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Testimony On Betrayal Of Berrigan

SF Chronicle

Harrisburg, Pa.

Star government witness Boyd Douglas testified yesterday that he prepared in advance his betrayal of the Rev. Philip Berrigan so authorities "would realize the threat of these people to the United States."

Douglas said he turned FBI informer against Father Berrigan partly because as a strict Catholic he was concerned about the actions of the militant anti-war priest and six codefendants on trial with him on federal conspiracy charges.

Douglas said Father Berrigan recruited him as a courier to smuggle mail in and out of the Lewisburg, Pa., federal prison where both were convicts in the summer of 1970. Douglas was attending college under a prison release program.

Among such letters were two said by the government to have concerned a plot to kidnap presidential aide Henry Kissinger.

Douglas, 31, also testified that Father Berrigan revealed to him a scheme to blow up heating tunnels in Washington buildings.

"He told me he had been in this system along with another individual. He had been down in the tunnel system himself posing as an electrical engineer . . ."

Douglas testified that he made copies of letters he smuggled in and out of prison for Berrigan. When asked why he made the copies, Douglas said:

"I knew it would be only a matter of time before the institutional authorities knew I was carrying out contraband material.

"I felt if I had enough evidence to produce at the time that the authorities would believe what I was telling them, not only about the conversations, but also about the letters, and they would realize the threat of these people to the United States government."

As he feared, the government claims, Douglas' smuggling of the letters was uncovered.

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