

Northern Flank by Göran Haglund

New underwater activity in Stockholm

Mystical waves, camping Poles, and an East bloc truck were detected near the king's new residence.

A one-day police and military alert was caused on May 5 in Stockholm, as several suspicious events signaled foreign espionage or spetsnaz activity in waters near the king's castle. Government buildings were guarded by reinforced police units, police patrols were armed with submachine guns, and civilian and military intelligence were buzzing with activity, as the security establishment grappled to evaluate the threat.

Despite official secrecy wraps, the following events are known. Two policemen, driving across Nockeby Bridge in western Stockholm at about 4.30 a.m., observed some heavy waves and whirlpools in the otherwise glassy water of Lake Mälaren, extending westward from Stockholm. The Nockeby Bridge leads from Stockholm to the island where the king's residence, Drottningholm Castle, is located. On the beach a few hundred meters away, about a kilometer from the castle, the policemen observed a campfire.

Arriving at the campfire, the policemen found a tent, three Polish citizens, and two naturalized Swedes of Polish extraction. A sixth person had been there, but had left the scene. The five were arrested, suspected of crimes against the security of the state, and the Security Police (SÄPO) took charge of the case.

Moments later, police divers arrived and started to search the water, between 7 and 13 meters deep at the location. Still later, Navy divers arrived, and the search was directed from the East Coast Navy Base at Muskö, east of Stockholm. SÄPO and De-

fense Staff Security Service personnel cordoned off the beach. Divers placed a red buoy in the water, and underwater video recordings were made twice.

Hours later, a witness reported seeing a submarine periscope in the eastern archipelago of Stockholm. Uncertain of what was going on, and knowing that U.S. Ambassador Gregory Newell was about to visit Premier Ingvar Carlsson to officially invite him to Washington, police ordered an alert, including reinforcements at all government buildings. On June 17, 1986, Newell had already been the target of a failed assassination attempt.

The five camping Poles and ex-Poles told SÄPO, whose reputation hasn't gone unscathed after the Palme murder, identical stories of how they were merely celebrating the gold medal won by the Swedish ice hockey team at the Vienna world championship! Their "celebration" had begun the day before, and as they stayed overnight in their tent, cold weather, despite plenty of booze, had forced them to light a campfire. . . .

Although some of them were known in police records for petty thefts, they were released for lack of evidence tying them to whatever went on under the water. Later reports said police were searching a truck observed on the island of the castle, carrying East bloc license plates and a "TIR" sign, under which seal trucks can pass national borders without customs checks. The truck was later found, empty, on a nearby island.

As the divers' search went on,

sources reported findings of traces on the bed of the lake, coming from a vessel or a heavy diving outfit. According to a defense spokesman on May 6, the "video films are still being analyzed. We have not yet decided whether the results will be published. They might appear in the Commander-in-Chief's next quarterly report," issued to report on the submarine incursions.

One policeman guarding the cordoned-off coastal strip told journalists on May 5, "This is probably the most serious incident in Sweden in recent years. But I have been muzzled." A Navy officer added: "If you think we got a false bite, you're wrong." And a police radio communication from the site was overheard, "Call in and say that it is a plus. Say only that."

It was just a couple of years ago that the king's residence was relocated from the old Stockholm City Palace to Drottningholm Castle, on a semi-rural island west of Stockholm. While the official reasons were the island's absence of auto exhaust fumes and its nicer playgrounds for the king's three children, insiders know the activity of mini-submarines in the Stockholm harbor, a mere stone's throw away from the City Palace, was a more substantial reason. Located on the inland, lake side of the coastal capital, all waterways to the new residence from the seaside lead through narrow locks.

Apart from possible targeting of the king, the new incident occurred exactly where a highly sensitive telecommunications cable passes across the bottom of the lake, to the nearby headquarters of the Armed Forces' Radio Institute, the center of Sweden's advanced electronic communications surveillance. A Defense Staff spokesman insisted that the divers found the cable to be "wholly untouched."