



The Corona Project: America's First Spy Satellites

Curtis Peebles

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In the early 1960s, when the United States and the Soviet Union faced each other in a nuclear standoff, a small band of engineers, designers, and intelligence officers secretly set out to do the impossible. Armed with little more than a few ideas and drawings of the payload, they created America's first reconnaissance satellite program - the Corona project - which for decades remained one of the nation's most closely guarded secrets. This is the story of their extraordinary efforts, from the first desperate requests for intelligence on the USSR, through a series of heartbreaking failures, to Corona's ultimate success. This book focuses not only on the Corona project's great technical achievements but also on the remarkable human side of the story - on the engineers who built the satellites but could not divulge what they did even to their own families, and on the recovery pilots who competed to see who would be the first ace. Their stories appear for the first time in this book along with previously classified details of their recovery unit and a list of the ace pilots.

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