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U.S. Aide Is Killed In Greece

From News Dispatches

ATHENS, Dec. 23—Richard S. Welch, special assistant to the U.S. ambassador to Greece, was shot to death outside his suburban home here tonight, a U.S. embassy spokesman said.

Welch's name was among seven on a list of alleged U.S. Central Intelligence Agency agents working in Greece published recently by the English-language daily Athens News.

A police spokesman said Welch, 46, a first secretary at the embassy, was shot in front of his villa in the fashionable suburb of Palaion Psychiko, about eight miles from the Greek capital.

Three masked gunmen drew up in a car, one got out and shot Welch three times. He died soon after he was rushed to a hospital, the police spokesman said.

(According to intelligence sources in Washington Welch was CIA chief of station in Athens at the time of his murder. A CIA spokesman in Washington, asked about Welch's alleged undercover activities, replied: "The agency does not confirm employment, either past or present. It never has and never will." A State Department spokesman said he did not know if Welch worked for the CIA.)

Welch and his wife Kiki were apparently returning to their residence from a Christmas party given by U.S. Ambassador Jack B. Kubisch for hundreds of Greek and American guests. Mrs. Welch was reportedly unhurt in the shooting incident.

Welch was a career diplomat with previous overseas service at the U.S. embassies in Peru, Guatemala and Cyprus.

A 1951 graduate of Harvard, he spent nine years as an

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economic analyst for the Department of the Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1960. He was assigned to the embassy here about five months ago.

When it published the names of alleged CIA agents, the Athens Daily News said it had received the list from an organization calling itself "The Committee of Greeks and Greek-Americans."

The committee said in a letter that Welch's job was "to see that the government of Premier Constantine Karamanlis does not get out of control." It did not say how Welch did this.

A few days later another previously unknown organization calling itself "The Committee to Keep

Greece Greek" sent the Athens News a letter naming 10 alleged agents of the Soviet KGB, or secret police, working in Greece.

The News refused to publish the KGB list but foreign news agencies received a copy of it and published the story.

There has been some anti-American feeling in Greece, stemming from belief in some quarters that the United States supported the Turks in their invasion of Cyprus last year. Many Greeks also believe Washington propped up the military junta that ruled Greece for seven years before the Cyprus crisis.

Diplomat's Death Laid to Publicity

While President Ford expressed his shock and sorrow

at the murder in Athens of U.S. diplomat Richard S. Welch, a former CIA official said that such tragedies become "inevitable" because of recent exposures of CIA personnel.

David Phillips, president of the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers and a close personal friend of Welch said in Washington yesterday that his organization for several months "has expressed its concern for a number of American foreign service officers abroad because of their identification as CIA officers by a small group of ex-intelligence people who have been engaged in a program of exposing intelligence officers."

Phillips, who retired from the CIA in May of this year,

identified Philip Agee, another former CIA employee, as the main "protagonist" in the effort to identify CIA agents abroad. In a recent book Agee named more than a hundred CIA agents, both Americans and others of foreign nationalities.

Phillips said "our association believes that the murder of Welch in Athens represents the tragic kind of occurrence which becomes inevitable" through the practice of identifying CIA agents as practiced by Agee.

President Ford, vacationing in Vail, Colo., said he was "shocked and horrified by the terrorist murder" of Welch. The President said "the hearts of all Americans go out to his family in sympathy and in gratitude."