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Extract from A.I Gribkov et al. U Kraya Yadernoi Bezdni, (On the Edge of the Nuclear Madness), 1998

On the 27 October at 8 a.m., I arrived at the command point for the Group of Forces. Already there was the deputy commander for Air Defenses, General S.N. Grechko, who was analyzing reports about the activities of U.S. espionage planes. At our meeting, he told me: “Our ‘guest’ has been circling above us for more than an hour. I think that we should give the order for downing the American plane, as he could discover our positions in depth, and Washington will be informed about the intelligence data in a few hours.” We decided to call [Soviet commander] I.A. Pliyev on the direct line, but the commander was away from his headquarters.

At that time, the officer on duty reported that the U-2 plane had changed course. Arriving at Guantanamo, he turned toward the North. It was clear to us, that the spy was leaving Cuban air space after fulfilling his mission. I expressed the view that all our missile starting positions had been uncovered, and we must not allow that the secret information fall into the hands of the Pentagon. Stepan naumovich several times tried to get in touch with our commander, but we did not succeed in finding him in the crucial minutes. It was also impossible to get in touch with Moscow in such a short time. We knew that Pliyev had more than once asked [Defense minister] Malinovsky to allow him to shoot down American spy planes, but had received no answer.

After a short period of reflection, S.N. Grechko announced, “Well, let’s take responsibility ourselves.” Our order for the destruction of Target number 33—the u_2 plane—was transmitted to the command point for the Air Defenses. The order was transmitted to the commander of the first battalion of the 507th anti-aircraft rocket regiment, Major Ivan Gerchenov. The anti-aircraft forces fulfilled the order immediately. The American plane, piloted by Major Anderson, was hit by SAM missiles.