays out criteria for initiating surveillance on citizens and dissidents and contains recommendations for collecting “source materials.” These guidelines attest to systematic efforts to suppress any attempt at free speech that might endanger the SED dictatorship.

Source

The further shaping of a developed socialist society in the GDR, the general strengthening of the socialist community of states, the further implementation of the principles of peaceful coexistence, and the struggle to preserve and secure peace are occurring in the context of fierce class confrontations with imperialism.

The reliable protection of [the GDR’s] societal development and the general guarantee of the GDR’s internal security require from the Ministry for State Security the determined, concentrated, and focused preemptive prevention, detection, and suppression of all subversive attacks by the enemy.

An important prerequisite for successfully accomplishing this main objective is continuous improvement in the development and handling of operational cases on the basis of focused, political-operational groundwork to ensure security and order within each respective sphere of authority.

A determined approach to developing and managing operational cases aims above all to preemptively prohibit hostile-negative forces from having an effect, to prevent potential harm, danger, or other grave consequences that could result from hostile-negative actions, and to thereby make an essential contribution to the ongoing implementation of the policies of the leadership of the party and the state.

The heads of the operational service units must concentrate their management and leadership activities on the development and handling of operational cases, and ensure that the operational forces and means, especially the IMs [unofficial collaborators] and GMSs [Social Collaborators for Security], are deployed and cultivated in a focused manner, in order to solve the tasks at hand. Leaders at every level of leadership must use all opportunities to give operational staff a targeted political-ideological education and to instill in them skills needed to develop and handle operational cases professionally, in the manner of the Chekists [Soviet Secret Service].

[...]

With regard to management and leadership activities in improving the development and management of operational cases, with regard to the preparation and execution of all relevant political-operational measures, and also in the oversight of case files, the regulations governing conspiratorial activity and secrecy must be strictly implemented.

1. The targeted development of operational cases

1.1 The systematic, focused development of basic materials for operational cases of great importance to security policy

To carry out the tasks assigned to the Ministry for State Security by the leadership of the party and the state, basic materials for operational cases must be collected and developed, especially to secure key political-operational areas and to address political-operational priorities. This includes cases where indications of hostile-negative actions become known outside of the key political-operational areas previously identified; in these cases, basic materials for operational cases must be collected or dealt with in some way. It must be ensured that all indications of hostile-negative actions are recognized in time and handled in a focused manner.

The leaders must ensure that basic materials for operational cases are collected especially where:

- hostile attacks could give rise to grave threats to the internal security of the GDR;
- the enemy, according to information at hand, is highly likely to attack and could cause significant harm;
- hostile-negative actions, influences, and dangers, as well as other manifestations that disrupt and impede the [GDR's] societal development need to be combatted offensively;
- conditions and circumstances favoring harm to the GDR and the abuse, exploitation, and involvement of GDR citizens in the enemy's activity must be eradicated in a proactive manner.

The systematic collection and development of basic materials for operational cases demands the complete and thorough political-operational penetration of the political-operational focal areas. It must meet the following requirements:

1. The comprehensive deepening of knowledge regarding the significance to security policy of the political-operational focal areas, especially with regard to their significance to the fulfillment of tasks set by party and state leadership, and to hostile attacks directed in the past against the political-operational focal areas and hostile-negative acts that have occurred.
2. The identification of areas, processes, categories of persons, and individuals that exercise significant influence, within the political-operational focal area, on the realization, as planned, of the [GDR's] main societal tasks, for which operationally significant indications exist and which, for other reasons, are at the center of anticipated hostile attacks.
3. The guarantee of constant oversight over everything found in a political-operational focal area, such as operational materials, personal control files, operational cases, and the results of other political-operational work connected to the political-operational focal area, especially results that clarify the question "who is who?" in the political-operational focal area and facilitate its exact analysis.

In the political-operational penetration of the political-operational focal areas, the use of IMs and GMSs must be focused on identifying and mapping out:

- indications of hostile-negative actions;
- persons or circles in the political-operational focal area on whom the enemy is concentrating and through whom he tries to execute his plans, intentions, and measures, and the enemy's options (paths, connections, contacts) for exerting influence on these circles and becoming effective;
- conditions and circumstances favorable to the implementation and concealment of hostile-negative actions;
- imperialist secret services and other hostile centers, organizations, and forces that work against the political-operational focal area;

- areas, processes, circles, and persons in the political-operational focal area that are of special importance for guaranteeing security and order and for fulfilling the [GDR's] main societal tasks;
- indications of operationally important occurrences, dangers, and circumstances, and of the persons connected to them.

On the basis of the information generated in this process, the leaders of the operational service units must specifically instruct the subordinate leaders and operational collaborators on:

- which areas, processes, circles, and individuals exercising influence, within the political-operational focal area, on the fulfillment of the [GDR's] main societal tasks must be secured on a long-term and continuous basis through the concentrated deployment of the operational forces and means;
- where and when priority is given to collecting basic materials about certain persons or circumstances in order to fend off hostile-negative actions;
- given the presence of indications of the planning, preparation, and execution of crimes of terror or diversion, of subversive human trafficking, of illegal flight from the GDR, violent crimes, and serious military crimes, where and when immediate measures must be initiated to prevent these things in time;
- on whether the types of basic materials that have been substantiated and verified are sufficient to set an operational case in motion;
- where, when, and how information should be passed on to other leading state and economic bodies, enterprises, collectives, and institutions, as well as to social organizations and bodies, for the purpose of initiating effective preventive measures.

The necessary political-operational tasks and measures to develop operational cases must be incorporated into the work plans of the service units in accordance with Guidelines Nos. 1/70.

In order to create the preconditions for the collection and development of basic materials for operational cases, it is necessary to carry out a continuous analytical assessment (review)—relative to the political-operational focal areas—of the effectiveness of the operational forces and means, especially the IMs and GMSs. To that end, priority should be given to working out:

- which IMs and GMSs are available for the targeted development of basic materials for operational cases;
- the types of assignments for which the IMs and GMSs have been deployed to date, which options exist, and which political-operational results have been achieved so far through the IMs and GMSs;
- which concrete level has been reached in the scheduled training of the IMs and GMSs in the development of basic materials for operational cases.

On the basis of these assessments, the heads of the operational service units must specify:

- how the operational forces and means, especially the IMs and GMSs, should be deployed for the preemptive prevention and detection of hostile-negative actions;
- which measures must be initiated to further train and qualify the IMs and GMSs;
- how existing gaps in securing the political-operational focal areas should be closed, especially through the targeted recruitment of suitable IMs and GMSs;
- how existing options for the development of operational cases should be developed.

These specifications should be incorporated into work plans and procedural concepts for the political-operational focal areas, and they must contain the necessary responsibilities and deadlines.

Source: Richtlinie Nr. 1/76 zur Entwicklung und Bearbeitung Operativer Vorgänge (OV) (GVS MfS 008-100/76); reprinted in David Gill and Ulrich Schröter, *Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit: Anatomie des Mielke-Imperiums*. Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991, pp. 349–52.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap

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