

Ex-CIA Agent Given 5 Years in Ex

Former Operative Admitted Demanding \$1 Million in Return for

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Former CIA covert operative Douglas F. Groat was sentenced to five years in prison yesterday after admitting attempts to extort money from the agency. He told the judge that he had fought back against the CIA's attempts to silence him after a work-related dispute.

A CIA officer for 16 years, Groat pleaded guilty in July to one count of extortion in demanding \$1 million for not disclosing to foreign governments how the United States intercepts their communications. In return for the plea, prosecutors dropped four additional counts of espionage, including two that could have carried the death penalty.

The government had alleged that Groat disclosed to foreign

governments classified national defense and cryptographic information. By reaching a plea agreement, the government avoided a trial that could have required disclosing embarrassing CIA operations against foreign embassies.

U.S. District Judge Thomas F. Hogan said yesterday that he believed Groat had no intention of harming national security but noted, "You let your judgment lapse."

In a three-page statement submitted to Hogan, Groat stated, "I admit I put pressure on the government to resolve our dispute and I

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— U.S. District Judge Thomas F. Hogan,
addressing Douglas F. Groat

have used some of their own tactics against them. But I have paid dearly for standing up for my beliefs and fighting for fair and just treatment."

A specialist in covert operations that included breaking into foreign embassies overseas, Groat was placed on administrative leave in 1993 after repeated arguments with his supervisor over the way covert operations should be undertaken.

In his statement, Groat said he first got into trouble in 1990 because he reported "serious flaws"

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Not Disclosing Secrets

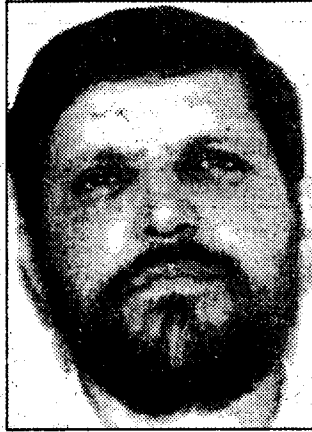
in an operation "that could have gotten my teammates and me captured." Rather than taking his report seriously, Groat wrote, his superior "lashed out at me and threatened to end my career." Groat also criticized the CIA inspector general's office, calling it "an extension of the CIA bureaucracy, primarily concerned with damage control and protecting management."

A CIA spokesman said yesterday that the agency would have no comment on Groat's allegations.

During the three years he was on administrative leave, receiving full pay, Groat became increasingly angry as officials debated his future. Because he took part in highly classified operations, agency officials were concerned that at some point he might disclose past CIA activities to foreign governments or the press.

At one point, he sent the CIA letters demanding that the agency give him \$1 million in exchange for not contacting foreign governments and offering his services as a consultant in the field of communications security. The agency rejected his monetary demands and dismissed him in October 1996.

A few months later, according to prosecutors, Groat told the CIA he intended to embark upon a plan to "discuss offering my knowledge and services, as a paid consultant, to select foreign governments." In July 1997, he wrote to the CIA



FILE PHOTO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Former CIA covert operative Douglas F. Groat pleaded guilty to extortion in July agreement.

offering to "suspend any and all actions that may interfere with Agency intelligence gathering activities" in return for \$1 million.

Groat had already made contact with two foreign governments that have not been publicly identified. After he was indicted in April 1998, prosecutors indicated that they were aware of his communications with foreign nationals and had audiotapes of the discussions.

Groat's sentence, which follows the terms of the plea agreement, calls for the prison time to be spent in a minimum-security facility. Upon his release, he will be put on three years of supervised probation. As part of the plea, Groat promised that he would never disclose any classified information learned during his CIA career or offer secrets to any foreign government.