

Czech Military Names Own Spies

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The Czech Republic's military intelligence service has unintentionally revealed the identities of some of its own agents, officials confirmed on Monday.

The blunder dates back to April, when the state-run Prague-based Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes posted on its website a list of communist-era spies, provided by the country's military intelligence agency.

However, 380 of those spies had stayed on in active service after the end of the Cold War in 1989, the Defence Ministry admitted.

The institute took down the list in June after being alerted by the agency that it included names of spies still active, the Mlada Fronta Dnes daily reported.

The newspaper said that some of the listed agents are active to this day, although the ministry rejected the claim.

"None of them was active at the time of the list's publication this spring," spokesperson Jan Pejsek told the German Press Agency dpa.

"None them was at that time working or collaborating with the military intelligence. The activities of the agency did not have to be curtailed," he said.

However, some of the listed ex-spies could have been compromised in their jobs in diplomacy or business. "It may have caused personal problems to some of them," Pejsek admitted.

Intelligence experts told Czech Television that the list's publication could have also helped foreign intelligence services uncover informants of the compromised spies and hurt the agency's credibility among partners and employees.

Among the compromised agents named is Frantisek Masopust, who was the Czech Charge d'Affaires in Moscow until 2002 and currently heads a Prague-based chamber of commerce for the Commonwealth of Independent States, a group of former Soviet countries.

"I already know that they compromised me," the newspaper quoted Masopust as saying. "Whether it offends me or angers me? That is an understatement. This is something that should not happen in a normal country."

The agency and the institute are now trading accusations over who was responsible for the leak. – Sapa-dpa

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