

Cover-Up Scandal Within the CIA



Jack Anderson

THE Central Intelligence Agency apparently has violated the law in an attempt to cover up a sexbugging scandal involving two CIA officials.

Now, under the prodding of the National Wiretap Commission, the Justice Department is finally digging into the case.

A suspicious wife feared her CIA husband might be having a homosexual affair with a CIA superior. She hired private detective Donald Uffinger to investigate.

Tape recordings contain evidence that the detective and his chief assistant, Robert Peters, provided a tiny microtransmitter for the wife to conceal in her home. Thereafter the two private eyes, with the wife listening in, monitored the bug from a neighbor's house and from a parked car, the tapes disclose.

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ONE NIGHT, as Uffinger, Peters and the wife were huddled around the radio-monitor in the car, they heard the two CIA officials engaging in what sounded like a compromising act. The eavesdroppers barged into the house with a camera.

There was a scramble as one of the CIA men lunged at Peters' camera.

Uffinger floored the fellow with a punch, and the wife and two private eyes departed triumphantly with the film.

The episode got back to the CIA whose security chief at the time, Howard Osborn, began a secret investigation. The two accused CIA officials told us they informed the CIA about the bug.

Under Federal law, bugging is a crime, and failure to report the crime is a prison offense. Yet the CIA made no such report, according to the FBI, the Justice Department and the U.S. Attorney, David Hopkins.

The wife, meanwhile, sued for divorce, and the two CIA officials were eased out of their jobs; one through retirement; the other through forced resignation.

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FOR A TIME it appeared that the CIA coverup had been successful. But then detective Uffinger fired his assistant, Peters; and the veil of secrecy began to slip. The disgruntled Peters talked about the case to businessman Richard Bast, formerly Washington's most celebrated private detective. Peters told all about the sex-bugging episode.

The case would have been killed if Bast, troubled over the coverup, hadn't taken it to the new Federal Wiretap Commission.

Assistant Attorney General Henry Petersen, who wanted no more coverup criticism after the Watergate investigation, has reopened the case. He has ordered Hopkins to conduct a "four-square" investigation into every aspect of the bugging and the CIA coverup.

Footnote: Uffinger, one of the East Coast's best known private detectives, told us emphatically there was "no truth" in what Peters told Bast on the tape recordings. Peters was "trying to sell himself, blowing smoke," he said.