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CIA, Not KGB, Eliminated Double Agent, Soviets Hint

Reuter

MOSCOW, Aug. 17—A Soviet weekly newspaper said today that a Soviet defector who disappeared in Austria 19 months ago on a counterintelligence mission for the FBI may have been killed by American agents.

The story in Literary Gazette, quoted from files of the KGB, the Soviet secret police, directly contradicted U.S. officials' statements about the case of Nikolai F. Artamonov, alias Nicholas C. Shadrin.

He disappeared in Vienna Dec. 20, 1975, when he was supposed to be meeting KGB agents by appointment.

At the time Artamonov/Shadrin had been acting as a double agent for the FBI for nine years. He defected in 1959 and was employed by the Defense Intelligence Agency.

President Ford formally raised the matter of Artamonov/Shadrin's disappearance in a letter to Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. U.S. officials and Artamonov/Shadrin's wife, a McLean, Va., dentist, believe that her husband was kidnaped by KGB agents and taken to the Soviet Union.

Brezhnev answered Ford by saying that he has read the entire file of the case. He confirmed that the missing man had been a Soviet naval officer who fled to Sweden in 1959. In 1966, Brezhnev said, Artamonov/Shadrin approached Soviet diplomats in Washington asking to be allowed to return.

Brezhnev said Moscow had agreed to the defector's request for a meeting in Vienna in December 1975. He

repeated his desire to return to the Soviet Union, Brezhnev said, but failed to appear for a second meeting two days later.

Today's article repeated the same argument, adding unmistakable hints that the CIA—not the KGB—was behind the disappearance.

"I don't want to believe the worst," it quoted his supposed KGB contact, Igor Orlov, as saying. "But knowing the methods of the CIA, I find it hard to believe that he is being kept in detention."

Orlov—a pseudonym, the newspaper made clear—was a member of the Soviet embassy in Washington in 1966 when Artamonov/Shadrin allegedly offered to provide information on the workings of U.S. intelligence. Orlov, who maintained regular contact with the missing man, met him again in Vienna, a week before Christmas 1975, just two days before he vanished.

Orlov said Artamonov/Shadrin pressed him about an appeal he had asked him to pass on, requesting permission to return to the Soviet Union.

"To come back to the homeland ... was his dream. He understood that he would be dead if the Americans found out about it," he said.

The KGB agent said he promised to do all he could and arranged to meet again two days later, but Artamonov/Shadrin failed to show up.

"American special services have long resorted to the physical annihilation of people who pose a threat to them," the weekly added.