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10 May 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing of Congressional Leadership on U-2 Incident; 9 May 1960, 1415-1600, Room F-82, Capitol

Present from CIA were Mr. Dulles, General Cabell, Mr. Bissell and Mr. Lundahl and group.

1. Secretary of State Herter

Secretary Herter opened the briefing with the observation that the incident involving the flight of the U-2 plane on 1 May had led to a great deal of interpretation and, in the process, of course, some mis-interpretation. He followed this comment with the reading of a prepared statement which was issued to the press later (attached). Mr. Herter then introduced Mr. Dulles and stated that Mr. Dulles would be able to brief the Congressmen on what had happened and the real value of these overflights.

2. Mr. Allen W. Dulles

Mr. Dulles <sup>spoke from</sup> [did not have] a prepared statement, <sup>(attached)</sup> [but spoke from a set of notes]. [He covered the following points:

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a. For background on this operation, we should start with the National Security Act of 1947 which entrusted CIA with collecting intelligence essential to the national security. Subsequently there had been several National Security Council directives issued to provide guidance on the implementation of that mission.

b. Since 1947, the USSR has been arming in secret behind the Iron Curtain. Obviously our national security requires

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that we have, for defensive and retaliatory purposes, an appreciation of Soviet military strength and capabilities as well as the location of military installations. If, for example, the location and number of Soviet bases are kept secret we wouldn't know where to direct retaliatory blows.

c. At the 1955 Summit Conference the President offered the "open skies" proposition to the Soviets. This proposal not only was rejected by the Soviets but they actually reinforced their security measures thereafter. In the meanwhile, the Soviets continued to have ready access to military information on the United States since much of this is open knowledge. We found that the classic means of gathering intelligence on Soviet military capabilities and activities were largely ineffective due to the controls imposed by them.

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d. Early in December 1954 a project was initiated to come up with an aircraft which would provide the type of unique performance desired to obtain this intelligence by aerial survey. The first U-2 was in being the 2nd of August 1955. By that time our "open skies" proposal had been rejected by the Russians at the Summit Conference. Meanwhile the USSR was continuing to develop bases and missiles on a highly secretive scale. This was an intolerable situation from the viewpoint of national security because we did not have the facts or the knowledge upon which to plan our defensive and retaliatory forces or their commitment. This is essential information for the survival of any great State today.

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A policy directive was issued to CIA to obtain information on vital targets in the USSR by any means available to us. The details and the timing of this was left to the technicians. A considerable number of flights have been made since then, including flights [redacted]

(b)(1)  
(b)(3)

[redacted] Vital information has been obtained on missiles, R&D sites, bomber bases, nuclear sites, and other vital targets.]

MR. HEETER: Mr. Herter interposed at this point and noted that over this period ~~no~~ U-2 aircraft had been lost <sup>in unfriendly territory</sup> [on an operational mission] until the first of May 1960.

MR. DULLES: In response to a number of questions from various Congressmen, Mr. Dulles indicated the following:

a. The first operational flight of the U-2 was <sup>in</sup> on 4 June 1956. Mr. Dulles <sup>preferred</sup> hesitated to specify the total number of flights undertaken by the U-2 and upon being <sup>said that for reasons of high security he</sup> ~~pressed~~ <sup>over Blue Territory</sup> ~~stated that it was~~ <sup>indicated that a</sup> ~~considerably more than~~ <sup>percent had been flown.</sup>

b. On the question of the circumstances under which Powers was shot down, Mr. Dulles stated that we tended not to believe the story put out by Khrushchev. He said it was quite possible that there had been a flameout in which case the pilot would have to descend to a lower altitude for more oxygen. It could have been that the plane was shot down by anti-aircraft artillery <sup>or fighter</sup> at a lower altitude at some stage of the descent. He noted that pilot loss of oxygen was part of our original cover story.

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c. In response to a question on the altitude capabilities of the U-2, Mr. Dulles noted that we still don't want to reveal this information to the USSR. He stated that it was capable of level flight <sup>in neighborhood of</sup> at 70,000 feet.

d. In answer to a question as to whether or not he thought the Russians actually had the film from the U-2 Mr. Dulles answered that it was quite possible since film is hard to destroy.

e. On a question involving provisions for destruction of the plane, Mr. Dulles noted that such existed but it required action on the part of the pilot in his preparation for abandoning the plane. He explained that we didn't know whether or not the pilot actually set the destructive mechanism in motion. Mr. Dulles added in this connection that according to the experts ~~the~~ plane remnants gathered together by the Soviets for news photographs may well not be the remains of the U-2. [Note: This was the first of them]

f. CONGRESSMAN: A Congressman stated that while he agreed everything should be done to obtain this type of information, he felt public acknowledgment we were doing this was bad and quite serious.

CONGRESSMAN: Another Congressman responded at this juncture that he felt public disclosure of this type of activity would have a beneficial effect upon the U.S. people. In his opinion, the American people, as a result of this disclosure, would know that we are not afraid of doing

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whatever is necessary to assure national security. He also noted that, in his opinion, this would not affect the Summit Conference.

MR. HERTER: Mr. Herter interjected that at one time in the history of this project we had seriously considered taking the product of our U-2 endeavors before the United Nations and surfacing it to show what the Russians were really up to.

MR. DULLES: In response to a question involving altitude and bail-out height, Mr. Dulles noted our lack of knowledge on precisely what had happened and stated we were studying available evidence to see if we could not reconstruct the circumstances. He said to one Congressman, specifically, that he would give him more details on altitude later.

MR. DULLES: In response to a question concerning the kind of individual Powers was, Mr. Dulles stated that he had had an Air Force background reinforced by extensive training, and in general was eminently suited for the job to be done. He also noted that some of Khrushchev's story as related to Powers doesn't seem to jibe but we assume that in time we will get at the truth. He added that Powers had been with us four years and, during that period, had led a rather rigorous and confining life without many outside contacts.

CONGRESSMAN: A Congressman wanted to know whether it would not be a nice turnabout if we could nab a Red spy in the U.S. at this time and surface him to take some of the play away

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from Khrushchev by showing that this type of thing is being done by both sides.

MR. DULLES: Mr. Dulles brought up the Abel Case in which a very capable Russian spy was caught red-handed not too long ago with transmitting equipment, codes, etc. He said that somebody might talk to J. Edgar Hoover on this one.

MR. RAYBURN: Mr. Rayburn said that one facet of interest to him was who gave the order for this flight.

MR. DULLES: Mr. Dulles responded that sometimes the release of flights was made in the field and sometimes by Washington. He elucidated on the field releases by stating that a number of local factors were often involved, plus rapidly changing weather conditions which necessitated some authority in the field.

MR. RAYBURN: Mr. Rayburn wanted to know if this wasn't a rather doubtful time to release such a flight with the Summit Conference coming on and being so close.

MR. DULLES: Mr. Dulles <sup>also</sup> responded that this could be argued two ways: on the one hand, don't take a chance of disturbing the Conference; on the other hand, it might provide some useful information for the Conference.

MR. RAYBURN: Mr. Rayburn stated that this briefing was the only time he had heard about any such flight and stressed that he had never heard a word about it until today. He also reiterated that he questioned someone's judgment

*Mr. Porter: Remarked that any time was a bad time for doing this kind of thing*

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in sending up the flight at this particular time.

MR. DULLES: Mr. Dulles responded that he regretted that Mr. Rayburn had not been briefed.

CONGRESSMAN HALLECK (?): Congressman Halleck stated that obviously this technique was no longer secret and that he had not been briefed either. He noted that he had gone to the White House for a conference at some critical juncture during the Korean War and the question of Red Chinese capabilities had come up. Nobody seemed to have any idea of their capabilities because we could not fly over the Chinese Mainland. He had felt then that we ought to be ferreting out this type of information. He concluded by stating that he, for one, agreed that we should find out by overflights where the Communist strength was in order to be able to defend ourselves.

SENATOR BRIDGES: Senator Bridges wanted to know if there had been any Russian flights over our country.

MR. DULLES: Mr. Dulles stated that essentially the Soviets did not need to overfly the U.S. to obtain their information. Quite aside from the fact that the Soviets had a difficult problem in overflight of the U.S. and return to Soviet territory in one trip Mr. Dulles noted that there had been some Soviet flights over Alaska <sup>the</sup> ~~area~~.

CONGRESSMAN: A Congressman wanted to know if Powers' terminal point on this trip was in Norway.

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MR. DULLES: Mr. Dulles responded that we weren't sure because the pilot had various alternatives, one of which, for example, was to go to Norway and another, to loop back south again to a base south of the USSR.

MR. HERTER: Mr. Herter interjected that the Norwegian Government really did not know that we were doing this and was telling the truth when it denied official knowledge of our use of the flight base on its territory for this purpose. Mr. Herter added that this aspect of the matter was quite sensitive and actually involved surreptitious evacuation.

3. Mr. Art Lundahl

Art Lundahl proceeded to use a series of photographs and charts/ to demonstrate the unique value of this intelligence technique and to demonstrate its significance for purposes of national security.  
(See attached for list of charts used)

SENATOR MANSFIELD: Senator Mansfield interrupted to inquire whether any Cabinet members knew of this flight. The response from Mr. Dulles was that he believed not. Senator Mansfield then wanted to know whether Powers operated under the command of the Colonel in Turkey. While Mr. Dulles was attempting to respond to this question by noting certain areas of field authority for releasing flights, Mr. Mansfield rephrased his question by asking who was Powers' boss? Mr. Dulles began by



stating that the flight patterns were established here in Washington... <sup>Senator</sup> [Mr] Mans-<sup>field</sup> then asked whether or not the Air Force Colonel knew of Powers' mission? Mr. Dulles replied that the Colonel did know of Powers' mission but there were certain local authorities involving weather and local conditions.

CONGRESSMAN: In response to a question asked by a Congressman as to the range of the U-2, Mr. Bissell answered 3,800 nautical miles.

CONGRESSMAN: A Congressman noted that by and large the Khrushchev story seemed accurate.

MR. BISSELL: Mr. Bissell responded that it was by and large although we have a feeling there are some deliberate mis-statements on the circumstances involved in the loss of the aircraft.

SENATOR MANSFIELD: Senator Mansfield wanted to know whether the salary of \$2,500 a month for Powers was correct.

MR. BISSELL: Mr. Bissell stated that the figure was correct, and a Congressman noted that under the circumstances it was well worth it.

MR. BISSELL: Mr. Bissell stated that on many flights there had been interception attempts by Red aircraft but they could not get close enough to do any good. During one of the earlier flights a Russian interceptor had been caught in a photograph and our photo interpreters put the interceptor

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at a point some 10,000 feet below the U-2. Some of the characteristics and uses of the U-2 were indicated by Mr. Bissell as being the following:

- a. A speed of 420 knots.
- b. Oblique photography into the USSR from outside Soviet borders.
- c. Adequate film to provide for from 1,800 to 2,400 miles coverage dependent upon several variables.
- d. Use of recorders on overflights to pick up Russian electronic emissions. (This was useful in providing data on the characteristics, location, and other features of the USSR radar system.)
- e. Actual use for weather flights. (NASA, for example, had done considerable weather research with the U-2 and <sup>it has been</sup> also used ~~for~~ for upper atmospheric sampling of nuclear debris.)
- f. Installation of special electronic gear for flights south of the Soviet border to pick up missile telemetry.

CONGRESSMAN: A Congressman wanted to know how far we can see into the USSR on a peripheral flight.

MR. LUNDAHL: Art Lundahl stated that it depended upon a number of variables but, for example, if we were 20 miles outside the border we could certainly take oblique photographs covering up to 40 miles inside Soviet territory.

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SENATOR DIRKSEN: Senator Dirksen wanted to know whether Khrushchev might not have been "fooling" us when he said he shot down the U-2.

MR. BISSELL: Mr. Bissell responded that in examining the photographs of the U-2 wreckage it appeared that this might well be the case. As to the reason, Mr. Bissell felt there was an even chance, perhaps, that the plane had not been shot down but had been forced to land under the threat of Soviet fighter planes at the lower altitudes. He explained that the Soviets, of course, would have a great interest in obtaining the U-2 intact. Mr. Bissell stated that, aside from the foregoing, Khrushchev might have made his statement to emphasize to the world, and to reassure the people of the USSR on Russian prowess in the missile field.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: Senator Dirksen mentioned that since we had begun U-2 operations in June of 1956 he supposed we had set up something like an overflight schedule at intervals of, perhaps, four or six weeks.

MR. DULLES: Mr. Dulles responded that we could not fly missions at all times of the year because, for example, at certain times the sun angle was not right.

CONGRESSMAN: A Congressman wanted to know why Khrushchev was so careful to exonerate President Eisenhower in his statements?

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SECRETARY HERTER: Secretary Herter emphasized that the President had not been involved in the 1 May flight but Khrushchev was probably adopting this line in view of the forthcoming Summit Conference. Mr. Herter added that it was very hard to tell what Khrushchev had in mind and, although he did not personally believe it, there was some speculation that Khrushchev did not want to go to the Summit Conference. Mr. Herter also noted that there was some opinion Khrushchev was not finding "all easy going" at home and a consideration in his attitude on the U-2 incident was strengthening his personal position at home as well as the possibility of a Summit failure.

MR. LUNDAHL: Art Lundahl then continued with the balance of his briefing which involved photographs of the Soviet proving ground for nuclear testing.

CONGRESSMAN: A Congressman wanted to know how much of the USSR we had photographed during this period of U-2 flights.

MR. DULLES: Mr. Dulles responded that a great deal of the USSR was of no particular interest to us and indicated that it would be difficult to state what percentage of coverage we had obtained of the percentage of Soviet territory in which we were interested.

4. The briefing concluded with Senator Dirksen bringing up the point that the participants should have some kind of agreement with respect to the great clamor for news on this subject. Mr. Dulles stated that for obvious reasons CIA would

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like its section of the briefing considered off-the-record. Secretary Herter stated that his opening statement had been prepared for release to the press. Mr. Rayburn stood up and announced to all Congressional participants that he would give the newsmen no comment whatsoever. The balance of those present seemed to accept this as their guideline.

Attachments

1. Secretary Herter Press Statement.
2. List of photos and charts.