

OBITUARIES

Arthur C. Lundahl, 77, Dies; Photo Interpreter for CIA

slp
By **Bart Barnes**
Washington Post Staff Writer

Arthur C. Lundahl, 77, a pioneer in photographic intelligence and the art of photographic interpretation who in 1962 informed President Kennedy that the Soviet Union had installed missiles in Cuba, died of respiratory failure June 22 at Suburban Hospital.

Mr. Lundahl was the first director of the Central Intelligence Agency's National Photographic Interpretation Center, and in that capacity he reviewed aerial photographs of construction activity in a field near San Cristobal, Cuba, that were taken in early October. On Oct. 16, he reported his findings to the president.

"Mr. President, I am as sure of this as a photo interpreter can be sure of anything," former colleague Dino A. Brugioni quoted him as saying in a book on the Cuban missile crisis, "Eyeball to Eyeball." "... I am convinced they are missiles."

Those findings led the president to impose a naval blockade and quarantine on Cuba. The crisis passed when the Soviets withdrew the missiles.

A Navy veteran of World War II, Mr. Lundahl began his career as a photo interpreter in the Aleutian Islands, where he analyzed photography obtained on reconnaissance flights over Japan.

After the war, he came to Washington as civilian chief of the photogrammetry division of the Naval Photographic Center. Later he became assistant chief engineer there, and by the early 1950s, he had developed a reputation as a brilliant photo interpretation specialist and

photo scientist who also was an articulate speaker with a talent for making highly technical material understandable to laymen.

This led the CIA to hire him to organize and develop its fledgling photographic intelligence division to process and interpret photography from U-2 reconnaissance flights, which were opening new directions in the intelligence field. For the first time, intelligence agencies had available precise and current data on landmass and physical installations throughout the world.

This intelligence-gathering process originally was intended to collect information on the Soviet Union, but it also was used elsewhere. Mr. Lundahl regularly briefed President Eisenhower, the secretaries of state and defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the photographic findings.

After Francis Gary Powers's U-2 was shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960, the National Security Council ordered that a centralized photo interpretation center be set up for all the intelligence agencies. Mr. Lundahl was named its first director in December 1961.

Operating out of the Steuart Motor Car Co. building at Fifth and K streets NW in Washington, Mr. Lundahl's unit reviewed photographs the next fall of what at first glance appeared to be farmland in Cuba. But enlargements of the photographs allowed the interpreters to discover objects such as missile transporters, launcher erectors and other equipment indicating the installation of a missile base. It was that information that he took to the president.

A resident of Bethesda, Mr. Lundahl was born in Chicago. He graduated from the University of Chicago, where he later was an instructor in photogrammetry, photo interpretation, cartography and surveying as part of a war training program.

He retired from the National Photographic Interpretation Center in 1973 because of severe arthritis. He also retired from the Naval Reserve as a captain that year.

At his retirement, Mr. Lundahl received the CIA's Distinguished Intelligence Medal, the Presidential National Security Medal and the Defense Intelligence Agency director's Exceptional Civilian Service Award.

The citation on the CIA medal called Mr. Lundahl "a superb technician in the science of photographic interpretation and photogrammetry with few, if any, peers."

Mr. Lundahl also received an autographed picture of former Intelligence director Allen W. Dulles. "Art Lundahl has done as much as any man I know to protect the security of this nation," was the inscription.

Mr. Lundahl was a member of Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church and the Cosmos Club, and he was a former president of the American Society of Photogrammetry.

His wife of 42 years, the former Mary Emily Hvid, died in 1986.

Survivors include two children, Ann and Robert Lundahl, and a granddaughter, all of Chevy Chase.