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ARCHANGEL: CIA's SUPersonic A-12 RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT



Synopsis

This is an interesting history of the CIA's Archangel project. Archangel was to design a replacement spyplane for the U-2 after it became apparent the USSR had tracked the U-2 from its very first mission. Written by CIA Chief Historian David Robarge, it details the development of the A-12 reconnaissance aircraft, and its use as an intelligence collector. Information was compiled from the CIA History Staff, the Center for the Study of Intelligence, the CIA's Directorate of Science and Technology, the Directorate of Intelligence, Lockheed Martin Corporation and A-12 program veterans known as the Roadrunners. Illustrated with color and black and white photos, maps and charts, it tells a grand tale of this secretive part of the cold war.

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Customer Reviews

Obviously a CIA authorized book from beginning to end. A nice read on the narrow focus of the A-12, the original sibling of the SR-71. The detail on the building of the craft is evident. Yet the account loses much of its charm as it is severely limited to the A-12 only. Hardly any mention is made of the SR-71 follow-on which came out of the A-12 design. A better history is to read both Kelly Johnson's autobiography "More than My Share of It All" and Ben Rich's biography, "Skunk

Works: My memoir of My Years at Lockheed". They give much more background and political history of why the A-12 was built as well as the SR-71.

There have been lots of discussions and books about the A12 and its development and initial use by the CIA. You'll find references to all the major players and entities involved in the development of what later became the more well known SR-71. Richard Bissel, Kelly Johnson, the flyers, Area 51, the "Skunk Works", Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, - you will find it all here. Not an exhaustive treatment by any sense, but good coverage of the major issues, personnel, politics and the entities involved. If you don't know anything about the A12 or SR-71 aircraft, this is a good book to talk intelligently about a milestone in aviation history. Not lavishly illustrated - but if its mainly pictures you want, and not a historical story, you will be disappointed. A very good price for the material presented.

I liked this book. As a former B-52 pilot I was interested in comparing my SAC crew-dog experiences with those of a completely unique aircraft like the SR-71. The author goes into great detail by reviewing the checklists used to keep the aircraft in flying configuration. Of particular interest to me was the critical nature of the SR-71's center-of-gravity and how the crew shifted fuel to keep it the aircraft controllable. However, I do not feel this book is for the casual reader. It is technical in nature and uses many acronyms, that even though are spelled out when used initially, would be confusing making it difficult to follow the author's train of thought.

Great history of the early A-12 missions from Kadena AB, Okinawa. I was stationed there during this time and assigned security on this aircraft as an AP. We weren't called SPs yet. I witnessed many flights and spent much time up close to this bird and found it absolutely amazing to be around.

Gives very detailed information about development and use. Learned some interesting information. I always thought this and the SR71 were the same plane.

I have read numerous books on the SR-71, but few written specifically on the A-12. Books focusing on the former tend to leave the impression that the SR-71 was the superior aircraft, neglecting to mention that the A-12 flew faster and flew higher. I found the book very informative, interesting and easy to read. It was a little brief and short on helpful illustrations, however.

As a free standing book, this is a great read. It explains the CIA's input in this great airplane. For Air Force buffs it gives some indication of why this single seat airplane flew faster and higher than the SR-71. I was lucky. I read this book as part II to Richard H. Graham's "Flying the SR-71 Blackbird: In the Cockpit on a Secret Operational Mission". I believe reading these books in that order enhances "Archangel" and makes it even more interesting.

Good review of my favourite plane the SR71 Blackbird. Never knew the USAF poached off the CIA's A12. I thought they were developed together but USAF first. This is the real history sequence of events. Good read. Would love to have been on the side of the road in those days to see those big crates go by from Pasadena, Ca. to Area 51, Nev.

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