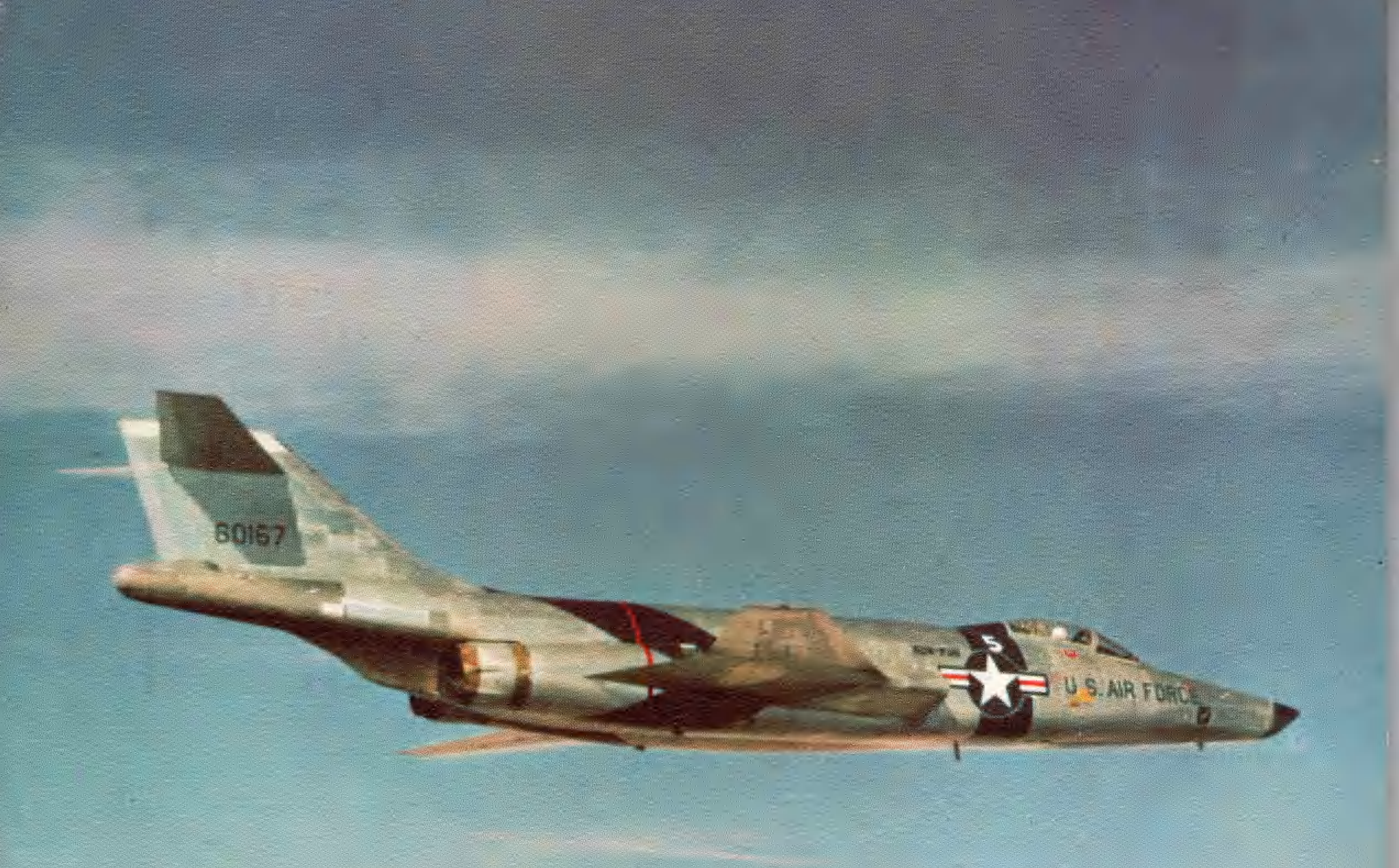


OPERATION

SUN RUN

1957

COVER:
McDonnell RF-101 enroute to New York
during record breaking Operation **SUN RUN**

"Congratulations" J. S. McDonnell, President of McDonnell Aircraft Corporation, tenders congratulations of the McDonnell Team to the 363rd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing. Shown, left to right, are: Captain Donald D. Hawkins, Captain Robert J. Kilpatrick, Captain Robert M. Sweet, Mr. McDonnell, Brigadier General Stephen B. Mack, Commander of the 363rd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, Lieutenant Gustav B. Klatt, Captain Robert E. Burkhart, and Captain Ray W. Schrecengost.

OPERATION SUN RUN 27 NOVEMBER 1957

HEADQUARTERS TACTICAL AIR COMMAND
LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, VIRGINIA

8 October 1957

OPERATION PLAN NO. 15-57
CHARTS AND MAPS REFERENCES: As required.
TASK ORGANIZATIONS:
Commander, Ninth Air Force - Major General Lee

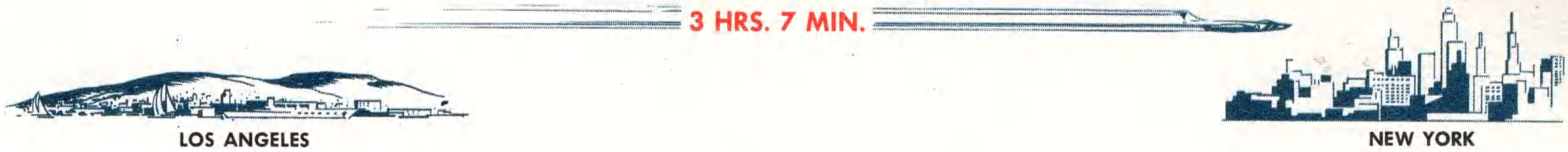
1. GENERAL SITUATION.

a. Headquarters USAF has directed Tactical Air Command to establish four (4) F/RF-101 international speed records between 2 November and 31 December 1957. Headquarters USAF message AFOOP-OC-B-2 30047, dated 4 October 1957, assigns and authorizes Mission Category II for all support areas associated with this task.

(1) Four (4) RF-101C aircraft will participate in a speed run from west coast (Los Angeles, California) to east coast (New York, New York) with two of the aircraft returning to west coast in an attempt to set east to west record in addition to west to east and round trip record attempts. All aircraft will be refueled with KC-135 tankers.

GEN. O. P. WEYLAND

SUN RUN planning conference held at McDonnell Aircraft Corporation in Mid-October. Project officers from Headquarters USAF, TAC, SAC, ADC, AWS, AMC, ARDC, APGC, Pratt and Whitney, and McDonnell were present.



OPERATION SUN RUN. The spectacular success of Operation SUN RUN is a tribute to a wonderfully coordinated effort on the part of an untold number of people of many talents and skills in many organizations. To those intimately associated with it, the planning and the results added up to an interesting and exciting story.

Operation SUN RUN was originally conceived about 6 months ago shortly after the "Voodoo" had entered active squadron service. The long range and high speed features of the RF-101 Voodoo together with its photographic capabilities made it a natural for a record breaking demonstration. The availability of the new KC-135 jet tankers to refuel the Voodoo became a reality, and with much planning, coordination and foresight on the part of the Air Force, Operation SUN RUN now holds a spectacular place in the history of jet aviation.

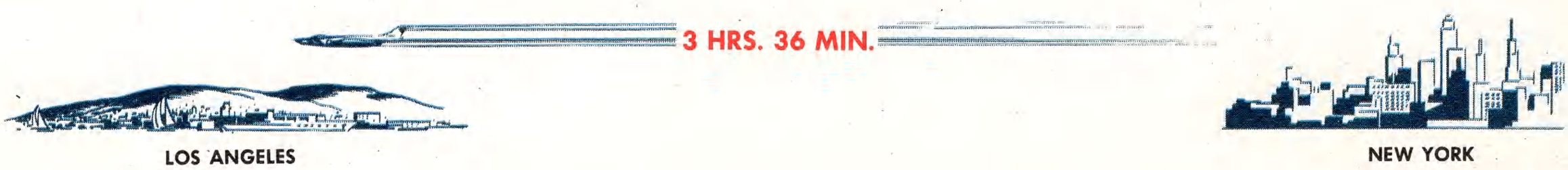
Imagine the excitement of setting forth to do something never before attempted—the establishment of three official speed records. Knowing that the Voodoo was the only airplane that could do it, Tactical Air Command expressed a desire to run such a mission. To do this, McDonnell Aircraft Corporation was asked to lay out the precise performance of the airplane and put it together in the form of a mission compatible with KC-135 tanker performance. McDonnell calculated many missions and these were presented to Air Force Headquarters and to Tactical Air Command. The Air Force Chief of Staff and the Department of Defense gave final approval for the operation on 10 September 1957.

At McDonnell Aircraft Corporation, 6 SUN RUN airplanes were prepared for delivery. They were painted bright colors so that the official timers would have no trouble in making accurate identification in Los Angeles and New York. Special in-flight refueling tests were run on these airplanes to be sure that the systems were operating correctly.

Meanwhile Tactical Air Command, having been directed to establish the speed records, was organizing the operation on a project basis. The best qualified reconnaissance pilots were selected, regardless of rank. Project officers were selected throughout the Air Force and their responsibilities assigned. In mid-October a conference of all project officers was convened at McDonnell in St. Louis, Missouri. Following the conference at McDonnell a command post headquarters was established at Ent Air Force Base, Colorado, and the Air Defense Command Communication System and Radar Controlling was set up. Tanker support from SAC and ARDC was arranged and the mission details were dove-tailed into the tanker capabilities. The weather, key to the success of the entire mission, was forecast by top Air Force experts to be sure that SUN RUN was launched under favorable conditions.

In early November, the selected SUN RUN pilots had flown their Voodoos to George Air Force Base in California to begin practicing for the Operation. Rendezvous and refueling exercises had been realistically planned and the radar controllers did an excellent job of putting the Voodoo and tanker together 7 miles high. In a short time the flight crews were ready to go. The rest is History.

Most people do not realize the planning, effort and precision required to make missions such as this, a success. Nevertheless, these sorts of missions are routine and are being conducted on an around-the-clock basis throughout the Air Force.



SUN RUN PILOTS. Left to Right—Lieutenant Klatt, Captain Hawkins, Captain Kilpatrick, Captain Burkhart, Captain Sweet, Captain Schrecengost.

CAPTAIN ROBERT M. SWEET
17th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron
Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina
Home Town: Barronett, Wisconsin

Captain Sweet established a *new* Los Angeles to New York to Los Angeles round trip (non-stop) speed record of 6 hours, 46 minutes, 36.21 seconds and a *new* New York to Los Angeles speed record of 3 hours, 36 minutes, 32.33 seconds. Captain Sweet also broke the old Los Angeles to New York speed record.

CAPTAIN RAY W. SCHRECENGOST
18th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron
Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina
Home Town: Kittanning, Pennsylvania

Captain Schrecengost broke 3 existing speed records on his round trip (non-stop) flight:
Los Angeles to New York—3 hours, 15 minutes, 41.10 seconds.
New York to Los Angeles—4 hours, 1 minute, 26.64 seconds.
Round Trip—7 hours, 17 minutes, 7.74 seconds.

3 HRS. 7 MIN.

LOS ANGELES

NEW YORK

FIRST LIEUTENANT GUSTAV B. KLATT
18th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron
Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina
Home Town: Houston, Texas

Lieutenant Klatt established a *new* Los Angeles to New York speed record of 3 hours, 7 minutes, 43.63 seconds.

CAPTAIN ROBERT J. KILPATRICK
17th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron
Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina
Home Town: Bristol, Connecticut

Captain Kilpatrick broke the existing West to East speed record by flying from Los Angeles to New York in 3 hours, 11 minutes, 39.74 seconds.

Captain Burkhart and Captain Hawkins flew spare RF-101 Voodoos. After being informed at the first tanker station that the preceding aircraft had successfully completed their first in-flight refueling, they returned to Los Angeles.

CAPTAIN ROBERT E. BURKHART
18th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron
Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina
Home Town: Alliance, Ohio

CAPTAIN DONALD D. HAWKINS
17th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron
Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina
Home Town: Springfield, Missouri

U. S. AIR FORCE OFFICIAL SPEED RECORD

RECORD BREAKING SPEEDS

	OLD RECORD	NEW RECORD
L. A. TO N. Y.	(723.517 MPH)	781.7409 MPH
N. Y. TO L. A.	(469.383 MPH)	677.7262 MPH
L. A. - N. Y.- L. A.	(513.496 MPH)	721.8532 MPH

RECORD BREAKING TIMES

	OLD RECORD	NEW RECORD
L. A. TO N. Y. 2445.9 STATUTE MILES	(3 HOURS, 22 MIN., 50.05 SEC.)	3 HRS., 07 MIN., 43.63 SEC.
N. Y. TO L. A. 2445.9 STATUTE MILES	(5 HOURS, 12 MIN., 39.24 SEC.)	3 HRS., 36 MIN., 32.33 SEC.
L. A. - N. Y. - L. A. 4891.8 STATUTE MILES	(9 HOURS, 31 MIN., 35.40 SEC.)	6 HRS., 46 MIN., 36.21 SEC.

"Winged Oasis" FILLING STATION

The success of Operation **SUN RUN** was due, in no small measure, to the tanker capabilities. Shown is the tanker that refueled the **SUN RUN** Voodoos on the last leg of their round trip, record breaking run. The crew, from left to right are:

Major EDWARD B. FITCH, *Pilot;* **Major JACK N. FANCHER,** *Co-Pilot;* **Captain GUSTAV M. FENSKE,** *Navigator;* **T/Sgt. ROBERT E. DALL,** *Boom Operator;* **T/Sgt. JACK R. TAGLIARINI,** *Crew Chief.*

"UP A LITTLE . . . . . !"
Boom operator's view of one of the RF-101 Voodoos coming up behind the tanker prior to refueling hook-up during Operation **SUN RUN.**

Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker refueling a record breaking **SUN RUN** Voodoo. The new jet tankers are now in service with the Strategic Air Command and the Air Force Research and Development Command.

3 HRS. 36 MIN.

LOS ANGELES

NEW YORK

VOODOO MEDICINE MEN The men behind the men that flew the planes that broke the records.

Installing camera equipment in **SUN RUN** airplane.

SUN RUN airplanes in line at George Air Force Base, California. The McDonnell Voodoos are distinctively marked for ease of identification by timing officials.

3 HRS. 7 MIN.

LOS ANGELES

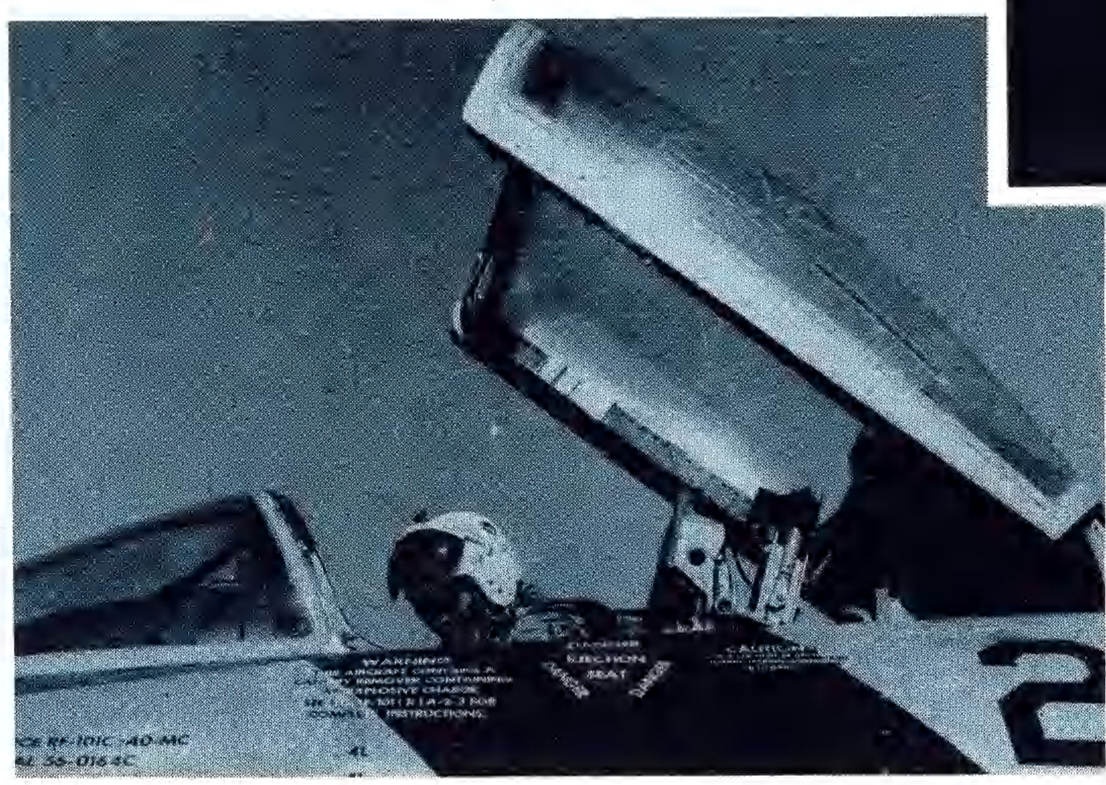
NEW YORK

Success or failure of Operation SUN RUN depended on accurate weather prediction.

Shown are weather predicting experts, Major Harold Banks (left) and Captain Edward L. Brant of the 2nd Air Weather Group at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia.

Careful planning paid off.

SUN RUN pilots with Lt. Colonel William H. Nelson, Project Officer.

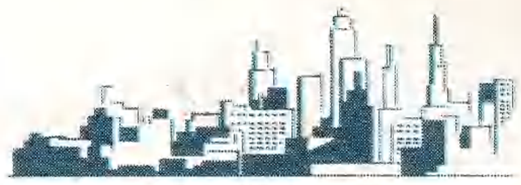


PREPARE FOR TAKE-OFF!

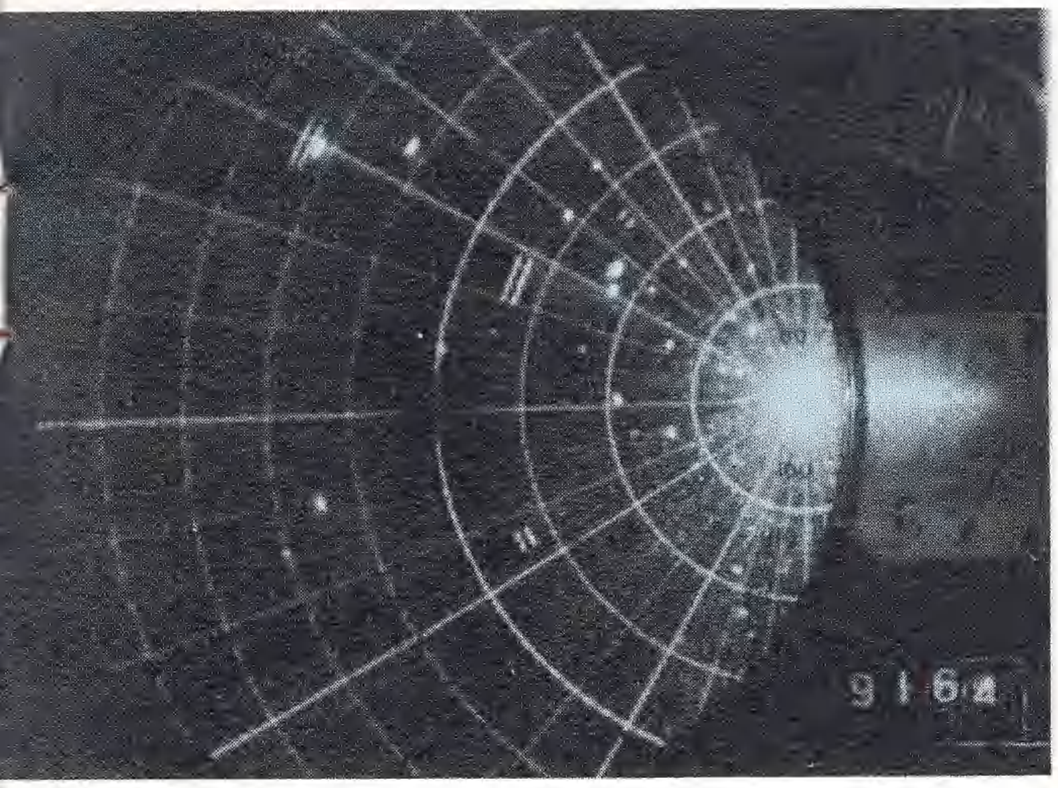
One of the **SUN RUN** Voodoos streaking away from Ontario International Airport, Los Angeles, on the first leg of a record breaking, cross-country speed run.

3 HRS. 36 MIN.

LOS ANGELES

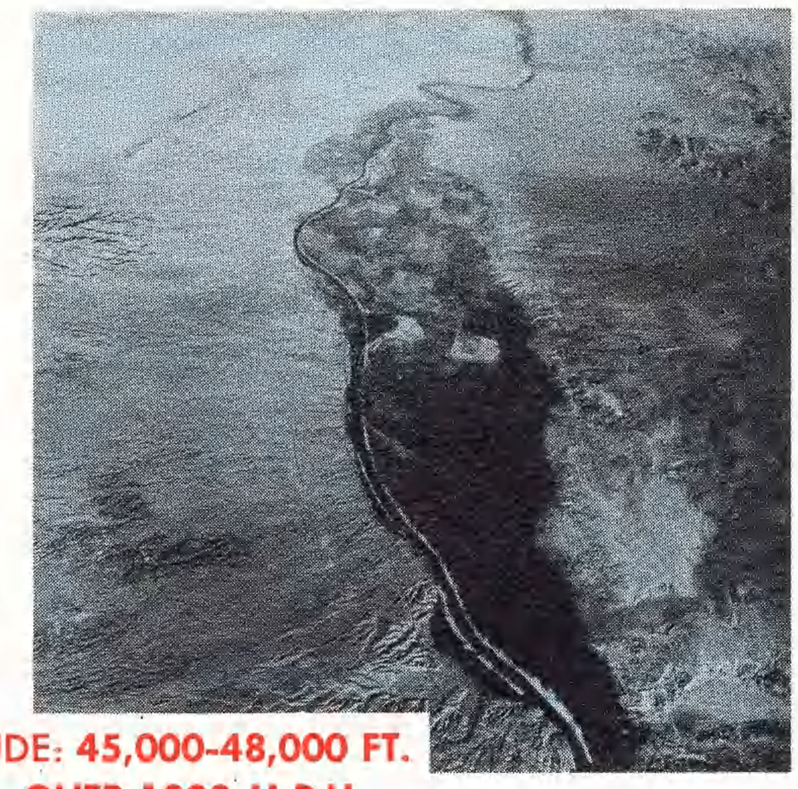


NEW YORK

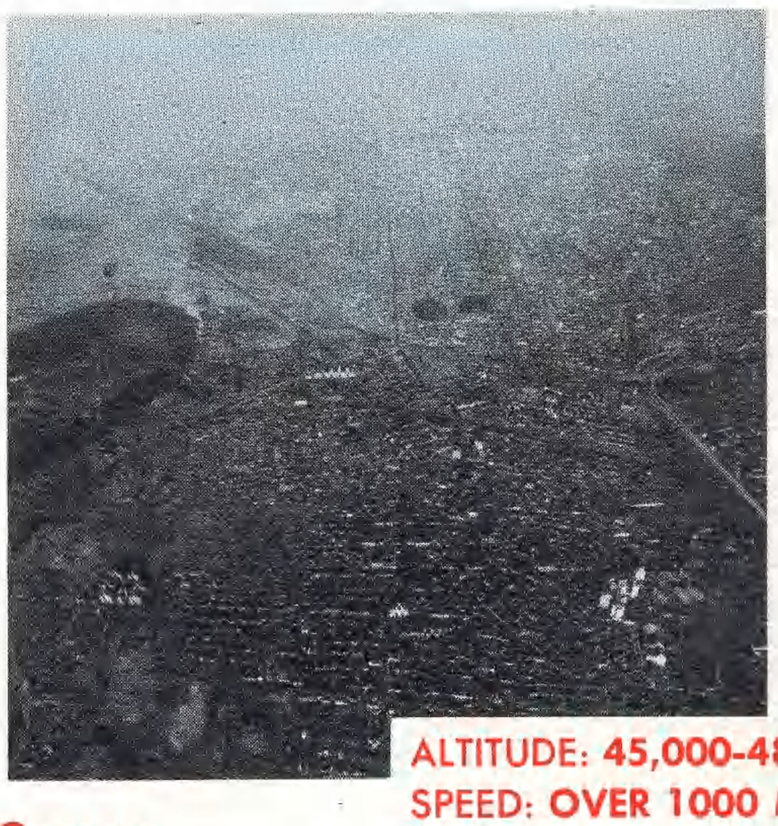


A radar scope in one of the Air Defense Command GCI facilities that provided communications, navigation and tanker hook-up control for the **SUN RUN** aircraft during the record breaking run across the United States.

NEEDLES, CALIFORNIA TO NEWARK, NEW JERSEY



ALTITUDE: **45,000-48,000 FT.**
SPEED: **OVER 1000 M.P.H.**



ALTITUDE: **45,000-48,000 FT.**
SPEED: **OVER 1000 M.P.H.**

TIME 2 HRS. 43 MIN.

Captain Kilpatrick landing at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey.

GENERAL O. P. WEYLAND, Commander of the Tactical Air Command, awarding the Distinguished Flying Cross to Lt. Klatt (center) and the Air Medal to Captain Kilpatrick.

"Well done"!

BRIGADIER GENERAL STEPHEN B. MACK, Commander of the 363rd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross to Captain Sweet for establishing a new Los Angeles to New York to Los Angeles speed record.

GENERAL MACK congratulating Captain Schrecengost after his successful assault on the Los Angeles to New York to Los Angeles speed record.

17th TACTICAL RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON

18th TACTICAL RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON

McDONNELL *Aircraft Corporation*