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PAGE A29.

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Ex-Defector Yurchenko Reappears in Moscow

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Vitaly Yurchenko, the high-level KGB officer whose defection last year ended in an extraordinary news conference at the Soviet Embassy here and his return to the Soviet Union, has given a brief interview to a German television correspondent in Moscow to explain that he had dropped out of sight to receive unspecified "medical treatment," but was not dead, as had been reported in the West.

A portion of the interview, a reportedly spontaneous encounter with Yurchenko on a Moscow street, was aired on German TV last month. A copy of the full interview made available to The Washington Post by German ARD television shows that Yurchenko was interviewed twice, once outside and once indoors. He was asked a series of virtually identical questions, and responded with vague and generalized statements.

Yurchenko said he is planning to write about his experience and recently returned to his old KGB job as a security officer for Soviet embassies abroad.

Yurchenko had not been seen publicly since November, when he walked away from his Central Intelligence Agency escort at a Georgetown restaurant and announced two days later before a packed news conference that he was returning to Moscow. Yurchenko gave a second news conference upon arrival in Moscow and then dropped out of sight.

Early last month, National Public Radio reported that Yurchenko had been executed by firing squad and his family was billed for the bullets.

A week later, a German television reporter was said to have "stumbled into" Yurchenko on a Moscow street.

"After the press conference, I have been some



KGB officer Vitaly Yurchenko appears in West German television interview.

weeks in the hospital for medical treatment," Yurchenko said in the interview, "then I have some rest here in Moscow and now I am working again."

Intelligence community sources familiar with the videotape said it was likely that the KGB staged Yurchenko's encounter with an unwitting western television crew to counter the reports that the KGB had executed one of its own.

The CIA, whose officials boasted last summer that Yurchenko's defection was a major intelligence coup, has completed a three-month internal report on its handling of the case. Many intelligence experts have criticized the agency for alienating Yurchenko to the point that he exercised his right to return to the Soviet Union.

In an initial briefing on the internal report last week for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, CIA officials were "torn apart" by critical Republicans and Democrats, according to one member.