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Otepka Case Safe-Crack Testimony Is Released

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The tools of the trade in the State Department are not all diplomatic: They include a high-speed drill, a pharyngoscope and a fouled-up wiretap.

The lesser-known facets of the State Department operation were revealed in the latest installment of the Otepka series furnished by the Senate internal security subcommittee.

The subcommittee released yesterday the second part of closed-door hearings on its investigation into the case of Otto Otepka, the former top-level security officer in the State Department who was dismissed.

Otepka is now awaiting a Department hearing—currently scheduled for October—on an appeal of his dismissal. He is charged with "conduct unbecoming a State Department officer" because he gave information to the subcommittee.

The Otepka case is part of a broad subcommittee study of State Department security.

Cracking a Safe

The latest volume of testimony does not reveal any new facts on the Otepka case. It deals with already-known information that State Department security officers tapped Otepka's phone and broke in to his safe.

Stanley E. Holden, chief of the technical security branch, provided the information on how the State Department obtains the combination of a safe.

Holden testified he ordered one of his men, Russell Waller, to crack Otepka's safe. Waller used a high-speed drill "to

permit use of a pharyngoscope, a medical instrument," his superior said.

Holden explained that a pharyngoscope is used by doctors to look down a throat, but in the art of safecracking—in the words of subcommittee counsel Jay Sourwine—it "is used to see how tumblers are falling so that you can line up the tumblers and open up the safe."

After Waller cracked the safe, the combination was passed on to John F. Reilly, the chief security officer, who had requested it.

Wiretape Is Flasco

The whole episode puzzled Sen. Thomas Dodd, (D-Conn.), the subcommittee chairman.

"It seems to me you were going at pretty great length to get at a safe in your own department," Dodd said. "What was to prevent Mr. Reilly from saying to Mr. Otepka, 'I want you to open your safe and I want to see the contents of it.'"

Mr. Holden: "Nothing, not a thing, sir."

The tap on Otepka's telephone was a flasco.

George James Pasquale, a former security engineer, testified that Holden told him Jerry Shneider, "one of our men in Frankfurt," was told by Reilly to bug Otepka's phone.

Pasquale: "... apparently, he fouled the thing up in do-it and actually did not do the job right, and apparently Otepka must have noticed there were strange goings-on in his telephone."