

Mr. Arthur C. Lundahl

Director
National Photographic Interpretation Center
May 1953 – July 1973



Mr. Arthur C. Lundahl earned a BS in 1939 and an MS in geology in 1942 at the University of Chicago.

Mr. Lundahl began a professional research career in Ontario, Canada, using aerial photography to produce geological maps. He joined the U.S. Navy and served as a photointerpreter at Adak, Alaska, where he examined photos taken over the Aleutian Islands, Japan, and the Kuriles. In 1946 the navy asked him to write the charter for the Naval Photographic Interpretation Center (NAVVIC); he then served for seven years as chief of the Photogrammetric Division and as assistant chief engineer. In 1953 the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruited Mr. Lundahl to head and develop its Photographic Intelligence Division (PID), under the Office of Research and Reports. In 1958 the PID merged with the Statistical Branch of the Office of Current Reference to form the Photographic Interpretation Center (PIC). In January 1961, President Eisenhower created the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) with Mr. Lundahl as director. Under Mr. Lundahl's leadership, NPIC's role—to support of the CIA's Deputy Director of Intelligence—expanded to transform the center into a national-level, multidepartmental component of the intelligence community, with over one thousand employees drawn from CIA and the Department of Defense.

NPIC demonstrated that image intelligence was a prime strategic and tactical resource worldwide. Mr. Lundahl fostered development of business practices, tradecraft, and technology to manage the ever-growing volumes of satellite and aircraft imagery. His leadership was instrumental in the development and evolution of the U-2, SR-71, and satellite reconnaissance programs.

Director of NPIC for two decades and “father” of modern imagery analysis and imagery intelligence, Mr. Lundahl received a personal letter and a silver memento of the Cuban Missile Crisis from President John F. Kennedy. He received the National Security Medal, the National Civil Service League Award, the Defense Intelligence Agency's Director's Exceptional Civilian Service Award, and the CIA Distinguished Intelligence Medal. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II named Mr. Lundahl a Knight of the British Empire. In 1985 Lundahl received the U.S. Pioneer in Space Medal. Mr. Lundahl died in 1992. In 2001 he was posthumously inducted into the National Imagery and Mapping Agency Hall of Fame.