

USAF Security Service

Last week, I wrote about the unit my father served in during WWI. This week, you will learn about the Air Force Security Service and the Wing I served in during the 1960s. The Security Service was created in 1948 as branch of the Air Force tasked with monitoring, collecting and interpreting military voice and electronic signals of countries of interest, which often were Soviet and their satellite Eastern bloc countries. According to one web site “the Security Service was composed primarily of airmen culled from the cream of the Air Force's enlisted recruits (the top 1/2 of 1 percent)”, Intelligence was often analyzed in the field, and the results transmitted to the National Security Agency (NSA) for further analysis and distribution to other intelligence recipients. Adopted in 1962, the motto was "Freedom Through Vigilance". The Security Service cooperated with the Army and Navy security groups all reporting to NSA. Approximately 85% of all usable intelligence came from the NSA with the remaining 15% from other sources such as CIA and State Department. Air Force linguists were sent to intensive language programs at The Presidio, CA, Yale, CT, Syracuse University, NY and University of Indiana. Following this training, Airmen we transferred to Goodfellow Air Base, TX for additional training in military language and intelligence. Once that training was completed, Airmen were assigned to duty sites on bases that surrounded the Soviet Union in Turkey, Germany, England, Alaska and Japan.

While waiting at the Induction Center in Fargo in July 1964, the Air Force liaison person took me to his office and we talked about what I should expect in the Air Force. He told me about a language test given in basic training and if I got a high enough score, I would be sent to language school. Apparently I passed because I spent 10 months at the University of Indiana and another 7 months at Goodfellow learning Russian and intelligence analysis. Our training at IU was by native Russians who spoke very little English, so we learned Russian in Russian. Our training at Goodfellow was by Air Force personnel. Upon graduation, we were assigned to one of the bases overseas. I received orders to 6921 Security Wing at Misawa, Japan where I spent the next two years. Misawa Air Base has an interesting history. In 1870, the Japanese Emperor established a stud farm for the household cavalry in the area that later became Misawa AB. The first runway was built in 1938. The world's first non-stop trans-Pacific flight left from Misawa and landed in Wenatchee WA. The Japanese used the lake at Misawa to practice for their attack on Pearl Harbor, because the lake was similar to the harbor at Pearl. Almost completely destroyed during WWII, the base became a US fighter base in 1948. The Security Wing was established in 1955 and was active until 1976. My time there was from 1966 to 1968. I was stationed there when the USS Pueblo was captured by the North Koreans. The work was really rewarding but military life was not for me, so I returned to civilian life.