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Wilson Greased Palms of Key Public Officials

With a habit he developed in the CIA, renegade ex-agent Edwin P. Wilson was able to lubricate his illicit international business deals by greasing the palms of key officials here and abroad.

A former Wilson associate claims he witnessed payoffs to several members of Congress.

One was actually bold enough to visit Wilson's corporate headquarters in Washington, D.C., and pick up envelopes of cash.

On one occasion, a senator, no longer in Congress now, accepted a payoff in a Capitol Hill bathroom, relates the source.

Fearful of discovery, the senator insisted that he and Wilson's courier crowd into a stall, where the swag was passed to the sound of a flushing toilet.

One thing is certain:

Wilson knew at least half a dozen members of Congress he felt entitled to ask for favors. One former associate said Wilson sometimes paid off his congressional pals by picking up the salaries of various secretaries.

In most cases, the initial contacts were made at Wilson's sprawling Virginia estate. The congressional

guest, taken with the camaraderie of the sporting life and impressed by the other movers and shakers who knew Wilson, would figure that his host must be all right.

At least two high-level officials in the Carter White House got to know Wilson that way.

One of them may have delayed the investigation of Wilson because of their friendship, or because federal prosecutors were getting uncomfortably close to Billy Carter's Libyan shenanigans.

On June 25, 1981, I reported that the Justice Department had evidence that Wilson and his partner, another ex-CIA man named Frank Terpil, were "known to bribe U.S. government officials to enhance their businesses."

I referred to a former Energy Department official who subsequently was convicted of taking illegal gratuities from Wilson.

Terpil later told Mike Wallace of the television program "60 Minutes" that he and Wilson had bribed military officers for inside information, that they had also paid off a State Department official for help with false passports.

A former employe told my associate Dale Van Atta how Wilson's bribery worked:

"Ed always carried thousands of dollars in his pocket. He would often drag me to the bathroom of whatever restaurant we were in and hand

me wads of \$100 bills, instructing me what particular job he wanted done.

"He made constant payoffs to a variety of Washington undercover policemen, some of whom would come directly to his office, others of whom we would encounter on late-night visits to the city's watering holes."

The former employe said one or another of Wilson's people would travel to Geneva and withdraw large amounts of cash from Wilson's accounts there.

Usually, he said, it was two female employes, but he pulled the courier duty three times himself.

"I flew directly from Geneva to Montreal and followed Ed's careful instructions to go through the customs line manned by someone wearing a multicolored ribbon," the source recalled.

"From Montreal I flew to Dulles Airport, where a special badge signaled the safe customs agent. Ed seemed to have the right people well taken care of."

Some of Wilson's secret, illicit lines of communication into the federal government were almost unbelievable.

For example, without too much trouble he could get a full financial readout on just about any American taxpayer from at least one contact in the Internal Revenue Service, whose files are supposedly the most carefully guarded of any federal agency.