

Covert Agent Sues the CIA Over Job

Operative Says Agency Using False Allegation of Extramarital Affair

By Walter Pincus

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A decorated CIA covert agent has sued the agency claiming he is being forced out because of false allegations he had an affair with a Russian intelligence operative, according to papers filed yesterday in U.S. District Court here.

The officer, called "G.A." in the court filing because his real name is classified, claims in the suit that the allegation of his extramarital affair was a fiction resulting "from a disinformation campaign conducted by an opposition intelligence source." The allegation was contained in a 1993 FBI intelligence report, the court papers said.

In his suit, the agent charges that the CIA has used the FBI report to move against him in retaliation for his views about security inside the agency in the wake of the 1994 arrest of the spy Aldrich H. Ames. The court filing maintains that the agent told his case officer at the agency's Counterintelligence Center that the "CIA had been penetrated by as yet undetected high-level 'moles' in addition to the recently arrested Aldrich Ames."

A spokesman for the CIA said yesterday that there would be no official response to the filing of the lawsuit.

The court papers describe G.A. as a high ranking agent with extensive experience in trouble spots around the world. According to the suit, he joined the agency in 1983, served in two unnamed overseas locations and from 1991 to 1993 carried out covert

operations in Moscow. He then returned to CIA headquarters where he ran highly sensitive operations in Russia from 1993 to 1995, when he became deputy group chief and then group chief of a special entity.

"He is a mad genius and knows some of our most sensitive secrets," according to an intelligence source with agency contacts familiar with G.A.'s activities.

In July 1995, according to the papers, G.A. was initially confronted

According to the lawsuit, the agent told his case officer that the Counterintelligence Center at CIA "has been penetrated by as yet undetected high-level 'moles' in addition to . . . Aldrich Ames."

with the allegation about a woman identified in the filing as "Galina" and denied that he had had "close and continuing contact" with her. Over the next eight months, he took two CIA polygraphs that were deemed unsatisfactory, although he was promoted.

After a third unsuccessful polygraph, he was removed from his job, barred from unescorted access to CIA facilities and placed on administrative leave with pay. Sources said G.A. showed deception when denying an alleged relationship with the woman, whom they described as a foreign government intelligence employee. The agent also failed to disclose to his superiors as required by CIA regulations that he was having an affair with a foreign national while in Russia, sources said.

According to the papers, the agent had told CIA authorities that he believed that Ames had been deliberately exposed as a spy by the Russian intelligence service in "an attempt to divert attention from another, more valued 'mole.'"

In the months after G.A. was put on administrative leave he agreed to meet with a series of CIA designated psychiatrists, but claimed that he also was subjected to surveillance "so intense as to constitute obvious harassment," according to his court filing.

In February 1997, G.A.'s attorney was told by the CIA office of general counsel for the first time that he was under investigation because of "his acknowledged failure to report sexual contact with a foreign national female" under the agency's reporting requirement, and because of and his inability to pass a polygraph, according to the court papers.

In his filing, G.A. reported having earlier sexual relationships outside his marriage that were known to his superiors, but did not result in any disciplinary actions. In addition, he claimed that on one occasion, a CIA chief of station in a foreign country

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"encouraged (him) to enter into a sexual relationship with a female . . . in order to further gain her trust and confidence."

G.A. charged in his court filing that other CIA covert case officers have failed to report sexual contact with foreigners but "continue to serve in highly sensitive positions in the CIA" including "various East European or 'denied area' locations." He named four officers in his filing, including one who later disclosed the affair "and was permitted to serve out his career in a [less] sensitive position."

The lawsuit, which claims that G.A.'s rights have been violated, was filed after weeks of negotiations involving the agent, his attorney and agency officials aimed at permitting the clandestine officer to remain a CIA employee, sources said.

A recommendation by the agency's Personnel Evaluation Board that G.A. be separated from the agency is now on the desk of CIA Director George J. Tenet. G.A.'s attorney, Roy W. Krieger, said he believed the lawsuit would be dropped if Tenet turned down the recommendation and kept the operations officer as a CIA employee.

According to his court papers, G.A., in the course of his almost 14 years with the clandestine Directorate of Operations, has received the Intelligence Commendation Medal, two CIA Meritorious Unit Awards, six Exceptional Performance Awards, various letters of commendation and consistent "outstanding" ratings on his CIA Performance Appraisal Reviews.