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[Home](#) | [23 December 1975—CIA Officer Richard Welch Murdered in Athens](#)

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(U) Three masked gunmen from the Greek terrorist group Revolutionary Organization 17 November shot and killed COS Richard Welch on 23 December 1975 outside his home in the Greek capital as he and his wife were returning from a Christmas party. Welch was the highest ranking Agency officer killed in the line of duty up to then, and the first COS to be murdered in a politically motivated assassination. A Harvard-trained classicist, Welch has just turned 46 and was seven months shy of reaching 25 years of service with CIA when he died. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Intelligence Cross and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.



(U) At the time, Welch's murder was largely ascribed to the disclosure of his name a year before in a radical anti-CIA publication called *Counterspy* and then—along with his address and phone number—the preceding month in the English-language *Athens News*. Occurring in the midst of congressional inquiries into Agency activities, the killing intensified controversies over media leaks and alleged mishandling of intelligence information by Congress. In February 1976, President Gerald Ford declared that "it is essential that the irresponsible and dangerous exposure of our nation's intelligence secrets be stopped," strengthening DCI William Colby's hand in limiting release of information to investigators on the Hill—particularly the Pike Committee in the House of Representatives.



(U) Welch's death also helped bring about passage of the Intelligence Identities Protection Act (IIPA) in 1982. The Agency estimated that the identities of over a thousand CIA officers had been divulged since the mid-1970s in publications like *Counterspy*, the *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, and Philip Agee's expose *Inside the Company*. During his presidential campaign in 1980, Ronald Reagan stated that passage of legislation to criminalize such disclosures would be a priority of his administration. After Reagan's election, DCI William Casey worked with the congressional oversight committees to develop and secure passage of the IIPA.

(U) In December 2003, a Greek court convicted 15 members of 17 November of a series of assassinations, car bombings, and rocket attacks dating back nearly thirty years. One of those members had confessed to participating in Welch's murder, but charges were not brought because the statute of limitations had expired.

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[Heritage Activities](#)

[Recent History Staff](#)

[Activities](#)

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[Publications](#)

[CSI Electronic Briefing](#)

[Books](#)

[History of the CIA](#)

[Documentary Videos](#)

[Studies in Intelligence](#)

[Center for the Study of](#)

[Intelligence](#)

[Historical Intelligence](#)

[Collection](#)

[Hall of Honor](#)

[CIA Trailblazers](#)

[American Intelligence](#)

[Overview](#)

[Origins of CIA](#)

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