

CIA Conceals 'Picture Gap,' Pentagon Says

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The mystery of the "Cuba picture gap"—the Kennedy administration's failure to show aerial photos of Cuba for a five-week period during the Soviet missile buildup—may never be explained publicly.

An official Pentagon spokesman has delivered what may be the death blow to any hopes of a public accounting by saying it was the Central Intelligence Agency and not the Defense Department that was responsible for aerial reconnaissance during that stretch.

Attempts by reporters to obtain information from the Pentagon spokesman yesterday on flights during the September 5-October 14 "picture gap" period drew a blank. The Defense Department has no business discussing CIA activities, he said. The CIA won't comment on its missions.

Rift Is Denied

The identification of CIA as the responsible party for the October 14 aerial reconnaissance came in the course of a Pentagon denial of a CIA-Defense Department rift over the Cuban surveillance.

The Pentagon spokesman flatly denied a Newsweek magazine story claiming it was a dispute between CIA and the Strategic Air Command that created a gap in reconnaissance flights over the island in September and early October.

In response to questions, he said SAC in fact had assumed responsibility for the flights from CIA on October 13.

was made on October 14 and it resulted in what has been called "the tell-tale picture" on the Soviet missile buildup.

Transcript Changed

Secretary of Defense McNamara, in his February 6 revised intelligence briefing on Cuba, listed five dates during the September 5-October 14 stretch on which reconnaissance flights were made, but no photos during that period were shown at the briefing. Later, the Pentagon changed Mr. McNamara's transcript to show seven dates.

The Defense spokesman asked whether any photographs actually were taken on these dates. Mr. McNamara said flights were made, would not comment. Nor would he explain why responsibility for the flights was switched from CIA to SAC.

The matter of the five-week "picture gap" has been a subject of Republican speculation on Capitol Hill. Mr. McNamara has been questioned extensively about it in at least two closed-door congressional hearings and CIA Director John A. McCone at another.

A G. O. P. Congressman at one of the executive sessions

confronted the Defense Secretary with weather maps and charts of the Caribbean area for the September 5-October 14 stretch, plus a report by Dr. Helmut E. Landsberg, director of climatology for the United States Weather Bureau, saying they showed flights were possible throughout that time.