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STATEMENT CONCERNING FRANCIS GARY POWERS

Since his return from imprisonment by Soviet Russia, Francis Gary Powers has undergone a most intensive debriefing by CIA and other intelligence specialists, aeronautical technicians, and other experts concerned with various aspects of his mission and subsequent capture by the Soviets. This was followed by a complete review by a Board of Inquiry presided over by Judge E. Barrett Prettyman to determine if Powers complied with the terms of his employment and his obligations as an American. The Board has submitted its report to the Director of Central Intelligence.

Certain basic points should be kept in mind in connection with this case. The pilots involved in the U-2 program were selected on the basis of aviation proficiency, physical stamina, emotional stability, and, of course, personal security. They were not selected or trained as espionage agents, and the whole nature of the mission was far removed from the traditional espionage scene. Their job was to fly the plane, and it was so demanding an assignment that on completion of a mission physical fatigue was a hazard on landing.

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The pilots' contracts provided that they perform such services as might be required and follow such instructions and briefings in connection therewith as were given to them by their superiors. The guidance was as follows:

"a. If evasion is not feasible and capture appears imminent, pilots should surrender without resistance and adopt a cooperative attitude toward their captors.

"b. At all times while in the custody of their captors, pilots will conduct themselves with dignity and maintain a respectful attitude toward their superiors.

"c. Pilots will be instructed that they are perfectly free to tell the full truth about their mission with the exception of certain specifications of the aircraft. They will be advised to represent themselves as civilians, to admit previous Air Force affiliation, to admit current CIA employment, and to make no attempt to deny the nature of their mission."

They were instructed, therefore, to be cooperative with their captors within limitations, to use their own judgment of what they should attempt to withhold, and not to subject themselves to strenuous hostile interrogation. It has been established that Mr. Powers had been briefed in accordance

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with this policy and so understood his guidance. In regard to the poison needle which was prominently mentioned at the trial in Moscow, it should be emphasized that this was intended for use primarily if the pilot were subjected to torture or other circumstances which in his discretion warranted the taking of his own life. There were no instructions that he should commit suicide and no expectation that he would do so except in those situations just described, and I emphasize that even taking the needle with him in the plane was not mandatory; it was his option.

Mr. Powers' performance on prior missions has been reviewed, and it is clear that he was one of the outstanding pilots in the whole U-2 program. He was proficient both as a flyer and as a navigator and showed himself calm in emergency situations. His security background has been exhaustively reviewed, and any circumstances which might conceivably have led to pressure from or defection to the Russians have also been exhaustively reviewed, and no evidence has been found to support any theory that failure of his flight might be laid to Soviet espionage activities. The same is true of the possibilities of sabotage.

Accordingly, Mr. Powers was assigned to the mission that eventually occurred on 1 May 1960 and accepted the assignment willingly.

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It was a particularly grueling assignment across the heart of Soviet Russia and ending on the northwest coast of Norway. It was necessary to maintain extreme altitude at heights at which no other plane but the U-2 had steadily flown. So far as can be ascertained Mr. Powers followed the scheduled flight plan, making a prescribed turn to the northwest when nearing the city of Sverdlovsk where he was directly on course. According to his statement, he had settled on his new course and had Sverdlovsk in sight, perhaps 20 or 30 miles away, when he felt and heard something he describes as a push or feeling of acceleration on the plane accompanied by a dull noise unlike the sharp sound of a high explosive. This caused him to look up from his instruments, and he saw surrounding him, or perhaps reflected in his canopy, he is not sure, an orange or reddish glare which seemed to persist. He felt this phenomenon to be external to the plane but says he cannot be sure. For a moment the plane continued to fly normally, then it dipped to the right but he found he was able to control this dip and level the plane with his normal controls. Shortly thereafter, however, the plane began to nose forward, and Mr. Powers states that as he drew back on the stick he felt no control as if the control lines had been severed. The plane nosed sharply over and went into

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violent maneuver, at which point he believes the wings came off. The hull of the plane then turned completely over and he found himself in an inverted spin with the nose high revolving around the center of the fuselage so that all he could see through the canopy looking ahead was the sky revolving around the nose of the plane. This motion exerted G forces on him which threw him forward and up in the cockpit. At this point he states he could have reached the destruct switches which would have set off an explosive charge in the bottom of the plane. However, he realized that this charge would go off in 70 seconds and he did not yet know if he could leave the plane. He stated that he tried to draw himself back into the seat to see if he could activate the ejection mechanism, but the G forces prevented him from recovering his position. Being forward and out of the seat, even if he could have used the ejection mechanism, which was below and behind him, it would have seriously injured him if activated. He recalled that it was possible to open the canopy manually, and shortly thereafter he was able to do so and the canopy disappeared. His last recollection of the altimeter was that he was at about 34,000 feet and descending rapidly. To see if he could get out of the cockpit, he released his seat belt and was immediately thrown forward out over the cowling of the cockpit to a position where

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he was held only by his oxygen tube. He tried to pull himself back in the cockpit to the destruct switches which take four separate manipulations to set and found himself unable to do so because of the G forces, the inflation of his pressure suit, and the fogging up of his face mask which totally obscured his view. By pushing he tore loose the oxygen tube and fell free, whereupon his parachute opened almost immediately, indicating that he was probably at 15,000 feet or below at this time since the automatic mechanism was set for this height. In connection with Powers' efforts to operate the destruct switches, it should be noted that the basic weight limitations kept the explosive charge to 2 1/2 pounds and the purpose of the destruct mechanism was to render inoperable the precision camera and other equipment, not to destroy them and the film. After he landed he was taken by commercial plane to Moscow the same day.

In the processing into the prison he was given a hypodermic injection which may well have been a general immunization, and there is no evidence of the use of truth serums or other drugs. From then until the time of the trial, about 100 days, he was kept in solitary confinement and subjected to constant interrogation, sometimes as long as ten or twelve hours a day, but on the average considerably

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less than this. He had no access to anyone but his Russian guards and interrogators despite repeated requests for contact with the U. S. Embassy or his family and friends. He states that the interrogation was not intense in the sense of physical violence or severe hostile methods, and that in some respects he was able to resist answering specific questions. As an example, his interrogators were interested in the names of people participating in the project, and he states that he tried to anticipate what names would become known and gave those, such as the names of his commanding officer and certain other personnel at his home base in Adana, Turkey, who would probably be known in any case to the Russians. However, they asked him for names of other pilots and he states that he refused to give these on the grounds that they were his friends and comrades and if he gave their names they would lose their jobs and, therefore, he could not do so. He states they accepted this position. It is his stated belief, therefore, that the information he gave was that which in all probability would be known in any case to his captors.

At his trial he had only the advice of his Russian defense counsel to go by, and he advised that unless Powers pleaded guilty to what the Russians considered a clear violation of domestic law and expressed

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penitence matters would go hard for him, including a possible death sentence. These actions were consistent with his instructions from CIA. After the trial and sentencing, Mr. Powers states that there was only intermittent interrogation of little importance and that on the whole he was well treated, adequately fed, and given medical attention when required.

All the facts concerning Mr. Powers' mission, the descent of his plane, his capture, and his subsequent actions, have been subjected to intensive study. In the first place, Powers was interrogated for many days consecutively by a debriefing team of experienced interrogators, one of whose duties was to evaluate Powers' credibility. They expressed the unanimous view that Powers was truthful in his account. Secondly, an intensive inquiry was made by Government officials into the background, life history, education, conduct, and character of Powers. This team included doctors, specialists in psychiatry and psychology, personnel officers, his former colleagues in the Air Force and on the U-2 project. All these persons were of the view that Powers is inherently and by practice a truthful man. Thirdly, Powers appeared before a Board of Inquiry and testified at length, both directly and under cross-examination.

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The Board agreed that in his appearance he appeared to be truthful, frank, straightforward, and without any indicated attempt to evade questions or color what he was saying. In the Board's judgment he reflected an attitude of complete candor. In the fourth place, when during his examination before the Board a question was raised as to the accuracy of one of his statements, he volunteered with some vehemence that, although he disliked the process of the polygraph, he would like to undergo a polygraph test. That test was subsequently duly administered by an expert and in it he was examined on all of the factual phases which the Board considered critical in this inquiry. The report by the polygraph operator is that he displayed no indications of deviation from the truth in the course of that examination. In the fifth place, a study of the photograph of the debris of the plane and other information concerning the plane revealed in the opinion of experts making the study no condition which suggested an inconsistency with Powers' account of what had transpired. The Board noted the testimony of Russian witnesses at the trial in Moscow which dealt with the descent and capture of Powers and with technical features of the plane and the incident.

The testimony was consistent with the account given by Powers.

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Powers was able to identify a spot near a small village where he thought he had landed. This location checked with prior testimony given by Powers as to physical features, directions, and distances and also corresponded with earlier independent information not known to Powers that certain of the persons who captured him lived in this same small village. Some information from confidential sources was available. Some of it corroborated Powers and some of it was inconsistent in parts with Powers' story, but that which was inconsistent was in part contradictory with itself and subject to various interpretations. Some of this information was the basis for considerable speculation shortly after the 1 May episode and subsequent stories in the press that Powers' plane had descended gradually from its extreme altitude and had been shot down by a Russian fighter at medium altitude. On careful analysis, it appears that the information on which these stories were based was erroneous or was susceptible of varying interpretations. The Board came to the conclusion that it could not accept a doubtful interpretation in this regard which was inconsistent with all the other known facts and consequently rejected these newspaper stories as not founded in fact.

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On all the information available, therefore, it is the conclusion of the Board of Inquiry which reviewed Mr. Powers' case and of the Director of Central Intelligence, who has carefully studied the Board's report and has discussed it with the Board, that Mr. Powers lived up to the terms of his employment and instructions in connection with his mission and in his obligations as an American under the circumstances in which he found himself. It should be noted that competent aerodynamichsts and aeronautical engineers have carefully studied Powers' description of his experience and have concluded on the basis of scientific analysis that a U-2 plane damaged as he described would perform in its descent in about the manner he stated. Accordingly, the amount due Mr. Powers under the terms of his contract will be paid to him.

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