

Views the CIA

Van Nuys

Fifteen years after his U-2 plane was shot down over Russia, Francis Gary Powers reads with interest the news about his former employer.

"The revelations about the CIA don't surprise me. Disappointed would be a better word. Disappointed that they've gone beyond what they should have."

Now 45 and graying, he sips coffee in the offices of radio station KGIL, Van Nuys, where he's worked for two years monitoring and broadcasting rush-hour traffic conditions from a single-engine plane.

Did he know of other CIA activities in the early '60s?

"I heard of involvement in other countries. Mainly training of foreign pilots, flying off to Guatemala, things like that. But nothing domestic.

"Still, I've felt my own phone has been tapped. Whenever I've been doing something

like working on a documentary or my book, old CIA friends would just happen to show up. It seemed quite a coincidence."

Powers also suspects CIA involvement in his departure from Lockheed in 1970.

"It was another coincidence. The same month I gave the CIA my book to look at, I was laid off. Lockheed has since hired other pilots my age, some who never had flown U-2s before, while I have 2000 hours in them. It had to be political. I don't know if there were direct orders — it wouldn't surprise me a bit — but Lockheed may have acted on its own, fearing it would lose government contracts."

The current revelations tend to nourish paranoia and raise old questions about the past. Could the CIA, as some claimed, have authorized Powers' flight on its own, hoping to abort the summit meeting and the possible rapprochement which might have limited CIA activities?

Powers doesn't think so.

"There was some idea the CIA itself



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Francis Gary Powers said he's disappointed but not surprised about the CIA revelations

planted a bomb to sabotage the summit talks. The Russians tried to tell me that. But I know that's not true. I was hit by a missile."

Others disagree. In a documentary by Peter Davis, a man named Selmer Nilsen — a former Norwegian spy for Russia — insists a bomb planted in the tail section brought down Powers' plane. But the documentary can't be shown because he won't sign a release.

But Powers is not sure about yet another old issue — his belief that Lee Harvey Oswald may have provided information used to shoot down his U-2. A Warren Commission document, still classified top secret, is titled "Oswald's Access to Information about the U-2's."

Despite everything, Powers says: "I have no reason to, but I still have a soft spot for the CIA. They were good people to work for, and the work was necessary then and now.

"We violated Soviet air space and broke international law, but we had to have that information. We were using maps made in the '30s to find targets in case of war. As long as one country does it, we all have to."

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