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Slain CIA Agent Receives Unusual Honor

By Eugene L. Meyer

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Richard S. Welch, the Central Intelligence Agency station chief whose slaying last week in Greece shocked the American intelligence community, came home yesterday in a flag-draped coffin to an unusual reception by government dignitaries and high CIA officials.

The body of the 46-year old CIA agent, accompanied by his 23-year old son, Marine 2d Lt. Patrick Timothy Welch, arrived in a C-141 Air Force transport at Andrews Air Force Base shortly after 7 a.m.

Those who gathered in the chill dawn to pay tribute to the slain agent included the highest official in the U.S. intelligence establishment, CIA director William E. Colby, and presidential counselor Philip W. Buchen Jr.

As the casket was carried from the plane by a Bolling Air Force Base honor guard, Welch's first

wife, Patricia, and their 17-year old daughter, Molly, placed their right hands over their hearts and the daughter burst into tears.

Also in the group of 30 lined up to mark Welch's arrival were Deputy CIA Director Vernon Walters, agency spokesman Angus Thurner, David Phillips, president of the Retired Intelligence Officers Association, Arthur Hartmas, assistant secretary of state for European affairs, and his deputy, Bruce Langin.

"The President asked me to come out," said Buchen, the lone White House representative. Welch's death, he said is "all part of a general terrorist scheme, apparently. I don't know what can be done."

Welch was shot to death Dec. 23 outside his suburban Athens home after he had been identified in an English-language Greek newspaper as a CIA agent. He had previously served in U.S. embassies in Peru, Guatemala and Cyprus. An American

magazine, "Counterspy," had earlier identified him as a CIA operative in Peru, where he served from 1972 until his transfer to Greece last May.

For the CIA, the airport ceremony represented rare acknowledgment that one of its agents had been killed. The agency will hold a memorial service for Welch later today at its headquarters in Langley. It will be a ceremony for agency employees only, including those in sensitive positions whose identities have to be protected.

No reporters or photographers will be admitted to the service. United Press International reported. It will be held in the white, dome-shaped auditorium just outside the main entrance to the headquarters building.

The reception yesterday for Welch began around 6 a.m. in darkness when television crews began setting up in a fenced-in "media area" on the Andrews air field.

See WELCH, A4, Col. 3



By Doug Chevalier—The Washington Post

CIA Director William E. Colby and slain agent Richard Welch's former wife Patricia lead sobbing daughter Molly away.

CIA Agent's Body Given Reception

WELCH, From A1

"Tell that plane to do a great 360 (degree turn) up there for 15 minutes," a TV technician setting up his equipment told Air Force Lt. Lois Galan, a public information officer. "He's coming into the area early," she said, "but they'll keep him up until seven."

Inside the terminal, family and official greeters waited in a VIP lounge. On the field, there was a "ramp freeze," during which, Lt. Galan explained, "no trucks move, no people are allowed to move around. It's a security precaution," done routinely whenever the President lands at Andrews.

The big Air Force transport landed and stopped parallel to the terminal and was flooded by bright television lights. The black Cadillac hearse from Gawler's Funeral Home in Washington pulled up near the rear of the aircraft.

The mourning party lined up between the hearse and the plane. A four-man color guard joined them, then the honor guard, which disappeared up a ramp into the plane. It emerged carrying the casket, which it placed in the hearse before marching slowly away. The hearse drove off, and the mourners dispersed.

The entire ceremony lasted perhaps five minutes.