

Early flights over Soviet territory

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Following World War II, the actions of the Soviet Union on the world stage made it clear the country would follow an agenda of its own.

Events such as the Marshall Plan, the Soviet Blockade of Berlin and the outbreak of the Korean War clearly confirmed the United States and the USSR were locked in a Cold War pitting capitalism against communism in an ideological struggle.

In December 1950, President Harry Truman authorized the first flight over Soviet territory. Information gathered from these flights could disclose the status of the Soviet air force.

One of the Air Force's newest bombers, B-47 Stratojet, was chosen to conduct the first overflight of Soviet airspace. The project commander canceled the first mission when the B-47 selected to fly was destroyed by fire during a refueling operation at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska.

News reached Washington in the spring of 1952 that the Soviets were staging aircraft out of bases in Siberia, giving the issue of overflights new attention.

In October, a B-47B, piloted by Lt. Col. Donald Hillman, left Eielson, crossed the Bering Sea, flew more than 800 miles of Siberia and exited Soviet territory at Provideniya. He returned with useful radar data and the confirmation of Soviet installations.

The B-47 flights continued for the next few years as several nearly fell victim to Soviet defensive actions. As a result, the Air Staff requested President Dwight Eisenhower change national policy to permit overflights of the USSR. As Soviet military expansion reached alarming proportions, the United States felt it necessary to continue with reconnaissance flights.

By early 1950, human intelligence



U-2

operations failed to provide information on the Soviet Union's fast growing nuclear capability.

With a need to gain such information, the CIA contracted Lockheed to begin developing the U-2 in late 1954. The U-2, operating at altitudes above 80,000 feet, began operations in July 1956, with the first mission of the super secret spy plane staging from a base in West Germany.

Flying directly over Leningrad and Moscow, the intrusion of Soviet airspace infuriated the Soviets—particularly Premier Nikita Khrushchev. American planners reasoned the plane would only carry out missions for about a year as advances in Soviet radar would soon allow them to track the high-flying U-2s.

The United States underestimated the sophistication of the Soviet Unions air defenses. Their forces accurately tracked the first U-2 flight over Soviet territory. From that point on, sharp notes of diplomatic protest followed every mission. President Eisenhower responded by halting the missions for a brief period.

The U-2 confirmed the Soviets lacked a significant capability to launch an aerial attack on the United States. U-2 overflights focused on the build-up of the Soviet ICBM program.

By early 1960, Soviet Air Defense planners began to consider ways to shoot down the U-2. On May 1, 1960, the Soviets took advantage of a golden

opportunity when Francis Gary Powers, a CIA pilot, took off from Peshawar Air Base, Pakistan on an overflight of the USSR.

His primary mission was to photograph the Soviet ICBM test center at Tyuratam, in the then-Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan, in support of President Eisenhower's upcoming summit meeting in Paris with Nikita Khrushchev.

As Powers approached the Soviet city of Sverdlovsk, his U-2 suffered an engine flame-out resulting in the plane descending to an altitude which placed it in harm's way of the recently deployed SA-2 surface-to-air missile. One of several SA-2 SAMS fired by Soviet Air Defense forces exploded close to the U-2, buckling one of the wings and sending it into an uncontrollable spin.

The U-2, equipped with a self-destruct system activated by the aircraft's ejection seat, failed because Powers bailed out of the aircraft. Previous denials of the overflights by the U.S. Government now carried no weight. The evidence was undeniable as the Soviets now had the pilot, the wreckage and much of the airplane equipment, as well as Powers' CIA standard issue personal cyanide-suicide needle kit in their possession. After two years, Powers was traded back to the United States for KGB spy Rudolph Abel.

The United States initially

downplayed the incident when the State Department issued a statement that an aircraft on a weather research mission had been missing for several days. In fact, the black U-2 with NASA registration markings had fallen victim to a tenacious Soviet Air Defense force that claimed one of its own MIG interceptors and pilot in bringing down the U-2.

The incident prompted the cancel-

lation of the scheduled summit meeting between President Eisenhower and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in Paris on May 5, 1960.

Following the State Department's initial story, President Eisenhower accepted full responsibility and disclosed he had known of the overflights. Khrushchev demanded an American apology along with a promise that the flights would not occur again.

President Eisenhower ordered a ban on all U-2 overflights of the Soviet Union shortly after Powers' capture.

The overflights of the USSR by this unique aircraft yielded information of immeasurable value and allowed the US to formulate its defense strategy toward fielding a force of ICBMs that the Soviets would not match for nearly a decade. ■

family news



Shaking babies injures, kills

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The young airman hung his head in pain and remorse. In the courtroom gallery, his young wife and baby daughter watched as the court-martial board faced him and passed sentence—he would be dishonorably discharged from the Air Force and spend time in a military prison.

I will never forget that day three years ago, because I was one of the court martial board members who sentenced him. Three lives were changed forever because the young airman twice shook his daughter so hard she developed seizures.

In 1993, almost 5,000 babies under the age of one were reported as being abused in the United States, according to statistics kept by the Kelly Air Force Base Family Advocacy program. Many of these infants were victims of a phenomenon called Shaken Baby Syndrome. It happens when adults or older children take out their anger or frustration on babies by shaking them. Sometimes it even happens when people play too roughly with babies and children.

Because babies have weak neck muscles and heavy heads, even a few seconds of violent shaking can cause

brain damage, blindness, paralysis, mental retardation, seizures or even death.

According to Blondell Hill, Kelly's Family Advocacy nurse specialist, children under the age of three are especially vulnerable. Almost 80 percent of perpetrators and 60 percent of victims are male.

Hill said a baby being shaken experiences 4 g's of force—four times the forces felt on a rough roller coaster. A baby who is shaken and then thrown down experiences 300 g's of force—the same as a motorcycle rider hitting a wall at 50 m.p.h.

"Many people don't know that shaking a baby can be harmful," said Hill. "Most Shaken Baby Syndrome cases happen when a parent or baby sitter gets frustrated while trying to console a crying baby," she said.

"But it can also happen when people are playing with babies and young children—bouncing them too hard on the knee, spinning them around, or swinging them by the ankles," she said.

"Every Air Force base has a Family Advocacy program that educates new parents about how to handle and care for their children," said Hill. "I'd encourage all parents to take advantage of our many parenting courses," she said. ■

Tips for coping with a crying baby:

- Feed and change the baby
- Check for signs of illness
- Offer the baby a pacifier
- Rock, walk or dance with the baby
- Sing, play music or talk quietly with the baby
- Run the vacuum, turn on the dryer, or run water — babies enjoy rhythmic noises
- Lay the baby tummy-down across your lap and gently rub or pat his back
- Swaddle the baby
- Take the baby for a ride in a stroller or in a car seat in the car
- Call a friend or relative to help give you a break
- If nothing works, put the baby in her crib, close the door and turn up the TV or radio. Check on the baby every 15 minutes
- Never shake, hit or throw the baby