

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

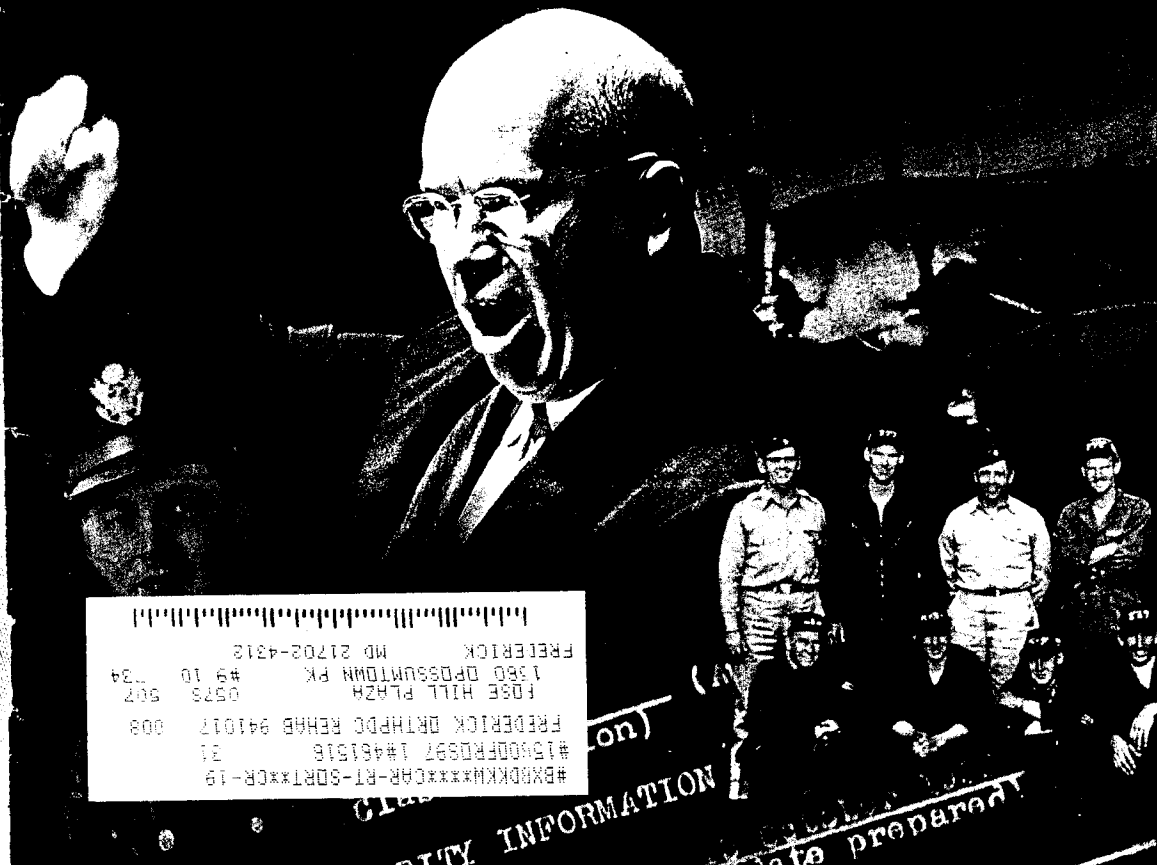
U.S. News & WORLD REPORT

MARCH 15, 1993

\$2.50

AMERICA'S TOP-SECRET SPY WAR

IN THE '50s AND '60s, THE U.S. LOST MORE THAN
130 AIRMEN IN MISSIONS AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION.
THE TRUTH NEVER CAME OUT. UNTIL NOW.



#BXNDKKN***CR-RT-SORT**CR-19
#13000FRD0597 1#461516 31
FREDERICK DRTHPDC REHAB 941017 008
JOSE HILL PLAZA 0575 507
1380 DPOSSUNTDWN PK #9 10 734
FREDERICK MD 21702-4312

CLASSIFICATION INFORMATION

State prepared

SPECIAL REPORT

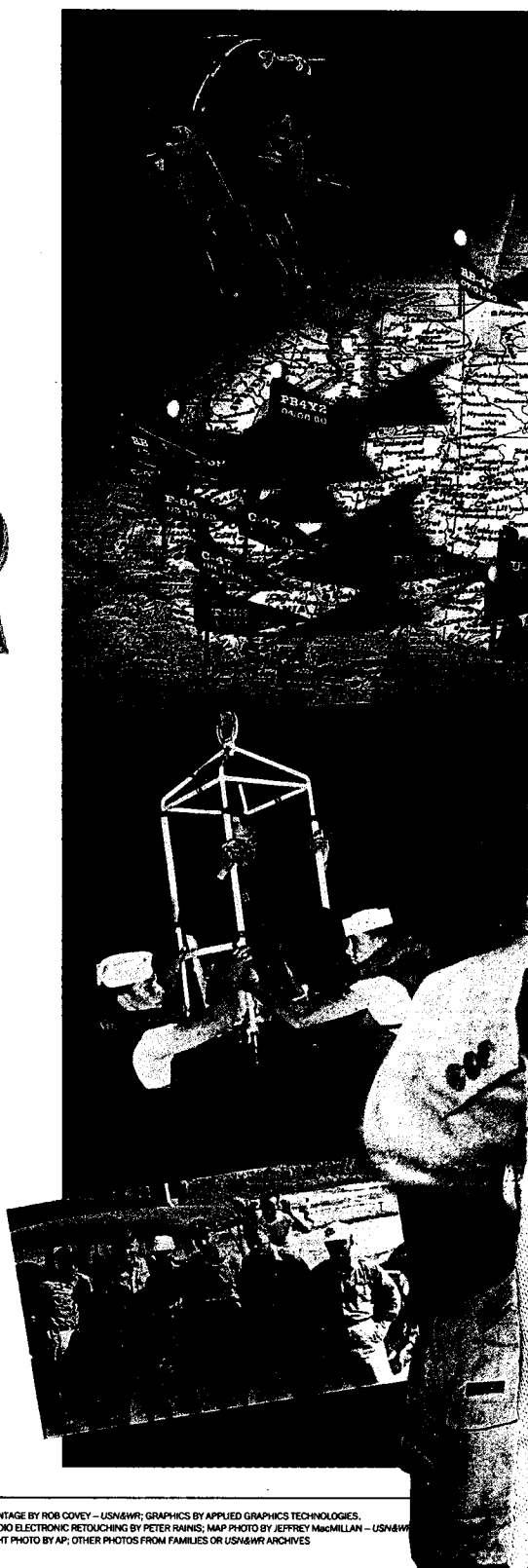
SECRETS OF THE COLD WAR



Lt. Boris Dokin picked up Jack Fette's Navy PB4Y2 Privateer just past twilight and nosed his Soviet LA-11 fighter through a deck of pink-rimmed clouds to engage it. Midnight blue, the Privateer was cruising at 11,000 feet above the icy chop of the Baltic Sea. It was an ungainly aircraft, ugly as planes go, and if you believed the gripes of the crew, a guaranteed rocky ride that was also slower than hell. Fette's men called the Privateer the Turbulent Turtle. To hear Dokin tell it, when he first saw the Turtle, it was just south of the Latvian coastal city of Liepaja, 5 miles from the town of Tsenkony. The time was 5:39 p.m., the date April 8, 1950, the Saturday before Easter.

Seconds after the sighting, Boris Dokin sent Lt. Anatoli Gerasimov into action. "Force the intruder to land," Dokin ordered. Gerasimov and a wingman approached at high speed, but Jack Fette pushed the Turtle into a hard turn west. Warning shots were fired by the LA-11s, and Dokin and his comrades say Fette's crew re-

The elapsed-time indicator (above) from Francis Gary Powers's downed U-2





RUSS HOLD YANK FLYERS, U. S. SAYS



SPECIAL REPORT

turned the compliment, in spades. That will never be known. "I fired 15 rounds at the intruder," recalls Lt. Ivan Ivanovich Tezyaev. "The intruder started to go down . . . and disappeared in the clouds." Eight days later, a British ship recovered one of the Turtle's bright-yellow life rafts. A Swedish ship picked up another five days after that. Both were empty. The bodies of Jack Fette and his nine crewmen have never been recovered.

Risk and reward. In this century's longest-running international morality play, there were thousands of bit players like Jack Fette, two big, heart-stopping scenes set in Berlin and Cuba but only one actor on whose frail shoulders the great weight of the dramatic conflict was settled all at once. He was American pilot Francis Gary Powers, and when he fell from the sky onto the tilled fields outside the Soviet city of Sverdlovsk, a decade after Lt. Jack Fette's Turbulent Turtle vanished forever into the soupy gray clouds above the Baltic, it fractured the fragile cold war truce between Washington and Moscow. "The honeymoon," Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev vowed, "was over."

In truth, there had never been any honeymoon—and Gary Powers was never the lone American actor his government made him out to be. Relying on thousands of newly declassified documents and more than 150 interviews with authorities in the United States and Russia, a four-month investigation by *U.S. News*, broadcast by ABC News's "PrimeTime Live" on March 4, has found that the Gary Powers spy mission, far from being the isolated incident that most Americans believe, was just the tip of a vast iceberg of cold war espionage.

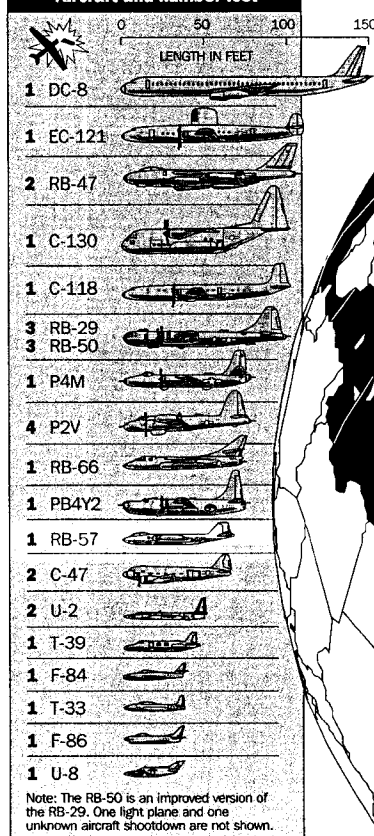
For more than a decade before a clot of thick-necked KGB guards escorted Powers into an ornate Moscow courtroom for a stacy Soviet show trial, thousands of American airmen risked their lives to spy on Soviet air defenses in a highly secret campaign conducted primarily by the Air Force, the Navy and the Central Intelligence Agency. The outlines of this campaign and of a secondary effort against the government of Communist China have been sketched before. But the newly declassified documents and details never before disclosed by U.S. and former Soviet authorities cast important new light on the high-risk American espionage effort. To this day, the full extent of the espionage campaign has never been acknowledged by the United States.

These are among the principal find-

Grim tally. Cold war adversaries downed 31 U.S. planes between 1950 and 1970.

Map reference	Date of loss	Aircraft	Crew on board	Survivors recovered	Dead	Not found/fate unknown
1.	April 8, 1950	PB4Y2	10	0	0	10
2.	Nov. 6, 1951	P2V	10	0	0	10
3.	Nov. 18, 1951	C-47	4	4	0	0
4.	June 13, 1952	RB-29	12	0	0	12
5.	Oct. 7, 1952	RB-29	8	0	0	8
6.	Jan. 18, 1953	P2V	13	7	0	6
7.	March 10, 1953	F-84	1	1	0	0
8.	July 29, 1953	RB-50	17	1	2	14
9.	Sept. 4, 1954	P2V	10	9	0	1
10.	Nov. 7, 1954	RB-29	11	10	1	0
11.	April 17, 1955	RB-47	3	0	0	3
12.	June 22, 1955	P2V	11	11	0	0
13.	Aug. 22, 1956	P4M	16	0	4	12
14.	Sept. 10, 1956	RB-50	16	0	0	16
15.	Dec. 23, 1957	T-33	1	1	0	0
16.	ca. 1958	RB-50	?	?	?	?

Aircraft and number lost



Typical "ferret" aircraft crew

A cold war reconnaissance aircraft, such as the RB-47 shown here, carried a crew of pilot, copilot and navigator, and three or more Ravens. The Ravens, in the rear of the plane, manned gear to intercept, record and analyze enemy radar signals.

Map reference	Date of loss	Aircraft	Crew on board	Survivors recovered	Dead	Not found/fate unknown
17.	ca. 1958	Unkwn.	?	?	?	?
18.	March 6, 1958	F-86	1	1	0	0
19.	June 27, 1958	C-118	9	9	0	0
20.	Sept. 2, 1958	C-130	17	0	4	13
21.	May 1, 1960	U-2	1	1	0	0
22.	May 25, 1960	C-47	9	9	0	0
23.	July 1, 1960	RB-47	6	2	1	3
24.	Oct. 27, 1962	U-2	1	0	1	0
25.	Aug. 6, 1963	Lt. plane	6	0	6	0
26.	Jan. 24, 1964	T-39	3	0	3	0
27.	March 10, 1964	RB-66	3	3	0	0
28.	Dec. 14, 1965	RB-57	2	0	0	2
29.	June 30, 1968	DC-8	17	17	0	0
30.	April 15, 1969	EC-121	30	0	2	28
31.	Oct. 21, 1970	U-8	4	4	0	0
TOTAL			252	90	24	138

ings of the magazine's investigation:

■ **Provocations.** Although Washington admitted to only a single violation of Soviet airspace with the Gary Powers spy flight, intelligence documents and interviews with former government officials show that the penetrations were numerous — and deliberate. There were at least 17 U-2 overflights before the Powers incident and uncounted others by high-flying RB-45 Tornados. Meanwhile, on multiple Soviet frontiers, U.S. planes flying periphery spy routes also violated the limits claimed by Moscow on its coastal waters. "Quite often," says Bruce Bailey, a radar intercept operator who flew more than 400 spy missions against the Soviet Union, "we'd fly in at low level below radar and then pop up in their airspace. . . . Our flights were intentionally very provocative."

At times, the planes penetrated the 12-mile limit claimed by the Soviets and, more rarely, even the internationally recognized limit of 3 miles. Authorities in Moscow say such penetrations were far more numerous than Washington will admit. Says Gen. Dmitri Volkogonov: "The Americans were very active

. . . The flights were intensive." An adviser to Boris Yeltsin, the author of a landmark biography of Joseph Stalin and the head of a Russian commission investigating the fate of Americans held prisoner during the cold war, Volkogonov told *U.S. News* that still classified Soviet intelligence reports confirm the high numbers of U.S. spy flights: "Practically every month, the planes would penetrate our borders."

■ **Constant surveillance.** The scope of the espionage campaign was enormous — far greater than has ever been admitted. From 1950 through the late 1960s, documents and interviews show, the United States launched more than 10,000, and perhaps as many as 20,000, spy missions against air-defense installations along the borders of the Soviet Union and China. Officially, Washington said that any planes flying near those borders were merely engaged in "electromagnetic research" or "photographic mapping missions." In fact, insiders referred to these as "ferret" flights. Their purpose: to flush out the precise location and capabilities of electronic and

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This story was uncovered by U.S. News Moscow Bureau Chief Douglas Stanglin and reported by Stanglin in Moscow and by Susan Headden and Peter Cary in Washington. Later, *U.S. News* was joined by Chris Wallace, Paul Mason and Mark Lukasiewicz of ABC News's "PrimeTime Live."

The reporting for these stories began in Moscow more than six months ago. Denied information in Washington, Bruce Sanderson had gone to Russia looking for his father, Warren, who had disappeared over the Sea of Japan on July 29, 1953, with the crew of an RB-50 reconnaissance bomber. In Moscow, Sanderson met Stanglin, who assisted with his inquiries. The two men pried some information loose, enough to know that the full story of Warren Sanderson's disappearance lay back in Washington.

The dimensions of the story appeared gradually — but it became clear that it involved not just a single missing American but scores. The trail led to more than 10,000 classified records. For nearly 30 years, the documents had been sealed away at the National Archives. Not only had the documents never been indexed, they had never been organized or even read. Inquiries by the reporters led to the release of thousands of pages of documents. The records and more than 150 follow-up interviews reveal an aggressive U.S. espionage campaign whose full scope has never before been disclosed.



DAVID S. MERRILL - USN&W

■ SPECIAL REPORT

radar defenses along Soviet borders. Because of the secrecy still enforced by the Air Force, Navy, CIA and National Security Agency—all of which played key roles in the espionage campaign—the precise number of ferret flights may never be known. Summaries of the missions by each agency remain classified.

The missions continued even after the U-2 fiasco. Hours after Lee Harvey Oswald murdered President John F. Kennedy in Dealey Plaza in Dallas, for instance, the Air Force and the CIA sent a "Flash" worldwide alert for all ferret flights to return to their bases lest the Soviet Union be provoked.

■ **In harm's way.** Risks were high. The Soviets were unpredictable, for one thing, and the ferret aircraft were easy targets. "Our planes didn't have speed, were often unarmed and the Soviets would pick us off," says retired Lt. Col. Philip Corso, an aide to President Dwight Eisenhower who was briefed regularly on the ferret campaign. "So we lost a lot of our boys."

The losses were considerable. U.S. government records show that at least 252 American airmen were shot down flying espionage or support missions between 1950 and 1970, 24 lost their lives, 90 survived and 138 remain unaccounted for to this day. The actual number of losses may be even higher than those reflected in the official tallies. New evidence, for instance, suggests that two allied spy flights were shot down by Soviet jets over the Caspian Sea in 1958; no official documentation has yet been found.

■ **Prisoners?** No one may ever know how many of those Americans declared "missing" were imprisoned and tortured. An extensive *U.S. News* analysis of a dozen shootdowns, as well as the sheer number of airmen unaccounted for, strongly suggests that some must have been captured. Documents reviewed in Washington and Moscow show a pattern of information from prisoners, missionaries and other sources about American fliers jailed by Soviet and Chinese authorities. The information is largely anecdotal but persuasive. "It seems," says a newly declassified cable dated Sept. 20, 1958, from the American Embassy in Moscow, "[that] SOV have determined to make 11 crewmen 'unpersons' with the objective to impress on US as well as other countries dangers of flying close to SOV border."

■ **Broken vows.** The ferret missions were so secret that search-and-rescue pilots flying to retrieve downed U.S. crews were sometimes sent to areas far from where the missions were actually flown.



The secrecy may have cost some airmen their lives. "We had no illusions," says Bruce Bailey, the former radar-intercept operator. "We were expendable."

■ **Obstructionism.** Where there was evidence of survivors from planes that had been shot down, State Department lawyers were often prevented by superiors and intelligence officials from pursuing it. "Herewith the RB-50 file," Walter Stoessel, the State Department's Soviet Affairs officer, told the legal office in a handwritten note about a reconnaissance plane shot down July 29, 1953. "We feel we had better cease fire on this one." The memo was obtained by *U.S. News*. Another legal-office memorandum, on a U.S. C-118 shot down on June 18, 1957, records this: "Representations and recommendations have been made to me by intelligence authorities of the government that NO LEGAL ACTION SHOULD BE PURSUED." Says James Keeffe, an Air

Force meteorologist who briefed ferret crews flying from a base near Tokyo: "I took an oath of silence, but as far as I'm concerned, it's null and void because my government has done some monstrous things. . . . They violated their trust with me and with crew members."

■ **Lies and whispers.** Many years afterward, friends and loved ones of the crews lost or killed in the ferret campaign were still being lied to by their government about what happened. "For years, I tortured myself, wondering whether he was being tortured," says Ruth Heller, the wife of Capt. Sam Busch, shot down by Soviet fighters in an RB-29 reconnaissance bomber on June 13, 1952. "As far as I knew, it was just a weather mission. It was like he just disappeared from the face of the Earth." Says Gordon Berg, whose brother, Eddie Ray, was lost along with the rest of the RB-29 crew: "Eddie had written that he was on a serious mis-

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SANDERSON FAMILY



The Sandersons. Bruce (left) and brother, John, receive their father's Purple Heart. Warren Sanderson (above) vanished July 29, 1953.

sion, and that he was afraid. ... They said there was no evidence of the plane or survivors. The Air Force told my mom she should just accept things as they are."

■ **"A policy of denial."** Despite pledges of cooperation from Russian President Yeltsin, authorities in Moscow refuse to reveal meaningful information on the fate of the missing American airmen. A U.S. task force will travel to Moscow next month to press for answers, and President Clinton may raise the matter with Yeltsin at his forthcoming summit. So far, however, there has been little cooperation. "We are not succeeding," says Ambassador Malcolm Toon, the task force leader, "in getting the information we need." Susan Mesina, director of ARK, a private human rights group searching for U.S. prisoners in Russia,

believes some may still be alive, making the Russians' obstructionism literally a matter of life and death. "A policy of denial," Mesina calls it. "[It] has made negotiations for release difficult, if not impossible."

Many in Washington defend the need for the ferret missions against Moscow. "Our view then, and it would be my view now," says Gen. Andrew Goodpaster, President Eisenhower's staff secretary, "is we had to do it." Many of the airmen who risked their lives share that view. "You had the big Russian bear over there that we were concerned with," says Capt. Ray Britton, who piloted ferret missions in 1953 on an RB-50 reconnaissance bomber out of the U.S. base at Yokota. "We had to keep track of it."

That the true scope of America's cold-war espionage campaign should become apparent only now is tribute to the tec-

tonic force that underlies the relations of great powers in conflict — and of the long hangover effect of such conflict. Although the Clinton administration is wrestling now with questions about the nature and size of an aid package for the former Soviet Union, deep reservoirs of distrust remain in Washington and Moscow. Conviction, like prejudice, sinks its roots deep.

The revelations are also instructive in the peculiar ways that history is made, recorded and, finally, discovered. After Lt. Jack Fette and scores of other American airmen disappeared into the frigid mists swirling around the Soviet Union, their friends and loved ones were given incomplete and, in some cases, absolutely false accounts of what had happened to them. Weather flights, training missions — to preserve the secrecy of the ferret campaign, U.S. officials cobbled together all sorts of phony excuses for the families. Patriotic, the families accepted them. But with the passage of time, many became frustrated.

Then some became angry. Bruce Sanderson is one of them. His father, a handsome 29-year-old first lieutenant named Warren, disappeared off the Soviet coast over the Sea of Japan with 16 other crewmen in a customized RB-50 Superfortress on July 29, 1953. For years, Sanderson and his brother, John, peppered Washington with requests for answers; for years, he was stonewalled. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the hope of assistance from Moscow, Sanderson flew there last year to press for answers. After a few weeks, with a handful of leads, he returned to Washington — and a lucky break.

Within the Pentagon, a task force had been set up to find answers to the fate of missing soldiers and airmen in the former Soviet Union. Among the staff of the National Archives and Records Administration who specialize in military records, the work of the Pentagon task force generated new interest. Some archivists began looking into the matter, and in November 1992, one of them hit pay dirt.

The Federal Records Center is located in Suitland, Md., a sleepy community across the slow-moving Anacostia River from Washington. It was there on a blustery fall day that archivist Richard Boylan was alerted to the existence of 35

SPECIAL REPORT

large corrugated cardboard boxes of documents. Their contents had been sealed since 1963. Intrigued, Boylan took a look inside. Then he grabbed a phone and called Maj. Neil Rogers.

In one of those happy accidents of history, Rogers had completed his doctoral dissertation under the guidance of Rich Boylan. He had gone on to become a highly regarded Army historian assigned to the Pentagon's Task Force Russia. Although Boylan had no way of knowing it, Rogers and his colleagues on the task force had also begun trying to help Bruce Sanderson find answers to some of his questions. All were convinced that critical records had somehow gone missing. When Rogers and his col-

leagues began digging into the 35 boxes, it dawned on them just how much missing material there really was.

"The mother lode." It also introduced him to a ghost. Samuel Klaus was a collector of antique rugs and a writer-of-memos extraordinaire. It was Klaus who had compiled the contents of the 35 boxes of documents (box, below). A State Department lawyer assigned to investigate what were then known archly as "serious air incidents," Klaus, with his top-secret security clearance and his well-earned reputation for persistence, became something of a ferret himself, flinging endless demands for answers into the darkest corners of the American intelligence bureaucracies. A lawyer before he was a cold warrior, Klaus was assigned to investigate shootdowns of

ferret aircraft so that he could make a case to the International Court of Justice. What he needed, though, was the truth from his own government. He assembled every record he could lay his hands on. Then he began building a case.

The Klaus files today are the most integral set of records on the nature of the American ferret campaign now available for analysis. "The mother lode," says Major Rogers. *U.S. News* has reviewed these records independently. Amplified by information from the scores of interviews conducted in the course of this research, the documents provide the basis for the accounts that follow.

BY DOUGLAS STANGLIN, SUSAN HEADDEN
AND PETER CARY

LAWYER AND PATRIOT

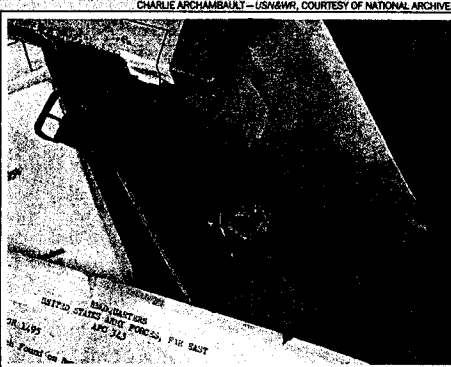
The man who kept the files

In France one time, Sam Klaus was mistaken by a group of children for Charlie Chaplin. With his prim mustache, black bowler and cane, Klaus bore only the slightest resemblance to the Little Tramp. He was fastidious, for one thing, and not much inclined to humor. To borrow from the language of the time, in fact, Sam Klaus was something of a fussbudget. But it was precisely those habits of mind—exactitude, diligence and righteousness—that made Klaus such a great detective.

His investigations infuriated the Pentagon. "I'm sure the Defense Department thought Sam Klaus was a nuisance," says Leonard Meeker, a colleague from the State Department's legal office, "maybe even a security threat."

Assigned to a government project to recruit German scientists after World War II, Klaus fought the Pentagon tooth and claw. The Germans must be thoroughly screened, he insisted; Nazis would be excluded. Defense officials, eager for the Germans' technical knowledge, fought Klaus and won. The State Department lawyer was banished to bureaucratic Siberia.

Depressed and suffer-



Evidence. *Fliers' personal effects, for the record*

ing from chronic diabetes, Klaus was nevertheless unbowed. After the ferret flights geared up, he began investigating the loss of American aircraft and lives. Typically, he minced few words. "The fear has been expressed . . . in the Air Force," Klaus wrote in a secret 1953 memo, "that a serious risk of embarrassment or damage to our national security is inherent in our bringing a claim against the Soviets."

Such concerns, Klaus continued, paraphrasing the Air Force argument, "should outweigh the national interest in bringing [Moscow] to justice for the illegal destruction of the plane and the death or concealment of the crew."

The argument was appalling, Klaus said: Failure to

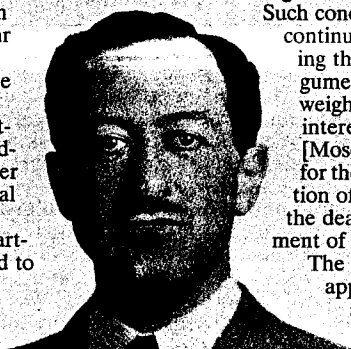
act by Washington would embarrass the State Department not only with the American public but "as a matter of public and historical record as well."

The destruction of U.S. aircraft should be made public, he argued, and Moscow forced to answer for the fate of the crews in the International Court of Justice. Leonard Meeker: "Making these cases public would have been embarrassing to defense agencies because they would have had to admit they were spying—and that they bungled it."

Despite what seems to have been a coordinated campaign of keep-away from Klaus, he managed to document a phenomenal amount. Today, his records, on the ferret campaign and on other violations of international treaties by the Soviet Union, extend to some 35 cubic feet, filling more than 100 document boxes in the National Archives. From nearly every box emerges a memorandum or note recording Klaus's frustration with his government's prevarication. A patriot and a cold warrior, Klaus yielded to no one in his hatred of Moscow. But he was also unable to abide less than the truth. "He never told a lie," says Klaus's sister, Ida. "He just thought lying was the most terrible sin of all."

A lifelong bachelor, Sam Klaus died alone on the morning of Aug. 1, 1963. He was 58 years old.

BY SUSAN HEADDEN



Flights of the ferrets

Decades later, many of the spy missions are still shrouded in secrecy

Mystery marked the flights of the ferrets then; it marks many of them still. Take Jack Fette's Turbulent Turtle: It disappeared 43 years ago next month, and answers are no closer now than on the twilight evening when it vanished forever. *U.S. News* obtained copies of the reports Lt. Boris Dokin and his colleagues turned in after they shot the Privateer from the gathering sky. The accounts contradict every significant piece of American intelligence on the tragedy.

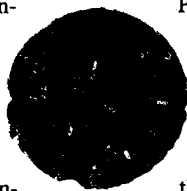
Boris Dokin and his colleagues swore that the Privateer was armed and that it fired at the Soviet fighters. Impossible, says Robert "Ned" Haines, who often

flew the Baltic route aboard the plane: "The guns had been taken out and put in the squadron armory eight months before." The Soviet airmen said the Privateer was at 11,000 feet when they engaged it; the Navy plane was not carrying oxygen and the crew could not fly for long above 10,000 feet. Even the weather remains a matter of dispute. "Good," says a declassified report on the shootdown of the Privateer.

Miserable, counters Gen. Fyodor Sicherenko, the commander of the six-man air-defense unit that shot down the Privateer. In an interview with *U.S. News*, General Sicherenko says conditions were so bad that he was unsure at

first whether his pilots should even be allowed to take off.

Most important of all: What happened to Lieutenant Fette and his crew? "The United States government," says a diplomatic note delivered to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the American ambassador in July 1956, "is informed and believes that ... at least one American military aviation person, believed to be a member of the United States Navy Privateer, was held at Camp No. 20, allegedly near Taishet, and Collective Farm No. 25, approximately 54 kilometers from Taishet. [The airman] is said to be under sentence for alleged espionage." Other reports from Soviet prisoners said that as many as eight of the Privateer's crew



JEFFREY MACMILLAN - USNEWS



Missing. Jane Reynolds Howard was pregnant with daughter Carolyn when her husband, Robert, vanished on April 18, 1950, with the crew of the Navy Privateer. The Reynoldses step out (above right).

SPECIAL REPORT

the Pentagon's official position on the RB-29 and its crew of 12, who went missing one fine spring day somewhere far away over the Sea of Japan.

'AN EYE FOR AN EYE'

JULY 29, 1953: THE RB-50

The water, when he hit it, was exactly 68 degrees. It quickly filled his wristwatch, which stopped ticking at 6:20 a.m., but Capt. John Roche didn't notice. His head was gashed from his right eye to the top of his skull, but Roche didn't notice that either. He was too busy swimming clear of the aviation fuel that had leapt into flames around him. His Mae West kept Roche's head above the water's gentle chop as he picked his way through the plane's debris. Some oxygen tanks, a sleeping bag—these he fashioned into a crude raft. Then he heard a shout.

A few more minutes and some labored paddling brought Roche face to face with Capt. Stanley O'Kelley. Roche, the copilot of the RB-50, had found his pilot. O'Kelley's lips were horribly swollen. His hair and eyebrows were singed. "I asked him how I looked," Roche recalled, "and he said I looked pretty good. I told him he looked pretty good, too." They were maybe 30 miles from the Soviet coast, bobbing groggily in the Sea of Japan. It was just about the last place John Roche and Stan O'Kelley ever expected to find themselves. An armistice in the Korean War had been declared just two days earlier.

The mission had been a routine one right till the end. From Yokota, O'Kelley and Roche had pushed the RB-50 on a course west northwest until they could make out the lumpy contours of the Korean peninsula. With its custom pitch-black underbelly, the big reconnaissance-bomber had turned right, ghosting the Soviet coast on a northerly tack dead-on toward the closed Soviet port city of Vladivostok. There O'Kelley and Roche made a 45-degree right turn followed by a hard right that took the RB-50 off the coast of Cape Povorotny. The route was designed to maximize the effectiveness of 1st Lt. Warren Sanderson and the other five Ravens stuck back in the rear of the big plane. Electronics specialists, the Ravens were assigned the task of identifying and monitoring air defenses all along the Soviet borders. Confined with their sweating electronic sensors, radarscopes and microwave transmitters into unbelievably cramped quarters they called the "crow's nest," the Ravens were the unsung heroes of the ferret campaign (box, Page 46).

Until it was shot down, the RB-50 had encountered some problems, but nothing

SCOTT GOLDSMITH FOR USNEWS



serious. At 5:59 a.m., O'Kelley took the plane into a final 95-degree turn to the right and made his heading for the long flight home. Exhausted, O'Kelley put the plane on autopilot, Roche lit a cigarette, and the rest of the crew began to relax.

Sixteen minutes later, disaster struck. Gunfire disabled the RB-50's No. 1 engine. Seconds after that, a Soviet fighter Roche and O'Kelley took for a MiG-15 roared into view, red stars winking on both wings. There was more gunfire. Large-caliber rounds shredded the RB-50's No. 4 engine, on the right side of the plane. Roche killed both engines, and O'Kelley depressurized the cabin and yanked the jump alarm. It rang incessantly as the plane cartwheeled into the sea.

Of all the shootdowns attributed to the Soviets during the ferret campaign, the case of the RB-50 offers the most compelling evidence that survivors may have been picked up and jailed.

Fighting acute hangovers after the armistice parties thrown the night before, the Yokota operations officers assigned to monitor the ferret flights failed to report when the RB-50 missed two of its assigned checkpoints. As a result, senior officers were late dispatching search-and-rescue flights to go after the missing aircraft. Once they were in the air near where the plane went down, however, spotters aboard the American planes counted as many as 15 Soviet PT boats. By the time the first search aircraft arrived in the area, the Soviet patrol boats were speeding away from the location of the downed plane.

More important, John Roche has confirmed for the first time that several of the PT boats came within 100 yards of him and O'Kelley as they clung to their makeshift raft in the fog that hung low over the water. In an interview with *U.S. News*, Roche said the boats arrived within an hour after the RB-50 went down



The RB-50. The copilot, John Roche, in the cockpit in 1953 (above), and being returned home (above right). The rest of the crew (top) during training exercise. At home (left), Roche ponders the tragedy. He was the only survivor.

and passed so close that their wake washed over him and O'Kelley. "There were five of them there," Roche recalled. "You could hear the putt-putt. You could hear them coming. . . . And then they got a little close so I swam [away], and they went right on by."

The information is important because others besides O'Kelley and Roche probably survived the shootdown. In a newly declassified affidavit from the Klaus files, Sgt. Robert Hacker, a scanner riding in the bombardier's position of an SB-29 rescue plane more than 10 hours after the RB-50 went down, said he had seen at least six men in the water and possibly as many as eight. In his own affidavit, Roche told of hearing shouting in the fog. Except for O'Kelley, however, he could locate none of the other crew.

A question that puzzles: Why so many Soviet boats in such an unlikely location so early in the morning? It was little no-

ticed at the time, and certainly not by most of the crew of the RB-50, but on the last day of hostilities in Korea, American fighter jets shot down a Soviet IL-12 airliner with at least 21 people aboard. The plane went down in Manchuria, U.S. officials said at the time, but still-classified U.S. documents contradict that. Other evidence suggests that the Soviet shootdown of the RB-50 was a direct retaliation for the American downing of the IL-12. "An eye for an eye," Bruce Sanderson says he was told in Moscow by officials on the commission studying the fate of American fliers shot down during the ferret campaign.

The evidence is persuasive. The route flown by Stan O'Kelley and John Roche was routine. The Soviets had monitored such flights with their coastal-defense radar for some time. Indeed, veterans of ferret flights say, some missions were so well-known by Soviet fliers that they often saw the same planes and pilots off

their wings on different missions. The presence of the 15 PT boats is perhaps the best evidence. To some U.S. analysts, the unusual concentration of patrol boats suggests that the shootdown was planned—and that the Soviets intended to pick up any survivors. Capt. Stanley O'Kelley slipped beneath the waves sometime before nightfall. At 4:19 a.m. on July 20, 18 hours after the RB-50 went down, the crew of the USS Picking plucked John Roche from a life raft that had been dropped by one of the search aircraft. The Picking's official log records the moment:

04:19, Capt. John Roche
USAF AO-2029268
Recovered at sea

Roche is the only known survivor, but the evidence of others is impossible to ignore. One clue: An Air Force intelligence report from September 1955 quotes a source, identified only as a Japanese national recently repatriated from Communist China. The source reported that in late 1952, when he was held at the Soviet INTA prison camp No. 1, he had worked on a street-cleaning detail for two days with a "Caucasian" prisoner of war. The Japanese prisoner described the man as about 5 feet, 6 inches tall with dark brown hair. The man appeared to be 25 or 26 years old with pale skin, dark eyes and a "rather low nose." After transfer to a new prison camp, the Japanese source heard from other Japanese POWs that the Caucasian was an American airman. Although the date of the sighting and other details don't square with the RB-50 shootdown, the description of the man bears a striking resemblance to Warren Sanderson, the Raven aboard the RB-50. At the time of the shootdown, Sanderson was 5 feet, 10 inches and 29 years old, with brown hair and brown eyes. The Japanese source was shown 11 photographs of downed U.S. airmen believed to be held as prisoners of war. Eventually, the Japanese man excluded every photo but one. The Caucasian, the Japanese man concluded, was American 1st Lt. Warren Sanderson.

'THE LESS SAID, THE BETTER' JUNE 27, 1958: THE C-118

Not long after noon, in brilliant sunshine over the tumbled mountains of eastern Turkey, a U.S. Air Force C-118, the military version of the Douglas DC-6, was

■ SPECIAL REPORT

PHOTOS BY ED KASHI FOR USN&WR



The C-118. Shot down on June 27, 1958, over Soviet Armenia, Col. Dale Brannon recalls the mission, the crew (above) and the battles between the superpowers that caused the shootdowns. The crew was released after days of interrogation.



tarmac before the fuselage finally broke in two, a charred shell. The tail, intact, tilted crazily toward the sky.

Amazingly, after nine days of interrogation by the Soviets, the crew was released, set free on the Soviet-Iranian border. "I cried like a baby," said Brannon. "I never expected to get out of there alive." Back in the United States, Major Lyles was courted by the press for a firsthand account of his exploits. He signed a sworn statement instead, refusing to grant any interviews at all. Concluded Samuel Klaus, in a confidential memo to the Pentagon: "The less Major Lyles says about this case, the better for everybody."

Though it was not, strictly speaking, a ferret flight, Luther Lyles's doomed C-118 was bound up intimately in the secret American espionage campaign against the Soviet Union. So sensitive was the plane's mission, in fact, that Washington said nothing about the shootdown until 18 hours after officials in Moscow revealed it. When the news finally broke, officials in Washington scrambled to patch together a cover story. According to their version, the C-118 was ferrying supplies to the U.S. mission in Tehran when it was blown off course by thunderstorms.

These are the facts of the matter: The C-118 was no ordinary cargo plane but a specially designated courier air-

craft for the Central Intelligence Agency. In Soviet hands, the plane's cargo would have been especially dangerous. "It was fortunate that the crew lived and the plane was destroyed," Samuel Klaus wrote shortly after the incident, in a memorandum classified as secret, "because the case would have been much worse for us had the plane landed and its contents been taken."

There is no question that the C-118 was carrying sensitive intelligence information. What remains unclear is what it was—and whether the Soviets got their hands on it. Three intelligence officers who participated in the C-118 flight told *U.S. News* that the plane was operating under U.S. Air Force cover to deliver papers detailing a covert operation to U.S. intelligence officials in the region. Two sources believe that the C-118 was carrying documents from the U-2 spy program. Retired Col. Fletcher Prouty, who provided Air Force support for CIA operations during the cold war, says the plane was a VIP aircraft outfitted for CIA Director Allen Dulles. Three CIA officers who worked on the U-2 program were aboard when the plane was shot down. Moreover, the C-118 had taken off from Wiesbaden, Germany, a major Air Force base out of which the CIA operated, and it was scheduled to stop at Peshawar, Pakistan, a known U-2 base. "The whole

thing was U-2," Prouty says. "This was Dulles's plane and these were his U-2 people on board."

Prouty has gained a reputation as an extreme believer in conspiracy theories, but Maj. Bennie Shupe, who was aboard the C-118 and familiar with the U-2 program, believes that the plane was carrying extremely sensitive information about the U-2 flights. Says Shupe: "I'd go with Prouty on that."

Even now, U.S. intelligence officials will not discuss the C-118 incident in detail. Col. Dale Brannon was the highest-ranking CIA officer on board the aircraft when it was shot down. Brannon denies that the plane was carrying information about the U-2 program. The plane, he concedes, was carrying documents detailing another top-secret intelligence operation. "It was some awful important information," Brannon says. "There were papers that could have told the Russians what we were doing."

Whether the files concerned the U-2 or not, the crucial question was whether they came into Soviet possession. Samuel Klaus, in a memorandum obtained by *U.S. News*, raises the possibility that the Soviets lured the C-118 into the airspace over Armenia with bogus radio signals—precisely because of the valuable intelligence information aboard the plane. "This may have resulted from Soviet foreign espionage's knowl-

The C-130. Archie Bourg and 16 other airmen were shot down on Sept. 2, 1958. His sister, Lorna, still seeks answers. Remains of four men were identified. There were reports of survivors, but few attempts were made to verify them.



edge of the kind of cargo the plane was carrying," Klaus wrote. As to what became of the secret documents, Klaus offers this: "There is a question whether the manifests of the cargo were not dispersed into the airspace of Armenia through the cargo door [after the plane came under attack]." Bennie Shupe says he is sure of one thing: The Soviets didn't get their hands on any of his secret files. As he drifted to Earth beneath his billowing parachute, Shupe ripped up all his incriminating papers. Then he ate them, one by one.

'OUR BOYS WERE SACRIFICED TWICE'
SEPT. 2, 1958: THE C-130

A few minutes after 1 p.m. in the Black Sea port of Trebizond, a Turkish peasant was just finishing his lunch when he heard the muffled buzz of an airplane circling high above him. Because of the dense fog, the man couldn't see the plane. From the noise of its engines, however, he could tell that it looped three times above him before it vanished behind the Pontic mountains that climb east toward Armenia.

The man had no way of knowing it, but 22,000 feet above him, a U.S. Air Force C-130 transport was in big trouble. Within seconds after crossing the Soviet border at Kinegi, Turkey, the plane was accosted by three Soviet fighters. The first,

No. 218, positioned itself off the big transport's left wing. Fighter No. 82 was off its right. No. 201 made a diving run from above. "I am attacking the target," squawked No. 201. He fired once and missed, then radioed his wingman: "218 ... Target speed is 300 [kilometers per hour], I am going along with it." The C-130 fought to get back over the border, but there was no way it could outrun the swift MiGs. "It is turning toward the fence," the pilot in 201 radioed. He fired again, a lethal shot this time. "There is a hit ... the target is going down ... the target is burning ... the tail assembly is falling off the target. 82, do you see me? I am in front of the target." As the C-130 tumbled out of control, the pilot in No. 201 yelled with joy: "Look! Oh, look at him, he will not get away, he is already falling." No. 201 moved in for the kill. "I will finish him off, boys. The target has lost control. ... It is going down."

In a village below, townsfolk reported the sound of cannon fire. Peasants outside the Armenian city of Talin saw the crippled plane plummet to Earth; none reported sightings of parachutes. On the ground, the fuselage burned for hours. Witnesses said no one emerged from the wreck. Twenty days later, the remains of six crewmen were presented to the American authorities at the city of Leninakan, not far from the Soviet-Turkish frontier. The remains of only four of the men were

ever identified. What became of the 11 others aboard remains unknown.

Declassified diplomatic and military correspondence reviewed by U.S. News shows conclusively that the mission of the C-130 was not, as Washington claimed, "to study the propagation of radio waves transmitted by United States radio stations." The plane was designed to identify Soviet radar defenses and test their capabilities.

As for the crew, while efforts by U.S. officials to learn more about their fate appeared genuine, the newly declassified documents show they were anything but. Air Force letters to families of the missing crew said that "every effort" was being made to learn their fate, says John Oshinski, whose brother Robert was aboard the plane. A memo dated Oct. 16, 1959, to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles flatly contradicts that. "We believe no purpose will be served by further communication to them [the Soviets], at least for the present," the memorandum, from Assistant Secretary of State Foy Kohler, states. After being shown that and other records on the C-130 incident, Lorna Bourg, the sister of another member of the crew, responded angrily: "We have been lied to for 40 years. It's as if our boys were sacrificed twice."

The C-130 was a special plane. Otherwise used for routine transport, it was

SPECIAL REPORT

converted in 1957 by the Temco Co. to perform electronic eavesdropping for the National Security Agency's Communications Intelligence, or COMINT, program. According to Dan Hearn, an engineer who worked on the project to customize the C-130, the specifications called for the reconfigured plane to replicate a standard cargo plane in every detail. "Side by side," Hearn says, "you couldn't tell it apart from a regular cargo plane. Except I guarantee you it didn't carry any cargo."

To explain how the big transport plane had strayed as far as 55 kilometers off course, military officials suggested a malfunctioning Soviet beacon and even decoy beacons. After investigation, however, State Department officials decided to back off the beacon issue for fear that the Soviets would counter with charges of electronic interference by the United States. Assistant Secretary of State Kohler, for example, vetoed a proposal to take the C-130 case to the United Nations Security Council, saying, "the Soviets would almost certainly counter by pointing to the numerous U.S. violations of Soviet airspace and might well produce evidence regarding violations they have not yet referred to publicly."

Rumors of survivors persisted. From the Klaus files, a memorandum dated April 1, 1959: "There was adequate opportunity for the 11 men to jump from or be pulled out of the fuselage of the plane." And this, from a classified memorandum dated Sept. 13, 1960: "We cannot disregard rumors that we constantly hear about three survivors." U.S. officials did little to verify such reports.

THE CASE OF THE BOSTON CASPER

JULY 1, 1960: THE RB-47

U.S. Air Force Maj. Willard Palm, service no. AO-2087476, came home in a zinc coffin. The Soviets had fished his body out of the frigid Barents Sea and then mutilated his corpse in an autopsy. Three other young airmen in Palm's RB-47 who also fell into the arctic sea that day were never found—or so the Soviets then claimed. The remaining two airmen fared somewhat better. They were picked up by Soviet trawlers from separate life rafts, then jailed for seven months. Their names were Capt. John McKone and Capt. Freeman Bruce Olmstead. Besides Francis Gary Powers, they would be the only American fliers to get out of Moscow's infamous Lubyanka prison alive.

The flight had started routinely, with a 10 a.m. takeoff from Brize Norton, a Roy-

JEFFREY MACMILLAN—USNAWR

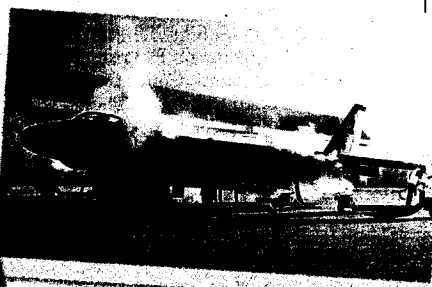


al Air Force base in England. Then their Boeing RB-47, outfitted with electronic reconnaissance gear, pushed north up the coast of Norway on a secret round-trip route called Boston Casper. The route took them across the Arctic Circle, then east over the Barents Sea. The RB-47 then turned south to approach the Soviets' Kola Peninsula, then southeast, parallel to the coast. The crew had plotted a track 50 miles offshore from the Kola's bristling air defenses, recording the electronic emissions from radars, airfields and missile sites.

To stay out of danger, the crew depended on John McKone's estimable navigation skills. Huddled in the nose of the big swept-wing jet, McKone, 28, made his first fix off the Kola Peninsula. It showed the RB-47 5 miles closer to Soviet territory than planned. Major Palm immediately correct-

ed back onto course. Another fix, about 70 miles later, showed them 2 miles off to the Soviet side of their track, and they corrected again. A Soviet fighter had shown up far off the right wing, then disappeared. At 5:58 p.m., Palm reached the point where he was to swing the big jet north for the trip back to Brize Norton. McKone took a radar fix off the Kola's coast.

Seconds later, the Soviet MiG appeared off their right wing. Willard Palm banked the jet into his turn, as planned, but the MiG came up hard on its tail. Then it opened fire. Bruce Olmstead, in the copilot's seat, fired back, opening up with the RB-47's two 20-mm tail guns. But it was too late. Two of their RB-47's three turbojet engines on the left wing were hit; the wing began to drag. Olmstead stood on the right rudder pedal with all his might to try to help Palm recover



The RB-47. Bruce Olmstead (left) was one of two survivors after the plane went down on July 1, 1960. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge at the U.N. (above, left). President John F. Kennedy welcomed the survivors home.

control, but the plane began spinning to the left and dropping fast. Then their canopy blew off, and Palm yelled: "Stand by, stand by!" And then: "Bail out!" Olmstead ejected into the frigid slipstream.

Six hours after they hit the water, Bruce Olmstead and John McKone were plucked from their rubber dinghies by a Russian trawler. Both men say the ship did not stop to pick up anyone else.

On Jan. 21, 1961, Nikita Khrushchev, as a good-will gesture to the newly inaugurated John F. Kennedy, released Bruce Olmstead and John McKone from their cells in the Lubyanka, where they had been guests of the KGB for seven months. They had been subjected to endless interrogations as the Soviets tried to get them to confess that they had violated Soviet airspace. Resolute-

ly, the two American airmen held their ground.

Back home, Olmstead and McKone drew maps for Air Force intelligence debriefers, showing what the Soviets claimed was their flight path and what they knew to be their real path. They insisted they had stayed 50 miles off the Soviet coast. The Soviet interrogators claimed that they had watched the RB-47 on radar as it paralleled the Kola coast, edging closer and closer until it crossed the 12-mile limit. The Soviet fighter pilot had said he had no orders to shoot the plane down; he had done so on his own.

At the State Department, Samuel Klaus didn't buy the Soviet story. But he was having a hard time with the U.S. position, too. Washington had maintained that the plane was on an "elec-

tromagnetic observation" flight, measuring "variations in compass readings." Klaus had debriefed Olmstead and McKone, and their top-secret affidavits did not jibe at all with a speech delivered at the United Nations on July 25, 1960, by Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge. Pointing to thick red and black lines on a big map, Lodge had insisted that the RB-47 had been pushed a good 40 miles south, right to the edge of Soviet territory, by the Soviet fighter that shot the plane down. Wounded, the RB-47 had turned north and crashed 20 minutes later, at 6:22 p.m., well over international waters, Lodge insisted. "Perhaps Chairman Khrushchev has been lied to," Lodge declaimed. "That often happens in dictatorships."

But Klaus believed that Lodge had prevaricated as well. It was clear from McKone's and Olmstead's stories that the RB-47 had not been pushed south by the MiG. "This must have been made up by Lodge," Klaus noted in a newly declassified memorandum dated May 17, 1961. Furthermore, Klaus noted, the 6:22 p.m. position of the RB-47 cited by Lodge had to be wholly erroneous; the plane had been fired on by the MiG at 6:03 p.m. It was almost certainly in the drink by 6:05 p.m. Klaus fired off a query to Lodge's speechwriter. The man replied that the U.N. speech had been prepared with the skimpiest of evidence—a couple of cables and an intelligence briefing. But Klaus needed hard evidence to take such a case into the international court, not reconstructive presumption. The best information had come from the fliers themselves.

Yet even the fliers would not know—until the Klaus files were opened last month—of a grand snafu, shrouded in mystery, that could have sealed their fates. Lodge had insisted at the U.N. that "our scientific devices," presumably long-range radars in England or Norway, had followed the plane every minute of its route. Why, then, retorted Soviet delegate Vasili Kuznetsov, had the American search crews looked in entirely the wrong place? Lodge had no answer then. Indeed, there is none now.

The air-sea rescue records are startling. The call about a missing RB-47 came to the 57th Air Rescue Squadron in England at 30 minutes past midnight on July 2. Soon after daybreak, three lumbering SC-54 search planes arrived at Bodo, Norway, to begin looking for the missing aircraft. It was already 12 hours after the shootdown. The searchers divided the ocean into 60-mile-square sections and searched until mid-

■ SPECIAL REPORT

night, July 7. Seventeen aircraft logged 474 hours of search time. The entire time, they were looking in the wrong place—250 miles north of where the aircraft went down.

Today, Olmstead and McKone have no explanation for the discrepancy. It is possible, they say, that it was nothing more than a snafu, the result of confused radar tracks, mixed-up communications. It is also possible, some say, that the secrecy of the mission prevented its accurate disclosure to the search crews. John McKone: "I'm not sure they knew the route. Because in those

days that was very, very sensitive. Only a few folks knew about this."

For the families of those who didn't survive the downing of the RB-47, the mysteries are maddening. The fates of the Ravens, Maj. Eugene E. Posa, Capt. Dean B. Phillips and Capt. Oscar L. Goforth, remained unknown. Then, last November, the Soviets released a document indicating that they had once held the body of Major Posa, but no more information came forth.

Maria McAtee, formerly married to Captain Goforth, hand delivered a letter to Boris Yeltsin last year when he was visiting Wichita, Kan. Please, the letter said, tell me whatever you can about what

became of my husband. Two months later, McAtee received a reply. Gen. Dimitri Volkogonov, the head of the Russian commission studying the fate of American prisoners during the cold war, said he had studied all the relevant paperwork on the matter. "Your husband perished," Volkogonov wrote, "and rests in the depths of the Barents Sea."

Maria McAtee distrusts this information, as she has distrusted what was said in the past by both governments. "I wonder," she says, "if I will ever know the truth from either side." ■

BY DOUGLAS STANGLIN, SUSAN HEADDEN
AND PETER CARY

AIR RAIDS

Trial balloons and trouble

He had thought about "The Benny Goodman Story" and "The King and I," but when Dwight Eisenhower finally selected a Hollywood film to have dubbed into Russian and presented to Nikita Khrushchev, he settled on Mike Todd's "Around the World in 80 Days." It was a choice rich in irony, if nothing else.

While the ferret campaign and the U-2 overflights had become a source of constant friction between the two superpowers by the late 1950s, Moscow and its satellites in Eastern Europe were also being driven to distraction by balloons years earlier: balloons carrying propaganda, but also big helium-filled weather balloons tricked out for spying.

Listening in. The motivation of the U.S. intelligence bureaucracy was simple. Useful as they were, the ferret flights could gather intelligence only along Soviet borders. In a top-secret memo dated Oct. 25, 1950, Col. Edward Barber, deputy in charge of the collection division in the U.S. Air Force directorate of intelligence, explained: "Practically, no information is available," he wrote, "concerning electronic installations within the interior of Russia."

Thus, balloons. In the early 1950s, the United States launched something called Project Grand Union. Some 200 balloons were to be sent aloft from the U.S. East Coast toward the Soviet Union. Outfitted with listening gear and recorders,



Lighter than air. At Lowry Air Force Base

they would give America a close-up look at its archenemy. Theoretically, anyway. As it happened, only 20 balloons ever made it airborne; none reported anything of value.

Interestingly, things got worse as efficiency improved: 1956, for example, was a banner year for balloons. On August 3, a Polish MiG fighter piloted by Capt. Roman Lachcik and 2nd Lt. Jozef Raze crashed after a hydrogen-filled balloon was sucked into one of the jet's engines. Both men died. The balloon was carrying propaganda leaflets. Investigators found it was emblazoned with "Free Europe." The balloon had been sent aloft, with hundreds of others, by a

U.S.-backed group called the Free Europe Committee Inc. Howls of protest ensued; the United States feigned ignorance. On October 23, dozens of Free Europe balloons began floating across Czechoslovakia. One blew up near the hamlet of Vlkova. Three Slovak workers were injured. The Prague government protested. U.S. officials winced, then pledged to look into the matter.

The balloons, however, kept right on coming. At 7:10 p.m. on Oct. 26, 1956, workers of the Free Europe Committee began launching 947 big S-260 balloons carrying a total of 3,767 pounds of propaganda leaflets. Their target? Czechoslovakia—again. This time, the winds were tricky, however, and most of the balloons wound up in Albania.

The cost to American credibility from the balloon campaign can now be assessed, at least in part: Lies were told. A newly declassified Feb. 6, 1956, memorandum from Herman Phleger, State Department legal adviser: "The proposed answer to the Soviet note protesting the flight of balloons over Soviet territory would reiterate the position taken by the United States: that the United States has nothing to do with the launching of propaganda balloons by Radio Free Europe." Exactly one week later, Herman Phleger was given instructions on the nettlesome subject of balloons by his boss in the State Department, Leonard Meeker. "[T]here should be no immediate discontinuation of Radio Free Europe balloons," Meeker wrote, "under Soviet pressure."

■ SPECIAL REPORT

A new look at the U-2 case

Never before interviewed, those who met Gary Powers when he fell from the sky tell their story

When 23-year-old Mikhail Vasilyev first spotted someone floating to Earth under a red and yellow parachute on May Day of 1960, he thought it was a Soviet pilot in trouble. But as he ran across a newly plowed field toward the downed airman, Vasilyev began to think that the intruder, with his dark hair, flat nose and boxer's physique, didn't look Russian. Not at all. And when the man in the green flying suit couldn't even converse with him, Vasilyev was sure he had stumbled upon a foreigner. For Vasilyev there could be only one conclusion: The pilot must be Bulgarian.

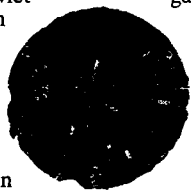
Not even in his wildest imagination could Vasilyev have divined the truth, that the muscular young man who fell from the sky into the small village of Povarnya, deep in the Urals, was an American, a pilot named Francis Gary Powers. "We helped him to get on his feet, unhooked his suit and took it off," Vasilyev told *U.S. News*. "It was all wet inside from sweat. We aired the suit in the spring breeze." His friend, Leonid Chuzhakin, a driver at a collective farm, remembers that Powers's suit had a lot of laces and wires. "He pointed to his

hands and I helped him to unhook the gloves," Chuzhakin said. As they pulled off the suit, the two young men, joined by 30-year-old Anatoli Cheremisin, began to suspect there was something very special about the intruder. "We saw foreign labels," said Chuzhakin. But what really caught his eye was a "strange-looking pistol with a long barrel that was fastened to his leg."

After Vasilyev helped Powers fold up his parachute, everyone piled into a Moskvich automobile. Powers sat in the front. "The first idea was to drive to the airport," said Vasilyev. "Where else?" Although Powers kept quiet, he did ask at one point for a cigarette, so Vasilyev gave him a foul-smelling Russian brand called Sibir. When Powers gestured that he was thirsty, Chuzhakin stopped at a friend's house for a glass of water.

U.S.A. More than 30 years later, the impressions of Powers differ markedly among the Russians. Vasilyev remembers him as having a "very kind face, smiling a lot." But Cheremisin says he was "extremely arrogant and didn't want to talk to anyone." In the car, they got their first clue to the identity of their mysterious passenger. "I pointed at myself and said, 'I'm Russian — and you?'" Vasilyev recalled. "He said with pride, 'America,' and wrote the letters U-S-A on the front window."

For Gen. Georgi Mikhailov, who then served on the main staff of the Soviet Air Defense Command in Moscow, the U-2 shootdown was a long time coming. When President Eisenhower in 1955 proposed the "Open Skies" program to legalize overflights of the United States and the Soviet Union, Mikhailov and



Show time. Powers's trial was a propagandist's coup.



Look down. Powers allegedly took this photo



of a Soviet military airport from his U-2.

other officers suspected that the Americans already had developed a new spy plane and were anxious to try it out.

Still, the Soviets were caught flat-footed when the U-2, on its maiden voyage, flew over Moscow on July 4, 1956. "Our defenses were designed to fight waves of bombers, but here was one single plane, coming very slowly," Mikhailov told *U.S. News*. "Nobody knew what it was. There was no order to shoot down every plane, so we first had to report that there was a plane coming, but nobody took the responsibility to order someone to fire."

Hits and misses. Yet, some high-ranking Soviet officers still refused to believe that a plane could fly so high. It was only after the shootdown, when they saw that the U-2 was made of lightweight materials and used its wings as fuel tanks, that they understood how it could be done. It was "simple, but very clever," said Mikhailov, who flew to the crash site, spoke to Powers and took home souvenirs from the U-2, including scraps of metal, a strip of undeveloped film and a brass key made in Chicago.

Until May 1, the air-defense crews bungled each attempt to bring down the U-2. Mikhailov blamed it on the "generals' effect"—the Russian equivalent of Murphy's Law. "One time the rockets were ready but the fuel wasn't," he said. "Another time, everything was ready, but the commanding officer was on leave and nobody knew what to do without him." After each failure, the

Air Defense Command would feel the heat from on high. "It would start with Khrushchev, then to Marshal Zhukov, then, step by step, down to us," he said.

But even after air-defense rockets finally brought down the plane, Powers's capture was almost a fluke. When Chuzhakin stopped to call his boss, two KGB officers, riding bicycles, simply stumbled upon the car and its foreign occupant. "I told them we were taking

some American to [the airport at] Koltsovo—and that he was a paratrooper," Vasilyev said. "They said, 'We're looking for him; we'll take him.'" The KGB officers found dollars, francs, pounds and three packs of Soviet 25-ruble bank notes stuffed in his pockets.

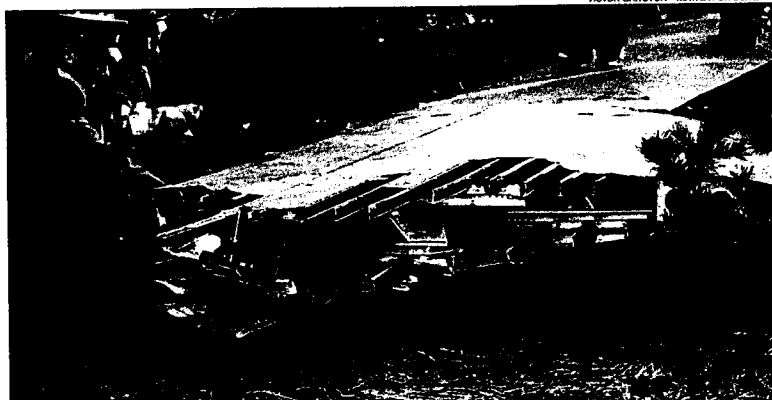
They took Powers to the farm director's office, where a local doctor examined him. Cheremisin remembers that Powers "sat on a chair, leaning against the closet, and

paid attention to no one." He stood up only once, Cheremisin said—when a KGB general entered the room. The late Capt. Vasili Pankov, who was the first regional KGB officer to see Powers, later told his wife, Zoya, that the pilot spoke very little until they discovered a poisoned needle in his pocket. "The only question he answered after that was the one that asked: 'Why didn't you commit suicide?'" Zoya said. "He replied: 'I wanted to live.'" ■

BY DOUGLAS STANGLIN IN MOSCOW AND
SERGEI KUZNETSOV IN POVARNYA



Ready. General Mikhailov



Inspection. Soviet air-defense officers examine Powers's damaged U-2.

■ DEATH IN THE FAMILY

In search of the truth

The clues suggest and tantalize, but the new information on cold-war casualties leaves families with a combination of hope and dread

Last summer, Russian President Boris Yeltsin startled many Americans when he disclosed that the Soviet Union had shot down dozens of U.S. airplanes during the cold war and taken some airmen as prisoners. Among the families of the missing fliers, the news quickened old hopes and sparked new fears. Might the fate of their loved ones finally be known? What, really, had happened?

Down the years, the scenarios have run from dream to nightmare. The crew of the RB-29, for instance. Had the

men survived, only to suffer long years of incarceration in a Siberian labor camp? Did the crew of the C-130 that disappeared in Soviet Armenia parachute to safety, only to be tortured and killed? Or

might some of the airmen, brainwashed into renouncing America, actually be alive somewhere today?

In his many memorandums on the doomed ferret flights, Samuel Klaus often referred to the missing airmen as "the boys." True enough then. But for children who had never known their fathers, wives who had long since remarried, the unexpected prospect that some may have survived, perhaps even to this day, conjures up images of men old and drawn. The thought is at once thrilling and terrifying.

Though no evidence suggests that any of the lost fliers remain among the living, one good thing has come from Boris Yeltsin's incautious words of encouragement. With his announcement, the beleaguered Russian president seems to have planted the seeds for a new kind of family. Suddenly, loved ones like those of 1st Lt. Warren Sanderson were not alone, their loss no longer solitary. Dozens had been shot down, Yeltsin said; the families of the dozens began seeking, and finding, one another. The result today is a determined network of spouses, siblings and offspring.

Group recovery. Acting individually before, they had buttressed their heads against the brick walls of bureaucracy seeking answers. Now they support each other. Gordon Berg, for instance. An engineer from Blackduck, Minn., he found Charlotte Mitnik, an office manager from Huntingdon Valley, Pa. Lorna Bourg is another. A rural-poverty activist from Baton Rouge, La., she discovered John Oshinski, a union president from Rockville, Md. John and Bruce Sanderson, respectively a policeman and appliance repairman

from Fargo, N.D., met Jane Reynolds Howard, an educator from Middleton, Wis. Like participants in a group recovery program, they shared their sorrows and vented their frustrations. In phone calls lasting late into the night, apprehension is mingled with hope.

All agree the years of uncertainty have taken their toll. Ruth Busch Heller often lay awake nights wondering whether her husband was being tortured. She waited more than 15 years to find a new husband and stepfather for her young son.

Maria McAtee remarried 24 years ago. Still, for three decades she wondered: What really happened to her first husband, Oscar? His RB-47 had vanished in 1960, but not her memory of him. "If your husband or wife dies," McAtee says, "you bury them and they're gone. But this thing, after 32 years, it's back."

The new knowledge brings a measure of understanding. Suddenly, old mysteries seem to make sense—or take on new meaning. Why Eddie Ray Berg, a skinny 18-year-old in a baseball hat, confessed to a cousin that he believed his flight was "doomed." Why Robert Reynolds, an Annapolis grad with a wife and a baby on the way, was so anxious in the weeks before his Navy Privateer was shot down. Why Maj. Samuel Busch, who never talked about his work, kept worrying about the kids on the crew of his B-29. So young, he told his wife, so very young.

In the Pentagon task force now working with Russians to search for clues to the fate of the airmen who went missing during the cold war, the families finally have a government agency they trust. There has

been no date set for its expiration, but the task force is rushing to get more information out of Moscow in case the window of opportunity suddenly closes. Pentagon researchers are doing more to pry open American archives, too. Says Jane Reynolds Howard: "It is important that this subject not be swept under the rug again."

Realistically, the families know there is little chance any of their loved ones are alive now. Those who long ago accepted the military's presumption of death have already built memorials. At the very least now, however, they want bodies to put in the graves. "It's like there is someone there saying, 'Come and get me,'" says Gordon Berg. "There has got to be an answer to it all. Somewhere."

BY SUSAN HEADDEN



Questions. At Arlington National Cemetery