

# Retired Army Reserve colonel gets life sentence for spying

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Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — The highest-ranking military officer ever accused of spying was sentenced to life in prison yesterday, 50 years to the day after he declared his allegiance to United States as a new citizen.

George Trofimoff, a retired Army Reserve colonel born in Germany, continued to profess his innocence — declaring, “I am not a traitor” — as U.S. District Judge Susan Bucklew handed down the sentence.

Trofimoff had faced at least 27 years in prison. Assistant Secretary

of Defense John P. Stenbit told the judge in a letter on behalf of President Bush that anything less than a life term would be neither adequate punishment nor a deterrent to others.

Prosecutors say it is the first time such a letter has been written for a federal inmate.

“Mr. Trofimoff has conducted espionage longer than anyone else we have known of in this country,” said Assistant U.S. Attorney Walter Furr. “This is not someone who made a mistake, or who got greedy momentarily. What happened here was someone who set out to live his life as a spy.”



**George Trofimoff, a retired Army Reserve colonel, is the highest-ranking military officer ever accused of spying. He was sentenced to life in prison yesterday.**

Throughout the Cold War, Trofimoff led the Army section at the Nuremberg Joint Interrogation Center in Germany. There, secret intelligence

documents were stored and defectors and refugees were interviewed about life, especially military operations, behind the Iron Curtain.

Trofimoff was convicted in June of taking secret documents out of the center, photographing them and selling the film to the KGB for \$250,000 over more than 20 years.

He worked through a childhood friend, a Russian Orthodox priest, in a spying career that was noted in KGB archives smuggled out of the Soviet Union as it collapsed.

Trofimoff repeated to Bucklew the claim he presented to his jurors: He only told the undercover FBI agent

he was a spy because he needed money to pay debts.

“I am guilty of trying to make a foolish claim,” he said. “What it did is really convince me and my friends of my old-age senility. You are condemning an old man who served his country honorably for 46 years.”

Trofimoff’s attorney, Daniel Hernandez, said he intended to appeal. Trofimoff’s wife, Jutta, who has been left bankrupt, did not speak on his behalf and declined to comment following his sentencing.

Trofimoff was convicted after a monthlong trial in which jurors heard testimony from an extraordinary line-

up of former KGB agents, spies and intelligence officers. They also watched hours of a videotaped meeting between Trofimoff and the undercover FBI agent in which the retiree detailed his spying career.

Among other things, Trofimoff is believed to have given the KGB details of what the United States knew of the Soviet military capabilities.

Hernandez said none of the information Trofimoff is convicted of leaking was shown to have caused the deaths of U.S. sources, as was shown in the spy cases of Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen. They also received life in prison.