

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
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STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

On May 7 the Department of State spokesman made a statement with respect to the alleged shooting down of an unarmed American civilian aircraft of the U-2 type over the Soviet Union. The following supplements and clarifies this statement as respects the position of the United States Government.

Ever since Marshal Stalin shifted the policy of the Soviet Union from wartime cooperation to postwar conflict in 1945 and particularly since the Berlin blockade, the forceful take-over of Czechoslovakia and the Communist aggressions in Korea and Vietnam the world has lived in a state of apprehension with respect to Soviet intentions. The Soviet leaders have almost complete access to the open societies of the free world and supplement this with vast espionage networks. However, they keep their own society tightly closed and rigorously controlled. With the development of modern weapons carrying tremendously destructive nuclear warheads, the threat of surprise attack and aggression presents a constant danger. This menace is enhanced by the threats of mass destruction frequently voiced by the Soviet leadership.

For many years the United States in company with its allies has sought to lessen or even to eliminate this threat from the life of man so that he can go about his peaceful business without fear. Many proposals to this end have been put up to the Soviet Union. The President's "open skies" proposal of 1955 was followed in 1957 by the offer of an exchange of ground observers between agreed military installations in the U.S., the USSR and other nations that might wish to participate. For several years we have been seeking the mutual abolition of the restrictions on travel imposed by the Soviet Union and those which the United States felt obliged to institute on a reciprocal basis. More recently at the Geneva disarmament conference the United States has proposed far-reaching new measures of controlled disarmament. It is possible that the Soviet leaders have a different version and that, however unjustified, they fear attack from the West. But this is hard to reconcile with their continual rejection of our repeated proposals for effective measures against surprise attack and for effective inspection of disarmament measures.

I will say frankly that it is unacceptable that the Soviet political system should be given an opportunity to make secret preparations to face the free world with the choice of abject surrender or nuclear destruction. The Government of the United States would be derelict to its responsibility not only to the American people but to free peoples everywhere if it did not, in the absence of Soviet cooperation, take such measures as are possible unilaterally to lessen and to overcome this danger of surprise attack. In fact the United States has not and does not shirk this responsibility.