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Probably the strangest detective agency in the world is DOFO

by Emile C. Schurmacher

*The recent publicity surrounding a Washington scandal has revealed very little about the most hush-hush organization in America. Known as DOFO, the Division of Foreign Operations, this agency became involved in recent headlines when Otto F. Otepka, chief security evaluations officer, was dismissed from his post for giving secret information to a Senate subcommittee.*

*It is not the controversy between Mr. Otepka and his superior, John F. Reilly, deputy assistant secretary of state for security, that this article is concerned with, but the fantastic cloak and dagger aspects of DOFO, probably the strangest detective agency in the world.*

NOT LONG AGO the U.S. military attaché of one of our most sensitive embassies in Europe was visited at his home by an American who looked like a tourist, with a camera suspended from his neck and a leather camera bag slung over his shoulder.

Instead of filters, exposure meter and similar accessories usually carried by amateur photographers, the bag contained several compact and ingenious electronic detection devices.

Two of these were of special usefulness: a small gadget somewhat like a miniature mine detector could locate a microphone hidden in a wall; and a radio frequency probe could indicate the presence of a concealed tiny transmitter.

The "tourist" was a counterespionage agent working for DOFO, the Division of Foreign Operations, Office of Security, U.S. State Department. He was one of about 30 experts who constantly check our embassies and the homes of U.S. diplomatic personnel at 94 U.S. foreign service posts in 86 countries throughout the world. His job was to guard against eavesdropping by espionage agents and spies.

The U.S. military attaché received the agent hospitably and conducted him to the living room. The family pet poodle was curled up napping on the floor. When they began to talk the poodle suddenly woke up, howling and whining as though in pain.

"Curious about our dog," the military attaché remarked. "She's been behaving like that lately. There doesn't seem to be anything wrong physically. You'd think she actually resented conversation."

The agent suddenly began to study the poodle with more than casual interest. He watched as the dog ran to a corner of the room, whining and growling at some invisible enemy.

The agent held up a warning hand. "Let's try a little experiment," he said. "For the next 30 seconds neither of us will speak."

The two men lapsed into silence. So did the dog. She relaxed.

Half a minute went by. Then the agent said: "I think this room is bugged."

At the sound of his words the poodle again began to howl.

"And now," the agent added with conviction, "I'm absolutely sure of it!"

He crossed the room to where the poodle stood and looked closely at the parquet floor. It showed signs of recent tampering. Methodically, he removed the squares of parquet. Under one of them, near the corner of the room, a tiny FM radio transmitter was cleverly concealed in the hollowed-out sub-flooring.

No bigger than a lump of sugar, and wired to a battery the size of a match box, it was capable of broadcasting normal conversation as far as a block away!

The military attaché was staring at the ingenious device, his face a study in mixed incredulity and indignation.

"Is this why my dog has been carrying on so strangely?"

"That's right," the agent explained. "Whoever concealed the transmitter here doesn't expect to return to replace the battery. Therefore, to conserve the life of the battery, the transmitter is only activated by the sound of voices. The sending signal is too high pitched for the human ear to hear, but like those silent dog whistles, it's disturbing, if not painful, to your pet."

But for the agent's visit, important diplomatic secrets discussed in the supposed privacy of the U.S. military attaché's home would have continued to be overheard by Communist espionage agents stationed in a room somewhere within a block radius of the house.

"The Case of the Howling Dog" is unusual in that the counterespionage agent detected the eavesdropping device without using his anti-eavesdropping apparatus.

"We rely heavily on scientific techniques," declared a State Department spokesman. "Rapidly advancing technology has been a great help to us in detecting eavesdropping operations in our posts abroad—especially behind the Iron Curtain.

"Our Office of Security has expanded its technical security operations to combat this threat to the privacy of our embassy offices and official residences."

This expansion is shown in the State Department's appropriation for anti-eavesdropping devices. Three

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