

PILOTS OF THE U-2

Projects Aquatone, Idealist and the Pilots Today



Yep! It doesn't get better than this.!

The pilots in the photo above were the first six CIA U-2 "Drivers" forming Detachment "A" at Watertown, NV, aka: Area-51's Groom Lake circa 1955. Photo was taken at Palmdale, CA in 1994

The first pilots of the U-2 were those of the Contractor, Lockheed. By ground school and flying in the Groom Lake of Area 51 in Nevada (known then as "Watertown" or "the "Ranch"), the Lockheed (LAC) test pilots along with other relevant contractor personnel trained an Air Force transition team designated, the 4070th Special Activities Squadron, on the systems. The Lockheed test pilots were: Tony Lavier, Robert Matey, Ray Goudey, Robert Sieker, Robert Schumacher.



Mr. Dick Newton was the CIA Station Chief at Watertown. The 4070th SAS was composed of: Col Wm R Yancey, Commander, Major R E Mullin, pilot navigator and classroom instructor, Navigation Officer: Jack Delap, Lt Col Art Lien as Chief of Supply, Col Herbert Shingler as Deputy Commander and Material Chief, Louis A. Garvin as Dev. & Test Flight Officer, Phillip O. Robertson, Captains Hank Meierdierck and Louis Setter, U-2 pilots and Test Flight Officers. This Air Force transition team in turn trained the first CIA pilots.

Major Delap devised the system of flight planning and navigation as the transition team actively engaged in flying test missions and learned more about the A/C characteristics they passed them on to the students. The Air Force transition team developed a complete program of ground school and flying that started with several low level flights with the pogos attached. During this time all of the Air Force pilots went to David Clark Co. in the northeast to have partial pressure suits fitted for high altitude flight. The program progressed quite rapidly with the LAC and Air Force team learning more about the airplane through its daily flights. The student pilots followed closely behind, gaining proficiency with each ground school class and their training flights.



Upon completion of the program, each student was declared mission and combat capable. There were no USAF failures since all were very skilled pilots. They also trained several foreign students who were eliminated very early since they lacked the skills to fly such a sophisticated airplane.

There were several accidents and deaths of students during the tenure of the total program. All of the students except one went on to deploy with their units to an overseas location.





During this training period the 4070th SAS was responsible for the preparation of the three units for overseas deployment. This effort include EVERYTHING that a tactical unit need including, but not limited to, personnel, finance, base preparation, supply, transportation, fuel, camera film, A/C maintenance ,mission planning and clearance, security and many more things that are necessary to a restricted deployment.

As this program was completed, the training pilots checked out some USAF pilots and the program was turned over to them. In 1991, CIA Project Idealist was declassified. It is probable that the subsequent Air Force U-2 operations remain classified, therefore will not be posted on this site.

The list below is intended to be a small gesture towards establishing and maintaining the legacy of those special aviators who silently soloed along the fringes of outer space with their cameras and ELINT equipment to ensure the safety of the free world.



U-2 Pilots receiving awards for their flights over Cuba during the Cuban Crisis.

Cuban Missile Crisis Distinguished Flying Cross Awardees

4028TH Strategic Reconnaissance Weather Squadron, 4080th Strategic Wing
Presented by General Thomas S. Power (CINCSAC)

VIDEO BY GENERAL
GERALD E.
MCLIMOYLE



- Major Rudolf Anderson, Jr. (KIA)
- Major Buddy L. Brown
- Major Edwin G. Emerling
- Major Richard S. Heyser

Major James A. Qualls
Captain George M. Bull
Captain Roger H. Herman
Captain Charles W. Kern
Captain Gerald E. McIlmoyle
Captain Robert L. Primrose
Captain Daniel W. Schmarr

29TH Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 363rd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing
Presented by: Admiral Robert L. Dennison (CINCLANT)

Lt. Colonel Clyde B. East
Lt. Colonel Joe M. O'Grady
Captain Arthur W. Beckstrom
Captain George W. Bernert
Captain Jack C. Bowland
Captain Thomas B. Estes
Captain Thomas L. Hennagan
Captain Hallett P. Marston, Jr.
Captain Bobby J. Martin
Captain Byron L. Marvin
Captain Simon W.C. Moses
Captain Carl K. Overstreet
Captain James B. Payson
Captain Gordon Palenius
Captain Albert G. Rogers

