

1959 “alien landing” was an ROC pilot in a spy plane 「外星人登陸」？ U2機台灣駕駛啦！

The City of Cortez is a small town in an isolated and mountainous area of Colorado. It has long been rumored that, 50 years ago, an unidentified flying object (UFO) piloted by an alien landed there. It was only when US military files were declassified that the town's residents discovered, to their surprise, that the so-called alien and his flying saucer were in fact Taiwanese pilot Major Hsichun Mike Hua and his U-2 spy plane, which had to make a forced landing.

Although the files have been declassified, proving that what landed all those years ago were not an alien and a UFO, the town's inhabitants still get excited when they talk about the incident. The town's cultural center has even held activities to commemorate the forced landing, inviting Mike Hua to visit and talk about how it happened. For this reason, the Republic of China (ROC) flag has made a few appearances in the town.

Hua remembers with gratitude how runway lights of the Cortez Municipal Airport saved his life, and it is because of that incident that the airport has kept its runway lights switched on every night for the past five decades. The story continues to circulate in both Taiwan and America to this day.

During the Cold War, the US hurriedly developed the U-2 high-altitude spy plane to gather intelligence on Soviet nuclear weapons, and assigned some of its best pilots to conduct surveillance over the Soviet Union and China. Taiwan collaborated with the US, sending pilots from the ROC Air Force's 35th “Black Cat” Squadron for training in America. Hua, who now lives in the US, was one of them.

The US's purpose in developing the U-2 was to accomplish its mission, and pilot safety was not the foremost concern. In the early days there were numerous incidents of U-2s crashing and crewmembers being injured.

Hua recalls that the Americans categorized the U-2 as top secret. Its special fuselage design made it appear very different from general aircraft of the time, and training flights were always done at night.

On the night of Aug. 3, 1959, the U-2 Hua was flying flamed out at high altitude, having lost all its fuel. He took the plane down to 35,000 feet and tried three

times to restart the engines, but without success. Hua knew that he was flying over the Rocky Mountains and could crash into a mountain any time.

Just as the situation seemed hopeless, Hua saw a strip of light in the midst of the unfamiliar territory and judged it to be a runway. Finally, he succeeded in making a precarious forced landing, his plane hitting the runway on its belly and the left wing dragging along the ground.

As Hua says, the U-2 was a top-secret plane and the general public had never seen one. People working at Cortez Airport only saw a strangely shaped plane landing, whereupon a pilot wearing strange clothes and speaking a strange kind of English appeared. Hua remembers the bewildered look on their faces. The US Air Force immediately sent a C-124 Globemaster transport plane and a team of investigators to the town. They dismantled the U-2 right there on the runway and transported it back to base. The public explanation given by the US authorities was that the incident was a simple forced landing by a military aircraft, and no mention was made of the U-2.

Consequently, rumors of aliens having landed in the town quickly started to circulate. 19 years after the forced landing took place, Lieutenant General Ray B. Sitton wrote a report in the American magazine *Aerospace Historian* entitled *The Invasion of Cortez: An Extra-Terrestrial Incident*, and the Feb. 1989 edition of *Air Force Magazine* published a cartoon about the incident with the title *There I Was*.

(LIBERTY TIMES, TRANSLATED BY JULIAN CLEGG)

美國科羅拉多州山區的偏遠小鎮柯爾特斯鎮，一直流傳五十年前曾有外星人及UFO（Unidentified Flying Object，不明飛行物體，俗稱幽浮）降落的往事。直到美軍檔案解密後，小鎮居民才赫然發現，所謂外星人及UFO，竟是台灣空軍飛官華錫鈞駕駛U2偵察機迫降！

儘管檔案解密，澄清當年降落的不是外星人及UFO，但小鎮居民提到此事還是很興奮，甚至在該鎮文化中心舉辦迫降事件紀念活動，邀華錫鈞回到小鎮，講述迫降過程及感想，中華民國國旗也因此出現在這個美國小鎮上。

華錫鈞十分感念這個小鎮機場的夜間跑道燈光，救了自己一命，而柯爾特斯機場也因此事件，跑道燈至今長達五十年

夜夜不熄燈，成就台美兩國的一段佳話。

在冷戰時期，美國為取得蘇聯核武情報，緊急研製U2高空偵察機，派出優秀飛行員駕駛偵察機蘇聯及中國，我國也與美方合作，由空軍三十五中隊派飛行員赴美受訓，目前僑居美國的華錫鈞就是其中之一。

美國研製U2時，一切以達成任務為重，飛行員安全並非優先考量，初期機毀人傷的事件頻繁。

華錫鈞回憶指出，U2當時被美國列為最高機密，加上機型設計特殊，與當時一般飛機外觀明顯不同，訓練飛行也都選夜晚進行。

一九五九年八月三日晚間，他駕駛U2在高空熄火，油料又將耗光，他將飛機高度降到三萬五千呎以下時，三度試圖重新發動引擎，但都未成功，他清楚知道飛機就在洛磯山區上空，隨時可能撞山。

就在萬般無奈時，華錫鈞看到陌生地面上的一道光，研判是飛機跑道，最後以機腹擦撞地面，在左翼拖地滑行情形下，驚險迫降成功。

華錫鈞自述，U2在當年是最高機密，民間根本沒見過，機場人員只見到一架奇形怪狀的飛機降落，隨後身著「奇裝異服」、口說奇怪英文的飛行員現身，讓他們臉上露出詫異表情。不久，美國空軍立即派出C124運輸機及調查人員來到小鎮，就在跑道上將失事的U2全數拆解後載回原基地。美方對外解釋是單純軍機迫降事件，且絕口不提U2。

於是，外星人降落小鎮的傳聞迅速流傳。迫降事件發生的十九年後，美軍甚至有一位雷·席頓中將在美國「航太歷史季刊」上，發表一篇外星人入侵柯爾特斯鎮的報告，美國空軍月刊也在一九八九年二月登載了「There I was」事件的漫畫。

(自由時報記者羅添斌)

Below left: Retired Republic of China Air Force pilot Mike Hua looks at the flight suit he was wearing when he made a forced landing at Cortez, Colorado, while visiting the town for commemorative activities in this undated photo.

Below right: A still from a video on retired air force pilot Mike Hua's Web site shows how he looked in his flight suit after landing his U-2 reconnaissance at Cortez, Colorado on Aug. 3, 1959.

SCREEN CAPTURES FROM MIKE HUA'S WEB SITE BY LO TIEN-PIN, LIBERTY TIMES

下圖左：這張未註明日期的照片中，台灣退役飛官華錫鈞到美國科羅拉多州柯爾特斯鎮參加U2迫降事件紀念會時，看到當年所穿的飛行裝百感交集。

下圖右：退役飛官華錫鈞一九五九年八月三日駕駛U2偵察機迫降科羅拉多州柯爾特斯鎮時，身穿飛行衣的模樣。照片翻攝自華錫鈞網站影片。

照片：自由時報記者羅添斌攝

