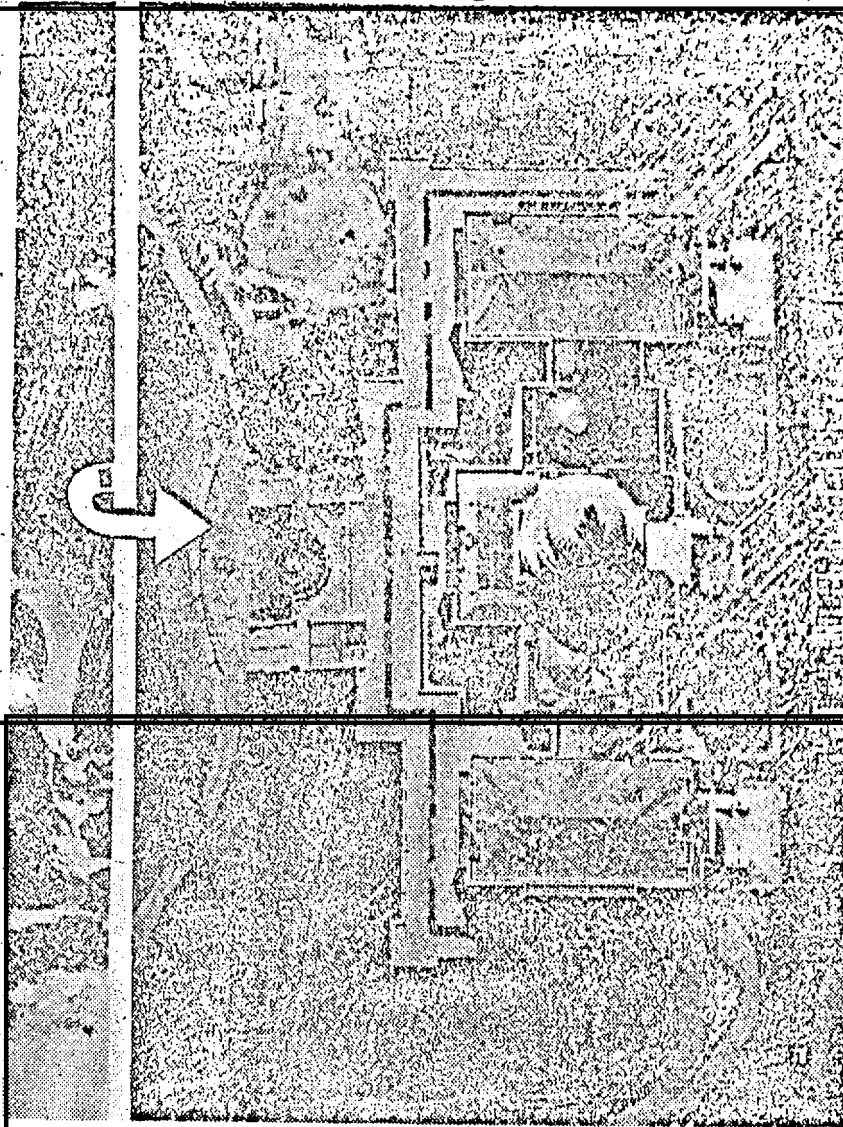




Francis Gary Powers (above) made the U-2 famous when his went down in Russia. Capability of high altitude reconnaissance is illustrated by Washington, D. C., scenes at right. Tiny rectangle at end of arrow was magnified and resulting print clearly shows Capitol and cars parked around it.



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U-2: End of a 'Routine Mission'

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The fabulous, troubled U-2, one of the world's best-known secrets, was back in the news last week. Air Force Capt. Robert D. Hickman, 32, of Alexandria, La., left Barksdale, La., Air Force Base Thursday on a "routine mission," headed toward Florida and its environs. Hickman failed to make a planned turn between Sarasota and Key West as he flew down the coast, and flew on south, perhaps unconscious because of a failure in the craft's oxygen system.

The high-flying plane, obviously originally headed for Cuba and a surveillance mission, was spotted by radar over Panama. Then, on automatic pilot, it continued south high above the towering Andes for half the length of the South American continent. When its fuel ran out it went into a glide and crashed west of Oruro, Bolivia, a tin mining town near the Peru-Chile border 140 miles south of La Paz. Scattered wreckage and Hickman's battered body were found by farmers.

The plane's disappearance recalled the incident which first brought the U-2 to public notice: the disastrous flight on May 1, 1960, of Francis Gary Powers, a \$2,500-a-month civilian pilot employed by Lockheed Aircraft, builder of the spy plane. Powers on that day—just 15 days before a four-nation (U.S., Russia, Britain, France) summit conference in Paris—took off from Turkey and headed over the Soviet Union, four targets on his knee clipboard: the rocket complex at Tyura Tam, east of the Aral Sea; Sverdlovsk and its mysteriously domed missile launch points, and the Soviet air and submarine bases at Archangel and

Murmansk. The route was to cover more than 5,000 miles.

Radar Found Powers' U-2

He crossed the Soviet border at more than 70,000 feet, far above the range of any Soviet plane, which would flame out in the rare air. But Soviet radar was locked on the spy plane, and when Powers ran into trouble and was forced to descend to a lower altitude he was downed. The Russians recovered Powers, his wrecked plane and its intelligence gear.

An American pilot, announced the National Aeronautics and Space Administration piously, had reported difficulties with his oxygen system while flying a weather mission over Turkey. The unnamed pilot, Nasa indicated, might have lost consciousness and flown over Russia by accident. Powers could have been close to Soviet borders, Nasa added, because the U.S. weather research program was worldwide.

When Premier Khrushchev produced the plane's wreckage, and Powers, an agonizing reappraisal was necessary in Washington. Finally, President Eisenhower admitted publicly for the first time in American history that a spy had invaded the borders of another country. Eisenhower accepted full responsibility, and the summit meeting was scuttled.

Powers, 31, was tried, pleaded guilty to espionage charges and was sentenced to 10 years—three in prison and seven in a prison colony. On Feb. 10, 1962, Powers was released and returned to American authorities in exchange for the release of Col. Rudolf Abel,

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