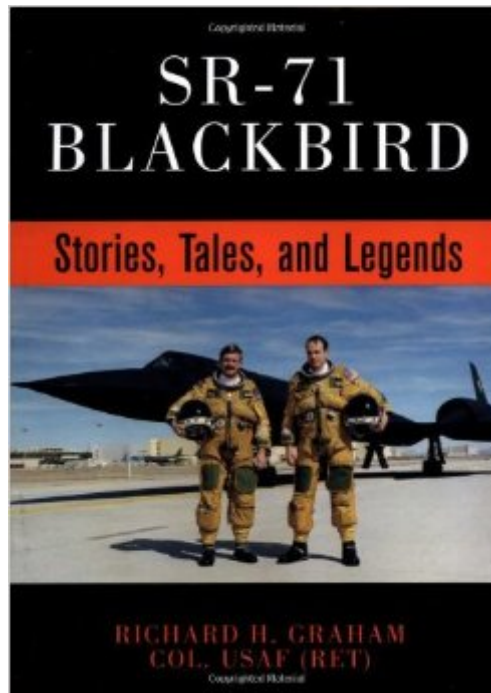


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# SR-71 Blackbird: Stories, Tales, And Legends



## Synopsis

Feel the Mach 3 power generated by Lockheed's incredibly fast SR-71 Blackbird! Former SR-71 pilot, instructor and wing commander, Richard Graham, presents the most intriguing SR-71 stories ever told. This once highly classified program is fully revealed through the words of pilots, commanders, mechanics, and instructors involved in the Blackbird's creation and flight-testing. From grueling reconnaissance missions to the Persian Gulf conflict, this insightful book tells stories of bravery and daring determination.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Colonel Graham has put together unique memories of 19 former pilots and RSOs for the 3 Blackbirds, (A-12, YF-12 & SR-71) in chronological order from the first A-12 ejection through the retirement of the SR-71, (both times). Most of the chapters deal with the SR-71 at it's two deployment detachments, Det 1 at Kadena AB, Okinawa and Det 4 at RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom. These are fabulously interesting insights into the lives and times of the best men in the US Air Force who were chosen to fly the best plane in the US Air Force, the titanium wonder-bird, SR-71. It doesn't provide much in the way of facts, figures, drawings and detailed photographs, but that was not the intent of this book. It is one of the most interesting books I have ever read. All profits from the book go the J.T. Vida memorial fund to help maintain SR-71 # 17972 at the Smithsonian Musuem at the Dulles Air Port west of Washington, DC. Lt Col Vida spent 16 years as an RSO and amassed nearly 1400 hours in the SR-71, the most of any crew member. He was the RSO for 972 on it's record breaking flight from LA to DC in March of 1990.

A number of books have been written about this remarkable aircraft. Most good, a few not so. This book definitely falls into the good (no, excellent) category. It is not as technical as some of the other books (although some technical concepts are very clearly explained) as much as it is a book relating some of the tales of those who actually operated the aircraft. It gives a wonderful insight into what is probably the best reconnaissance system the US ever had. Even today, we have no systems that are capable of doing all the things the SR could. For one thing it was the only atmospheric system that could safely penetrate defended airspace. For another, it remains the only system that can do wide spectrum multi-sensor reconnaissance of a given target on the same mission. This book relates some of the missions that demonstrated this as well as what was involved "behind the scenes" in pulling off these successes. Although satellites are wonderful, there are things they simply can't do that the SR-71 could (For one thing, since the orbits of the satellites are known, the bad guys know when to hide the stuff they don't want seen. The SR could surprise its targets). The last part of the book is valuable in relating the real reasons this remarkable system was retired. It wasn't for cost and it wasn't for lack of capability. The hard numbers provided and the stories of the shenanigans pulled to "justify" a bad decision are almost worth the price of the book itself. Col. Graham has done it again and this is a worthy companion piece to his excellent "SR-71 Revealed" book

After working on this amazing aircraft for over twelve years, and being retired for twenty three years I still miss her. One simulator attempted taxi and I got the feel of what a handful this thoroughbred could be. The book let me relive those days. As an instrument/inlet specialist I got to program the computer that control the engine inlets. I kept those inlets " humming"!!All the stories brought back some wonderful memories.

If you love flying and airplanes, or are current or ex-force and find the SR-71 fascinating, this is a great book!!! I was at McConnell AFB in the late '60s when an SR-71 made an emergency landing and I saw it from 200' - I was spellbound!Two crewmen climbed out in high altitude flight suits (X-15 style) and unzipped them, pulled them down, and there stood two business men in suits and ties!James Bond stuff!Fuel poured out from underneath and Security Police were everywhere with M-16s and I was told to turn away.And the subsequent takeoff with blue flame shock diamonds was even more spectacular!! Pure magic!!, the stuff of science fiction!It impressed me almost as much as the pilots I met with South East Asia 100 missions completed, the "Century pilots" - I bow to you

guys!!!This book describes all of the YF-12/SR-71 aircraft, and crew, characteristics in fine detail.The aircraft, and the book, are testament to the genius of Kelly Johnson and the personnel at the Lockheed "Skunkworks" This book is not the only SR-71 history book, there are at least four really good ones, but this is one of the best!It is a shame the SR-71 program was tanked so soon after it was developed.Hoorah HABU! ‘• •» Hoorah to the crews ‘• •»!

The SR-71 is one of the most interesting subjects to read about. Unfortunately the author seems to have taken the easy route in writing this book. Specifically...Mr. Graham does not search out really interesting stories, events, or participants. He mainly interviews his HABU friends who only occasionally provide gripping stories, compared to the wealth of subject matter available. There is so much more that is truly interesting to read about this plane and the events and people associated with it.This book comes across more as a cut-and-paste effort concerning his friend's off-the-cuff recollections. In summary: a fairly interesting book that does not live up to it's potential.

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