

FBI, Soviet agents engage in silent U.N. intrigues

WASHINGTON — Behind the diplomatic drama of the United Nations, Soviet KGB men and American FBI agents engage in a silent game of espionage and intrigue.

They keep one another under surveillance, compile dossiers on each other and lurk in the shadows with hidden cameras and tape recorders. The KGB plants agents and both sides recruit Secretariat informants.

All of this, of course, violates U.N. rules outrageously. Ugly pressure is brought on the informants, for example, to violate their U.N. oath that they will not "accept instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any government or other authority external to the organization."

We have documented the case of a South American, seeking U.S. citizenship, who was assigned to work in the Secretariat under a high-ranking Russian. Not long after he applied for citizenship, the South American received a confidential telephone call from the FBI. He was asked to stop by an FBI office where he was pressed to furnish information about his Soviet superior.

The FBI agent was polite and made no mention of the pending citizenship application. But the dismayed South American feared his application would be rejected if he didn't cooperate.

Applicant 'stupefied'

He was "stupefied" by the information that the FBI had already gathered about the Russian. But the FBI wanted the prospective citizen to report on the Russian's daily schedule, to sneak glimpses into his appointments book to listen for any unusual telephone calls, to make a note of all but routine visitors, to monitor the letters he wrote, to keep track of his travels and, significantly, to note any personal quirks or romantic inclinations.

The unhappy South American, whose identity we have agreed to withhold, didn't want to spy for the FBI in violation of his U.N. oath. But he also didn't want to jeopardize his chance of becoming a U.S. citizen. He put the FBI off, at first, by reporting that the Russian was secretive about his activities. Then the Latin got a new position—far enough removed from any Russians that the FBI let him off the hook.

Main espionage center

Of course, the FBI had good reason to be suspicious of the Russian. KGB agents

over how to handle Soviet spies. Over the past decade, the U.S. has expelled only 11 Soviet U.N. employees. But the FBI has accumulated enough evidence to justify ousting several others.

The State Department feels that their

Jack Anderson

back-alley activities aren't harmful enough to risk upsetting Soviet-American relations and that the expelled diplomats would merely be replaced by other spies anyway. The Kremlin would also retaliate by expelling American diplomats from Moscow where it's more difficult to arrange replacements.

Usually, the State Department has prevailed. But the FBI occasionally takes matters into its own hands.

This happened only a few weeks ago. The FBI had evidence that Vladimir Paulichenko, a top U.N. public relations official, was a key KGB agent. This information was quietly leaked to The New York Times just as his five-year U.N. contract came up for renewal. Since the State Department didn't expel him, the FBI hoped the publicity would force Russia to pull him out.

This is how the game is sometimes played behind the scenes at the United Nations.