

SR-71 "Blackbird" Crash Site in Harding Co., NM

DATE January 25, 1966

AIRCRAFT SR-71 "Blackbird" S/N 61-7952 (#2003)

GENERAL LOCATION A Harding County ranch NE of Mosquero, NM

PEOPLE ABOARD Pilot and RSO (back-seat crew member)

REFERENCES Declassified USAF Accident Report, a Pilot interview on the Internet and an interview with one of the landowners

HISTORY

This historical information was extracted and summarized from the references.

The crash occurred on January 25, 1966, on this Harding County, NM ranch. The pilot and RSO were evaluating navigation and reconnaissance systems on the aircraft during a test flight from Edwards AFB in California. At 1432 MST, the aircraft was at Mach 3.2 and 78,000 feet altitude, when the aircraft right engine inlet's automatic control system malfunctioned. This problem led to a series of events that resulted in the SR-71 breaking apart in mid-air. The pilot does not remember ejecting, but he found himself floating down to earth in a parachute. He saw another parachute that had to be that of the RSO. Upon landing, the pilot was met by the ranch owner. After helping the pilot get out of his parachute, the ranch owner checked on the RSO and found him dead. Authorities were contacted and the pilot taken to a hospital in Tucumcari, NM, for treatment.

Several crash explorers and family members of the two-man crew have visited the ranch since the crash. Some of them have looked for crash debris for as long as a week without finding much, if anything.

In July, 2009, two crash explorers visited the ranch and spoke with one of the present ranch owners. This owner was very young in 1966, but remembers the USAF members who came to clean up the wreckage. They did a very complete clean-up, but there was so much debris spread over the ranch that some pieces are occasionally found today. The crash explorers did a very brief search following the interview, but found nothing. However, the owner showed them two pieces of the debris found over the years.

