MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR, NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

SUBJECT: SR-71 Accident History

In response to a query from the House Armed Service Committee, I accompanied Mr. Frank Fishburne (AFABF) and Lt Col Tom Jones (AFSDCP), on 21 March 1970 to Congressman George H. Mahon's office to handcarry and discuss the SR-71 accident history. Query and resultant discussion was the result of an article which appeared on 20 March in the Washington Post. Article was based on SAFOI prepared release in response to questions by Ted Bell, Los Angeles Times.

We were greeted by Mr. George Preston. He reviewed the attached documents and indicated that he was satisfied that accidents did not have any established pattern or trend.

Mr. Preston was advised that the release prepared by SAFOI included reports on two accidents that are not reflected in the Air Force SR-71 inventory since these two aircraft were YF-12/SR-71 prototypes that were in actuality "black aircraft". He stated that he understood.

The two YF-12/SR-71 prototypes/test bed referred to in attachment 3 were actually A-12's. No reference or discussion was made to CIA, OXCARTS, A-12's or the NRO.

4 Attachments
1. Answer to Query
2. Wash Post Article
3. Wnk Cy SR-71 Type A/C Accident Summary
4. AF SR71 A/C Program

CC: OSA Security
QUERY:
1. When did the 9th Strategic Wing lose its operational status?
2. What were the detailed locations of the deployed SR-71s?
3. Was the SR-71 ever grounded in the recent losses?
4. If so, when and for how long?
5. What were the reasons turned up by the investigators for the cause of the losses?
6. Were there problems in the aircraft which contributed to the losses?
7. If so, what were the problems?
8. Which losses involved aircraft deaths and how many?

SOURCE OF ANSWER:

REPLY:
1. 22 December 1967.
2. See attachment.
3. Some temporary flight restrictions have been placed on aircraft and subsequently removed but no extensive groundings have been made.
4. Cause of crashes and status of the operational fleet will not be discussed by the Air Force.
5. See attachment.
A. Following are the dates and locations of announced SR-71 losses:

1. 18DEC69, Sonora, California area.
2. 10OCT66, Beale AFB, California area.
3. 11JAN68, Marysville, California area.
4. 25OCT67, Lovelock, Nevada area.
5. 13APR67, Las Vegas, Nevada area.
6. 10JAN67, Edwards AFB, California area.
7. 5JAN67, Las Vegas, Nevada area (Pilot fatality).
8. 25JAN66, Northwest New Mexico area (Pilot fatality).

B. In addition to the above, the following accidents have been announced:

1. 11APR59, Edwards AFB, California area—SR-71 accident occurred—vehicle had repairable damage—this was not a vehicle loss.
2. 3JUN68, Pacific area, between Okinawa/Manila—The aircraft was a YF-12/SR-71 TEST BED TYPE AIRCRAFT—this was an aircraft loss, (Pilot fatality).
9 Super-Secret U.S. Spy Planes Lost in Crashes

By Ted Bell

Los Angeles Times

At least six aircraft from the Air Force's top secret SR-71 spy planes have been lost in crashes, including one in California, three in Nevada, one in New Mexico, and one in the Pacific. The Air Force is not releasing new information on what the Air Force planes were doing when they were shot down. It was confirmed that the Air Force's Top Secret SR-71 spy planes have been lost in crashes. This month alone, two SR-71s have been lost in crashes, one in Nevada and one in California. The Air Force stated that it is investigating the losses.

Although all SR-71s are based at Davis, individual aircraft are often operated with other aircraft from bases around the world. They have been reported as operating from bases in China, Thailand, and in the Pacific, among other places.

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SUBJECT: SR-71 Type Aircraft Accidents

1. Reference our previous paper listing seven each SR-71 aircraft accidents resulting in total losses and one incident. The aircraft involved in the incident is repairable.

2. There were a total of nine losses, seven SR-71's and two additional YF/SR-71 type aircraft losses. The two additional losses were proto-type aircraft. The proto-type aircraft losses are as follows:
   - 5 Jan 67, Loith, Nevada area (pilot fatality)
   - 4 Jun 63, Pacific area, between Chinawa/Manila (pilot fatality)

3. News releases indicate a total of nine losses (seven SR-71s, plus two YF/SR-71 type aircraft) and do not include the one SR-71 that was involved in a ground incident. The aircraft involved in the incident is repairable and was not a total loss.
of climb and flight, to spend
Instructor elected to remain
later, the second pilot to fall
to Scale, both engines failed, 1 crew
jogged successfully.

f. 18 Nov 62 - 2 crew surviving
free fromScale AFB, pilot landed safely in Apra Harbor, USA!
takeoff. The aircraft arrested immediately.
The aircraft traversed the reverse and nose surface and was destroyed by fire and debris.
Two aircraft were destroyed, the aircraft experienced.
crew member ejected successfully after takeoff.

g. 18 Nov 62 - AFB Pointe Fortin - Grandma
and normal inflight refueling, a series of abnormal engine stalls were experienced. A mid-deck abort was experienced after several engine stalls occurred.
Pilot failed to maintain correct airspeed corrections could no longer control the aircraft. Ejection was
called.
and crew suffered no major injuries. Aircraft was completely destroyed.

Damaged

(c) On 11 Apr 67, an SH-71C on an AEGC system test flight was damaged in a ground accident and is repairable. The sequence of events was as follows: On takeoff at rotation speed, the pilot felt a jar and mid vibration on the left side and crowd tire failure. Short procedures were initiated, and the aircraft stopped on the runway. Fire had initiated from tire and visual group, and debris had punctured wing fuel tanks. Fire was extinguished after successful crew evacuation. This aircraft is repairable.

3. There is no established pattern which caused the above listed SH-71 losses.
By Howard Silber

The Department of Defense acknowledged Friday that the Air Force has lost nine of its SR71 reconnaissance planes in crashes in the last four years. Four of the aircraft were assigned to the Strategic Air Command's 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing.

The others, the Pentagon said, were "research and development planes." The Pentagon refused to expand on its "research and development" statement.

Clerical Error

Thursday night, SAC, which has all of the operational SR71s in its 9th Wing, said it had lost only three of them. A SAC spokesman explained Friday that the information office had made a clerical error and that the number it had lost actually was four.

The silence by the Pentagon about the "research and development" planes heightened speculation that some of the SR71s are being flown by the Central Intelligence Agency.

This was the case with the U2, predecessor of the SR71. The U2 also was assigned to SAC. However, the U2 which was downed over the Soviet Union in 1960 was piloted by Francis Gary Powers, a CIA employee.

The SR71 is capable of moving at 2,000 miles an hour and climbing to about 100,000 feet altitude.

Number a Secret

It is unknown to be crammed with highly sophisticated electronic equipment.

The Air Force has refused to say how many SR71s it has. No plans have been announced to visit the area of bases Air Force Base, Calif., in which SR71 operations are conducted.

The Pentagon said eight of the nine losses occurred in the United States. The ninth plane was reported to have gone down in June 1968 between Okinawa and Manilla. It was described as a "research and development" plane.

SAC said all four of the planes it lost crashed in the United States.