

# Spy 'Bugs' Open New Worlds for Seabees to Conquer

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WASHINGTON

The Seabees were landed in Poland and, in the words of the American ambassador completed their mission without being captured by "the temptations which Warsaw has in abundance."

In a heretofore secret naval foray behind the Iron Curtain, the Seabees spent 18 days last winter rebuilding the American Embassy, where 30 rooms had literally been ripped apart to remove a microphone network presumably installed by Polish intelligence agents.

The sailors performed so splendidly that the State Department has now asked Congress for \$1,644,600 in the coming fiscal year to put 155 Seabees at work around the world restoring other "debugged" places and building special "tanks"—rooms within rooms—where diplomats may converse in safety.

All this came to light yesterday with the release of 1,083 pages of testimony on the new State Department budget before a House Appropriations subcommittee headed by Rep. John Rooney, D., N. Y.

Judging by the experience of the nine-man expeditionary force pioneering in the Polish capital, the selected Seabees have it made. Ambassador John M. Cabot reported to Washington:

"You can understand that we were somewhat apprehen-

sive before they arrived as to where they should be housed, fed, and even more important, isolated from the temptations which Warsaw has in abundance.

"The housing problem was solved by turning the first-floor conference room in the Embassy into a dormitory

. . . A number of Embassy wives took turns preparing a proper dinner for them every night, which was served in our snack bar. On weekends they were invited to the homes of members of our staff for food and entertainment.

"Everything worked out to our complete satisfaction."

Unfortunately, satisfaction hasn't always been guaranteed. Marvin Gentile, new Deputy Assistant Secretary for Security, told the subcommittee why "our counter-audio boys" might find trouble keeping friends after they have torn down plaster walls, ripped up floors and demolished ceilings in order to get at a suspected "bug."

"In the past," Mr. Gentile said, "many posts have been unhappy to have a man go rip up a floor and have to wait indefinitely to have it put together again."

Perhaps Mr. Gentile's previous nine years' service with the FBI and 11 years with the CIA have hardened him to more unpleasant aspects of security work. In any event, he recently ordered every east European embassy interior dismantled because "we have let ourselves be open for a real chance to be had" by the opposition.

The current "de-bugging" cycle started after a tip from a Russian defector, Yuri Nossenko, caused officials to hammer away at the walls of the American Embassy in Moscow. In April, 1964, security men found 40 microphones—embedded and undetected for 11 years.

Based on the Moscow find, Mr. Gentile decided to rip apart the deputy chief of mission's office in the American Embassy in Warsaw, a six-story glass-and-concrete \$1.6 million structure opened in 1963. His search was rewarded Oct. 7 when "we came up with this wired microphone system."

"Naturally, the witness went on, "once you find one microphone, this leads you to a wired system and to all of the other systems . . . down through pillars and such things as that. It is quite a feat to tear these out."

However, a Seabee team of plumbers, carpenters, electricians and plasterers was summoned to patch up the damage. Total cost: \$12,073, a bill that the Poles have yet to pay.

Next year, if the department gets its way, Seabees would take over abroad from native labor. On loan from the Navy, 128 Seabees would fan out on 15 major overseas construction jobs from Baranquilla to Zagreb.

That still leaves a question in Mr. Gentile's mind over security at home base: the \$51 million State Department building here which opened in 1961. As he put it:

"Considering the number of classified documents and safes unlocked that (we) find, we realize we have a serious problem." His solution: hiring 23 more guards at a cost of \$170,400 a year.

Mr. Gentile recalled that Secretary of State Dean Rusk had "invited the American Legion" to study the matter and that a Legion group had submitted a report calling for more guards.

"I have heard a lot of things," Rep. Rooney said, "but this is the greatest."

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