

Silent Sentinels - Birth of the ACRP and the USAF Security Service

Airborne Communications Intelligence
Reconnaissance Platform

WWII in the Pacific – U.S. Army Air Corps radio squadrons used RB24 recon aircraft to collect signals intelligence on Japanese air defenses.



The Soviet threat after World War II

- In 1945, the Soviet Union might as well have been on Mars.
- Except for small areas around Moscow, Leningrad and Vladivostok, nothing was known about the military and economic landscape.
- The Soviet Stalinist threat was clearly identified – But what to do?
- Concern about the “Bomber Gap”
- Answer: Collect intelligence in a serious manner.
 - Human Intelligence (HUMINT)
 - Imagery Intelligence (IMINT)
 - Signals Intelligence (SIGINT)

Lt. General Richard P. Klocko

A WWII veteran, Commander of the 350th fighter wing in the North Africa campaign, he was captured and taken prisoner while on a special mission behind enemy lines. After the war, as a Colonel, he was the spark plug behind the creation of a new air force major command to process and report special intelligence information. The command was vastly different from the army and navy structures.



The USAF Security Service was activated as a major command on Oct 20, 1948



A quick peek at the “Bomber Gap” and the role of the U2

Much concern in the early 1950’s that Soviet Myasischev M4 (Bison) bomber capability was a serious threat to the US Mainland.

In July 1956, CIA U2 overflights discredited the concern, but Congress was left in the dark due to security concerns as to the source of the information.



The first SIGINT/COMINT aircraft in Europe – RB50 “Dreamboat”



- **In the first six months of European operations, two RB50's flew ninety-seven SIGINT and COMINT intercept missions producing 1,535 hours of actual intercept.**
- **Captured intercept beyond the range of ground-based line-of-sight VHF.**
- **Intercept immediately useful in establishing order-of-battle information.**
- **In 1958 (after shootdown of 60528) all flights suspended pending an evaluation of the entire program.**
- **Evaluation showed that airborne intercept productivity was much greater than at fixed sites, deemed of high intelligence value.**
- **Missions were resumed.**

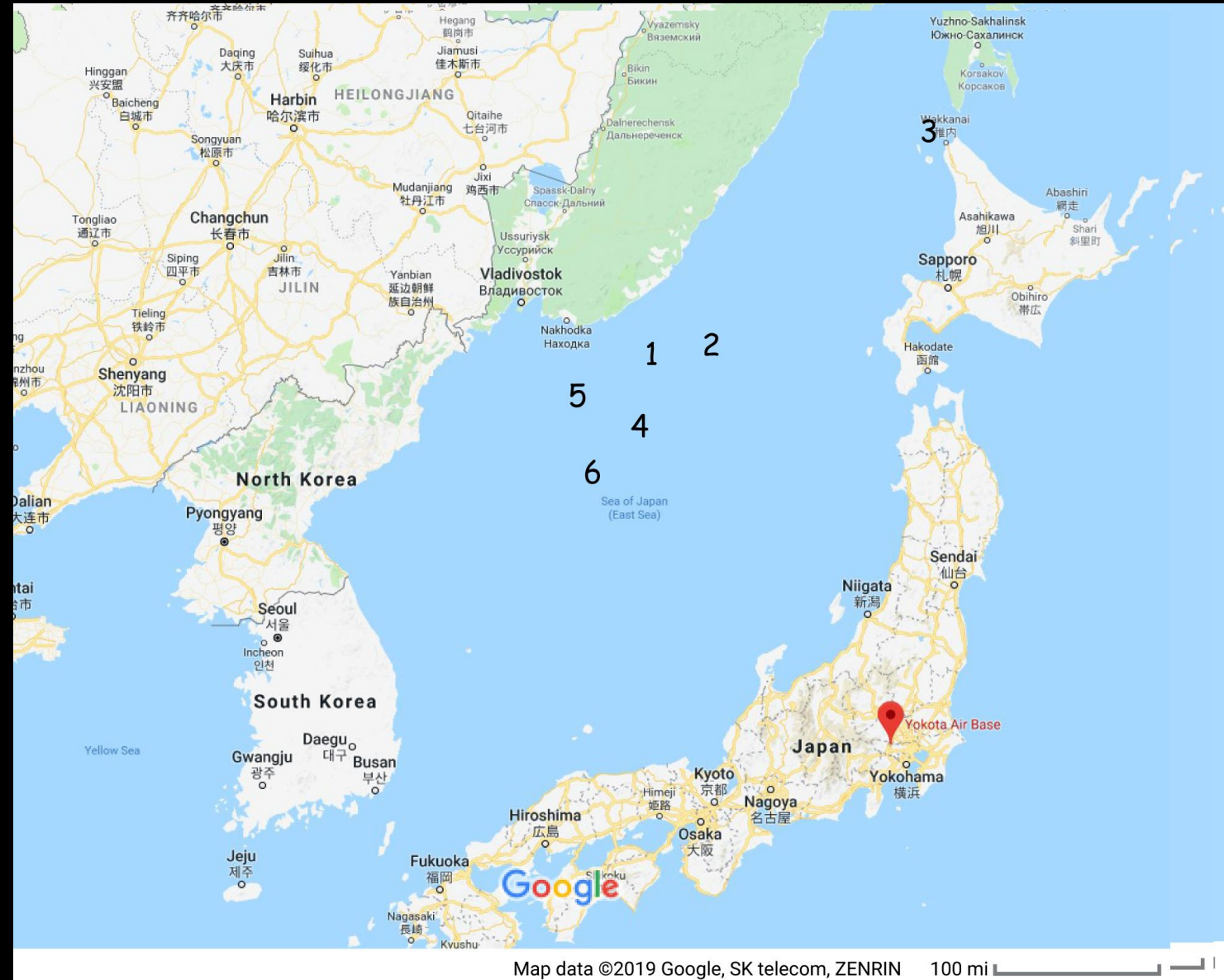
Shootdowns

Thirteen reconnaissance aircraft were shot down by the Soviets in the period 1950 to 1964.

- 8 April 1950 USN PB4Y2 Privateer Barents Sea
- 8 Nov. 1951 USN P2V Neptune 1 Sea of Japan
- 13 June 1952 USAF RB-29 2 Sea of Japan
- 17 Oct. 1952 USAF RB-29 3 East of Hokkaido/Kuril Is.
- 29 July 1953 USAF RB-50 4 Sea of Japan
- 4 Sep. 1954 USN P2V Neptune 5 Sea of Japan
- 7 Nov. 1954 USAF RB-29 East of Hokkaido/Kuril Is.
- 18 April 1955 USAF RB-47 Off Kamchatka Peninsula
- 10 Sep. 1956 USAF RB-50 6 Sea of Japan
- **2 Sep. 1958 USAF RC-130 Soviet Armenia**
- 1 May 1960 CIA – U2 Sverdlovsk USSR
- **1 July 1960 USAF RB-47 Barents Sea**
- 10 Mar. 1964 USAF RB-66 East Germany

Sea of Japan shootdowns

Vladivostok (“Ruler of the East”) home port of the Soviet Pacific Fleet was of major interest to U.S. with military facilities all along the Soviet East Coast.



The First one: USN PB4Y2 Privateer



Shootdown of USAF RB-47E over the Barents Sea - July 1, 1960



What happened

- **The RB-47E with six crew members (Pilot Major Willard Palm, Co-pilot Capt. Freeman Olmstead, navigator. Capt. John McKone and three electronic warfare officers) took off July 1, 1960 from RAF base in Northern England to pinpoint locations of Soviet Air Defense radars. Their flight route took them across Northern Norway and into the Barents Sea.**
- **Tracking data shows they maintained a distance of at least fifty miles from Soviet air space.**
- **They were approached by a single MIG-19 very close off the right wing. The MIG broke off, reapproached from the rear and opened fire with cannons.**
- **Four crewmen were lost, (it was assumed that all had ejected).**
- **McKone and Olmstead survived and were picked up by a Russian fishing boat.**

Flight path and location of RB47 Shootdown



Imagery ©2019 Landsat / Copernicus, Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO, IBCAO, U.S. Geological Survey, Map data ©2019 Google 200 mi

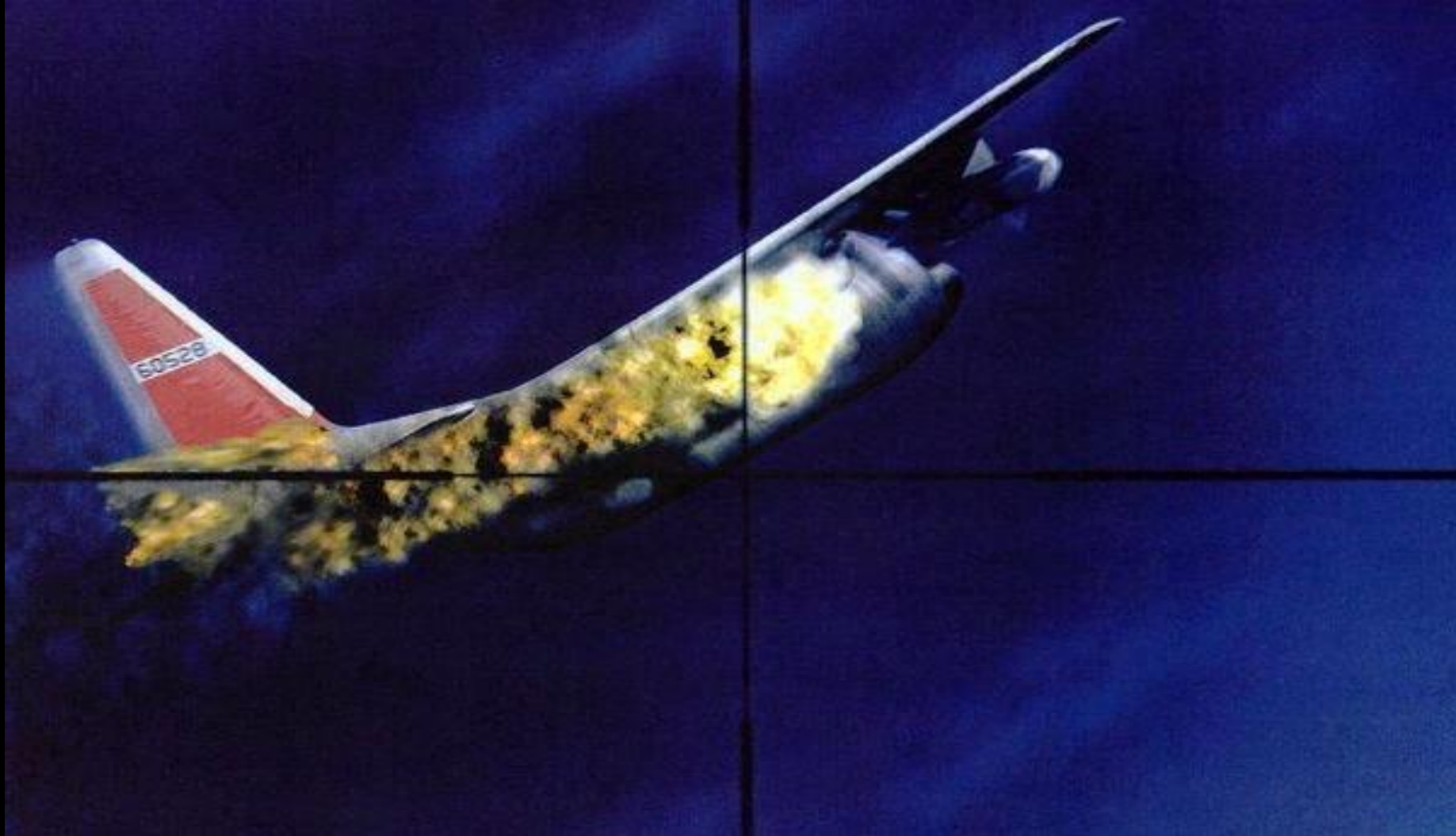
The Aftermath and Lessons Learned

- McKone and Olmstead were brought to Lubyanka prison at KGB HQ.
- Kept in solitary confinement and interrogated incessantly (26 straight days of around-the-clock interrogation) Trying to force an admission of violating Soviet air space
- Immense psychological pressure, but no traditional physical torture.
- In spite of every threat, every ruse, every trick, neither American admitted to wrongdoing. The Soviets were frustrated, they needed a confession in to bring them to trial.
- After seven months, they were released. Political motives, Kennedy election. Khrushchev didn't want Nixon to get elected. (sound familiar?)
- The lessons of their experience was incorporated into our survival training. Lesson #1 – Never confess or admit to any wrongdoing.

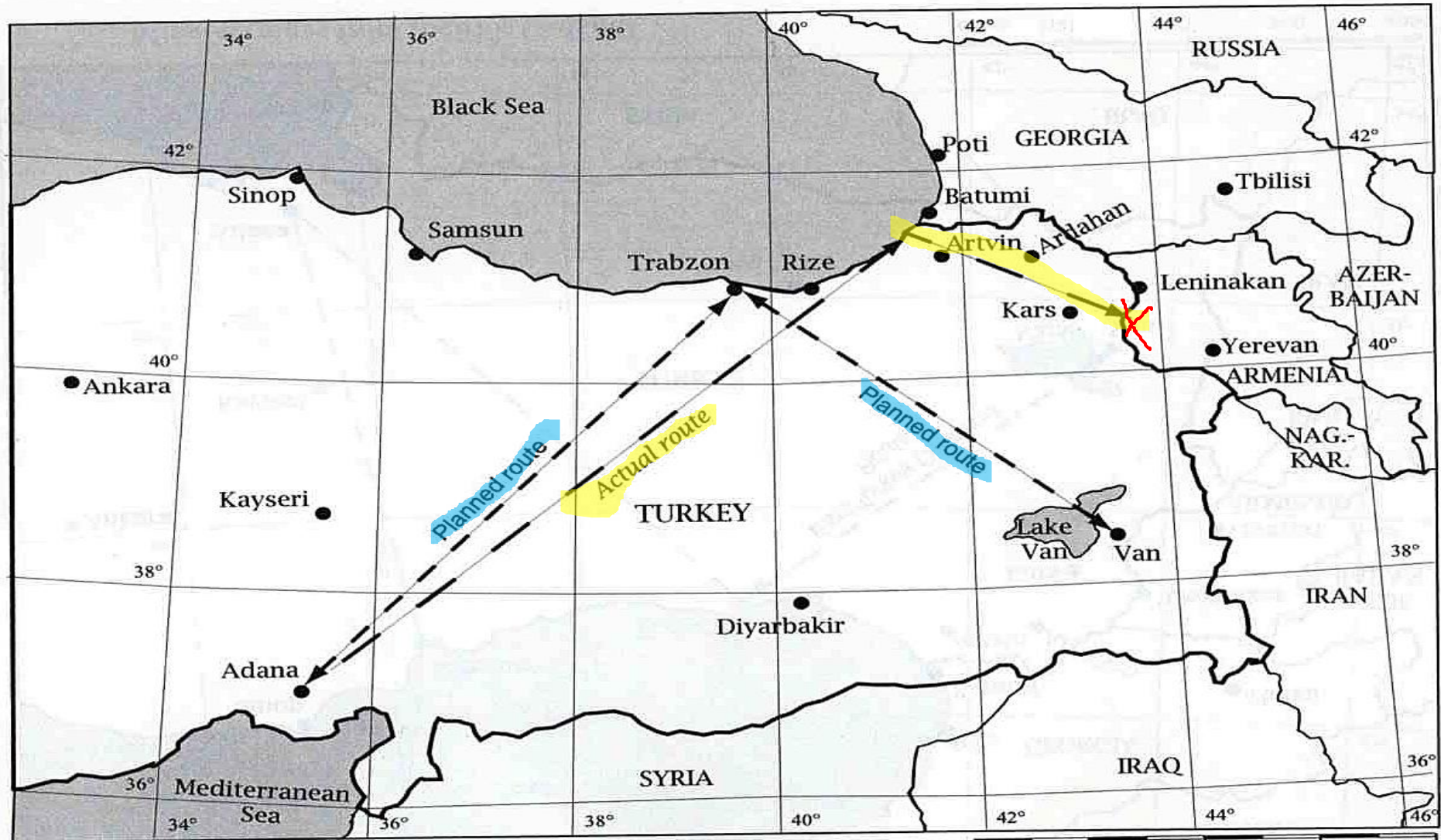
Time Magazine February 3, 1961



Shootdown of 60528 – Taken from the gun camera of an attacking Soviet MIG-17 fighter



Flight path of 60528



Actual flight route of C-130 60528, Sept. 2, 1958

0 km 100 200 300 400

Soviet Mig-17 Fighter



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~~TO BE HANDLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH IRSIG~~



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b)(3)-18 USC 798
b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

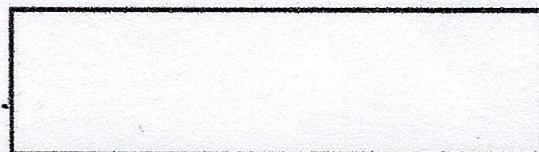
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"Q" CATEGORY MATERIAL Addendum to: 3/ 010260 (of 3/10/56)

Issued: 7/10/1958

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SHOOTING DOWN OF U. S. C-130 TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT IN THE TRANSCAUCASUS

[The information contained in this report should be communicated only to those with a firm need to know and should not be quoted without reference to CCHQ.]

The map at Appendix A shows the tracks of the aircraft concerned in this incident. Recipients are asked to attach it to their copies of the report.

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APPENDIX B

Time	To	From	Text
[582]	?	No. 3	- open fire, I've [SWAMPED].
218	?		Are you attacking?
?	[218]		Now I am, yes!
?	?		The target's burning! [SWAMPED] own side.
?	?		The tail unit has broken away from the target.
582	?		Can you see me? I'm ahead of the target.
?	582		[TOO WEAK].
?	?		Watch where it [the target] is going.
?	?		Eh?
?	?		Look at me. He isn't getting away. He's already falling. [MISSED]. Force him down to the west! Force him straight down! [SHOUTING].
?	?		The target is out of control, it's going down.
?	?		The target will fall now, it [MISSED] too sharply.
?	582		Turning to starboard!
?	?		The target has turned over.
?	?		The target is falling.
?	?		All the aircrew are on board, aren't they?
?	582		I'm to watch the target, aren't I?
?	?		Look, it's falling by the [O% river].
1215Z	?		Yes, form up quickly and go home.
?	?		After my third burst the target caught fire, and then everybody hit it in turn.
16	577		Give me my SECRET and task.

[Continued overleaf]

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APPENDIX B

Time	To	From	Text
[577]	[16]		Height 100, over 135[i].
577	?		Have you passed 134[i].
?	577		Yes. Am going to 135.
577	16		Maintain height 120 [= 12,000 metres] in the region of 134/135. Watch the frontier carefully.
582	16		How do you hear me?
582	[577]		Why don't you answer 16?
?	[582]		I forgot to switch off the [MISSED] guns.
[582]	?		[DISTORTED] didn't jump?
?	[582]		No, nobody jumped.
582	16		How do you hear me?
582	577		How do you hear me?
[582]	[16]		Go home, and stop chattering.
[582]	[577]		He told you to go home.
582	577		Did you understand me?
?	[577]		Roger, 582 is landing on airfield 107[ii].
[577]	16		Roger, maintain [height] 12 in that area.

Comments: [i] Unlocated point numbers.

[ii] Unlocated, but probably a mistake for 137 [= O% EREVAN].

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What went wrong?

- Soviet Deception Beacons? The Soviets were using two misleading signals on the same frequencies assigned by international convention to Turkey.
- Ill-prepared transition to the new C130's
- A “Kick the tires and fly” mentality.
- Lack of formal airborne SIGINT training. Everyone was a novice working to create a fledgling airborne reconnaissance program from scratch.
- Lack of full understanding of the new RADAR systems.
- Extreme Cold War tensions
- Aircrew fatigue?

Lessons Learned

- USAF installed more effective TACAN (Tactical Air Navigation System) facilities.
- The use of radio beacons for navigation along the border was banned.
- Abort criteria was formalized.
- Used Soviet tracking data – Added a Morse intercept operator.
- Airborne intercept training was formalized with specialized training at Goodfellow AFB
- Closer coordination between the aircraft commander and recon crew implemented

Growing Pains - From Detachment 1 to the birth of the 6916th Security Squadron

- The 6911th (a ground based intercept squadron) was based in Darmstadt, Germany.
- Need for airborne operations was recognized, and Detachment 1 was formed at Rhein Main AFB.
- First operational mission was flown on January 13, 1957 aboard an RB150 along the East German and Czechoslovakian borders.
- None of the “back end” crew had any experience. They had never even seen or heard of the equipment they were supposed to use.
- Training was a hit-or-miss affair.

Problems

- Lines of communication badly snarled.
- 6911th was reluctant to provide needed support and resources.
- Analysis of intercepted traffic not trusted due to inexperience of crew.
- Turf battles existed.
- Protocols were confusing because the aircraft and flight crews belonged to the 7406th support squadron.
- Most senior flight crew members had combat experience from WWII and Korea. But none had operational experience with communications intelligence recon missions in Europe.
- All training was conducted in a live, hostile environment.

More problems – some solutions

- RB50's were not particularly suited for reconnaissance.
 - Only enough room for five intercept positions with one receiver in each.
 - Few comforts for constant long missions.
 - It was designed solely as a bomber.
 - Needs of cold war airborne intelligence becoming increasingly complex.
- RC130's introduced in January 1958.
 - Ten intercept positions with dual receivers with increased bandwidth and frequency capabilities, dual recorders, improved demodulators.
 - One position dedicated to Morse code intercept.
 - Galley and bathroom facilities added.
- 6916th Radio Squadron Mobile was created Jan 1, 1960
 - Name changed to 6916th Security Squadron July 1, 1963

The Improved Training

After USAF basic training and being vetted for security clearance:

- Russian language school at Syracuse University – Nine months of intensive training with native speaking instructors. Attrition rate of ~35%.
- Voice intercept operator (cryptologic and intelligence) training at Goodfellow AFB – Three months
- Airborne operator training at Goodfellow AFB. San Angelo, TX – Six weeks
- Physiological training at Perrin AFB – Dennison, TX
- Survival (Escape and Evade) training at Fairchild AFB – One month, including special interrogation training.
- Supervised OJT at final duty station – Approximately three months

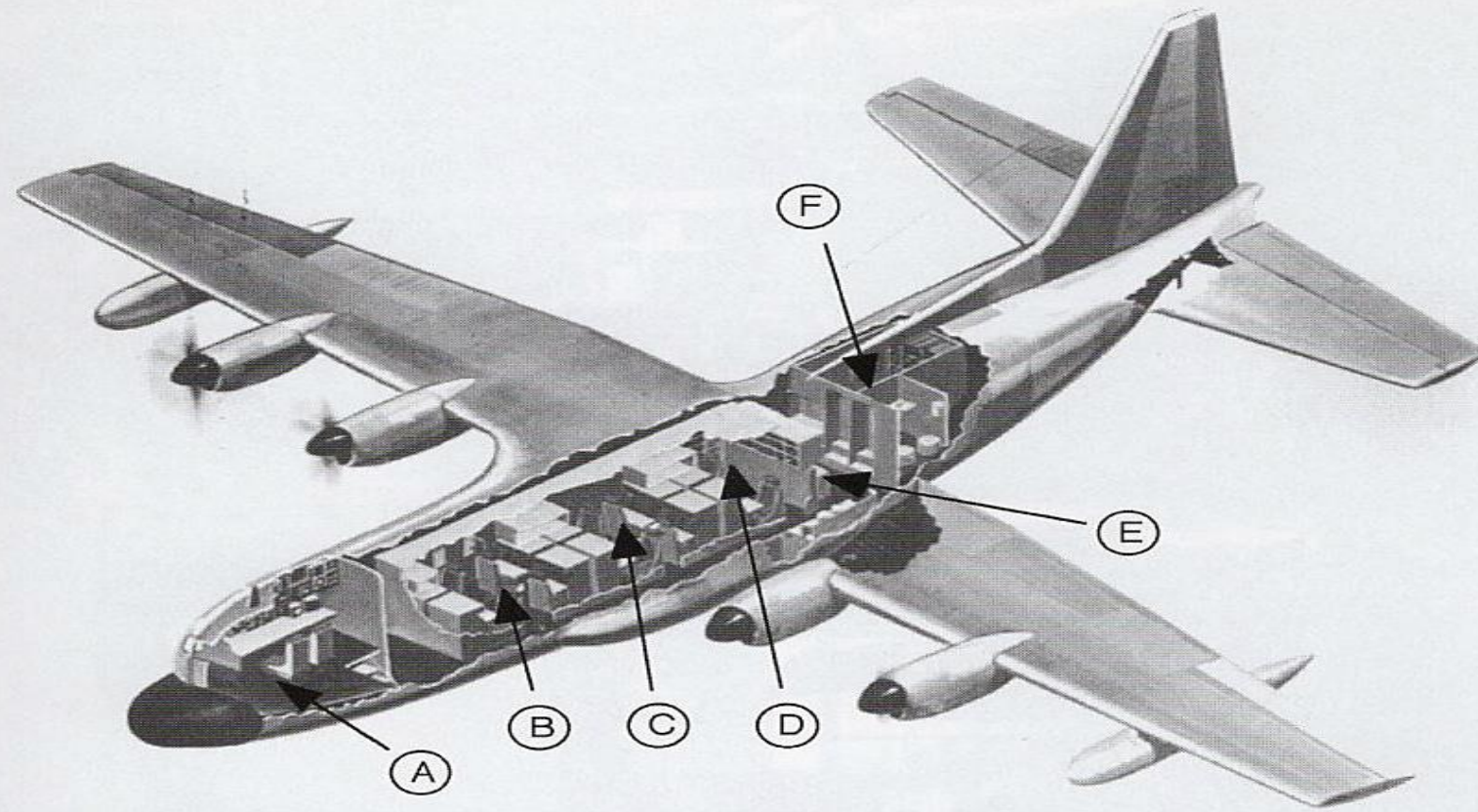
Training school at Goodfellow AFB



RC130 A One of the aircraft of the 6916th Security Squadron



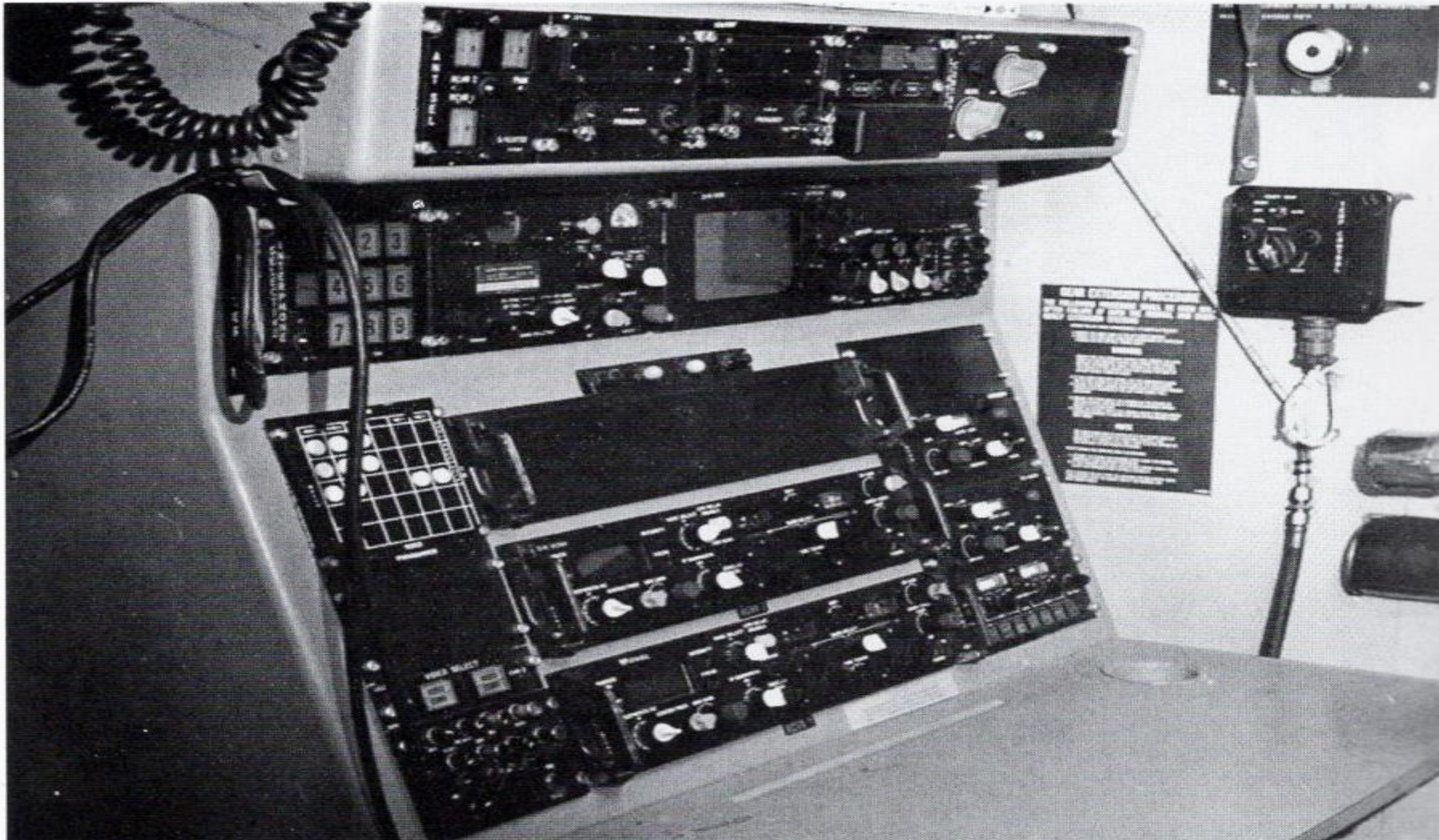
RC130A Configuration in the 1960's



C-130A-II internal configuration. (USAF)

- A Flight deck—pilot, copilot, flight engineer, and two navigators
- B Compartment 1—operators 7, 10, 6, and 9
- C Compartment 2—operators 8, 5, 4, and 3
- D Compartment 3—operators 1 and 2
- E Four “airline” seats and galley
- F Maintenance station and toilet built-in on closed cargo ramp

Typical intercept operator position on a RC130A



Airborne intercept operator position 10. C-130 60528 had ten such positions, with each operator working at a console similar to this one. (USAF)

Missions in the Baltic and Europe

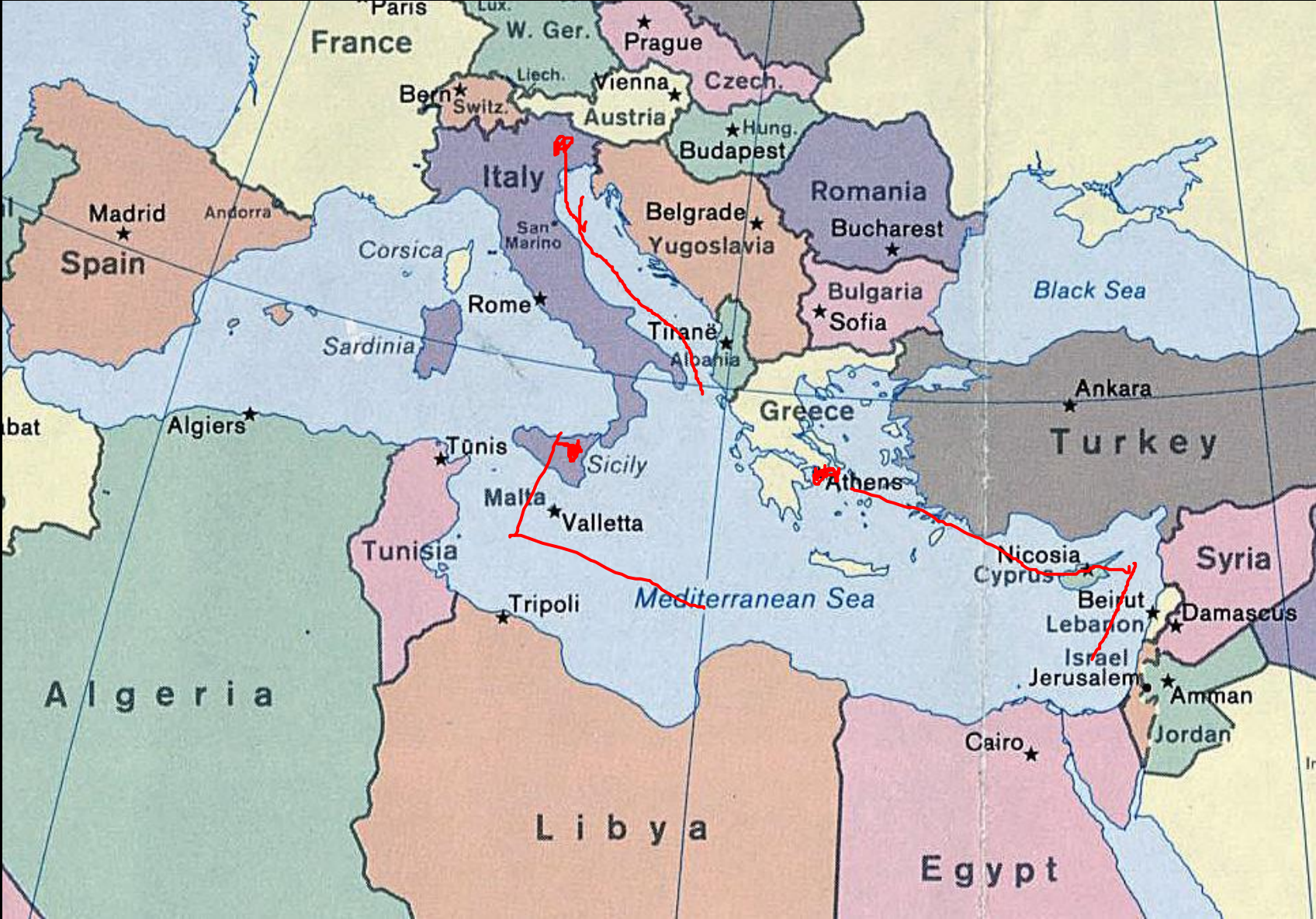


RAF Canberra Medium Bomber

Canberras of this type were used in "coordinated" missions. They would fly in at high speed to test Soviet fighter reaction times and air defense capabilities.



Missions in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic



On a TDY Assignment



A view of one of our aircraft taken from the beach at Glyfada, Greece, August 1968



Climbing out from Sigonella NAS, Sicily,
looking at live volcano Mt. Etna



Ground intercept operations

By the mid-1960s, U.S. Air Force Security Service had installed AN/FLR-9 antennas, or 'elephant cages,' in strategic locations around the globe. By the end of the decade, seven antennas were in operation.



In the late 1950s and early 1960s, U.S. Air Force Security Service support to national level customers expanded rapidly. As a result, USAFSS ground units opened in out of the way places around the globe, to include: Samsun and Trabzon, Turkey; Zweibrucken and Wiesbaden in Germany; Royal Air Force Kirknewton in Scotland; and Peshawar, Pakistan.



The Fulda Gap – Most likely route of Soviet invasion



National Vigilance Park outside NSA HQ, Fort Meade, MD

The Park was set up as a memorial to those who lost their lives in airborne intelligence gathering operations. This section shows a mock-up of 60528 and a Navy EA-3B that crashed in the Med in 1987. The park is now closed, but is scheduled to be relocated

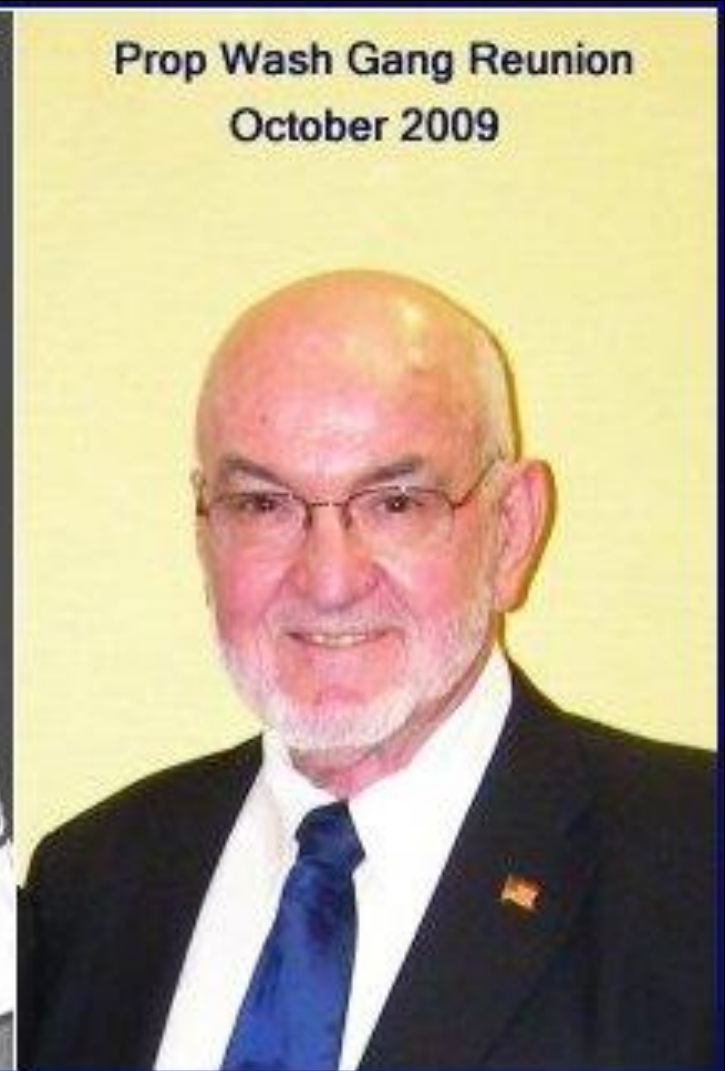
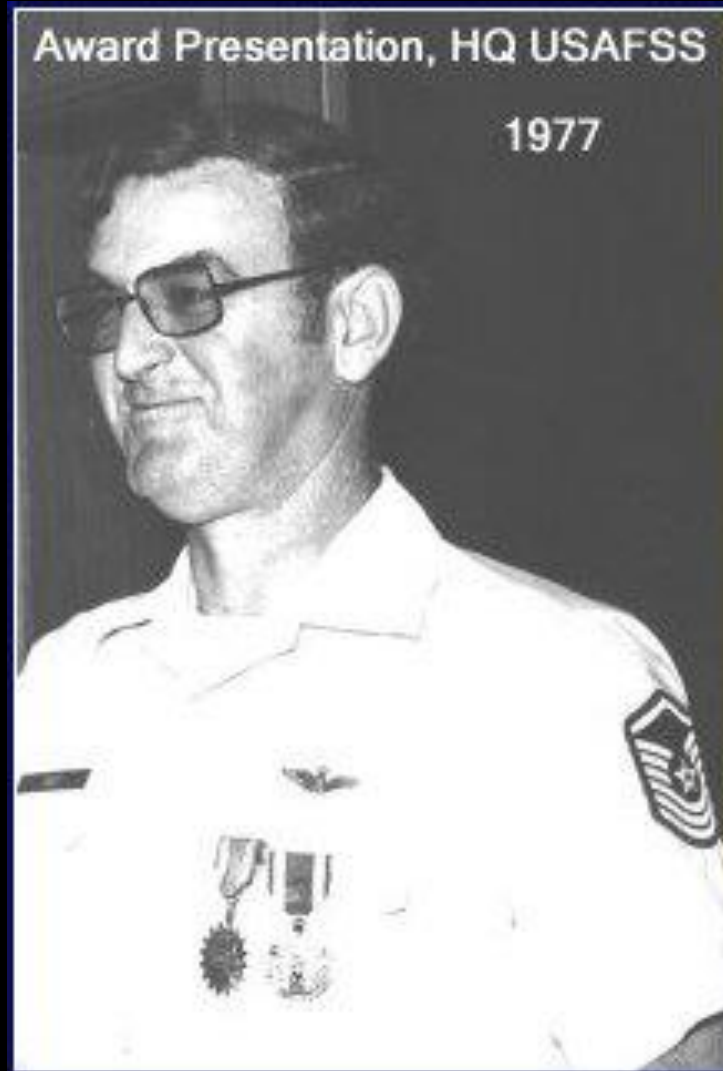


A visit to National Vigilance Park



Larry Tart – Historian and Author

Larry Tart has lived the history about which he writes. He served in Air Force Security Service for twenty-one years, retiring from USAFSS Headquarters as a SMSgt. in 1977. Trained as a Russian linguist, he completed seven overseas tours-four at USAFSS ground sites and three in the command's airborne reconnaissance units. He also served as a special projects analyst in the Air Force Special Comm Center in Texas in the mid-1960's. Larry was inducted into the Air Intelligence Agency Hall of Honor in 2000. A year later, he published *The Price of Vigilance*, about the shoot down of USAFE C-130 60528 over Armenia in 1958



USAFSS and Successor Organizations

- On 1 August 1979, the Air Force redesignated USAFSS as the **Electronic Security Command (ESC)**, a *major command** that assumed the broad responsibility to improve the Air Force's use of electronic warfare technology in combat.
- On 1 October 1991, the Air Force redesignated the Electronic Security Command as the **Air Force Intelligence Command (AFIC)**. This new organization consolidated, restructured and streamlined the personnel and missions of the Air Force Foreign Technology Center at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, the Air Special Activities Center at Fort Belvoir, Va., and elements of the Air Force Intelligence Agency, Washington D.C., into a single command.

On October 1, 1993, the Air Force Intelligence Command was redesignated the **Air Intelligence Agency** (AIA) and simultaneously designated a *field operating agency** reporting directly to the Headquarters US Air Force Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence.

In August 2006, the Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen T. Michael Moseley, directed Air Force intelligence to transform into an organization that stressed its intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities. As a result of this unprecedented reorganization and mission expansion, the Air Force redesignated AIA as the **Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Agency**

On 29 September 2014, AFISRA was redesignated the **25th Air Force**.

Twenty-Fifth Air Force



Mission

We execute worldwide intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance to protect and defend the United States and its global interests.

Vision

We will employ innovative ISR, Cyber, and EW capabilities, fully integrated into joint multidomain operations, to detect, disrupt, deter, destroy, and defeat our adversaries.

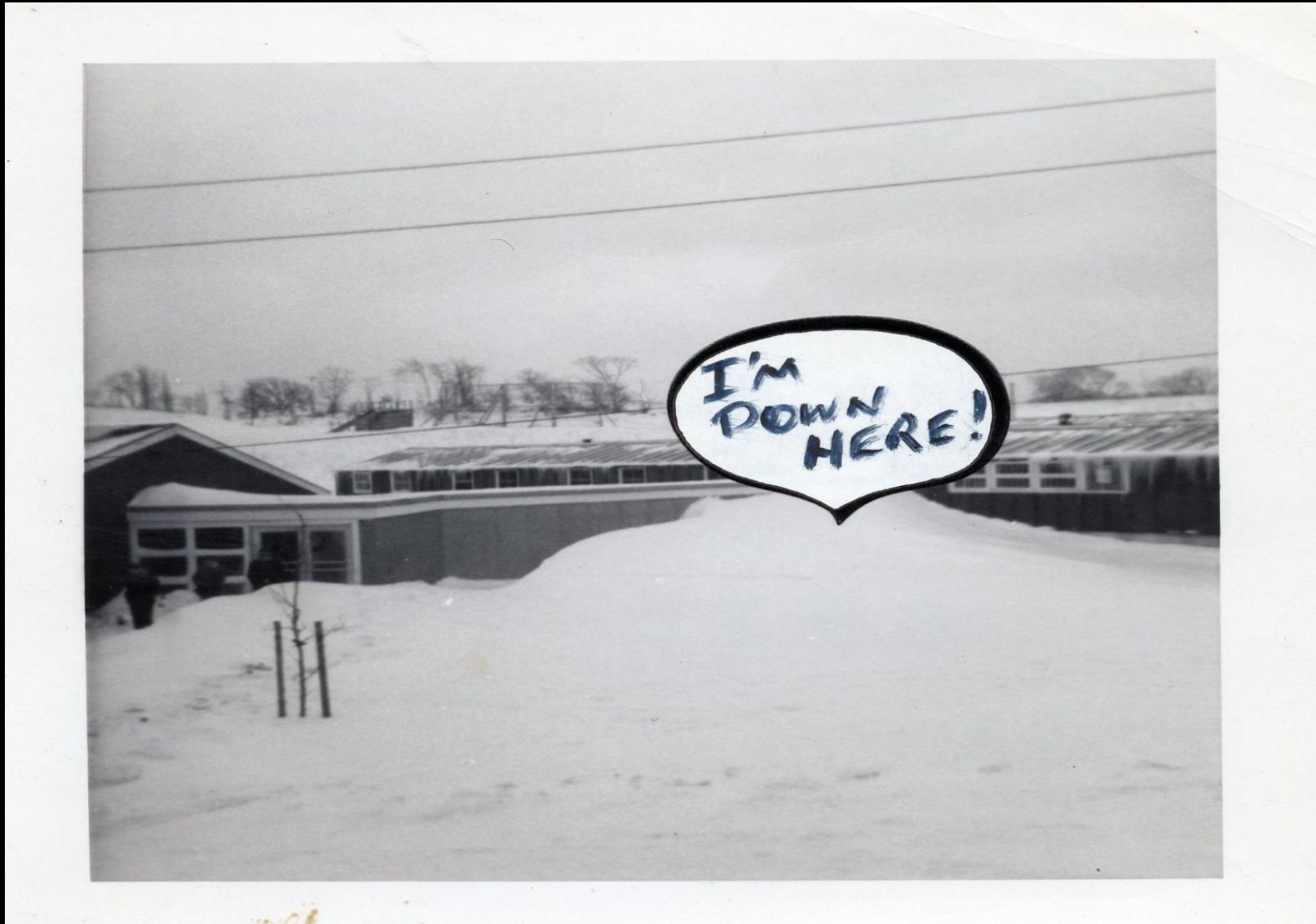
Priorities



Maj. Gen. Mary F. O'Brien is the Commander of the Twenty-Fifth Air Force, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas



Skytop – Syracuse University January 1966



Always time for recreation

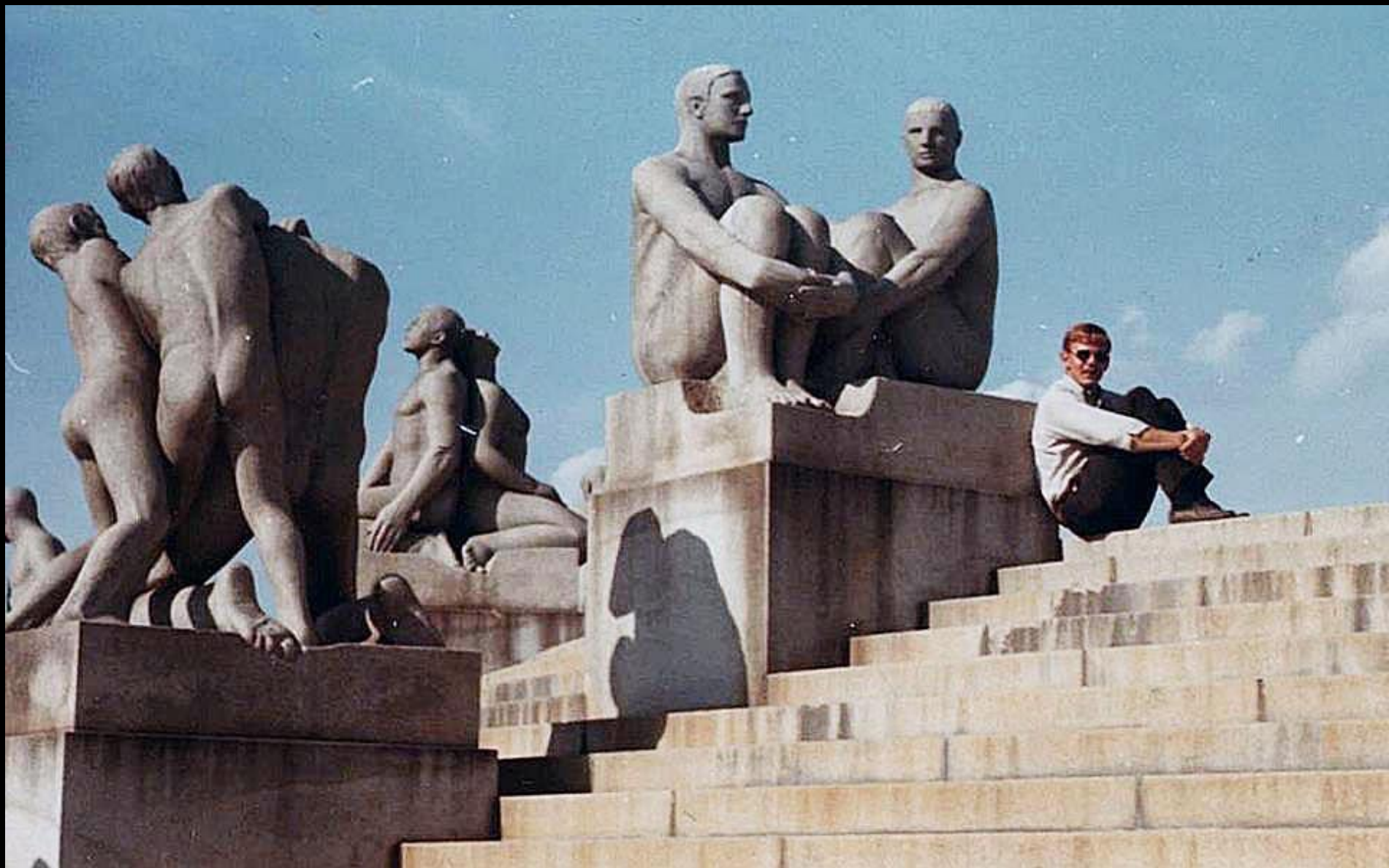
Riding in Texas



Sailing in the Aegean



Chilling in Norway



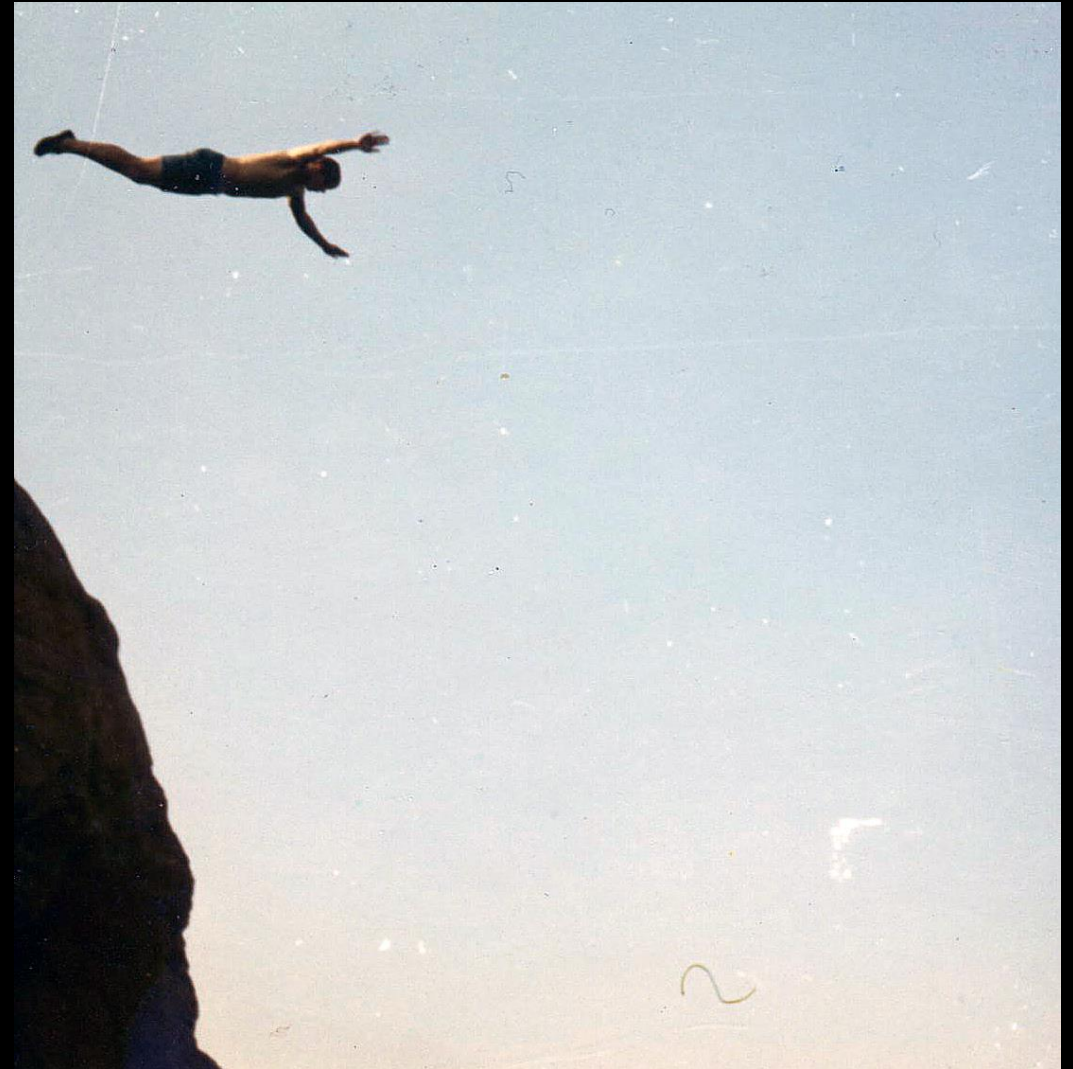
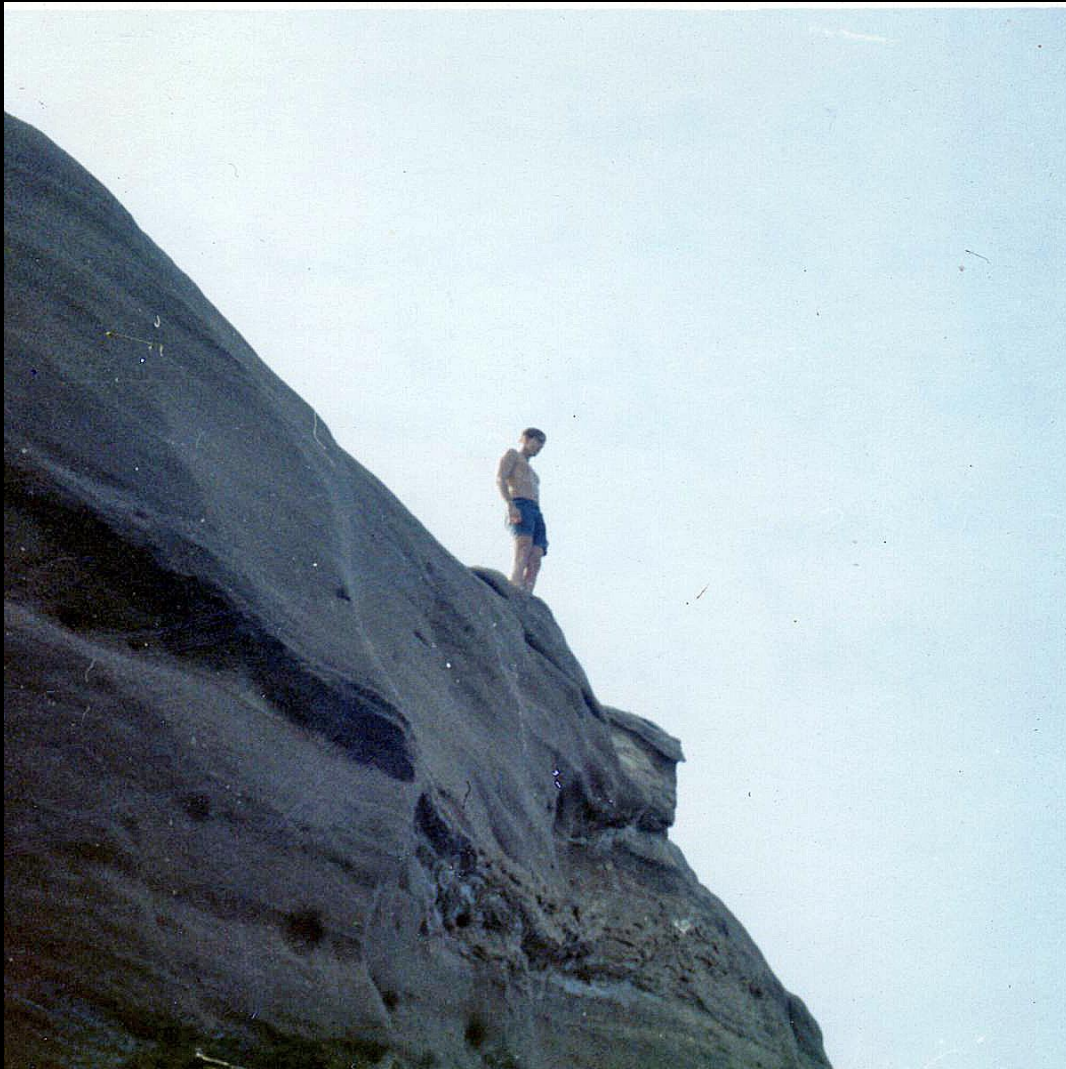
A visit to the Parthenon



A picnic on the Rhine



Cliff diving in the Aegean



Apfelwein in Sachsenhausen Christmas at my apartment



Spare time activities – The guys in the Squadron built this holiday display in the basement



The Prop Wash Gang

“We are a group of rapidly aging and steadily disappearing veterans, of a war that was fought with skills and talents not normally associated with the military, nor understood by the general public. Our pride is in accomplishments that are often secret, and memories are about things that happened, but will be officially denied.”

- - Bill Mahan, 15 June 2008

Crewmates and friends forever

