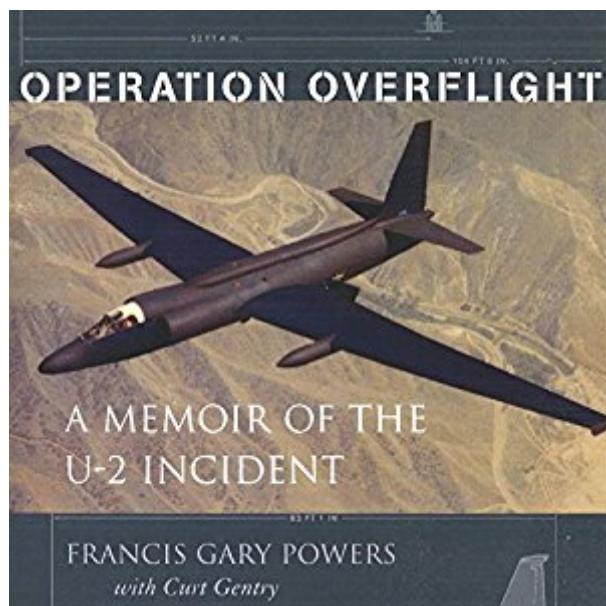


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Operation Overflight: A Memoir Of The U-2 Incident



Synopsis

U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers is a central character in the movie Bridge of Spies starring Tom Hanks. In his classic 1970 memoir, Powers reveals the full story behind what happened in the most sensational espionage case in Cold War history. After his U-2 reconnaissance plane was shot down, Powers was captured on May 1, 1960 and endured 61 days of rigorous interrogation by the KGB, a public trial, a conviction for espionage, and the start of a 10-year sentence. After nearly two years, the US government obtained his release from prison in a dramatic exchange for convicted Soviet spy Rudolph Abel. The narrative is a tremendously exciting suspense story about a man who was labeled a traitor by many of his countrymen but who emerged a Cold War hero.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The crash of the U2 and the capture of its pilot Gary Powers was a major event of the Cold War. It gave the Soviet Union a major propaganda victory of the US. I found the book reliable up to the take off of the U2 on its fateful mission. The key question has always been was the U2 shot down at operational altitude or had flame out occurred that forced it to a lower altitude that brought within the range of the Russian missile. CIA elements claimed a flame out...thus overflights might safely continue. On this issue Powers pretends not to know. So be it! The contract period with the CIA for U2 pilots was eighteen months. Powers was the only pilot in the first group to renew. As the relatively short distance overflights continued to be successful the program grew arrogant and sloppy! The shoot down flight was the longest U2 flight ever tried, it would cross most of the

USSR. Powers was going to meet his wife in Norway at the conclusion of the flight. He packed his passport, drivers license, civilian clothes etc. The reader just shakes their head in disbelief at the sheer stupidity! In view of pending meeting between Ike and Khrushchev why did Ike permit the flight to take place? He was assured by the CIA that nothing could go wrong. Why would Ike, the five star general, ever believe this....military operations always go wrong!

This book is certainly a must have for the Cold War, Military Aviation and Spy aficionados out there! While the authors did their best to make the most of what little details Powers did/could provide them - especially about the actual missions he flew for the CIA - they failed to do justice to the historical significance of the event. Powers' actual flights and missions in the U-2 are not discussed in great detail (they never even mention the plane's actual altitude, there are no details about the U-2 except for some hearsay info on its imagined structural integrity (or lack thereof), and they assigned less than a page to discuss the other "special missions"), and there are very few details about the mission the book was actually written about. What you will nevertheless be able to read in detail about are his time spent in Russian prisons, the KGB interrogations, or his kind Latvian roommate Zigurd in Vladimir prison. The final section of the book is spent on the well-justified trashing of the CIA (afterall they gave him the shaft the same way NASA did to the Apollo 13 crew), and Powers provides some great insights into the personal dealings of the Agency. Reading it today, Powers' observations were way ahead of their time! You'll appreciate Powers Jr's epilogue that puts the entire book in perspective. Overall it is a great book, the only first-hand account of the U-2 incident you'll ever have, and as a matter of fact, I'll go and read it again!

I enjoyed this book. I'm sorry it took me so long to read it. If you are interested in the U2, I recommend this book

best

Great book! I bought this for a school project, but got really interested with the story and memoir, and ended up reading it on my own. I had a question, perhaps for the seller? The copy I received was used, and on the title page there is a signature, "Francis Gary Powers J." I was wondering if this is an actual signature of FGP Jr., or if it is just a sort of identifier. I think it would be cool if it was an actual signature! If anyone has any idea whether his could be an authentic signature or whether FGP Jr. ever signed these books, I would be very interested to know! Great book, once again!

When Powers wrote this he was still in apology mode. I certainly don't think he had anything to be sorry about. He got shot out of the sky by a Russian missile and did hard time in a Soviet max joint. Would anyone of us handled it better than he did. Here is the big issue he doesn't really confront. Lee Harvey Oswald knew the exact altitude of the U2 flights and the CIA knew Oswald had defected to Russia in 1959. Yet in 1960 the agency decided to send Powers on a full border to border overflight. The first one ever! Either they knew Oswald was on our side the whole time or they wanted to make sure Powers got shot down. Which was it.

Excellent history of the Cold War, geo-politics of imaging technology and satellites....once the Russians did it, this allowed the US launch satellites. President Eisenhower told the CIA not to fly the last flight over Russia - weather delay on what was the effective time for the memo to go into effect - DC time, Turkey Time, or Pakistani Time.

I bought this book before attending a display of the "U2 Incident" in the Palm Springs Aerial Museum and attending a talk by Francis Gary Powers son. There has been lots of writings, analysis, and post period discussions of the event and its aftermath. This is a good read from the person involved and it reflects his memories and feeling of the incident.

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