

Dragon Ladies Down



The United States started flying the U-2 spyplane in 1956. A few years later, Taiwan was sending Dragon Ladies on reconnaissance missions over Communist China. These flights were carried out by a CIA-sponsored Taiwanese unit called the Black Cat Squadron. Between September 1962 and January 1965, four of Taiwan's high-flying U-2s were downed by Chinese SAMs. Two pilots died and two were captured. The aircraft themselves survived relatively intact, and Chinese technicians meticulously reassembled the crash pieces. In October 1965, four of these aircraft went on display in a pavilion of the Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution in Beijing. One of these downed U-2s is still displayed at the museum. China shot down a fifth U-2, with the loss of its Taiwanese pilot, in 1967. The program officially ended in 1974.



Official emblem of Taiwan's Black Cat Squadron.



Top: The wrecks of four Taiwanese U-2s, pieced back together by Chinese technicians, on display in Beijing in 1965. Bottom: Current U-2 display in Beijing museum.

Photo by Alan J. Giddings