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Why Moscow is winning

The Marine spy scandal is just the latest U.S. intelligence fiasco, indicating deep-seated problems with no easy remedies

■ For two years, the nation has been rocked by one major spy scandal after another: The Walker family plunders secrets under the Navy's nose, the Pollards snoop on America for Israel, a hard-drinking CIA rogue officer outwits his would-be FBI captors. Now, an equally grave Moscow embarrassment is raising the specter of a worldwide U.S. embassy-security crisis. With cases rapidly piling up—and these are only a sampler—Washington has come face to face with the painful reality of chaos in its counterintelligence apparatus.

Complacency factor

Until now, the guardians of America's secrets have mostly insisted that if the problem were serious, no spies would ever have been nabbed. But, in fact, cash-and-carry espionage by the likes of the Walkers and the others went unnoticed for years before lucky breaks finally triggered arrests. With the Moscow sex-for-secrets scandal expanding, the official attitude is far less sanguine. No one can plausibly deny any longer that the U.S.'s own complacency has left it highly vulnerable to prying enemy eyes. "America has been indifferent to security matters for a long time," says Stansfield Turner, the former CIA director. "We've had a distressing casualness toward the whole business of keeping an eye on suspicious Americans, and now we're seeing the results."

GARY L. KIEFFER—USN&WR

At storm's center: Lonetree, in shackles, departs hearing

Nothing underscores this laxness so much as the still unfolding embassy case. Two Marines who served as U.S. Embassy guards in Moscow stand accused of permitting Soviet KGB agents into top-secret areas after they were sexually entrapped by Russian women. A third Marine has been accused of improper fraternization with Russian women, and a fourth—a former Leningrad sentry—is being held for questioning. Last week, the Pentagon recalled four Marine guards from Vienna for possible Moscow-style violations. The U.S. has replaced all 28 guards in Moscow and is doing the same in Leningrad. Meantime, as pretrial proceedings resumed for Sgt. Clayton Lonetree, the first arrested, Naval Investigative Service gumshoes are busy quizzing 50 Marines in 20 countries about possible security breaches.

The puzzlement is how the embassy spying in Moscow could occur for so long without arousing suspicion. Why, for instance, did no one think it odd that two young Marines—Lonetree and Cpl. Arnold Bracy—would volunteer for dead-of-night shifts? Why post them at their own request to the most secret areas? Why permit them to remain when they made no attempt to disguise illicit friendships with Soviet women? Just as important, why would fellow guards, despite ample reason to inform, stay mute?

The answer to the last question strikes at the very heart of the problem—a refusal to accept, even in the face of mounting evidence, that Americans themselves pose one of the biggest spy threats. "We probably counted too heavily on the dynamic of a high-morale group reporting on each other," admits Arthur Hartman, ambassador during Lonetree's tour. "We thought if someone was going astray, other members would tell us." Yet, incredibly, during more than 250 hours of guard school, Marines got no tips on whistle blowing and only minimal guidance about moral obligations in critically important overseas posts.

Such official myopia is distressingly apparent in many of the cases. Among them: The 18 years of messages handed to Moscow by the Walker family spy ring, the thousand or more documents sold the Israelis by Jonathan Jay Pollard, the multibillion-dollar electronic-eavesdropping program compromised by Ronald Pelton, the description of CIA Moscow operations given the KGB by former officer Edward Lee Howard. Although differing in some respects, these cases have common threads—specifically, the ease with which these turncoats almost cavalierly perused America's top secrets, and the fact that their bizarre behavior signaled no red flags to U.S. counterspies.

Pollard worked under an honor sys-

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tem in which he was expected voluntarily to limit his top-secret access to data on possible Caribbean terrorism, yet he brazenly obtained baskets of sensitive Mideast information. While he repeatedly bragged to friends that he was an Israeli agent, security checks failed to spot him as a risk. John Walker's pre-enlistment history of burglaries hardly seemed the sort of background that would qualify him for a career as crypto-custodian of a command vessel. And no one questioned how Walker could pay for a sailboat and flying lessons. Only his estranged wife's tip belatedly brought him to the attention of investigators.

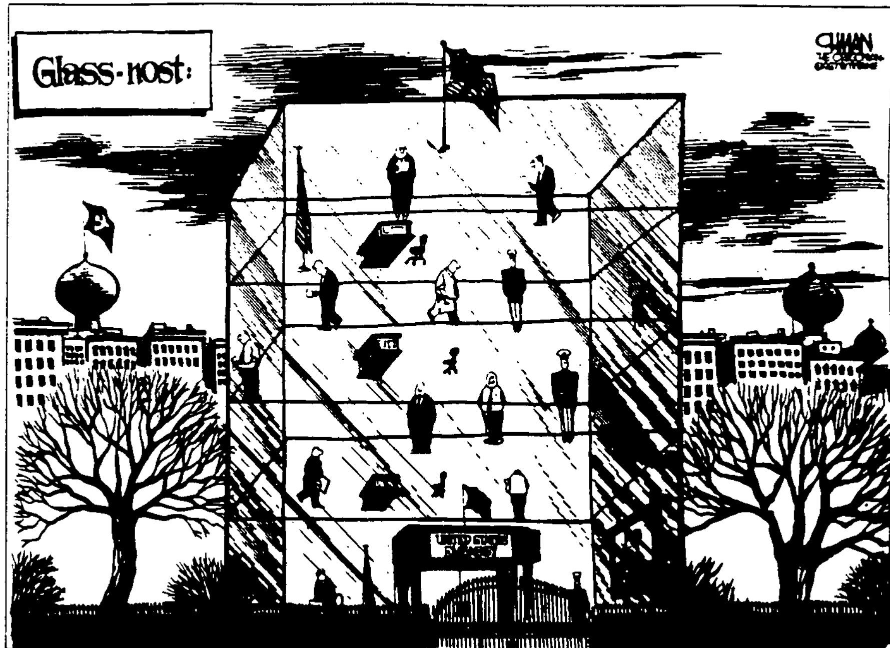
Pelton had severe money troubles and filed for bankruptcy while at the super-secret National Security Agency, later becoming a drug abuser after resigning. His January, 1980, call to the Soviet Embassy was detected through a lawful wiretap, but he wasn't caught until his KGB contact, Vitaly Yurchenko, defected five years later. Howard, too, had severe drinking and drug-abuse problems, and failed a polygraph test before being fired by the CIA in June, 1983. Yet it appears that the CIA was unaware of his merchandising of secrets until Yurchenko tattled. Howard then slipped an FBI tail in September, 1985, later turning up on Moscow television.

Root causes

The spying seems to have flourished because of two things—a deeply ingrained attitude that Americans ought not spy on fellow citizens and a crippling lack of coordination among agencies sharing the counterespionage pie. Of the two, attitudes may well be the most resistant to change.

Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.), a member of the Select Committee on Intelligence, believes the paranoid Watergate-era spying created such fear of intrusion that many officials today shut their eyes to the possibility of traitors in their midst. "You cannot imagine a more benign environment for moles than that in which they can't be believed to exist," he says. "What makes us think we have developed such a corner on morality that our people are not turnable?" Others feel Secretary of State George Shultz compounded the problem by refusing to submit to a polygraph test required of all those cleared to see top-secret information.

Senator Wallop. He says problem is mainly one of attitude



The feeling perceived by Wallop and given dramatic expression by Shultz has led virtually all federal agencies charged with responsibility for counterintelligence to treat it less than seriously. The FBI, the lead agency for domestic counterspying, is reported to have spent far less than Congress provided. One practical result is a shortage of translators to handle the load, sometimes with grave consequences. Sources tell of a Soviet-bloc spy who succeeded in fleeing the U.S. when incriminating statements could not be translated in time.

Other branches have problems as well. At the National Security Agency, no one bears sole responsibility for counterespionage, and many operatives are guided by outdated theories. "They need to adjust . . . in the face of U.S. weaknesses that have become apparent in the 1980s," says one longtime observer of the NSA. At the CIA, counterintelligence is still not a separate career track, which means agents do not always get the chance to develop expertise. At the State Department, the ticket to the top is diplomacy, not security. "One of their problems," says a former CIA official, "is that a whiz kid has no interest in making embassies secure. He wants to wear striped pants." Within the FBI, counterintelligence people are scornfully called "rusty guns."

Even with the long series of embarrassments, there is still virtually no coordination among agencies. The U.S. approach of giving different counterintelligence duties to several branches—chiefly the CIA, FBI, Defense Intelligence Agency and the NSA—is rare for a Western power. For good reason, almost all of America's allies have single agencies doing counterspy work, such as Britain's legendary MI-5, France's DST and Canada's respected Intelligence and Security Service. "What we have is every agency carving out its own little area and no one bringing it together," says a former CIA spook. "We're trying to find out if the Kremlin can break message traffic, the NSA tries to decode traffic, the Pentagon to screen employes, the State Department to find bugs. No one pulls it together, and things fall through the cracks."

The pitfalls became obvious with Howard's defection. When he left the CIA and moved to New Mexico, his old employer didn't inform FBI agents. By the time the FBI was ready to pounce, Howard had plotted an escape.

Yet despite all the foul-ups, few experts recommend a new superagency to handle counterspying. The concern is that it would take years to create and in the meantime might tempt those now handling the task to become less vigilant. Instead, a consensus favors a smaller bureau to coordinate available

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espionage data and make rules for both counterintelligence and security.

Meanwhile, several preventive measures—such as increased use of the polygraph—seem possible. The Pentagon reported last week that it has begun weighing use of random tests on embassy guards as part of a general security shake-up. But the testing, already required of CIA employes, could be applied on a much broader scale. "It has proven one of the most effective deterrents and investigative tools," said Kenneth Bass, a former Justice Department intelligence expert. "I wouldn't send people to jail on the basis of a polygraph, but I would remove them from sensitive security positions."

Years without checkups

More frequent scrutiny of those with top-secret clearances also would cut exposure. With manpower in short supply, many workers go years without undergoing checks aimed at turning up the kind of troubles that could attract a KGB ever alert to personal weaknesses. "Most people aren't problems when they come into service," said an official. "They become one once they're here. The Soviets don't place people in jobs. They recruit them once they're hired."

A more controversial option is to track certain former key employes who once had access to secrets. While intelligence officials believe such a policy would have given them early warning of most big recent spy cases, civil-rights ramifications make it a politically volatile issue. Still, says a congressional analyst, "it makes no sense to have someone cleared for the most sensitive secrets, and when he walks out the door, he's the man who never was. Our greatest vulnerability is from people who have left." A prime example: Walker, whose free-spending ways and peripatetic travel might well have rung alarms had the Navy kept an eye on former top-secret workers. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger said last week that the ring enabled Moscow to decipher more than a million secret messages—"devastating," he said, "in event of war."

But whatever measures are taken, experts agree that they must be applied without exception. Says Bass, the former Justice Department lawyer: "Nothing is more counterproductive than turning the screws on the career people and letting top policy people play by different rules. Of all the people who don't believe in security, the people at the top are the worst." ■

by William L. Chaze with Gordon Witkin, Maureen Santini, Donald Baer, Dennis Mullin and Charles Fenyvesi

DARRYL HEIKES—USN&WR

Interview: Ambassador Hartman

'Preventable'—in hindsight

Arthur Hartman, U.S. ambassador to Moscow during the time that Marine guards are alleged to have spied for the Soviet Union, spoke to U.S. News *at his home in Washington.*

Q Secretary of State Shultz was in Moscow recently for high-level talks. Wasn't it humiliating for him to have to use a trailer in order to have secure communications?

I think it was important that he go. We have known all along that this kind of espionage activity goes on, and so I don't know why people are suddenly so shocked. It shouldn't interfere with negotiations with the Soviet Union.

Q Did anything occur that was puzzling at the time but now makes more sense in light of the fact that the guards admitted Soviet citizens to the embassy building?

People told me there were security-alarm anomalies. The same thing happened with the fire-alarm system, and if you are an enemy intelligence service, you try to reduce confidence in the alarm system.

But we all knew what we should not talk about in our houses, bedrooms, out in the garden or even in my office. Therefore, the only place I did feel secure—perhaps falsely—was in the secure rooms.

Q In your view, were the incidents involving the Marine guards at the Moscow embassy preventable?

In hindsight, everything is preventable.

What we have to determine now is what improvements can be made—possibly getting more-mature, married guards. But other embassies have had difficulty even with married guards.

Q Given the small size of the embassy staff, you must have known the Marines who have been charged—

I think two of them were our guests for Thanksgiving. It was a shock.

Q In retrospect, how do you think a situation developed in which U.S. Marines have been charged with spying for the Soviet government?

We probably counted too heavily on the dynamic of a high-morale group reporting on each other. We thought if someone was going astray, other members of the group would know and tell us.

Q The U.S. is in the process of replacing Soviet nationals who worked at the embassy with American employes. Won't they be just as vulnerable to the KGB as the Marines were?

They will have to be very carefully screened. It's difficult, particularly when you are talking about blue-collar jobs, to recruit Americans to those jobs in Moscow.

People asked how I could have a Soviet driver. I said I would rather have a Soviet driver because, even if I had an American driver, I could not have a secure conversation in my automobile; at least a Soviet driver knew how to get you where you wanted to go.

Q Do you believe the Soviets knew in advance what policy positions the U.S. would take at the Reykjavik summit?

Anyone who knows how this administration treats sensitive issues like arms control knows that even though U.S. positions might leak to the press in Washington, they were not put down on paper and sent to the embassy in Moscow. I would learn more about our position from the Washington press than from the cables.

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