

CIA Termed World's Top Intelligence Unit

The United States "has a more fully integrated and coordinated 'intelligence community' at the top level than any other country in the world."

Sherman Kent, onetime Central Intelligence Agency director for the Office of National Estimates, and retired chairman of the Board of National Estimates, offered that observation yesterday at a Commonwealth Club luncheon gathering in the Sheraton-Palace Hotel.

Kent, who retired from his CIA activities three years ago, believes the agency is doing "a very good job — not perfect, but a very good job, using a great number of people and a lot of machines to keep every corner of the world in contact.

Best in World

"American intelligence is bright and imaginative not only in its collection tasks, including espionage and counter-espionage," Kent said, "but in analysis and conclusions. Our intelligence is the best in the world."

While America obviously continues to have its own spies and counter-espionage agents, he said, "a new echelon of analysts has been added — experts in sound, line, symbol and pictures."

And these have become a

very important factor in an age of technology.

Speaking in a framework of his own questions and answers — for security reasons — Kent said that Soviet Russia, basically, still depends on espionage — a network of spies.

This alone, without the new element of technology, can be "dangerous," he said, and explained:

Grave Error

Soviet Russia placed big missiles in Cuba because of "a grave error in Soviet espionage."

"The error came," Kent said, "from a Soviet spy stealing the wrong document — a mere memorandum suggestion that America would not concern itself seriously with Russian missiles in Cuba."

On that alone, presumably without "analysis and conclusion" techniques, the Russians acted.

What they did not know, Kent added, "was that we had stolen a document telling us how the Soviets would react to American defiance . . . but this document was only part of our 'analysis and conclusion' techniques."

Referring briefly and cautiously to the U2 and Pueblo incidents, Kent said that "if we had not taken these and other risks that you know

about — and fortunately many you don't know about — the cost to this country would have been a thousand times greater in terms of financial cost."

Cooperation

Unlike the intelligence operations of "foreign capitals, where a country has numerous and jealous intelligence groups," the United States' "intelligence community" — including CIA, State Department intelligence, FBI, Atomic Energy Commission, Army, Navy, and Air Force intelligence and others — is integrated and cooperative."

Kent, member of a pioneer San Francisco family and a 1926 Yale classmate of crooner Rudy Vallee and artist Peter Arno, was with CIA for 17 years.

Despite the new breed of analysts and researchers, one rule in intelligence has never changed — every fragment, whatever its source and whether it be "knowable to us, knowable but unknown by us, or literally unknowable" — is still important.

This range of sources still includes everything from a revealing paragraph in an isolated newspaper — which can disclose major enemy plans — to documents stolen by key spies "to be analyzed by our experts and machines."