

Sergeant a 'Sick Man,' Spy Trial Lawyer Says

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TYNDALL AFB, Fla. (AP) — Civilian defense attorney Henry Rothblatt today called for the acquittal of espionage defendant M/Sgt. Walter Perkins, whom he called "a sick man crying out for help."

Col. Joe Peck, hearing the case without a jury, began deliberating the charge that Perkins tried to pass vital defense secrets to a Soviet spy in Mexico City after a brief final argument from prosecutors.

Rothblatt said Perkins had deliberately laid a trail for the government to follow—from buying plane tickets in his own name to carrying the five secret documents in his attaché case.

"He did everything wrong," Rothblatt said. "He wanted to be caught."

But the prosecutor, Capt. Reinold Werrenrath III, said "Such a message would wreak havoc on our society." The theory that Perkins wanted to be caught in the espionage effort, said the prosecutor, "borders on the absurd."

Yesterday, the Air Force said the five documents allegedly stolen by Perkins were crucial to protecting the nation against air invasion.

Werrenrath conceded that Perkins was an alcoholic. But, he said "there is no question he was mentally responsible beyond a reasonable doubt."

"He was an expert in intelligence who well realized the significance of these documents," Werrenrath said.

Lt. Col. Skyler Crowell, head of the intelligence unit at Tyndall's Air Defense Weapons center, said one of the stolen documents outlined radar and other "electromagnetic" detection equipment that will be on American planes "for the next eight years."

The other documents, he said, involved American intelligence reports on Soviet and East European ballistic missile systems. "They would have known what we knew about them and what we didn't know," he said.