

May 11, 1960

James C. Hagerty, Press Secretary to the President

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THE WHITE HOUSESTATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

(Issued at the President's Press Conference May 11, 1960)

I have made some notes from which I want to talk to you about this U-2 incident.

A full statement about this matter has been made by the State Department, and there have been several statesmanlike remarks by leaders of both parties.

For my part, I supplement what the Secretary of State has had to say with the following four main points. After that, I shall have nothing further to say -- for the simple reason I can think of nothing to add that might be useful at this time.

First point is this: The need for intelligence gathering activities.

No one wants another Pearl Harbor. This means that we must have knowledge of military forces and preparations around the world, especially those capable of massive surprise attack.

Secrecy in the Soviet Union makes this essential. In most of the world no large-scale attack could be prepared in secret. But in the Soviet Union there is a fetish of secrecy and concealment. This is a major cause of international tension and uneasiness today. Our deterrent must never be placed in jeopardy. The safety of the whole free world demands this.

As the Secretary of State pointed out in his recent statement, ever since the beginning of my Administration I have issued directives to gather, in every feasible way, the information required to protect the United States and the Free World against surprise attack and to enable them to make effective preparations for defense.

My second point: The nature of intelligence gathering activities.

These have a special and secret character. They are so-to-speak "below the surface" activities.

They are secret because they must circumvent measures designed by other countries to protect secrecy of military preparations.

They are divorced from the regular, visible agencies of government which stay clear of operational involvement in specific detailed activities.

These elements operate under broad directives to seek and gather intelligence short of the use of force -- with operations supervised by responsible officials within this area of secret activities.

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