'French Connection' Plot Thickens

By Morton Mintz
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NEWARK, N.J., April 18—

A three-day interrogation of the French counter-espionage agent who smuggled $12 million worth of heroin into the United States a year ago reveals that a key report implicateing his superior disappeared in Paris after arrest here.

A transcript of the questioning also disclosed that the agent’s mistress and a son were harassed by French authorities and that a member of the French consular staff in New York City, identified for the first time, was to be his contact if trouble unrelated to the smuggling should develop.

The 368-page transcript may revive a furor in France over claims by French police and judicial authorities that they have not covered up for the cooperation he professed.

The questioning was conducted here last month, mainly by investigating magistrate Gabriel Roussel of Paris. It provides rare glimpses into the agency, SDECE (Service de Documentation Exterieure et de Contre-Espionnage).

The record of the interrogation was made public Monday by Donald A. Robinson, counselor for the agent, Roger X. L. DeLouette of Paris, when DeLouette, 48, received a minimum five-year sentence.

Judge Frederick B. Lacey, who imposed the sentence, and U.S. Attorney Herbert J. Goldstein, who imposed the sentence, were present.

On March 15, three days after the agent’s arrest, the French police arrested a U.S. Customs inspector, Lynn Pelleteri, 21, making a routine spot-check of the interior of the VW, noticed sunlight coming through a hole in a front installation panel — the result, apparently, of a screw having shaken out in transit. Curious, she reached behind the panel — and plucked out a package of heroin.

Under a French-American agreement on narcotics trafficking, DeLouette was questioned the day after his arrest by a French policeman then assigned to the consulate, Daniel Hartwig, who took notes, and by U.S. customs agent Paul Boulard, who made a tape recording.

In a statement, DeLouette named the man he called the mastermind of the smuggling scheme as an SDECE department head known to him as "Col. Paul Fournier," who since has been identified as Paul Ferrer.

At one point, when the customs agent went to another room, Hartwig, Hardwig and DeLouette said, "to tell me that I should never have said this to the Americans," the agent said.

The transcript disclosed that Hartwig phoned someone in Bordeaux to look for a room. And, at Roussel’s request, police interrogated the student for 71/2 hours and searched his room "in order to seize his letters," DeLouette said.

On March 11 — a day after the interrogation ended — Stern sent Roussel a tape of the recording made by the customs agent, Boulard, a year ago.

But, DeLouette said, she subsequently was indicted for possession of $17,000 counterfeit U.S. currency, which he said was in her apartment but of which she was "totally unaware." She was jailed for three months and was "liberated" only two days before giving birth. Recently, Roussel lifted her passport, temporarily preventing her from coming to see DeLouette.

In his statement to Hardwig, DeLouette told of being requested by Ferrer to meet a certain SDECE employee who then gave him an envelope containing the $17,000. DeLouette, following instructions, went to an Italian town on the French border, Marseilles, to deliver it to a contact.

But Ferrer cancelled the meeting, suggesting instead that DeLouette take the counterfeit currency to Algeria. The agent declined, not wishing to risk a severe penalty. He said the money was in a bureau drawer in the apartment when he left for the United States.

Last October, DeLouette said, one of the six children by his marriage, a son, arrived in the university community in Bordeaux to look for a room. And, at Roussel’s request, police interrogated the student for 71/2 hours and searched his room "in order to seize his letters," DeLouette said.

In a statement, DeLouette named McNabb, Hardwig and the top narcotics official of the Police Judiciale, Claude Chamadas, called on McNabb to show him photos of DeLouette.

Stern, in a confrontation with Roussel during the interrogation last month, protested that Hardwig made a report on the question of DeLouette that got to French police, but, somehow, according to Roussel, did not reach him. Stern also recalled to Roussel a statement by the magistrate that Hardwig had claimed that DeLouette had never mentioned McNabb.

Last April, DeLouette said, Hardwig "gave me his word" that if he supplied the address of his mistress, Marie-Jose Robert, then 22 and pregnant, "nothing would be done against her."

But, DeLouette said, she subsequently was indicted for possession of $17,000 in counterfeit U.S. currency, which he said was in her apartment but of which she was "totally unaware." She was jailed for three months and was "liberated" only two days before giving birth. Recently, Roussel lifted her passport, temporarily preventing her from coming to see DeLouette.

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A grand jury indicted Ferrer, as well as DeLouette, last Nov. 15. Not until after that was there any public knowledge of the behind-the-scenes legal wrangle between French authorities and Stern and his top assistant, Jonathan L. Goldstein.