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Archangel: CIA's Supersonic A-12 Reconnaissance Aircraft

By David Robarge

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Related Material:

[1959 U2 Flight Manual PDF \[18.0MB\]](#)

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Foreword

This history of the A-12 reconnaissance aircraft was occasioned by CIA's acquisition on loan from the Air Force of the eighth A-12 in the production series of 15. Known as Article 128, the aircraft will be on display at the Agency's Headquarters compound in Langley, Virginia. This history is intended to provide an accessible overview of the A-12's development and use as an intelligence collector.

Writing this story was a fascinating challenge because I am not an aviation historian and have never flown any kind of aircraft. Accordingly, I have tried to make the narrative informative to lay readers like myself, while retaining enough technical detail to satisfy those more knowledgeable about aeronautics and engineering. I have drawn on the sources listed in the bibliography and the extensive files on the A-12 program in CIA Archives. Hundreds of those documents will be declassified and released to the public in conjunction with the dedication of Article 128 in September 2007 as part of the Agency's 60th anniversary commemoration. I have limited citations to specific documentary references and direct quotes from published works. When discrepancies arose among the sources regarding dates and other details, I have relied on the official records.

For their contributions to the substance and production of this work and to the documentary release, I would like to thank my colleagues on the CIA History Staff and at the Center for the Study of Intelligence, the information review officers in the Directorate of Science and Technology, designers and cartographers in the Directorate of Intelligence, and publication personnel at Imaging and Publishing Support. I also am grateful for historical material provided by the Lockheed Martin Corporation and the A-12 program veterans, the Roadrunners.

David Robarge
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Historical Document
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