

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION,
BIPARTISAN LEADERS BREAKFAST
WITH THE PRESIDENT, HELD IN THE
STATE DINING ROOM, THE WHITE
HOUSE, THURSDAY, MAY 26, 1960,
AT 8:45 A. M.

The President started the discussion by telling his guests that he had invited them in for a round table discussion of the events in Paris of the preceding week. He said that he thought they might want to ask questions of him or Secretary Herter or Secretary Gates who were also present. The President also added that he heartily approved of the inquiry which was being started in the Senate and that the Administration people, of course, would fully cooperate.

The President said that he specifically wanted to bring up two questions at the start.

The first was what happened to the U-2 plane. He said that the Soviets had claimed they had shot it down by rocket, but that he did not believe this. The Soviets had known about these flights for some time and were not able to interfere with any of the other flights because of the high altitudes at which the planes were flying. He pointed out that a picture of the plane released by the Soviets showed bullet holes in the wings. No Soviet fighter could get up to 70,000 feet so it is obvious that those holes must have been put in the wing at a lower altitude. He said it is the present theory that the plane's engine had flamed out, and that the pilot had to come down to below 70,000 feet to get the plane working again. It is possible that at that level Soviet planes could have attacked the U-2 and that their bullets could have damaged the plane's control and made it possible for the pilot to destroy the plane.

The second point the President said he wanted to raise was that of intelligence and espionage. He said that intelligence and espionage were distasteful for many Americans, but that he as President from the very beginning of his Administration had to make decisions based on what was right for the United States concerning the fundamental intelligence knowledge that we had to have. In this field, of course, one had to weigh the risks and the serious consequences that would result if one were caught. The decision of such espionage is something that the President, and the President alone, has to decide. The President fully knows that if anything goes wrong, there will be criticism

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