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When the Soviets shot-down Francis Gary Powers and his U-2 reconnaissance plane, over Soviet territory, the event made worldwide news. This image depicts a view of the wreckage scene. Photo, by an unnamed Soviet photographer, online via Bloomberg View.

It wasn't just the Soviets who were upset with Francis Gary Powers when he deliberately flew his U-2 reconnaissance plane over Soviet territory.

American officials, wrongly believing that the USSR did not have the technology to shoot-down a plane at high altitude, thought Powers had made disastrous mistakes.

They were also annoyed that he had not destroyed the plane or himself. What, they wondered, had he given-up during his interrogation?

Powers was quickly put on trial. No foreign journalists were allowed to attend, but historical footage survives. In it, we hear a narrator suggesting that Powers' trial was an ideological battle during which:

Russia directed her venomous attack largely against America itself.

Another contemporary newsreel maintained in the archives of British Pathé, called "President Defends Spying," includes Dwight Eisenhower's defense of U-2 planes and their missions. Among other things, the President says:

...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 attacks.

Powers' high-profile trial—attended by his greatly upset family—was over by August 17, 1960. A guilty verdict was never in doubt.

Powers received a prison sentence of three years plus an additional seven years hard labor at the Vladimir Central Prison.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/TRIAL-of-FRANCIS-GARY-POWERS-Bridge-of-Spies)

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Francis Gary Powers and His U-2 Wreckage

Francis Gary Powers and his Lockheed U-2 were shot-down by a Soviet surface-to-air (SAM) missile on May 1, 1960. This image, by an unnamed Soviet photographer, depicts a view of the wreckage.

This was not the first time the Soviets had shot-down a plane flying over its territory. It was actually the 11th shoot-down, according to a formerly top-secret/now-declassified document entitled "[Maybe You Had to Be There.](#)" (See page 5 of the 44-page report.)

There was a difference, however, between the other shoot-downs and that of the Powers' U-2 Incident. This time, the pilot (who had no accompanying crew) lived. Photo, by unnamed Soviet photographer, depicting wreckage of the U-2 flown by Francis Gary Powers and shot-down over Soviet territory on May 1, 1960.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Francis-Gary-Powers-and-His-U-2-Wreckage>

Trial of Francis Gary Powers

This historical footage, without sound, depicts scenes from the trial of Francis Gary Powers in Moscow's Hall of Columns.

It also includes a view of the street, near the place where trial is held, as large crowds try to get a view of the comings/goings.

The clip includes scenes of Powers' family, including his father Oliver—who initially broached the subject of a spy exchange between the US (holding Rudolf Abel) and the USSR (holding Powers' son)—and the Soviet leader (Nikita Khrushchev) who is examining parts of the U-2 wreckage.

The capture of Powers, and his plane, was a significant coup for Khrushchev. He must have been pleased when he heard the American government announce that one of its planes, on a weather mission, had gone missing.

That story, of course, was a cover-up.

Even President Eisenhower made an announcement, along those lines. Not until the U.S. federal government had fully committed itself to the bogus story did Khrushchev announce that the Soviet government had both the plane and the pilot.

CIA officials, for whom Powers worked, were upset that their pilot had not destroyed his plane before it crashed to the ground. That fact—plus the fact that Powers had not used his poison pin on himself—caused some U.S. officials to distrust Powers.

Although it was not known until many years later, the Soviets had shot-down other U.S. planes which were flying in Soviet airspace. Crew members, aboard those flights, did not survive.

Silent historical footage of the Powers' trial, online via YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Trial-of-Francis-Gary-Powers0>

