

# Cuban Tale — U.S. Pilot's Body in Ice

## Denver

Cuban officials told a group of visiting liberal Republicans that the body of an American U-2 spy-plane pilot has been preserved in a block of ice for 13 years, one of the Americans said yesterday.

He said they were not allowed to see the body.

Denver attorney John F. Head said the group was told the body could be reclaimed and that Washington knows it exists.

"According to the information the Americans received, the pilot's name was 'Johnson' and his U-2 was shot down in 1963, Head said.

Head said he and the six others in the group from the liberal Republican Ripon Society tried repeatedly to get the Cubans to let them see the body during a visit this month.

After being told several times that a viewing would be arranged,

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Head said he was refused on ground that any action concerning the corpse would have to be on a government-to-government basis.

In Washington, a spokesman for the State Department said the only known U-2 incident in Cuba concerned a plane piloted by Major Rudolf Anderson Jr. of Greenville, S.C. Anderson's spy plane was shot down by an anti-aircraft missile during the Cuban missile crisis, on Oct. 27, 1962, and his body was returned and buried two months later.

Published reports from that era showed, however, that a U-2, a high-flying gliderlike jet reconnaissance plane, was reported lost in the Caribbean on Nov. 20, 1963. That pilot, Captain Joseph G. Hyde Jr. of Lagrange, Ga., was not found, but pieces of his aircraft were found on November 21 in the Gulf of Mexico, 40 miles northwest of Key West, Fla., and 180 miles north of Cuba. Two weeks later, Air Force investigators said they ruled out the chance the plane was shot down.

Head said an interpreter assigned to the group, Juan Ortega, mentioned the preserved body during a conversation over cocktails in the presence of a foreign ministry officer.

The lawyer said the subject came up during a discussion of how the Ripon Society members could help Cuba in the United States. "They were probing the depth of our influence in this country," Head said.

"The conversation developed to where we were saying, 'Look if Cuba wants to normalize relations with . . . the United States, it would be a very worthwhile public relations gesture if you let us take prisoners back with us.'"

The reference was to eight Americans known to be in Cuban jails. Ortega then said, Head reported:

"There's one prisoner down here you can see that nobody wants. He's in a block of ice. In fact, you can take his body home with you."

Ortega then explained about the pilot's body, Head said.

Head said that was on October 6. He said he made repeated appeals to see the body to Ortega and to Cecilia Argudin, head of the American desk in the foreign ministry, as well as to other officials. The only response he got was a series of promises that he could see it later.

Finally, on October 14, after the other members of his delegation had left, Head said he was told by foreign ministry official Reinaldo Legon: "I've checked, and you cannot see the body. Your government knows he is here, and they can go through official channels to get him back."

That was the day before Cuban Premier Fidel Castro accused the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in a speech of masterminding the sabotage of a Cuban airliner and said he was terminating an anti-hijacking treaty with Washington next April.

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