

A TELL-TWO TALE

by Walt Stoll



The EB-47E -TT , Tell-Two model was a bomber with the bomb bay modified into an EWO compartment and 'black boxes' specifically to monitor missile telemetry.

In the summer of 1964 a 55th SRW crew flying the EB-47E Tell-Two model, comprised of AC- LtCol Leo Legard, CP-Capt Floyd Braeske, Nav-LtCol Walt Stoll, Raven1-Major Willard Ladnier, R2-Capt Irving Wisner, (*all ranks were theater spot-promotions as was the custom of the time*), at Incirlik AB, Turkey (OL-4), flew 20 alert sortie missions in the period 22 July – 25 September without a late take-off or abort. Most likely a record for the wing and maybe all of SAC.



L to R: Legard, Braeske, Stoll, Ladnier, Wisner

What makes this whole story unusual is that during this tour, the Tell-Two operations to monitor USSR missile test launches routinely called for two crews and aircraft to be on alert, ready for short notice launches at any given time. One crew was primary, another secondary, and they rotated regularly. Those circumstances would normally preclude a specific crew from completing an inordinate number of sorties since the mission executions were purely random. However, strange things do happen.

Once the primary crew and aircraft launched on a mission (*quite often at o-dark hundred*), it was common practice for the secondary crewmembers to leave all their flying gear and mission materials at their respective positions in the aircraft. Then they were free to resume their routine activities on base: swimming, volleyball (*jungle rules*), o-club, BX, library (*yeah, right*); but were still on alert status.

However, if the primary mission was aborted, the alert alarm would sound and the secondary crew would madly scramble to get to the backup plane. It was our unfortunate lot to be paired with a crew and aircraft that seemed to abort every other mission.

As a result, I remember our crew climbing the ladder into the plane dressed in anything from slacks, Hawaiian shirts, wet swim trunks, sandals, et al, then, taxiing to make the fastest take-

off possible and fly the mission. It was a lot of fun trying to get into flight suits and boots in those cramped areas of the aircraft while enroute to the designated surveillance area.

On one of our missions while patrolling over eastern Iran, the area for picking up telemetry from Soviet missile launches, we staggered up to 45,000 ft. Former RB pilots will remember how the aircraft responded at that altitude. She shuddered, stalled and almost ceased flying, but Leo held her there and steady as possible so the ravens could get their work done. After that one, one Mr Brown, who debriefed us, said that we had gotten a ten million dollar, one tenth of a second 'take' on a rare signal type.

Here's something else pilots can appreciate, because Leo would never take credit for himself. We 55th crews took a lot of flak from the AF fighter jocks at Incirlik about how much better they were in their hot planes than we were in our "slow, lumbering aircraft".

So, on our final mission before going home, upon calling for landing instructions, Leo had the copilot ask for permission to do a 360-degree overhead approach to landing.

The tower immediately questioned the request and wanted to know the type of aircraft. Once we ID-ed as a multi-engine jet, the tower asked two more times for aircraft type, but finally and reluctantly granted approval.

Well, Leo pushed full-throttle to the engines and pulled the plane up into a tight turn, stayed inside the airfield boundaries, lined up on the runway and set her down as neat and smoothly as you can imagine.

The fighter jocks must have been alerted by the tower guys about what was going to happen, as a bunch of them were watching. We never were again ragged about our "clumsy ol' bird".

On an earlier deployment, from 13 July to 17 October 1963, the same front end crew, with ravens Capt Frank Forrest and 1Lt Dominic Ricci, flew 18 Tell-Two missions from Incirlik without an abort or late take-off. This would give Crew E-38's front end crew 38 consecutive successful alert missions. Something to be proud of and remembered.

I gleaned the flight data from my personal Form 5a and flight orders.

Submitted by
Walt Stoll, Wills Point, TX