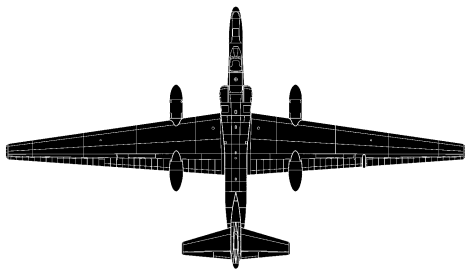


U-2 Dragon Lady



The Air Force's U-2 Dragon Lady spyplane is one of the most famous and successful aircraft of all time. Lockheed produced the long-range, high-altitude reconnaissance craft to meet an urgent need to overfly heavily defended Soviet territory and snap photos of missile emplacements and other military targets. These flights led to the May 1, 1960, downing of a U-2 flown by Francis Gary Powers, who was captured, tried, imprisoned, and subsequently released by the Soviets.

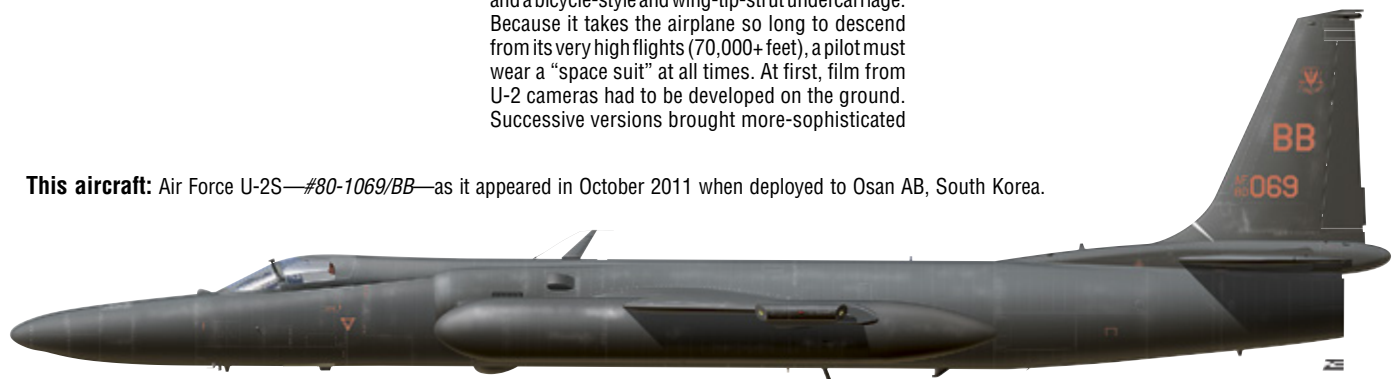
The U-2, designed by the renowned "Skunk Works" under the supervision of Kelly Johnson, emerged from a series of 1950s-era programs. It is a single-engine, all-metal, single-seat aircraft with an ultralight structure, very-high-aspect-ratio wings, and a bicycle-style and wing-tip-strut undercarriage. Because it takes the airplane so long to descend from its very high flights (70,000+ feet), a pilot must wear a "space suit" at all times. At first, film from U-2 cameras had to be developed on the ground. Successive versions brought more-sophisticated

construction, change in dimensions, and continuously improving reconnaissance equipment. All versions have been difficult to fly. There have been many losses.

The U-2 was initially operated by the CIA (with USAF pilots) and then by the Air Force directly. In 1962, its photographs revealed Soviet missile installations in Cuba, and Maj. Rudolf Anderson Jr. was shot down and killed on one of the Cuban overflights. The U-2 routinely overflew the Soviet Union, communist China, North Vietnam, and Cuba. It has served in every US combat area for half a century. Plans call for it to remain in action for years to come.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: Air Force U-2S—#80-1069/BB—as it appeared in October 2011 when deployed to Osan AB, South Korea.



In Brief

Designed, built by Lockheed ★ first flight Aug. 4, 1955 ★ number built 90 ★ crew of one ★ endurance up to 12 hr ★ **Specific to U-2S:** one General Electric F118-GE-101 turbojet engine ★ no armament ★ max speed 500 mph ★ cruise speed 440 mph ★ max range 4,600 mi ★ weight (loaded) 41,000 lb ★ span 103 ft ★ length 63 ft ★ height 16 ft.

Famous Fliers

Shot down: Rudolf Anderson Jr. (KIA), Francis Gary Powers. **Other notables:** Pat Halloran, Steve Heyser, Hsichun Hua, Jack Ledford, Leo Stewart, Gimo Yang. **Test pilots:** Darryl Greenamyer, Ray Goudey, Skip Holm, Tony LeVier, Bob Matye, Bob Schumacher, Bob Sieker.

Interesting Facts

Finished second to Bell X-16 in original competition ★ assigned original service life of two years ★ known as Bald Eagle, Dragon Lady, Aquatone, Oilstone, Senior Year ★ flown for CIA by "sheep-dipped" USAF pilots ★ began operations under cover as "weather research" aircraft ★ proved JFK's famous "missile gap" claim was bogus ★ brought down (May 1, 1960) by shockwave from explosions of 14 SA-2 missiles ★ obtained first photos of USSR missile sites in Cuba ★ flew within 10 mph of high or low speed stall for much of the flight ★ requires a pilot, calling out attitude and airspeed from a chase car, to land ★ flew from aircraft carriers (USS *Kitty Hawk*, 1963; USS *Ranger*, 1964, and USS *America*, 1969) ★ operated by USAF, CIA, RAF, and Taiwan ★ faced early opposition from Gen. Curtis LeMay, who had no interest in aircraft without guns or standard wheels ★ used new low-volatility, low-vapor pressure fuel that would not evaporate at high altitudes ★ given "U" designation to denote a "utility" aircraft—a deliberate deception.



U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers (right) with U-2 designer Kelly Johnson in 1966, four years after Powers' release from the Soviet Union, where he was imprisoned for spying.