

TOP SECRET

BACKGROUND ON THE PROGRAM:

In 1954, Mr. Clarence L. (Kelly) Johnson of Lockheed Aircraft Corporation presented a drawing board version of the U-2 Aircraft to the U.S. Government for their consideration of the vehicle as a reconnaissance collection aircraft. Mr. Johnson pointed out that the aircraft would be excellent for this type of work because of its high altitude and long range capabilities. Headquarters and the USAF, impressed with the potential employment of the aircraft, sought appropriate approvals for the program and subsequently embarked on a joint Headquarters-USAF project. It was agreed Project Headquarters would generally run the program with logistical and technical support furnished by the USAF in accordance with the joint policy guidance. For purposes of administering and controlling the project, Project Headquarters created a separate staff to contract for the deployment of the aircraft, monitor the development activity, administer all personnel involved, establish operational policies and procedures, and provide a tightly controlled and secure program. Simultaneous with the creation of a mechanism for monitoring development and operational use of the aircraft, steps were taken to establish an intelligence community effort for identification of intelligence requirements and processing, interpretation and distribution of the final product by the most expeditious and secure means.

Initial development activities began at Lockheed and subsequently expanded to a test site facility within the Atomic Energy Commission testing facility in Nevada. This site was used for flight testing the vehicle, equipment checkout and pilot transition and training.

In anticipation of overseas deployment, where the U-2 detachment would require USAF support, the program was surfaced as a NASA-Air Weather Service research program engaged in the collection of upper air weather and air turbulence data. Additionally, the project was identified in classified circles [redacted]. NASA was chosen as one of the program sponsors in order to give the activity a civilian, non-offensive appearance. The introduction of Air Weather Service into the picture was necessary to explain the use of USAF facilities overseas and, at the same time, further tag the program as a scientific undertaking.

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As soon as the initial U-2 became operationally ready, plans were made for the deployment of one unit to a forward overseas location.

ORIGINS OF WRSP IV

In May 1956 the first U-2 unit, designated Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (Provisional) 1st, deployed [redacted] This was then, WRSP-I. Due to the political climate in the host country at that time, the unit was subsequently moved to Wiesbaden AB, Germany from which location overflights began with the first overflight on 20 Jun 1956. [redacted]

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In August of 1956, a second unit was deployed to Adana, Turkey (WRSP-II). In February of 1957 a similar detachment was sent to Atsugi, Japan (WRSP-III). In September 1956, WRSP-I at Wiesbaden moved [redacted] where it remained until November 1957 at which time the unit was moved back to the U.S. The Adana detachment remained at that location until the fall of 1960 when the major part of the detachment returned to the U.S., in the fall of 1960. The returning detachments were located at Edwards AFB. These plus the remainder of personnel and equipment that had been moved from the AEC test site in Nevada to Edwards AFB in June of 1957 to become WRSP-IV.

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Initially it was thought that overflights would be conducted direct from the overseas U-2 bases as were the first flights from Weisbaden [] and isolated flights from Adana and Atsugi. Subsequently, it was decided that the best coverage could be obtained by staging from other bases closer to the target areas. The locations used on these staging operations were Alaska, Pakistan, Phillipine Islands, [] and Thailand. From these staging locations and overseas bases themselves, fifty-two (52) flights were made over Sino-Soviet bloc countries. Numerous other periphery flights were made as well as Middle East and Southeast Asia coverage.

As well the flights mentioned above, which were mainly photo-reconnaissance and ELINT flights, many training flights were conducted including legitimate weather reconnaissance [] Specialized missions were flown from Japan to photograph typhoons, [] These proved to be of value to the Air Weather Service typhoon monitoring program and likewise to the Japanese Meteorological Society. Other by-products of the program were the development of more sophisticated collection equipment and electronic countermeasures mechanisms which continued concurrently with the performance of the primary mission.

THE 1 MAY INCIDENT

In the early part of May 1960, the U-2 Program, up to this point a covert intelligence program, became a topic of conversation in every corner of the world. NBC described thier television expose "White Paper" of the U-2 incident as the most widely listened to docuementary program of 1960. U-2 became a household word and Francis Gary Powers, a more widely known individual than many heads of state.

Little did Mr. Powers know that he would obtain such notoriety when he joined the program in 1956. Prior to this, he had been a USAF pilot at Turner AFB in Albany, Georgia. [] Mr. Powers resigned from the USAF and went to work for Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. He was trained to fly the new aircraft at the AEC covert location and exhibited great skill in the mechanics of flying and navigation.

Prior to the 1 May Flight, Mr. Powers was briefed on his flight plan which ran from Peshawar, Pakistan to Bodo, Norway. After his briefing, Mr. Powers took off and proceeded along his programmed course until he reached Sverdlovsk where he experienced difficulties. The Soviet Union claimed that a direct hit from one of their ground to air missiles was responsible for the aircrafts initial descent from altitude and the following crash. Many theories have been advanced for the explanation of what occured at Sverdlovsk. The most recent and widely publicized answer comes from Col. Oleg Penkovskiy who is know popularly as "The Spy in the Kremlin": Col. Penkovskiy claims he released Russian intelligence information in order to alert American and British people to the danger of Khrushchev's "adventurist tactics". Col. Penkovskiy stated that 14 missiles were fired at the plane. It was not a direct hit but rather the shock wave that caused the aircraft to disintegrate.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE U-2 PROGRAM

Before the beginning of the program the United States had organized against the threat of suprise attack by the Soviet Union. U.S. sources and analysis had given us a great deal of knowledge concerning the capabilities of the Soviet Union.

Classical intelligence sources often deal in information which is hard to verify and difficult to interpret. These sources showed that the Soviet Union was developing considerable military power.

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There remained many questions concerning the level which the Soviets had reached. The rate at which the Soviets were increasing their power and their ultimate aims for its use was an unanswered question. Half knowledge of the Soviet Union and uncertainty of its true power position posed tremendous problems for the United States. The United States was faced with the constant risk of exposing ourselves to enemy attack or of needlessly expending a great deal of money and effort on military preparations of our own, which would become obsolete before they were needed.

In order to meet this situation, it was determined that the U-2 program was the answer. The U-2 would give the United States a firm foundation of hard information on which to make intelligence judgments. The program has covered a large part of the most important areas in the Soviet Union and has provided information on a great variety of subjects important to the evaluation of the Soviet power position. The main emphasis however, was directed against three critical problems; namely the Soviet bomber force, the Soviet atomic energy program, and the Soviet missile program.

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