

## Former U.S. official says a tip by CIA led to South Africa's arrest of Mandela

Cox News Service

WASHINGTON — For nearly 28 years the U.S. government has harbored an embarrassing secret: a CIA tip to South African intelligence agents led to the arrest that put black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela in prison for most of his adult life.

Now, with Mr. Mandela en route here to a hero's welcome, a former U.S. official has revealed that he has known of the CIA role since Mr. Mandela was seized by agents of the South African police special branch Aug. 5, 1962.

The former official, now retired, said in an interview that within hours after Mr. Mandela's arrest, Paul Eckel, then a senior CIA operative, walked into his office and said approximately these words: "We have turned Mandela over to the South African security branch. We gave them every detail, what he would be wearing, the time of day, just where he would be. They have picked him up. It is one of our greatest coups."

With Mr. Mandela out of prison, the retired official decided there is no longer a valid reason for secrecy. He called the U.S. role in the affair "one of the most shameful, utterly horrid" byproducts of the Cold War struggle between Moscow and Washington for influence in the Third World.

A spokesman for Mr. Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada, said that the African National Congress had long been aware of rumors of a CIA link to Mr.

Mandela's arresting officers, but that he is sure Mr. Mandela bears no resentment. "He accepted the invitation [to the United States], didn't he?" Mr. Kathrada said.

In the summer of 1962, the CIA's covert branch in Johannesburg saw the ANC as a threat to the stability of a friendly South African government. That government not only had just signed a military cooperation agreement with the United States but also served as an important source of uranium.

Five years earlier, the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria had cabled Washington that South Africa's black educated elite was "psychologically susceptible to the extremes of black nationalism or communism," and had influence "extending beyond the borders of South Africa into and among the native leadership of other African countries." An open conflict pitting blacks against whites in South Africa "could become a cardinal threat to American security," the cable warned.

Interviews in the United States and in South Africa portrayed a CIA covert branch in Johannesburg that by 1962 devoted more money and expertise to penetrating the ANC than did the tiny, fledgling intelligence service of the South African government.

Retired South African intelligence operative Gerard Ludi recalled: "At that time, we never had the funds. So we didn't have a proper intelligence department. There were only about three of us in 1962. But the

CIA at that time was flush with funds. They helped us a lot."

Mr. Ludi said that at the time of Mr. Mandela's arrest, the CIA was running a highly successful agent in the inner circle of the ANC branch in Durban. That agent provided his case officer with an ongoing account of ANC activities there. He said that case officer was his longtime friend Millard Shirley, whom he identified as the CIA's chief undercover agent in Southern Africa.

The CIA said its standing policy is not to comment on allegations.

CIA involvement in Mr. Mandela's arrest has been rumored since the mid-1980s. But pro-Mandela sources have known only that Aug. 4, 1962 — the night before his arrest — he came out of hiding to attend a dinner party in Durban with 12 to 15 longtime confidantes affiliated with the ANC's Durban branch.

Mr. Mandela was arrested at a police roadblock the next morning as he drove out of Durban in an Austin belonging to a white theatrical producer. Biographer Fatima Meer quotes Mr. Mandela as remembering that a South African police sergeant instantly saw through his false identity: "He said he knew that I was Nelson Mandela and he had a warrant for my arrest."

Mr. Ludi said he does not know whether Mr. Mandela's arrest resulted from information the CIA was gathering from its Durban agent. He said that he was working outside South Africa during that summer.

Mr. Eckel died in 1986.

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A tip from a paid informant of the Central Intelligence Agency led to the 1962 arrest of African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported yesterday.

Quoting a retired U.S. "intelligence officer" who was stationed in South Africa at the time, the newspaper said a senior CIA official claimed credit for Mandela's capture within hours of his arrest on Aug. 5, 1962.

"We have turned Mandela over to the South African security branch," the intelligence officer, who was not named, quoted the CIA official, Paul Eckel, as saying in substance. "We gave them every detail, what he would be wearing, the time of day, just where he would be. They picked him up. It is one of our greatest coups."

Tried on charges of sabotage and conspiracy to overthrow the South African government, Mandela, now 71, spent 27 years in prison.

Freed in February, he will come to the United States next week for a 12-day visit scheduled to include a ticker-tape parade in Manhattan, a rally at Yankee Stadium and a speech to a joint session of Congress.

There have been persistent reports in the past of CIA involvement in Mandela's arrest, but yesterday's account was the most detailed.

According to the Journal-Constitution, the unnamed intelligence officer said he discussed the subject with Eckel again after Mandela was sentenced. He said Eckel told him that details about Mandela's whereabouts came from a paid informant who communicated with the CIA through a series of "cutouts," or intermediaries.

Mandela had organized the military wing of the African National Congress, Umkhonto-we-Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), and it had decided in December 1961 to end the ANC's policy of nonviolence and begin armed struggle. He was smuggled out of South Africa in January 1962, but returned secretly that June.

In August, he went to Durban, accompanied by an old friend. On the night of Saturday, Aug. 4, according to one of his biographers, Mandela attended a dinner party in

Durban with 12 to 15 longtime associates in the local branch of the ANC. He was stopped at a police roadblock the next day near Howick Falls in Natal Province, 80 miles inland from Durban.

Gerard Ludi, a retired South African intelligence operative who said he had infiltrated the Communist Party, said yesterday he knew the CIA had a "deep cover" agent in the ANC and Communist Party branches in Durban at the time.

Ludi said the secret informant's case officer was Ludi's longtime friend, Millard Shirley, a high-ranking CIA official in South Africa.

"Millard was very proud of that operation," Ludi said.

Shirley died several years ago in an auto accident in Swaziland. Eckel, who served in the Office of Strategic Services, predecessor of the CIA, in the closing days of World War II, died in 1986 in the Atlanta area where he had retired. He was posted as first secretary to the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria from 1957 until 1962 and later worked on the staff of the National Security Council.

Ludi, who was in the Soviet Union when Mandela was arrested, said he didn't know whether the CIA had tipped off the South African police. He said "the CIA helped us, but not on any grand scale." He said he doubted the CIA would have been interested in Mandela's daily movements.

According to the Atlanta newspaper, however, the unnamed U.S. intelligence official who is its main source was so concerned about the CIA's role that he reported it after Mandela was arrested to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Henry J. Tasca, then responsible for dealings between the CIA and the State Department's African Affairs Bureau.

The official reportedly told Tasca that Mandela was fundamentally an African nationalist, not a communist. Tasca agreed and consulted "higher authorities." The result, the Journal-Constitution said, was that prior State Department approval was required from then on before dissidents could be turned over to South African authorities.

This never happened again, the unnamed official told the newspaper, although approval was requested for at least three other South Africans.

According to reports in the mid-1980s, the U.S. official who delivered the information about Mandela to authorities in Durban was Donald Rickard, allegedly a CIA officer working as U.S. consul there. Now retired and living in Colorado, he declined to comment then and he declined again yesterday.

*Lardner reported on this story from Washington, Ottaway from Johannesburg.*

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