

Mission Summary--4016--20 November 1956

Mission 4016 from Adana was a photo reconnaissance flight performed on 20 November 1956 which was to photograph Baku and the Soviet-Iranian-Turkey border between the Caspian and Black Seas. Analysis of Soviet air defense communications indicated the aircraft was under sporadic surveillance for approximately 35 minutes; however, it was labelled as an intruder for only 7 minutes and suspicious for 10 minutes. The aircraft was first reported as it entered Soviet territory just west of Astrakhan. It was evident from subsequent position reports that these surveilling radars experienced difficulty in tracking the aircraft. Although not reflected in air warning communications, it is possible that a Communist aircraft had been confused with mission aircraft during the period in which the air defense network experienced difficulty in tracking. Track was lost and not picked up again for approximately 1½ hours at which time it was identified as suspicious but apparently no relationship between it and the first tracking of an intruder was established. After this track was lost another track was begun about 15 minutes later when the aircraft was in Turkey and returning to base. This track was not even labelled suspicious. The only reported altitude relative to our mission was 24,600 feet and there were no fighter reactions. Photo coverage on this mission was only fair due to haze over Baku and more than anticipated cloud coverage along the flight path. One of the most significant pieces of intelligence picked up on this flight was a completely new hard surfaced air field outside of Baku with extensive track activity of military maneuvers around the area. Additionally there was considerable intelligence gathered about the Soviet program of improving their known airfields. One of the conclusions air defense analysts are able to make as a result of this mission was that air defense elements in Baku/Tbilisi air defense district are highly inefficient in detecting and identifying potentially hostile aircraft.