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Pueblo Incident More Grave Than Cuban

WASHINGTON (NANA) — The current U.S. confrontation with North Korea may be more ominous than the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, in the view of a former high-ranking Central Intelligence Agency official.

Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, Jr., who served as executive director of the CIA during the Kennedy administration, characterized the tense situation now prevailing as "more grave from the point of view that there was better control in the Cuban missile crisis. The Russians were not anxious to provoke a general war."

Kirkpatrick, now a professor at Brown University, emphasized his opinions were not based on classified information, but on published material and the debate in the United Nations Security Council.

He voiced his views during a visit to the capital.

Kirkpatrick believes the North Koreans seized the USS Pueblo, an intelligence-gathering vessel, without consulting the Chinese or Russians, with whom their relations reportedly are cool.

"They (the North Koreans) always have been aggressively provocative and exceedingly difficult to deal with," he said.

Moscow and Peking, however, have publicly backed North Korea. Moscow has rejected U.S. requests to help effect a settlement.

Soviet Premier Kosygin takes the position that the Pueblo violated North Korea's ocean boundaries. Peking supports the seizure of the ship, although it has not indicated it intends to intervene in North Korea's behalf.

Kirkpatrick is a career intelligence officer of 23 years' experience. He served eight years as the CIA's inspector-general, later becoming its executive director, the agency's no. 3 position.

He believes Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher succeeded in destroying most of his ship's classified devices before he and his 83 men were taken prisoner. Kirkpatrick expects the North Koreans to try to rebuild the sensitive equipment, an eventuality which could be damaging.

He readily admits the CIA operates outside the law in information-gathering activity conducted abroad. "If they don't want you to have it, it's an infringement of their sovereignty," he said. However, he insists the agency's internal operations those within U.S. boundaries, are conducted within the law.

"I get a little annoyed when I hear the sanctimonious comments about an intelligence ship like the Pueblo. The Russians have theirs following our fleet units. As newspaper photographs show, one is sitting on the tail of the Enterprise right now.

"News stories often mention the Soviet trawler sitting off Vietnam. It listens to all ship communications. Those trawlers get in so close they constitute a hazard.

"When people talk about this and cluck disapprovingly, I would simply note there are hundreds of Russians operating in the United States with legal immunity whose primary function is collecting intelligence."

In a recently published book, "The Real CIA," (MacMillan) Kirkpatrick said the major cause of the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba in 1961 was "A complete miscalculation by the CIA operators of what was required to do the job." He said his book had been cleared by the agency.

Cuban Communist forces surprised the CIA at the time with their strength and loyalty. The invasion force probably would have lost "even if Castro had not had airplanes or tanks," he said.