

Hunt Missing U2 Plane Lost Over Atlantic

F Post 7/29/64

WASHINGTON (AP)—A high altitude U2 plane flying from the United States toward South America is missing, and the Pentagon said Thursday it assumes the pilot lost consciousness in flight.

A defense department spokesman said the craft, which is used for reconnaissance missions, was "under apparent control of the automatic pilot" maintaining a course south.

The plane took off this morning from Barksdale Air Force Base, La., "on a routine mission," the spokesman said.

Authorities in South America have been alerted, he told newsmen.

Radio contact was last made with the pilot while he was off the coast of Florida, the spokesman said. The last radar contact with the Strategic Air Command aircraft showed it was over Panama.

"It is estimated that the aircraft fuel would have been exhausted by mid-afternoon, Eastern Daylight Time, the spokesman said.

The Pentagon later identified the pilot as Capt. Robert D. Hickman, 32, of Alexandria, La.

Hickman is the father of six small children and married to the former Pauline Ann Cicardo, also of Alexandria.

He joined the 100th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona last August. He and his family have been living in Tucson.

The craft had been due to turn east or west off its southerly course — the spokesman did not say which — between Sarasota and Key West, Fla.

Continuation of the due southerly course apparently would have taken the plane across Cuba.

The spokesman said, how-

ever, he did not know if the U2 flew over Cuba. He said there was "not the slightest indication" of Cuban surface-to-air missile activity.

The Pentagon would not disclose the destination of the U-2 or its mission.

The name of the pilot was being withheld pending notification of next of kin.

"The assumption is that the pilot lost consciousness possibly due to anoxia (insufficient oxygen)," the Pentagon said.

Search operations are under way south from Panama to the Peruvian-Chilean border, and appropriate authorities of Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and Chile have been alerted.