

Jiu-Jitsu, the still secret operation

I can see it as if it was yesterday, The tall tail-fins of the RB45s with the oversized RAF fin-flashes. They were grouped around building 1322 which was Sculthorpe's most southerly hangar. They were the USAF's 91st SRW painted in RAF colours for a special mission, Jiu-Jitsu. The USAF wanted to photograph possible Russian nuclear targets but President Truman would hear nothing of it, and so the USAF approached the RAF for help. Although Prime Minister Attlee was hesitant about it, the RAF took a chance and formed a Special Duties flight in anticipation. They were sent to the US for training and most thought that they were evaluating the aircraft for possible RAF use but some officers knew what the real plan was.

Churchill was returned as Prime Minister and he was interested in the plan. The Special Duty flight returned to Sculthorpe and an exploratory flight was made high and fast down the Berlin air corridor to see the reaction of the Soviets but there was none. In April 1952 Churchill gave the go-ahead for a mission comprising three different routes into the USSR, these passed without incident and the RAF crews returned to their regular jobs.

There was talk of another mission which was a joint mission with the USAF and RAF but the USAF pulled out because of political implications and there was also a suggestion that security had been compromised.

Nothing was heard for a year and then the go-ahead was then given for another sortie while the 91st were still at Sculthorpe, Strategic Air Command still held Sculthorpe.

This time the Soviets knew that they were there, in particular the aircraft that had elected to take the longest route into the USSR. MiG fighters were told to ram it but they did not have radar and could not find it in the dark! Apart from some flak and a missed AAR slot the aircraft returned home safe and that was the end of it as far as is known.

When the 47th Bombardment Wing arrived at Sculthorpe some of the RB45s were disbursed around its squadrons. There is anecdotal evidence that another sortie was planned. An RB45 was stripped of all identification including serial numbers on equipment and instruments then it went away for a while, at that point the informant got the feeling that he had already said too much and so the end of the story may remain a mystery!

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