

Ex-Post Correspondent Disputes Report of KGB Ties

Former Moscow Bureau Chief, Editors Dismiss Time Story Attributed to Soviet Defector

By Howard Kurtz
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Freelance journalist Dusko Doder yesterday dismissed as "ridiculous" and "insane" an allegation reported by Time magazine that he accepted \$1,000 from the KGB while working as The Washington Post's Moscow bureau chief in the mid-1980s.

The allegation, made in 1985 by a high-ranking Soviet defector, triggered an FBI investigation that found no evidence that Doder was working with the Soviet intelligence service.

"If you think you can buy the bureau chief of The Washington Post for \$1,000—my income that year was close to \$100,000," Doder said in a telephone interview. "It's insulting. If you were talking about \$100,000, then it wouldn't be insulting, just a lie."

In a statement, Post Executive Editor Leonard Downie Jr. and Managing Editor Robert G. Kaiser called the Time story "inaccurate and misleading in many ways that do Doder an injustice." They said the paper's inquiry into the matter six years ago "failed to find any evidence from U.S. government agencies or any other source that would support the allegation that Doder was a dupe or agent of the Soviet government or the KGB."

The Time article, to be published

after checking with American officials in Moscow, told The Post the story was untrue, prompting the newspaper to take it off the front page after the first edition and soften some of the language. The Soviets announced Andropov's death the following day.

Doder has said he pieced the story together from such clues as late-night activity in government offices and the fact that Soviet television and radio programming had switched to classical music.

Doder criticized the CIA in a 1986 opinion piece in The Post for its "clumsy handling" of the case involving American journalist Nich-

olas Daniiloff, whom the Soviets detained on espionage charges. Doder wrote that Daniiloff had been "used by the CIA station in Moscow."

Part of the Time article involves speculation about Doder's Soviet sources. Arthur Hartman, former U.S. ambassador to Moscow, told Time it was his "impression" that Doder had a "very good source" who was "probably KGB direct."

Downie and Kaiser called the comment "irresponsible," saying Doder's reporting was "embarrassingly more timely and accurate than that of Hartman's 'embassy' or the CIA" and that these officials "have long sought to discredit it."

Doder, 55, who was born in Yugoslavia and came to the United States as a young man, graduated from Washington University in St. Louis and received an MA degree in history from Columbia. He was head of The Post's Moscow bureau from 1981 to 1985. After taking leave to write a book, he covered national security affairs in Washington for The Post, then resigned from the newspaper in 1987 to cover China for U.S. News & World Report. He left the magazine two years later and now lives in Belton, where he writes for the Boston Globe, the Baltimore Sun and a European newspaper.

in the issue appearing Monday, says that Vitaly Yurchenko, a senior KGB colonel who defected to the United States in 1985, told U.S. officials that he had heard from KGB colleagues that Doder once accepted a \$1,000 payment from a KGB officer in Russia.

Three months after his highly publicized defection, Yurchenko suddenly eluded his CIA handlers and returned to Moscow, prompting some CIA officials to conclude that he had been a double agent. Time says Yurchenko's allegation about Doder "cannot be proved."

In 1986, after Doder had returned to Washington and begun a new assignment covering national security affairs, then-FBI Director William H. Webster told Benjamin C. Bradlee, then The Post's executive editor, about the Yurchenko allegation that had been made more than a year earlier. Bradlee said in an interview that The Post's attorney, the late Edward Bennett Williams, "grilled" Doder and that the newspaper's inquiry found no evidence that Doder had any ties to the KGB. He remained on the national security beat.

According to Time, the FBI later arranged a sting, furnishing Doder with classified information to see if he would pass it to the Soviets, but he did not.

"Webster told The Post that the FBI had concluded that there was no evidence that Doder had done anything improper or had any connection to the KGB," Downie and Kaiser said in their statement. "Time was told this repeatedly but failed or refused to say so in its story."

Bradlee said he could not believe

that Time would publish a "hearsay charge" by "a double defector."

Time spokesman Robert Pondiscio responded that "the story was carefully reported and scrupulously edited and is fair to all parties concerned." He said the author, Jay Peterzell, had interviewed more than 60 intelligence officials, diplomats, KGB officers and journalists.

The article raises a broader question about Doder's reporting, recounting some of his exclusive stories in Moscow and suggesting that they must have been leaked by high-level Soviet sources. "Did the KGB co-opt Doder? Or was it the other way around?" the magazine asks.

Doder said he cultivated a variety of Soviet sources, and that some, such as Foreign Ministry officials, may have had KGB ties. Doder said the leak of the Yurchenko claim to Time reflected "a clear case of vendetta" by the CIA, which he said had been repeatedly embarrassed by his reporting.

"The CIA was humiliated," he said. "Day in and day out, my judgments proved more accurate. . . . I was fluent in Russian. I knew how to deal with these people."

One of Doder's biggest scoops was his Feb. 10, 1984, report in The Post that there were signs that then-Soviet leader Yuri Andropov had died. Then-Undersecretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger,