

# BRITISH SPY CASE WORRIES U.S. AIDES

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The British Government, however, now in the process of preparing a damage assessment, has briefed American intelligence officials about some aspects of the case. That information was provided by American sources who asked not to be identified.

Mr. Prime's job as a Russian translator at the communications headquarters, these sources said, gave him access to highly classified raw intelligence material flowing into Cheltenham from satellites and ground stations operated by the United States.

## Targets of Surveillance Identified

The material included tape recordings and transcripts of intercepted Soviet communications. While Mr. Prime saw only a fraction of the intercepts that are processed at Cheltenham, the American officials said, those he handled or heard about from colleagues clearly identified some of the targets of American and British surveillance.

Mr. Prime kept the Soviet Union informed about new targets, the American sources said.

In addition, much of the material Mr. Prime received was in code and was given to him for translation only after passing through advanced code-cracking computers at Cheltenham.

By telling the Russians which of their communications had been decoded, Mr. Prime compromised the highly sensitive code-breaking effort, the British have found.

Armed with his warnings, Moscow could change radio frequencies, modify codes or take other steps to make communications secure, cutting off access to vitally important information about Soviet military, economic and political developments.

## Intelligence Sources Lost

How much of this the Russians actually did as a result of Mr. Prime's work is difficult to determine, according to American officials. They said that during the period when Mr. Prime was employed by British intelligence, several key sources of electronic intelligence about the Soviet Union were lost when Moscow changed communication channels or modified codes.

But a precise damage assessment may never be made, according to intelligence officials, because it is almost impossible to determine what prompted the changes.

"You can never tell for sure what led the Russians to change encryption systems or switch to different channels," one senior intelligence official said. "It's what you don't know in a case like this that scares you most."

In addition, some American officials fear that the information gave the Soviet Union an opportunity to plant misleading information in the Western eavesdropping system, possibly distorting basic intelligence estimates and thus affecting foreign policy decisions.

## Recruited in the Early 60's

The American officials said the British had found that Mr. Prime was recruited by the Russians in the early 1960's, when he was stationed in West Berlin by the Royal Air Force.

How he slipped through security checks when hired at the communications headquarters has become a subject of some heat among British intelligence officials, according to the Americans.

The adequacy of security procedures at Cheltenham was questioned in Parliament immediately after Mr. Prime's arrest in July, and the British Government is trying to determine how Mr. Prime escaped detection for so long. His unmasking as a Soviet spy was the result of a sex-offense investigation.

He resigned his job at the communications headquarters in 1977 for reasons that British authorities have not made public, but which were apparently unrelated to security breaches. He then became a wine salesman and later a taxi driver in Cheltenham, 95 miles northwest of London in Gloucestershire.

## Information Provided by Wife

Earlier this year he became the main suspect in an investigation of sexual assaults against young women in the area. When Mr. Prime, who was unemployed at the time, was arrested in July and charged with the offenses, his wife reportedly told the police that she knew nothing about the sex cases but had thought her husband might be a spy.

After several days of additional investigation, Mr. Prime was charged with espionage.

Unlike earlier Soviet "moles" found inside British intelligence services such as Sir Anthony Blount, H. A. R. (Kim) Philby, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess, Mr. Prime did not attend an elite British university or hold a position of prominence in the Government or society.

Instead, he attended a technical college in Staffordshire, England's pottery and porcelain-producing region. He received Russian language training after joining the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Prime, a gaunt-faced man who was something of a loner, was born in the late 1930's in Alton, near Stoke-on-Trent.

The operations of the National Security Agency had been penetrated several times previously by Soviet agents, according to American officials.

Though a final determination must await further briefings by the British, American officials said Mr. Prime's activities appeared to rank among the most serious security breaches in the nearly 30-year history of the National Security Agency.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1982

Associated Press  
Geoffrey Arthur Prime

# U.S. Aides Say British Spy Gave Soviet Key Data

By PHILIP TAUBMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23 — British intelligence officials have determined that a former translator of Russian, charged last summer with espionage, was responsible for one of the longest and potentially most damaging Soviet penetrations of Western intelligence since World War II, according to American officials.

American intelligence officials say that the accused man, Geoffrey Arthur Prime, supplied Moscow with a stream of highly sensitive information about American and British interception of Soviet communications while he was employed as a linguist at Britain's main electronic intelligence center in Cheltenham from 1968 to 1977.

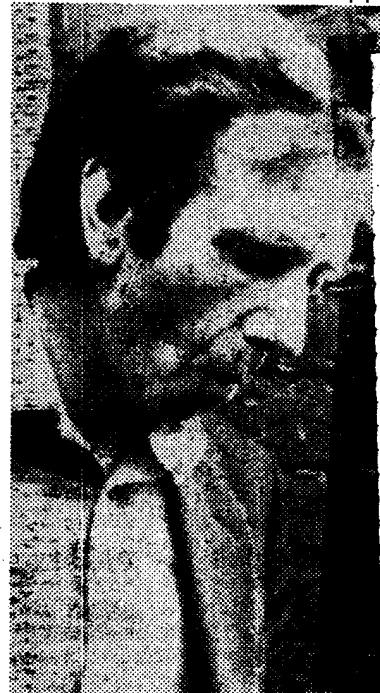
## U.S. Seeking Detailed Account

The interception program is the chief source of intelligence information about

the Soviet Union. It is jointly operated by the United States National Security Agency and Britain's Government Communication Headquarters, with participation from Canada and Australia.

Because the installation where Mr. Prime worked serves as a nerve center of the worldwide eavesdropping and code-breaking operation, American intelligence officials believe that the implications of Mr. Prime's efforts are extremely serious.

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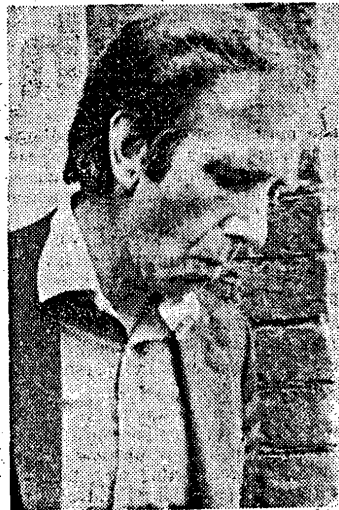
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NY DAILY NEWS 25 OCT 82

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# Spy-der webs crack



Geoffrey Arthur Prime—In position to compromise code-cracking efforts.

The defection of a top member of the Soviet Union's KGB spy agency, who supervised the Kremlin's strategy in Iran, and new disclosures about a British linguist, who gave away the West's code-breaking secrets shook the Soviet and Western intelligence camps yesterday.

The two cases seemed likely to force intelligence networks in both camps to rethink some of their most delicate operations.

British agents yesterday grilled Soviet defector Vladimir Kuzichkin, hoping to obtain a new picture of the KGB's inner workings.

Official sources said that British MI6 intelligence agents were questioning Kuzichkin at a "safe house" in Sussex. The defection of Kuzichkin, 35, a former vice consul in the Soviet

Embassy in Tehran, was disclosed Saturday by the British Home Office.

AGENTS DESCRIBED him as a "big fish" in Soviet spy service who has provided valuable insight into the Russian espionage network.

"He has exposed the long-term subversion plan by which the Russians hoped to generate chaos and gain power in Iran when they felt that conditions were ripe," one published report said.

Sources said Kuzichkin had given British intelligence the names of KGB agents overseas and KGB operational plans.

While Kuzichkin's defection represented a victory for Western intelligence, there were new worries over the potentially sensational case of a British linguist charged with espionage last summer.

Geoffrey Arthur Prime, a 44-year-old Russian language expert, worked at Britain's ultra-secret Cheltenham communications center—the headquarters for all British intelligence communications and the nerve-center of links between the CIA and British intelligence.

PRIME WAS ARRESTED in July, but his case has not yet come to trial. One published report yesterday, quoting American officials, said Prime was responsible for one of the longest and potentially most damaging Soviet penetrations of Western intelligence since World War II.

He provided Moscow with highly sensitive information on the West's attempts to intercept Soviet communications and break the Kremlin's code, the report said. He spied from 1968 to 1977, it said.

## Israel jets

near over



## WHAT ELSE IN THE WORLD

# British Laws Limit Details on Spy Suspect

By Peter Osnos  
Washington Post Foreign Service

LONDON, Oct. 25—On June 28, a man named Geoffrey Arthur Prime appeared in an English country courthouse charged with three counts of sexual assault on young girls over a period of two years. Police claimed that Prime, 44, had drawn up a list of potential victims while working for a taxi company in Herefordshire.

Just over two weeks later, Prime appeared again in the same court. This time his alleged offense was of a vastly different kind: spying. In accordance with stringent British laws on reporting criminal cases, news accounts merely said Prime had been charged under Section 1 of the Official Secrets Act—which even without details meant that the case was serious.

Among the many mysteries in the Prime affair is how local investigators transformed a routine morals arrest into the uncovering of what U.S. officials were quoted over the weekend as saying is potentially the most serious security leak in Western intelligence since World War II.

Officials refused to comment today on reports from Washington about U.S. concern over British handling of the case, in particular, the British refusal to give the United States a full accounting of the suspected espionage. With Prime awaiting trial scheduled for late November, spokesmen said no comment is permitted and that as a national security issue, it is doubly off-limits.

"It would not be right to have further public discussion until the trial is completed," Attorney General Michael Havers said in Parliament.

But there is no inclination here to dispute the basic U.S. view that Prime's alleged supply of highly classified data to the Soviets for the nine years he worked at the Cheltenham electronic intelligence center was a major security breach.

Also not denied are reports that security procedures at the installation, known formally as General Communications Headquarters, may have been lax in the past—since the main allegations against Prime predate the present government, which maintains that it is tightening up security procedures.

After Prime was charged on July 15, British newspapers reported wi



GEOFFREY ARTHUR PRIME

... espionage trial scheduled late next month

stantive details that a spy scandal involving Cheltenham was in the making and that it could be spectacular. Under the British "lobby" system, journalists are given such information by government and opposition sources on the condition that there may be no indication of the source.

The case disappeared from view on July 20 after Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher issued a bland statement in response to questions by opposition members of Parliament, saying, in effect, that the appropriate agencies were looking into security at Cheltenham. "Any charge under Section 1 of the Official Secrets Act is very serious," she said.

As a result of the British restraints on information, little is known about Prime. The youngest of three sons of a gardener, he joined the Royal Air Force in the early 1960s and was taught Russian. He was sent to West Germany, where he learned German and, according to U.S. reports, was recruited by the Soviets.

In 1968 he went to work at Cheltenham, the

network coordinated with the United States, Australia and Canada. By the time he left in 1977, he had reached the senior rank of advanced linguistics specialist and was one of several dozen Russian-language experts. It was apparently his high rank that gave him access to much of the sensitive information on NATO codes and military deployments that he allegedly passed to the Soviets.

According to local sources in the town of Cheltenham, Prime gave "pressur  of work" as his reason for leaving intelligence work. He joined a local mini-cab company, which, among other contracts, transported computer tapes from the base to other locations. This could explain why the charges against him extend until 1981.

Friends said that Prime displayed a marked interest in Russian literature and went to London regularly to Russian cultural exhibitions. But they did not recall him making political statements. Prime was married twice and has three stepsons.

In 1981, Prime joined another taxi company and then briefly worked for a distillery. At the time he was picked up on the morals charges he was unemployed. After his arrest, police said they found a card file of names and addresses of potential victims and a list of women to whom he made obscene telephone calls.

On the issue of security at Cheltenham, British newspapers have printed interviews with Alex Lawrie, who worked as a linguist there for 22 years before retiring last December. The Guardian quoted him today as saying security there is "just about good enough to fend off a well-meaning drunk."

In an interview, Lawrie said, "I always had the impression that the Russians knew a great deal more about [Cheltenham] than I did." He said employees often walked out with computer papers and that gate checks were cursory. "If you go in in a car, you just have to slow down and hold the papers up to the window. It's not a close check."

British intelligence did win a vote of confidence today from former president Jimmy Carter, who in London on a private visit. Saying he had knowledge of any security breach on a scale attributed to Prime while he was president, Carter added "a vote of confidence in British intelligence v