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Skunk Works Mailing List

Re: FWD: (TLC-Mission) A-12, the summer of "67"

Date: Fri, 27 Aug 1999 12:23:04 -0400
From: Joe Donoghue
Subject: Re: FWD: (TLC-Mission) A-12, the summer of "67"

At 10:57 PM 08/26/1999 -0700, Terry Colvin forwarded the following from Howard Wyman. It appears to be a mixture of historical fact, rumor and inaccurate memories.

>A lot of the A-12 (Oxcart) project revolved around the testing of
>SR-71/YF-12A/D-21 drone projects. The majority of tests were done at Area
>51, Nevada, as the A-12 were kept there. They belonged to the CIA, not the
>Air Force. The YF-12A interceptor version was made somewhat visible to the
>public, so if an aircraft was spotted somewhere you would automatically
>assume it was a YF-12A. One must understand the flying of spyplanes, by the
>Air Force, was revoked after the Powers incident in 1960. The Air Force did
>not resume operational missions until the SR-71 deployment.

I don't know what he means by "the flying of spyplanes" here. All US assets stopped overflying the Soviet Union after Powers was shot down, however, penetration of Soviet territory by USAF was pretty much shut down after SAC flew 3 RB-57Ds over Vladivostok in December 1956. The Air Force continued to operate its own U-2s on "operational" missions, including peripheral photography of Siberia during 1959 and 1960, many missions over Cuba beginning in October 1962 and a long deployment to Vietnam which began in early 1964.

>
>The government states the first operational mission of a SR-71 was flown

from
>Kadena AB, Okinawa on May 31, 1967.

I'd like to see a cite for this.

>Filming the Chinese detonating their first atomic bomb was also done at around >this time, by a SR-71 our government states.

I'd like to see a cite on this statement, also. I do not believe we ever filmed the "detonation" of a Chinese nuke AND the first Chinese nuke was detonated on October 16, 1964, several years before the A-12 was deployed and two months before the first flight of the SR-71. Corona satellites filmed the test site before and after the blast and ROCAF/CIA U-2s which were standing by at Takhli, Thailand were not used against the PRC nuke test site in 1964. At least one U-2 mission was flown to the Lop Nur test site in the summer of 1967 from Takhli while the A-12s were at Kadena.

> Actually the aircraft used for these missions were the A-12. The government doesn't officially admit this, even today.

The pilots don't remember them either

>During May 1967 A-12's 60-6930, 60-6932, and 60-6937 were deployed to Det. 1 >Kadena AB. They were painted off to the layman as SR-71. These aircraft had >no visible markings except a small red tail number painted on them. Missing >was the rear cockpit that ALL SR-71 have.

>
>I deployed with the 2nd group of TDY personnel from Beale AFB, to Kadena AB >in July of 1967. Our initial deployment to support the CIA were 10 KC-135Q >tankers. The tankers were sent to Kadena in April 1967, prior to the A-12 >movement.

snipped a lot of interesting tanker stuff.

>The A-12 missions would generate an 18 hour day for us, separate from the >"Tiger" one. These missions did take precedence!!! The A-12 would fly north >to south, down all of Vietnam,

Crickmore and the pilots say they flew East to West over North Vietnam, refueled over Thailand and then flew West-East over a different track over North Vietnam.

>and then refuel at or over U-Tapao. It would >then fly the same route south to north, for comparison photos, and return to >Kadena. What made the day so long was having to launch tankers at different >intervals, so they would arrive at the correct location on time, throughout >the mission. Other missions were flown over North Korea, China

Again, the A-12 pilots don't seem to remember any China missions. Nor do the flight planners. I guess the men in black got to them.

>and during the capture of the U.S.S. Pueblo.

>The down time for maintenance on the A-12 (or SR-71) was extensive due to the >nature of the aircraft. The Chine bay covers all had to be removed for >access to the equipment, and these were not secured with dzuz fasteners. We >were required to remove, bench test and align, and then reinstall all >equipment.

We? The tanker avionics maintenance guys from Beale were working on the A-12s which deployed from A51? Funny, I'd have thought the OXCART team would have deployed self-sufficient in that regard. I'll have to ask the A-12 Det commander when I see him in October.

I felt extremely sorry for the instrument shop, as they were >required to remove and calibrate every one after each flight.

Snipped the rest. The A-12 lost from Kadena went down on June 5, 1968, not the 2nd.

Joe Donoghue

PS: Enjoy your stay in Kuwait, Terry

>"Hap" Wyman
>

>Howard "Hap" Wyman
>--
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>Home Page: < <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Shadowlands/8832> >
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>Member: Thailand-Laos-Cambodia Brotherhood (TLCB) Mailing List
> TLCB Web Site: < <http://www.tlc-brotherhood.org> >
>Southeast Asia (SEA) service:
>Vietnam - Theater Telecommunications Center/HHC, 1st Aviation Brigade
> (Jan 71 - Aug 72)
>Thailand/Laos
> - Telecommunications Center/U.S. Army Support Thailand
> (USARSUPTHAI), Camp Samae San (Jan 73 - Aug 73)
> - Special Security/Strategic Communications - Thailand
> (STRATCOM - Thailand), Phu Mu (Pig Mountain) Signal Site
> (Aug 73 - Jan 74)
>

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Created: Fri Aug 27 13:36:28 EDT 1999