

COVERS FOR C. I. A. GROWING PROBLEM

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Recent Naming of Agents Is
Forcing a Major Shift in
Covert Assignments

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 15—The increasingly frequent identification of people as Central Intelligence Agency personnel abroad has convinced senior American Intelligence officials that they should abandon the practice of trying to pass off C.I.A. officers as State Department employees, a well-placed Administration source said today.

"It's obviously not a viable system, or won't continue to be in the future," the source said of the arrangements in which agency operatives are thinly disguised as political and economic counselors in American embassies abroad.

But the source added that the difficulty involved in altering the covers of hundreds of C.I.A. employees around the world was "mind-boggling," and that the agency at present had "no idea how to do it."

The problem, he said, had been left in abeyance until William E. Colby, the current director of Central Intelligence, is replaced by George Bush, his designated successor who has not yet been confirmed by the Senate.

Mr. Colby, the source said, was one of those who had agreed, following the identification of dozens of alleged C.I.A. officers by the American magazine *Counterspy*, that "some kind of new cover arrangements" were necessary.

The naming by *Counterspy* of those it said headed the C.I.A.'s stations in various countries became the focus of a controversy last month when Richard S. Welch, chief of the Athens station and one of those named by the magazine, was shot to death by gunmen in an Athens suburb.

Since then, publications in France, Britain and Spain have printed the names, and in some cases private telephone numbers and home addresses, of individuals whom they allege to be working for the C.I.A. in their countries.

Winslow Peck, a spokesman for the Organizing Committee for a Fifth Estate, the group that publishes *Counterspy* as part of its self-described effort to "demystify" the C.I.A., said today that he had "confirmed" for the French newspaper *Libération* the identities of the 32 individuals it named as C.I.A. employees on Tuesday. On Wednesday the French paper printed 12 more names.

K. Barton Osborn, another committee official, said in a telephone interview today that Mr. Welch's death had not deterred the group from its plan to name alleged C.I.A. operatives in France, Sweden and Angola in the issue of *Counterspy* to be published at the end of this month.

Mr. Osborn, who like Mr. Peck helped to found the organizing committee two years ago, rejected any responsibility for the Athens murder, noting that Mr. Welch and others had been named as C.I.A. officials by a Greek newspaper a month before his death.

Where the Greek publication obtained the names of Mr. Welch and lesser C.I.A. officials working in Greece has not been determined. Up to now, *Counterspy* has published only the names of C.I.A. station chiefs who, like Mr. Welch, are in many cases fairly well known in their host countries.

But Mr. Osborn said that the next issue of the magazine would also name subordinate C.I.A. officers if their true roles as intelligence operatives could be confirmed.

Mr. Osborn said that the group's research capability was limited by its dependence on public records and documents, as well as by its meager funds, which are obtained from selling *Counterspy* at \$6 a year to about 3,000 subscribers and from a smaller number of \$15 annual contributions.

He conceded that *Counterspy*, for these and other reasons, might eventually err in its identification of individuals as C.I.A. employees, but dismissed the possibility as unlikely that such a case of mistaken identity might jeopardize an individual's life.

The committee's motive in publishing the names of Mr. Welch and others, he said, was not to advise "the man in the street in Paris" about C.I.A. activities inside his country.

Rather, Mr. Osborn said, the committee hoped to demonstrate to the American people "the scope and vulnerability of diplomatic cover," which he said had been "very badly used" by the C.I.A.

In addition to its three full-time staff members, the Organizing Committee has a string of unpaid "advisers," who Mr. Osborn said included himself, Phillip Agee, and Victor Marchetti, two former C.I.A. agents who have written books on the agency, and a number of lawyers and others active in liberal causes.

Statement by Agee

PARIS, Jan. 15 (UPI)—Former C.I.A. agent Phillip Agee said today that he had helped news organizations throughout the world identify United States intelligence agents, but denied having identified Richard Welch in Greece.