

1960 Testimony Reveals Loss Of Spy Plane, Crew to Soviets

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The Soviet Union shot down a CIA spy plane and took the American crew prisoner sometime before the downing of a U2 reconnaissance plane in May, 1960, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said yesterday.

Newly released testimony confirmed that the United States had sent spy planes over Soviet territory long before the U2 incident on May 1, 1960, which severely damaged U.S.-Soviet relations and became an issue in the 1960 presidential election campaign.

On May 31, 1960, CIA Director Allen Dulles described another episode involving what he said was "a civilian plane. It was manned by employees of the Central Intelligence Agency, not by military personnel . . . It was an entirely civilian intelligence operation."

In this earlier incident, Dulles told

the committee during closed-door testimony, eight or nine CIA employees were aboard the plane when it went down "in the area of Caucasus."

The CIA chief said that U.S. officials were "endeavoring to get back" the plane's crew members, but that the Soviets "haven't told us" their fate.

Dulles did not identify the type of aircraft or the date when it went down.

Alan Safran, a spokesman for the Senate panel, said the committee staff does not know what happened to the crew members. Whether they are dead or alive and their whereabouts if still alive remains classified information, he said.

In the U2 case, pilot Francis Gary Powers was captured after his plane went down near Sverdlovsk in the Ural Mountains. He was released in an exchange of prisoners.