

DOUBLE AGENT OPERATIONS

Counterintelligence operations enable the U.S. intelligence community to monitor hostile intelligence services so appropriate countermeasures can be taken to protect sensitive information upon which the survival of this country may one day rest.

One way this is done is through the use of double agents -- individuals under the control of one intelligence agency who offer their services to an opposing intelligence agency.

Through the use of double agents, the U.S. intelligence community is able to identify hostile intelligence services: operatives and agents, "tradecraft", electronic and photographic eavesdropping capabilities, and sources and methods of operations.

In some cases, double agent operations have resulted in the arrest of hostile intelligence service officers. Some of these hostile intelligence officers had diplomatic immunity and were deported. Others were convicted of espionage and later traded for prisoners held in Eastern bloc countries.

Another goal of double agent operations is to discourage hostile intelligence agencies from accepting "walk-ins", who come to them offering their services. "Walk-ins", such as John Walker, have been responsible for a majority of the damage done to national security through espionage.

Since the Federal Bureau of Investigation has primary jurisdiction in counterintelligence matters inside the U.S., all double agent operations conducted inside the U.S. are coordinated with the FBI.

HOW THEY WORK

Although "double agent" operations are the result of careful planning and preparations, they sometimes begin in what might be considered a less than spectacular fashion. A very successful and one of the few double agent operations made public in recent years started with, what for lack of a better word, was a daydream.

In the summer of 1980, NIS Special Agent Ron Olive was involved in a fraud survey at what was then the Naval Electronic Systems Engineering Center (NAVELEX) in Charleston, S.C. Although the purpose of the survey was

to detect fraud, waste and abuse, Special Agent Olive got another idea.

"I noticed they dealt a lot with submarine communications, and I started thinking that the Soviets would be extremely interested in this type of information," Special Agent Olive said. "I wrote up a proposal to recruit a civilian double agent and target him against the Soviets by having him supply controlled information to them about submarine acoustics and communications.

"It was initially intended to find out exactly what the Soviets were looking for in the area of submarine communications and to discover how they would task and handle someone working for the Navy in an area such as Charleston, which is away from diplomatic establishments."

As an after thought, Special Agent Olive modified it to target the East German intelligence Service -- the Ministerium fuer Staatssicherheit (MfS).

Special Agent Olive then presented it to the FBI and eight months later, the operation began. "The total take from this operation," Special Agent Olive said, "proved to be much more than I ever dreamed."

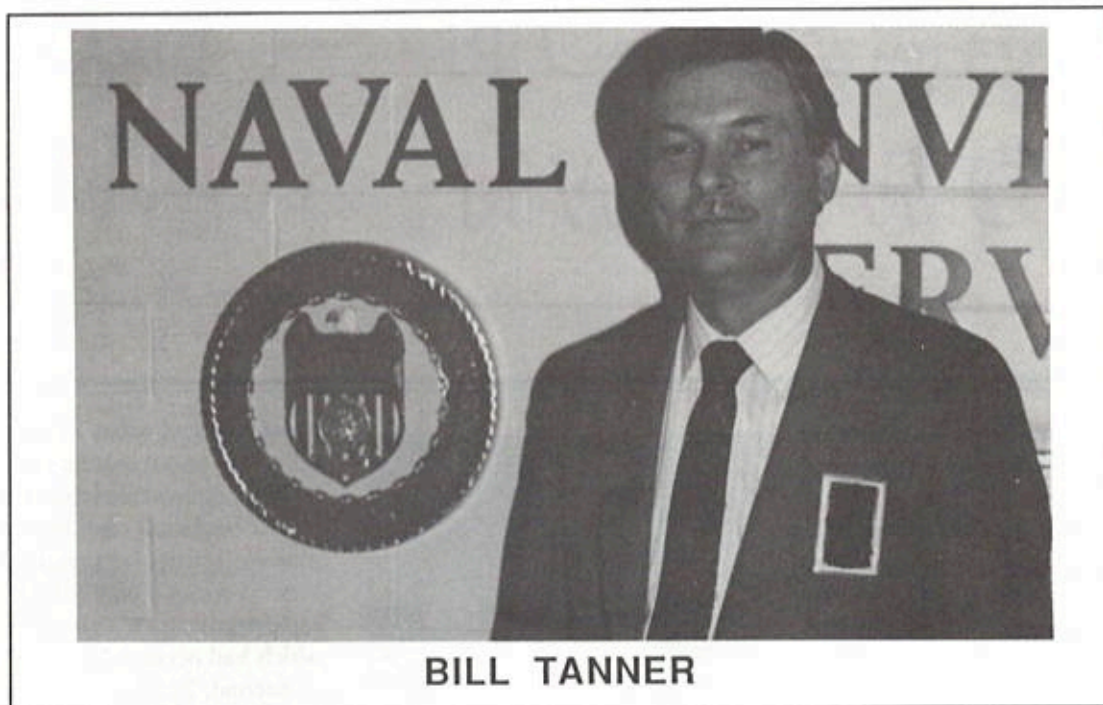
THE DOUBLE AGENT

The first and most important task facing the NIS and the FBI was to find someone willing to be the "double agent".

"We were looking for a very special type of person," Special Agent Olive said. "Several people had been interviewed under the pretext of a security survey. As soon as Bill Tanner was interviewed, we knew immediately he was going to be the man for the job.

"He was very calm and forthright, and had a very good record. He seemed like he would stand up well under extreme pressure and think clearly at the same time -- something that would later prove invaluable to the success of this operation. He was intelligent and knowledgeable of the world situation and, of course, submarine communications."

Although Tanner was the top prospect, he wasn't aware



BILL TANNER

of it until weeks later.

"After doing some background checks on Tanner, we called him and asked him to meet us at a local restaurant," Special Agent Olive said. "He didn't know why we asked him to meet with us. We just told him he would be meeting with agents from the FBI and NIS."

Tanner agreed and later met with Special Agent Olive and an FBI Agent.

"We didn't tell him what his job would be," Special Agent Olive said. "We just asked him if he would be willing to participate in a highly sensitive operation for the Navy."

"As we expected, he was dumfounded. We told him it could put him in a hostile environment where there could be a high degree of anxiety and pressure. We told him this operation would be outside of normal working hours and it would not interfere with his job. Then we told him to go home and think about it and we would get back with him in a week or so.

"About a week later we got together again. He said he thought about it and really wanted to participate in it. He was subsequently recruited formally and his training began for the operation."

It was called "Operation Showdown".

OTHER DOUBLE AGENT OPERATIONS

Ironically, while Special Agent Olive was drawing up the plans for one "double agent" operation, a story about another one involving the NIS and the FBI appeared in the June 1980 edition of Reader's Digest. Written by Jeremy J. Leggatt and entitled "Art Lindberg's Walk in the Cold", it outlined an operation which targeted hostile intelligence agents working out of the Soviet Union's United Nations Mission in New York.

Lindberg, a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy, was recruited much like Tanner. And like Tanner, Lindberg was married with children.

For Lindberg it began in April 1977 with a call from NIS Special Agent Terry Tate. It was the start of "Operation Lemonaid".

Nine years later a woman naval officer, Donna Geiger, received a similar call from an NIS special agent and became the double agent in "Operation Station Zebra".