

February 28, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Houston

Questions which occur in reading the Prettyman report:

1. Additional details on substance of the contract referred to on page 12, particularly what was the term of the contract for which the recited cancellation clause applies?

2. How many flights over enemy territory were made by Powers and how many total U-2 flights were made by him?

3. When was Powers first briefed on the fatal flight, and what surveillance was he placed under from that time on? In other words, was he free to talk to uninformed personnel or to make contact with outsiders through conversation, telephone, or by mail?

4. When was the final date of flight known to Powers, and what outside contact did he have or did others who knew of the flight have after the plan was definitely known?

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6. Was he followed by Soviet fighters -- when, where, and were these circumstances unusual?

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8. Is Powers of the impression that there was only a single shot which was a near miss, or did he observe other shots which exploded below or above him prior to the shot that he claims brought him down?

NSA review(s) completed.

OGC Has Reviewed

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9. Have the rumors concerning Powers' conduct in Turkey been disposed of to the satisfaction of the Agency, most particularly the reports that he was in contact with a woman from Beirut who is known to be a Soviet agent?

10. Do experienced flyers consider Powers' failure to detach the pressure hoses to his suit (thus, so I am told, causing inflation of the suit as he descended) constitute an unusual behavior and bad judgment and contributory to his inability to reach the destruct button?

11. Was the plane equipped with a charge for total destruction, or merely destruction of the camera and film?

John A. McCone
Director

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28 February 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. McCone

Following is in response to your questions on the Prettyman Report:

Question 1. Additional details on substance of the contract referred to on page 12, particularly what was the term of the contract for which the recited cancellation clause applies?

Answer 1. The contract as amended ran by its terms to 31 October 1960. However, in paragraph 4.h. of his contract, which was so extended by the amendment, it was provided that in the event he was determined to be missing in service, benefits would be paid in accordance with Agency regulations on this subject, which are in general accord with the principles of the Missing Persons Act. These provisions would automatically continue his benefits until he was released from capture.

Question 2. How many flights over enemy territory were made by Powers and how many total U-2 flights were made by him?

Answer 2. Mr. Powers completed a total of 118 sorties, comprising 546 flying hours in the U-2; 27 of these were completed operational missions prior to the 1 May 1960 flight. One of these prior missions was over Communist China and was to penetrate the USSR but when bad weather was observed at the border he turned, in accordance with instructions, and returned to base. A second mission was over Soviet territory between the Caspian and Black Seas but was basically a peripheral mission. The rest were either peripheral or Middle East, including [redacted]

Question 3. When was Powers first briefed on the fatal flight, and what surveillance was he placed under from that time on? In other words, was he free to talk to uninformed personnel or to make contact with outsiders through conversation, telephone, or by mail?

Answer 3. On 3 April 1960 Powers was one of three pilots briefed on three proposed missions, the first on 9 April 1960, which was performed by another pilot; the second was scheduled for 27 April 1960, which actually took off 1 May 1960; and the third, a subsequent mission, which was cancelled after 1 May 1960. Between the period 3 April and 26 April 1960, when he went with the prestrike group to Peshawar,

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[redacted]

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Powers was living on the base but was free to talk to uninformed personnel and could make contact with outsiders by conversation, telephone, and mail.

Question 4. When was the final date of flight known to Powers, and what outside contact did he have or did others who knew of the flight have after the plan was definitely known?

Answer 4. The final flight was originally scheduled for 27 April 1960 and was delayed from day to day until the decision was made on the morning of 1 May 1960 that it would actually take place. During that time he remained with others of the prestrike group in isolation on the air field at Peshawar. The only outside contact was with the Pakistan Air Force through Colonel Shelton.

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[redacted]

Question 6. Was he followed by Soviet fighters -- when, where, and were these circumstances unusual?

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Answer 6. Powers saw only two contrails indicating fighter action shortly after crossing the Soviet border.

[redacted]

[redacted] Powers, however, saw nothing of this nature. There were no unusual circumstances about the fighter activity. However, it was clear that the Russians were going to make every effort to intercept this particular flight.

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[REDACTED]

Question 8. Is Powers of the impression that there was only a single shot which was a near miss, or did he observe other shots which exploded below or above him prior to the shot that he claims brought him down?

Answer 8. Powers does not characterize the phenomenon as a shot which was a near miss. He states he felt an impulse or acceleration of the plane and at the same time heard a dull noise unlike the crack of high explosive. He then saw the orange or reddish glare over his canopy which appeared to persist. Although he had been visually observing the area beneath him prior to this episode, he states that he saw nothing that would indicate ground-to-air activity against his plane.

Question 9. Have the rumors concerning Powers' conduct in Turkey been disposed of to the satisfaction of the Agency, most particularly the reports that he was in contact with a woman from Beirut who is known to be a Soviet agent?

Answer 9. Rumors concerning Powers' conduct in Turkey have been disposed of to the satisfaction of the Agency, and the report concerning the woman from Beirut, who was known to be a Soviet agent, has been refuted. CI Staff has detailed studies on these items.

Question 10. Do experienced flyers consider Powers' failure to detach the pressure hoses to his suit (thus, so I am told, causing inflation of the suit as he descended) constitute an unusual behavior and bad judgment and contributory to his inability to reach the destruct button?

Answer 10. Powers' pressure suit inflated as soon as the canopy was released thus reducing cockpit pressure. At the same time his face mask frosted over so he was completely unable to see beyond the mask. On release of his seat belt he was held in the plane only by his oxygen hose and was held so far forward by the G forces generated by the spin that he could not draw himself back to reach the destruct switches, the activation of which involved four separate manual operations. Experienced flyers have testified that he showed presence of mind and good judgment in his actions under these circumstances.

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Question 11. Was the plane equipped with a charge for total destruction, or merely destruction of the camera and film?

Answer 11. The destruct equipment was designed to render the camera and ELINT equipment inoperable and was not designed to destroy the plane itself. It was the estimate of project officers that if the charge went off, at best it would damage the film only slightly and possibly not at all. The charge consisted of 2½ pounds of explosive placed in the bottom of the plane in the equipment bay.

Lawrence R. Houston
General Counsel

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