

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Press Release on Missing U.S. Plane



Washington May 5

One of NASA'S U-2 Research Airplanes, in use since 1956 in a continuing program to study gust-meteorological conditions found at high altitude, has been missing since about 9 o'clock Sunday morning, (local time) when its pilot reported he was having oxygen difficulties over the Lake Van, Turkey area.

The airplane had taken off from Incirlik Air Base, Turkey. The flight plan called for the first check point to be at 37 degrees, 25 minutes, North; 41 degrees, 23 minutes, East, and for a left turn to be made to the Lake Van Beacon, thence to the Trabason Beacon, thence to Antalya, and return to Adana. The flight scheduled was estimated at 3 hours, 45 minutes, for a total of 1400 nautical miles. Takeoff was at 8 a.m. local time.

(The above-given times are the equivalent of 3 a.m. Sunday, and 2 a.m., Eastern Daylight Time.)

About one hour after takeoff, the pilot reported difficulties with his oxygen equipment. Using emergency radio frequency, he reported he was heading for the Lake Van Beacon to get his bearings, and that he would return to Adana.

As indicated above, his flight plan called for him to make a left turn at the Lake Van Beacon. His last report indicated he was attempting to receive that Beacon. It is believed he probably was on a northeasterly course, but there was no further word.

An aerial search was begun soon after receipt of the last communication. The Lake Van Area is mountainous and very rugged. No evidence has been sighted of the aircraft having crashed.

If the pilot continued to suffer lack of oxygen, the path of the airplane from the last reported position would be impossible to determine. If the airplane was an automatic pilot, it is likely it would have continued along its northeasterly course.

The pilot, as are all pilots used on NASA's program of upper atmosphere research with the U-2 airplanes, is a civilian employed by the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, builders of the airplane.

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