

Profiles in courage: Trump & Eisenhower

by M. K. Bhadrakumar,* India



M. K. Bhadrakumar
(Picture ma)

President Donald Trump had a difficult week. No, this isn't about Elon Musk or Harvard University. On Wednesday, his call to Russian President Vladimir Putin didn't go well. It turned into a 'conversation', as Trump wrote on Truth Social, lasting only

an hour and 15 minutes, which means, setting aside the time for interpretation, it left no room for substantive discussions.

The call took place against the backdrop of the attack on Russia's nuclear force on 1 June Trump acknowledged in his Truth Social post later that Putin spoke "strongly" about Russia's response to come. The post was notable for its subdued tone.

We wouldn't know whether Putin brought up Western involvement. The Kremlin merely noted that "Donald Trump reiterated that the Americans had not been informed about this [attack] in advance."

Zelensky's version is that the attack was in the pipeline for the past 18-month period. Yet, we are to believe, neither the CIA nor MI6 whose operatives run the show in Kiev got an inkling of it. Trump's Truth Social post simply omitted this crucial part of the conversation with Putin, which is highly significant — and consequential.

Especially, as *Kremlin-funded RT*¹ had already carried one report citing the assessment of an ex-French intelligence officer that the Ukrainian targeting couldn't have been possible without US satellite inputs.

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Earlier, *Tass* also had carried a similar report² citing a former US naval officer who estimated that the 18 month-period was when the Biden administration was virtually on auto-pilot (due to the president's dementia). An interesting thought in itself?

Tass quoted the American source who actually said on a War Room podcast: "So, who was it on the American side that either gave the greenlight to this or provided the initial intelligence targeting? Hey, where is William Burns and Jack Sullivan, the neocon whizkids in Biden's team?"

Again, on the same day as Trump spoke to Putin, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister *Sergey Ryabkov* warned at a news conference in Moscow,

"The fact that certain circles in the United States have been and are still hatching plans to move towards eradicating Russia as a state is also undeniable. [...] We should not underestimate the consequences of such a mindset. [...] Russian society should remain in a state of high readiness for any intrigues."

Interestingly, Ryabkov called on Washington and London specifically to speak up on the attack on Russian airfields. As he put it, "We demand that both London and Washington respond in a manner that stops this recent round of escalation of tensions."

When asked about the Ukrainian attack on Wednesday in Brussels, NATO secretary-general *Mark Rutte* came up with an *ingenious argument*:³

"Let's not forget that the capabilities they hit were the capabilities the Russians were using to attack innocent people going about their daily lives in Ukrainian cities and communities. So I think we should take note of that."

Clearly, the poor chap was in the loop! Rutte refused to speak further.

Equally, the social media is awash with the assessments by some prominent American experts, especially ex-CIA analysts, pointing finger directly at the agency's involvement. Of course, Russia has the experience and technical expertise to dig deep.

There are comparable situations. What comes to mind is the famous U-2 spy plane incident on 1 May 1961. Perhaps, Trump is finding himself in the same embarrassing situation as President *Dwight Eisenhower*.

Do we give the benefit of the doubt to Trump that he too was unaware of the strike on Russia's nuclear force on June 1? To my mind, the analogy of the U-2 incident holds good – a rare cold-war era confrontation over the US' blatant violation of Russian sovereignty and territory at a critical juncture just when the White House was navigating an improvement of relations with Russia.

Eisenhower was kept in the dark about the full details of the U-2 although countdown had begun for his planned summit meeting with Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet leader, in Paris to discuss a Soviet-American detente (just what Trump is attempting with Putin.) The following excerpts from the archives of the *Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial, Eisenhower National Historic Site*⁴ are most insightful:

"[U-2 spy plane pilot Gary] Powers did have a contingency in the form of a concealed needle with the poison Saxitoxin. If injected, this would have killed him and prevented his capture. Powers did not utilize this and was surrounded by Soviet citizens very soon after he touched down. Soviet citizens soon found his United States issued firearm, and other items bearing the flag of the U.S., turning him over to Soviet officials. Powers, and what was left of his spy plane, were shipped to Moscow be researched and documented. In a matter of hours, *Khrushchev* was informed of the captured pilot and the wrecked U-2."

"When Powers was overdue to land at Norway [U-2 had taken off from its base in Peshawar], the CIA started to consider what might have happened. As a result, their contingency plan went into action. To prevent the public and the Soviets from learning the true nature of the U-2 aircraft, a misinformation campaign began. A NASA press release stated one of their high-altitude weather research U-2 aircraft had gone missing over Turkey, and that it may have drifted into Soviet airspace because of an unconscious pilot. A U-2 was shown off in NASA colors as well to help sell the story. *Khrushchev* learned of this story from the Americans and decided to lay a trap for the United States and for Eisenhower."

"The Soviets released information that a spy plane was shot down but did not include any

other information on the status of the aircraft or Powers. The U.S. believed it could shape the narrative further and kept releasing 'reports' of oxygen difficulties in the aircraft and that the auto pilot may have sent the plane into Soviet territory. Once the deception from the United States grew large enough, on May 7th, *Khrushchev* sprung his trap by stating the pilot was alive, and that the Soviets had captured the remains of the aircraft, which contained a camera and film of Soviet Military Installations. This destroyed the cover story and was a public embarrassment for the United States and for President Eisenhower. The President learned of this at the office of his Gettysburg residence, where he got a phone call informing him the Soviets had captured Powers. This shattered the peace and tranquility of his stay in Gettysburg, and he knew that he would be held responsible in the eyes of the Soviet Union. In a remark to an aide, Eisenhower reportedly said, 'I would like to resign.'"

While Eisenhower did not resign, the U-2 incident and the acute embarrassment so close to the end of his second term defined his Cold War legacy. *Khrushchev* cancelled the Paris summit and Soviet-American detente had to wait until *Henry Kissinger* consolidated his grip over US foreign policy strategies. Nonetheless, the Deep State, which loathed detente, booby-trapped *Richard Nixon's* presidency!

Eisenhower's sense of betrayal is reflected in his farewell address when he bitterly called out the Deep State and prophesied that it will someday wreck America's democracy.

History is repeating. Look at the cascading turbulence already around Trump presidency. Eighty two out of 100 members of the Senate are co-sponsoring a bill by Senator Lindsey Graham (whose affiliation to the Deep State is legion), forcing Trump's hands to impose "bone-breaking" sanctions against Russia, whose sole objective is to stall any improvement of US-Russia relations. Meanwhile, a call for impeachment of Trump is already in the air.

Source: <https://www.indianpunchline.com/profiles-in-courage-trump-eisenhower/>, 6 June 2025

¹ <https://www.rt.com/russia/618640-ukraine-attack-us-intel/>

² <https://tass.com/world/1967923>

³ <https://www.yahoo.com/news/nato-secretary-general-comments-ukraines-103444655.html>

⁴ <https://www.nps.gov/ddem/index.htm> and <https://www.nps.gov/eise/index.htm>