

CIA's Elaborate Cover for Start of Glomar Adventure

By Seymour M. Hersh
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The Central Intelligence Agency used secret stairways, fake offices, hideaway apartments and even set up a spurious marine engineering concern here as part of an effort to maintain the secrecy of its 1974 attempt to salvage a sunken Soviet submarine, according to a participant in the project.

The participant, Wayne R. Collier of Houston, who was in charge of recruitment for the unsuccessful project, told in a recent series of interviews of elaborate and expensive cover efforts that he said were employed by the CIA.

Collier, who now works for an oil company, also said that the CIA, anticipating success in the project, had planned to announce publicly the recovery of the entire submarine in an effort to curb the growing criticism of the agency for its role in the Watergate scandals.

In an earlier published interview, Collier and his younger brother, Billy C. Collier had told how a human error had been responsible for the CIA's failure to recover all of the submarine, which sank in 1968 about 750 miles north of Hawaii. Only the forward third of the vessel was salvaged, according to their story.

The brothers said the main recovery vessel, the Glomar Explorer, was built ostensibly for Howard R. Hughes' Summa Corp. The vessel was said publicly to be managed by Global Marine Inc., a California-based shipping concern known for



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WAYNE R. COLLIER
CIA project recruiter

its expertise in deep-sea drilling and exploratory work.

A new subsidiary of Global Marine, known as Global Marine Development Inc., which had about 75 employees, was established in separate quarters in the Tishman building in Los Angeles. And it was in those offices, Collier said, that he began recruiting for the ship's crew.

The emphasis in recruiting, he said, was on those men — primarily southerners — who would unquestionably accept the CIA's explanation for the necessity of the salvage operation and the secrecy that went with it. But only about 20 per cent of the men and women employed by the development compa-

ny knew the true purpose of the Glomar Explorer's mission, he said.

The CIA's headquarters for the recovery program were in a small office building in the San Fernando valley, outside of Los Angeles, that also was leased in part by the Summa Corp. Even in that building, Collier recalled, the CIA men made a practice of leaving the elevator on the fifth floor and then walking up a specially built staircase to a series of secret offices on the sixth floor.

Collier said that a senior CIA official once said that deception was necessary because there were, in fact, some offices on the sixth floor that had been leased to the Veterans' Administration, a federal agency. Since the fifth floor offices were marked "Summa Corp. Global Marine," Collier said, it was decided not to run the risk of having a CIA official observed both going into the Global Marine offices on the fifth and also going to the sixth floor, where there were known federal government offices.

The CIA's concern, Collier said, was that someone would conclude that the Global Marine offices were associated with the government. "This may sound silly," Collier added, "but it was one of the agency's methods of operating and they were very strict with the policy."

On Fridays, Collier said, officials from the development company and from CIA headquarters would meet to discuss the operation in one of two "safe houses," fashionable apartments leased in nearby Santa Monica and Long Beach. The apartments were regularly inspected for wiretaps, bugs, or other means of electronic surveillance by CIA security men, he said.

Collier said that those project members who were not in the CIA had another term for the apartments — "cool houses." "That was because they were cool to talk in and cool to party in and play in," he said.

Once recruited and cleared for a briefing on the submarine recovery project, a process that often took three months or more, Collier said, the crew members were provided with two weeks of intensive training by the CIA at a special facility near Redwood City in San Mateo county.

There the men studied rudimentary Russian, he said, and received intensive instructions on what to expect aboard the Soviet vessel.

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