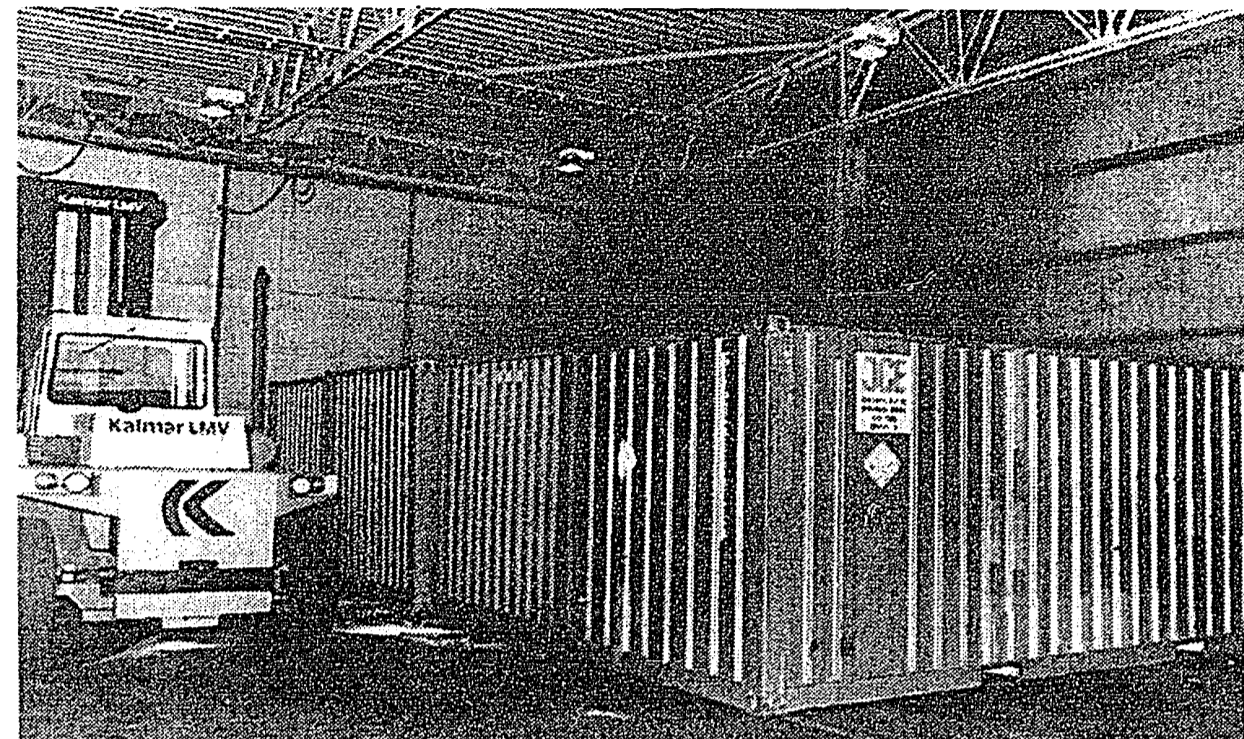


Moscow-Bound Computer Is Seized

By EDWARD C. BURKS Special to The New York Times

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Associated Press

Containers with electronic equipment, believed to be bound for Moscow, are stored in Helsingborg, Sweden.

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 20 — The United States Customs Service said today that components of a highly advanced American computer had been seized in Sweden before they could be shipped to the Soviet Union.

William Green, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Enforcement for the Customs Service, said that the material was part of the same shipment of computer parts that was seized Nov. 11 by West German authorities in Hamburg. He said that the shipment included seven huge containers of parts: four that were seized recently in Sweden and the three other containers seized in Hamburg.

Mr. Green said the computer is "super hot stuff" in its sophistication.

Mr. Green added that the containers of components made up the "largest illegal shipment we've ever intercepted." The entire computer system is more than a roomful of equipment, a Customs spokesman said, and is a veritable "mother computer that can make and run other computers."

Swedish Customs Guards

Mr. Green said tonight that the equipment, in four huge containers, had reached the Swedish port of Helsingborg and was stored on the docks there "with Swedish customs guarding it for us." He estimated the total weight of the equipment at considerably more than 100 tons.

He added that "negotiations are still going on" with the private Swedish company that was to ship the equipment and with the Swedish Government about recovery of the shipment by the United States.

The advanced system, known as a VAX 11/782, was manufactured by the Digital Equipment Corporation of Maynard, Mass., and legally shipped under a government-approved license to a private company in South Africa, Mr. Green said. That is the same route taken by the equipment that was seized in Hamburg.

Mr. Green said that he could not give details on how the South African company had been approved to receive such equipment, or on the procedures involved in what the Government described as a circuitous attempt to route the computer system to the Soviet Union via West Germany and Sweden.

The Times of London reported that a secret agent of the Soviet K.G.B. in South Africa had engineered the plan to smuggle the computer into the Soviet Union.

Mr. Green said the computer had the

potential for a variety of highly advanced civilian and military uses, including the operation of a missile guidance system or use in the construction industry and electromechanical design. The VAX 11/782 sells for between \$1.5 and \$2 million, according to a spokesman for the manufacturer.

Mr. Green said that the manufacturer "was not involved in any way in any suspicion of wrongdoing" and in fact had been "super-cooperative" in the investigation of the transshipment.

The apparent attempt to circumvent United States export controls came to light last Monday when it was reported that, at the request of the American Government, West German authorities had seized three huge containers on a Swedish ship in Hamburg harbor just seven minutes before the ship was to sail for Sweden.

It had taken an appeals court ruling to overturn an initial West German court ruling that the ship was free to sail with its computer cargo.

'In the Nick of Time'

Commenting on the incident at Hamburg, John M. Walker, Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Enforcement and Operations, said the seizure was made just "in the nick of time." But after the container ship sailed, a check showed that only a part of the computer system had been intercepted. The three containers taken off the ship at Hamburg were each 20 by 10 by 8 feet and weighed more than 50 tons.

At the time, Mr. Walker said the computer had shipped by a company in New York State to an affiliated company in South Africa and from there to Hamburg.

Christine Frazer, a spokesman for the Customs Service, said that the three containers seized in Hamburg held power generators and ancillary equipment with a value between \$2.5 million and \$3 million.

Miss Frazer said the equipment that the United States is seeking to recover comes under the provisions of the Export Control Act dealing with illegal shipments of munitions, armaments and critical technology to the Soviet bloc.

Persistent Soviet Efforts

Earlier today Richard N. Perle, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy, said: "I believe the equipment involved is a computer or several computers, we are not quite sure. The Soviets have made a persistent and all too successful effort to obtain Western technology."

In an interview on the ABC News program "This Week" Mr. Perle added:

"I believe that the Swedish Government is now looking into whether the illegalities of the transaction will enable them to return the shipment to the United States."

Negotiations with the Swedish company and the Swedish Government have been going on since Friday, according to Mr. Green, who described them as sensitive.

The Times of London identified the suspected K.G.B. agent in South Africa as Richard Mueller, a German native, and said that he had "secretly diverted" the shipment to forward it to the Soviet Union. South Africa's Commissioner of Police, Gen. Johann Coetzee, was quoted in the London paper as saying that Mr. Mueller was now "lying low" in Austria.