



Chung Kee Yong, Korean-American journalist, is target of scare tactics by KCIA meant to stop criticism of South Korean regime.

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The Korean CIA's Campaign of Fear in the U.S.

by Phil Stanford
PHOTOS BY RON STANFORD

Sometimes, says Chung, the telephone rings in the middle of the night, and when you pick it up there's no one there—nothing but silence. And sometimes there's a high, whirring sound, "like in a horror movie."

Chung Kee Yong says he has been getting these calls for four years, ever since he started the Han Min Shinbo, a tiny Korean-language newspaper he publishes in the Washington, D.C., suburb of Arlington, Va.

The calls can come at any time, at home or at his office. Once Chung and a staff member were working late to get out the newspaper. At about 3 a.m. they decided to move to a room in another building. As soon as they entered the room, the phone rang.

Chung picked it up. "Nothing," he says. "Just silence." As soon as he hung up, the phone rang again. The same thing happened. And then a third time.

"They're very clever," says Chung. "There's nothing you can really prove. They just want you to know they're watching."

continued

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'The KCIA has violated the rights of Koreans living in this country.'

KCIA CONTINUED

Sometimes the threats are more direct, like the time a high-ranking agent of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) for the United States approached Chung at a party.

Chung remembers the incident in some detail. He was sitting alone when the agent walked up and told him to stop using his newspaper to criticize the South Korean government. "You'd better watch out," the agent said.

After years of living with such threats—first as a student protesting against the military dictatorship of his native Korea and, more recently, as the editor and publisher of the Han Min Shinbo—Chung doesn't scare easily.

"What did you say?" demanded Chung in a loud voice, so the other partygoers could hear. "I didn't hear you. Tell me again." The agent turned and walked away.

There are an estimated 250,000 Koreans living in the United States today, and most of them, like Chung, are aware that the KCIA is sometimes willing to make good on its threats. In 1967, the KCIA kidnapped 17 Korean students from Germany. In 1973 they kidnapped a prominent Korean politician, Kim Dae Jung, from Japan, where he was on a speaking tour. Kim Dae Jung, who was once a candidate for president of South Korea—in 1971 he finished second to Park Chung Hee—and leader of the opposition party there, is now in prison.

'You will be a widow'

Last year, while Chung was out of town, the telephone rang again and his wife answered. This time there was someone on the other end of the line.

"Tell your husband he is making a big mistake," said a man's voice. "If he doesn't stop writing bad things about the government, you will be a widow."

"It doesn't bother me any more," says Chung. "I'm used to it. But my wife is very frightened." During the past year, he says, his wife Moon-ja has developed a stomach ulcer from worrying.

Chung is not the only Korean journalist living in the United States who says he has been threatened by the KCIA.

In December, the editor of a Korean-language newspaper in Philadelphia, the Korean Guardian, reported that he

had received threatening calls from men he believes are KCIA agents.

For editor Park Mahn-suh the threats are something new. Until recently, he had been a supporter of the South Korean regime. However, this past fall, shortly after the Korean bribery scandal broke into the headlines in U.S. newspapers, he began to criticize the Korean government for its role in attempting to buy off U.S. Congressmen.

According to Park, one of the callers told him, "If you don't change your articles, we're going to smash your head." Another warned Park that his newspaper offices would be destroyed if he didn't stop his criticism.

More threats on West Coast

In San Francisco, another Korean editor, Song Sun Keum, says his life has been threatened by KCIA agents. Song's newspaper, the Korean Journal, is a longtime opponent of the policies of South Korean dictator Park Chung Hee.

In Los Angeles, the editor of New Korea, Kim Woon Ha, has reported similar threats. He says KCIA agents have warned him of "retaliation" if he continues to criticize the Korean government and have also offered him bribes to stop publishing.

In Korea, Kim was an editor of one of the country's largest newspapers and president of the Korean Journalists Association. He left Korea in 1972, shortly after President Park Chung Hee declared martial law and made it illegal to criticize the government.

In Los Angeles Kim was surprised to discover that "Korean-American journalism in the United States suffered conditions similar to those in Korea." Nor, says Kim, are journalists the only Koreans in this country who are intimidated by the KCIA. Its agents, he says, also attempt to control the activities of Korean residents' associations. The aim is to suppress all criticism of the Park regime.

'Prison-type atmosphere'

The KCIA, says Kim, is "creating a prison-type atmosphere for many Koreans living in the United States, just as they have done in Korea."

Last spring, in testimony before a Congressional committee headed by Rep. Donald Fraser (D., Minn.), Kim described the situation in Los Angeles. "Because of abusive KCIA activities," said Kim, "the Korean-American residents of this area call Los Angeles the

second Seoul, and they call the Korean consul general a generalissimo, and they call the KCIA Los Angeles chief an emergency decree commander. Los Angeles is not U.S. territory to Korean-Americans; it has become, rather, a territory of South Korea."

After hearing the testimony of Kim and others, Fraser asked the FBI to look into the problem. Ten months later, Fraser says, he has not received a report from the FBI.

Inquiries at FBI headquarters in Washington reveal that the FBI, indeed, has very little to report. Evidently they looked into some of the leads handed them by Fraser's committee and then dropped the matter for lack of evidence. A spokesman for the FBI says it is not conducting any investigation of allegations of threats and harassment by KCIA agents "at this time."

"There's nothing we can do unless we have evidence that a federal law has been broken," says the spokesman. He says the FBI has "no special interest" in foreign agents operating in this country, "unless they break the law."

Fraser says that in his opinion there is ample evidence that the KCIA has

violated the rights of Koreans living in this country who have been critical of the South Korean government. "The situation is outrageous and deserves a thorough investigation," he says.

Surprisingly, a statement by the South Korean ambassador himself — Hahn Pyong-choon — seems to support that position. In October, in response to questions by a UPI reporter, Hahn acknowledged that sometimes the KCIA got out of line.

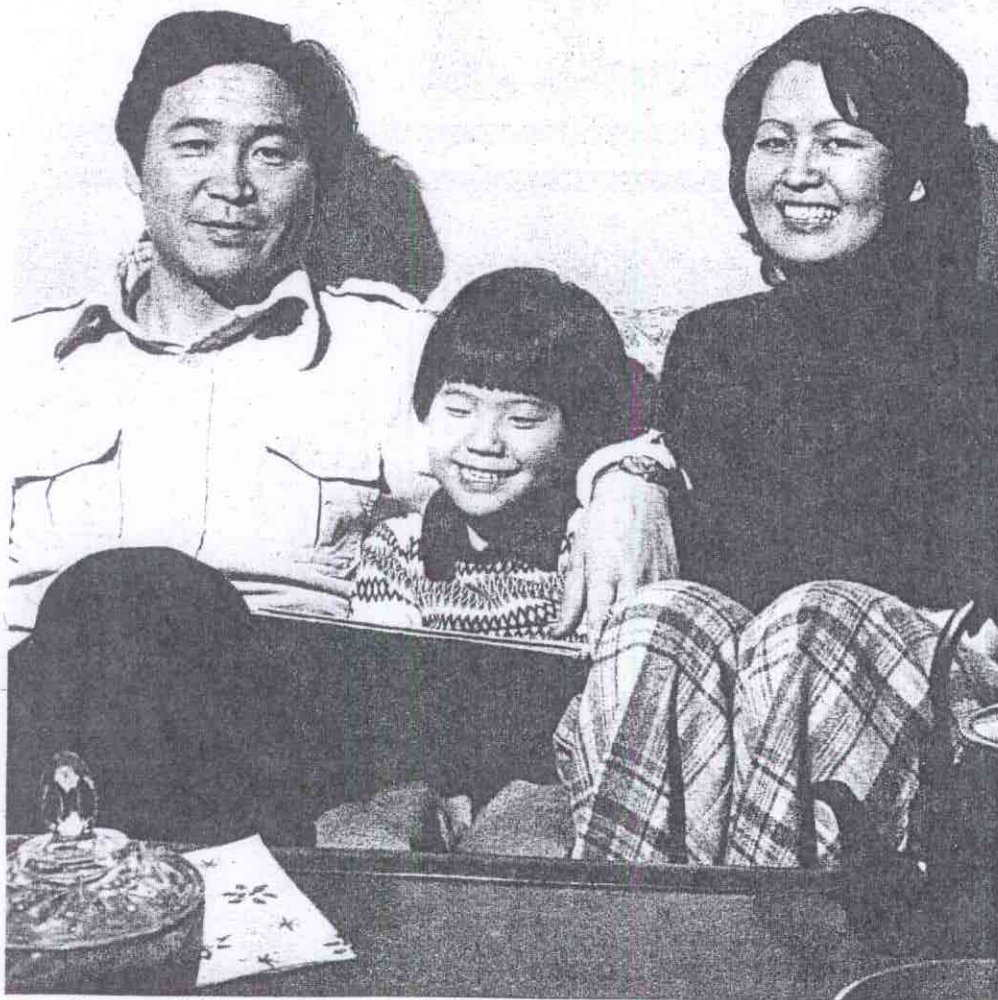
'Goon tactics'

"There have been undesirable characters in the KCIA who have been assigned and working here," said Hahn. "There is no question about it."

Ambassador Hahn even admitted that some agents "used goon psychology and tactics." However, he said those were being sent home.

The Korean embassy now denies that Hahn ever said this. It was all a "misunderstanding," says the embassy's press officer. The ambassador was only referring to "reports of unconfirmed allegations."

Meanwhile, says Chung, he keeps getting those telephone calls.



Chung with his son Ho-chung and wife Moon-ja. KCIA agents—who make threatening phone calls to homes as well as editorial offices—told her, “You will be a widow.”