

Enemy Spies Change Tactics, Now Bug Martinis or Shoes

By Lewis Gulick

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The era of attempted eavesdropping on U.S. diplomats abroad through cumbersome wire-connected microphones is over. Hostile agents are trying more advanced devices, small enough to be dropped into a martini or planted in a shoe.

So reports the State Department's deputy assistant secretary for security, S. Marvin Gentile, who is responsible for safeguarding U.S. missions overseas.

Gentile, in an unusual interview dealing with the continuing undercover-intelligence struggle, disclosed that in the last year or so his sleuths have uncovered at U.S. embassies in Communist East European countries:

- A tiny radio hidden in a heel of a shoe of a senior U.S. diplomat. It had good sound pickup and could transmit 300 yards to listening points outside the embassy.

The bug was secretly placed in the heel when the diplomat's maid took the shoes out for "repair." A U.S. security officer, presumably using modern detection gear, soon discovered his colleague was a walking broadcasting station.

- A miniature transmitter tucked into an innocent-looking binder holding curtain samples.

Gentile said this spy device, which turned out to have a broadcasting range of 400 yards, was spotted before it got into any embassy room where secret information was discussed.

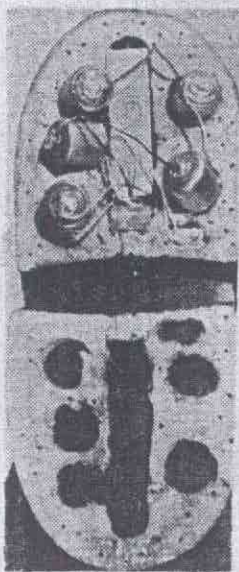
Both devices fit Gentile's definition of "drop transmitters" — tiny radio transmitters, usually battery-powered, which can be easily hidden and quickly implanted in an office or on a person.

A popular spy tactic used to be to hide microphones in U.S. embassies and link them by wire to outside listening posts. This climaxed in 1964 with removal of 52 microphones from the American embassy in Moscow and 55 from the embassy in Warsaw.

Gentile said such eavesdropping installations were possible in the first years after World War II, when U.S. diplomats moved into buildings which had not been under U.S. guard.

"The technological advances of electronics and miniaturization have made these wired systems obsolete" and around-the-clock guarding of U.S. embassies prevents hostile agents from maintaining them, he said.

Gentile figured modern safeguards pretty well protect against uninvited listening at U.S. embassies, but he said continuing vigilance is needed because "you never can be absolutely sure."



A transmitter was put secretly in the heel of a shoe worn by a U.S. diplomat overseas.