

MEMORANDUM

July 20, 1998

To: Jeremy Gunn
Executive Director

cc: Bob Skwirot
CIA Team Leader

From: Michelle Combs
Associate Director for Research and Review

Subject: CIA-IR-16 U-2 Files

Many researchers have wondered whether Lee Harvey Oswald learned enough about the U-2 airplane during his time at Atsugi, Japan to provide useful information to the Soviets as to its airspeed and altitude or whether he might have played a different role regarding Soviet knowledge of the airplane. In his 1994 book, *Skunk Works: A Personal Memoir of My Years at Lockheed*, Ben Rich, the former director of Lockheed's research and design "Skunk Works," recounts a story of four false test flight manuals produced by the flight engineers at the Skunk Works at the request of Richard Bissell. The false test flight manuals contained incorrect information on the plane's weight, speed, altitude, and load factor limits. Rich says that the four manuals were produced and artificially aged but how or if the CIA got them to the Soviets only Bissell knew. Researchers have suggested that perhaps Lee Harvey Oswald, or others like him, carried these fake manuals into Soviet hands.

In response to the Review Board's Informal Request for Additional Records and Information CIA-IR-16 the CIA provided an extensive and detailed index of their archival files on the U-2 aircraft to the Review Board staff. The Review Board staff selected and examined numerous files from the earliest days of the U-2 including some of the original test flight manuals. No reference to or mention of the creation of four fake test manuals was found. The Directorate of Science and Technology could find no mention of any fake U-2 manuals in its archives or database.

In an additional effort to locate evidence to confirm Rich's story, the Review Board staff contacted several individuals who had been involved with the U-2 program at CIA. Lockheed, when queried, reported that records of that age, if they still existed, were neither indexed nor archived. In brief, the Review Board staff was unable to locate any individual who had ever heard of any fake U-2 manuals or any record which even hinted at the existence of the manuals. With Rich and Bissell both deceased, the existence or plan for four fake U-2 manuals remains a mystery.

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