



CHAPTER 01

IN GOD WE TRUST... ALL OTHERS WE MONITOR



◀ A cockpit upgrade known as the RAMP was done between 2002 and 2007, and has provided pilots with superior situational awareness. (Stu Broce)

Less than one month after the 9-11 outrage in 2001, a U-2 soared into the desert sky above the United Arab Emirates, and headed for the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Once again, the Dragon Lady was quickly overhead a territory that held secrets of crucial importance to Western security. The Soviet Union, Cuba, Vietnam, Iraq – the U-2 had done it all before. Now, despite all the spy satellites, other airborne collectors, SIGINT ground stations, and agents on the ground, the U-2 was there to do it again.

But the Dragon Lady that soared over the desolate mountains of Waziristan and the Hindu Kush on

4 October 2001 was no geriatric jet. Fortunately, the U.S Air Force had continued investing in the type, having realised that an airplane capable of flying above 70,000 feet for 12 hours or more with a heavy payload of multiple sensors, was worth keeping. First, the U-2 had been put back into production. Thirty-seven new airplanes had rolled off the production line at the Lockheed Martin Skunk Works between 1981 and 1989. New sensors had been funded, for radar and electro-optical imaging, and for SIGINT, as well as electronic countermeasures for defensive purposes. Money had also been spent on the aircraft's communications links and in the