Aldrich Hazen Ames

- Age 52 at time of sentencing

- Sentenced to life without parole

- Former Central Intelligence Agency Case Officer with access to the most sensitive CIA operations information

- Spoke Russian and Specialized in Russia

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CASE STUDY
Espionage

WHAT HAPPENED

The Aldrich Hazen Ames, was a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) case officer, who spoke Russian and specialized in the former Soviet Union's and then Russian intelligence services (RIS) to include the former KGB (now SVR), which was the USSR's foreign intelligence service. His initial overseas assignment was in Ankara, Turkey, where he targeted Russian intelligence officers for recruitment. Later, he worked in New York City and Mexico City, Mexico. The Ames espionage cases was one of the .espionage cases documented in the history section of the FBI's website

On April 16, 1985, while assigned to the CIA's Soviet/Eastern European Division at CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia, Ames volunteered to spy in behalf for the USSR while meeting with KGB officers at the USSR Embassy, in Washington, D.C. Shortly thereafter, the KGB paid him $50,000. During the summer of 1985, he met several times with a Soviet diplomat and passed them classified information about CIA and FBI human sources as well as technical operations targeting the Soviet Union. In December 1985, he met with a Moscow-based KGB officer in Bogota, Colombia. In July 1986, Ames was transferred to Rome, Italy, where he continued his activities. The KGB wrote to him that he had been paid $1.88 million by them in the four years since he volunteered. Upon his return to Washington, D.C. in 1989, Ames continued to pass classified documents to the KGB, using "dead drops" or prearranged hiding places where he would leave the documents to be picked up later by KGB officers from the USSR Embassy in Washington, D.C. In return, the KGB left money and instructions for Ames, usually in other "dead drops."

The FBI opened an investigation in May 1993. At that time, the Soviet Union had already dissolved, and the KGB was dismantled and replaced by the Russian SVR intelligence service. FBI Special Agents and investigative specialists conducted intensive physical and electronic surveillance of Ames during a 10-month investigation. Searches of his residence revealed documents and other information linking him to the Russian intelligence service. On October 13, 1993, investigative specialists observed a chalk mark Ames made on a mailbox confirming to the Russians his intention to meet them in Bogota. On November 1st, U.S. agents observed him and, separately, his Russian handlers in Bogota.

When he planned foreign travel, including a trip to Moscow, as part of his official duties, a plan to arrest him was approved. Ames was arrested by the FBI in Arlington, Virginia, on espionage charges on February 21, 1994. At the time of his arrest, Ames was a 31-year veteran of the CIA, who had been spying for the Russians since 1985. Arrested with him was his wife, Rosario Ames, who had aided and abetted his espionage activities. Ames received a life sentence without the possibility of parole, and Rosario was sentenced to 63 months in prison on October 20, 1994. The FBI debriefed him, at which time he detailed compromising identities of CIA and FBI human sources, some of whom were executed by Soviet authorities. Pursuant to his plea agreement, he forfeited his assets to the United States, and $547,000 was turned over to the DOJ's Victims Assistance Program. Rosario has since been released from prison.

INDICATORS

- **Foreign Considerations**: Ames's wife was born in Colombia, and he had foreign connections on her side of the family.

- **Security and Compliance Incidents**: Ames misused his privileged functions to include providing classified information to a foreign intelligence service.

- **Financial Considerations**: Ames displayed signs of unexplained affluence, which he attributed to his marriage to Rosario.

IMPACT

- Ames was sentenced to incarceration for life without the possibility of parole, and his wife, Rosario, was sentenced to 63 months in prison and has since been released.

- Ames' espionage caused exceptionally grave damage to U.S. national security and U.S. intelligence activities to include recruited Russian assets being executed. Those assets had been providing valuable intelligence to the United States.

- Ames' espionage activities resulted in procedural changes to agencies' security background investigations to include closer review of employees who have access to the most sensitive data.

ADDITIONAL INFO

- Aldrich Ames was the highest paid U.S. spy ever having received over $1 million.

- Ames, despite his knowledge of tradecraft used in operations, made mistakes and moves contrary to known intelligence tradecraft that would have been more easily detected given today's technology and processes.

- Ames was caught on camera during a rendezvous with a Russian agent in Caracas, Venezuela. Wanting to catch Ames in the act of dropping or receiving materials for his Russian handlers, the FBI postponed his arrest until February 21, 1994.

Questions to Consider:

- If the policies and practices that are in place today had been in place then, would Aldrich Ames' espionage been detected earlier?

- How was Aldrich Ames able to elude detection for as long as he did?

- What is the role of today's insider threat programs in deterring such activities?

Resources for Further Exploration:

- Job Aid – Insider Threat Potential Risk Indicators
  https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaids/insider/INTJ0181-insider-threat-indicators-job-aid.pdf

- eLearning – Counterintelligence Concerns for National Security Adjudicators
  https://www.cdse.edu/Training/eLearning/CI020/

- Job Aid – Understanding Espionage and Counterintelligence Crimes
  https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaids/ci/ci-jobaidseries-understandingespionage.pdf

- FBI Website – FBI History: Famous Cases – Aldrich Ames
  https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/aldrich-ames

Supporting Through Reporting!

Contact the appropriate POC to report any observed potential risk indicators:

Name: _____   Agency/Department: _____
Title: Supervisor/Security Officer/ITP   Senior Official/ITP Manager