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U.S. Marshals Run Special

By Douglas Watson
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"Restricted Area — U.S. Govt. Training Center," says the sign on the barbed wire-topped fence surrounding a barracks at Ft. Holabird on the edge of Baltimore.

The sign doesn't say it, but the barracks is one of several "safe houses" that the U.S. Marshals Service operates for the special care and feeding of very important prisoner-witnesses such as Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt, political saboteur Donald Segretti and stock manipulator Joel Kline.

Three to five "safe houses" have been in existence around the country for about a year, usually holding about 50, mostly white-collar, "principals," as they like to call themselves. They are federal prisoners who usually were involved in organized crime and who are considered too valuable as government witnesses or too endangered by threats to be incarcerated in the usual prison.

The "safe houses" aren't country clubs — there are guards, strict rules and a daily regimen. But those being held in them, usually for no more than six to eight months, cook their own meals, don't wear prison garb and are urged to use assumed names.

Safeguarding the "safe houses" is but one of the U.S. Marshals Service's many roles. Matt Dillon, fictional U.S. marshal in the 20-year-old Gunsmoke television show, would be surprised to learn that today's real marshals and their deputies also carry out such varied functions as:

- Providing new identities—meaning new names, new jobs and new homes in another part of the nation—last fiscal year for 122 government witnesses whose lives were threatened because they had talked to police and investigators.

- Bringing in a task force to Washington this spring to help find and arrest 2,000 fugitive felons sought on warrants issued here, the largest number of at-large federal suspects in any American city.

- Maintaining a 150-man "special operations group" that was called on last year to restore law and order to Indian-occupied Wounded Knee, S.D. and whose riot-ready members can assemble anywhere in the country within hours to keep peace.

- Operating a nationwide bus system to transport federal prisoners that in its first two months this spring has carried 1,200 prisoners back and forth across the country with far fewer marshals needed as guards than would previously have been.

- Temporarily seizing nearly 3,000 ships during the past three years whose captain, crew or owners were charged with various federal crimes.

Having widely varying responsibilities is nothing new for the U.S. Marshals Service, the nation's oldest federal law enforcement agency, which on Saturday officially became a full-fledged bureau of the Justice Department.

The office of U.S. Marshal was created by the Judiciary Act of 1789, with President George Washington appointing the 13 original marshals, one for each state.

During their 185-year history, U.S. marshals and their deputies always have served the federal courts, but at one time or another they also have taken the census, supervised the prisons,

executed courts-martial, administered alien laws, helped win the West, hunted the brewers of illegal beverages, apprehended counterfeiters, acted as undercover agents and even protected government surveyors.

In the 1950s and 60s U.S. marshals often were called on to protect the civil rights of those seeking to desegregate Southern communities. More recently they were assigned for four years to prevent air piracies at key airports. The Marshals Service is now helping guard more than 1,200 armories around the nation and starting a truck cargo protection program in 16 cities.

Despite their varied activities, or perhaps partly because of them, the nation's present 94 U.S. marshals, one for each federal court district, and their 1,600 deputies have a low public profile.

The "safe houses" located on both the East and West Coasts are an example. The Marshals Service does not identify their locations or even say exactly whether it is now operating three, four or five of them.

It is nothing new for federal courts and prosecutors to ask the marshals and their deputies to provide special protection for certain highly valuable and vulnerable prisoner-witnesses, considered "stool pigeons" by the criminals they are testifying against.

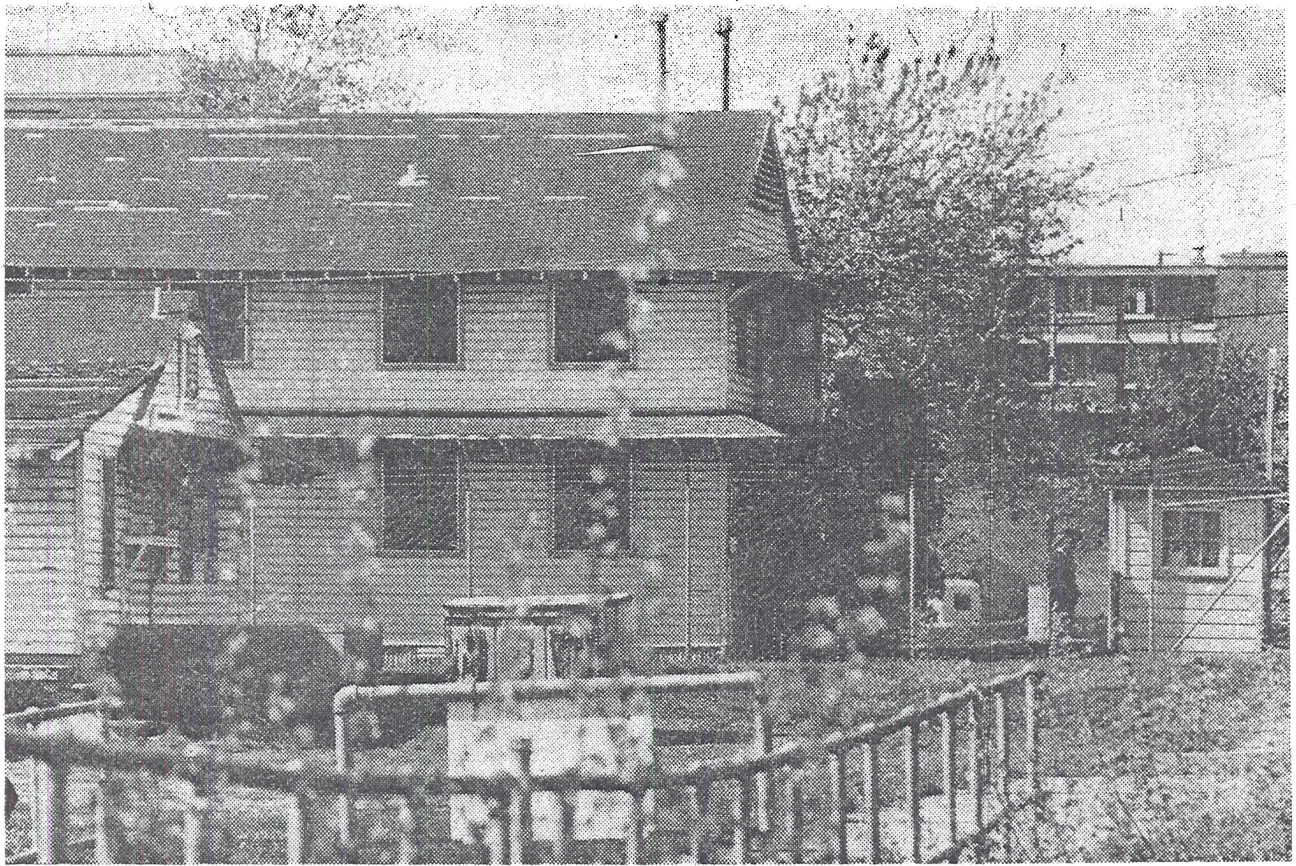
But until about a year ago such special prisoners were usually guarded in ho-

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Jails for Special

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Prisoners



By Linda Wheeler—The Washington Post

The U.S. marshals facility at Ft. Holabird, which houses special prisoners, is shown in a side view.



Members of the marshals "special operations group" undergo an inspection.

tel or motel rooms, which was an expensive and not especially secure practice. The "safe houses," which are guarded around the clock by deputy marshals, provide better protection while keeping the prisoners more readily available for weeks and months of questioning by federal investigators and for courtroom appearances as government witnesses.

Joel Kline, a key government witness against former Baltimore County Executive Dale Anderson who was convicted in March of extortion and tax evasion, spent most of his 4½ months as a federal prisoner either being questioned in Baltimore's federal courthouse or being held in the two-story barracks that serves as a safe house at Ft. Holabird, with two small guard houses situated along the surrounding fence.

The "safe houses" observe U.S. Bureau of Prisons regulations, according to a Marshals Service spokesman. But the marshals don't pretend that they are the same as the typical prison.

One of the "principals" is regularly escorted by a marshal to a local supermarket to buy groceries that he and his fellow prisoners will then prepare. They don't wear uniforms, but their own informal clothes—slacks, sports shirts, even bermudas. They are provided with small allowances and, often, with some family support.

The prisoners are encouraged to use assumed names

and not to talk to each other about their crimes, a standard topic in most prisons. But the "safe house" residents don't need such warnings, usually already fearing violent retaliation for what they are revealing to federal investigators and not sure who really composes their small group of a dozen to a half-dozen fellow prisoners.

The Marshals Service last fiscal year provided special protection for 551 witnesses, including many not held in "safe houses." Different identities and relocation to another part of the country were provided for 122 of these people so they could start new lives free of the fear of retaliation.

No witness under protection by the Marshals Service has ever been assaulted. Deputy marshals credit their protection with encouraging many criminal informers who would have been afraid to talk before, with deciding cooperating with the government is now their safest course.

Deputy marshals have long had the job of finding and arresting federal fugitives that other law enforcement and investigative bodies haven't been able to track down. Though the Marshals Service arrested 18,474 suspects last fiscal year, a backlog of 22,000

outstanding warrants for federal fugitives had developed.

To reduce the number of wanted felons, the Marshal Service started last fall bringing in a rotating group of about 30 deputies to a particular city for an intensive manhunt for long-sought suspects. The task force was used in Minneapolis, Baltimore and Los Angeles.

Starting April 1, about 30 outside deputy marshals joining with deputies from the Washington district and local police began a special search for 2,000 federal fugitives sought by the courts here, the largest number in the country because this is a federal city where all crimes are federal crimes. After one month's hunting on the city streets, 78 suspects had been quietly arrested.

The Marshals Service "special operations group" is one unit that has gotten plenty of publicity. After marshals deputies were called on in 1971 to remove a dissident group from the Puerto Rican island of Culebra, the Service created the S.O.G. to be ready to meet similar disturbances, wherever they occur.

The S.O.G. men, all volunteers who work as regular deputy marshals when not called to a crisis situation, have been used to remove Indians occupying

Alcatraz Island, and most prominently, at the protracted Wounded Knee confrontation where gunfire was exchanged for weeks, wounding and paralyzing one U.S. Marshal as well as injuring another federal agent.

Temporary seizure of nearly 3,000 vessels in the past three years, usually done in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard, is another little known activity of the Marshals Service.

Most are American ships that are held until fines are paid or other legal actions are taken. Some are foreign vessels that have encroached within the 12-mile limit.

The Marshals Service no longer is involved in protecting 41 airports against skyjackings. But in the four years that it was, deputy marshals aborted or prevented 29 possible hijackings, made 4,300 arrests, including more than 1,000 for narcotics violations and more than 400 for carrying concealed weapons. They confiscated \$18 million worth of narcotics and \$2 million in U.S. currency. No flight screened by the Marshals Service was hijacked.

Because more than \$1.5 billion dollars in cargo shipments, mostly by truck, is stolen each year, the Marshals Service recently has begun coordinating a program in 16 cities that seeks to reduce such losses.

Such special assignments accounted for 31 per cent of the Marshals Service's manpower last year, with 27 per cent used for prisoner handling, 16 per cent for court security, 11 per cent for serving almost 400,000 legal papers, 7 per cent for administrative functions, 5 per cent for training and 3 per cent for making arrests on outstanding warrants.

The Service, has expanded the number of its deputies by about 50 per cent since 1969. A recent civil service examination for 80 deputy marshal positions drew over 3,000 applications, though the starting salary is only \$8,055.

The Marshals Service was ordered by the Justice Department last year to promote the hiring of minority-group members in what had been a largely white organization. A spokesman for the Service said blacks now total account for 17 per cent of the 1,600 deputies. The largest proportion of these are assigned to the local marshal's office here, which is the largest in the country.

The Marshals Service's image was not given any luster by the sentencing three years ago of its director, former Major Gen. Carl C. Turner, once the Army's top law enforcement officer, to three years in prison for stealing 136 firearms given him by the Chicago police department for Army use. A Marshals Serv-

ice spokesman quickly noted that the crimes did not occur while Turner was its director.

Wayne B. Colburn, the Service's present director, was appointed to the post in 1970, previously having been U.S. marshal in San Diego and a 20-year veteran of that city's police department.