

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Science and Technology
FROM : James A. Cunningham Jr.
SUBJECT : Examination of Declassification of Certain Aspects of U-2 Program

1. OBJECTIVE;

My objective has been to examine existing records, histories, contract files, correspondence and photographs dealing with the entire U-2 Program, to see if there are elements which might be declassified without compromising operations or intelligence sources and methods.

2. BACKGROUND:

To begin with, aside from the very excellent "History of the Office of Special Activities," the pertinent records on the U-2 Program are not in one location:

- (a) Some vital documents, estimated at roughly 700 - 900 cubic feet, are in storage [redacted] These I have reviewed in large part.
- (b) Records having to do with the post-1 May, 1960 episode and the role of DD/O elements in that incident are lodged with that component.
- (c) USAF records on their version of the U-2 Program, save for the Lockheed contract file, are in the hands of RDPJ in the Pentagon. We do not have a useful estimate of how many cubic feet of records they may have, though it is probably a considerable amount, given the fact that they are still operating U-2 aircraft. In addition, there are undoubtedly many records at SAC Headquarters in Omaha and at Beale AFB in California where the U-2s are based.
- (d) Kelly Johnson estimated that Lockheed might have as many as 2,000 cubic feet of records in Burbank or at their corporate records storage area in their facility at Rye Canyon. An on-site scan of these materials discloses that an amount far less than that exists today. Because of the closely guarded nature of the program when it was under Agency auspices, Lockheed, as prime contractor, intentionally minimized the amount of paper flowing between them and the various sub-contractors. Much of their business dealings were accomplished in face-to-face meetings and by telephone instead. Much of what did remain has been destroyed over the years. Some records have been microfilmed, and the few technical manuals on the early aircraft have been microfilmed and stored at Rye Canyon.

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It does not appear to be within the scope of this examination to conduct a complete records inventory on the U-2.

3. DISCUSSION:

Any discussion about declassification of existing material should, it seems to me, begin with a retrospective about what the U-2 Program was designed to accomplish. Simply stated, the U-2 Program was initiated as a clandestine intelligence gathering effort targeted against the Soviet Union. CIA was designated the executive agent for the Program (with invaluable support from elements of the U.S. Air Force) because of its capacity to conduct covert operations, provide compartmented security and to contract for goods and services outside the mainstream of normal military and/or government channels.

The public perception of the U-2 Program for what it really was did not begin until the 1 May 1960 Powers Incident. In the lingua of the classification business, this was a "disclosure event," and it was followed almost immediately by "Executive acknowledgement," by the country's highest political authorities. In the public mind, the U-2 Program was "blown." However, following 1960, CIA and the Air Force continued to operate the U-2 over foreign territories, with and without permission. No further disclosures were officially acknowledged (with the exception of U-2 reconnaissance over Cuba during the Missile Crisis in 1962) though press speculation continues to this day. CIA relinquished control of its U-2 assets in 1974, while USAF/SAC continues to operate U-2Rs as part of its strategic reconnaissance force, now including the U-2 derivative, the TR-1.

In looking back over the U-2 Program with a perspective not evident when I was an active participant in it, it seems to me that there is core information that should not be declassified, now or in the future. In fact, it is almost easier to say what should remain privileged information than it is to identify those things that might be disclosed without compromise.

Central in this core are those things, unique to this Agency, that made the Program possible. First of all, there was CIA's ability to contract for the system in its entirety using covert funds without reference to normal open bid contracting procedures. In many respects, self-imposed strictures were more rigidly adhered to than might have been the case under normal, open bids. However, in every instance, contractors enjoyed wide latitudes in determining how best to meet their target objectives without unnecessary time-consuming review boards, administrative procedures and correspondence, yet with an appropriate overview still remaining in the Government's hands. This sharing of responsibility for performance with the contractors was unique and extremely productive, as well as saving time and money for the Government. While it seems unlikely, short of a major war, that the CIA would again be called upon to conduct covert air operations on the scale achieved by the U-2, it appears that all appropriate steps should be taken to preserve undisclosed the manner in which the Program did its contracting and administrative support business.

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Secondly, and closely interwoven with the above, the Agency's entire U-2 security support mechanism should be shielded from disclosure. The manner in which security approvals and clearances were granted, often under the shield of corporate industrial security systems, together with the criteria employed and the breadth of security concerns should continue to be indefinitely protected. Under this heading also would come the degree of close cooperation with USAF security elements, not only in systems procurement but in protection for the end product and in the very important element of military personnel procurement.

Also proscribed from disclosure should be the tailormade, wholly dedicated communications system the Program enjoyed. This should include discreet communications with domestically based suppliers, depots and bases as well as a vast network of specially protected communications from Washington to overseas fixed operational sites, military commands and operational staging locations as well. The Agency covert tie-in with the GLOBECOM weather net was unique to this Program, and operations would hardly have been possible without it. Of course, also included in the protected list would be the specific mission approvals mechanisms, together with links to U.S. Embassies abroad, whereby Washington retained control of the "go, no-go" machinery on every overflight ever launched. While it is true that the DCI, Allen Dulles, did allude to the mission clearance mechanism in his post-1 May 1960 testimony before a Congressional committee, the text of such testimony has not yet been released to the public in its entirety.

The nature of our closely woven relationships with USAF Headquarters and specific and numbered commands overseas should not be compromised. Nor should the web of diplomatic negotiations involving the Department of State and U.S. Embassies leading to permission to base U-2 units overseas or to stage them briefly in certain friendly countries be revealed.

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Also, in the context of our relations with USAF, nothing should be released dealing with the manner and mechanisms through which USAF furnished priority airlift, depot support for parts and engines, as well as qualified and key military personnel on a "by-name" basis to man designated positions at Agency Headquarters and in the foreign field. The fact that CIA did the covert contracting for USAF in its version of the U-2 and the manner in which Air Force funds were made available for this purpose should not be considered attributable under foreseeable circumstances.

All materials dealing with the selection of targets for operational missions, photographic, ELINT or IR, such as the proceedings of USIB and COMOR, together with details of specific mission planning, must be protected indefinitely. Mission folders and/or debriefing reports must be withheld, including all graphic overlays, especially those portraying hostile missile installations or other mission-threat information based on codeword sources.

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Precise methods of pilot selection from the ranks of foreign air forces or from the USAF should be protected, along with details of physiological and psychological selection and administrative support thereof. Survival and escape training for pilots, as well as Agency-furnished technical devices in these areas should not be disclosed, as should Agency CI support to the Program.

Efforts by CIA to dramatically reduce the radar cross-section of the U-2s, conducted in the late 1950s under the code word RAINBOW, should not be wholly declassified because of possible inferences that might be drawn from them with regard to ongoing USAF efforts in this field. This prohibition would include discussion of various substances applied to the aircraft, special antennas installed, bandwidths against which these efforts were targeted, location of tests, etc. A passing allusion to these efforts has already been cleared for publication by Lockheed.

There is a considerable body of internal correspondence, inter-office and inter-Agency memoranda dealing with specific agreements with the military services, the establishment of agreed policies regarding the Program, as well as records of conferences held with key Government officials - so-called "charter papers" - that must not be released or sanitized for disclosure. For the most part, these papers are in the possession of DDS&T's Registry, having been transferred there from what was then the DD/P's records in 1962.

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4. CONCLUSIONS:

A. Had there been no requirement for the highest degree of secrecy possible in the formulation of a project dedicated to the covert collection of intelligence over the USSR in 1955, it is almost certain that CIA would not have been involved in the U-2. In fact, it was solely because CIA could be tasked to do the job without alerting the Russians that highest authority was persuaded to place the initial responsibility on this Agency with vital Air Force support.

B. While the 1 May 1960 "disclosure event" ended the conduct of overflights of the Soviet Union for political and technological reasons, and while "Executive acknowledgement" rendered the U-2 more visible, it did not end its career as a collection system, albeit in somewhat less vulnerable areas.

C. Despite the fact that it has been eight years since CIA has had any responsibility for operating U-2 assets, some of these same assets continue as part of the USAF's strategic reconnaissance inventory. Thus, the U-2 Program has not ended and certain of its equipment, ranges,

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altitudes and capabilities require safeguarding to this day.

D. Given the Agency's responsibilities to protect sources and methods of intelligence collection, as well as operational history and specific subsystem characteristics, capabilities and results, it would appear that there is little left to consider declassifying, save for limited details about the aircraft itself, along with some of its less critical components.

E. A possible cutoff point for any disclosures about the U-2 might be 1967 and years following, at which time the U-2R, now in service with USAF, was ordered, produced, tested and first deployed by CIA. It is assumed that hardware carried by the original U-2 aircraft in the period between 1955 and 1966 has undergone sufficient growth or change as to be several generations removed from that now in service, and in many cases a whole new cast of suppliers and new systems have taken the stage. Additionally, much of the early subsystems have been compromised by capture, either by the Russians or the Chinese.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. That you approve declassification of information having to do with the original CIA U-2 Program during the period from 1 November 1954 (generally agreed as having marked the Program's starting point) to 1 January 1967, or approximately when it was decided to extend the capability by means of the later model U-2R.

B. That because of the close working relationship in administrative, security and contractual fields between the CIA's U-2s and those of the U.S. Air Force, no details of this relationship be included in any present declassification beyond acknowledgement that USAF was an active participant in the Program.

C. That as a general rule, declassification be confined to pertinent information relating to the original U-2 aircraft itself: its appearance in photographs, information on weights, size, performance characteristics, fuels, installed engines, materials employed in its construction, ranges, speed and general altitude capabilities, plus airframe and engine modifications, as well as cockpit layouts and aircraft general arrangement drawings.

D. That as a corollary to the proposed declassification of the U-2 aircraft, an early model U-2 be donated to the National Air and Space Museum in Washington for public display therein. Such an aircraft has been located in Palmdale, California and is surplus to Air Force requirements. It is the same aircraft which made the first flight over the USSR in July of 1956. Lockheed and Pratt & Whitney have agreed to bear the cost of refurbishing the aircraft for display and bringing it to Washington. Air Force agreement has been obtained. It is proposed

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that the aircraft be displayed along with an early model "B" camera, an early tracker camera, a sextant and a J57-P31 engine, all declared surplus by the Air Force. Additional related U-2 items are already in the hands of the Air and Space Museum, having been donated to them several years ago by the Agency.

E. That in order to give some coherence to the storage of those records of the U-2 Program now in the possession of the Agency, an informal, ad hoc group be set up under joint DDS&T and OIS aegis, to establish categories that would permit proper sorting and computerizing of these records, as well as to identify those items that might properly be destroyed. Since the records of the U-2 Program (IDEALIST) are colocated with those relating to Project OXCART, it should be possible to review these at the same time and to make some preliminary judgements regarding retention of essential material. There is an ever-diminishing group of people in CIA who have first-hand knowledge of these programs and it would be useful to gather together such a group for this purpose while they are still available.

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