

## Teasing the Bear

By Bill Watkins © May 2015

From 1957 until 1962 in Topeka, Kansas  
It was my honor and privilege to be,  
A SAC combat ready crew member  
On the RB-47H Recon aircraft you see.  
The front end crew consisted of a pilot,  
Copilot and a navigator making three.  
The rear end crew was EWOs who did  
Electronic spying on the Cold War enemy...

I was one of 2 or 3 EWOs normally on board  
And this my first combat duty role was to be.  
We rode in temporary slings in the front aisle  
For all takeoff and landings for added safety.  
Our inflight cabin was located in the bomb bay  
And thru a narrow tunnel we traveled quickly,  
Into our pressurized temperature controlled area  
And downward ejections seats were a necessity...

We did a ninety day temporary duty every year  
In one of five varied operating locations overseas,  
From which we were able to eavesdrop around  
The entire periphery of our cold war enemies.  
Our job was to capture electronic emissions  
From their defensive radar equipment array,  
So our engineers could design new equipment  
To avoid or confuse theirs in a future war day...

Our aircraft had to stay in international waters  
A minimum of 12 miles from their shore space,  
But some other U.S. aircraft over flew their land  
As did other allied aircraft at this time and place.  
This was to 'tease the bear' into turning on  
His best equipment in this 'cat and mouse' game.  
Our flight path was oft impeded by their planes  
Trying to force us into their airspace and fame?..

The Bear shot one of our crews down in 1960  
Over international waters of the Barents sea.  
No trace of the EWOs were ever to be found  
And the Pilot's body was returned routinely.  
The Navigator and Copilot after time in prison  
And thru diplomacy were eventually set free.  
Now they're/our story can be fully read  
In the 1962 The Little Toy Dog book story...

The Bear was doing similar things  
Around the North American boundary,  
Using their ships and various planes  
To check our radar equipment capability.  
Normally we escorted each other's planes  
Along their almost routine flight pathways,  
With pilots waving and taking some pictures  
To be studied and talked about in future days...

Due to technological advances over time  
Vastly different methods are in use these days,  
But electronic surveillance is part of all our lives  
And the purpose of it is and has been always.  
To gain some kind of advantage to be used  
To further a particular identity's causes new,  
In future encounters whatever form they be  
Giving advantage to the best info gathering crew...

The months we had stateside duty were great  
The hours were shorter and the duties easy.  
Our front end crew flew in similar aircraft  
To keep up their required flying proficiency.  
We EWOs flew on a limited basis with them  
Doing our training in flight simulators too.  
Time was spent doing needed ground training  
And bonding with other recon crews we knew...

In love and tribute I acknowledge greatly  
Our wives and children during these years.  
Living a portion of their lives on their own  
With limited and slow contact oft with tears.  
Thru it all as good troupers they keep on  
Doing their best while we were far away.  
And looking forward to the extra time  
We had together during our stateside days...

If you bump into me along life's way  
Just ask and I will be glad to regale you,  
With many more hours of info about  
My time and experiences on a Recon crew.  
Beware I must warn you of this accepted fact  
That I have acquired a reputation strong,  
Of talking way too often, far too loud  
And most of the time much too long...