

Redding Record Searchlight

Saturday

FBI says alleged spy robbed Vermont bank earlier

■ An agent also testified that Roderick James Ramsay helped sell large quantities of classified documents to Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

By Michael Isikoff
The Washington Post

A former Army sergeant arrested on espionage charges Thursday night had robbed a bank in Vermont prior to receiving a top secret Pentagon clearance and then joining a West Germany-based espionage ring that did "unprecedented" damage to U.S. security, an FBI counterintelligence expert testified Friday.

FBI agent Joe Navarro testified in a court hearing in Tampa, Fla., that Roderick James Ramsay, 28, admitted in "numerous" interviews prior to his arrest that he was a "close associate and confidant" of convicted spy Clyde Lee Conrad and had helped Conrad sell large quantities of classified documents to the Hungarian and Czechoslovak intelligence services beginning in 1983.

The documents, including many involving NATO conventional and nuclear defense plans, were later passed along by the Hungarians and Czechoslovaks to the Soviet KGB, a Justice Department Spokesman Doug Tillett said in Washington. Navarro, who headed the investigation, said "It's one of the most serious breaches ever — it's unprecedented what went over to the other side."

The arrest of Ramsay on a downtown Tampa street Thursday night, coming just a few days after Conrad's conviction in a West German court, adds a new chapter to an espionage saga that federal officials now say appears to have been far more serious than when it was first disclosed in August 1988, when Conrad was arrested.

Ramsay did not enter a plea during Friday's hearing before a U.S. magistrate, and was ordered detained without bail pending another hearing next Tuesday. Mark Pizzo, his court appointed lawyer, did not return repeated phone calls.

Navarro testified that before joining the Army on Nov. 17, 1981, Ramsay had robbed a bank in Vermont and, while working as a security officer in a hospital, had



Roderick Ramsay

attempted to break into a safe. No further details were provided. A federal prosecutor in Tampa later described the bank robbery as "unsolved" and said there was no indication that Ramsay was ever charged in the crime.

Ramsay received a top secret military security clearance and was assigned to work under Conrad as assistant classified documents custodian of the G-3 plans section of the Army's 8th Infantry Division in Bad Kreuznach, West Germany, about 50 miles east of Frankfurt. An Army spokesman said Friday that there would have been no grounds for denying Ramsay a security clearance if there was no public record of any criminal activity.

As part of the Army's 5th Corps, the 8th Infantry Division has responsibility for defending central West Germany in the event of a Soviet block attack. According to Navarro's affidavit, Ramsay said that after being recruited by Conrad, he received \$20,000 in ex-

change for passing along extensive classified material, including documents dealing with "the tactical use of nuclear weapons" by NATO forces and "General Defense Plans" for Western Europe. The defense plans, Army officials said, spell out where each military unit would be assigned during an attack and details what their missions would be.

Ramsay left the Army in November 1985 with a good conduct medal, an Army achievement medal, an active service ribbon, and an overseas service ribbon. Navarro said that Ramsay had later stored stolen top secret documents at his mother's house in Tampa and destroyed them after Conrad, who by then had left the Army, and seven others were arrested in Europe in August 1988.

Navarro described Ramsay as a highly intelligent but erratic drifter, who spoke Japanese and German and "had the ability to recall minute details, facts, and figures — some from documents he hadn't seen in five or six years."

But at the same time, Ramsay

apparently profited little from his alleged espionage activities. Since leaving the Army, he worked at odd jobs, including driving a taxicab, and most recently was living at his mother's house and working with her in a business that did bookkeeping for local law

firms. On a form he filled out after his arrest, Ramsay listed his income as \$1,000 a month.

By contrast, Navarro testified Friday that Conrad, who lead the spy ring since 1975, received between \$2.2 million and \$5 million for his espionage activities.

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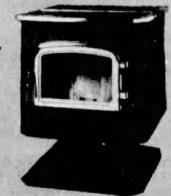
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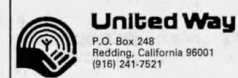


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