

## **ML.59.THUMP!**

In January 2023, the U.S. military disclosed what it characterized as an unsafe maneuver in December by a Chinese fighter jet that U.S. military officials said flew too close to an American reconnaissance aircraft in international e near the island. The Chinese J-11 fighter pulled within 20 feet of the American plane's nose forcing the RC-135 to take evasive maneuvers to avoid a collision," U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement.

This was considered routine when we flew so much so we never reported it as it gave us the opportunity to photograph their aircraft from our cockpit close-up capturing the type armament and any new mods they had. The "boffins" who interpreted this intel were delighted as it gave them a keen insight and confirmation of some of the development of which they were aware but had no photographic evidence.

"Thumping" was a favorite of the Russian fighters. We always knew their position relative to us as the linguists in back were monitoring the communications between the fighters and ground controllers. "Thump"...Our lead enlisted Russian linguist in the back would call the front cockpit and advise us "he" (fighter) was backing off to our six o'clock position where we obviously could not see him but when he started forward our linguist would warn us ..."here he comes"... and he did, very fast ... beneath our aircraft pulling up straight ahead to insure we would fly through his jet wash ...."THUMP"! Much like encountering turbulence from the weather.

I've had one on each wing tip flying formation with us. Had them come beneath and slightly behind the wing to see if we were putting a playmate photo in the over-wing window and this was SAC flying during the Cold War ... as hot as I suggest it is now. SAC is "gone" and we have new "Kings" none of whom have WW II experience like the leaders we had then.

- *Steve Jordan and Reg Urschler*

