

CIA 'Cover' Transparent ^{CIA (A)}

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Agents Identifiable in Public Papers

By Laurence Stern
Washington Post Staff Writer

A former colleague of Richard S. Welch, the slain Central Intelligence Agency station chief in Athens, deplored yesterday the lack of adequate protective "cover" for clandestine U.S. operatives abroad.

Mike Ackerman, who served with Welch in a two-man CIA post in what was then British Guiana in 1968 and 1969, said in an interview that CIA agents can be readily identified in overseas missions from documents available publicly at the Government Printing Office.

The documents, the Foreign Service List and the State Department Biographical Register-known intramurally as the "stud book"—generally separate bona fide diplomats from spies by different foreign service rankings.

Ackerman said the administration and particularly the State Department, share the blame for the leaky cover afforded intelligence operatives. He observed that State insists on "identifying its own officers as an elite within embassies" and that "it categorizes CIA officers separately in its departmental directories, and thus simplifies the task of fingering them."

Regular foreign service officers are designated in the

list by the initials FSO after their name, indicating foreign service officer. Intelligence agents using State Department cover are usually designated FSR, meaning foreign service reserve. Needless to say, many who bear FSR status do not work for the CIA. They may, for example, be political appointees to ambassadorial posts.

Nevertheless it is possible to determine from clues in the Biographical Register—such as unexplained lapses in service, assignment to other departments such as the Army or Air Force—who are using their State Department affiliation as a "cover" and who are working in open diplomatic duty.

Welch, for example, was listed in the directory as an FSR and a political officer for the Department of the Army from 1951 to 1960. This was a period when the Army was providing cover for CIA personnel.

In addition to the U.S. documentary clues to Welch's intelligence background, the 1968 publication "Who's Who in the CIA" listed him as an operative—along with Philip Agee, the former CIA operations officer who is now devoting himself to the exposure of his former

colleagues in the American intelligence service.

David Phillips, former chief of CIA operations in Latin America and now leader of the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers, observed yesterday that "in the perfect espionage world, you would have perfect cover in the embassies—in other words you'd be an FSO."

Phillips said there has been pressure from within the State Department to eliminate the "light cover" afforded CIA agents through FSR status. "It would mean increased cost to taxpayers for providing deeper cover, which costs more money."

The advantages of embassy cover, the former CIA official said, are "security, rapid communication, available office space and entree to society in the post. . ."

In large diplomatic missions the station chief is usually known publicly by his title, often special assistant to the ambassador, and by his residence, and his car as well as his prior career in other missions.

Generally the senior intelligence officers in foreign posts of the CIA and the KGB, Soviet intelligence, are known to each other. Often, by mutual agreement, these principal officers do not target operations against each other.