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MADISON STATE JOURNAL (WI
18 November 1983

# Danger is within, conservative ex-spy says

By Roger A. Gribble
Of The State Journal

WHITEWATER — Peter James, a former CIA spy who decided to go public, sounded the alarm Wednesday night at UW-Whitewater.

The nation is in danger, said James, who also worked for Air Force intelligence during the early 1970s. But he said the danger comes more from within than from outside.

Recent developments in Central America, including the invasion of Grenada, highlight that danger, he warned, adding, "Reagan is a master at subtly controlling information."

James, on a nationwide speaking tour, said the Reagan administration probably knew there was a weapons cache on Grenada. It excluded the American press from the invasion because it expected stiff opposition and didn't want a lot of negative reports coming out of the island during the initial phases of the attack, he said.

James, speaking on the subject "The Castro Connection," has visited Cuba three times in the past 2½ years. He argued that U.S. policy toward Cuba since Castro came to power has dictated its actions in other Central American nations.

Peter James

The U.S. trade embargo against Cuba for the past 20 years and the current travel embargo have kept the American public in the dark about Cuba, and that's the way the administration wants it, James said.

He encountered no animosity from Cuban civilians or government officials during his visits, he said, even though he had revealed his former CIA ties. Cubans seem to dissociate American visitors from American government policies, he said.

The Cuban government is fearful of an invasion and has armed civilians, who form a militia to protect Cuba in the event of an invasion, he said.

James said the arms found on Grenada were probably intended for similar use by civilians there as part of a militia force, rather than being destined for other countries.

James said he has a conservative background and some of his books have been endorsed by a conservative book club, but the current administration doesn't like much of what he says during his talks.

"I find myself playing the role of devil's advocate. I want to keep a lot of my conservative friends honest," he said during an interview. Even though he is unhappy with the administration, he said, he has also been disappointed with liberals because they have provided no constructive alternatives.

"I find myself, with a conservative background, coming up with alternatives the liberals should be offering," he said.

James said the American press has been discredited since the Iranian hostage crisis, when the American public became tired of being bombarded with bad news.

He was surprised, he said, that the press and the American public put up with the press being excluded from the Grenada invasion.

Henry Kissinger was the worst possible person to put in charge of the fact-finding mission to Central America, he argued, given Kissinger's role in backing the bloody overthrow of the Allende government in Chile.

He called the Kissinger Commission "nothing but a time-delaying tactic. "I suspect the Reagan administration has set in motion, through covert operations, a plan where Nicaragua will be resolved by the time the commission reports. In the meantime, the U.S. brings more troops into surrounding countries. The commission is a deliberate attempt to mislead the public."

James said he is also alarmed that the Reagan administration "has turned the intelligence community loose to undo some of the damage (to the administration) resulting from the Watergate affair.

"The administration will back the intelligence agencies even if they break the law," he said. "Reagan even pardoned some agents in New York who broke the law."

James said he did his spying for the CIA and Air Force while on the payroll of Pratt and Whitney Aircraft as an aerspace engineer. He is able to disclose that role, he said, because he was never on the government payroll and thus never signed a security oath.

At first his spying consisted of "picking the brains" of Russian scientists and engineers at conferences he attended, he said. Later it involved compiling political dossiers on Soviet officials.

James said he finally decided to give his reports to audiences in the form of talks rather than to intelligence agencies, and he has concentrated his efforts in providing information the public cannot otherwise obtain.

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