

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1LOS ANGELES TIMES
23 June 1986

Risky Endeavor

Spying on Allies — It's a Tradition

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WASHINGTON—A foreign secret agent stationed in New York was assigned to "get the dirt" on a senior State Department official. His aim was to force the U.S. official to quit trying to curb espionage activities in the United States—British espionage activities.

A scientist in the super-secret U.S. National Security Agency was convicted of passing secret documents—to the Dutch. And a special section for collecting intelligence on U.S. scientific research and missile developments was created—in the French intelligence service.

Allies have been spying on the United States—and the United States has been returning the favor—ever since Benjamin Franklin received money clandestinely from the French government to help finance the Colonies' fight for independence from the British.

Latest Episode

The recent arrest of Navy intelligence official Jonathan Jay Pollard on charges of selling U.S. secrets to Israel is only the latest episode in a long tradition of friends spying on friends.

To paraphrase a British prime minister, nations have no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests. When the interests of even friendly nations do not precisely coincide, the friendships take second place to the interests.

The United States is not always the victim. In 1956, according to a member of the British Parliament, the United States intercepted and decoded the secret messages of its three closest allies—the British, French and Israelis—during their combined attack on Egypt, and forced them to abandon the invasion. More recent objects of U.S. spying allegedly have included the Canadians, the Italians and the Japanese.

Break Their Word

Even when close allies forswear clandestine activities against each other, according to experts, they sometimes break their word. "There is no such thing as a friendly intelligence service," Philip Agee, the renegade U.S. counterintelligence officer, wrote.

In a recent book, "The Ties That Bind," about the close and wide-ranging intelligence relationships among the English-speaking nations—the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand—Jeffrey T. Richelson and Desmond Ball wrote that even these ties are "plagued by discord, non-cooperation and deceit."

Richelson, an American University authority on intelligence, said that no one should be surprised to learn that Israel spies on the United States even though it relies heavily on this country for economic and military support. Israel knows that "friends can get you into as much trouble as enemies," he said.

In fact, all nations, friendly and hostile, openly collect information on each other all the time. They have embassies abroad whose diplomats are specifically assigned to learn all they can about their hosts.

In return, virtually all host governments try to listen in on the communications to and from the embassies, whether they originate locally or from distant capitals, whether they are carried by phone, radio or mail.

"Those countries where the post, telephone and telegraph services are owned by the government have a much easier job monitoring embassy activities," one former intelligence official said. Most European and Third World nations have government-owned mail, telephone and telegraph services.

At the same time, the United States, with military facilities in Europe and Asia ostensibly for the purpose of monitoring Soviet communications, can eavesdrop easily on host nations as well.

The U.S. National Security Agency maintains stations in six West German cities, for example, and they allegedly monitored thousands of West German domestic phone calls daily a few years ago, in an effort to get information about a deal to build a Soviet gas pipeline to Western Europe.

Most Sensitive Missions

"Where you cross the line into impermissible and potentially embarrassing activities is when you use the nationals of a friendly country to collect information or carry out missions against that country," the former intelligence official added. "It's not widespread, but, as we've seen, it happens."

In recent years, at least four nations undertook illegal activities in the United States:

—Taiwan, which was given three surplus U.S. submarines in 1970 but denied advanced torpedoes for them, used agents to try to buy the torpedoes and their secret technology, according to reliable sources.

—Iran, under Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, mounted several covert actions in the United States aimed at neutralizing opposition to the shah from Iranians studying here.

Diversion of Uranium

—South Korea, through the well-financed efforts of Tongsun Park and others, contributed to the election campaigns of about 25 congressmen to gain their support on measures affecting that country. One former congressman went to jail and three California congressmen were reprimanded in the 1978 "Koreagate" scandal.

—Israel secretly diverted enriched uranium from a nuclear processing plant in Pennsylvania, according to Carl Duckett, a former CIA deputy director, to build more than half a dozen atomic bombs by 1974.

Before a nation begins any covert activity, said former CIA Director William Colby, it should determine that the information it seeks is worth risking that the spying will be exposed.

"With hostile countries, like the United States and Soviet Union, the impact of exposure is small," Colby said. "Everyone knows we both do it."

"But with Canada, for example, we'd be out of our minds to run an operation there." The two neighbors cooperate so closely on matters of intelligence and national security that the United States should simply ask for whatever information it may need, he said.

"We'd expect to get it, or, if it were too much a family secret, we'd be refused and just forget the whole thing," Colby said.

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Exposures in Canada

Yet the CIA has been charged with trying to manipulate Canadian politics. Although U.S. officials suspect that most such charges are inspired by Soviet agents seeking to cause difficulties between the allies, two Americans quickly left Canada in 1975 after Agee identified them as CIA agents. As Richelson and Ball noted later, the Canadian government said that it had been "utterly unaware of their real duties" there.

Colby acknowledged in his memoirs that the CIA spent money to influence Italian politics during the 1950s. More recently, David C. Martin wrote, in "Wilderness of Mirrors," that the CIA's longtime counterintelligence chief, James J. Angleton, was believed to control three senior men in the Italian government—one each in the foreign ministry, interior ministry and national police force—as well as a "source in the Vatican."

U.S. Often a Victim

The United States also has been accused of using the National Security Agency's two dozen listening posts in Japan to eavesdrop on the Japanese government and to gain an advantage in the negotiation of terms for Okinawa's reversion to Tokyo's control in 1969.

But more often, the United

States has been the victim of the friendly snooping.

During World War II, for example, Adolf A. Berle, the assistant secretary of state, sought to curb British espionage activities in the United States. The British retaliated by assigning an agent to get enough dirt on Berle to get him removed from office, according to the memoirs of a former British agent, H. Montgomery Hyde. The agent was expelled from the United States, and Berle kept his job.

A former French intelligence agent, Philippe T. de Vosjoli, who helped the United States identify Soviet missiles deployed in Cuba in 1963, wrote in his memoirs that France ordered him to "organize a clandestine intelligence network in the United States for the specific purpose of collecting information about U.S. military installations and U.S. scientific research." President Charles de Gaulle allegedly ordered the operation after Washington refused to help build his nuclear *force de frappe*.

Secrets of Economics

Japan, whose first intelligence priority is economic information, is sometimes suspected of aiding the private industrial firms it subsidizes, particularly in electronics.

Holland, which has long been in the forefront of world cryptological advances, took secret documents supplied by National Security Agency physicist Joseph S. Petersen in 1954. It was the first agency spy scandal, and one that seems bizarrely purposeless to this day.

Israel, however, is the ally most frequently suspected of snooping for U.S. secrets: Despite its dependence on the United States, several knowledgeable sources believe that Israel conducts a variety of clandestine intelligence activities in the United States.

First, Israel seeks information on

all U.S. policy, activities and dialogue regarding Arab nations and friends of Arab nations, to the end of preventing U.S. actions inimical to Israeli interests.

Saudi Arms Sale Cited

Through congressmen with large Jewish constituencies, Israel is well positioned to influence the U.S. government, such as when Congress recently forced President Reagan to water down a proposed arms sale to Saudi Arabia and very nearly blocked the sale altogether.

Second, when the Israelis are denied access to U.S. advanced weapons technology, they seek it surreptitiously. One source said that the Soviets are green with envy of Israel's penetration of Silicon Valley secrets.

Third, Israel wants U.S. information on potential military and terrorist targets in Arab countries, whether it comes from spy satellites or other collection methods it does not possess. Pollard pleaded guilty to passing documents to the Israelis, and sources said that some of the documents were related to potential targets of Israeli military strikes.

Data Used for Attack

The United States has denied Israel such material since 1981, when Israel—using U.S.-supplied information—launched an air strike on Iraq's nuclear reactor in Baghdad. A review of Israeli requests after the Baghdad strike, moreover, found a disturbing interest in facilities such as Pakistani nuclear research laboratories, according to another source.

The United States continued to provide timely and complete intelligence on immediate threats to Israel, this source said, although the Israelis may not have believed it when they decided to employ Pollard.