

The Genesis of training the Japanese Self Defense Forces in Signal Collection and analysis:

By Rick Heckler

Part I: “The Dilemma”

In the summer of 1964 Cdr. Albert T. Holt assigned me to his flight Crew and the position of Operations Chief. In addition to the responsibility for the 200+ enlisted crew-members’ training and qualifications; an additional daily duty was to review all incoming classified traffic received by the squadron, and compile a “read” list of information pertinent to the various Department Head’s activities. Communiques were both directive, for squadron tasking, and informational, for Elint subjects affecting the area. After a couple of months of screening incoming traffic, I came across a message involving DOD, DOS, JCS and other alphabet organizations, discussing the dilemma of a non-authorized commitment to the Japanese by a DOS person, to train them in Elint collection and analysis. The problem arose in 1959, and the discussions amongst the recipients ranged from how to get out of the commitment diplomatically, or to provide some low-level of training, while not sharing our database of signal analysis. After five years of haggling, the pressure to implement some form of action had risen to “critical”.

I thought through the issue and discussed with Cdr. Holt an approach that would gather spare or obsolete equipment from all services, in order to establish a single, ground collection station site; train JSDF personnel and then leave it to the Japanese to construct additional stations in order to triangulate signal sources. Cdr. Holt had me draft a formal plan, which he submitted up the chain-of-command.

The plan was approved to be conducted under the aegis of the JCS; would be logistically supported by MAAG Japan to warehouse the incoming equipment, and provide classroom space; and the team would be led by a Commissioned Officer and instructors would be comprised from AFSS, ASA and VQ-1. As the originator of the action plan, I along with Larry Brosh, represented the two navy personnel.

Anecdote #1: The Air Force contingent; Capt. Robert Fisher and TSgt. Fred Bishop; were from AFSS Training Command and were assigned to bring their lesson plans and some of the equipment for the installation site. Their shipment of materials became lost in transit, which gave me the opportunity to define the content of the training program. Because my belief was that operators and analysts would be more skillful if they had a fundamental knowledge of the theories of transceivers, antennas and waveform propagation; I combined our squadron’s operator syllabus with my B School notes to create daily lesson plans each night, for the next day’s classes. After this applications’ success with the JSDF class; demonstrated by their quality of performance at their site; we updated our course at VQ-1, which was then shared with VQ-2.

“Part 2” will explore the adventure at the installation site and very humorous events that occurred; followed by “Part 3”, the “Airborne” program and how we deliberately caused an international crisis between Russia and Japan.

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Part 2: "The Installation Adventure"

The JSDF training program in Tokyo lasted 12 weeks, with 32 tri-service Japanese students, while the compound in Hokkaido was being built. The facility consisted of a large courtyard surrounded by a high wall, metal pickets and a double-gate entry with intercom and camera surveillance. The main building contained a mess-hall, sleeping quarters, duty office and operations center; with a silo at the end of the structure to house a receiving antenna. It also contained a common bath facility, as well as a generator in-a-pit which comes in-play in a subsequent part of the story.

Anecdote#2: For those inexperienced with Japanese toilets and baths; the toilets are porcelain holes (no seats) and the bath contained multiple hot/cold faucets around the base of the walls; where attendees can wash and rinse (with wooden buckets and short wooden stools) before entering the central large tub (@ 110 degrees) and soak with all the other attendees, before drying off and ending the bath. Both sexes and all ages typically participate in this process together. Our hosts were aware that Americans utilized different facilities; so in anticipation of our arrival, they went to a nearby, former U.S. Air Force Communications facility, and confiscated a commode that they adapted to straddle one porcelain hole, and added piping and shower head alongside their tub, for our use only. Each day, before the end of the day-shift, a building staff member would fire up the boiler, and when the tub was full of hot water, we Americans would be called to shower and soak, and when we exited, the rest of the crew would then go through their bath ritual. The night before our departure we altered their honorable ritual dramatically. But, that's to be described at the end of Part 2.

Anecdote#3: When I first arrived in Japan in 1954, I observed that the Japanese seemed to be very inefficient; working in teams when one person could accomplish the task and using very indirect approaches to getting a job complete. Over time I realized that the inefficiency was deliberate, in post WWII bankruptcy, and the need to lower unemployment. However, I believe the method became standard practice. When our team first toured the new facility, it was pointed out that the city power was frequently off-line, so they had an emergency generator; in a pit, below ground level, in the Boiler-room. Hokkaido freezes from September to late April, and when the ground thaws it is saturated with water and with a generator below ground level, subject to filling with water. When I mentioned that, it was proudly pointed out that they had put in a pump in the pit, controlled by a switch at the top of the stairs, so when they were alerted to the rising water they would turn on the switch. We walked off shaking our heads, and got on with installing the equipment. Three weeks later, I observed one of our students fabricating a circular aluminum device with a rod sticking out of it. This had nothing to do with our project, so I asked what it was for. He said he was building a float and that the rod would be connected to a micro-switch, so when the water rose above a certain level, it would activate the micro-switch. I was absolutely thrilled. I thought being around our team had rubbed off on him. Then, when he completed the hook up he demonstrated what he did; which was connect the micro-switch, not to the pump, but the bell in the Duty Office; to alert the on-duty person to go down the hall and turn on the pump manually. What a let-down! I asked how they wired the bell, and he said they already had one that ran underground to the button at the main gate, for gaining entry. Do I need to state the obvious?? When the bell rings how can they know if it's the gate or micro-switch? Sooooo, after work I waited for everyone to be down for the night; except the duty person; and Larry

and I wired the micro-switch up to the ceiling and across the hall into our sleeping quarters; then commenced to activate the bell, listened for the on-duty person to run down the hall, check the pit, go to the front door and check the gate, see nothing and settle back down in the office; then trigger the bell again. After several activations we heard members of the staff getting up to dig up the wiring to the gate, so we had to fess up that we were doing it and why. Welcome to Gaijin humor.

As we approached the end of the eight weeks on-site, we had installed the directional receiving system and recorders; had fabricated an analysis station patch-panel which provided the capability to conduct full signal analysis; and conducted two weeks of training in collection and report generation. We were done!

The day before we were to depart, we decided to pull a prank that the students would remember for the rest of their lives. We went into town and bought a woman's slip and bra, a box of laundry soap, a mop, balloons, shaving cream and bottles of perfume. When we were called to commence our bath, we took in our supplies. Capt. Fisher put on the bra (filled with two water balloons), slip and put the mop (separated from the pole) on his head; and positioned himself at the far wall in-line with the entry door. The rest of us dumped the soap in the tub, stirred it up until the bath room was full of suds. We grabbed a bottle of perfume and shaving cream, and announced that we were done with our baths and the crew could come in. As they entered enmasse, they were shocked at what they saw, and then we started peppering them with shaving cream and perfume, and they started running out and down the halls with us in pursuit. Total chaos and yelling.....until I chased a student into the mess-hall, where a JSDF Col. (we didn't know was in the building for the next day's ceremony) was conversing with the site Commander. That quickly ended our prank. But at least they experienced a second dose of Gaijin humor. It must have had a positive effect on them, because they all came to the train station the next day to see us off, and all had tears in their eyes as we pulled out.

Part 3 involves the airborne program we conducted with their P2V crews.

Part 3: P2V Airborne Program:

In the fall of 1966, Cdr. Melvin Klein and I received an invitation to meet with a U.S. Embassy employee in Tokyo for lunch. It turned out that the "employee" was the CIA Station Chief, Paul R..., who wanted to discuss conducting another training program. This one for the JSDF Naval Aviation Unit flying in P2V's provided by the U.S. several years earlier. He informed me that when their fleet of P2's were turned over to them, they all had the ALR-8 system, DF Antennas and recorders, installed in them. So this program wouldn't involve any equipment or logistical support. He also advised us that he was the intermediary to the upper echelon of the JSDF on the previous program, so this program would only involve him, us and the JSDF hierarchy. I advised him that we could conduct the program over an 8 week period, if I could get the right people to assist. With that we launched the 2nd program.

The two people I had in mind to assist, were Larry Brosh and Robert Bradford, so I put in a request to BuPers to cut TDY orders for them, for 10 weeks. BuPers denied the request, stating they were critical to their current commands; so I should submit the qualifications I needed and they would perform a computer search and find two candidates. Okay; so it had to be two people who had Elint experience in the Pacific theatre as Opera-

tors, and spoke some Japanese. They amazingly came up with Larry Brosh and Bob Bradford!

After assembling the training materials, we commenced the program after New Year's Day. We conducted the classes, Monday-Friday, at a hotel near the airfield where the P2's were based.

The initial plan did not involve any flight time, for collection practice, but as the classes progressed we determined, 1. It would be the only way to develop skills/techniques in a realistic environment, and 2. It might stir up the Russian facilities in the Sakhalin and Kuril islands (where it was suspected that some new state-of-the-art equipment was installed but never illuminated).

I contacted Paul R..., and discussed our recommendation to conduct two days of flights, involving 3 P2's, with 1 instructor and 1/3 of the students in each plane; stacked @ 1,000 feet separations. We would fly from Tokyo to southern Hokkaido on day one and the northern tip of Hokkaido on day two; returning on the eastern edge of Hokkaido, in order to have the best opportunity to find signals of interest.

Paul advised me JSDF was adamant that there would not be any flight time under this program, due to their concern of any Russian response. I requested a meeting with JSDF so I could pitch my rationale.

Paul accompanied me to the meeting, where I stressed the value of the training would not be achieved without conducting airborne collections. That our flight plan would not at any time cross the land-mass of Japan, so there should not be any concern for Russia. They reluctantly approved the plan.

The strategy was that on the first day, flying only to southern Hokkaido with two aircraft stacked one above the other, with Americans speaking over the radio in Japanese; would capture Russian attention and curiosity. On the second day, continuing past lower Hokkaido on a direct path to Sakhalin, might indicate day one was a dry run, and this is real and they'd bring up everything they had. Day one went smoothly, and the students recorded a lot of non-essential signals. Day two, as desired, had Russian activity as we neared the northern tip, and they launched interceptor A/C and some new radars just as we peeled off to the east and were then coming down at the Kuril's. The Navigator on my A/C was a little late in making the right turn, so we slightly exceeded the landmass (luckily for me). They launched A/C from a Kuril base as well. Success!

When we landed at the base in Tokyo, a staff car with Paul in it, pulled up to my A/C on the ramp and he informed me we were going to JSDF headquarters immediately, to explain why we had triggered a diplomatic complaint from Russia. At the meeting I explained that our flight plan, as promised, was laid out to remain over land, and that a slight error by the Navigator put us over water, but still within their territorial space, for just a couple of minutes. They were obviously unhappy, but the explanation was accepted. We did record signals not seen before!

Two of the most interesting experiences of my career!!!