

Anti-CIA WXPost Press Cited In Slaying

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ATHENS, Dec. 24—Sensationalist anti-Americanism in Greek newspapers and worldwide publicity for Washington investigations of CIA "black" operations preceded the murder of U.S. diplomat Richard S. Welch here.

This early conclusion of Greek and U.S. observers here about Welch's assassination late yesterday in suburban Athens seems likely to stand, whatever may be eventually proven about the crime.

Both Greek Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis' government and U.S. Ambassador Jack Kubisch's staff were working to limit damage to Greek-American relations, already badly battered by alleged U.S. involvement with the late dictatorship here and the Cyprus crisis and its aftermath.

Karamanlis, vacationing on the island of Corfu, telephoned the ambassador to express his condolences.

An organization calling

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itself the Union of Officers Struggling for the National Ideal claimed responsibility for the murder and threatened to assassinate other "CIA agents," news agencies reported.

Men identifying themselves as members of the group telephoned Athens newspapers and said, "From now on you will hear of us often." Police, reporting they had never heard of the organization, said they attached no importance to the phone calls.

In an intensive search for the three masked gunmen who shot Welch in front of his home, police checked hundreds of cars leaving Athens with Christmas holidaymakers.

An embassy spokesman said security for senior U.S. officials here has been stepped up. Greek police assigned extra guards and patrol cars to suburbs where American and other foreign diplomats live.

The murder came after a Greek paper called Welch the CIA's Athens station chief.

Many Greeks from all walks of life have blamed the CIA for installing two army juntas in power here between 1967 and 1974 and for the 1974 coup against Cypriot President Makarios and the resulting Turkish invasion of the island.

But an additional basis for the peculiarly Greek variety of anti-Americanism was provided by the emergence of

Athens as an alternate base to war-battered Beirut for American businesses in the Middle East. About 50 U.S. firms have transferred here from Beirut.

The sensational, mass-circulation daily Ta Nea recently carried this headline: "CIA headquarters moving from Beirut to Athens." The accompanying story said some 200 CIA were moving to Athens "under cover of the U.S. multinational corporations."

Another newspaper claimed that the American University of Beirut, which is searching for funds to continue operations there, would "move to Rhodes or Crete" and would "function as a big CIA front" in Greece.

After a major anti-U.S. demonstration here last month, Ta Nea alleged it had photographed U.S. marines with "machine guns" on the embassy roof. An embassy spokesman replied that the fuzzy photos really showed pipes being repaired on the embassy roof. Ta Nea promptly seized the word "pipefitters", transformed it into "plumbers" and reminded readers of the Watergate plumbers.

Police, who described the murder of Welch as a "very professional job," declined to speculate on the identities or motives of the killers. But three theories were uppermost in speculation about the assassins' identities:

(1) Non-Greeks—Palestinian Arab leftists or others opposed to any improvement in relations between the U.S. and the Palestine Liberation

Organization, whether or not such a group was linked to the one which kidnaped OPEC oil ministers in Vienna Monday.

Newspapers here quoted Mrs. Welch as saying her husband's murderers were three dark-skinned men, perhaps Arabs. Ta Nea said police sources thought they could be Turks. The implication was that the murder could further disturb troubled Greek-Turkish-American relations.

(2) Greek leftist extremists, anxious to embarrass Prime Minister Karamanlis. His good relations with Washington have withstood the strong tides of anti-U. S. sentiment.

(3) Rightist extremists, perhaps linked to the junta which Karamanlis replaced when he returned to power during the Cyprus crisis. Yannis Horn, publisher of the English language Athens News, said he believed no Greeks were involved but, if they were, they could have been extremists of the junta's military police.

One unanswered question was who gave Horn the story naming Welch as the CIA station chief in Greece along with the names of other alleged CIA officers here.

In a telephone interview, Horn expressed sorrow at the murder but added, "I received a piece of news. I printed it, as the U.S. and world press does." Horn said he knew at least one of the Committee of Greeks and Greek-Americans signing the article as highly reliable, but would not say more.

Soon after the article appeared other Athens papers printed a list of 10 alleged Soviet KGB officers here and named its Soviet Embassy first secretary Sergei Trokhine as station chief.