

Clandestine Conflict Is Continual

WASHINGTON AP — State Department security officers, in the last year or so, have found a tiny eavesdropping radio transmitter secretly placed in the heel of a shoe worn by a senior U.S. diplomat in a Communist East European country.

At another American embassy in East Europe, they located a miniature spy radio hidden in a seemingly innocent binder holding curtain samples.

The head of the State Department's security force, Deputy

Assistant Secretary G. Marvin Gentile, reported these sample discoveries of new, sophisticated spy devices in a continuing undercover intelligence struggle abroad.

These are the first public disclosures of such bugging of U.S. missions overseas in recent years.

Gentile said in an interview, however, that the Clandestine conflict goes on regardless of changes in the international climate and that "much of this espionage is uncovered with alarming regularity."

"Over the years since the second World War," he said, "technical espionage has become an increasing hazard to the security of our diplomatic missions overseas."

Gentile, whose sleuths seek to protect U.S. foreign posts from hostile intelligence penetration, said defenses against electronic spying have improved with modern gear.

He figures today's safeguards pretty well take care of uninvited listening gadgets at the U.S. embassies though there is need for continuing vigilance. But . . .

"You never can be absolutely sure," he said.

The heel radio said to work well up to 300 feet away when the wearer isn't walking—reflects the long strides in electronic espionage techniques over the immediate postwar era when U.S. diplomats were moving back into buildings left unguarded during the war.

A popular spy tactic then was to hide microphones in walls and fixtures and hook them to listening posts by wires. Discoveries of wired microphones climaxed in 1964 with the removal of 52 from the American Embassy in Moscow and 55 from the embassy in Warsaw.

Under the just completed U.S. Soviet agreement for new embassies in each other's capital, U.S. negotiators insisted on control over constructing the interior of the new U.S. building in Moscow and on guarding

the premises around the clock during construction.

Gentile said that wired eavesdropping on U.S. diplomats has become obsolete now with technological advances, with miniaturization and with 24 hour guarding of U.S. embassies keeping out hostile security agents.

Instead, he said, hostile intelligence is resorting to tiny battery run radios known as "drop transmitters" which can be hidden easily and quickly slipped into an office or on a person.

The State Department security executive declined to say just where or how the ingenious heel and carpet bugs were spotted, or what U.S. diplomats were their targets.

In the case of the bugged heel, he said:

The maid of a high-ranking American diplomat at a U.S. Embassy in East Europe took a pair of his shoes for repair and returned them in due time.

The heel of one shoe had been repaired better than he knew—for hostile agents had implanted a thumb-sized radio with button batteries within what, to the naked eye, still looked like a heel.

So the diplomat wore his shoes to work, unaware that he was a walking broadcasting station. But a security officer—presumably using electronic detection gear—soon discovered his diplomatic colleague was on the air.

Inspection showed the radio could transmit some 100 yards with good sound pickup, except when the diplomat moved his feet.

The batteries could power the transmitter for about 200 hours, enough for a couple weeks' eavesdropping at 12 hours a day.

A small hole in the heel would have allowed the maid, if the espionage venture had gone

on long enough, to stick in a pin to switch the radio off when the shoes weren't being used in order to save the batteries.

The cardboard binder for a book of drapery material samples was what Gentile called a "target of opportunity" used by hostile agents.

Such books are common in many U.S. Embassies when redecorating is going on. Presumably, in this case, the spy's hope was that the innocent-looking samples would be left in an office where the Americans talked about their topmost secrets.

But the device was spotted before anyone carried it into an embassy room where classified information is discussed, he said.

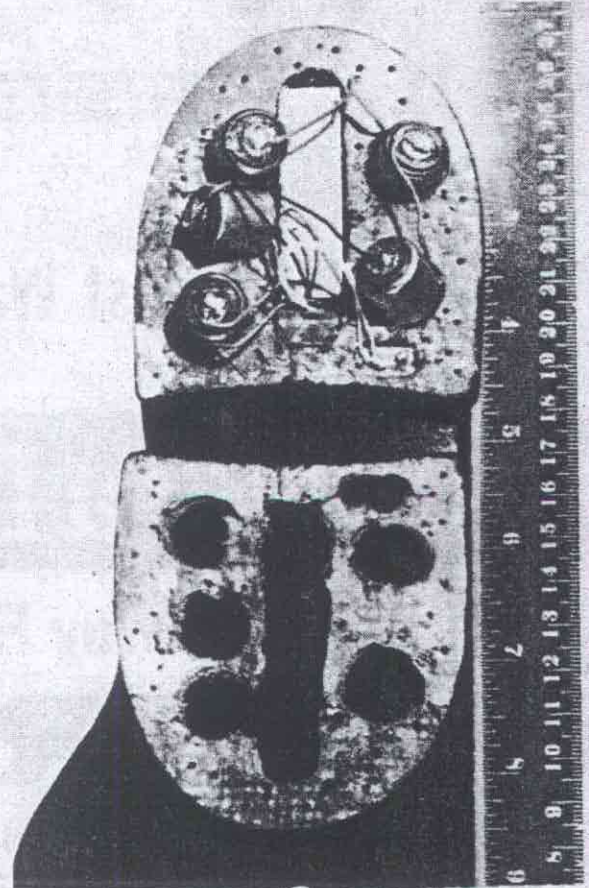
To prolong battery life, the

transmitter turned itself off when the book was face down. Presumably the agent who brought it into the embassy would leave it face down, on the theory that some unsuspecting U.S. diplomat would place it face up later.

Gentile said eavesdropping devices are found from time to time in American installations in non-Communist countries too. But he believes they are implanted by Communist intelligence services.

The reason for this conclusion, he said, is that "we have been very successful in

identifying the local employes (caught in the espionage) and whom they are working for." He said no Americans have been implicated.



EAVESDROPPING RADIO — This is the eavesdropping radio transmitter which was secretly placed in the heel of a shoe worn by a senior U.S. diplomat in a Communist East European country. — (AP Wirephoto)