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Phillips to Campaign Against Critics

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CIA Aide Quits, Will Head Drive

By Joseph Novitski

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The chief of Central Intelligence Agency operations in Latin America since before the 1973 coup in Chile, a veteran of 24 years of clandestine activities including the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, retired yesterday to lead a public campaign to answer the agency's critics.

David Atlee Phillips, 52, plans to begin lecturing, for a fee, later this month.

Since he decided to retire 7 weeks ago, Phillips has started the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers "to explain why our country needs an intelligence service and to help clear up some of the erroneous impressions and sensationalism surrounding us by explaining what CIA is and ... what it is not."

Phillips said in an interview that declining morale at CIA, anger at the agency's constant critics and alarm over the readiness with which some stories about the CIA are accepted in the United States all

came together as reasons that led him to resign and speak out.

Phillips, a former professional actor who lectured for a living in 1955 while he was a part-time CIA agent, is very aware that many may think his plans and his association are parts of a CIA operation.

In a two-hour interview he would not explain in detail how he expects to solve what he calls "a tough credibility problem."

His first public appearance will be a press conference here today for Latin American correspondents stationed in Washington.

Speaking only two days after Cuban Premier Fidel Castro again charged that the CIA has tried to kill him, Phillips, expects to field questions on the CIA's role in foreign assassination plots, the agency's alleged part in the bloody coup that toppled President Salvador Allende in Chile and on the hunt that ended in Ernesto (Che) Guevara's death in Bolivia in 1968.

Castro and Cuba were the

specific intelligence targets assigned to Phillips for a total of five years in four separate periods, including two years (1968 and 1969) as chief of Cuban operations.

However, he may not shed all light available on what the CIA has done in Cuba or elsewhere in Latin America because, he asserted, he will not endanger agents' lives or reveal successful, continuing operations.

A spokesman for the CIA said yesterday that the agency had nothing to do with Phillips' decision and would do nothing to help him.

"He loses his badge, can't get into the building," the spokesman said. "It's the real end. It's like having your chevrons ripped off."

A big, blond man with a seamed face and a quick, hard grin, Phillips has seemed to some almost type-cast as a successful agent and operator. He worked undercover in Chile, Guatemala, Lebanon and Cuba for eleven years.

Even after he semi-surfaced

in 1961 in an assignment in Mexico City under polite, but thin cover as an American diplomat, friends recall that he relished periodic U.S. re-qualifying courses in the clandestine arts of spying.

A woman who knew Phillips well socially as a senior U.S. Embassy member in Rio de Janeiro in 1970 without ever suspecting he was station chief there privately nicknamed him "John Wayne."

At the same time politically sophisticated, well-informed Brazilians were quite sure the station chief was John Mowinkel, a big bluff man who was the public affairs officer. None suspected Phillips.

To answer those who ask why he is ending his career in early retirement and taking what he says is a \$20,000 pay cut, Phillips typed seven reasons onto the back of an envelope last week.

The reasons, which he carries in the left breast pocket of his suit jacket, are the product of a month of waking



DAVID ATLEE PHILLIPS

... a "tough problem"

at 3 o'clock each morning on purpose to mull over his move, he said.

The first six reflect his professional concerns and his anger at critics such as authors John Marks, Victor Marchetti and Phillip Agee. He calls Agee "the first defector ever from the Central Intelligence Agency."

"I'm talking about agents who say they won't work for a gossip factory," Phillips said when he assessed the effects of critical books and news stories. "I'm talking about liaison services that say, 'We won't cooperate as we did in the past because we don't want to see our stuff in the newspapers.'"

It is the seventh reason that seems to grip Phillips most. He recalls that like other CIA men, he has had to explain to his children, as they move into their teens, "that daddy is not a businessman or a Foreign Service officer, he's an intelligence officer."

"In the past, this has usually been a pleasant experience," he said. Recently he had to explain to the fifth of his seven children.

"This time the reaction was, quote, but that's dirty, unquote," Phillips said very slowly.