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Not guilty verdicts in spy trial prompt official British inquiries

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LONDON — The British government ordered two inquiries yesterday into the collapse of Britain's longest and most expensive spy trial, which ended with a jury's not guilty verdicts on Monday.

Seven young military men, accused of passing secrets to the Soviets at a British intelligence-gathering base on Cyprus, beat a total of 31 charges against them. They claimed they were pressured into making false confessions.

Armed Forces Minister John Stanley told the House of Commons that an independent investigation, headed by lawyer David Calcutt, head of the English and Welsh bar association, would start work next week and produce a report as soon as possible. The other inquiry, announced by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, is to be conducted by the government's Security Commission, which oversees the handling of security investigations.

The case has seriously embarrassed a government that had just celebrated a major counterespionage success through the defection of KGB London station chief Oleg Gordievsky. The collapse of the case

against the "Cyprus Seven" (originally eight) appears to retarnish Britain's counterintelligence image.

Opposition Labor Party spokesman Denzil Davies, leading a chorus of parliamentary criticism, said the men's confessions were elicited "at best by dubious means, at worst by barbaric means."

It is uncertain what, if anything, Western intelligence lost through the alleged spy ring and whether, in light of seven not guilty verdicts, there was any passing of secrets "by the bagful" as the prosecution alleged. The Royal Air Force and army signals post where the men worked in the mountains of Cyprus focused on picking up radio communications from ships, planes and ground stations, mostly in Lebanon, Syria, Israel and North Africa, but also in the

Black Sea, Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Stanley said last night there are no other cases pending as a result of the investigation into "what appeared at the time to be a serious breach of security," nor was anyone else under investigation. He refused to comment on what was alleged to have been stolen. The alleged evidence was presented in court sessions held almost entirely in secret.

But this was not the first espionage case against a British intelligence-gatherer in Cyprus — or the first one that collapsed.

In August 1984, RAF technician Paul Davies was acquitted of copying and passing on classified documents to a Hungarian woman in return for sexual favors. The woman flew from Beirut to the trial in London without any guarantee of immu-

nity, in order to clear her name.

The men who investigated Mr. Davies and the "Cyprus Seven" were the same military investigators.

Yesterday, freed RAF telegraphist Geoffrey Payne said he was very bitter that he had been held in isolation for days, and questioned without cease until he told the investigators what they appeared to want to hear.

Special Branch detectives from London took over the investigation. Asked why neither he nor any of the others reportedly complained to them about their alleged mistreatment, Mr. Payne said: "After nearly six weeks of interrogation by those thugs and the way I had been treated, just left in a cell, I was in no position to trust anybody."

The men, one of whom has already been dismissed from the Army, are entitled to no compensation, and, said Mr. Stanley, they will get none.

Meanwhile, The Times of London reported from Cyprus that some Greek Cypriot intelligence men believe the prosecutions may be part of an Anglo-American plot to demean the reputation of Cypriot intelligence services, for the man alleged to have been the controlling KGB major in the "spy ring" has been identified as merely a Cypriot policeman.

The reason for this, according to the report, is to assist the American case "for trying to set up their own radar and radio intercept station in the Turkish-occupied north of Cyprus."