

CIA
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WXPost JAN 1 1976

Colleagues Pay Tribute To Welch

Former colleagues yesterday honored Richard S. Welch, the Central Intelligence Agency agent killed in Athens last week, in an unusual and emotional private ceremony that included eulogies and the singing of the National Anthem.

Welch will become the 32nd star on an honor roll of agents who died "in the service of their country" in intelligence operations. The stars are engraved in the marble of the CIA building's lobby. Sixteen on the present list are identified, the others are anonymous.

The half-hour ceremony, closed to the media, was held in the white-domed auditorium outside the agency's headquarters in Langley.

Only CIA employees or their relatives were allowed to enter and a spokesman said "people were turned away."

Welch's sons, Marine Lt. Patrick T., and Nicholas, a student at Leeds University in England, were among the mourners. Patrick accompanied his father's body from Athens on Tuesday.

A CIA official who was present said, "The service opened with the singing of the National Anthem followed by introductory remarks by the director for operations (William E. Nelson). Then there were remarks by (CIA director) Bill Colby, who talked about Welch's scholarship, his knowledge of foreign affairs."

Welch, 46, who was a Greek classic scholar before entering intelligence work, held the intelligence medal of merit and commendations from ambassadors under whom he served, the official said.

"He will be getting posthumously the intelligence star," he said. "That would be the 32nd star."

"The assemblage sang 'America the Beautiful' and the service ended."

Welch, who was shot Dec. 23 outside his Athens home, "was the first chief of station murdered by political assassins," the official said.

Welch had been named as a CIA agent by an English-language Athens newspaper and a publication called Counterspy, put out by a Washington-based organization called Fifth Estate.