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There was a difference
in the public image and
real self of the central
figure in the celebrated
U-2 shoot down.

Francis Gary Powers - The Unmaking of a Hero, 1960-1965.

By

James J. White

MAYDAY!

On 1 May 1960, somewhere between Peshawar, Pakistan and Bodo in Norway, Francis Gary Powers 'went missing' while piloting his U-2 aircraft on an overflight of the Soviet Union. The hazardous eight hour flight, three thousand miles of which were over Russia, could never be considered routine but the operation had been conducted successfully for four years and no unusual difficulties had been anticipated. Soviet surface to air missilery was improving but was not yet considered capable of reaching the high flying U-2. No change in flight plan was made by reason of the upcoming summit meeting of the Big Four (U.K., France, USSR, US) scheduled for Paris in that month.

An uneasy silence followed Powers' disappearance. During this time the US authorities at Adana Turkey correctly issued a low key press release stating that NACA* weather reconnaissance plane had disappeared near Turkey. The item received little press attention at the first but was not to remain quiet for long. On 5 May, just before

*National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics, predecessor to NASA. Four years of success had caused the original cover plan to gather dust in both Headquarters' files but evidently not in the field.

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the Paris Conference convened, the Soviets announced that a US photographic plane had been shot down over Soviet territory. On 7 May, Premier Khrushchev revealed that the pilot, Francis Gary Powers was alive and had confessed to having been on a spying mission; also that they had recovered the aircraft.

Now the fat was really in the fire which blazed up world-wide with such intensity that the State Department felt it necessary to issue a statement. As a result of an inquiry ordered by the President, the Department said, on 7 May, it had been established that in so far as the authorities in Washington were concerned there was no authorization for any such flight as described by Mr. Khrushchev. The denial was followed on 9 May by an admission from Secretary of State, Christian Herter that such flights had existed for several years in order to gather information to protect the West from surprise attack. Herter asserted that the flights would be continued unless the Soviet Union lessened the danger of aggression. Secretary Herter's statement further exacerbated the situation, so much so that President Eisenhower, on 11 May 1950, admitted that he had authorized the flights adding that they had been suspended and were not to be renewed. Of those ten days, Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, the Agency's Inspector General, said, 'one of the most momentous flaps that I witnessed during my time in government.'*

On 16 May 1950, after the Chiefs of State of the Big Four had gathered in Paris for the summit part of the Conference, Premier Khrushchev

*Kirkpatrick, Lyman B. Jr., The Real CIA, New York 1968 p. 114

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angrily confronted President Eisenhower with the U-2 affair demanding a personal apology.* The Conference broke up amidst charges and countercharges. President Eisenhower's proposed visit to the Soviet Union scheduled for June of 1960 was also cancelled by mutual agreement. The U-2 affair was, according to James B. Donovan, New York attorney and leading US Figure in the later Powers-Abel exchange, 'the Soviet Union's greatest propaganda triumph since the cold war began.'**

Powers emerged from the propaganda mauling given to the United States with his reputation badly damaged, became in fact an object of scorn and derision in the US press which painted him as a sorry figure of an American. Public opinion in the early sixties was inclined to be severe in its judgements of American prisoners of the Communists and Powers was no exception. Was he unjustly maligned? Perhaps after the passage of fifteen years, some perspective can be gained on the quiet Virginian from the US Air Force Reserve who for four years had flown the most dangerous and most successful reconnaissance mission in history.

POWERS, THE MAN

A more incongruous figure for the spy label than Francis Gary Powers would be hard to imagine. An amiable, reserved man from the hills of Virginia, 30 years old at the time of his disappearance, very much in the 'good old boy' tradition, he had made the leap from a humble but proud background in Pound, Virginia to commissioned status in

*Walters, LtGen Vernon A; General DeGaulle in Action, Studies in Intelligence, Winter 1974. Article contains an eye witness account by the present DDCI of the Conference and its frictions.

**Strangers on a Bridge by James B. Donovan, N.Y. 1964 p. 345

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the US Air Force Reserve. He was on active duty as a first lieutenant at the time of his recruitment for the project in 1956. Aviation was his passion and had been ever since his first flight at age fourteen when he found something special about it, 'like climbing mountains, only better.'* A superb pilot and navigator he was considered by some to be the best pilot in the project composed of a carefully selected elite. Having just missed the Korean Conflict and completed six years in the Air Force including mastery of high performance aircraft, Powers was ready for the greater challenge of the U-2 and the reconnaissance overflights. Money was a but not the motivating factor. The aviation aspects of the mission were very intriguing as borne out by the training which, except for a week of evasion training at an Agency base, took place in a remote area of the US west. Thoroughly checked out on the equipment Powers later claimed that no one from the Agency ever briefed the pilots on the procedure to follow if forced down in Russia. The pilots preferred not even to talk about that awful possibility lest they be tempting fate. Thinking about the unthinkable was not exactly the forte of the action type of which Powers was a prime example. Other negative characteristics, such as a tendency of self pity, entirely understandable in light of the barrage of unfavorable publicity which Powers felt he bore alone, led to his denigration of the public and to his loss of faith in the Agency, an outcome very different to that of the other 'MIA' cases.** Some of the resentment undoubtedly resulted from the many injustices done Powers as the nation took out on him the many frustrations that it felt over this unhappy episode of the cold war.

*Operation Overflight by Francis Gary Powers with Curt Gentry, NY, 1970 p. 15

**Downey and Fecteau for example held no rancor even after twenty years of captivity.

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WAS HE AN EMPLOYEE?

Although a component of the DDP,* the Developmental Project Division (DPD) -- which ran the highly classified U-2 project, -- was completely compartmented from the rest of the Agency, having its own support components including security and personnel. The Powers case, however, received too much international attention to be contained within the confines of either DPD or CIA. Diplomatic and release efforts were conducted at the very highest levels in the White House, the State Department, and the Agency; Messrs. Dulles, Bissel, General Cabell from the CIA; Assistant Secretary of State Charles Bohlen for the State Department and General Good Paster for the President being in attendance at the various meetings. The General Counsel, Lawrence Houston and his assistant [redacted] were the Agency focal point for these efforts.

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On the administrative level DPD pulled together an informal group consisting of support personnel assigned to the project and of representatives of the central Personnel and Security Offices.** The most pressing administrative task was to determine Powers' employment

*Richard M. Bissel, who had been prime Agency mover in the development of the U-2 project as a Special Assistant to the DCI, was at this time the Deputy Director of Plans (DDP) a post which he held from 1 January 1959 until his resignation on 17 Feb 1962.

**John McMahon, Personnel Officer of the DPD was the focal point on the support side. Ben DeFelice represented the Personnel Director, and [redacted], Jr., the General Counsel. A major role was played by [redacted] as Chairman of the Damage Assessment Committee and by John Mertz of the CI Staff and by Security officers detailed to DPD included [redacted] headed up the group of OS people, including [redacted] and H. [redacted] who handled Barbara Powers problems and received and debriefed Powers. Joseph E. Murphy, the security officer [redacted] who identified Powers at the time of exchange was added to this group. Bruce L. Solie assist [redacted] in the Powers case.

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status. Was he or was he not a federal employee within the terms of the Missing Persons Act? Powers was an appointed contract employee of the Agency, a doubtful category for an MIA case* but any doubts were resolved in his favor. On 10 May 1960 the Director of Personnel qualified him for the benefits of the Missing Persons Act (Public Law 490, 77th Congress), authorized continuance of pay and allowances, and assumed financial control, through Chief, Benefits and Services Division, OP of his accrued funds and allotment disbursements. There was a considerable measure of moral responsibility for Powers accepted by the CIA in this action and in continuing the contract during the period of captivity. The contract, originally written in May 1956, had been renewed for the second time on 1 November 1959, through 31 October 1960, called for remuneration as follows:

When in General Duty Status - \$1,000 per month.

Operational Duty Status in the US - \$1,500 per month

Operational Duty Status Overseas - \$1,500 per month.

In addition to the above amounts of compensation . . . \$500 per month for each month of service in an Operational Duty Status overseas.

In addition to all other amounts specified, there was payable upon termination of the appointment an amount of \$500 per month for each month of satisfactory service in an Operational Duty Status in the United States or overseas - provided services were satisfactory and there was no abandonment of obligations.

*Missing in action is a technical term which includes not only those Americans in their country's active duty who are literally 'missing' but also those who are, 'interned in a neutral country, captured by an enemy, beleaguered or besieged.'

**The total sum, when paid, equaled the compensation of the most senior commercial air captains of the day.

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Only the funds involved in the final clause of the contract, namely the \$500 a month payable upon termination of the appointment for each month of satisfactory service in an Operational Duty Status, were not accrued but left for final determination. It was on this point which the greatest confusion arose on the part of press and public when Powers returned in 1962.

TRIAL AND CAPTIVITY

Powers was put on trial for his life in August 1960. The Moscow 'spectacular' was carefully managed to damage US prestige and further Soviet propaganda aims.* Powers' sentence of ten years, three in prison and seven in labor camps, was relatively mild considering the espionage charge. Powers publicly confessed to being deeply

*Allen Dulles, writing in 1965, revealed the degree to which the entire U-2 Affair was orchestrated by the Soviets:

And while I am discussing myths and misconceptions, I might tilt at another myth connection with the U-2 namely the Khrushchev was shocked and surprised at it all. As a matter of fact, he had known for years about the flights, though his information in the early period was not accurate in all respects. Diplomatic notes were exchanged and published well before 1 May 1960, the date of the U-2 failure when Khrushchev's tracking techniques had become more accurate. Still, since he had been unable to do anything about the fact of his impotence to his own people, and he stopped sending protests.

His rage at the Paris Conference was feigned for a purpose. At the time he saw no prospect for success at the conference on the subject of Berlin. He was then in deep trouble with the Chinese Communists. Following his visit to President Eisenhower in the fall of 1959, he had been unable to placate Mao during his stop at Peking en route back from the United States. Furthermore, he was apprehensive that the Soviet people would react too favorably to President Eisenhower's planned trip to the USSR in the summer of 1960. Influenced by all these considerations, he decided to use the U-2 as a good excuse for torpedoing both the trip and the conference. The Craft of Intelligence, NY 1965

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repentant and profoundly sorry for his flight, statements that in retrospect seemed fairly apparent.* Nevertheless, his abject apology, and the pictures that accompanied it, one in particular which showed Powers from the side with his head slumped on his chest probably taken in a moment of fatigue, did not 'sit well' and the U.S. public was left with the impression that Powers had served his country poorly. It was a self-fulfilling kind of situation. Powers said later that his Russian interrogators had lifted the Iron Curtain about two weeks after his capture and months before the trial to reveal what the American press was saying about him. From that point forward, said Powers he had two opponents, the Soviet interrogators and the U.S. press.** Why do you insist that you are a civilian, his Soviet interrogators kept asking in their efforts to force Powers to condemn both his country and the U.S. military. U.S. press reports and speculation about his altitude, his mission, his associates, the location of training bases, deployments, carefully screened to give the lie to his testimony, were thrown at him unexpectedly. The technique was very upsetting to Powers, increasing his fears of being trapped in falsehoods, and adding to his despair for his life.

During and after his trial, press clamor in the United States rose to a crescendo difficult to understand now after the passage of a decade or more. Powers was faulted for his confession, for

*Powers and Gentry, *Op cit* p. 134
 **Mikhail I. Griniev was named by the Soviets to conduct Powers defense. His lack of effort contrasted sharply with the spirited defense of Col. Abel by Attorney James B. Donovan. The theoretical argument, developed by American attorneys, on freedom of the air was never made. It stated that since Russia did not control the air space over her borders and had not agreed to international conventions to limit sovereignty, air space at the cruising altitude of the U-2 was free in the same sense that the sea is free beyond the three mile limit.

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'It has been reported' said one editorial 'that at least two U-2 pilots blew themselves and their planes up when they ran into trouble. These are the real U-2 heroes and Powers should not be allowed to join them until he has given a good explanation of why he failed to do the same.'* The statement was entirely false and insulting not only to Powers but to the two pilots who had lost their lives in the experimental and testing phase of the U-2 project in the US.

'Should we be alarmed by the difference between the behavior of Airman Powers and of Nathan Hale,' asked Fund for the Republic President Robert Maynard Hutchins as he launched a two-year study of the decline in the moral character of America.**

IMPRISONMENT

Some eighteen months of prison life ensued for Powers. One month after his trial he was moved from the Lubinaka to Vladimir prison about one hundred and fifty miles east of Moscow on the trans-Siberian railroad. Given a choice of solitary confinement or a cellmate, he chose the latter. A Latvian named Zigurd Kruminsh, charged with espionage, was assigned to his cell and Powers reported that he shortly had Kruminsh speaking English with a Virginia accent. As an unexpected bonus Kruminsh's mother furnished vitamins which did correct Powers' sight deficiency at one point. She also furnished, despite the poverty of the Latvian peasants, certain wool colors that

*Dallas Morning News as quoted in Powers and Gentry OpCit p. 301

**Not all the public was critical. Powers received a large number of Christmas cards from the San Francisco area. They were sent as a result of a notation by Herb Caen, a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle: 'While you are making out your Xmas cards remember to send one to Francis Gary Powers c/o American Embassy, Moscow, USSR. Let him know that U-2 haven't forgotten.' Powers and Gentry, OpCit p. 244

the prisoners used in their rug-making. Chess playing, reading and letter writing helped to offset in some measure the cold, drab days, and the despair Powers felt at his sentence and confinement. At one point he had to refute a story in the British press to the effect that he had been offered his freedom in exchange for repudiating his country and living in the Soviet Union. No such offer was ever made and at no point before, during or after his trial did Powers ever condemn or renounce his country. The long silences of his wife and the possible ill health of his parents for whom he felt, as did the other MIA's, the strongest of attachments, were continuous sources of worry during his imprisonment.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE USA, AUG 1960 - FEB 1962

Having established Powers' status as a federal employee in terms of the Missing Persons Act, the Director of Personnel representative moved to safeguard his funds and render assistance to his family, functions which in Powers case proved to be contradictory. Powers had left no allotment instructions of any kind since his wife, Mrs. Barbara Powers, was residing with him overseas. Mrs. Powers had been returned to the United States shortly after the shoot down. Armed with the power of attorney, and aware of

*Ben DeFelice, currently the Agency's Deputy Director of Personnel. The Powers case was not assigned to the Ad Hoc Committee which administered the affairs of the other MIA's.

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the strong position which this document gave her, she at first demanded that her husband's accrued salary and allowances be given to her 'in toto'. Arguing that her husband's helpless position and her own sense of what was right would not permit this, the Agency administrator eventually obtained agreement for a monthly allotment of a portion of the salary. Mrs. Powers was childless without dependents of any kind and her basic needs were judged as not requiring the ^{total} amount demanded. The arrangement, which included medical and health expenses,* preserved most of the accrued funds for investment, similarly to that of other Missing in Action cases. It continued throughout the captivity.

The difficulties of the financial negotiations with Mrs. Powers paled in comparison to the problems she presented to the Agency's security officers.** Returned to her home town of Milledgeville, Georgia, after her husband was shot down, Barbara Powers became more and more of a security risk as her conduct and behavior deteriorated under the stress and strain of publicity, her husband's captivity, and her ill advised actions. The separation tipped the balance in what had been a shaky marriage, and resulted in numerous escapades, a dozen arrests and eventual psychiatric commitment for alcoholism. The cooperation of local law enforcement officials and that of her doctor, a dedicated paratrooper veteran of the 82nd Airborne,** kept her eccentricities and oddities of behavior from becoming public, a development which would have been most unfortunate for both the Agency and the husband.

*Medical fees and sanitation bills - Mrs. Powers had to be hospitalized under psychiatric care - were paid from Powers hospitalization policy. Lawyers fees and travel to Moscow for Mrs. Powers and her mother were paid for by the USG.

[redacted] retired in 1973; [redacted] in 1965; and [redacted] in 1973 were the principal security officers in the case.

** [redacted] would take no money until he was assured that payments were not coming from Powers' funds.

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The result was that Powers had little in the way of moral support or communication from his wife at the time when he was being subjected to the pressures and tensions of his imprisonment. Like so many aspects of the Powers case anything that could be said would have added to his woes.

It was a different story with Powers large and close knit family. Precipitated almost overnight from the obscurity of a Virginia mountain community into the world spotlight including attendance at the Moscow trials, they gave him strong support, the father taking the lead in pressing for his son's release. Oliver Powers was an ex-coalminer, soldier and farmer, who, in May 1960, had his own shoe repair business in Norton, Virginia. He was convinced that if only he could get to talk with Khrushchev as one farmer to another, he could win his son's release. Spurred on by journalists (Life magazine paid all his expenses) and by local friends, including a lawyer named Carl A. McAfee and Sol Curry, a Norton, Virginia, department store owner, the father addressed appeals to the Soviet Premier and sent a letter to Colonel Abel suggesting that an exchange be initiated. He would have nothing to do with the two lawyers, Alexander W. Parker and Frank W. Rogers, named by the Virginia Bar Association at the request of the State Department to defend his son. He never quite understood the subtleties of his son's relationship to the CIA so that his early

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actions were more of a problem to the State Department than they were to the Agency until Gary Powers managed somehow in Moscow to get the word to his father to lay off the journalistic enterprise. Ill advised though some of the release efforts may have been, the mail from home* and the packages were a sustaining factor throughout Power's ordeal.

*One letter from the mother mentions that, (Daddy went up to the high knob to try to get a deer this morning.)

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POWERS-ABEL EXCHANGE, 10 February 1962

Fortunately for those concerned including the prisoner, the Powers case for all its intensity was mercifully brief. His imprisonment which began with the shoot-down on 1 May 1960 ended with the celebrated exchange for KGB Colonel Abel on Glienicke Bridge between East and West Berlin on 10 February 1962. A number of factors lead to the exchange. Some of the personal hard feeling between President Eisenhower and Premier Khrushchev on the Powers matter was dissipated by the new Kennedy Administration which took office in January 1961. There were a number of diplomatic feelers from the Soviet Union which carefully avoided terms such as exchange since they never admitted that Abel was 'theirs' and yet gave the impression that they wanted him back. A petition, possibly KGB inspired, was sent by Mrs. Abel in East Berlin to President Kennedy on 8 February 1961, pleading her husband's release. The idea of exchange had been proposed by the father, Oliver Powers, to Col Abel who referred him to the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy. Things did not fall into place easily, however. Some people in government wanted no truck with either Peking or Moscow that would have left the Communists the winners both in value of commodity gained and in political prestige. This reaction was in response to the report that Allen Dulles, according to one writer,* wanted to trade Abel for American prisoners behind Bamboo and Iron curtains. Both the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the Federal Bureau of Investigation were opposed** to the release on the grounds that given time and pressure Abel would

*E.H. Cookridge, *Spy Trade*. NY 1971 p. 86 Allen Dulles retired 29 Nov 61 and John McCone succeeded him as DCI.

**According to Agency sources.

talk about his whole operation in the United States something that he had failed to do in five years of imprisonment. The decision to trade was probably made at the Presidential level. Included in the transaction were two other Americans,* neither associated with the US government. They had been picked up while in the Soviet Union as tourists. The intermediary was Attorney James B. Donovan of New York, an OSS alumnus, who had served as Abel's defense counsel in the 1957 trial and had continued his contacts with the KGB officer in prison.** Donovan's opposite number was the so called second secretary of the Soviet Embassy in East Berlin, Ivan Alexandrovich Schischkin. Between them they worked out the details of the exchange arrangements, already agreed on a higher level, in ten intensive days in Berlin, preceeded in Donovan's case by numerous Washington meetings stretching back into January. 'At exactly 8:20 (a.m.), I walked to the center of the bridge, flanked by Alan Lightner of the State Department Mission in Berlin and a young civilian who had been a comrade of Powers during his U-2 flying days', wrote Donovan.*** The 'young civilian' was Joseph E. Murphy, the security officer there to make sure of the identification. Security was not going to let Abel loose until their officer was able to say, 'This is Gary Powers.'

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*Frederic L. Pryor, a Yale student from Michigan was release simultaneously Marvin Makinen, a University of Pennsylvania student touring Russia, was promised clemency.

**James B. Donovan, Strangers on a Bridge, N.Y. 1964. Donovans book deals with the Abel case from beginning to end. Powers takes some exception in his book, Operation Overflight, to Donovan's rather cavalier treatment which Powers though added to the unfavorable light he was put in by the media. In retrospect it would seem that the attorney did not have sufficient contact with the American flyer to appraise him properly. Donovan is now deceased.

*** Opcit.

AFTERMATH: INQUIRIES GALORE

The news of the exchange was not exactly received with acclaim in the United States. William F. Tompkins, former Assistant U.S. Attorney General who had prosecuted Abel and thus had been Donovan's adversary was quoted as saying, 'It's like trading Mickey Mantle for an average ball player. We gave them an extremely valuable man and got back an airplane driver.'* American Legion official John Wickers said, 'I view the exchange with astonishment and disgust. Powers was a cowardly American who evidently valued his own skin far more than the welfare of the nation that was paying him so handsomely.' The non sequitur of all time, 'more of a mercenary than a pilot' also had the American Legion as its source. It should have been of course 'more of a pilot than a spy.'

The victim of all this venom was immediately evacuated to the United States after the exchange. During the next few weeks he was moved from safehouse to safehouse while undergoing formal debriefing. This portion of the Powers case had the trappings of a television serial, diversion of aircraft, auto chases on snowy roads, all in an effort to avoid the hordes of reporters while Powers regained his equilibrium.

*Operation Overflight, Francis Gary Powers and Curt Gentry N.Y. 1970 p. 296

**Powers and Gentry Op cit p. 299

First came the Agency debriefing by the Damage Assessment Team originally convened at the time of his shootdown. The Team had spent two months in the summer of 1960 conducting interviews and studies in an attempt to estimate the things Powers could have known. They found that there had been considerable speculation among the pilots about a follow-on aircraft, bigger, faster and better in every way than the U-2. The pilots had discussed technological unemployment, retraining to meet the challenge and similar aspects. The Team also determined that since Powers had been with the project from the very beginning, he knew a great many of the personalities involved, not only the pilots but the back-up people, logistics, security, all the support elements and the contractor personnel. The Team figured that most of this information was probably extracted from Powers in the interrogations and his debriefing in 1962 was approached on that assumption.

Their debriefing lasted about two weeks. Powers also had some polygraph testing during this period. The results were very different from what had been anticipated. The Team was totally satisfied with Powers behavior. They found that the confession of CIA employment, for which Powers had been so bitterly criticized, was permitted by regulation. DPD Order No. 6, published not long before the last flight, authorized the pilots, if forced down in hostile territory, to acknowledge their true employment contrary to the Agency Risk of Capture Regulation. Following his own principle, 'Don't Give Them Credit for Knowing More Than They Know,' Powers had told the Russians nothing except the obvious.

He was even successful in gaining acceptance for a false altitude figure given by the Soviets as 22,000 meters. His big disappointment was that he could not seem to convey the information to the Agency that he was shot down at the assigned altitude. Soviet surface to air missiles (SA) were capable of tracking and reaching the flights and no more flights should be made at that altitude. He had tried, in September 1960, shortly after his trial, when given an opportunity by the KGB to write a letter to the New York Times refuting a story about his shootdown attributed to his father, to get the word to the U.S. 'I was at maximum altitude as stated at the trial at the time of the explosion. This was sixty eight thousand feet.' The Times ran the letter with a note the 'sixty eight thousand feet' was well under the maximum, a fact, 'it said' which should have been know to Mr. Powers.*

The clean bill of health from the CIA was not enough. DCI John McCone asked the U.S. Air Force Inspector General, General Blanchard to convene an Air Force Group to study the plane itself and its structural characteristics. The Air Force confirmed that when subject to an explosion force near at hand the U-2 could very well have disintergrated at the wing roots as described by Powers, its 80 foot wing span being approximately twice the length of the fuselage.

*An 11 Mar 75 check with the technical side in the Agency indicated that since the flights had been suspended they ignored Powers' message.

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THE QUESTION OF HOW MUCH PAY

Much of the criticism focused on the amount of pay that Powers was drawing and whether the government should pay the large sum which accrued during his captivity,* an accrual largely due, it should be pointed out, to the strict handling of his affairs by the government administrator. 'Our recommendation would be no,' Newsday magazine editorialized, 'he was hired to do a job and he flopped at that job. He left his U-2 behind, substantially undamaged, so the Reds could copy and improve upon it. Under the circumstances, back pay would be laughable.' To meet this kind of public criticism, a Board of Inquiry under retired Federal Appeals Court Judge E. Barrett Prettyman was convened at Headquarters early in March, 1962 immediately after the Agency debriefings. The Board addressed itself to the matter of satisfactory performance and specifically to the clause in Powers contract calling for the payment of \$500 a month retroactivity over and above other payment for satisfactory completion of contract as previously described, the only amount at issue. The Board completely cleared Powers of any misconduct and ruled that the amount due Mr. Powers under his contract was to be paid. Its 11 page statement described the instructions given the pilots in case of capture and sustained Powers contention that he had followed preflight instructions to acknowledge CIA affiliation. The Board's statement also contained a detailed account of the shootdown and of Powers' efforts to free himself from the wingless

*Some \$52,000

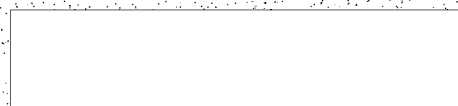
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fuselage as it fell toward the earth, a struggle which prevented him from activating the destruct mechanism. The Board completely cleared Powers of any misconduct and ruled that the amount due Powers under his contract was to be paid.

One other hurdle remained. On 6 March 1952, Powers appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee at an open hearing designed according to the Chairman, Richard B. Russell of Georgia, to correct some of the erroneous impressions. The Senate hearings proved to be a complete triumph for Powers. At its conclusion, he received the congratulations of the entire body most of whom were Southern gentlemen types very much taken by the Virginia 'boy'. It was, said the die-hard New York Times, 'all hominy,' despite the fact that a large measure of praise came from Senator Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts.

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THE DULLES VERDICT, 1964

After a brief spell as a training officer, Powers resigned from the Agency in October 1962 to return to his first love, aviation. Kelly Johnson, the great aeronautical engineer and Lockheed Vice-President, under whose guidance the U-2 was designed and produced, hired Powers as a test pilot in their program, a position he was to hold for eight years. The stress and strain of the experience left a residue of hard feeling* as reflected in his book 'Operation Overflight', publication of which was delayed until 1970, although Powers had the help and blessing of the Agency. The careful administration of his financial affairs by the personnel officials, the patient handling of his very considerable marital problem by the security officers and their sympathetic if lengthy debriefings which cleared him of any misconduct were in the best Agency tradition of responsibility for its MIA cases. True, the Agency remained silent through what was, after all, a mutual ordeal and that seemed to bother Powers a lot. On second thought, however, there was not much else CIA could do, when to speak out would only further compromise sensitive material and equipment, add to the victim's woes and give the opponent information not previously possessed. One clear lesson of the U-2 affair was, according to Powers, never to give the opponent credit for knowing more than they know -- the Soviets obviously knew very little, prior to the shootdown. The riddle of unfavorable publicity and what should be done about it, was no nearer solution in the 1960's than in 1975.

*Another and more pleasant residue of the U-2 affair was Powers marriage to Dr. Sue Downey, in October 1963 following (b)(3) his divorce in January of that year. The Powers now (1975) reside with their children in Los Angeles where Powers, still flying, is a traffic monitor for a local television station.

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An in(Approved for Release: 2019/05/21 C05782119, in 1954 by an unimpeachable source, one for whom Powers retained a good measure of respect. Alan Dulles was retired, some three years or so, when he spoke these impromptu words prior to a speech at a dinner of the Lockheed Management Club:

I want to say, too, as I start, that I am gratified to hear for another reason, because I would like to say to all of you as I have said from time to time when the opportunity presented itself, that I think one of your number - Francis Gary Powers - deserves well of his country. He performed his duty in a very dangerous mission and he performed it well, and I think I know more about that than some of his detractors and critics know, and I am glad to say that to him tonight.*

VALOR AWARDED, 1965

Even the subject of awards was misinterpreted in the Powers case. Approved for the Intelligence Star in April 1963, Powers did not receive it until 1965, some two years after the award ceremony for his contemporaries in the famous U-2 squadron. Powers took a rather dim view of this exercise, as noted in his book:

Compared to the broken promise regarding my Air Force service it was decidedly minor**...yet, indicative of a pattern. On April 20, 1963, at a secret ceremony which took place in the Los Angeles area, a number of pilots who had participated in the U-2 program were awarded the Intelligence Star, one of the CIA's highest decorations. There was one exception. Francis Gary Powers had not been invited...It wasn't too difficult to deduce the reasoning behind it...the public is already down on Powers because they think he told more than he should. He can't divulge what he withheld. Since he's already been made the scape goat, why not leave it at that?...In April 1965 I was asked to come back to Washington to be awarded the Star. My first reaction quite frankly and bluntly, was to tell them to shove it.**

*Powers and Gentry Op cit p. 348.

**The Air Force made their amends in the early nineteen seventies when arrangements relating to military reserve retirement were reached to the satisfaction of both parties.

*** Powers and Gentry Op cit p. 344

Fortunately Powers did not follow his first reaction, did in fact return for the Awards ceremony on the 5th Anniversary of his shoot-down. The Washington Post having learned about the Award on 5 May 1965 continued the unsympathetic treatment.

At least two mysteries remain. Why CIA wanted to bestow an award on its most famous employee -- one who brought the Agency under public scrutiny -- and second, why the CIA waited five years or so to do so.

Taking the latter so-called mystery first, the delay was without significance. All of the medals awarded in 1963 were picked up at the end of the ceremony and placed in secure storage until the men left the Agency, a matter of years in some cases. The decision to award the Intelligence Star to Powers was initiated by the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence (DDCI) General Charles P. Cabell USAF himself an Air Force officer, in 1963. The delay in awarding it was due entirely to the decision of the Honor and Merit Award Board not to make the Award until Powers could keep the Medal. He actually received it for retention ahead of many of the other officers in the squadron including the commanding officer.

The first mystery - why CIA wanted to bestow an award to its most famous employee -- was a matter of simple justice. The Intelligence Star, according to regulations, may be awarded for a voluntary act or acts of courage performed under hazardous conditions, or for outstanding achievements or services rendered with distinction under conditions of grave personal risk. The U-2 project - a pre-eminent example of Agency

*Information based on a 26 June 1973 conversation with retiree [redacted] (b)(3)
[redacted], prime mover and long time Recorder of the Agency's Honor Awards Board. (b)(6)

~~SECRET~~

initiative in the face of heavy odds -- was a triumph of aeronautical engineering, of intelligence collection, but most of all, a triumph of human courage and coolness on the part of the pilots who flew the missions. Powers was among the earliest in the project and among the best, truly an exceptional pilot. His service met every test of valor and performance and it was most unfortunate that the justly deserved Award should have contributed further to the unmaking of a hero.

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~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~