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Engineer Enters Guilty Plea To Two Counts of Espionage

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LOS ANGELES, March 14 (AP) — An aerospace engineer today pleaded guilty to espionage, confessing that he tried to pass Stealth bomber secrets to Soviet agents for \$55,000 because he needed money.

"That was the sole reason," the engineer, Thomas Patrick Cavanagh, 40 years old, told Federal District Judge W. Matthew Byrne Jr.

Judge Byrne scheduled sentencing for April 22 and allowed the defense to obtain a psychiatric evaluation of Mr. Cavanagh, who was an engineer at the Northrop Corporation, a prime military contractor.

Speaking so quietly that he could barely be heard, Mr. Cavanagh pleaded guilty to two counts of espionage. Two other counts were dismissed.

"Do you believe those documents, if given to a foreign power, would be injurious to the United States or advantageous to the foreign power, namely the Soviet Union?" Judge Byrne asked.

"It would not be injurious to the United States," Mr. Cavanagh said, "but it would be of assistance to the Soviets."

The Stealth concept involves developing an aircraft designed to frustrate radar detection by avoiding sharp-angled surfaces that tend to reflect radar beams. Outer surfaces of Stealth planes would be coated with special radar-absorbing materials.

Possible Life Sentence

Mr. Cavanagh, of suburban Downey, was accused of taking blueprints and documents about the bomber. Northrop is a prime contractor for the Stealth program. In a December meeting with undercover agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mr. Cavanagh said the information on the Stealth program was worth "billions of dollars," court documents said.

Standing in a blue prison jumpsuit, his hands folded, Mr. Cavanagh said he was giving his plea freely and voluntarily and had considered all possible

defenses before deciding to make the plea. He said he knew he could face two life prison terms.

Judge Byrne asked exactly what he had said to the undercover agents.

"I told them I had documents," Mr. Cavanagh said. "I was in debt and needed \$25,000."

A defense attorney, Manuel Araujo, said he hoped the psychiatrist's report would mean a softer sentence for Mr. Cavanagh. If sentenced to the maximum term, Mr. Araujo said, Mr. Cavanagh could be paroled in 10 years.

An Assistant United States Attorney, Percy Anderson, had said no prosecution request for a lighter sentence was included in last month's plea bargain.

A condition of Mr. Cavanagh's plea was that he be allowed to file an appeal of an earlier ruling by Judge Byrne that the Government legally obtained wiretap evidence in the case.

A favorable ruling on appeal could invalidate the plea, attorneys have said.

F.B.I. Answered Call

The Federal Bureau of Investigation said Mr. Cavanagh had got in touch with Soviet officials in San Francisco and Washington, offering to sell documents pertaining to the Stealth bomber program.

Federal agents intercepted the calls and sent undercover operatives who Mr. Cavanagh thought were Soviets to deal with him, the bureau said. No documents were ever passed to the Soviet Union.

In 45 minutes of interrogation by Judge Byrne today, Mr. Cavanagh said he had been handed \$25,000 and promised another \$30,000 in the deal by men he believed were Soviet agents before his arrest in December. The men were undercover F.B.I. agents.

"What did you tell them about the documents?" Judge Byrne asked.

"That they were Government projects that were being worked on," Mr. Cavanagh responded.

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Engineer admits guilt in bomber-secrets espionage

By Linda Deutsch
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — An aerospace engineer pleaded guilty yesterday to espionage charges, confessing that he tried to pass U.S. Stealth bomber secrets to Soviet agents for \$55,000 because he needed money.

"That was the sole reason," Thomas Patrick Cavanagh, 40, told U.S. District Judge W. Matthew Byrne Jr.

Byrne scheduled sentencing for April 22 and allowed the defense to obtain a psychiatric evaluation of Cavanagh, who was an engineer at the Northrop Corp., a prime defense contractor.

Speaking so quietly he could barely be heard, Cavanagh pleaded guilty to two counts of espionage. Two other counts were dismissed.

"Do you believe those documents, if given to a foreign power, would be injurious to the United States or advantageous to the foreign power, namely the Soviet Union?" Byrne asked Cavanagh.

"It would not be injurious to the United States," Cavanagh said, "but it would be of assistance to the Soviets."

The Stealth concept involves developing an aircraft that would frustrate radar detection through construction that avoids the sharp-angled surfaces that radar tends to pick up. Outer surfaces of Stealth planes also would be coated with special radar-absorbing materials.

Standing in a blue prison jumpsuit, his hands folded, Cavanagh said he was giving his plea freely and voluntarily and after considering all possible defenses. He said he knew he could face two life prison terms.

Defense attorney Manuel Araujo said he hoped the psychiatrist's report would mean a softer sentence for Cavanagh. If sentenced to the

maximum term, Araujo said, Cavanagh could be paroled in 10 years.

"He feels very guilty. He's glad he was caught. He's glad nothing came of this," Araujo said outside court. "It wasn't the act of a rational man."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Percy Anderson had said no prosecution recommendation for a lighter sentence was included in last month's plea bargain.

A condition of Cavanagh's plea was that he be allowed to file an appeal of an earlier ruling by Byrne that the government legally obtained wiretap evidence in the case. A favorable

ruling on appeal could invalidate the plea, attorneys have said.

The FBI said Cavanagh had contacted Soviet officials in San Francisco and Washington, offering to sell documents pertaining to the Stealth bomber program. Federal agents intercepted the calls and sent undercover FBI agents Cavanagh thought were Soviets to deal with him, the FBI said. No documents were ever passed to the Soviet Union.

During 45 minutes of interrogation by Byrne yesterday, Cavanagh said he had been handed \$25,000 and promised another \$30,000 in the deal by men he

believed were Soviet agents before his arrest in December.

"What did you tell them about the documents?" Byrne asked.

"That they were government projects that were being worked on," he responded.

Byrne then asked whether Cavanagh had been working on "an advanced system bomber project." He said he had.

"And did you believe those documents related to the national defense of the United States?" Byrne asked.

Cavanagh paused for several seconds and said softly, "Yes, sir."