

Tales of an International Ferry Flight

by Captain Mark J. Cincotta

“**A** rmy 14256, flight of two, cleared for takeoff, contact departure.” Those were the words clearing two RV-1D Mohawks for the last scheduled International Ferry Flight. The journey was scheduled to cover 30 days, four continents, and 18 countries. Fellow aviators

looked at me, CW3 Ross Schoneboom (the pilot of the other RV-1D), and our crew-chiefs, SGT Juan Rodriguez and SPC Todd McKay, with envy. They thought we were on a paid vacation. In actuality an international ferry flight is nothing less than an excellent training exercise for aviators of all experience levels.

Flying the aircraft from Stuart, FL to Camp Humphreys, Korea was a real learning experience. Unfortunately, most Army aviators accumulate thousands of flying hours flying from the airfield to the range, depriving them of the experience and knowledge an international flight has to offer. This was an opportunity to read and understand publications that most of us don't use on a daily basis.

The foreign clearance guide proved to be

CPT Cincotta is A Company Operations Officer, 3d Military Intelligence Battalion (Aerial Exploitation), Camp Humphreys, Korea.

a useful tool. It's broken down by individual countries and is key in assisting with the entire flight planning process. The foreign clearance guide gave us preferred routing for particular altitudes. It also gave us windows of validity for diplomatic clearances. That was very important since maintenance and weather delays often caused us to miss our actual arrival dates and times. Without the assistance of the foreign clearance guide, we might have attempted unauthorized entries in several instances.

Though we never caused an international incident, there was one time the foreign clearance guide failed us. We received our diplomatic clearance into Singapore from Thailand but not our clearance to transit Malaysian airspace enroute. I made the decision to hold on the ground in Thailand until we could confirm clearance through Malaysian airspace. We were delayed two