

# Air America in Thailand – since the days of CAT

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As, because of the neutrality of Laos, Thailand served as the starting point for military aid to Laos since the late fifties, all Air America activities out of Udorn and Takhli that cover military and paramilitary aid to Laos are dealt with in the files about Air America in Laos. In this file, only Air America activities out of Bangkok and Hua Hin as well as activities that regard the Thai borders are described.

## I) Thailand as a fortress against communism

Civil Air Transport operations in Thailand began in February 1951, and they were part of the CIA's attempts to build up a wall against possible Chinese aggression since the Communists had taken over Mainland China. Already in August 1950, a CIA team had travelled to Bangkok and negotiated an agreement with Major General Phao Siyanon, head of the Thai National Police Department, to train members of his police force, calling for the CIA to equip and train 350 Thai police and military personnel as a counterinsurgency force. The aid was to be channeled thru a newly created CIA proprietary, the ostensibly commercial Southeast Asia Supply Company, known simply as SEA Supply, which was incorporated in Miami, Florida. Legal affairs were handled by former OSS man Colonel Paul Heliwell, who had also established the contact between the CIA and Phao, and former OSS man Colonel Sherman B. Joost opened SEA Supply's offices at 10 Pra Athit Road, Bangkok in September 1950, but later, the offices moved to the *Grand Hotel*, Bangkok.<sup>1</sup> "Like WEI on Taiwan, SEA Supply equipped, trained, and advised its clients under an ostensibly commercial contract. Its primary mission was to develop an elite paramilitary police force that could defend Thailand's borders as well as conduct covert anticommunist operations into neighboring countries."<sup>2</sup> The main purpose of the CIA station at Bangkok was to help create a stay-behind network of Thai partisans for use in the event of a Chinese invasion.<sup>3</sup>

When, however, in December 1950, more and more Red Chinese "volunteers" appeared on Korean battlefields so that the UN troops risked to be driven out of the peninsula, US President Truman, who wanted to avoid an open war with China, agreed to a plan possibly invented by Alfred Cox: the *Li Mi Project*. Already in the spring of 1950, Kuomintang Lieutenant General Li Mi had asked US Vice Consul Frederick D. Schultheis at Hong Kong for American help to create a base at the Yunnan-Burma border from which he could launch an army to recapture China. Although the US response was probably very vague, Li Mi gathered a lot of irregular partisans around him and won command of the Nationalist Chinese regular troops in the Burma-Yunnan region.<sup>4</sup> While, in July 1950, Washington instructed the US chargé d'affaires at Taipei to press the Republic of China government to order its troops in Burma to lay down arms,<sup>5</sup> the US Government changed its mind in December.<sup>6</sup> As Li Mi had gathered about 12,500 soldiers by the end of 1950,<sup>7</sup> the US hoped to use this army for an

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<sup>1</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, pp.52/3.

<sup>2</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, p.53.

<sup>3</sup> Conboy/Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.57.

<sup>4</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, pp.35/6.

<sup>5</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, p.23.

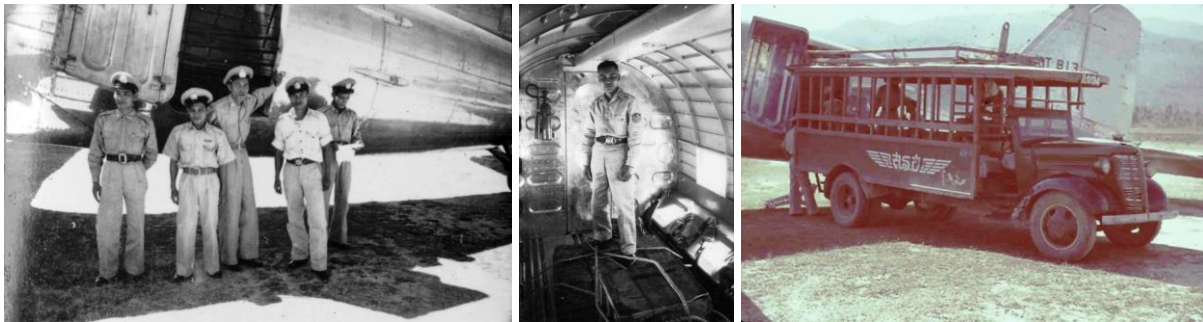
<sup>6</sup> Apparently in early December 50, President Truman approved Operation *Paper*, supported by the views of the US Departments of State and Defense, while CIA Director Walter Bedell Smith vigorously opposed Operation *Paper*, arguing that Li Mi's attacks against Yunnan were only pinpricks that could not divert Red Chinese troops from the Korean front. But President Truman overruled his CIA and so in early 1951, the Americans enlisted Phao and his Thai National Police into Operation *Paper* (Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, pp.60/1).

<sup>7</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, p.40.

attack on Yunnan in order to cause Peking to divert some attention from Korea.<sup>8</sup>

So, “in addition to training Thai security forces, SEA Supply would not only support Li Mi’s secret army as it formed in Burma but participate in its mid-1951 invasion of Yunnan. [...] The equipment they delivered was for de facto military units, not traditional police officers. That equipment included mortars, machine guns, rifles, medical supplies, and communications equipment from stocks of World War II matériel stored on American-occupied Okinawa, Japan. Later, SEA Supply added tanks, artillery, and aircraft to the police inventory.”<sup>9</sup>

Of course, CAT was the perfect airlift for feeding and arming Li Mi’s troops, and so Operation *Paper*, as CAT called the *Li Mi Project*, commenced on 6 February 1951, when 4 C-46s and 1 C-47 of CAT left Tachikawa for Kadena, Okinawa, where they were to pick up arms and ammunition from CIA stocks.<sup>10</sup> While the C-46s were used to transport weapons, ammunition and other equipment from the CIA stocks on Okinawa via Clark Air Base in the Philippines to Bangkok in Thailand, the CAT C-47 was used to transport them from Bangkok to Chiang Mai or Chiang Rai in Northern Thailand, where vehicles of the Thai Border Police picked up the cargo and carried it overland to the border, from where *mapangs*, i.e. groups of armed horsemen,<sup>11</sup> brought them to Li Mi’s camp at Mông Hsat in Burma.<sup>12</sup> This type of supply flights by CAT planes probably lasted until January or February 1952.<sup>13</sup>



Thai Police officers outside and inside CAT C-47 XT-813 and a Thai Police truck waiting to take over the weapons at Chiang Mai on 24 and 25 February 1951 (UTD/Kirkpatrick/B9 photos nos. 1KP-9-PB-A-5-2 and -4 plus UTD/Kirkpatrick/Slide Box A1, color slide no 1KP-A1-SC905)



CAT C-47 XT-813 at Chiang Mai on 26 February 51 with a Thai Police truck waiting (UTD/Kirkpatrick/B9, photo no. 1KP-9-PB-A-5-9)

<sup>8</sup> Leary, *Perilous missions*, p.129; Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, p.49-50.

<sup>9</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, p.53.

<sup>10</sup> For details see my file: *Working in remote countries*.

<sup>11</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, p.13, note 30.

<sup>12</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, pp.62/3.

<sup>13</sup> For details see my file: *Working in remote countries*.

However, supporting Kuomintang General Li Mi was only the more picturesque side of SEA Supply's activities. "The bulk of SEA Supply's activities was aimed at raising a Thai gendarmerie, later known as the Territorial Defense Police, and still later renamed the Border Patrol Police (BPP). By the end of 1953, 94 BPP platoons, each averaging 45 men, had been trained by SEA Supply and deployed along the Thai frontier."<sup>14</sup> This unusual police unit had been "created initially to cope with problems posed by foreign guerrilla elements using Thailand as a safehaven: the Vietminh in eastern Thailand and the Chinese Communists along the Malayan border in the south."<sup>15</sup>

For under the direction of James W. "Bill" Lair, since March 1951, SEA Supply had established a camp at Lopburi (S-15, later T-15), called *Camp Erawan*, north of Bangkok and was to begin airborne training for selected members of the Thai Police, who were soon joined by members of the Royal Thai Army, Air Force, and Navy. Between 1951 and 1953, more than 4,000 men graduated from the SEA Supply school, which was relocated to Hua Hin (S-10) in 1953.<sup>16</sup> This was an eight-week course in parachute and unconventional warfare tactics. The purpose was to build up a paramilitary force intended to halt the activities of Chinese-inspired insurgents along Thailand's borders. However, already on 30 June 51, the new police guerrilla force had to end a mutiny of the Royal Thai Navy at Bangkok and to liberate Thai Prime Minister Phibun who had been taken hostage.<sup>17</sup> This explains why, at the request of Taipei, all but the first CIA deliveries to Thailand would be by CAT planes thru the Royal Thai Government central purchasing bureau.<sup>18</sup>

As it seems, apart from transporting weapons destined for Li Mi from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, the CAT C-47 permanently assigned to Bangkok under charter to SEA Supply – XT-813 at the beginning – had 2 or 3 purposes: Possibly, it was used to fly equipment and supplies destined for the Thai National Police from Bangkok to their camps – initially only Koke Kathiem/Lopburi (S-15) north of Bangkok, then Ubon (S-19),<sup>19</sup> and later especially Hua Hin (S-10) in southern Thailand. But apparently, the main purpose of the CAT C-47 chartered to SEA Supply was airborne training for units of the Thai Border Police and the placement and recovery of police patrols operating in outlying border areas of Thailand so that they could get some operational experience – SEA Supply's main task. After every 1,000 hours of operation, the C-47 would be flown to Tainan via Clark Air Base in the Philippines and Hong Kong.<sup>20</sup>

Apparently, in the beginning, CAT had done quite a lot of things to get "Operation Paper" started without having a formal contract, only upon verbal agreements. For on 5 May 51, CAT's Vice-President A.T. Cox wrote Joseph Brent of ECA, Bangkok – who was also the head of Bangkok's OPC (i.e. CIA) Station – that he had sent CAT's Earle Willoughby to Bangkok "to take up with you and the Sea Supply corporation the signing of formal contracts covering the *Paper* flights using a C-47 internally in Siam and C-46 aircraft externally."<sup>21</sup> At the same time, Cox asked for commercial cargo that *Paper* planes could carry on their return flights from Bangkok and for commercial possibilities like a cooperation with POAS (Pacific Overseas Airways Siam) and TAAS (Trans-Asiatic Airlines Siam).

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<sup>14</sup> Conboy/Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.57.

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum of July 1961 from Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, Pentagon expert on guerrilla warfare, to Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, President Kennedy's military adviser, on *Resources for Unconventional Warfare, SE. Asia*, excerpts in: The Pentagon Papers, Boston 1975, vol. II, document 100, pp.643-49, ib. pp.645/6, formerly in: UTD/Leary/B20F10, now probably in: UTD/Leary/B35F11.

<sup>16</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.37/8; Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.117.

<sup>17</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.37/8; Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.117; Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.57-59.

<sup>18</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, p.62.

<sup>19</sup> Leary, Manuscript, ch. V, p. 355, in: UTD/Leary/B19F3.

<sup>20</sup> Cox, *Civil Air Transport (CAT), A Proprietary Airline, 1946-1955*, Washington DC (CIA) 1969, vol. II, p. 91 (paper version) (Clandestine Services History), at: <http://libtreasures.utdallas.edu/xmlui/handle/10735.1/1789>; Leary, Manuscript, p.42, in: UTD/Leary/B19F1.

<sup>21</sup> Letter dated 5 May 51 sent by A.T. Cox to Joseph Brent of ECA, Bangkok, in: UTD/Rosbert/B2F1.

One year later, in the period between 1 January 52 and 15 February 52, a lot of CAT aircraft were seen at Bangkok Don Muang airport, and some of them – the C-46s – may have brought weapons, ammunition or other equipment for Li Mi or for the Thai National Police.<sup>22</sup> There were also 3 CAT C-47s operating out of Bangkok at that time: CAT’s own C-47 B-817 and “two C.47s which are clearly marked C.A.T. and are on charter from the old Siamese Company T.A.A.S., with Siamese registrations.”<sup>23</sup> It seems that CAT chartered TAAS C-47s HS-TAC and HS-TAD quite often, probably for cargo flights between Bangkok and Lopburi, Chiang Mai, or Chiang Rai, but possibly also for air drops to Li Mi. At the end of the year 1952, CAT’s Bangkok-based C-47 was B-823, believed to be one of the C-47s formerly registered to TAAS. From Captain “Doc” Johnson’s log book we know that on 20 and 21 October 52, he flew CAT C-47 B-823 on the route Bangkok-Pt B-Pt B-Pt B-Bangkok – each day resulting in 3.8 hours of flying. On 15 November 52, he made a similar flight of 3.5 hours in the same aircraft. These flights may have been support flights to and then parachute training at the Thai National Police camp Lopburi.<sup>24</sup>

20	"	BKK-Pt B-Pt B-Pt B-BKK	C-47	3.8	1200	823
21	"	BKK-Pt B-Pt B-Pt B-BKK	"	3.8	"	823
15	"	BANGKOK-Pt B-BANGKOK	C-47	3.5	1200	823

CAT flights to Lopburi on 20 and 21 October and on 15 November 52

(Page from “Doc” Johnson’s log book kindly supplied by his son James on 14 February 2013)

In early 1953, the original *raison d’être* of SEA Supply’s training program – to operate in the wake of a Chinese invasion – was slowly dissipating, and so Lair proposed to transform the partisan police unit into an elite special operations unit trained for both defensive *and* offensive roles including cross-border missions. Beginning in April 1953, a total of 400 recruits was trained at a newly built training center at Hua Hin (S-10), called *Camp Naresuan*, in southern Thailand, where eight-month training cycles offered lessons in unconventional warfare, reconnaissance, and parachuting,<sup>25</sup> but the old Thai Police camp at Lopburi (S-15) was still functioning. Former CAT pilot Connie Seigrist recalls a flight of 23 May 1953: “Covert flying from Taiwan and Okinawa to Thailand’s interior grass strips with the C-46 became of age during this period. This particular date [23 May 1953], I flew from Taipei to Tainan, then Kadena, loaded the C-46, flew thru Clark AFB for fuel, to Bangkok for fuel, and to Cocotim, Thailand with my load. Flight time [was] 17 hours 48 minutes. [On] 25<sup>th</sup> May, I returned to Kadena and flew back to Cocotim in the same day with a flight time of 22 hours 41 minutes. Amongst all my flights, I flew a few trips carrying Chinese agents from Taipei or Kadena thru Clark, delivering them to Cocotim or Takhli.”<sup>26</sup> Royal Thai Air Force Base Cocotim or Koke Kathiem, located 10 kilometers northeast of Lopburi,<sup>27</sup> the place where the CIA had established a training camp for the Thai National Police in 1951,<sup>28</sup> probably was – along with Hua Hin in southern Thailand – one of the airfields used in that training program,

<sup>22</sup> See TNA file FO 371/101173 dossier FS1041/12/G, including a 3-page minute entitled *Reinforcement of K.M.T. in Shan States* and dated 18th February 1952, paragraph 9, kindly sent to the author by Martin Best on 6 December 2012.

<sup>23</sup> TNA file FO 371/101173 dossier FS1041/12/G, including a 3-page minute entitled *Reinforcement of K.M.T. in Shan States* and dated 18th February 1952, paragraphs 8 and 9, kindly sent to the author by Martin Best on 6 December 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Page from “Doc” Johnson’s log book kindly supplied by his son James on 14 February 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Conboy/Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.58.

<sup>26</sup> Connie Seigrist, *Memoirs*, p. 27, at: UTD/Leary/B21F11.

<sup>27</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.44. Lopburi is located some 140 kilometers north of Bangkok.

<sup>28</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.37.

so that it may not have anything to do with the Kuomintang units still resident in Burma at that time. On the other hand, as has been seen above, it was precisely the Thai National Police who had managed to get the supplies destined for KMT General Li Mi across the Thai Border into Burma. So somehow, the Border Police was probably still linked with Li Mi's troops. However, in the meantime, CAT also brought back thousands of Kuomintang troops from Thailand to Taiwan in operation REPAT (*Repatriation*). The first phase was from 9 November to 8 December 53, using 8 CAT C-46s to bring home 1,925 troops and 335 dependents. The second phase was from 14 February to 20 March 54, again using CAT C-46s to bring home 2,962 troops and 513 dependents. In a third phase, CAT C-46s repatriated about 700 troops in May 54.<sup>29</sup>

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THIS PAGE IS FROM		TO		NAME OF AIRLINE						
DATE	FLIGHT NO.	POINTS FROM AND TO		AIRCRAFT		HORSE POWER	CUMULATIVE	PILOT	CO-PILOT	
19				TYPE	NO.	FLIGHT TIME	TOTAL FLIGHT TIME			
23 <sup>rd</sup> MAY		TAIPEI-KADENA	CLARK-BANGKOK-XXX	C-46-D	874	17:48	10128	1748		
25 <sup>th</sup> MAY	1721	XXX-KADENA	CLARK-BANGKOK	C-46-D	874	22:41	12409	2241		
28 <sup>th</sup> MAY		BANGKOK	CLARK-TAIPEI			8:15	13224	815		

Entries from Connie Seigrist's log book kindly supplied by his son Steve: On 23 May 53, he flew C-46 B-874 from Taipei via Tainan, Clark, and Bangkok to "XXX", i.e. Koke Kathiem in Thailand. On 25 May 53, he returned from Koke Kathiem ("XXX") to Kadena, and then flew to Bangkok via Clark, from where he proceeded to Koke Kathiem, now given as "QAC", another code meaning an airport that cannot be named, and back to Taipei in another 8.15 h flight.

This is indirectly confirmed by the way CAT treated Operation *Paper* in their reports. As late as January 54, one CAT C-47 is still listed as flying for Operation *Paper* for a total of 81 hours.<sup>30</sup> For the same month, the Monthly Report of CAT's Operations Division notes for Bangkok: "There was little flying operation activity during January. B-858, stand-by aircraft for Operation [RE]PAT, returned to Hongkong as [scheduled flight no.] CT800 the early part of the month and no further scheduled flights entered Bangkok."<sup>31</sup> For February 54, the Monthly Report of CAT's Operations Division notes 408 C-46 hours for Operation *Repatriation* and – separated from these repatriation flights – 99 C-47 hours for Operation *Paper*. The forecast for March 54 even speaks of 800 C-46 hours to be expected for the repatriation flights plus 100 C-47 hours for Operation *Paper*.<sup>32</sup> This makes clear that in CAT terminology, *Paper* now stands for everything that has to do with "SEA Supply" and that the main purpose of this C-47 was parachute training for units of the Thai National Police and the placement and recovery of police patrols operating in the border areas of Thailand, but occasionally also to pick up wounded.<sup>33</sup> In early 1954, this *Paper* C-47 was still B-823, which arrived from Bangkok at Tainan on 2 February 54 for No. 3 service and returned on 10 February.<sup>34</sup> Apparently, it was replaced by C-47 B-811 later in the year, as it was B-811 that crashed into the Gulf of Siam, in the Hua Hin area, on 20 October 1954, when a wingtip dipped into the water during a low-level turn. At that time, CAT C-47 B-811 had been under charter to "SEA Supply" who itself was under contract to the Royal Thai Police Department: "At the time of the accident the plane was returning to Bangkok after completing three

<sup>29</sup> For more details, see my file *Working in Remote Countries* within this e-book.

<sup>30</sup> CAT's Operations Division, Monthly Report for January 54, p. 8, in: UTD/Leary/B21F1.

<sup>31</sup> CAT's Operations Division, Monthly Report for January 54, p. 6, in: UTD/Leary/B21F1.

<sup>32</sup> CAT's Operations Division, Monthly Report for February 54, pp. 10/1, in: UTD/Leary/B21F1.

<sup>33</sup> Leary, Manuscript, ch. V, pp.355/6, in: UTD/Leary/B19F3.

<sup>34</sup> CAT's Operations Division, Monthly Report for February 54, p. 3, in: UTD/Leary/B21F1.

practice paratroop drops at night between 7.30 and 8.30 p.m. The pilot had just finished his last run over the drop area and was at a low altitude when a warning light was accidentally turned on by the dispatcher in the rear of the plane, momentarily blinding the pilot. Before the pilot could recover his vision the plane hit the sea.” Capt. Harry Kaffenberger was the only person to survive the crash, in which co-pilot Y.C. Kan, Flight Operator Y.Z. Chen, and four passengers – 3 Thai policemen and an American – were killed.<sup>35</sup> Capt. Kaffenberger had been picked up by a small fishing boat after swimming for about 15 minutes. The boat immediately returned to the scene of the crash, but found that the plane had already submerged, with no sign of any survivors.<sup>36</sup> After the crash, the ill-fated B-811 was replaced by C-47 B-815,<sup>37</sup> and a decision was made by CAT to assign an American First Officer to the operation as an added margin of safety. Dale Williamson volunteered and arrived at Bangkok at the end of 1954. At that time, CAT’s Dutch Brongersma was already at Bangkok, Bill Shaver arrived shortly thereafter, and Al Pope also flew there as First Officer; CAT’s Station Manager at Bangkok was Walt McCarthy. The flying was in support of the Border Police, usually 110-115 hours a month. There was at least one trip a week to Chiang Mai; they also served the police camps along the Burmese border. And the plane often went to Hua Hin for two days to fly practice drops for Border Police personnel.<sup>38</sup>

In 1955, the police commandos were officially designated the Royal Guards, but in reality, they remained quite autonomous and responded to CIA-sponsored special operations: “During that year, for example, the unit rigged parachutes at Udorn for CAT planes making food drops into Laos.”<sup>39</sup> For several years, CAT’s activities in Thailand remained more or less the same, focussing on support to the Thai National Police, and from 1953 to 1957, the CIA trained Thai Royal Guard battalions at Hua Hin (S-10) in southern Thailand in airborne and counterinsurgency operations. When CAT pilot John E. Lee was assigned to Bangkok in February 1957 as vacation relief for Bill Shaver and Dale Williamson, CAT had a one-plane (C-47 B-815) operation in Thailand that was assigned to two contracts, one with PEO (believed to have been no. 57-60 with USOM Laos) and one with SEA Supply for the Border Police. “PEO flying was routine, with twice a week flights to Vientiane, carrying supplies and personnel. Sea Supply flying was much more varied, involving work with the Police Aerial Resupply Unit (PARU), an elite organization of paratroopers, similar to US Green Berets. Lee worked with the training program at the PARU base at Hua Hin. He also made two-day resupply flights, one south and one north, dropping supplies and rotation teams at outposts along the border from Burma to Laos and Cambodia. He usually received a rough schedule from Station Manager Mackenzie, detailing him to Hua Hin. There, he worked with Bill Lair, who was in charge of the PARU program.<sup>40</sup> Lee enjoyed working with this elite unit, which had a high *esprit de corps*. It was interesting flying.”<sup>41</sup> On 16 September 1957, Thai Army

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<sup>35</sup> “B-811 Report”, in: *CAT Bulletin*, vol. VII, no.12, December 1954, p.11; see also Cox, *Civil Air Transport (CAT), A Proprietary Airline, 1946-1955*, Washington DC (CIA) 1969, vol. II, p. 64 (paper version) (Clandestine Services History), at: <http://libtreasures.utdallas.edu/xmlui/handle/10735.1/1789>.

<sup>36</sup> “Two Crew lost In B-811 Emergency Landing”, in: *CAT Bulletin*, vol. VII, no.11, November 1954, p.14.

<sup>37</sup> Leary, *Perilous missions*, p. 219.

<sup>38</sup> Dale D. Williamson, interview made by William M. Leary at Bellevue, WA, on 13 July 1987; Professor Leary’s notes are preserved at UTD/Leary/ I B14F6.

<sup>39</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow War*, p.58.

<sup>40</sup> In 1961, the PARU training program consisted of 10 weeks’ basic training, 3 weeks’ jumping, 3 weeks’ jungle operations, 4 weeks’ police law and 3 months of refresher training yearly (Memorandum of July 1961 from Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, Pentagon expert on guerrilla warfare, to Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, President Kennedy’s military adviser, on *Resources for Unconventional Warfare, SE. Asia*, excerpts in: The Pentagon Papers, Boston 1975, vol II, document 100, pp.643-49, ib. p.645, formerly in: UTD/Leary/B20F10, now probably in: UTD/Leary/B35F11).

<sup>41</sup> John E. Lee, interview given to William M. Leary at Watkinsville, GA on 27 May 1987; Professor Leary’s notes of this interview are preserved at UTD/Leary/B46F10.

commander Sarit Thanarat organized a *coup d'état* that ousted Thai Prime Minister Marshal Phibun Songkhram and Major General Phao Siyanon, head of the Thai National Police Department, forcing both men into exile. SEA Supply, the CIA's outfit at Bangkok, had to close its doors, and Sarit brought the paramilitary Border Patrol Police under operational control of the Royal Thai Army.<sup>42</sup> As far as CAT was concerned, "as a result, there was a stand-down, as Sarit did not trust the Border Police. The first call to get back into business came on December 20, 1957. An American aerial survey team was running a Shoran station for mapping purposes north of Chiang Rai. Unfortunately, they located the station (unknowingly) in the middle of an opium patch. Contact soon was lost with them. On the afternoon of December 20, Mackenzie told Lee to pick up a PARU team at Hua Hin and drop them at the site. Lee flew them into the area just before sunset. They dropped in and confirmed that everyone had been killed. Lee then landed at Chiang Rai after dark (no lights at field). The remains were brought to Chiang Rai during the night, and Lee flew the bodies to Bangkok the next morning. This incident, combined with the fact that the Royal Thai Air Force had been having trouble finding drop zones (Sarit had ordered them to take over the support operation), put CAT and the Border Police back in business."<sup>43</sup> So, the CIA worked with the Royal Thai Police Special Branch into the 1960s, as the US International Cooperation Agency (which later became USAID) advised Thailand's Provincial Police.<sup>44</sup>

"Beginning in 1958 the program's graduates were being formed into hundred-man Police Aerial Reinforcement Units (PARU) within the newly created Thai Border Patrol Police (BPP)."<sup>45</sup> There was also a plan to build a new PARU base at Phitsanulok.<sup>46</sup> As the graduates were parachuted into insurgent-contested areas, they were prepared to work alongside their own people. On 29 May 58, contract no. 58-056 was signed between CAT and the Border Police Forces Thailand, Thailand National Police, Bangkok, effective 21 June 58, "furnishing flying services [...] to be based in Bangkok or elsewhere in Southeast Asia."<sup>47</sup> The aircraft originally covered by that contract were C-46s and C-47s, later a Helio Courier was added, and in 1963, we also have a Caribou assigned to that contract.<sup>48</sup> In January 1959, CAT's Bangkok-based aircraft seems to have been C-46 B-850, probably hiding CIA-supported flights for the Thai National Police as "local training" flights, but also operating the courier service to Vientiane for USOM, while C-47 B-817 was probably based at Vientiane<sup>49</sup> and C-47 B-827 may have been the CAT aircraft based at Saigon.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, p.177.

<sup>43</sup> John E. Lee, interview given to William M. Leary at Watkinsville, GA on 27 May 1987; Professor Leary's notes of this interview are preserved at UTD/Leary/B46F10.

<sup>44</sup> Gibson/Chen, *The secret army*, p.180, note 48.

<sup>45</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.37/8

<sup>46</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow War*, p.59.

<sup>47</sup> "Renewal of Commercial Operator Certificate", Letter to the FAA sent by Hugh Grundy on 1 November 63, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.2. See also Supplemental Agreement no.2 to contract 58-056, draft dated 30 March 62, in: UTD/Fink/B2F16, which, for the first time, mentions 1 Helio Courier as a basic aircraft assigned to the contract, but also a C-123B – "if requested by the Customer and such aircraft are available to be furnished to the Contractor" (pp.1/2).

<sup>48</sup> "Renewal of Commercial Operator Certificate", Letter to the FAA sent by Hugh Grundy on 1 November 63, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.2.

<sup>49</sup> C-47 B-817 had been permanently based at Vientiane on 30 June 57 (Leary, *CIA air operations in Laos*, p. 54). Bruce Blevins, with his C-47, was the first CAT pilot to be based at Vientiane (Dale D. Williamson, telephone interview made by William M. Leary on 25 September 1985; Professor Leary's notes are preserved at UTD/Leary/B43F5). The C-47 probably flew for the US Embassy under the provisions of contract no. 57-08.

<sup>50</sup> Page from "Doc" Johnson's log book kindly supplied by his son James on 14 February 2013.

9	JAN	TRAINING	BANGKOK	LOCAL	C-46	3.5	2000	B-850
9		USOM	BANGKOK	VIENTIANE	C-47	2.1	1200	B-817
9		TRAINING	VIENTIANE	LOCAL	"	3.2	"	"
10		USOM	VIENTIANE	BANGKOK	C-46	1.9	2000	B-850
12		USOM	BANGKOK	VIENTIANE - BANGKOK	"	3.7	"	"
14		"	BANGKOK-PNPH-SGN-QUIN HON-BAT-SGN		C-47	7.1	1200	B-827
15		"	SGN-PNPH-BANGKOK		"	3.2	"	"

#### CAT flights out of Bangkok between 9 and 15 January 1959

(Page from "Doc" Johnson's log book kindly supplied by his son James on 18 February 2013)

In October 1959, the aircraft based at Bangkok was C-47 B-829, as can be seen in "Doc" Johnson's log book, while C-46s B-866 and B-864 used for flights between Bangkok and Vientiane were probably assigned to Laos contract no. 57-060: Under the provisions of this contract, Air America C-46s delivered supplies from Bangkok to Vientiane and Luang Prabang.<sup>51</sup> As many people were probably unaware that Air America was not a different airline, but just the new name of CAT Inc. and as B-registered, i.e. Air Asia-owned aircraft flown by Air America were sometimes painted as "chartered to Air America", the flights for

6	CHTER	BKK-HHN-A/D-HHN-A/D-UDORN-BKK	C-47	8.5	1200	B-829
7	"	BKK-PKB-A/D-PKB-A/D-SONGKHA-PKB-BKK	C-47	10.4	"	"
8	"	BANGKOK-VIENTIANE-BANGKOK	C-46	3.8	2000	B-866
12	TRAINING	BANGKOK LOCAL	C-47	1.0	1200	B-829
13	CHTER	BANGKOK-VIENTIANE-BANGKOK	C-46	3.6	2000	B-864

#### CAT flights out of Bangkok between 6 and 13 October 1959

(Page from "Doc" Johnson's log book kindly supplied by his son James on 18 February 2013)

Air America are marked here as charter flights. The nature of the flights of C-47 B-829, evidently working for the Thai National Police at that time, can only be guessed: On 6 October, "Doc" Johnson flew Bangkok-Hua Hin, then made air drops, returned to Hua Hin, again made air drops, proceeded to Udorn and finally returned to Bangkok. "A/D", i.e. air drops, could mean parachute training for members of the Thai Border Patrol Police (BPP), who had their camp at Hua Hin, in various areas of Thailand. The flight "Doc" Johnson made on 7 October 59 in C-47 B-829 is more difficult to understand, as "PKB" is not an official airport code and does not resemble to an unofficial abbreviation of any known Thai airfield. As Songkhla is in southern Thailand and as the "p" in PKB is not a capital letter, it may stand for "province", making "pKB" something like the "Province of Krabi"; all this looks like parachute training of the Thai Border Patrol Police, this time in southern Thailand.

In early 1960, PARU's Pathfinder Company was dispatched to the Lao frontier, where they established 3 posts – one opposite Vientiane, one opposite Paksane, and one opposite Savannakhet. When Bill Lair flew between these border posts in an Air America C-46 on 9 August 60, he heard about the Kong Le coup, and shortly afterwards, PARU units began to assist the pro-Western side in this new conflict in Laos.<sup>52</sup> The next report we have about Air

<sup>51</sup> See my file *Air America in Laos I – humanitarian work*, part I.

<sup>52</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow War*, p.59; in July 61, 13 PARU teams totaling 99 men were working in Laos (Memorandum of July 1961 from Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, Pentagon expert on guerrilla warfare, to Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, President Kennedy's military adviser, on *Resources for Unconventional Warfare, SE. Asia*,



America's activities out of Bangkok is another extract from "Doc" Johnson's log book, this time for the period between 3 and 14 October 1960. While the C-46 flights between Bangkok and Vientiane or Luang Prabang probably meant more supplies flown in under the provisions of Laos contract no. 57-060, the flights of Air America C-47 B-827 probably delivered parachutes into Pakse and Seno in southern Laos and perhaps also PARU advisors<sup>53</sup> – that is

3-OCT	"	TAIPEI-HONGKONG-BANGKOK	"	6.1	"	"	3.0
4	CHTR	BANGKOK-VTE-BKS-VTE-BKK	C-46	7.5	2000	B-148	2.9
6	"	" " " "	"	3.7	"	"	1.5
9	"	BKK-LOUVEIE-PAKIE-SENO	C-47	4.2	1250	B-827	
10	"	SENO-PAKIE-BANGKOK	"	3.2	"	B-827 B-817	
14	"	BKK-LUANG PRABANG-BKK	C-46	4.9	2000	B-136	2.5

#### CAT flights out of Bangkok between 6 and 14 October 1960

(Page from "Doc" Johnson's log book kindly supplied by his son James on 18 February 2013)

21	"	TAIPEI-HONGKONG-BANGKOK	"	6.5	"	"	1.6
22	TRAINING	BANGKOK LOCAL	C-46	4.1	2000	B-148	
23	CHTR	BKK-SUGAR-BKK-WHISKEY-BKK	"	8.9	"	B-148 B-154	1.0
24	"	BKK-BRAVO-BKK	"	5.0	"	B-154	1.0
IF YOU WISH TO CERTIFY EACH PAGE USE THIS SPACE							
25-NOV	CHTR	BANGKOK-SUGAR-BANGKOK	C-46	5.3	2000	B-154	1.0
27	SCHED	TAIPEI NAHA	DC-6B	1.8	2000	B-1006	

#### CAT flights out of Bangkok between 21 and 27 November 1960

(Pages from "Doc" Johnson's log book kindly supplied by his son James on 18 Feb. 2013)

material and personnel they could probably pick up at the old PARU training camp at Lopburi (S-15). This would mean that the contract that CAT Inc. and then Air America had with the Thai Border Patrol Police at that time also included hauling supplies to the pro-Western troops fighting in Laos. One month later, at the end of November, the final destinations of Air America's flights made out of Bangkok into Laos under the provisions of Laos contract no. 57-060 are coded as "Sugar", "Whiskey", and "Bravo" – but the meaning of these codes is not known. What surprises in the extract from "Doc" Johnson's log book published above is that on 22 November 60, "Doc" Johnson flew more than 4 hours on "local training" flights out of Bangkok. As already before, flights for the CIA were indicated as "training" flights, this may have been flights for the CIA-sponsored Thai Border Patrol Police. In August 1961, the Bangkok-based Air America C-46s assigned to Laos contract no. 57-060 again ferried supplies and / or personnel from the old PARU training camp at Lopburi (S-15, here given as "LOB") to Pakse in Laos. This makes again believe that the contract that Air America had with the Thai Border Patrol Police at that time still included hauling supplies to the pro-Western troops fighting in Laos, although – as can be seen below – most of the flights into Laos originated at Bangkok and then went to Vientiane via Udorn and sometimes on to Luang Prabang.

Since at least 1961, a Helio Courier was also used under the provisions of the contract that Air America had with the Thai Police – at least from time to time. After Bill Andresevic had ferried Helio "326" from Vientiane (V-08 at that time, later L-08) to Bangkok (S-09) on 30

excerpts in: The Pentagon Papers, Boston 1975, vol II, document 100, pp.643-49, ib. p.645, formerly in: UTD/Leary/B20F10, now probably in: UTD/Leary/B35F11).

<sup>53</sup> See Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow War*, pp.35/6.

September 1961 for maintenance and tests, he took Bill Lair to Hua Hin (S-10 at that time) in that Helio on 3 October 61 and then brought him back to Vientiane on 4 October, flying the same aircraft via Bangkok.<sup>54</sup> So apparently, the Helios assigned to the contract that Air America had with the Thai Police, were used for liaison duties.

14	"	BKK-LOB-paske-LOB-BKK-LOB-paske-BKK	"	10.0	"	B-154	50
15	"	BKK-LOB-paske-LOB-BKK	"	5.3	"	B-154	30
15	"	BKK-VTE-BKK	"	3.8	"	B-148	
16	"	BKK-UDORN-VTE	"	2.0	"	B-13P	10
16	"	VTE-BKK	"	1.8	"	B-124	
17	"	BKK-UDORN-VTE-3-LP	"	7.8	"	B-91A	14

#### CAT flights out of Bangkok between 14 and 17 August 1961

(Pages from "Doc" Johnson's log book kindly supplied by his son James on 18 Feb. 2013)

While the original contract of 1958 with the Thai Border Patrol Police provided only for one C-47, this was extended in March 1962 to include also one Helio Courier plus additional aircraft (C-47s, Helios, a C-46 and even a C-123), if required and available. These aircraft were based at Bangkok and flown and maintained by Air America, as CAT Inc. was called in the meantime.<sup>55</sup> The Air America aircraft were used, among others, for a training program in which the BPP-men had to parachute into insurgent-contested areas and then to work alongside their own people,<sup>56</sup> and for communications. The excellent results of the PARU units and the pro-American attitude of the Thai government and military resulted in a considerable extension of their activities in 1960. When Kong Le seized power in Laos in 1960, CIA and Thai officials assigned PARU specialists to General Phoumi's lead battalions, and since 1961, PARU squads assisted the CIA in recruiting and training Hmong soldiers in Laos.<sup>57</sup>

Shortly after Air America's new 2 DHC-4A Caribous had been ferried from Toronto to the Far East in July 1962, one of them, Caribou B-853, was flown by Ed Eckholdt on shuttles from southern Thailand to Laos: From 5 to 12 August 62, the aircraft shuttled between the PARU training camp at Hua Hin in southern Thailand and Sam Thong in Laos via Vientiane, Udon or Takhli, probably bringing in PARU advisors and their equipment.<sup>58</sup> From July to September 1963, two aircraft were assigned to contract no. 58-056: C-47 B-829, which was replaced by Caribou B-853 on 13 September 1963, and Helio Courier N4191D.<sup>59</sup> In the fall of



Helio N4191D at the Thai border in 1962  
(UTD/Wiren/B2)

<sup>54</sup> Log book of William Andresevic, in: UTD/Leary/B43F9.

<sup>55</sup> Supplemental Agreement no.2 to contract 58-056, draft dated 30 March 62, in: UTD/Fink/B2F16.

<sup>56</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.38

<sup>57</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.38.

<sup>58</sup> Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/B44F13.

<sup>59</sup> AAM Aircraft Availability for 1 July 63, 15 July 63, and 21 September 63, NOTAMS nos. OF-N-63-09, -12, and -23, in: UTD/Walker/B25F8.

1963, Air America pilot Joe Hazen was assigned to fly under the provisions of contract 58-056: “I flew [Caribou] 853 on the PARU contract from 24 October 1963 to 16 March 1964, when I went back to Vientiane as CPHC (Chief Pilot Helio Courier).”<sup>60</sup> Officially, this aircraft was based at Bangkok, where also most of the maintenance was done,<sup>61</sup> but ‘853’ was used for parachute training quite often out of Pitt’s Camp. We also hauled supplies to different places. We did stay overnight many times at Pitt’s Camp (S-603).<sup>62</sup> While “S-01 was a paved runway in the city of Phitsanulok”, nearby Pitt’s Camp (S-603) “was dirt (red and sticky when wet) at the PARU training camp.”<sup>63</sup> “Most of the work was out of S-603 dropping students (with parachutes, of course), out the rear or sometimes side door, port side, of the aircraft. The C-47 and C-46 do not have a rear door. Lom Sak (S-20) was one of the favorite drop airports as it was paved and not far from Pitt’s Camp (to the east).”<sup>64</sup>



DHC-4 Caribou “853” taken in the early sixties (UTD/Hickler/B33)

Looking at the extracts from Joe Hazen’s log book, there is no doubt that Pitt’s Camp had become the real center of PARU training in 1963, as this place was touched by nearly all flights he made in Caribou B-853, which – at that time – was still flying as “853”. Pitt’s Camp (S-603) – or *Camp Surat Sena*, as it was officially called – was located some 29 kilometers east of the town of Phitsanulok (S-01). It had been built during the second half of 1962 and was in fact two camps in one, divided by a small river, and so was advised by two CIA advisors – Jack Shirley and Arthur Elmore at that time. While the northern half of the camp served as garrison for the new elite Thai unit called the *Special Battalion* coming half from the PARU and half from the Royal Thai Army’s Airborne Ranger Battalion,<sup>65</sup> “the half on the south side of the river was devoted exclusively to unconventional warfare training for third-country nationals, primarily Lao.”<sup>66</sup> PARU trainees would be picked up at Pitt’s Camp and then flown to Lom Sak, where the actual parachute drops were made: “S-20 was Lom Sak, which is where the parachute training took place. After a drop, I would land, usually pick up the trainees and take them back to S-603 or S-01. If I went someplace else after S-20, then I

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<sup>60</sup> E-Mail dated 5 May 2013, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>61</sup> Joe Hazen recalls: “Maintenance on [Caribou] 853 was done at S-09 [Bangkok] or S-08 [Udon], so we had to go, mostly to S-09, every 2~3 days. [...] I don’t recall any serious problems with 853 while flying this contract” (e-mail dated 5 May 2013 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen).

<sup>62</sup> E-mail dated 1 May 2013, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>63</sup> E-Mail dated 3 May 2013, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>64</sup> E-Mail dated 3 May 2013, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>65</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow War*, p.103, note 21.

<sup>66</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow War*, p.98.

think the trainees were trucked back to S-603.<sup>67</sup> Phitsanulok was and still is headquarters of some very important Royal Thai Army units.<sup>68</sup> So, apparently, many of the flights that also included parachute drops continued as cargo or passenger flights to other destinations. From Joe Hazen's log book, it is possible to identify the following flights that included parachute drops and then pick-up at Lom Sak airfield and return to Phitsanulok (S-01) or Pitt's Camp (S-603):

05 Nov. 63: Pitt's Camp (S-603)-Lom Sak (S-20)-Phitsanulok (S-01)-Pitt's Camp (S-603)

06 Nov. 63: Pitt's Camp (S-603)-Lom Sak (S-20)-Phitsanulok (S-01)-Takhli (S-05)-Bangkok (S-09)

16 Dec. 63: Bangkok (S-09)-Takhli (S-05)-Phitsanulok (S-01)-Lom Sak (S-20)-Pitt's Camp (S-603)

17 Dec. 63: Pitt's Camp (S-603)-Lom Sak (S-20)-Phitsanulok (S-01)-Koke Kathiem/Lopburi (S-15)-Bangkok (S-09)

12 Jan. 64: Takhli (S-05)-Pitt's Camp (S-603)-Lom Sak (S-20)-Phitsanulok (S-01)-Takhli (S-05)-Bangkok (S-09)

According to Joe Hazen,<sup>69</sup> there were more parachute training drops at Lom Sak (S-20) than just those 5 drops mentioned above, but they cannot be clearly identified from his log book. Probably there were a lot of drops made at S-20 that do not appear there, because Joe Hazen did not land at Lom Sak (S-20) after the drop to pick up the trainees and fly them back to Pitt's Camp (S-603) or Phitsanulok (S-01) – possibly, for example, flights that departed S-603 or S-01 and then, after the drop, directly continued to Bangkok for maintenance like on 27 October 63, 2 December 63, 8 January 63, 15 January 64, 9 March 64 and 16 March 64. After dropping a “full load” of trainees at S-20, the aircraft may have flown empty to Bangkok – but all this is only a guess. However, he also recalls one very special occasion. “There was one time, maybe the 3 November 1963 flight, S-20 to S-09 [Bangkok], where I brought the trainees back to S-603 and then continued to S-09, but did not list the landing at S-603. Possibly on that date [CIA case officer] Tom Fosmire<sup>70</sup> made a solo jump out of the aircraft and came down hard. I landed without dropping the trainees, placed Tom on board, went back to S-603, dropped off the trainees and continued on to S-09. An ambulance was waiting to take Tom to the hospital, where it was found he had fractured some vertebrae. I don't recall seeing him after that, nor do I recall who took his place, if anyone, at Pitt's Camp.”<sup>71</sup> In November 63, Phitsanulok (S-01) was also the place where Air America successfully tested airdrops from Ten-Two N7950C.<sup>72</sup> As to Joe Hazen, he also met PARU Colonel<sup>73</sup> and CIA officer Bill Lair: “I recall meeting Bill Lair at least once at the camp. He invited me to make a jump on the rig they had set up. I declined. My reason was: if I broke or sprained a foot or leg, they would not have a pilot. Bill agreed.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> E-Mail dated 9 May 2013, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>68</sup> [Third Army \(Thailand\)](#) is headquartered in [Phitsanulok](#) and responsible for the northern and northwestern parts of the kingdom. The RTA's Third Army comprises: the 4th Infantry Division, the 7th infantry division, the 1st Cavalry Division, and the 3rd development division. Today, even some elements of the RTA's aviation are based at Phitsanulok airport ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal\\_Thai\\_Army#Units](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Thai_Army#Units)).

<sup>69</sup> Telephone interview with Joe Hazen, dated 11 May 2013.

<sup>70</sup> CIA man Tom Fosmire was at Hua Hin in 1962/63 and at Pitt's Camp from 1963 to 1965 (Thomas G. Fosmire, Interview, conducted by Prof. Bill Leary at Florence, SC, on 28 December 92, transcript in: UTD/Leary/B82F21).

<sup>71</sup> E-Mail dated 11 May 2013, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>72</sup> Memo no. RCP-63-126 dated 19 November 63, in: UTD/Walker/B7F8.

<sup>73</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.155, note 61.

<sup>74</sup> E-Mail dated 11 May 2013, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

As to cargo flights done under the provisions of PARU contract 58-056, Joe Hazen recalls: “I hauled material out of S-01 [Phitsanulok] for delivery, air drop usually, to teams near or at the Burma border. [...] I recall taking a load of corrugated sheet metal roofing material from S-01 to a town on the Burma border, on the Salween River, named Mae Sot (now T-35). The strip at that time was not long enough for a Caribou, so had to drop by parachute. I briefed the two Thai kickers, PARU, to push the stuff out exactly on my command and do not delay as the drop run was from east to west. They screwed up on the first drop and the first pallet ended up in the river and sank. The next 2-3 drops went well. The town is a crossing to Burma and the Burmese had been notified (so I was told) that the aircraft would briefly enter Burmese airspace after the drop and then turn back to Thailand. They did not shoot, so I guess it was worked out.”<sup>75</sup> “I think the roofing material was to be used by the PARU to cover some sort of small building, perhaps a small barracks or storage or both. Just a guess.”<sup>76</sup> “It looks like I landed once at S-06, Mae Hong Son, on 1 Dec’ 63 [...]. It is possible I dropped stuff there and then landed after a strip was built or lengthened. It is not far from the Burma border.”<sup>77</sup> “Thinking back on what I said about air drops near the Burma border, there were not that many. How many, I don’t recall.”<sup>78</sup>

On many flights made under the provisions of the PARU contract, Air America carried all sorts of cargo and also personnel. As to Mae Sot, i.e. the place where Joe Hazen dropped the roofing material, the first pallet going into the river, he already “went there once from S-09 [Bangkok], in Do-28 #N4225G. This was on 20 March 1963. I did not know the designator at the time or if it even had one, so wrote the name of the place in my logbook. We then went to Hua Hin (S-10) and then back to S-09. I had at least one passenger, PARU, maybe two. The total block time was 4+18.”<sup>79</sup> “As for the other places, I carried personnel (CIA, Thai PARU and possibly Thai Army) and cargo, but don’t recall who or what other than I don’t think any ordnance.”<sup>80</sup> Some of the flights can easily be identified as some sort of courier service touching distant locations: On 24 October 63, Joe Hazen flew Caribou “853” on the route Bangkok (S-09)-Pitt’s Camp (S-603)-Ubon (S-19)-Udon (S-08)-Pitt’s Camp (S-603), linking Bangkok with stations in eastern Thailand, before he ended up at Pitt’s Camp. The following day, on 25 October 63, he proceeded from Pitt’s Camp (S-603) to Bangkok via Phitsanulok (S-01)-Chiang Mai (S-11) and Koke Kathiem/Lopburi (S-15), this time, linking the north of Thailand with the capital. On 6 November 63, he first flew from Pitt’s Camp (S-603) to Chiang Rai (S-16) in the far north, and on his way back to Bangkok, he also landed at Phitsanulok (S-01) and Lom Sak (S-20) – possibly without a parachute drop this time, as the next station after Lom Sak (S-20) was Bangkok (S-09) and not the RTA and PARU homes at Phitsanulok (S-01) and Pitt’s Camp (S-603). On 20 November 63, he again departed Pitt’s Camp (S-603) on a flight to Bangkok (S-09), but this time – after a stop at Phitsanulok (S-01) – via Chiang Khong New (S-516A) in the far north of Thailand and Takhli (S-05). On 22 November 63, he even flew a zigzag route pattern from Pitt’s Camp (S-603) in western Thailand to Ubon (S-19) in the east, then back to Takhli (S-05) in the west and finally to Udon (S-08) in northeastern Thailand. On 10 January 64, Joe Hazen flew from Pitt’s Camp (S-603) first to Udon (S-08) in the east, then back to Takhli (S-05) and Pitt’s Camp (S-603) in the west and finally to Ban Chiang Kam (S-514) and Chiang Mai (S-11) in the north of Thailand, before he returned to Bangkok (S-09) – “visiting” the whole country with only southern Thailand missing. But the real center of these flights was not Bangkok but Pitt’s

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<sup>75</sup> E-Mail dated 3 May 2013, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>76</sup> E-Mail dated 5 May 2013 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>77</sup> E-Mail dated 9 May 2013 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>78</sup> E-Mail dated 6 May 2013 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>79</sup> E-Mail dated 5 May 2013 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>80</sup> E-Mail dated 3 May 2013, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

Camp, and so on 12 March 64, he flew from Pitt's Camp (S-603) to Ubon (S-19) and Udorn (S-08) in the east of Thailand before returning to Pitt's Camp (S-603).<sup>81</sup>

Another center of activities under the provisions of the PARU contract no. 58-056 was Chiang Mai (S-11) in northern Thailand. Always using Caribou "853", Joe Hazen flew Bangkok (S-09)-Chiang Mai (S-11)-Mae Sariang (S-21)-Kun Yuam (S-12)-Mae Hong Son (S-06)-Pai (S-36)-Chiang Mai (S-11) on 1 December 63, and the following day, on 2 December 63, it was Chiang Mai (S-11)-Chiang Rai (S-16)-Phrae (S-07)-Pitt's Camp (S-603)-Bangkok (S-09). On 3 January 1964, we see him flying Takhli (S-05)-Pitt's Camp (S-603)-Chiang Mai (S-11)-Ban Chiang Kam (S-514)-Phitsanulok (S-01)-Bangkok (S-09). On 6 January 64, he flew another time to the north on the route Bangkok (S-09)-Pitt's Camp (S-603)-Ban Chiang Kam (S-514)-Chiang Mai (S-11), and then he stayed overnight at Chiang Mai for a couple of days. During this time, he flew Chiang Mai (S-11)-Chiang Khong (S-516)-Ban Chiang Kam (S-514)-Ban Pua (S-506)-Chiang Mai (S-11) on 7 January 64, and on 8 January it was Chiang Mai (S-11)-Chiang Khong (S-516)-Ban Pua (S-506)-Pitt's Camp (S-603)-Bangkok (S-09). Apparently, this time, he had to fly to Bangkok for maintenance, because on 9 January 64, he flew back to the north from Bangkok (S-09) to Chiang Mai (S-11) and Ban Chiang Kam (S-514) before he returned to Pitt's Camp (S-603). In March, he flew some similar missions: one was Pitt's Camp (S-603)-Ban Chiang Kam (S-514)-Ban Pua (S-506)-Chiang Mai (S-11) on 14 March 64,<sup>82</sup> and another one was Chiang Mai (S-11)-Ban Chiang Kam (S-514)-Chiang Khong (S-516)-Chiang Mai (S-11) on 15 March 64.<sup>83</sup> Joe Hazen recalls: "Regarding staying and flying out of S-11, I think I carried higher ranking PARU and Thai army officers on inspection tours. We stayed in town at a hotel, as I recall. I do recall a restaurant we went to for lunch that had the best beef with oyster sauce I had ever tasted. I hope it was beef, maybe water buffalo. As for any cargo from S-11 to wherever we went, I just don't recall. [...] My co-pilot, Leroy Letendre, and I were very well treated wherever we went."<sup>84</sup>

In February 1964, Caribou "853" was still based at Bangkok and assigned to contract no. 58-056, i.e. to the contract that Air America had with the Thai Border Patrol Police.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, on 11 February 64, Ed Eckholdt flew "853" Bangkok-Takhli-Phitsanulok-Bangkok, before he ferried it Bangkok-Danang-Hong Kong-Tainan on 25 February 64 for maintenance.<sup>86</sup> In April<sup>87</sup> and July 1964,<sup>88</sup> Caribou "853" was still used out of Bangkok on Royal Thai Border Patrol Police contract no. 58-056. One of the Air America pilots mainly assigned to fly this aircraft in 1964 and 1965 was Ed Eckholdt, who ferried "853" back from Tainan to Bangkok on 7/8 September 64 and flew the aircraft during paratroop drop practice at Phitsanulok on 9/10 September 64.<sup>89</sup> After another tour from Bangkok to Tainan on 29 October 64 and back to Bangkok on 4 November 64 in Caribou "853", Ed Eckholdt made some border air drops out of Phitsanulok on 21/22 November 64. Half a year later, Ed Eckholdt again flew Caribou "853" in Thailand between 3 May 65 and 1 August 65, mostly making air drops out of Phitsanulok or Udorn. But he also ferried the aircraft from Bangkok to Tainan on 6 June 65 and back to Bangkok on 12/13 June 65.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> E-Mail dated 5 May 2013 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>82</sup> "On 14 March 1964, I made 8 landings, so it is possible I did a shuttle between S-514 and S-506" (e-mail dated 11 May 2013)

<sup>83</sup> E-Mails dated 5 and 10 May 2013 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>84</sup> E-Mail dated 9 May 2013 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>85</sup> Operations Circular CA-C-OF-64-002 (Air America aircraft availability) of 1 February 1964, kindly faxed to the author by Ward Reimer on 17 February 2004.

<sup>86</sup> Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/B44F13.

<sup>87</sup> Aircraft Availability: Operations Circular no. CA-C-OF-64-013 of 1 April 1964, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4.

<sup>88</sup> Aircraft Status as of 7 July 64 in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>89</sup> Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/ B44F13.

<sup>90</sup> Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/ B44F13.

DATE DAY MO	MAKE & MODEL	AIRCRAFT IDENTIFI- CATION NO.	AIRCRAFT TYPE 1	AIRPLANE CLASS 2	NO. OF ENG.	ENGINES		FLIGHT NO.	FLIGHT RECORD		DURATION OF FLIGHT RES. MIN.
						MAKE & MODEL	TOTAL H.P. OF ENGINES		FROM	TO	
25/10	AHC-4A	B-853	A	C	2	R2000	1450	-	UDORN SIAM	UDORN SIAM	6 42
26/10	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	"	"	8 05
27/10	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	"	BANGKOK SIAM	7 33
29/10	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	BANGKOK SIAM	TAINAN, TAIWAN	10 29
3/11	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	TAINAN, TAIWAN	TAINAN, TAIWAN	0 48
4/11	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	TAINAN, TAIWAN	BANGKOK, SIAM	8 48
21/11	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	PITSANULOK, SIAM	PITSANULOK, SIAM	5 13
22/11	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	"	VIENTIANE, LAOS	7 30

AM	6 42	6 17	0 25	1 00				6 42	VIA Long Tieng - Muong Soui
	8 05	7 45	2 0					8 05	VIA CHIANG KHONG SALT LIES
SIAM	7 33	5 48	1 45	1 15				7 33	VIA PITSANULOK, CHIANG KHONG - Ferry
TAIWAN	10 29	7 22	3 07	3 30				10 29	VIA DANANG S. VIETNAM & HONG KONG
TAIWAN	0 48		0 48					0 48	TEST FLY
SIAM	8 48	8 48		3 00				8 48	VIA HONG KONG & DANANG S. VIETNAM
S. SIAM	5 13	5 13						5 13	VIA BORDER AIR DROPS
S. LAOS	7 30	7 30						7 30	VIA BORDER DROPS & UDORN

Flights Ed Eckholdt made in Bangkok-based Caribou "853" in October and November 1964  
(Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/B44F13)

3/5	AHC-4A	853	"	"	"	R2000	1450	-	"	"	8
4/5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	"	"	1
5/5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	UDORN, THAILAND	BANGKOK, THAILAND	1
9/5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	BANGKOK, THAILAND	"	7 0
11/5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	"	"	0
12/5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	"	PITSANULOK, "	3
13/5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	PITSANULOK SIAM	UBIEN SIAM	8
14/5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	UDORN, "	PITSANULOK SIAM	10
15/5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	PITSANULOK SIAM	BANGKOK, THAILAND	8
16/5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	BANGKOK, "	"	5
19/5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-	"	VIENTIANE, LAOS	1

	8 41	8 16	DS	20				8 41	
	1 02	1 02						1 02	FLY VTE + RTA
Yok, Thailand	1 45	1 45						1 45	FLY
"	0 15	0 15						0 15	TEST - gear PROBLEMS
"	0 20	0 20						0 20	" "
Yok, "	3 35	3 35						3 35	VIA CHANG MAI
SIAM	8 38	8 38						8 38	AIR DROPS
BANGKOK SIAM	10 15	10 15						10 15	AIR DROPS
BK, THAILAND	8 44	8 44						8 44	AIR DROPS
"	5 41	5 41						5 41	VIA XIENG LOM
"	1 52	1 52						1 52	FLY

Flights Ed Eckholdt made in Bangkok-based Caribou "853" in May 1965  
(Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/B44F13)

## II) Under the umbrella of USAID

### 1) Flying under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-66

At that time, i.e. in mid-1965, 2 changes had occurred. Already in October and November 1963, at a price of \$ 36,000 each,<sup>91</sup> Air America had bought 2 more Helio Couriers that eventually became B-867 and B-869. The first of them, B-867, was used out of Bangkok under contract 58-056 in February 64<sup>92</sup> and in April 64,<sup>93</sup> then was transferred to Vientiane for use under contract AID-439-342,<sup>94</sup> but returned to Bangkok in 1965, after the old PARU contract no. 58-056 had been integrated into the new USAID contract no. AID-493-66 on 1 July 65.<sup>95</sup> This new contract was the second change. As to Helio B-867, it continued to fly out of Bangkok under this new USAID contract,<sup>96</sup> until it was transferred to Saigon on 1 April 67, where it flew under the provisions of another USAID contract, AID/VN-23.<sup>97</sup> While flown out of Bangkok, this Helio apparently served as a liaison aircraft. The second Helio, B-869, was also used out of Bangkok, but initially under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-8 – that is where we find it in February 64.<sup>98</sup> Shortly afterwards, it was transferred to the PARU contract no. 58-056,<sup>99</sup> still for use out of Bangkok, and we still find it there in July 64,<sup>100</sup> but when Helio B-869 undershot the runway at Chiang Khong (T-516), Thailand, on 12 December 64,<sup>101</sup> it was probably already assigned to contract AID-439-342 for operations out of Vientiane, where we find it in November 65.<sup>102</sup> Contract no. AID-493-8 between Air America and USOM/Thailand was effective 23 June 62,<sup>103</sup> furnished flying services with 1 C-46, 1 C-47, and 1 Helio Courier,<sup>104</sup> and apparently also included services for the Thai Police: CAT C-47A B-815 was still used out of Bangkok in February 57,<sup>105</sup> but then photographed at Vientiane on 27 April 60.<sup>106</sup> From July to September 1963, two aircraft were assigned to contract no. AID-493-8: C-46 B-910, which was replaced by C-47 B-815 on 10 September 63, and Helio Courier N4190D.<sup>107</sup> But on 27 December 63, Air America C-47 B-815 crashed 35 miles southwest of Songkhla, Thailand, while flying under the provisions of USAID contract 493-8 for the Royal Thai Border Police, killing pilot Herbert Liu, co-pilot Tsuan-Ho

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<sup>91</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc of 29 October 63, in: UTD/CIA/B7F2.

<sup>92</sup> Operations Circular no. CA-C-OF-64-002 (AAM Aircraft Availability) of 1 February 64, in the possession of Ward Reimer who kindly faxed it to the author on 17 February 2004.

<sup>93</sup> Operations Circular no. CA-C-OF-64-013 (Aircraft Availability) of 1 April 1964, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4.

<sup>94</sup> Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>95</sup> See USAID contract no. AID-493-66 dated 1 July 65, preserved at: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

<sup>96</sup> Helio B-867 was used out of Bangkok under contract AID-493-66 in November 65 (Revised Status of Aircraft as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1) and still in April and May 66 (Revised Status of Aircraft as of 8 April 66, in: Kirkpatrick/B1F1; Status of Aircraft as of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2).

<sup>97</sup> See Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>98</sup> Operations Circular no. CA-C-OF-64-002 (AAM Aircraft Availability) of 1 February 64, in the possession of Ward Reimer who kindly faxed it to the author on 17 February 2004.

<sup>99</sup> Operations Circular no. CA-C-OF-64-013 (Aircraft Availability) of 1 April 1964, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4.

<sup>100</sup> Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>101</sup> Aircraft accidents 1964, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2.

<sup>102</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>103</sup> See Contract Administration – Memorandum no. ALC-62-134 dated 27 July 62, in: UTD/Fink/B2F16.

<sup>104</sup> Statement of Application for Renewal of Commercial Operating Certificate as of 1 November 63, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.2.

<sup>105</sup> John E. Lee, interview with William Leary, in: UTD/Leary/I B8F9.

<sup>106</sup> UTD/Kirkpatrick slide A 5242.

<sup>107</sup> AAM Aircraft Availability for 1 July 63, 15 July 63, and 21 September 63, NOTAMS nos. OF-N-63-09, -12, and -23, in: UTD/Walker/B25F8.



Hsieh, radio operator L. S. Yu, and 9 Royal Thai Border Police passengers.<sup>108</sup> It was replaced by Beech C-45G Ten-Two N7950C for use out of Bangkok until 24 January 64,<sup>109</sup> when the aircraft was transferred to Saigon, where it was assigned to contract DA92-321-PBC-1861 for the CSG.<sup>110</sup> The new aircraft flying out of Bangkok under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-8 since 24 Jan. 64 was C-46 B-138,<sup>111</sup> but this was only for a short time, as contract no. AID-493-8, which had covered flying services with C-46, C-47 and Helio aircraft, expired on 29 February 64,<sup>112</sup> and indeed, on 1 April 64, C-46 B-138 was still based at Bangkok, but unassigned, together with another aircraft that had been released from contract no. AID-493-8 on 28 February 64: C-45G (10-2) N9573Z.<sup>113</sup> This aircraft was involved in an accident near Cam Ranh (V-54), South Vietnam, on 9 April 64.<sup>114</sup>

The real new thing at that time was contract no. AID-493-66 dated 1 July 1965. This was not a contract between Air America as Contractor and USAID, but between Air America Inc and the “Government of the United States of America, acting through the Agency for International Development (hereinafter referred to as ‘AID’), represented by the United States Operations Mission to Thailand (hereinafter referred to as ‘USOM’)”<sup>115</sup> – a formula that reveals the presence of the CIA behind this contract. The contract covered flying services for USOM/Thailand with Caribou “853” (1200 flying hours), Ten-Two N5269V (840 flying hours), and Helio Courier B-867 (1620 flying hours) and was estimated to have a value of \$706,395.40.<sup>116</sup> The new contract combined aircraft that came from the old PARU contract no. 58-056 (Caribou “853” and Helio B-867) and from another contract that Air America had had with the Thai Border Patrol Police since 30 June 1962: contract no. 62-38 (Ten-Two N5269V),<sup>117</sup> “furnishing flying services of one Beech TENTWO type aircraft to be based in Bangkok.”<sup>118</sup> In July 63, C-47 B-815 was the only aircraft assigned to contract no. 62-38, an “interim assignment pending arrival of TEN TWO N5269V about 22 July”,<sup>119</sup> and by 21 September 63, N5269V was flying under this contract.<sup>120</sup> This Ten Two had a very unusual color scheme, as the tail, the wings, and much of the fuselage were painted visibly red. As the designation “Beech Ten Two”, which was only used by Air America, was painted on the red fuselage, this unusual red color scheme was not just the heritage coming from a former owner, but was intended by Air America. It seems that the aircraft was intended to be identified from

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<sup>108</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd. of and Air America Inc. of 30 December 63, in: UTD/CIA/B7F2; Aircraft accidents 1963, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; List “Aircraft destroyed or lost”, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2.

<sup>109</sup> AAM aircraft availability (Operations Circular CA-C-OF-64-002) of 1 February 64, in the possession of Ward Reimer who kindly faxed it to the author on 17 February 2004.

<sup>110</sup> AAM aircraft availability (Operations Circular CA-C-OF-64-002) of 1 February 64, in the possession of Ward Reimer who kindly faxed it to the author on 17 February 2004; Operations Circular of 1 April 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4.

<sup>111</sup> AAM aircraft availability (Operations Circular CA-C-OF-64-002) of 1 February 64, in the possession of Ward Reimer who kindly faxed it to the author on 17 February 2004.

<sup>112</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc of 30 December 63, in: UTD/CIA/B7F2.

<sup>113</sup> AAM Aircraft Availability: Operations Circular no. CA-C-OF-64-013 of 1 April 1964, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4.

<sup>114</sup> See: Aircraft accidents 1964, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2.

<sup>115</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

<sup>116</sup> Inter-office routing slip of 18 Sept. 65 to contract no. AID-493-66, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

<sup>117</sup> In 1964, Ten-Two N5269V was still assigned to contract no. 62-38 (Operations Circular no. CA-C-OF-64-002 (AAM Aircraft Availability) of 1 February 64, in the possession of Ward Reimer who kindly faxed it to the author on 17 February 2004; Operations Circular no. CA-C-OF-64-013 (AAM Aircraft Availability) of 1 April 1964, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4; Aircraft Status as of 7 July 64 in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>118</sup> Renewal of Commercial Operator Certificate: Letter dated 1 November 63, written by Air America’s President Hugh Grundy to the FAA, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.2.

<sup>119</sup> AAM aircraft availability of 15 July 63, in: UTD/Walker/B25F8.

<sup>120</sup> AAM aircraft availability of 21 September 63, in: UTD/Walker/B25F8.



Air America Ten-Two N5269V, taken at Bangkok in 1967  
(UTD/Hickler/B33)

**INTER-OFFICE ROUTING SLIP**

REF. No. OR IDENTIFICATION OF THE ATTACHED: **AID-493-66**  
(Flying Service for USOM, T)

**TO** HQOR - WAS  
(via President)

**ACTION** 18555

\* For your information  
Initial and pass on  
For your comments  
Please handle  
Take up with me  
For your approval  
For your decision  
Investigate and report  
Bring up to date  
Draft reply

\* For your file  
Note and destroy  
Please return to:

**REMARKS:**  
**Attached:** A conformed copy of referenced contract.  
Based upon VPFA office estimate, the dollar amount and flying hours for Contract AID-493-66 as follows:-

	Flying Hours	Dollars Value
DHC-4A	1200	\$478,500.00
Beech Ten-Two	840	96,600.00
Helio Courier	1620	131,495.40
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>3660</b>	<b>\$706,595.40</b>

cc: T/C  
AA/TC  
VPFA (DFC) (2)  
VPFO  
VPTS

(Turn over for additional space)

DATE 18 Sept. 1965 FROM Henry F. Bevans  
Henry F. Bevans  
SLG

cc-a

THIS AGREEMENT, made this 1st day of July 1965, by and between the Government of the United States of America, acting through the Agency for International Development (hereinafter referred to as "AID"), represented by the United States Operations Mission to Thailand (hereinafter referred to as "USOM"), and AID-493-66, INC. (hereinafter referred to as the "Contractor"), a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware, Delaware, with Field Executive Office located at Kadana Air Base, Okinawa;

WITNESSETH:

AID is desirous of obtaining flying services with various type aircraft from the Contractor and the Contractor is willing to provide aircraft hereinafter referred to, upon the terms and conditions hereof;

AID, through USOM, for and in consideration of the stated premises, the mutual covenants and the terms and conditions herein set forth, the parties agree as follows:

1. This agreement shall be known as Contract No. AID-493-66
2. The Contractor shall, as hereinafter prescribed and pursuant to the applicable provisions of this contract, furnish the services of not less than the number and types of aircraft prescribed as Contract assigned aircraft in appendix "A", attached hereto and hereby made a part hereof, and subject to the availability thereof, and upon call by the Contracting Officer pursuant to the provisions of this contract, the Contractor shall provide additional aircraft services with the aircraft types subject to call prescribed in appendix "A" hereto. Subject to applicable provisions of this contract, and for in this contract, the Contractor shall furnish in the performance of services prescribed in this article "2" all necessary maintenance and operations personnel, normal flight crew, including a pilot of American nationality, and for contract assigned DHC-4A Caribou an air freight specialist, all aviation fuel, engine lubricating oil, supplies, services, maintenance, repairs and all ground equipment necessary for the operation of said aircraft. USOM shall provide personnel to load, handle and unload cargo. However, where Contractor has station facilities and personnel and USOM is unable to provide or arrange to have provided through its existing contractual arrangements for such services, the Contractor shall assist in the loading, handling and unloading of cargo and in any event the crew will assist whenever necessary. Except for daily maintenance and inspection, the Contractor may perform Contractor's repairs and maintenance of aircraft at facilities utilized by the Contractor in Southeast Asia or Taiwan as decided by the Contractor; provided, that the scheduling of maintenance flights shall

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Contract no. AID-493-66 of 1 July 65: Inter-Office Routing Slip and p.1 of the contract  
(UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27)

the ground, but its purpose is unknown. As to the other aircraft assigned to contract no. AID-493-66, Caribou "853" remained under that contract for several years – it was still based at Bangkok in November 65,<sup>121</sup> on 8 April 66,<sup>122</sup> and on 4 May 66.<sup>123</sup> Probably in 1967, it was transferred to Saigon for use under contract AID/VN-23, until it was released from that

<sup>121</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>122</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>123</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2.

contract on 31 December 67 and used as a spare aircraft still on 1 May 68.<sup>124</sup> However, more aircraft were added to the contract quite early: Already in November 65, a new Pilatus PC-6A Porter was to be added to contract no. AID-493-66 – intended to be msn 586<sup>125</sup> –, but the Porter that was eventually assigned to that contract was PC-6A N748N (msn 539), also based at Bangkok.<sup>126</sup> In May 66, the fleet assigned to contract no. AID-493-66 had further grown: We still find the original 3 aircraft – Caribou “853”, Ten-Two N5269V, and Helio B-867 – plus PC-6A N748N added in late 1965, but 2 helicopters were also added in April 1966: Bell 204B N1196W commenced operating out of Bangkok on 21 April 66, and Bell 204B N8539F commenced operating out of Chiang Mai on 26 April 66.<sup>127</sup> Astazou-powered PC-6A N748N was first assigned to contract AF49(604)-4395 for use out of Saigon in November 65,<sup>128</sup> but already on 27 January 1966, it struck a hidden chuck hole upon landing at Sao Ning (T-613) in Thailand.<sup>129</sup> In April and May 66, we find it assigned to contract no. AID-493-66 for use out of Bangkok,<sup>130</sup> and during its short service in Thailand, N748N had two more accidents: On 3 June 66, the engine flamed out, and the aircraft made a forced landing on a highway 10 miles east of Pitt’s Camp (T-603)<sup>131</sup> and on 20 September 66, the left landing gear broke off while landing at Ban Si (T-312), when the wheel sank into a mud hole on the landing roll, damaging the prop, the nacelle, the engine and the front fuselage.<sup>132</sup> During repair at Tainan in late 1966, it was also converted to a Garrett-powered PC-6C.<sup>133</sup> Probably in June or July 66, a second Porter was assigned to contract no. AID-493-66, PC-6C N392R, which had been acquired on 31 March 66 as a PC-6A model, but was converted at Tainan to a Garrett powered PC-6C model in April and May 66.<sup>134</sup> On 1 August 66, N392R crash-landed at Phu Lang Kha (T-530), when the strut broke during the landing, damaging the prop, the engine, the left wing and the left landing gear. The aircraft had been on a routine cargo contract flight from Chiang Mai (T-11) to Phu Lang Kha (T-530), transporting 3 sand sacks at 330 pounds each plus 2 bags of cement at 100 pounds each under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-66.<sup>135</sup> The aircraft was recovered on 3 August 66 and repaired by November 66 at a cost of \$ 27,300.<sup>136</sup> It seems that N392R was then immediately assigned to service in Laos, as the next time we hear about it, N392R landed short at Yung Tuia (LS-217) on 4 February 67.<sup>137</sup>

A lot of changes also took place in late 1966 or 1967: Caribou “853” was transferred to Saigon, as were Ten-Two N5269V, Helio B-867, and PC-6 Porter N748N.<sup>138</sup> For some time,

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<sup>124</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>125</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>126</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>127</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2.

<sup>128</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>129</sup> XOXO of 27 Jan. 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16; Aircraft accidents 1966, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2.

<sup>130</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; Status of Aircraft as of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2.

<sup>131</sup> XOXO of 3 June 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16.

<sup>132</sup> XOXO of 20 Sept. 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16; Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America Inc. of 28 September 66, in: UTD/CIA/B8F1; a photo of the ill-fated PC-6 is preserved in the Accident review of 2 November 66 in: UTD/Hickler/B24/F3.

<sup>133</sup> Status as of 28 March 74, in: UTD/CIA/B56F3.

<sup>134</sup> List “Accumulated costs as of 31 Dec. 67”, in: UTD/CIA/B40F8; Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America Inc. of 27 April 66, in: UTD/CIA/B8F1; Aircraft status as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; Aircraft status as of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2.

<sup>135</sup> XOXO of 1 Aug. 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16; Accident report in: UTD/Hickler/B24F4; Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America Inc. of 3 August 66 in: UTD/CIA/B8F1.

<sup>136</sup> Accident report in: UTD/Hickler/B24F4; Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America Inc. of 27 November 66 in: UTD/CIA/B8F1.

<sup>137</sup> XOXO of 4 February 67, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16; Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America Inc. of 14 February 67, in: UTD/CIA/B8F2.

<sup>138</sup> For details see the Caribou, Beech, Helio, and PC-6 files within my *The Aircraft of Air America*.

C-47D 0-50883, operating in full USAF colors, was also used on flights from Bangkok to Pitt's Camp (T-603) via Takhli (T-05) under the provisions of contract AID-493-66, and this aircraft had a landing accident at Pitt's Camp (T-603) on 6 September 67.<sup>139</sup> Already in late 1966, PC-6 N153L was assigned to service in Thailand: Officially acquired by Air America on 31 August 66,<sup>140</sup> N153L struck bushes and a tree while attempting to take off into the sun from Lao Na (T-614), Thailand, on 9 December 66, causing extensive damage.<sup>141</sup> After it had been repaired at a cost of \$71,750 in January 67,<sup>142</sup> N153L had another accident in Thailand when it suffered from an in-flight engine malfunction and crashed into the trees about 45 miles North of Ubon, Thailand, on 11 April 67, while on a flight to Ban Chanuman (T-313).<sup>143</sup> Once more, N153L was repaired, and its next accident was fatal, when a Thai Border Police sergeant walked into the rotating propeller of N153L at Ban Nong Khan (T-322), Thailand, on 28 January 68, and was instantly killed.<sup>144</sup> In May 68, N153L was still assigned to contract AID-493-66 for use out of Bangkok, but actually operated out of Ubon (T-19) in May 68, called thru 30 June 68,<sup>145</sup> but a year later, the aircraft had already been transferred to South Vietnam.<sup>146</sup>

Another addition of late 1966 was PC-6 N198X. Officially acquired by Air America on 31 August 66,<sup>147</sup> N198X had its first accident in Thailand on 11 October 66, when the tail wheel was damaged upon landing at Huai Fuang (T-549).<sup>148</sup> After it had been repaired, more accidents were to follow: On 7 November 66, N198X had another landing accident at Sam Meun (T-545), and this time, the landing gear, the prop, the left wing and the fuselage bottom were damaged upon landing, so that it could return to service only on 29 November 66.<sup>149</sup> After a minor accident – apparently damaging the tail wheel – on 11 December 66, N198X was next struck by misfortune, when – while parked at Ubon (T-19) – a USAF C-47 taxied into the rudder of N198X on 6 June 67.<sup>150</sup> Half a year later, it was not another aircraft, but a water buffalo calf that ran into the right horizontal stabilizer of the aircraft and damaged it – this time during the landing rollout at Ban Khae Don (T-311), Thailand, on 22 December 67.<sup>151</sup> Once more, Porter N198X was repaired, and in mid-1968, we find the aircraft assigned to contract AID-493-66 for use out of Bangkok, but it actually operated out of Sakon Nakhon (T-38).<sup>152</sup> A year later, the aircraft had already been transferred to South Vietnam.<sup>153</sup>

The third new acquisition made for that contract – Porter N199X – was officially also bought on 31 August 66.<sup>154</sup> Like the other 2 Porters flying in Thailand, N199X had some accidents where people walked into the propeller: On 5 January 68, it was a person of the Royal Thai Border Police who walked into the propeller of N199X at Ban Mu Sae Wa (T-553), Thailand, and was seriously injured, and on 12 July 68, it was an indigenous man who

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<sup>139</sup> Accident report of 6 September 67, in: UTD/CIA/B59F10.

<sup>140</sup> List "Accumulated costs as of 31 Dec. 67", in: UTD/CIA/B40F8.

<sup>141</sup> For details see my PC-6 file.

<sup>142</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc of 10 January 67, in: UTD/CIA/B8F2.

<sup>143</sup> For details see my PC-6 file.

<sup>144</sup> For details see my PC-6 file.

<sup>145</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>146</sup> N153L is given as assigned to contract AID/VN-41 for use out of Saigon 16-30 June 69 and 16-31 August 69 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B; F.O.C. of 15 August 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1).

<sup>147</sup> List "Accumulated costs as of 31 Dec. 67", in: UTD/CIA/B40F8.

<sup>148</sup> For details see my PC-6 file.

<sup>149</sup> For details see my PC-6 file.

<sup>150</sup> For details see my PC-6 file.

<sup>151</sup> For details see my PC-6 file.

<sup>152</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>153</sup> N198X is given as assigned to contract AID/VN-41 for use out of Saigon 16-30 June 69 and 16-31 August 69 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B; F.O.C. of 15 August 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1).

<sup>154</sup> List "Accumulated costs as of 31 Dec. 67", in: UTD/CIA/B40F8.

walked into the still rotating propeller at San Kham Lea (T-550), Thailand, and was seriously injured.<sup>155</sup> Like the other 2 Porters, N199X was listed as assigned to contract AID-493-66 in May 68, but for use out of Chiang Mai (T-11) as a basic aircraft.<sup>156</sup> But unlike the other two Porters on the contract, N199X was still assigned to that contract in 1969 and 1970,<sup>157</sup> and, when the Porter hit a tree on 20 April 71, it crashed into the forest and was destroyed by fire on Doi Suthep mountain, Chiang Mai Province, some 12 kms WNW of Chiang Mai (T-11). It had been laying telephone cables from the air under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-66; in this accident, 3 people were injured.<sup>158</sup> One of the main tasks of this Chiang Mai-based



Air America PC-6C N199X Porter at Chiang Mai in the late sixties  
(UTD/Hickler/B28)

PC-6 was, however, working for the *Drug Enforcement Administration* (DEA), i.e. searching for and helping to destroy drug plantations.<sup>159</sup>

This new type of aircraft flown under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-66 indicates that the focus of the contract had changed in the meantime. Parachute training was no longer needed for the PARU, but the contract was now engaged in building up an infrastructure in Thailand's mountainous areas, and this also included the construction of new mountain top air strips in Thailand. In December 1967, J. R. Barnhisel, Air America's Station Manager of Chiang Mai station described the situation as follows: "AAM's Chiangmai station is located in northern Thailand, approximately 360 nautical miles NNW of Bangkok in the City and Province of Chiangmai. It is quite centrally located in Northern Thailand, being about 100 miles from the Burmese border to the north and west and almost exactly the same distance from the Laotian border to the north and east. Although the immediate area surrounding Chiangmai lies in a rather large valley, most flight operations are conducted over mountainous, jungle-covered terrain around the periphery at five to six thousand feet

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<sup>155</sup> For details see my PC-6 file.

<sup>156</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>157</sup> N199X was still assigned to that contract 16-30 June 69 and 16-31 August 69 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B; F.O.C. of 15 August 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1) and on 1 July 70 (Leary, *The aircraft of Air America*, p. 20).

<sup>158</sup> XOXO of 20 April 71: UTD/Hickler/B25F11; Accident report, in: UTD/Anthony/F4; List "Aircraft destroyed or lost", in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; a photo is preserved in: UTD/Anthony/F6.

<sup>159</sup> Interview given to the author by Air America's Les Strouse, Bangkok, 28 February 2014.

elevation. Few roads exist in the up-country area and Air America 204B helicopters and PC-6C Porter STOL aircraft provide the primary means of transportation for the Royal Thai Border Police Patrol into and out of these otherwise inaccessible areas.”<sup>160</sup>

During the second half of the 1960s, a lot of additional STOL strips were built in Thailand, especially in the north. Already in June 65, 2 CIA men and 3 PARU’s moved to northern Thailand to support tribesmen in constructing new runways and in improving old sites.<sup>161</sup> An anonymous article published the March 1968 issue of *Air America Log* describes the problems inherent to this program: “When Air America personnel started to build STOL strips in remote areas of Thailand – where overland transportation is virtually non-existent – they had to adopt their methods to the circumstances at hand. They had to move earth. A wheelbarrow would seem to be the logical, simple, inexpensive prime mover. But not under the situation in the remote countryside. A wheelbarrow would have to be procured, air-lifted to the site, then air-dropped because there is nowhere an aircraft can land before the strip is built. The solution? Make your earth-mover out of locally-available materials. Wooden poles lashed together form the frame. The wheels are made of sections of a round log; axle holes are burned through the center. A concave-shaped cow hide is draped over the frame to form the body of the contraption to complete the vehicle. Crude – but effective; and it can be easily maintained in local shops. The device is moved by a man pulling a rope tied to the front of the thing while a second man pushes and guides it with a pole at the rear. Similarly, large graders are fashioned from local lumber: a wide plank forms the bottom blade and a wooden frame is attached to allow laborers to guide the grader as it is pulled over the strip’s surface by a group of workmen. Then there are smaller, two-man graders – simply a board blade which is steadied by one man as another pulls it along the ground with a rope tied to each end of the board. Here are some factors to be taken into consideration when building STOL strips:

- Before beginning the construction of the strip, it should be sited and designed by a team consisting of a veteran STOL pilot and an experienced airport engineer.

- In laying out the strip, every effort should be made to site it in such a manner that it can be easily enlarged to accommodate heavier aircraft if required. Therefore, it is important to note the location of graves, spirit trees and other religious non-movable items prior to siting the strip.

- Although runway length required for landing can be decreased as the upgrade increases, there is a limit. If the slope is too steep, pilots will be unable to pull the aircraft’s nose up high enough to land due to elevator control reaching maximum travel.

- Since some strips must be sited where they end in the vertical face of mountains – or large trees – careful consideration must be given to providing pilots with an ‘escape route’ if they have to abort an approach just prior to landing.

- Adequate means should be provided to prevent animals and people from encumbering the runway while aircraft are taking off or landing.

- Standard runway markings and wind socks should be provided.”<sup>162</sup>

Animals and people encumbering the runway was indeed an important point, as more than once, animals ran into Air America aircraft: For example, when Bangkok-based Porter N198X arrived over its destination Ban Khae Don (T-311) on 22 December 67, “the aircraft circled the field, made a low pass and observed that the strip was clear and then made a normal approach and landing. During the landing rollout, a water buffalo calf which was unobserved by the pilot, ran from adjacent bushes into the right horizontal stabilizer of the aircraft. The aircraft incurred damage to the right horizontal stabilizer and right elevator.”<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> J. R. Barnhisel, “Chiengmai Station”, in: *Air America Log*, vol. I, no. 2 (December 1967), p. 5.

<sup>161</sup> Leary, Manuscript, ch. V, pp. 529/30, in: UTD/Leary/B19F4.

<sup>162</sup> (Anonymous), “Constructing STOL strips in Thailand, in: *Air America Log*, vol. II, no.3, March 68, p.2.

<sup>163</sup> Aircraft accident review for the accident that Porter N198X incurred at T-311 on 22 December 67, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F3. But not only animals ran into Air America aircraft on small Thai airstrips, but also people.

As to the dates these strips were opened, some of them – mostly in the eastern parts of Thailand and numbered in the T-300s – had been opened as early as 1963 – like Ban Si (T-312) at coordinates VB3916 in eastern Thailand, which had been opened on 21 March 63 –, while others were opened only in late 1966 – like the strip at coordinates QU 0388 in north western Thailand – or even in 1967.<sup>164</sup> The aircraft operating under contract USAID 493-66 carried either passengers or cargo needed for construction work like cement and sand.<sup>165</sup> Among the heavy accidents that occurred during this type of operations (contract 493-66) was that of Porter N153L, which suffered from an in-flight engine malfunction over a heavily wooded area and crashed into the trees about 45 miles north of Ubon, Thailand, on 11 April 67, while on a flight from Ubon (T-19) to Ban Chanuman (T-313); after the accident, the pilot of N153L “vaguely remembers being carried away from the wreckage. Apparently he was pulled from the cockpit by locals, and a school teacher attempted the flow of blood before renting a passing truck to relay the pilot to a nearby Public Health Center for first aid treatment before continuing on to the USAF dispensary at Ubon (T-19)”. The aircraft was airlifted to Vientiane on 13 April and then flown to Tainan for repairs, which cost no less than \$ 63,760.<sup>166</sup> One of the problems was that STOL strips in Thailand were generally below the standards that had been established for Laos, i.e. below a minimum length 650 feet with an additional 100 feet per 1,000 feet elevation. Because of the length and because of approaches, strips in Thailand were more dangerous.<sup>167</sup>



**Building STOL strips in North Thailand**  
(photos: *Air America Log*, vol. II, no.3 [March 1968], p.2)

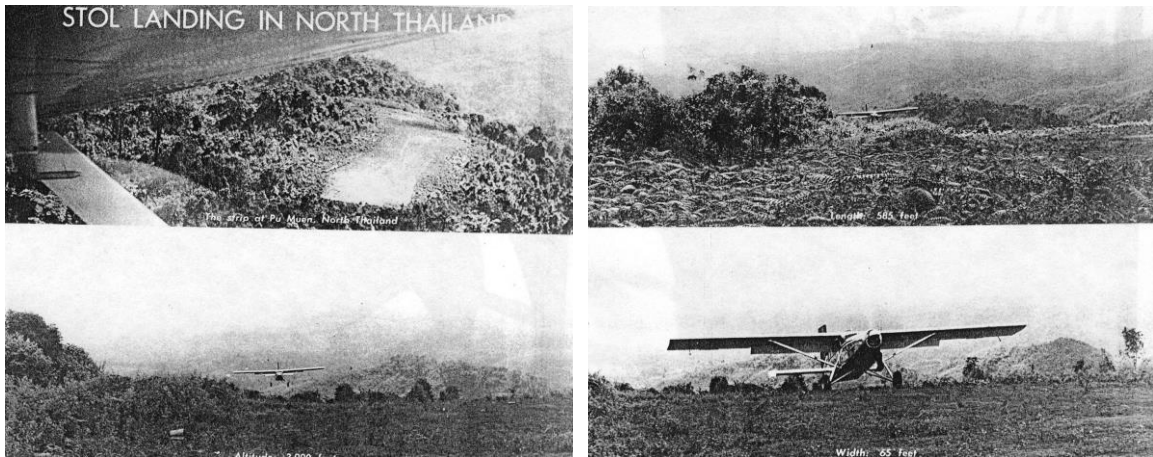
Such an accident happened for example at Ban Nong Khan (T-322) on 28 January 68, when a Thai Border Police Sergeant walked into the running propeller of Air America Porter N153L and was immediately killed (Aircraft accident review of this accident, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F1).

<sup>164</sup> For the dates these strips were opened see the Aircraft accident reviews for: Porter N748N accident at T-312 on 2 November 66 (in: UTD/Hickler/B24F3) and Porter N153L at Lao Na (T-614) on 9 December 66 (in: UTD/Hickler/B24F4).

<sup>165</sup> When Porter N153L crashed at Lao Na (T-614) on 9 December 66, it carried 5 passengers; when Porter N392R crash-landed at Phu Lang Kha (T-530) on 1 August 66, it carried sand and cement (Aircraft accident reports for these accidents, both in: UTD/Hickler/B24F4).

<sup>166</sup> Aircraft accident review (in: UTD/Hickler/B24F3) and XOXOs (in: UTD/Hickler/B27F1) of this accident; Minutes of Meetings of the Executive Committees of Air America Inc and Air Asia Co Ltd of 14 November 67, in: UTD/CIA/B8F2.

<sup>167</sup> Leary, Manuscript, ch. V, pp. 529/30, in: UTD/Leary/B19F4.



An Air America PC-6 landing at the STOL strip at Pu Muen (T-539), North Thailand  
(photos: *Air America Log*, vol. III, no.1 [1969], p.1)

The next addition to the fleet operating under contract no. AID-493-66 was to be an OnMark – maybe N46598 or maybe the second OnMark that was intended for Air America, but never left the USA. This highly sophisticated aircraft had been ferried to South-East Asia in mid-April 67, and was then used for training at Udorn from the second half of April to June 67. Between 31 May 67 and 11 June 67, Frank Bonansinga made several training rides in N46598 out of Udorn (T-08), then, on 12 June 67, he was checked out captain in a flight out of Udorn.<sup>168</sup> On 16 June 67, he flew a night drop mission over Laos in N46598, but received



Air America On Mark B-26 N46598 at Udorn in June 67  
(with kind permission from Frank Bonansinga)

gun fire. On 18 June 67, he ferried N46598 from Savannakhet (L-39) to Udorn (T-08) and back to Savannakhet.<sup>169</sup> As it seems, the aircraft proved unsuitable for nightly low-level supply drops over Laos, because it was too fast and too similar to a B-26 bomber, so that people on the ground did not turn on the signal light.<sup>170</sup> As to operations in Thailand, the OnMark had been intended “to meet AID’s needs, under USOM/T contract 493-66, for aerial survey work to be undertaken by USOM/T for the RTG. Additionally, they may occasionally

<sup>168</sup> Log book of Frank Bonansinga, checked by the author on 10 March 2004 at Frank’s home.

<sup>169</sup> Log book of Frank Bonansinga, checked by the author on 10 March 2004 at Frank’s home.

<sup>170</sup> Jim Rhyne, in: UTD/Leary/B1 for 30 June 67.



be called by AID/L under contract 439-713.”<sup>171</sup> The description of the aircraft attached to George Doole’s letter of 28 March 67 states that the purpose of the aircraft was “aerial resupply, low-level penetration”,<sup>172</sup> and one might guess that those low-level penetration missions were not only to cover parts of North Vietnam, but also parts of Red China. And so, Amendment no. 4 to contract AID-493-66, dated 31 August 67 adds an OnMark to the contract fleet with a minimum of 300 hours, also stating that “the prices set forth in this Amendment are interim billing prices and are effective as of the date such aircraft were assigned to perform services under the contract” and that there would be further negotiations.<sup>173</sup> This seems to mean that at that time, the OnMark had not yet entered service under contract no. AID-493-66. As to OnMark operations in Laos, the last flight on the night-drop program was made on 11 October 67, and on that flight there were engine problems. The unsatisfactory results of flying the OnMark in Laos may explain why – as it seems – the aircraft did not enter service under contract no. AID-493-66.<sup>174</sup> It continued to fly for Air America, but just doing transportation flights. On 30 March 68, it was sold to Overseas Aeromarine Inc, Seattle,<sup>175</sup> but crashed on take-off from Takhli on the ferry flight to the USA in mid-April 68, probably on 14 April 68.<sup>176</sup> Indeed, on 1 September 67, Volpar N3674G was assigned to Bangkok to fly under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-66<sup>177</sup> – apparently the survey aircraft that was eventually used instead of the OnMark. Of the 2 Bell 204Bs, one,

CONTRACT NO. AID-493-66

AMENDMENT NUMBER FOUR

THIS AMENDMENT NUMBERED FOUR is entered into this ~~31st~~ day of July 1967, by and between the Government of the United States of America, acting through the Agency for International Development (hereinafter referred to as "AID"), represented by the United States Operations Mission to Thailand (hereinafter referred to as "USOM"), and Air America, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as the "Contractor"), a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware, U.S.A., with Field Executive Office located at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa;

WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS, the parties hereto entered into an agreement dated the 1st day of July 1965, bearing Contract No. AID-493-66, as amended, pursuant to which the Contractor furnished to USOM aircraft flying services as therein provided; and

WHEREAS, the parties hereto desire to further amend said contract to provide for the flying services of On Mark type aircraft; and

WHEREAS, the Contractor is desirous of accommodating the Government to provide for such aircraft;

NOW, THEREFORE, for and in consideration of the stated premises and the mutual covenants herein contained, said contract is hereby amended as follows:

- On page 4, in paragraph 4.A., line 12, add a comma (,) after the phrase "Appendix 'A'" and thereafter insert the phrase "except the On Mark type aircraft,".
- Appendix "A" (Revision No. 1) of the contract is hereby amended by the addition of On Mark type aircraft on page 2 of 5 entitled "AIRCRAFT SUBJECT TO CALL" as follows:

Aircraft Type	Hours	DRY WING		WET WING	
		Normal	Hazardous	Normal	Hazardous
On Mark	Minimum 300	263.12	283.12	378.27	398.27
	Over 300	236.80	256.80	340.44	360.44

- It is hereby agreed that the prices set forth in this Amendment are interim billing prices and are effective as of the date such aircraft were assigned to perform services under the contract. The interim billing prices shall apply until the

CONTRACT NO. AID-493-66

parties shall agree to mutually acceptable prices. The new prices agreed to by the parties shall be retroactive to the date such aircraft were assigned to perform services under the contract. Should the parties be unable to agree on such new prices, such inability to agree shall be a dispute and subject to the clause in the General Provisions entitled "Disputes".

4. Except as hereinabove amended expressly or by implication as necessary to give effect hereto, Contract No. AID-493-66 shall remain the same and in full force and effect.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have by their representatives or officers thereunto duly authorized executed this Amendment on the date first above written, which is the date of the last signature hereto.

AIR AMERICA, INC.	THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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By: <u>s/ Hugh L. Grundy</u>	By: <u>s/ Anthony C. Labar</u>
Signature	Signature of Contracting Officer
Hugh L. Grundy     8 August 1967	Anthony C. Labar     31 Aug 1967
Typed Name                          Date	Typed Name                          Date

President \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_

CERTIFICATE

I, Jerry Fink, certify that I am the Deputy Legal Counsel of the Corporation named as Contractor herein, that Hugh L. Grundy who signed this Amendment on behalf of the Contractor was then President of said Corporation, that said Amendment Number Four was duly signed for and on behalf of said Corporation by authority of its governing body and is within the scope of its corporate powers.

s/ Jerry Fink  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(CORPORATE SEAL)

Contract no. AID-493-66, Amendment no. 4, dated 31 August 67  
(in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm no. 27)

<sup>171</sup> Memorandum no. SA/P-67-64 dated 13 April 67, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 4.

<sup>172</sup> Description of the On Mark attached to George Doole’s letter of 28 March 67, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 4, published in my B-26/On Mark file.

<sup>173</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66, Amendment no. 4, dated 31 August 67, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm no. 27.

<sup>174</sup> Former Air America OnMark pilot Frank Bonansinga confirms that he never heard about the OnMark flying in Thailand (e-mail dated 1 June 2013, kindly sent to the author by Frank Bonansinga).

<sup>175</sup> Details from the official FAA file thanks to Leif Hellström, e-mail dated 6 February 2004 to the author.

<sup>176</sup> E-mails dated 26 June 2001 and 9 June 2004, kindly sent to the author by Frank Bonansinga.

<sup>177</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 in: UTD/Herd/B2.

i.e. N1196W, was still assigned to contract no. AID-493-66 in May 68, but then it was based at Chiang Mai, waiting to be reassigned to contract no. AID-439-713 for flying in Laos.<sup>178</sup>

By May 68, the fleet assigned to contract AID-439-66 comprised only smaller aircraft, i.e. Volpar N3674G, PC-6Cs N153L, N198X, and N199X, and Bell 204B N1196W. The helicopters were in part based at Air America's new station at Chiang Mai (T-11).<sup>179</sup> Contract AID-493-66 does not specify the type of flying missions to be operated by Air America on behalf of USAID, except that "Air America furnishes the services of various types and number of aircraft, along with flight crew personnel, for the use of USAID in carrying out its programs in Thailand."<sup>180</sup> But it is evident that, since the early sixties, one of the most important aspects of USAID programs to Thailand was the construction of STOL strips, especially along its long borders. Another mission flown under the AID-493-66 contract was the Embassy Courier run. This flight departed Bangkok (T-09) and went on to Takhli (T-05) and Pitt's Camp (T-603), before reaching Chiang Mai (T-11), transporting mail and personnel. Normally, it was flown by Volpar N3674G,<sup>181</sup> but when this aircraft was not available, the service was flown by Bangkok-based Porter N198X or even by C-47 "883", which was normally used out of Bangkok under USAF-contract 1845.<sup>182</sup>

While in May 68, the fleet assigned to contract no. AID-493-66 was still the same – Volpar N3674G for survey flights, and 3 Porters (N153L, N198X, and N199X) as well as Bell 204B N1196W for developing border areas in northern and eastern Thailand around Ubon, Sakon Nakhon, and Chiang Mai –, there were some changes later in the year. In August 68, Bell 204B N1196W was already assigned to contract AID-439-713 for use out of Udorn,<sup>183</sup> and for most of the other aircraft, the change arrived on 30 September 68: While Porter N199X remained at Chiang Mai for several years, PC-6Cs N153L and N198X were stationed at Ubon and Sakon Nakhon respectively only until 30 June 68<sup>184</sup> and then worked out of Bangkok between 1 July and 30 September 68.<sup>185</sup> Probably immediately thereafter, both aircraft were transferred to service in South Vietnam.<sup>186</sup> Shortly after 30 September 68, Volpar N3674G also left Bangkok for service in South Vietnam.<sup>187</sup> From 1 October 68 onwards, these 3 aircraft were replaced by C-47 B-879 – modified to a configuration similar to C-47 B-933<sup>188</sup> – and Dornier Do-28s N2001F and N2002F, all based at Bangkok, but the Do-28s operating out of Ubon and Sakon Nakhon,<sup>189</sup> and this fleet was to remain under contract no. AID-493-66 until at least 30 June 69.<sup>190</sup> But already by 15 June 69, Do-28 N2002F had been released from

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<sup>178</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>179</sup> Rosters "Aircraft availability" of 1 April 64 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4), 7 July 64 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1), 1 November 65 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1), 8 April 66 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1), 4 May 1966 (in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2), and 1 May 1968 (in: UTD/Herd/B2).

<sup>180</sup> Jerry Fink, *Brief history of Air America operations in Thailand*, p.5, Memorandum dated 6 June 1967, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.

<sup>181</sup> See the statement of Capt. W.A. Rosenfield (in: UTD/Hickler/B24F3), who flew this aircraft also on 29 November 67, when the aircraft showed some engine problems.

<sup>182</sup> See "Captain's trip report" for Volpar N3674G for 29 November 67 (in: UTD/Hickler/B24F3), and Aircraft accident review (in: UTD/Hickler/B24F3) and XOXOs for the landing accident that C-47 "883" had at T-603 on 6 September 67 (in: UTD/Hickler/B27F1).

<sup>183</sup> F.O.C. of 15 Aug. 68, in: UTD/LaShomb/B14.

<sup>184</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>185</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66, prices 1968, Appendix A, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

<sup>186</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66, prices 1968, Appendix A, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27; F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.

<sup>187</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66, prices 1968, Appendix A, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27; F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.

<sup>188</sup> USAID, letter dated 2 Sept. 68 to Dave Hickler of Air America, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 27.

<sup>189</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66, version of October 68, Appendix A, p. 2, in: UTD/Walker/B14F3.

<sup>190</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66, prices 1968, Appendix A, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

the contract and was based at Bangkok as a spare aircraft,<sup>191</sup> and that was also the fleet assigned to contract no. AID-493-66 in mid-August 1969: C-47 B-879 and Do-28 N2001F based at Bangkok and PC-6C N199X stationed at Chiang Mai.<sup>192</sup>

At that time, flying under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-66 seems to have been done mainly for CIA-sponsored programs in Thailand. This is not proved, but at least suggested by a document dated 29 October 68 that indicates the origin of funds destined for contracts no. AID-493-66 (Thailand) and no. AID-439-713 – the contract that covered CIA activities in Laos. One would expect that funds destined for a USAID contract arrive from USAID or from the US Department of State, to whom USAID reported.<sup>193</sup> But in that document, funds for both contracts are announced by a “US Government Representative” of the “Department of the Air Force” who works inside “Air Asia Co Ltd”. As the CIA would never admit that it was involved, but would always hide behind other US Government institutions, this probably means a CIA officer responsible for questions of financing and working inside Air Asia who also knew about CIA funds arriving thru USAF channels. The



Air America C-47 “879” in the late sixties,<sup>194</sup> in: UTD/Hickler/B34



Air America Do-28 N2001F in the late sixties, in: UTD/Hickler/B28

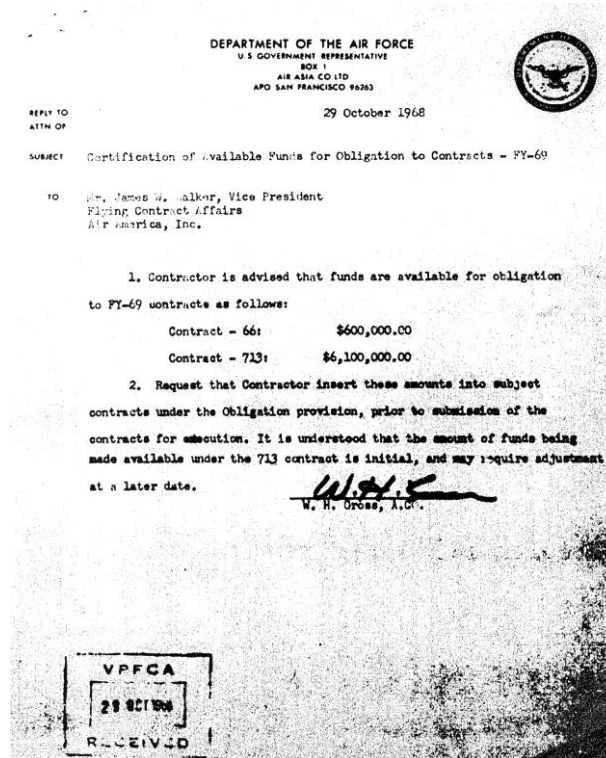
<sup>191</sup> F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.

<sup>192</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-69-34 of 15 August 69 in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1.

<sup>193</sup> “Although technically an independent federal agency, USAID operates subject to the foreign policy guidance of the President, Secretary of State, and the National Security Council” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Agency\\_for\\_International\\_Development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Agency_for_International_Development)).

<sup>194</sup> On aircraft that also operated in Laos, the Taiwanese country prefix “B-“ was dropped since 1962, so that B-879 was painted only as “879” – see my file *Air America in Laos I – humanitarian work, Part I*.

nature of flying under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-66 is unknown, but it can be assumed that Bangkok-based C-47 B-879 and Do-28 N2001F were used to carry supplies and personnel to various locations inside Thailand from where USAID and the CIA ran their programs like the construction of small landing sites in otherwise inaccessible country or training camps for Hmong and Lao troops, technicians, or pilots.



Contract no. AID-439-66, note dated 29 October 68: funds probably coming from the CIA (UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27)

After 1968, Air America's contract work in Thailand continued the same way as usually. Flying services from Chiang Mai involved Porter N199X.<sup>195</sup> Among the work to be done in northern Thailand under contract AID-493-66, was supporting the construction of telephone lines and transporting Thai officials from one place to another. Frequent passengers were the Governor of the North Thailand Province of Nan and officials working for the CSOR, the Clandestine Suppression Operations Region, which operated an anti-guerrilla program in the Province of Nan.<sup>196</sup> In 1969, we still have C-47 B-879 and Do-28 N2001F based at Bangkok and PC-6C N199X stationed at Chiang Mai. However, in addition to these 3 aircraft, Amendment no. 10 to contract AID-493-66, dated 30 June 69 still has 1 Helio and one Bell 204B crew as required plus – and this is new – 1 C-45/Ten-Two captain.<sup>197</sup> However, this was apparently for call aircraft only, as, when on 19 February 70, the Contracting Officer asked Air America to submit a contract proposal for Fiscal Year 71 to be effective 1 July 70, this was again for flying services with 1 C-47, 1 Do-28, and 1 PC-6C as the only basic aircraft assigned to contract no. AID-493-66, plus for the occasional use of C-123s, Caribous,

<sup>195</sup> See, e.g. Flight Operations Circular of 15 June 69 in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B; a photo of N199X appeared in *Air America Log*, vol. IV, no. 7 (1970), p.7

<sup>196</sup> (Anonymous), "Air America in North Thailand", in: *Air America Log*, vol. VII, no.3 [1973], p.6.

<sup>197</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66, Amendment no.10 of 30 June 69, p.2, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

Volpars, Helios, Bell 205s and Bell 204s on a call basis only.<sup>198</sup> A big change occurred in August 1970: On 5 August 70, the Sakon Nahkon-based Do-28 (N2001F) ceased to be a basic aircraft assigned to that contract, and instead, on 6 August 70, a Udorn-based second PC-6 was added to the basic fleet assigned to contract AID-493-66, with additional C-47s, PC-6s, Do-28s, and Ten-Twos as possible call-aircraft.<sup>199</sup> In 1970, C-47 B-879 was used for courier services, including a once weekly courier flight between Bangkok and Chiang Mai.<sup>200</sup>

But then, on 20 April 71, the old basic Chiang Mai-based PC-6C N199X lost power, while checking the area for the drop, hit a tree, crashed into the forest and was completely destroyed by fire. This accident occurred on Doi Suthep mountain, Chiang Mai Province, some 12 kms WNW of Chiang Mai (T-11), while N199X was on a routine drop mission, carrying 600 pounds of telephone wire, bundled in five 120 pound packages, i.e. one-quarter mile sections to be parachuted at Doy Huay Changkhien. It was like a miracle that the pilot, Captain Jack Smith, and his two American passengers were only slightly injured and were able to walk back towards town, until they were picked up by passing motorists.<sup>201</sup> And so, on 15 May 71, Ten-Two N7950C was called to fly out of Chiang Mai under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-66, and that for an indefinite period of time.<sup>202</sup> This new situation is reflected by Air America's Flight Operations Circulars of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71: At both dates, C-47 B-879 is still assigned to contract no. AID-493-66 and still based at Bangkok. Do-28 N2001F, which was dropped as a basic aircraft in 1970, has been replaced by Udorn-based PC-6 N358F in both documents. Beech Ten-Two N7950C was added, but this aircraft was released on 30 June 71 to spare and so is listed as an unassigned Bangkok-based spare aircraft on 15 July 71. However, a new basic PC-6C was needed for contract AID-493-66, and this was N3612R, which arrived at Vientiane on 26 June 71 and was positioned at Chiang Mai on 3 July 71.<sup>203</sup> Already on 5 July 71, N3612R had its first accident, when it caught a power line upon landing at Muang Nan (T-509), fortunately only causing some cuts in the left wing that were easily repaired.<sup>204</sup>

For 1972, we have a weekly schedule of the 2 Air America C-47s that were based at Bangkok at that time. While the C-47 assigned to contract no. F04606-71-C-0002, i.e. B-933, shuttled between Bangkok (T-09), Udorn (T-08), and Vientiane (L-08) several times a week, the C-47 that flew under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-66, i.e. B-879, made 3 once-weekly courier or liaison flights, linking the most important centers of the north, the north-east and the south with Bangkok. On Wednesdays, the flight went to the east, leaving Bangkok (T-09) at 7.30 a.m. for Udorn (T-08), where it arrived at 13.00 hours, with, in between, 5-minute stops at Korat Royal Thai Army camp (T-13B), Ubon (T-19), Nakhon Phanom East (T-50), and Ban Nong Hoi / Chieng Khrua (T-60). At 13.30 hours, the plane returned from Udorn (T-08) to Bangkok (T-09), where it arrived at 15.30 hours. On Thursdays, the flight went to the north, leaving Bangkok (T-09) at 7.30 a.m. for Chiang Mai (T-11), where it arrived at 10.40 hours, with, in between, 10-minute stops at Takhli (T-05) and Pitt's Camp (T-603). At 11.00 a.m., the plane returned from Chiang Mai (T-11) to Bangkok (T-09), where it arrived at 13.30 hours, with another stop at Takhli (T-05) in between. On Fridays, the flight went to the south, leaving Bangkok (T-09) at 7.30 a.m. for

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<sup>198</sup> Letter dated 19 February 70, sent by the Contracting Officer (Anthony C. Labar) to Air America, requesting a Contract Proposal for Contract no. AID-493-66, FY 71, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

<sup>199</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66 (FY 71), effective 1 July 70, Appendix "A", in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

<sup>200</sup> Letter dated 12 March 70, sent by J. F. Smith, Chiang Mai, to DFD, Taipei, in: UTD/Dawson/B1F2.

<sup>201</sup> Investigation of this aircraft accident in: UTD/Anthony/F4; XOXOs of this accident in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11; articles in the *Bangkok Post* of 21 and 22 April 71 and in the *Bangkok World* of 21 April 71.

<sup>202</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66 (FY 71), call order of 15 May 71, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

<sup>203</sup> Flight Operations Circulars nos. DFOD-C-71-014 of 1 July 71 (in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B) and DFOD-C-71-015 of 15 July 71 (in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B).

<sup>204</sup> XOXO of 5 July 71: UTD/Hickler/B25F11.

Songkhla (T-29), where it arrived at 11.20 hours, with, in between, 10-minute stops at Hua Hin (T-10) and Nakorn Sri Thamarat (T-26). At 11.40 hours, the plane returned from Songkhla (T-29) to Bangkok (T-09), where it arrived at 15.00 hours, with another stop at Hua Hin (T-10) in between.<sup>205</sup> It can be assumed that these were mixed passenger and cargo flights, comparable to Air America's "Milk Run North" and "Milk Run South" in Laos.

**AIR AMERICA**  
**OPERATIONS**  
**PROCEDURES GUIDE**  
 BANGKOK, THAILAND

Chapter: **X**  
 Section: **10.120**  
 Page: **2**  
 Effective: **1 July 1972**

SUBJECT : 10.120 FLAED SCHEDULE - BANGKOK  
 EFFECTIVE 1 JULY 1972

DAY	A/C No.	CONTRACT	FROM	ETD (LT)	TO	ETA (LT)	REMARKS		
MON	B933	0002	T09	0600	T08	0800	RGN T08		
			T08	0830	I08	0900			
			I08	1200	T08	1230			
TUE	B933	0002	T08	0800	I08	0830	UTD Hickler B8F7C		
			I08	1200	T08	1230			
			T08	1700	T09	1900			
WED	B879	493-66	T09	0730	T13B	0830	RGN T08		
			T13B	0835	T19	1005			
			T19	1010	T50	1125			
			T50	1130	T60	1200			
			T60	1205	T08	1300			
			T08	1330	T09	1530			
THU	B933	0002	T09	1500	T08	1700	RGN T08		
			B879	493-66	T09	0730		T05	0820
					T05	0830		T603	0920
T603	0930	T11			1040				
FRI	B879	493-66	T11	1100	T05	1230	RGN T08		
			T05	1240	T09	1330			
			T08	0800	I08	0830			
			I08	1200	T08	1230			
			T08	1700	T09	1900			
			T09	0730	T10	0820			
SAT	B933*	0002	T10	0830	T26	1030	RGN T08		
			T26	1040	T29	1120			
			T29	1140	T10	1400			
			T10	1410	T09	1500			
			T08	0800	I08	0830			
			I08	1200	T08	1230			
SUN	B933*	0002	T08	1700	T09	1900	RGN T08		
			T09	1000	T08	1200			
			T08	1600	T09	1800			

\* Contingent on Customer's requirement.

FOPS-221 (10CT70)

Air America, Operations Procedures Guide Bangkok, effective 1 July 72  
 (in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C)


<sup>205</sup> Air America, Operations Procedures Guide Bangkok, effective 1 July 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C.

What we also have for 1972 is a detailed report about all Air America activities at Chiang Mai (T-11) in the north: "Flying activities consist of 35 to 40 arrivals per month and of course an equal number of departures. All are scheduled flights are known well ahead of time so that there is no hectic scrambling to provide necessary ground support. The Chiang Mai Porter is involved in 80 to 85 % of these arrivals and departures. The remaining are a weekly C-47 or DC-3 courier flight out of Bangkok and an occasional Beech Volpar VIP flight out of Udon or Vientiane. The Chiang Mai Porter flies about 65 hours per month and it is no problem for one pilot to fulfil all of this requirement and for one aircraft mechanic to meet all of the maintenance requirements despite many other additional duties for both. The flights are normally limited to the standard work week which includes Saturday AM. [...] The Chiang Mai Porter carries mainly passengers with little or no baggage. I estimate they average about three per departure and arrival. The passengers are mostly U.S. Government employees and their indigenous assistants and high ranking Thai Border Patrol Police and their aides. We also do a limited amount of repositioning Border Patrol Policemen and their supplies to remote locations and transporting terrorist suspects and defectors under guard. We seldom carry any cargo other than mentioned above. The weekly, Air America, DC-3 Courier out of Bangkok is used for the exclusive support of the Customer. It carries both cargo and passengers who are U.S. Government employees. Sometimes this flight includes dependents who are transferring, going on leave, et cetera. The Volpar flights are irregular and they carry only U.S. VIP passengers and their baggage. The Chiang Mai Porter's area of activity is generally limited to seven or eight Northern Provinces most adjacent to Chiang Mai."<sup>206</sup> The following list of recorded landings of Chiang Mai's Porter N3612R in 1972 is also available:

TO : CSY VTE DATE: 10 July 1972  
 FROM : SZ CNX REF. No. SZCNX-72-042  
 SUBJECT : AIRFIELDS USED BY CNX AIRCRAFT

During the first six months of 1972, PC6 N3612R, operating out of Chiang Mai, recorded landings at the following airports and airstrips:

<u>Airports</u>	<u>Landings</u>	<u>Airstrips</u>	<u>Landings</u>	<u>Leo Apts</u>	<u>Landings</u>
T01	6	T504	5	L08	7
T03	3	T506	8	L25	11
T04	7	T509	37	LS62	2
T05	2	T514	28	LS274	10
T06	6	T522	1		
T07	14	T526	9		
T08	2	T545	1		
T09	1	T550	11		
T11	173	T551	19		
T16	30	T553	2		
T20	12	T572	9		
T35	2	T603	51		
T36	5	T624	2		
T67	1				
T22	1				

  
 Robert E. Dawson

Airfields used by Chiang Mai's PC-6C N3612R during the first six months of 1972  
 (in: UTD/Dawson/B1F2)

<sup>206</sup> Memo dated 11 June 72, sent by the Chiang Mai's Station Manager Robert E. Dawson to DSY (Department of Security), Taipei, in: UTD/Dawson/B1F2.

In 1973, Air America's flying in Thailand is basically still the same: Like two years earlier, in April 1973, three aircraft are still assigned to contract no. AID-493-66: Bangkok-based C-47 B-879, Porter N3612R operating out of Chiang Mai, and Porter N358F operating out of Udorn, with Ten-Two N7950C based at Bangkok as a spare aircraft for call orders.<sup>207</sup> On 24 January 73, Ten-Two N7950C was flown to Takhli and back to Bangkok, and C-47 B-879 flew Bangkok (T-09)-Korat Royal Thai Army camp (T-13B)-Ubon (T-19)-Nakhon Phanom East (T-50)-Ban Nong Hoi / Chieng Khrua (T-60)-Udorn (T-08)-Bangkok (T-09) that day<sup>208</sup> – the same route pattern as in 1972. Probably already since 1970 or 1971, the Chiang Mai-based PC-6 was also used in anti-narcotic operations. But is it known that in August 73, N3612R was used in anti-narcotic and reconnaissance operations; during taxi and turn-around before take-off from Ban Mae Raeng (T-551) on 26 August 73, the tail wheel of N3612R dropped in a hole and broke; it was repaired on 27 August 73 at Udorn and returned to service on 28 August 73.<sup>209</sup> In 1973, Air America aircraft that had been inactivated at Bangkok and were only stored there, are also mentioned for the first time.<sup>210</sup> On 28 June 73, Amendment no.4 to contract no. AID-493-66 was signed, extending that contract to 30 September 73.<sup>211</sup> This was not the end of the story, however, as on 1 November 73 and 1 December 73, we still have the same aircraft assigned to that contract – C-47 B-879 at Bangkok, Porter N3612R at Chiang Mai, and Porter N359F, but this aircraft is now based at Bangkok, together with Ten-Two N7950C based at Bangkok as a spare aircraft for call orders.<sup>212</sup>



PC-6C N3612R somewhere in northern Thailand in 1973  
(*Air America Log*, vol. VII, no. 3 [1973], p. 5)

In 1974, USAID contract no. Contract no. AID-493-66 (FY 71) was integrated into a contract that Air America had with the USAF since 1971, but for flying in Laos. This was the successor to the famous *Madriver* contract for operations in Laos, i.e. contract no. F04606-71-

<sup>207</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. DFOD-C-73-011 of 16 April 73 in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14.

<sup>208</sup> Bangkok Daily Flight Schedule of 24 January 73, in: UTD/Leary/B23F1.

<sup>209</sup> XOXO of 26 August 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12; Report by R. E. Dawson dated August 73, in: UTD/CIA/B18F4.

<sup>210</sup> Surveyed aircraft: Do-28 N2001F (inactivated BKK 6 Jan. 70), Do-28 N2002F (inactivated BKK 25 Nov. 69), and Apache N3183P (inactivated BKK 23 Sept. 69) (Flight Operations Circular no. DFOD-C-73-011 of 16 April 73 in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14).

<sup>211</sup> Contract no. AID-493-66 (FY 71), Amendment no. 4 dated 28 June 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

<sup>212</sup> Flight Operations Circulars nos. DOC-C-73-015 of 1 Nov. 73 (in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C) and DOC-C-73-016 of 1 Dec. 73 (in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).



C-0002, where flying in Thailand now simply became “F04606-71-C-0002, order 12”. The aircraft assigned to that operation in Thailand were basically the same as under the provisions of the old USAID contract, but their number was constantly reduced: Only the Bangkok-based C-47 B-879 and the Chiang Mai-based Porter N3612R are noted on 1 February 74, 1 April 74, and 1 May 74 as basic aircraft. Former Bangkok-based Porter N358F was a “call aircraft” on 1 February 74, a “spare aircraft” on 1 April 74, and on 1 May 74, it was even one Bangkok-based spare aircraft out of ten.<sup>213</sup> In April 74, “VIP passengers carried during the month included Ambassador Kintner and aides, Governor Sukit of Nan Province and several High ranking boarder police officers.”<sup>214</sup> But in the summer of 1974, that operation came to an end: All flying operations at Chiang Mai were closed on 30 June 74.<sup>215</sup> C-47 B-879 was sold to China Airlines on 14 June 74, delivered to Phnom Penh and officially sold to them on 29 June 74.<sup>216</sup> On 1 July 74, Porters N367F and N3612R were ferried from Bangkok to Saigon.<sup>217</sup> Porter PC-6C N3612R was sold to Evergreen Helicopters, McMinnville, OR, on 23 August 74 at a price of \$ 131,750.<sup>218</sup> All the spare aircraft still based at Bangkok at that time were flown to Saigon in late 1974.<sup>219</sup>

There were also several other contracts that Air America had with USAID-Thailand in the sixties, but most of them were very short-lived. The first of them was contract no. AID-493-49, apparently signed in late 1964 for one Pilatus Porter to be based at Bangkok. The aircraft involved was PC-6A/H-2 N185X, which arrived at Bangkok in December 64, where it was flown on 5 and 6 December 64 by Joe Hazen, Air America’s Chief Pilot of the STOL program.<sup>220</sup> In November 65, as well as April and May 66, N185X was assigned to contract no. AID-493-49 and based at Bangkok,<sup>221</sup> but it seems to have been involved in the construction of landing strips in northern Thailand, as it was there, at Ban Sa (T-512) in Lampang district, that the tail section of N185X was damaged on 27 January 66, while the aircraft taxied at that new site.<sup>222</sup> During the second half of 1966, however, Porter N185X was transferred to South Vietnam, where it crashed west of Chu Lai (V-194) on 12 January 67, when it flew into a ridge in bad weather, killing the pilot, Frank Farthing, and 4 passengers, while on a routine flight from Danang (V-03) to Quang Ngai (V-23).<sup>223</sup> After 1966, contract no. AID-493-49 does no longer appear in Air America documents.

The next contract of this type was contract no. AID-493-136 dated 15 February 67, which was a contract between Air America and “the Government of the United States of America,

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<sup>213</sup> Flight Operations Circulars nos. DOC-C-74-002 of 1 February 74 (in: UTD/CIA/B51F21), DOC-C-74-004 of 1 April 74 (in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C), and DOC-C-74-005 of 1 May 74 (in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); the latter lists C-47 B-879 (BKK) and PC-6C N3612R (CNX) as assigned to contract no. F04606-71-C-0002, order 12, and Volpar N9664C (BKK), Ten-Two N7950C (BKK), as well as PC-6Cs N355F, N359F, N360F, N365F, N366F, N367F, N358F, and N5302F as Bangkok-based spare aircraft.

<sup>214</sup> In April 74, Robert E. Dawson was still the Station manager at Chiang Mai (Chiang Mai Monthly Report for April 74, in: UTD/Dawson/B2F2).

<sup>215</sup> Letter dated 4 June 74, sent by Air America’s Chiang Mai Station Manager Robert E. Dawson to Lt.Col. Panohm, Commander, Royal Thai Air Force Base Chiang Mai, in: UTD/Dawson/B1F2.

<sup>216</sup> Agreement of Sale dated 14 June 74; Bill of Sale dated 29 June 74; all details listed in the “Status” this C-47 as of 12 August 74, in: UTD/CIA/B56F4; it was subsequently registered as B-1555. For details, see my file about Air America’s C-47s with the *Aircraft of Air America*.

<sup>217</sup> Bangkok Daily Flight Schedule of 1 July 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B5F10.

<sup>218</sup> Summary of aircraft sales, in: UTD/CIA/B40F6.

<sup>219</sup> See Air America’s undated aircraft list of late 1974, in: UTD/CIA/B49F1.

<sup>220</sup> E-mail dated 9 September 2003 sent by Joe Hazen to Erik Carlson who kindly forwarded it to the author.

<sup>221</sup> Aircraft status as of 1 Nov. 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; Aircraft status as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; Aircraft status as of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2.

<sup>222</sup> See the XOXO of 27 January 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16.

<sup>223</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc. of 24 January 67, in: UTD/CIA/B8F2; Board of Review report, in: UTD/CIA/B34F2; List “Total number of company employees killed in aircraft accidents”, in: UTD/CIA/B1F10.

acting through the Agency for International Development” – a formula that indicates that the real customer was the CIA. This contract covered “flying services of one (1) Pilatus Turbo-Porter PC-6 and one (1) Helio Super Courier type aircraft which shall be assigned either to Bangkok or Udon” as basic aircraft plus several “aircraft subject to call”.<sup>224</sup> No aircraft assigned to this contract are known, but from 15 to 31 May 67, Air America Captain Arthur J. Zarkos was on temporary duty at Bangkok to fly the then Bangkok-based Helio B-849. The aircraft was mostly stationed at Bangkok (T-09) or Korat (T-13A), with local flights out of T-13A and stops at Loei (T-17), Sakon Nakhon (T-38), Nong Khai (T-22) or elsewhere.<sup>225</sup> Between 10 and 30 September 67, A. Zarkos flew Helio B-849 out of Bangkok, but only one route is known, i.e. to Muang Nan (T-509) via Ubon (T-19).<sup>226</sup> As B-849 will turn up as one of the aircraft assigned to the follow-on contract no. AID-493-332, there may have been similar flights for AID-493-332’s predecessor AID-493-136.

As usually, the contract does not say anything about the type of missions to be flown, but the possibility to charter the aircraft to other customers when not needed,<sup>227</sup> hence the low number of flights expected, and the fact that hazardous rates were paid in case the flights went “over areas in which active combat operations are in progress or areas controlled or occupied by unfriendly forces,”<sup>228</sup> could make believe that these aircraft were perhaps intended to be used for police missions against drug smuggling. But the area of drug trafficking was further north in Thailand, that is in the Chiang Mai area. There is, however, another explanation of those “active combat operations”: Guerrillas of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). “In 1961, the CPT formally adopted a strategy of Maoist rural insurgency at its Third National Congress. The following year a radio station calling itself the Voice of the People of Thailand began broadcasting from China, while the CPT began to develop its infrastructure and supporting organizations. In January 1965, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, announced that a war of ‘national liberation’ was being launched in Thailand. The first guerrilla attack on Thai security forces took place on August 7, 1965, in the Na Kae district of Nakhon Phanom Province in the Northeast. The government’s initial response was to meet the insurgency with force alone, but these tactics were unable to prevent the gradual spread of CPT organization and of armed attacks on government forces and officials to other parts of the country. In 1968 General Saiyud Kerdphol, one of the leading strategists of the counterinsurgency effort, estimated that there were perhaps 2,000 CPT combatants operating in 80 groups in the Northeast, especially in two districts along the Mekong, opposite Lao territory, supported by 10,000 village sympathizers and part-time fighters. [...] By the end of 1965, a new coordinating organization was set up to develop an integrated strategy, the Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC), later (and still) called the Internal Security Operations Command. The strategy formed by CSOC combined military action against the insurgents with civic action by military and paramilitary forces, which included development and propaganda programs to counter the political efforts of the insurgents in the villages and to improve the relations between villagers and local officials.”<sup>229</sup>

“The separation between security and non-security aspects of the aid program cannot be sharply drawn since the rationale for the emphasis on the Northeast was at once its relative poverty and its location and exposure in the context of the security problems of the Southeast Asia region.”<sup>230</sup> Since 1962, Prime Minister Sarit had launched 2 activities to develop the

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<sup>224</sup> Contract no. AID-493-136, pp.1/2, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28.

<sup>225</sup> Arthur J. Zarkos, Flight Crew Member Monthly Movement Report for July 67, in: UTD/Zarkos/B1F8.

<sup>226</sup> Arthur J. Zarkos, Flight Crew Member Monthly Movement Report for September 67, in: UTD/Zarkos/B1F8.

<sup>227</sup> Contract no. AID-493-136, p.3, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28.

<sup>228</sup> Contract no. AID-493-136, p.6, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28.

<sup>229</sup> Robert J. Muscat, *Thailand and the United States. Development, Security, and Foreign Aid*, New York (Columbia U.P.) 1990, pp.154/5; online at [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pnabe752.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnabe752.pdf).

<sup>230</sup> Muscat, *Thailand and the United States. Development, Security, and Foreign Aid*, p.158.

Northeast. The first was the creation of Mobile Development Units (MDUs), but this concept was ephemeral. “The second of Sarit’s Northeast initiatives was the Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) program. The U.S. project to assist ARD became the largest single development activity in the history of the Thai Aid program. It began as a small RTG Program in the six Northeast *changwats* considered at greatest risk to insurgent activity (Loei, Nongkai, Udorn, Nakhon Phanom, Sakon Nakhon, and Ubon). The objective of ARD was also to demonstrate government concern for village welfare and development in these areas through the provision of local infrastructure such as village access roads, wells, and so forth.”<sup>231</sup> “After the program had been operating a few months, USOM offered to help, attracted by the local level orientation of ARD. The result was a \$75.3 million, thirteen-year project (1964-1977; the last year in which new funds were put into the ARD project was FY 1975) that was the centerpiece of the RTG effort on the civilian side to preempt rural loyalties for the government and wean away villager support the CPT had already gained.”<sup>232</sup> At the end, “ARD has racked up an impressive record of physical accomplishments. The principal measured output was the building of some 20,000 kilometers of rural roads of which 12,000 kilometers were built during the period of the AID project. Large numbers of wells, bridges, small reservoirs, and spillways were constructed as well. ARD also fielded teams that traveled through remote areas providing primary health care and potable water to villages never reached before by government services.”<sup>233</sup>

While contract no. AID-493-66 was mostly oriented towards building up and then supporting the Thai Border Police, it can be assumed that most of the other contracts that Air America had with USOM/USAID Thailand were to support certain aspects of the ARD program of developing underdeveloped areas of the country. As contract no. AID-493-136 was to expire on 31 October 67, Amendment 1 to that contract, dated 1 November 67, extends the duration of the contract to 30 November 67, also announcing a “follow-on contract for similar services”.<sup>234</sup>



Air America PC-6C N9445 in the mid-sixties  
(UTD/Hickler/B33)

<sup>231</sup> Muscat, *Thailand and the United States. Development, Security, and Foreign Aid*, p.160.

<sup>232</sup> Muscat, *Thailand and the United States. Development, Security, and Foreign Aid*, p.161.

<sup>233</sup> Muscat, *Thailand and the United States. Development, Security, and Foreign Aid*, p.164.

<sup>234</sup> Contract no. AID-493-136, Amendment 1 of 1 November 67, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28.



Air America Helio 849 at Bangkok in the mid-sixties  
(UTD/Hickler/B28)

While no aircraft assigned to contract no. AID-493-136 are known, a new contract between Air America and USAID c/o US Embassy, Bangkok – no. AID-493-332 – was signed on 15 November 1967, and to this contract, Porter N9445 and Helio B-849 were assigned as basic aircraft effective 1 November 67. Nothing is known about the type of operations it was to cover, but as the accounting and appropriation data for this new contract are listed under the number 493-163-3-80040, it is believed to be the follow-on contract to contract no. AID-493-136.<sup>235</sup> During the next couple of years, the size of the contract grew: On 1 May 68, we still have Porter PC-6C N9445 and Helio B-849 assigned to the contract as basic aircraft. As PC-6C N9445 had been assigned to Bangkok already on 3 October 66, and as Helio B-849 had been assigned to Bangkok already on 8 July 67, but was assigned for relocation at Vientiane or Saigon on 16 May 68,<sup>236</sup> i.e. before contract no. AID-493-332 even existed, it can be assumed that both aircraft had already flown under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-136. A third aircraft – Beech Ten Two N51259 – was added on a call basis between 17 March 68 and 31 October 68.<sup>237</sup> This aircraft flew out of Bangkok (T-09) to destinations like Chaiyaphum (T-58), Phrae (T-07), Prachub Khiri Khan (T-34), Udorn (T-08), Chiang Mai (T-11), Korat (T-13), Ubon (T-19), Roi Et (T-02), and Sakon Nakhon (T-38A) during that time.<sup>238</sup> As can be seen, many of these destinations were located in the underdeveloped northeastern areas of Thailand. So these flights were probably again made for the USAID-supported Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) program of the Royal Thai Government.

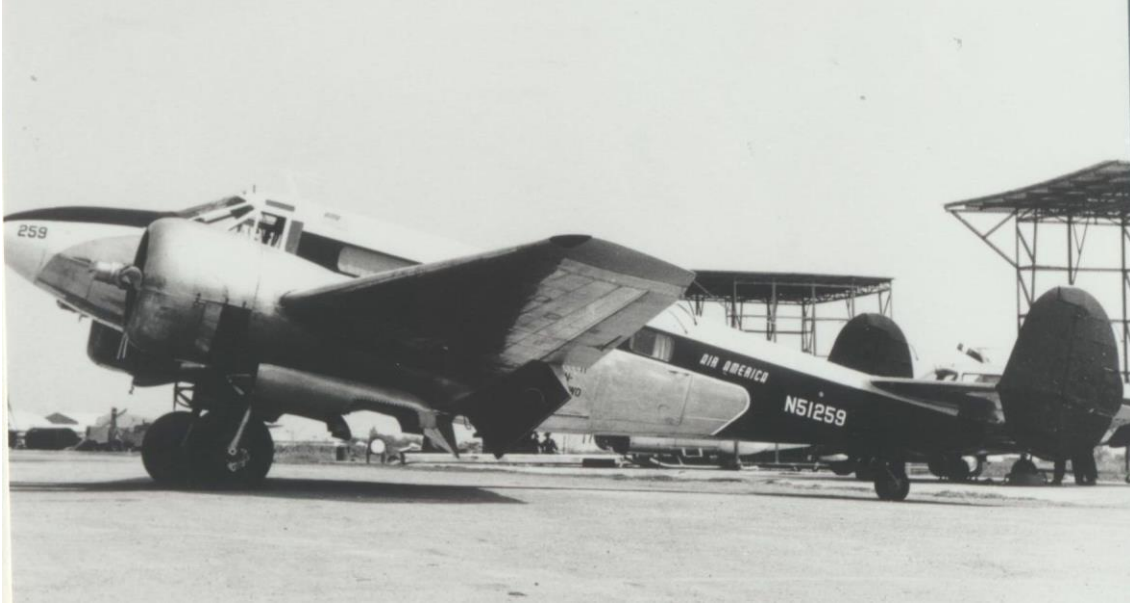
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<sup>235</sup> Contract no. AID-493-332, cover + assignment of aircraft, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28.

<sup>236</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>237</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>238</sup> Arthur J. Zarkos, Flight Crew Member Monthly Movement Reports for June to November 68, in: UTD/Zarkos/B1F8.



Air America Ten Two N51259 at Bangkok in the late sixties  
(UTD/Hickler/B3F16)

On 15 June 69, we still have PC-6C N9445 assigned to that contract plus one Helio Courier, which was B-881 since 1 June 69.<sup>239</sup> On 15 August 69, no aircraft was any longer assigned to contract no. AID-493-332,<sup>240</sup> so that it can be assumed that this type of operation ended in 1969.



Air America Helio 881 at Bangkok in the late sixties  
(UTD/Hickler/B28)

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<sup>239</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-69-24 of 15 June 69 in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.

<sup>240</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-69-34 of 15 August 69 in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1.

### III) Military flying in Thailand

#### 1) ARPA: defoliant research for South Vietnam

Military flying in Thailand began in 1963, when the Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited dated 23 April 1963 noted that “Air America has also reportedly been approached by The Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense and by one of its field offices (The Combat Development and Test Center in Bangkok) which is engaged in defoliant and communications research to provide Piper Apache and S-58 helicopter flying services. Air America will endeavour to provide the Test Center with aircraft services to the extent available without incurring capital outlay for additional aircraft.”<sup>241</sup> On 27 August 63, the same Minutes could report that “Air America entered into a letter agreement with Advanced Research Projects Agency to provide flying services to its Combat Development and Test Center field office in Bangkok which is engaged in defoliant and communications research. The contract is for a one year term, although it is anticipated that it will be at least three years before the research project is completed and renewals for additional periods will be forthcoming.”<sup>242</sup> This new contract, however, no. AF62(531)-1757 dated 20 August 63 and running until 19 August 64, was between Air America Inc. and the USAF Air Materiel Region Far East, and it requested the operations of other types of aircraft than originally planned. For its scope was “furnishing flying services of one Dornier Do-28 aircraft and one Beech TENTWO (utility) aircraft to be based at Bangkok and one Beech TENTWO (utility) aircraft to be based at Saigon” and also included, on a call basis, “flying services of Beech TENTWO, C-46, C-47, C-54, Helio Courier, Piper Apache, Bell 47G-2, Dornier Do-28 and DHC-4A aircraft, based at a place in Thailand or Vietnam” plus additional flight crews when needed.<sup>243</sup> Already a couple of months later, the number of basic aircraft assigned to that contract had grown to 3: Do-28 N2002F was assigned on 14 December 63 for operations out of Bangkok; Ten-Two N6622C was assigned on 14 December 63 for operations out of Saigon; and Ten-Two N5454V was assigned on 18 December 63 for operations out of Hua Hin.<sup>244</sup> And this was also the situation we have on 1 February 64,<sup>245</sup> on 1 April 64<sup>246</sup> and on 7 July 64.<sup>247</sup>

Air America’s Beech Ten-Two N5454V was a very special aircraft: Originally a Beech C-45G, Air America acquired it in the USA in September 63, converted it to Beech Ten Two in November / December 63 and then ferried it to Bangkok, where it was ready for operation in December 63.<sup>248</sup> It was a sprayer aircraft, specially equipped with a spraying gear and special tanks for service with the ARPA as a test aircraft for defoliant research, but somehow, it was a secret plane. To local people in the Hua Hin area, it looked like an ordinary agricultural aircraft, as it didn’t have Air America colors or Air America titles, but was painted white and yellow – so there was no visible connection to the CIA airline. To Air America flights crews

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<sup>241</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited dated 23 April 1963, in: UTD/CIA/B7F2.

<sup>242</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited dated 27 August 1963, in: UTD/CIA/B7F2.

<sup>243</sup> “Renewal of Commercial Operator Certificate”, Letter to the FAA sent by Hugh Grundy on 1 November 63, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.2.

<sup>244</sup> Operations Circular CA-C-OF-64-002 of 1 February 1964, kindly faxed to the author on 17 February 2004 by Ward Reimer.

<sup>245</sup> Operations Circular CA-C-OF-64-002 of 1 February 1964, kindly faxed to the author on 17 February 2004 by Ward Reimer.

<sup>246</sup> AAM Aircraft Availability: Operations Circular no. CA-C-OF-64-013 of 1 April 1964, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4.

<sup>247</sup> Aircraft Status as of 7 July 64 in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>248</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America Inc. of 20 September 63, 29 October 63, and 3 December 63, all in: UTD/CIA/B7F2.

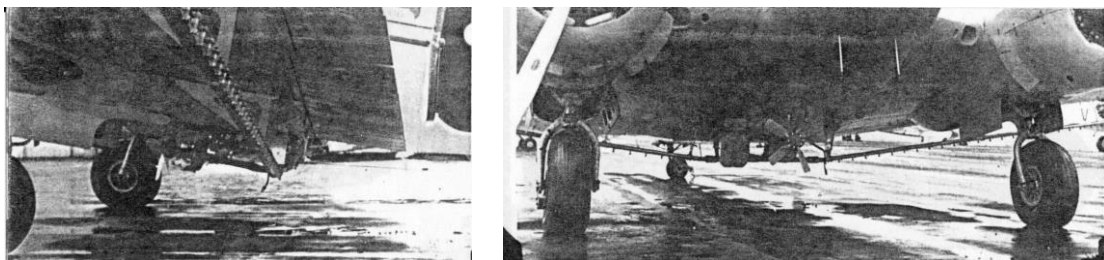
other than those who had to fly this aircraft, its existence was almost hidden by its registration number: Most Air America pilots recalled a specific aircraft by the “last three” of its tail number, i.e. as “54V” in our case. But there was a second Beech 18 “54V” in Air America’s fleet, and that was Beech C-45G N5254V, an ordinary transport plane flying in South Vietnam in full Air America colors. So whenever Air America people that didn’t have the necessary clearances happened to hear talking about the special “54V”, they would think that the regular “54V” was meant.



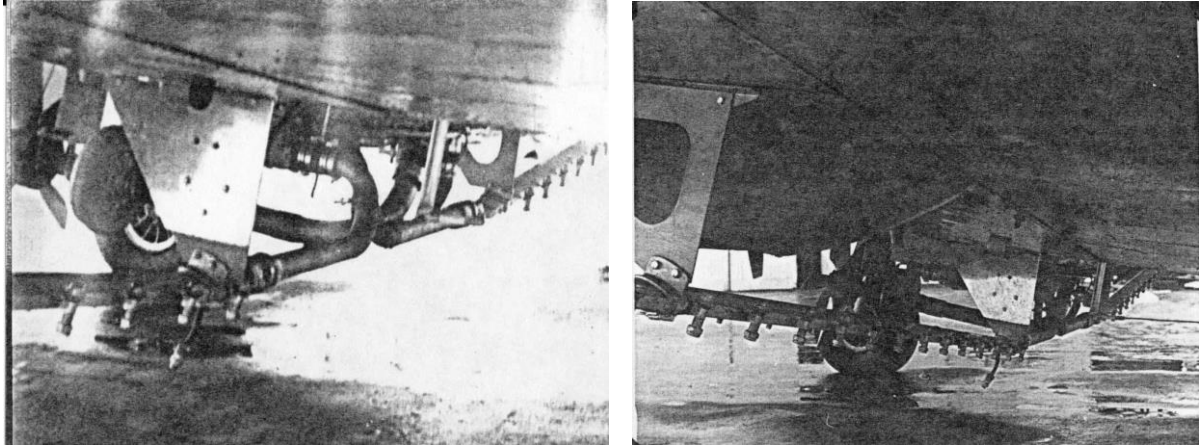
Air America’s sprayer Ten-Two N5454V, probably taken at Bangkok in the mid-sixties  
(UTD/Kirkpatrick/B29, green album)



Air America’s sprayer Ten-Two N5454V, probably taken at Bangkok in the mid-sixties  
(UTD/Kirkpatrick/B29, green album)



Details of the spraying gear of N5454V  
(UTD/Kirkpatrick/B29, green album)



More details of the spraying gear of N5454V  
(UTD/Kirkpatrick/B29, green album)

Later, N5454V returned to silver metal colors, as the photo below shows, while its regular counterpart N5254V always displayed full Air America colors.



a



b

a) N5454V all silver, probably at Hua Hin the mid-sixties (UTD/Hickler/B32) and  
b) N5254V in regular Air America colors at Nhon Co on 31 March 66  
(UTD/McCauley/B1F5)

In 1964 and 1965, there were some changes: First, in August 64, contract no. AF62(531)-1757 with ARPA was extended beyond 19 August 64 into 1965.<sup>249</sup> Then, on 29 September 1964, the Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America Inc. note: “The Company is expanding its activities for the USAF Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). ARPA will add to its contract a C-47 aircraft specially equipped for infra-ray surveillance experiments. ARPA has also proposed the addition of two H-21 helicopters to its contract. ARPA flying for the most part involves specialized low volume projects which require a greater amount of administration than most contracts.”<sup>250</sup> While the plan to add 2 Piasecki H-21 *Flying Banana* helicopters to the contract did not materialize, HC-47D “0-50883” was bailed from the USAF on 2 December 64.<sup>251</sup> In February 65, Air America’s Executive Committee noted that “ARPA (Advanced Research Projects Agency) continues active at Bangkok and has been discussing the possibility of sponsoring

<sup>249</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America Inc. of 11 August 64, in: UTD/CIA/B7F3.

<sup>250</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America Inc. of 29 September 64, in: UTD/CIA/B7F3.

<sup>251</sup> USAF Assignment Records, microfilm reel no. AVH-2.



DC-6 educational TV flights over Vietnam similar to the Purdue University experiment.”<sup>252</sup> In the summer of 1965, the old contract no. AF62(531)-1757 was replaced by its follow-on contract no. AF62(531)-1845. In November 65, the following aircraft were assigned to this new ARPA contract: Saigon-based Do-28 N2002F, which had flown for ARPA since December 63; Ten Two N5454V, formerly based at Hua Hin, but now given as Bangkok-based; newcomer Bangkok-based HC-47D 0-50883, which apparently replaced former ARPA-operated Ten Two N6622C then flying under another contract in South Vietnam;<sup>253</sup> and another newcomer, that is Bangkok-based UH-34D helicopter “803”.<sup>254</sup> It is interesting to note that the two newcomers to the ARPA contract did not fly in Air America colors either: the HC-47D flew in full USAF colors all the time, and the UH-34D used a white color scheme that made it look like a helicopter of the Royal Thai Police. The reason for this can



HC-47D 0-50883 at Bangkok in the late sixties  
(UTD/Hickler/B28)



Air America UH-34D 803 at Bangkok in the late sixties  
(UTD/Hickler/B28)

only be guessed: Both aircraft also operated in southern Thailand from time to time, i.e. out of Songkhla (T-29), and Air America probably wanted to avoid the impression that the “Vietnam

<sup>252</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America Inc. of 2 February 65, in: UTD/CIA/B7F4.

<sup>253</sup> On 28 January 65, N6622C still had an accident at Udorn, Thailand, but on 17 May 65, it had an accident at Ban Me Thuot in South Vietnam (Aircraft accidents 1965, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2).

<sup>254</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 1 November 65 in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; for details about UH-34D “803” see my files about the UH-34 in my *The Aircraft of Air America*.

conflict”, as it was called at that time and which the name of Air America also stood for in the eyes of a lot of people, had come all the way down to southern Thailand. But of course, UH-34D “803” had previously been “CIC-1” with the *Commission Internationale de Contrôle*, Laos, and their aircraft were white.<sup>255</sup>

In the spring of 1966, the fleet assigned to the ARPA contract no. AF62(531)-1845 was still the same: Bangkok-based HC-47D “0-50883”, Ten-Two N5454V, and UH-34D “803” as well as Saigon-based Do-28 N2002F.<sup>256</sup> It should be noted, however, that the base indicated in Air America’s “Status of Aircraft” reports are not always the places where an aircraft was really stationed: ARPA’s Ten Two N5454V was damaged by an Air America microbus on 18 July 67, while parked on the north ramp of Don Muang airport, Bangkok,<sup>257</sup> so was really based there, although it was sometimes used for flights to and from Songkhla as on 2 December 67.<sup>258</sup> ARPA’s white UH-34D “803”, however, was based at Songkhla (T-29) in southern Thailand in 1967: “Air America has one H34 leased from CIC and is furnishing it to ARPA on Contract No.65-11 which provides a minimum guaranteed usage of 60 hours per month and is valid indefinitely. The H34 is based at Songkhla, Thailand and records reflect that it has averaged some 65 flying hours per month and recent usage has been about the same level.”<sup>259</sup> A couple of days after that letter, on 19 April 67, “803” was damaged by sharp instruments, while parked on the ground at Songkhla (T-29), but repaired shortly afterwards.<sup>260</sup> Air America helicopter pilot Dick Casterlin recalls: “803: Painted white like the ICC A/C. Tom Moher flew this for *Jansky and Bailey*, an outfit that tested electronic equipment in the jungle for USG. I was asked if I wanted the job when Tom went on home leave. I was on home leave myself and was not ready to return to SEA, so I deferred. The ship was used on other missions that were handled by Mike Jarina.in northeast Thailand. It later returned to the UTH inventory.”<sup>261</sup> ARPA’s HC-47D “0-50883” was also working in different areas of Thailand all the time, as it had accidents at Songkhla (T-29), Thailand on 29 August 66<sup>262</sup> and at Pitt’s Camp, Thailand (T-603) on 6 September 67.<sup>263</sup>

In 1968, flying for ARPA received a new contract number that is contract no. F62531-68-C-0007. It was now officially called “CSG Flying”, but the aircraft assigned to the new contract are mostly the same on 1 May 68: Bangkok-based HC-47D “0-50883”, Ten-Two N5454V, and UH-34D “803” as well as Saigon-based Do-28 N2002F, all now called “basic” aircraft. But now, Bangkok-based Helio B-881 is also listed as a call aircraft assigned to that contract thru 30 June 68 for operations out of Songkhla (T-29).<sup>264</sup> This had been a long-term operation, and while Helio B-881 was a stand-by aircraft at Bangkok in early August 67, it was flown out of Songkhla (T-29) on temporary duty from 10 August 67 to 8 September 67 and then again regularly from January to August 68 by Captain Arthur Zarkos – unfortunately, his Flight Crew Member Monthly Movement Reports<sup>265</sup> do not give any details about this operation. Ten Two N5454V was flown out of Bangkok (T-09) to destinations like

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<sup>255</sup> For details about UH-34D “803” see my files about the UH-34 in my *The Aircraft of Air America*.

<sup>256</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 8 April 66 in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1 and Status of Aircraft as of 4 May 66 in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2.

<sup>257</sup> XOXO of 18 July 67, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F1; Accident report, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F1.

<sup>258</sup> Arthur J. Zarkos, Flight Crew Member Monthly Movement Report for December 67, in: UTD/Zarkos/B1F8.

<sup>259</sup> Letter dated 5 April 67, sent by Air America’s President Hugh Grundy to Managing Director George Doole, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28.

<sup>260</sup> XOXO of 20 April 67, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16.

<sup>261</sup> E-mail dated 17 February 2015, kindly sent to the author by Dick Casterlin.

<sup>262</sup> XOXO of 29 August 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16.

<sup>263</sup> XOXO of 6 Sept. 67, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F1; Accident report, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F3 and in: UTD/CIA/B59F1.

<sup>264</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>265</sup> Arthur J. Zarkos, Flight Crew Member Monthly Movement Reports for August and September 67 as well as January to August 68, in: UTD/Zarkos/B1F8.

Songkhla (T-29), Chiang Mai (T-11), Ubon (T-19), Nakhon Phanom West (T-55), Hua Hin (T-10), and Sakon Nakhon (T-38A) in the period between March and October 68, apparently no longer used as a sprayer, but now used as a light transport and liaison aircraft. HC-47D “0-50883” was mostly used at Songkhla (T-29), at least between 29 June 68 and 27 October 68, occasionally returning to Bangkok.<sup>266</sup>

In late 1968, a new contract succeeded to contract no. F62531-68-C-0007, and that was no. F62-531-68-C0005, still for “CSG Flying”. This new contract meant a reduction of flying, as now, no longer 4, but only 3 aircraft were considered to be “basic” to the contract, namely HC-47D “0-50883” and UH-34D “803”, which were both officially based at Bangkok, and – again – Ten Two N6622C based at Saigon. In June 69, Ten-Two N5454V and former Saigon-based Do-28 N2002F were both spare aircraft at Bangkok.<sup>267</sup> In August 69, we still have HC-47D “0-50883” and UH-34D “803” operating under contract no. F62-531-68-C0005 out of Bangkok and Ten Two N6622C out of Saigon, but Ten-Two N5454V was ferried Bangkok-Saigon on 14 August 69 for contract no. VN-41 and so was assigned to that USAID contract on 15 August 69, while Do-28 N2002F is now given as unassigned at Bangkok.<sup>268</sup> This did not last very long, as at the end, Do-28 N2002F was inactivated at Bangkok on 25 November 69, with 18 days to reactivate given in April 73.<sup>269</sup> HC-47D “0-50883” probably returned to the USAF in early 1970, as it was no longer current with Air America on 1 July 70.<sup>270</sup> Later it was transferred to the Royal Thai Air Force.

As to CSG’s all white UH-34D “803”, we know a little bit about its activities at that time from the log books of Duane Keele and Elmer Munsell. At least between 20 and 26 September 68, “803” flew out of Udorn (T-08) to Thai locations like Korat (T-13), Kanchanaburi (T-702), Sakon Nakhon (T-38), Nakhon Phanom East (T-50), Nakhon Phanom West (T-55), That Phanom (T-419), and Mukdahan (T-417). On 27 September 68, Munsell flew it down to Bangkok, from where it served Koke Kathiem / Lopburi (T-15) and Pawai (T-624), until he flew it back to Udorn on 1 October 68.<sup>271</sup> In October 68, “803” was used out of Lopburi (T-15), for on 21 October 68, it experienced difficulties when working in the Lopburi (T-15) area and landed at the local Army camp.<sup>272</sup> On 27 and 28 November 68, “803” worked out of Hua Hin (T-10), from where it flew to Bangkok-Don Muang (T-09) on 29 November 68 and continued to Udorn (T-08) on 1 December 68 via Loei (T-17) and Cheang Kham (T-411).<sup>273</sup> Between 2 and 6 December 68, Keele flew “803” out of Nakhon Phanom East (T-50), among others to the Thai locations of Nakhon Phanom West (T-55), Mukdahan (T-417), and Cheang Kham (T-411); on 20 December 68, he tested the aircraft at Udorn.<sup>274</sup> In 1969, we still have the same situation: Although UH-34D “803” was officially based at Bangkok to be used under contract AF 0005 at least between 16 June 69 and 31 August 69,<sup>275</sup> it was used out of Udorn at least between 23 June 69 and 25 June 69.<sup>276</sup> The end of its career with Air America came in early 1970: Having been test flown at Udorn on 13 March 70,<sup>277</sup> the aircraft was given to the Royal Lao Air Force as “8803” the same year.

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<sup>266</sup> Arthur J. Zarkos, Flight Crew Member Monthly Movement Reports for June to October 68, in: UTD/Zarkos/B1F8.

<sup>267</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-69-24 of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.

<sup>268</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-69-34 of 15 August 69 in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1.

<sup>269</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. DFOD-C-73-011 of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14.

<sup>270</sup> Leary, *The aircraft of Air America*, p. 20.

<sup>271</sup> Log book of E. Munsell, in: UTD/Munsell/B3F24.

<sup>272</sup> XOXO of 21 October 68, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F17.

<sup>273</sup> Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6.

<sup>274</sup> Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6.


<sup>275</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-69-24 of 15 June 69 (in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B) and Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-69-34 of 15 August 69 (in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1).

<sup>276</sup> Udorn Daily Flight Schedules of 23, 24, and 25 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1.

<sup>277</sup> Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6.

Was this the end of Air America's service for ARPA? Probably. On 5 December 69, the USAF Air Procurement Region Far East asked Air America to submit a written proposal for a

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**  
HQ AIR PROCUREMENT REGION, FAR EAST (APFC)  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96323




REF: TO  
ATTN: **FFP-I (Capt Lyna/38270)** 5 December 1969

SUBJECT: **Request for Proposal (RFP) Nr. F62531-70-R-0004, ARPA Flying Services - Saigon and Bangkok**

TO: **Air America, Inc.  
Field Executive Office  
APO San Francisco 96239**

1. Pursuant to the authority of Title 10, U.S. Code 2304(a)(6) and the Armed Services Procurement Regulations (ASPR), as amended, you are invited to submit a written proposal subject to the attached Request for Proposal Nr. F62531-70-R-0004.
2. The type of contract contemplated in connection with this procurement is Firm Fixed Price, Material Reimbursable.
3. Four (4) copies of the Request for Proposal are attached. Three copies are to be completed and submitted to the Administrative Contracting Officer who has surveillance over your maintenance facility by the time and date specified in Block 8 of the cover page of the RFP or to Hq APRFE (FFP-I), APO San Francisco 96323.
4. Four (4) copies of the RFP have been sent to your field office in Saigon, South Vietnam.
5. We request that you acknowledge, by letter or telegraphic notification, receipt of this Request for Proposal. Please indicate that you do or do not intend to submit a proposal.

  
**JAMES E. SPENCER**  
Contracting Officer

1 Atch  
RFP (4 cpy)

Cy to: Saigon Field Office,  
w/Atch (4 cpy)

Det 4, APRFE,  
APO 96327

A last call for ARPA flying, made on 5 December 69  
(UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28)

future contract no. F62531-70-R-0004 for ARPA flying services out of Saigon and Bangkok, with one basic "utility aircraft" to be based at Saigon and several aircraft on a call basis to be based at Bangkok, including a 25 seat passenger aircraft, a 10 seat helicopter, and a 6 seat fixed wing passenger plane.<sup>278</sup> It is not known if this project was ever put into action, but probably, it wasn't. For in the next available Flight Operations Circular, the one of 1 July 71, there is no trace of such a contract.<sup>279</sup> Furthermore, the only aircraft left over from the former ARPA fleet was Saigon-based Ten Two N6622C, and this aircraft was inactivated at Saigon on 1 February 70, with 12 days to reactivate given in April 73.<sup>280</sup>

<sup>278</sup> USAF, APRFE, Request for Proposal dated 5 December 69 for "ARPA Flying Services - Saigon and Bangkok", in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28.

<sup>279</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. DFOD-C-71-014 of 1 July 71 in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.

<sup>280</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. DFOD-C-73-011 of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14.

## 2) Courier flights Bangkok-Udorn-Vientiane

There were only few scheduled Air America flights in Thailand in the early sixties, but one of them was a daily courier flight from Bangkok to Vientiane using C-46s.<sup>281</sup> From at least 1 July to 29 September 63, the Bangkok-based courier aircraft assigned to Laos contract AID-439-342 was C-47 B-827.<sup>282</sup> In February 64, the Bangkok-based Air America aircraft that was used as a liaison aircraft on the Bangkok-Udorn-Vientiane run was still C-47 B-827 assigned to contract no. AID-439-342,<sup>283</sup> and on 1 April 64<sup>284</sup> and on 7 July 64,<sup>285</sup> it was still the same aircraft assigned to the same contract. Things changed in 1965: The same Bangkok-based Air America C-47 B-827 and its courier service became part of the Udorn-based *Madrider* contract (contract no. AF62(531)-1841), and two equally Bangkok-based Air America Beech 18s were added to the same contract and probably also to the same role as liaison aircraft: Ten-Two N77Y and C-45 N9542Z.<sup>286</sup> In 1966, this service was reduced: On 8 April 66, C-47 B-827 was released from the *Madrider* contract and N9542Z was transferred to Saigon, so that only Ten-Two N77Y was still assigned to that contract,<sup>287</sup> and one month later, on 4 May 66, N77Y was even only a call aircraft.<sup>288</sup> The reason for this reduction may have been that since December 1964 or early 1965, another Air America C-47 flew inside Thailand: HC-47D “0-50883”, which flew in full USAF colors and had accidents at Songkhla (T-29), Thailand on 29 August 66<sup>289</sup> and at Pitt’s Camp, Thailand (T-603) on 6 September 67.<sup>290</sup>



Air America C-47 “933” at Bangkok in the late 60ies  
(UTD/Hickler/B28)

One year later, however, again, a second Air America C-47 was based at Bangkok: B-933. It was assigned to Bangkok on 28 June 67, and the Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 says that

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<sup>281</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.104.

<sup>282</sup> AAM Aircraft Availability for 1 July 63, 15 July 63, and 21 September 63, all in: UTD/Walker/B25F8.

<sup>283</sup> Operations Circular CA-C-OF-64-002 of 3 Feb. 1964, Ward Reimer Fax of 17-2-2004.

<sup>284</sup> Operations Circular CA-C-OF-64-013 of 1 April 1964.

<sup>285</sup> Aircraft Status as of 7 July 64 in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>286</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 1 Nov. 65 in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>287</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 8 April 66 in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>288</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 4 May 66 in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2.

<sup>289</sup> XOXO of 29 August 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16.

<sup>290</sup> XOXO of 6 Sept. 67, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F1; Accident report, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F3 and in: UTD/CIA/B59F1.

it was to remain at least until 30 September 68. In the meantime, the old *Madriver* contract (no. AF62(531)-1841) had been substituted by a new one, i.e. by contract no. AF62531-67-C-0028, and it was to this new contract that C-47 B-933 was assigned with Bangkok as its base point.<sup>291</sup> For several years, C-47 B-933 remained the Air America aircraft that made the courier flights between Bangkok, Udorn, and Vientiane. Of course, the number of the contract changed during that time: On 16 June<sup>292</sup> and on 15 August 1969,<sup>293</sup> it was still contract no. AF62531-67-C-0028, but in July 1971, it was the Laos contract no. F04606-71-C-0002.<sup>294</sup> One year later, on 1 July 72, it was still contract no. F04606-71-C-0002, and Air America's C-47 B-933 flew Bangkok (T-09) – Udorn (T-08) – Vientiane (L-08) – Udorn (T-08) on Mondays, Udorn-Vientiane-Udorn-Bangkok on Tuesdays, Bangkok-Udorn on Wednesdays, Udorn-Vientiane-Udorn on Thursdays, Udorn-Vientiane-Udorn-Bangkok on Fridays, and Bangkok-Udorn on Saturdays as well as Udorn-Bangkok on Sundays “contingent on Customer's requirement”.<sup>295</sup> On 10 January 1973, C-47 B-933 was put into temporary storage at Bangkok, with 7 days to reactivate,<sup>296</sup> and later the same year, B-933 was listed again as a spare aircraft still based at Bangkok, but that was to be positioned at Saigon.<sup>297</sup> Apparently, that was the end of Air America's courier service between Bangkok, Udorn, and Vientiane.

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<sup>291</sup> Status of Aircraft as of 1 May 68 in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>292</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-69-24 of 15 June 69 in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.

<sup>293</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-69-34 of 15 August 69 in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1.

<sup>294</sup> Flight Operations Circulars no. DFOD-C-71-014 of 1 July 71, and no. DFOD-C-71-015 of 15 July 71, both in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.

<sup>295</sup> Air America, Operations Procedures Guide Bangkok, effective 1 July 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C.

<sup>296</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. DFOD-C-73-011 of 16 April 73 in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14.

<sup>297</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. DOC-C-73-015 of 1 Nov. 73 in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C.

#### IV) Thailand, backstage to the war in Laos

##### 1) Border towns

The liaison flights mentioned above that linked Vientiane to Udorn and Bangkok were not the only Air America flights that went into Thailand, but were operated under the provisions of a contract that was for flying in Laos. There are several aspects that allow to speak of Thailand as the backstage to the war in Laos. Already in the late spring of 1962, PARU Team I, stationed in the Thai border town of Chiang Khong (T-516) across the Mekong from Ban Houei Sai and joined by CIA man William Young, had opened guerrilla operations in the Lao Province of Houa Khong, drawing 15 tribesmen into the CIA fold. Joe Hazen recalls: “T-516 was Bill Young’s place, just across the Mekong from Ban Houei Sai (L-25), Laos. Air America H-34s worked out of there, I suppose hauling whatever across the river to teams in Laos.”<sup>298</sup> After the Geneva Accords, the CIA revived its Houa Khong operation in the summer of 1963 by secretly sending a class of Mien students from that province to Phitsanulok for radio and leadership instruction.<sup>299</sup> During the second half of 1964, the CIA built a new training center called Kai Kong on the outskirts of Chiang Khong, which, cadred by a PARU team, began courses in leadership, rudimentary spycraft for intelligence-gathering teams, and radio communications, and by the end of 1964, another training facility at Nam Yu, the CIA’s provincial center inside Houa Khong province.<sup>300</sup> Another aspect is that of Air America flights linking Thai border towns with locations in Laos. On 6 September 64, Richard Crafts flew Helio XW-PCA from Vientiane to Ban Sathan, also called Chiang Khong (T-516), remained there for 3 days of flying 7-8 hours per day, and returned from T-516 to Udorn in the evening of 9 September 64. In November 64, he flew Helio XW-PBZ to the same location, apparently again with frequent subsequent flights out of T-516. In December 64 it was XW-PCA again, then Helio XW-PCD, and in January and February 65, we can see him flying Helios XW-PBZ, XW-PBY, and again XW-PCA on numerous missions to T-516, while during the spring and summer of 1965 his Helio flights to T-516 became only sporadic.<sup>301</sup> Air America pilot Joe Hazen also recalls to have flown to that place several times: “There was a place in Thailand, no designator, just across the river from Ban Houie Sai (L-25) in Laos, that was named Chiang Kong or Khong (Bill Young’s place). It was just long enough for a Helio or Dornier. I do not recall going in there with a Caribou, so S-516 may well be nearby with the same name. I have it listed in my logbook, so I went there with [Caribou] 853. The stuff I brought in went across the river to Laos. I don’t know where in Laos it went after the crossing. AAM helicopters also worked out of Bill’s place, so it is possible the choppers hauled the stuff. [...] I had brake failure at Chiang Kong on 19 November 1962. The right side gear hit a stump, turned the aircraft (Do-28 # N4224G) 90 degrees to the right, collapsed both gear, and we slid sideways toward the fuel drums stored at the end of the runway on the right side. The aircraft came to a halt a few meters from the fuel drums. My passenger, a customer type whose name I do not recall, and I got out quickly and ran several meters away from the aircraft and waited several minutes until the dust settled. We then went back to the aircraft to check on the load, which consisted of several different types of ordnance, including blasting caps, which were sitting in boxes on top of the other stuff. A fun day. – The aircraft was fixed several days later and I came from Vientiane to fly it back to Udorn. The mechanic (Filipino) said it was already to go and that he would go back to Udorn by a C-47 out of Chiang Rai, not too far away. I said ‘No, you are coming with me since you said it was fixed.’ He reluctantly got in and off we went. On landing at Udorn, the brakes

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<sup>298</sup> E-mail dated 31 January 2015 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>299</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.135.

<sup>300</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.135/6.

<sup>301</sup> Log book of Richard Crafts, in: UTD/Leary/B44F6.

were weak. It turned out the brakes were being improperly serviced at Udorn as nobody read the f\*\*\*\*\*g manual. Vientiane was servicing the brakes properly, but Udorn did not get the word.<sup>302</sup>

Indeed, since May 1962, the Thai town of Chiang Khong located opposite the Laotian Ban Houei Sai was home of a PARU team, i.e. of Team I. This was part of an alternative guerrilla network adjacent to the Thai border in Laos' Military Region I – some sort of paramilitary insurance policy. At the same time, CIA case officer William Young, who had previously worked at Pa Doung, armed and equipped 30 guerrillas in the area.<sup>303</sup> Young also managed to train 15 Shan tribesmen to become radio operators and team leaders and then began recruiting Khmu as *Auto-Défense de Choc* (ADC) members and even dispatched seven Khmu students to Hua Hin for basic radio training. When the Geneva Accords of 23 July 62 forbade further activities inside Laos, Young retained the seven trained Khmu radio operators at Chiang Khong, but also managed to recruit seven more students and to dispatch them to Pitt's Camp for radio and leadership training.<sup>304</sup> So Thai border towns often were the starting points for paramilitary activities in Laos.

It will be recalled that on 23 July 62, the foreign ministers of 14 nations signed the Declaration and Protocol on the Neutrality of Laos, and this included an October 1962 deadline for the departure from Laos of all foreign regular and irregular troops. While the US complied with the Accords so that on 6 October 1962, Major General Reuben H. Tucker, III, Chief, MAAG Laos, and the remaining 127 MAAG personnel formally departed the Kingdom of Laos,<sup>305</sup> the North Vietnamese did not: Only about 40 out of some 7,000 North Vietnamese troops in Laos, went thru the formalities of leaving the country, while the remaining North Vietnamese forces together with about 19,500 fighting men of the Pathet Lao even expanded their area. So, in order to counterbalance the continued North Vietnamese presence in Laos without infringing themselves the Geneva Accords, the United States moved military advisers and CIA personnel just across the border into Thailand.<sup>306</sup> The CIA first moved to the small Thai town of Nong Khai (T-22), located south east of Vientiane on the banks of the Mekong River, which served as a CIA base for some time in 1962,<sup>307</sup> until its 4802<sup>nd</sup> Joint Liaison Detachment was established at the Royal Thai Air Force base at Udorn in late 1962.<sup>308</sup> From now on, CIA people were flown in daily by Air America planes. The US Embassy declared that Air America flights were humanitarian, while CIA men took USAID posts as cover. Another northern Thailand airfield that served as a base for military or covert aid to Laos was Nakhon Phanom (T-55), located some 120 miles east of Udorn on the banks of the Mekong River, which, especially since 1966, was the place from where the Air Commandos operated night interdiction missions against the Ho Chi Minh Trail.<sup>309</sup> But none of these airfields was a special base for Air America operations.

## 2) Transporting Thai PARU advisors and *Unity* troops into Laos and back to Thailand

From what has already been said above, it is obvious that the Thai PARU or Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit was a highly effective parachute-trained police unit formed by the CIA<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> E-Mail dated 1 May 2013, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>303</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow War*, p.90.

<sup>304</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow War*, p.135.

<sup>305</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.46-50.

<sup>306</sup> Leary, *CIA Air Operations in Laos*, p. 60.

<sup>307</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.161, note 60.

<sup>308</sup> Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic mountains*, pp. 118-20; Castle, *At war*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>309</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, pp.182-212.

<sup>310</sup> PARU training was established at Lopburi in 1951 and relocated to Hua Hin in 1953. Supplies for the program were delivered by Air America to the CIA's Bangkok cover organization called "Sea Supply". At the end of the program the men had even learnt to parachute into insurgent-contested areas (Castle, *At war*, pp.37/8).



to assist remote police outposts attacked by Communist guerrillas in Thailand. Over the years, James W. “Bill” Lair, the CIA specialist responsible for developing the CIA’s PARU program in Thailand, had succeeded in transforming this counter-insurgency elite group into a mobile force of highly skilled communications, intelligence, and weapons experts who could train others.<sup>311</sup> How did the Thai PARU enter the war in Laos? In August 1960, Bill Lair took an Air America Helio Courier from Vientiane to Savannakhet to deliver money to the 5 battalions working under the command of CIA-backed General Phoumi Nosavan, who, after the *coup d’état* made by Kong Le on 9 August 1960, had not accepted the change and had retreated to his personal power base at Savannakhet, where, on 10 September 60, he announced the formation of a “Revolutionary Committee” headed by Prince Boun Oum. When Lair convinced Phoumi to have his troops assisted by PARU teams,<sup>312</sup> Phoumi’s friend, Thai Prime Minister Marshal Sarit Thanarat, sent some of those PARU elite teams to train Phoumi’s troops. Indeed, on 20 November 60, 2 Air America C-47s flew in from Hua Hin, Thailand, home of the PARU, bringing to Savannakhet five 5-man PARU teams, each consisting of a commander, deputy, medic, and 2 communication specialists.<sup>313</sup> All this would not have been possible without the assistance of Sarit Thanarat, who was also the Thai military strongman, and who, in September 1960, formed a covert military advisory group called the “Thai Committee to Support Laos”, known as “Kaw Taw”, with headquarters at Bangkok and a forward detachment at Savannakhet, which was run by Col. Chamnien Pongpyrot.<sup>314</sup>

The PARU’s next customer in Laos was Vang Pao, leading officer of the Hmong tribesmen in Laos’ Military Region II, and since 1961, PARU squads assisted the CIA in recruiting and training Hmong soldiers in Laos.<sup>315</sup> For, impressed by Vang Pao’s energy and his will to fight the Communists, CIA’s Bill Lair proposed to his superiors to build up a secret CIA financed and PARU trained army of Hmong tribesmen in Laos, as Vang Pao had requested.<sup>316</sup> Flying for the PARU in Laos was officially made for the “Consolidated Electric Equipment Company” (CEEEO), as the CIA involvement in Laos was called at that time, and is well remembered by former Air America pilot John E. Lee: “Early in 1961, Thai PARUs went into Laos to lead and train Meos under Vang Pao. The Thais asked for their regular supply pilots to fly logistical support missions. Lee flew drops to Long Tieng and to ridges north of the PDJ. He worked directly under Bill Lair. [...] PARU losses were high. Lee had the sad task of flying into Udorn after dark and taking the bodies of the KIAs to Hua Hin, landing before sunrise. ‘These were the saddest trips I had.’ And there were quite a few of them.”<sup>317</sup> Also in early 1961, a special contingent of CIA case officers – including John E. “Jack” Shirley, Lloyd “Pat” Landry, and Anthony A. “Tony Poe” Poshepny – was sent to Laos to strengthen Royal Lao government control in the north. So Air America Helio Couriers and helicopters flew those CIA men and their PARU interpreters<sup>318</sup> from mountaintop village to mountaintop village where they succeeded in convincing the Hmong that the United States

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<sup>311</sup> Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic mountains*, pp. 78/9.

<sup>312</sup> Bill Lair, interview with Steve Maxner, December 2001, written version, pp .95/6, at: <http://star.vietnam.ttu.edu/>. According to Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p. 35, the Air America Helio arrived during the second week of September 60 and delivered US Dollars; in late September 60, the Thai military formed a covert military advisory group to support Laos, later to be known as “Kaw Taw”, with headquarters at Bangkok and a forward detachment at Savannakhet. In November and December 1960 PARU communications and medical technicians played an important role in Phoumi’s capture of Vientiane (Castle, *At war*, p.38).

<sup>313</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p. 37.

<sup>314</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p. 35.

<sup>315</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.38.

<sup>316</sup> Leary, *CIA Air operations*, pp.57/58.

<sup>317</sup> John E. Lee, interview conducted by William M. Leary at Watkinsville, GA on 27 May 1987; Prof. Leary’s notes are preserved at UTD/Leary/B46F10.

<sup>318</sup> Since March 61, 8 PARU teams operated in Laos (Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.52).

would give them the means to defend themselves against the Vietnamese. In doing so, they were strongly supported by Vang Pao, who had already been added to the CIA's list of receivers and who visited many widespread Hmong villages northeast of the Plain of Jars by Air America aircraft, arranging for air delivery of food and arms; and within a few months, several thousand men had received CIA training and weapons.

How did the PARU advisers come into Laos? Those who came from the PARU camp at Nong Khai, Thailand,<sup>319</sup> arrived in one of the Helio Couriers that were exclusively flown for the CIA: On 4, 5, 6, and 7 June 61, William Andresevic brought some PARU advisors to Vientiane in Helio "555", Major Aderholt's aircraft bailed to Air America, while B-835 was out for maintenance at Bangkok. On 27, 28, and 29 June, and on 5, 6, 14, 17, 20 or 21 July 61, Andresevic brought PARU advisors from Nong Khai in Air America's own Helio B-835, which had returned in the meantime.<sup>320</sup> Nong Khai (T-22) was not only the home of PARU

JUNE 1961												
Date	A/C	No.	TYPE	MISSION	PAX	STA	STA	NITE	INST.	TRIP		ACCU. TOTAL
										TIME	DAYS TIME	
3	555		HELIO	FERRY (S09 → B. 43 PARU)	3	BLUE CHIP	V8			1 55	1 55	1 55
4	555		"	OP	3	V8	14			50		
				OP		14	V8		48	2 10		
					3	V8	14		30	1 10		
						14	V8			1 35		
					3 NK	V8	V8			45 6 30	8 25	
5	555			OP-INC. WK.	1	V8	V8		30	1 30		
					3 → 4 NK	V8	V8			40		
				OP		V8	6		1 10	1 35		
				DROPS	SANTI.	6	6			1 15		
				DROPS PHA DONG	2 P.T.	6	V8		1 00	2 00	7 00	15 25
6	555				3 →	V8	V8			30		
					3 ←	V8	6			37	2 15	
						V8	6			50		
					SANTI.	6	7			40		
					"	7	6			45	1 25	
					2 P.T.	6	V8			35		
				CHOP ESCORT (THEY ABORTED)	3	V8	V8			40		
				OP	3	V8	14		15	45		
						14	16			50		
				MURPHY T.O. AT 16.		16	14			55 9 25	24 50	
					3P	14	V8			35		
7	555				2	V8	V8					

Log book of William Andresevic, entries for 4-7 June 61, where "NK" stands for landing at Nong Khai on flights from Vientiane (V8) back to Vientiane (V8) (UTD/Leary/B43F9)

"Team E"<sup>321</sup>, but also an important CIA station so that many of the flights touching that town apparently were liaison flights for the CIA: On 19 and 21 December 62, Allen Rich flew Helio B-861 from Udorn to Nong Khai in Thailand, before continuing to the Laotian town of

<sup>319</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.59.

<sup>320</sup> Log book of William Andresevic, at: UTD/Leary/B43F9.

<sup>321</sup> On 13 October 62, Allen Rich took Helio B-861 from Udorn to "Team E" and passed his night at Nong Khai ("RON S-22") according to his log book; from there, he made several air drops, always returning to Nong Khai, until he went down to Bangkok on 15 October 62 (Rich log book, in: UTD/Rich/B1).

Xieng Khouang in the Plain of Jars, possibly transporting PARU advisors. However, Helio B-861 also operated what apparently were CIA liaison flights into Southern Thailand: Udorn (T-08) - Takhli (T-05) - Bangkok-Don Muang (T-09) between 21 and 23 September 62.<sup>322</sup> The importance of Nong Khai (T-22), however, is underlined by the fact that sometimes, pilots had to fly even large detours to pass thru that station: On 22 February 63, Allen Rich took his Helio B-845 from Udorn north to Nong Khai, and there he made a sharp turn to the west, going up to Chiang Rai and Chiang Kong in northwestern Thailand; and on 13 March 63, he even made a 180 degree turn, taking Helio B-861 from Udorn first north to Nong Khai and then from there south to Bangkok. And this type of liaison flights linking with each other the CIA center at Udorn and the CIA stations at Nong Khai, Takhli, Bangkok and Long Tieng and evidently operating under the CEECO-contract no. 59-069, was also carried out by Air America's Helio Couriers B-845 and B-861 during the year of 1963. In 1964, Helios B-839 and B-845 had several accidents in Thailand.<sup>323</sup>

Other PARU advisors and their equipment apparently came from the PARU camp at Lopburi north of Bangkok: From the extract from "Doc" Johnson's log book covering the period between 3 and 14 October 1960 published above, we can see that Air America C-47 B-827 probably delivered parachutes into Pakse and Seno in southern Laos and perhaps also PARU advisors<sup>324</sup> – material and personnel the aircraft could pick up at the PARU training camp at Lopburi (S-15). This would mean that the contract that CAT Inc. and then Air America had with the Thai Border Patrol Police, at that time also included hauling supplies to the pro-Western troops fighting in Laos. And there were many more flights of this type: For example, between 21 and 24 November 61, "Doc" Johnson flew from Lopburi (S-15) to Vientiane and Pakse (V-11), probably carrying PARU advisers and their equipment. The flights were Bangkok-Lopburi-Pakse-Lopburi-Bangkok on 21 November 61 in C-46 B-150, the same route on 22 November 61 in C-46 B-914, adding the leg Bangkok-Vientiane at the end, and Vientiane-Lopburi-Vientiane on 24 November 61, again in Air America C-46 B-914.<sup>325</sup> Still other PARU advisers and their equipment arrived in Laos from the PARU camp at Hua Hin (S-10, later T-10): For example, from 5 to 12 August 62, Ed Eckholdt flew Air America's new Caribou B-853 on shuttles between Hua Hin in southern Thailand and Sam Thong in Laos via Vientiane, Udorn or Takhli, probably bringing in PARU advisers and their equipment – apparently again under the provisions of the contract that Air America had with the Thai Police.<sup>326</sup> Inside Laos, Air America flew PARU advisers throughout the country in Helio Couriers assigned to contracts no. 57-08 (with USOM/Laos) or no. 59-069 (with CEECO) or in Sikorsky H-19s and H-34s assigned to USOM/Laos contract no. ICA-39-007.

As to PARU training, it was initially organized at Pa Doung (LS-05), Vang Pao's first headquarters: With authorization to arm and train 1,000 Hmong warriors, CIA's Bill Lair arranged for an arm drop at Pa Doung, a mountaintop base south of the Plain of Jars. In January 61, Air America delivered weapons to the first 300 trainees.<sup>327</sup> The PARU team organized a three-day training program for the Hmong, involving use of their weapons and basic ambush techniques; some Hmong were also sent to a PARU camp in southern Thailand to be trained as radio operators.<sup>328</sup> In early 1961, then, about four hundred additional PARU advisers with a handful of CIA case officers were sent to Laos to help build up and train an

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<sup>322</sup> Log book by A. Rich, in: UTD/Rich/B1.

<sup>323</sup> Log book of A. Rich, in: UTD/Rich/B1; "Aircraft accidents 1964", in: UTD/CIA/B49F2.

<sup>324</sup> See Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow War*, pp.35/6.

<sup>325</sup> Page from "Doc" Johnson's log book, kindly sent to the author by "Doc" Johnson's son James on 10 August 2013.

<sup>326</sup> Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/B44F13.

<sup>327</sup> Leary, *CIA Air operations*, p. 58. Three Air America aircraft were used (Bill Lair, interview with Steve Maxner, December 2001, written version, p.98, at: <http://star.vietnam.ttu.edu/>).

<sup>328</sup> Kirk, *Wider war*, pp.207-9; Leary, *CIA Air Operations*, pp.56-58; Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.268.

irregular guerrilla army, which was approved by US President Kennedy to be increased to 11,000 men in August 61.<sup>329</sup> As to the tribal military forces supported by the CIA, the Hmong forces had been expanded to approximately 19,000 guerrillas by January 64, engaged in village defense and guerrilla activities against the Pathet Lao. Since about mid-1963, those Hmong forces were also trained in Thailand – at first only at the PARU center at Hua Hin, where they were taught guerrilla warfare tactics and the use of modern weapons and radios, and then also at Phitsanulok in northwestern Thailand. Later, a similar training program was organized at Long Tieng.<sup>330</sup> And the Hmong were not the only tribal forces supported by the CIA by early 1964, for the Agency had also developed “paramilitary and intelligence assets among the Yaos in northwest Laos (currently 1700; 2500 authorized) and the Khas in south Laos (currently 400; 1,000 authorized) and Lao in central Laos (currently 1,200; 2,000 authorized). The latter assets (Lao in central Laos) operate under FAR cover.”<sup>331</sup>

In late 1962, the CIA established its headquarters for operations in Laos, the 4802<sup>nd</sup> Joint Liaison Detachment, at the Royal Thai Air Force base at Udorn in an abandoned civil aviation building later known as “AB-1”.<sup>332</sup> At the same time, the “Kaw Taw”, i.e. the “Thai Committee to Support Laos”, set up shop in a single-story wooden complex in the same compound and changed its name to become “Headquarters 333”.<sup>333</sup> This Thai unit and the CIA’s 4802<sup>nd</sup> JLD at Udorn acted as a joint US-Thai command for covert military and intelligence-collection activities in Laos, and one of their tasks was to organize the use of PARU personnel in Laos, who also worked as road watchers, and later to assist in the recruitment and training of Thai soldiers destined for duty in Laos.<sup>334</sup> On 27 April 65, Joe Hazen flew such a mission in Porter N285L, which at that time was assigned to the CIA contract 59-069:<sup>335</sup> “I next flew it on 27 April from LS-20A (don’t recall who flew it there or starting point) to T-403, back to LS-20A and back to VTE. The total time was 3 hours and I made 13 takeoffs and landings, I am guessing, at T-403 and LS-20A. T-403, according to my list, is Ban Bung Kla #1, and I think this is the only time I had been there or for what reason. Don’t recall passengers, but I think there were. Going to a Thai strip from LS-20A, I probably had Thai personnel on board.”<sup>336</sup> Indeed, Royal Thai government cooperation was integral to the covert US aid for Laos – not only by providing land for US-built and operated military facilities, but also by sending PARU units since 1960, Thai Air Force T-28s since 1964, and between 1970 and 1974 even battalions of Thai volunteers (project *Unity*).<sup>337</sup>

For since 1969, Thai volunteer troops, and between 1970 and 1974 even several battalions of Thai volunteers, called project *Unity*,<sup>338</sup> served in Laos. As the C-123 assigned to contract AID-439-713 and permanently based at Udorn at that time, always picked up its cargo at AB-1’s Q-warehouse,<sup>339</sup> it becomes clear that Vientiane-based C-123s working out of Udorn “as directed [by] AB-1” were additional aircraft temporarily assigned to the AB-1 customer to support General Vang Pao’s irregulars or other CIA-supported programs or even covert

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<sup>329</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.38-43.

<sup>330</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.57/8 and 160.

<sup>331</sup> Memorandum of 17 January 64, written by the Deputy Director for Coordination, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, in: US Dept. of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, vol. XXVIII, Laos, in: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v28/d1>, tab.1.

<sup>332</sup> Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic mountains*, pp. 118-20; Castle, *At war*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>333</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.99.

<sup>334</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.3, 60/1, and 82.

<sup>335</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>336</sup> E-mail dated 29 January 2015 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen.

<sup>337</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.2/3; Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.444.

<sup>338</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.2/3; Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.444.

<sup>339</sup> Udorn flight schedules of June 1969, that is of 11 (in: UTD/Hickler/B6F3), 20 (in: UTD/Hickler/B3F14), 21 (in: UTD/Hickler/B3F14), 23 (in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1), 24 (in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1), 26 (in: UTD/Hickler/B3F14), 27 (in: UTD/Hickler/B3F14), and 28 June 69, (in: UTD/Hickler/B3F14).

missions.<sup>340</sup> And as sometimes, Air America's C-123s carried "C/L seats", that is centerline seats when flown on missions for AB-1 out of Udorn,<sup>341</sup> these flights may also have transported PARU units or Thai *Unity* troops, as AB-1 or the CIA was also responsible for the US-Thai support-program for Laos.<sup>342</sup> In February 73, that is at the time of the Ceasefire Agreement, the CIA and Thai "Headquarters 333" had 27 infantry and 3 artillery battalions in Laos, making a total of 17,000 Thai soldiers. In accordance with Article IV of the Vientiane Agreement, they had to leave the country. So on 1 July 73, the Thai SGU program was reduced to 17 battalions, to be cut to 10 battalions by 1 January 74 and to be completed by 30 June 74.<sup>343</sup> Already in March 73, Air America's Vice-President Laos James Cunningham told the Company's Managing Director Paul Velte that two C-130Es were to be used even in May and June 73, especially to withdraw the Thai irregular troops and all their equipment still operating in Laos at that time.<sup>344</sup> Former Air America pilot Connie Seigrist recalls that the C-130E program flying out of Udorn "was basically a daylight operation flown in support of the Thai Army Ground Forces plus some flying support for the Laotian Armed Forces and USAID. [...] When needed I flew as much as 13 hours + in a day plus making 16 or more landings and take-offs a day when transporting troops between their stations. I have had as high as 280 Laotian troops aboard on a single flight (stand up room only) when transporting them around to different areas."<sup>345</sup> Some of the C-130E flights mentioned in the Udorn Daily Flight Schedules as operating out of Udorn for ASB-044 do mention that centerline seats had been installed, so they probably moved Thai troops – within Laos and from Thailand in



Thai troops in the C-130

(with kind permission from Dan Gamelin)

<sup>340</sup> Joe Hennessy notes that "on occasions it would be necessary to give AB-1 preference and allocate them additional C-123s" (Hennessy, *Air America*, p.13).

<sup>341</sup> For example, on 1 September 72, C-123K "545" had to taxi to the Q-warehouse at Udorn at 0700L, pick up seats, fly to Vang Vieng (L-16) at 0800L, then to Long Tieng (LS-20A), and return to Udorn (T-08) ASAP, that is "as soon as possible" (Udorn daily flight schedule for 1 September 72 in: UTD/Severson/B1F7).

<sup>342</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.60/1, and 82.

<sup>343</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.121.

<sup>344</sup> Letters dated 23 and 24 March 1973, sent by James Cunningham to Paul Velte, both in: UTD/CIA/B31F4.

<sup>345</sup> Seigrist, *Memoirs*, p.83, in: UTD/Leary/B21F11.

1972: The Vientiane Daily Flight Schedules of 1972 preserved at Dallas<sup>346</sup> note the following Air America C-130E flights for ASB-044 with centerline seats installed, which probably means that at least several of them transported Thai troops:

24 May 72: Air America C-130E “786” shuttled between Seno (L-46) and Pakse (L-11) with centerline seats installed;

18 August 72: Air America C-130E “786” shuttled between Pakse (L-11) and Keng Ka Boa (LS-235) with centerline seats installed;

19 August 72: Air America C-130E “218” from Udorn to Nam Phong (T-712) and Phitsanulok (T-01), then as directed with centerline seats installed;

3 September 72: Air America C-130E “786” Udorn-Nam Xieng Lom (LS-69)-Udorn with centerline seats installed;

12 September 72: Air America C-130E “218” flew Udorn-Seno-Ban Xieng Lom-Udorn-Seno-Ban Xieng Lom-Udorn with centerline seats installed;

5 October 72: Air America C-130E’s “787” and “405” shuttled Phitsanulok (T-01)-Pakse (L-11), both with centerline seats installed;

21 October 72: Air America C-130E “218” shuttled Udorn-Nam Phong-Pakse and Udorn-Luang Prabang, and Air America C-130E “786” shuttled Udorn-Nam Phong-Pakse, Udorn-Ban Xieng Lom (LS-69A), and Udorn-Luang Prabang, both with centerline seats installed;

11 November 72: Air America C-130E “786” shuttled Udorn-Ban Xieng Lom (LS-69A) with centerline seats installed.

In 1973, the Thai troops were flown back from Laos to locations in Thailand: On 18 June 73, for example, Air America’s C-130E’s “404” and “405” as well as Air America’s C-123Ks “617” and “671” flew for ASB-044 and apparently carried back the Thai irregular troops mentioned above, as these aircraft shuttled between unknown locations in Laos and T-712, that is Nam Phong (the C-130s) and T-338, that is Nong Saeng (the C-123s).<sup>347</sup> To sum up: Air America was responsible for transporting Thai PARUs into and inside Laos, and later even for flying entire Thai volunteer battalions from Thailand to Laos, then from one position in Laos to another, and at the end for flying them back to Thailand.

### **3) Paramilitary and Military support for Laos: AB-1, the PEO and *DepChief***

As Laos was officially neutral after the Geneva Accords of 21 July 1954, US military aid for Laos initially passed thru the hands of the ostensibly civilian Program Evaluation Office (PEO) hidden inside USOM.<sup>348</sup> The situation in Laos became critical in the fall 1960, after the Kong Le *coup* of 9 August 60 had split the country: Kong Le recalled Prince Souvanna Phouma as prime minister to form a neutral government, while former Prime Minister General Phoumi, who had flown to Luang Prabang for a conference with the King on 8 August, did not accept the change, retreated to his personal power base at Savannakhet, and later announced the formation of a “Revolutionary Committee” headed by Prince Boun Oum. As the United States refused to overturn a Thai blockade of Vientiane set up upon Phoumi’s request, on 4 October 60, Souvanna announced his intention to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and invited the Pathet Lao to participate in the new government. On 7 October, the United States halted all military aid to the Vientiane government; on 13 October, Souvanna began negotiations with the Soviet Ambassador; and in late October 60, he announced that he would be very happy to receive Soviet assistance.<sup>349</sup> In addition to that, in

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<sup>346</sup> Vientiane Daily Flight Schedules of 1972, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7.

<sup>347</sup> Vientiane Daily Flight Schedule for 18 June 73, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7. Officially, however, the last Thai SGUs had left Laos already on 22 May 74 (Castle, *At war*, p.124).

<sup>348</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.17; Castle, *At war*, p.146.

<sup>349</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.20-22; Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.31-46.

November 60, Souvanna agreed to accept aid also from Peking and Hanoi.<sup>350</sup> The Communists considered the Kong Le *coup* to be a chance: The Russians began to support Kong Le with weapons and other equipment, boasting that it was the USSR's highest-priority supply operation since World War II.<sup>351</sup> On 16 December 60, General Phoumi recaptured Vientiane, but the Soviets continued to airlift supplies to Kong Le, who marched north to Vang Vieng. During the last 2 weeks of December 60, the Soviet airlift flew more than 180 sorties into Laos in support of the Pathet Lao and Kong Le forces. The combined Pathet-Lao-Kong Le forces drove the Royal Lao Government troops off the Plain of Jars, and by 3 January 61, every strategic road junction on the Plain was under pro-Communist control. The Soviets adjusted their airlift to the Plain. On 1 January 61, Kong Le reached Khang Khay, which he made his headquarters, and many Soviet IL-14s arrived from Hanoi, bringing in a dozen 105mm howitzers and eight 85mm field guns. Xieng Khouangville and Ban Ban were taken a little bit later. The Plain of Jars stream was in the strategic possession of Kong Le's forces. By 16 January 61, the air bridge to the Plain of Jars and to Sam Neua involved nine IL-14s and nine Li-2s that also made airdrops at locations like Ta Vieng, Ban Ban, and Vang Vieng.<sup>352</sup>

In this dramatic situation – as has been noted quite often<sup>353</sup> –, in the fall of 1960<sup>354</sup>, Air America's C-46s assigned to USOM contract no. 57-060 moved thousands of tons of arms and supplies from Bangkok and from the secret base at Takhli (S-05) in Thailand to General Phoumi Nosavan at Savannakhet and then at Vientiane. Since January 61, Air America aircraft also delivered supplies to a drop zone near Vang Pao's headquarters at Pa Doung in Laos.<sup>355</sup> These supplies could be arms and ammunition or rice bags and elephant-skin containers filled with water, and Air America aircraft even carried royalist paratroops to jump zones near Vientiane in operations leading to the flight of Kong Le's forces northward.<sup>356</sup> Among the pilots who flew under USOM contract no. 57-060 was also CAT's specialist for covert missions, Capt. "Doc" Johnson, who was in Laos on temporary duty at least from late September 61 to 17 October 61, flying for Air America. Several times, he flew his C-46 – mostly B-914 – from Bangkok to Takhli or to Vientiane or from Takhli to Vientiane, sometimes making air drops after he had landed at Vientiane; flights out of Bangkok and Takhli probably carried arms and ammunition. Sometimes he also made air drops flying out of Vientiane – on 2 October 61 in C-47 "147", on 14 October in C-46 B-910, and on 15 October in C-47 B-815 –, probably hauling rice bags. But there were also some more secret flights whose nature can only be guessed: On 28 September 61, "Doc" Johnson made a 5.8 hour night flight from Bangkok to Takhli using C-46 B-914 – that is 5 hours more than a regular flight between the two points would have taken. On 10 October 61, "Doc" Johnson made a 6.3 hour flight from Takhli back to Takhli, including 5.8 hours of night flying – in both cases possibly dropping agents or commando raiders behind enemy lines. On 27 and 28 October 61, he made 2 more 5.8 hour flights from Takhli to Takhli, possibly again dropping raiders.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.23.

<sup>351</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.108. The Soviets made at least 34 flights to Vientiane between 3 and 14 December 60, delivering fuel and military equipment (Castle, *At war*, p.23).

<sup>352</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp. 43-47 + 50.

<sup>353</sup> Prados, *President's secret wars*, p. 269; Castle, *At war*, p. 23; Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp. 36-39.

<sup>354</sup> On 10 October 60, Air America planes began flying supplies (mostly parachutes at the beginning) to Pakse and Savannakhet (Conboy/Morrison, *Shadow war*, p. 36).

<sup>355</sup> Leary, *CIA air operations in Laos*, p. 58; Trest, *Air Commando One*, pp. 109 and 116; Ahern, *Undercover armies*, p.60.

<sup>356</sup> Bowers, *The USAF in South-East Asia*, p. 441.

<sup>357</sup> Pages from Doc Johnson's log book kindly sent to the author on 14 September 2012 by James Johnson.

THIS PAGE BEGINS ON		AND ENDS ON		NAME OF AIRLINE					
25-Sept-1961		22-Oct-1961		C.A.T					
DATE 1961	FLIGHT NUMBER	FROM	TO	AIRCRAFT MAKE AND MODEL	AIRCRAFT CERTIFICATE MARK	MILES FLOWN	DURATION OF FLIGHT	ENGINE MAKE AND HORSEPOWER	REGISTRATION
25-Sept	CATER	BKK	TAKLI			C-46	0.8	2000	B-914
28	"	"	"			"	5+8	"	"
1-OCT	"	TAKLI	VTE-AD-UDMN-BKK-TAK			"	4+3	"	"
2	"	TAKLI	VTE-AID-VTE-TAK			"	5+8	"	"
2	"	VTE	AID-VTE			C-47	2+2	1250	947
3	"	TAK	VTE-AD-VTE-AID-VTE-TAK			C-46	6+9	2000	B-914
4	"	TAK	VTE-TAK			"	3+1	"	"
6	"	TAK	VTE-AID-VTE-AID-VTE			"	6+1	"	"
7	"	VTE	PAKSI-LP-VTE-AID-VTE			"	8+5	"	"
8	"	VTE	" - " - VTE - BKK			"	7+2	"	"
9	"	BKK	V-OP-AID-V-OP			"	5+7	"	"
10	"	V-OP	S-05			"	1+4	"	B-154
10	"	S-05	S-05			"	6+3	"	"
11	"	S-05	AD-VTE-AID-VTE-AID-VTE			"	7+2	"	B-154

Air America flights out of Bangkok and Takhli ("TAK" and S-05) for contract no. 57-060 (Page from "Doc" Johnson's log book kindly supplied by his son James on 18 February 2013)

THIS PAGE BEGINS ON		AND ENDS ON		NAME OF AIRLINE					
23-Oct-1961		20-Nov-1961		C.A.T					
DATE 1961	FLIGHT NUMBER	FROM	TO	AIRCRAFT MAKE AND MODEL	AIRCRAFT CERTIFICATE MARK	MILES FLOWN	DURATION OF FLIGHT	ENGINE MAKE AND HORSEPOWER	REGISTRATION
23-Oct	CATER	BKK LOCAL	TAK			C-46	0+8	2000	B-154
24	"	S-05	AID-VTE-AID-V-OP-S-05			"	5+9	"	B-154
24	"	V-OP	LOC			C-47	1+4	1250	B-817
26	"	S-05	AID-S-05-S-09-S-18-S-09-S-05			C-46	7+5	2000	B-148
27	"	S-05	S-05			"	5+8	"	B-154
28	"	S-05	S-05			"	5+8	"	B-154
29	"	S-05	S-09			"	0+8	"	B-154

More Air America flights out of Takhli (S-05) for contract no. 57-060 (Page from "Doc" Johnson's log book kindly supplied by his son James on 18 February 2013)

This entire operation was only possible because the US Air Force and the CIA cooperated closely, and the man in charge of organizing those support flights into Laos was once more Major Aderholt, commander of Detachment 2, 1045<sup>th</sup> Operational Evaluation & Training Group, by then stationed at Takhli. Indeed, the civil war in Laos determined the CIA to raise the level of their paramilitary activities, and soon Major Aderholt's Detachment 2 at Takhli became "the vanguard of special air warfare in Southeast Asia."<sup>358</sup> Although it was the CIA who secretly assisted Phoumi's forces and armed the Hmong tribesmen under Vang Pao,<sup>359</sup> this was not possible without massive assistance from the USAF: Lots of USAF C-124s and C-118s hauled in tons of palletized supplies of arms and rice to Takhli for distribution to the friendly forces in Laos. In May 1962, even C-130As belonging to the 21<sup>st</sup> TCS, Naha, ferried

<sup>358</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.99.

<sup>359</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, p. 108.



supplies into Laos.<sup>360</sup> The distribution to the forces in Laos was made by Air America aircraft: So flying arms and supplies into Laotian mountain strongholds became routine for Air America pilots working out of Takhli: Air America C-46s airdropped the bulk of arms and supplies to Vang Pao's forces.<sup>361</sup>

According to the new Geneva Accords of 23 July 62, Laos was still neutral, and by 6 October 62, all foreign regular and irregular troops had to leave the country. While the Americans complied with the Accords,<sup>362</sup> the North Vietnamese did not. Only about 40 out of some 7,000 North Vietnamese troops in Laos went thru the formalities of leaving the country, while the remaining North Vietnamese forces together with about 19,500 fighting men of the Pathet Lao expanded their area, pushing the Hmong away from their settlements, or absorbing those who did not flee, as well as attacking the neutralist forces.<sup>363</sup> Even Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma understood that without US assistance, the Communists would take over the Kingdom of Laos, and as Article 6 of the Geneva Accords prohibited the introduction of all sorts of armaments into Laos, except in small quantities necessary for the defense of the country, already on 10 September 62, Souvanna Phouma had sent a letter to US Ambassador Unger, requesting repair parts and supplies for US-furnished equipment, including training ammunition, oils and lubricants. In his reply dated 12 October 62, Ambassador Unger acknowledged that a new military assistance program had been created in the meantime, partly thru a new office set up within USAID Laos.<sup>364</sup>

While rice drops into Laos were hauled out of Vientiane, mostly aboard Air America's C-46s and C-47s, the delivery of military and paramilitary supplies to Laos by Air America planes had to be hidden somehow, because of Laos' neutrality. Indeed, there were two clandestine logistical systems to channel military and paramilitary aid into Laos, one run by the US Department of Defense and the other one run by the CIA. The CIA channel has already been described: The 4802<sup>nd</sup> Joint Liaison Detachment at Udorn ("AB-1"), working together with the Thai "Headquarters 333" also resident at Udorn, was responsible for supporting all paramilitary forces in Laos, and this included not only General Vang Pao's Hmong forces at Long Tieng, but also certain elements of the FAR as well as other irregulars and other tribal forces working for the CIA. So, all supplies destined for Vang Pao's irregulars were hauled on flights operated for CEECO and later on C-123 flights out of Udorn operating "as directed by AB-1". But in reality, this distinction had probably more importance for book-keeping,<sup>365</sup> that is in order to know who was to pay for the flight, and for determining the origin of the supplies, that is the CIA's supply stocks at Okinawa<sup>366</sup> on the one hand and the US Military Assistance Program on the other hand.

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<sup>360</sup> For the C-124s and C-118s see Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.109. For the C-130As, the official history of the 21<sup>st</sup> TCS notes for the period between January and June 1962: "Our finest work, as a newly integrated unit, began in May with the airlift to Laos. Although a 7 day week around the clock operation was in progress for nearly a month, we had a very successful operation" (Microfilm no. K0716, preserved at the AFHRA, Maxwell AFB, AL).

<sup>361</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, pp.109+116-20.

<sup>362</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.46-50.

<sup>363</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.49-50; Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.96.

<sup>364</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.51/2.

<sup>365</sup> Although Air America had separate contracts with USAID, the CIA, and the Department of Defense (Castle, *At war*, p.84), that is AID-439-342 with USAID, CEECO contract 59-069 and later AID-439-713 with the CIA, and AF62(531)-1674 and its follow-on contracts with the USAF, most pilots would fly a variety of missions, both military and civilian related, over the course of the day, and sometimes they would even have several customers on the very same flight. This complex system was managed by the "Air Support Branch" within USAID/RO that in close cooperation with the air carriers and the "customers" would publish the Daily Flight Schedules at Vientiane and Udorn (Castle, *At war*, p.84).

<sup>366</sup> At Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, was the CIA's main logistics base in East Asia, code-named ZRBLUSH and containing, among other supplies, arms and ammunition (see Leary, *Secret mission to Tibet*, p.69).

Much of the military supplies destined for the Royal Lao Army and Royal Lao Air Force arrived by merchant ships at Thai ports and was then trucked up to the border and transported across the Mekong River.<sup>367</sup> All military supplies that were flown into Laos – that is probably most of the military supplies that were not destined for the Vientiane area –, were hauled out of Udorn or Takhli by Air America aircraft. As to the organization of US military aid to Laos, the US Department of Defense supported the Lao regulars, that are the Royal Lao Army and the Royal Lao Air Force, thru a Thailand-based organization called *DepChief*, which worked hand in hand with a Laos-based organization called the *Requirements Office*. When the US MAAG group withdrew from Laos on 6 October 62, the following day US Major General Tucker established and took command of Deputy Chief, Joint United States Military Assistance Advisory Group, Thailand (DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI), normally abbreviated as *DepChief*, which was to become a new covert military assistance program for Laos.<sup>368</sup> Although officially a Military Assistance Program to Thailand for counter-subversion, its real function was to provide military assistance to Laos in Thailand and to ship it onwards to Laos.<sup>369</sup> But as *DepChief* personnel were not allowed in Laos, the program needed people working in Laos to coordinate the military assistance received from Thailand. These people belonged to the *Requirements Office* (USAID/RO), the small new office within USAID Laos mentioned by Ambassador Unger in his letter of 12 October 62, which was an integral element of *DepChief* – about thirty retired US military officers and some third-country technicians –, but was ostensibly under the control of the USAID program.<sup>370</sup> But then, some misuse of material supplied to Laos was discovered. And so, in 1966, some 120 active-duty US Air Force and US Army personnel – mostly radio communicators, intelligence, and operations specialists – were allowed to enter Laos under *Project 404*. This was a covert augmentation of *DepChief* and the US military attachés in Laos: While administratively assigned to *DepChief* in Thailand, they indeed worked at RLAf bases and Royal Lao Army Military Regions Headquarters, to advise, to assist in targeting, and to effect coordination of air support requirements.<sup>371</sup>

Air America flights for *DepChief* and the *Requirements Office* were called *Peppergrinder*-operations and normally originated at Udorn. *Peppergrinder* was the code-name of a 380-acre munitions storage facility located at Udorn Royal Thai Air Base. At *Peppergrinder*, there was a detachment of *DepChief*, the covert military assistance program to Laos, reporting directly to CINCPAC. It had been created in October 62, was headquartered in Bangkok, where *DepChief* also operated a large warehouse (code-name *Redcap*) at Don Muang airport, and had other detachments at the Air America facility at Udorn Air Base and at the Thai port of Sattahip.<sup>372</sup> In the early days, all types of aircraft assigned to contract AID-439-342 made flights for the *Requirements Office*. Later, *Peppergrinder*-flights mostly used C-123s that were based at Vientiane, were assigned to the “regular” USAID-contract AID-439-342 and were normally used for hauling fuel drums or heavy equipment into Laos. Sometimes, Air America’s C-123s also transported big guns like the 105mm, like N5005X that, in November 65, brought one to Thakhek West, as can be seen in the photo below. The transportation of military cargo under the provisions of a USAID contract was possible, because USAID/RO served as a link between *DepChief* and the regular USAID. Ostensibly under the control of

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<sup>367</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.85.

<sup>368</sup> Kirk, *Wider war*, pp. 234-36; Castle, *At war*, pp. 50+53.

<sup>369</sup> In his letter dated 12 September 62 sent to President Kennedy’s military aide Major General C.V. Clifton, General Robert J. Wood (US Dept. of Defense) defines DEPCHIEF’s purpose as to “carry out, within Thailand, certain necessary military assistance functions for Laos” (quoted from Castle, *At war*, p. xii).

<sup>370</sup> Castle, *At war in the shadow of Vietnam*, pp.85+53/4.

<sup>371</sup> Castle, *At war in the shadow of Vietnam*, pp.85/6.

<sup>372</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.53.



A 105mm gun is pulled out of Air America C-123B N5005X that has brought it to Thakhek West in November 1965.  
(with kind permission from Dr. Jonathan Pote)

the USAID program and designated the *Requirements Office* (USAID/RO), the unit was established to act as the in-country component of a highly classified, Thailand-based, joint US military assistance organization.<sup>373</sup> Pilots would fly their C-123s to Udorn, get a short and rather general briefing at the Flight Information Center, depart to *Peppergrinder* where they would be told their actual destination, load up the arms and ammunition, fly them to the destination designated by *Peppergrinder* and return to their base at Vientiane. Already in July-September 1964, *Peppergrinder*-operations played an important roll in supporting Thai-piloted RLAf T-28s that attacked Pathet Lao positions west of the Plain of Jars near the junction of Routes 7 and 13 in Operation *Triangle*. Operation *Triangle* lasted for about 10 weeks, and during this time, 3 Air America C-123s brought in arms for the T-28s from *Peppergrinder* at Udorn.<sup>374</sup> In 1966, between one or four C-123s per day were used on *Peppergrinder*-flights, and in this case, the actual flight schedules would only indicate: “UDN/ as directed by PPG/VTE”.<sup>375</sup> Evidently, the arms and ammunition flown into Laos on *Peppergrinder*-missions were delivered mostly to support the RLAf as well as the USAf aircraft flying in RLAf colors within the Military Assistance Program, and only to a smaller extent to the Royal Lao Army units serving outside the Mekong Valley, for example to those serving under General Vang Pao.

One might ask who was in charge of all military and paramilitary operations in Laos. Well, from 1962 to 1975, the real commander in chief of the entire war in Laos was neither a military commander nor a CIA man, but the US Ambassador to Laos – a situation that made Admiral John S. McCain, Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), observe that “Laos is a SECSTATE [Department of State] theater of war.”<sup>376</sup> After the *Bay of Pigs* failure, President Kennedy had determined to make the Department of State the central point, below the

<sup>373</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.53.

<sup>374</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.73/4; Leary, *Outline - Air America in Laos*, 1964, pp.24/5.

<sup>375</sup> For Friday, 20 May 1966, the daily flight schedule of Vientiane mentions only C-123 “613” being “as directed (PPG)” out of Udorn, while on Tuesday, 24 May 66, C-123s N5007X, “671”, “613”, and “374” flew “UDN / AS DIRECTED PPG” before returning to Vientiane or even to Udorn for operating the same type of missions the next day. At the very same time, all of these aircraft were assigned to contract AID-439-342 for operation out of Vientiane (Vientiane daily flight schedules of 20 May 66 [in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B] and 24 May 66 [in: UTD/Hickler/B7F7A]; Aircraft status of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2).

<sup>376</sup> Quoted from Castle, *At war*, p.2.

President, in the conduct of foreign affairs. On 29 May 61, Kennedy sent a letter to each US Ambassador working abroad stating that they were in charge of all operations of the US Diplomatic Mission, also including “representatives of all other United States agencies”, that is also including all CIA operations. In that letter, only the US military forces operating in the field were excluded, provided that “such forces are under the command of a United States area military commander.” But officially, Laos was neutral and there was no US military in Laos, and so there was no such “area military commander” either.<sup>377</sup> Consequently, by this letter of President Kennedy dated 29 May 61, the US Ambassador to Laos became the controlling authority for all aspects of the war in Laos; he was the man who was really in charge of the entire war in Laos.

#### **4) Thai Launch Bases for secret missions**

##### **A) Udorn:**

All covert Air America operations in Thailand and Laos were operated out of Udorn (T-08) or Takhli (T-05), and they were all about military or CIA aid destined for Laos. “Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base was established in the 1950s as a RTAF base. Political considerations with regards to Communist forces engaging in a civil war inside Laos and fears of the civil war spreading into Thailand led the Thai government to allow the United States to covertly use five Thai bases beginning in 1961 for the air defense of Thailand and to fly reconnaissance flights over Laos. [...] During the Vietnam War the base was a front-line facility of the United States Air Force (USAF) from 1964 through 1976.”<sup>378</sup> USAF units that were based at Udorn included the 432<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, several Tactical Fighter Squadrons, the 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron,<sup>379</sup> and – especially important for Air America – Detachment 1, 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing.<sup>380</sup>

USAF GS-13 James E. Spencer, former Contract Administrator for USAF-Air America contracts, recalls the beginning of Air America operations out of Udorn from the military point of view: “In early 1961, there was a combat Marine squadron operating and maintaining UH-34 aircraft out of Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base. Apparently, because of the political situation, a decision was made in Washington to remove the Marines from Udorn, and to take-over the operation with a civilian contractor. In February 1961, a joint State/DOD message was received by the procuring activity in Tachikawa, Japan directing that the Marine operations at Udorn be taken over by contracting with Air America, Inc. As there were no detailed requirements contained in the State/DOD message, another Contracting Officer, Mr. John F. Pakenham, and I were sent to Vientiane to discuss the details of the requirement with Gen. Boyle. Gen. Boyle’s instructions to us were: ‘I want aircraft to fly where I want them, when I want them and without any interference.’ After the visit to Gen. Boyle, a meeting was arranged with the commander of the Marine squadron, and the details of what would be required of the contractor were determined.”<sup>381</sup> All this sounds as if the beginning of Air America helicopter operations out of Udorn was only a change of the operator, replacing the Marines by Air America, and that was probably what people should believe.

In reality, the Marine squadron at Udorn was not a combat Marine squadron, but Marine Air Base Squadron 16 (MABS-16) that had received its order to move from its home at

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<sup>377</sup> Quoted from Castle, *At war*, pp.54/5.

<sup>378</sup> Quotation from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Udorn\\_Royal\\_Thai\\_Air\\_Force\\_Base](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Udorn_Royal_Thai_Air_Force_Base) .

<sup>379</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Udorn\\_Royal\\_Thai\\_Air\\_Force\\_Base](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Udorn_Royal_Thai_Air_Force_Base) .

<sup>380</sup> See <http://www.det156sow.com/history.html> .

<sup>381</sup> James E. Spencer, End of tour report, 19 September 1974, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F5.

Futema, Okinawa to Udorn only on 19 March 61, with airlift to begin on 22 March 61.<sup>382</sup> “MABS-16 was directed to be prepared to receive helicopters at the Udorn airfield on 27 March and to begin supporting helicopter operations immediately thereafter”, i.e. “deploy to Udorn ... for purposes of establishing an expeditionary base for operation and flight maintenance of 20 HUS-1 helicopters.”<sup>383</sup> The real purpose of this Marine unit was to build up at Udorn, for Air America’s 20 new HUS-1 (= UH-34D) helicopters, airfield operations, flight-line and aircraft maintenance, base support operations and related functions and to train Air America personnel in these skills, until Air America Udorn could become self-sustaining.<sup>384</sup> What already existed at Udorn besides the runway was an empty hangar, where the marines established aircraft repair shops,<sup>385</sup> and on the other side of the runway, “three buildings, all in extremely poor states of repair” that were renovated and put into service as part of the camp. So several tents had to be set up that were later replaced by wooden huts.<sup>386</sup> There wasn’t even any type of communication equipment at Udorn, before the Marines arrived.<sup>387</sup> All this makes clear that there hadn’t been a combat Marine squadron at Udorn that was simply replaced by Air America, but that everything was built up in 1961 for Air America’s new fleet of UH-34D (= HUS-1) helicopters that were to operate “in support of the Royal Laotian forces engaged in combat operations against Pathet Lao insurgents that were being supported by North Vietnamese ground troops and supplied by the Soviet Union and China.”<sup>388</sup> Interestingly, this build-up of Air America’s helicopter operation at Udorn by the Marines was called *Operation Mill Pond*,<sup>389</sup> a name that was also used for the aborted B-26 attack out of Takhli that was to hit the Plain of Jars on 17 April 61.<sup>390</sup> Apparently, the beginning of Air America’s helicopter operations out of Udorn was conceived as a part of the same decision made by President Kennedy in March 61 to substantially increase US support to the Royal Lao government against the Communist, “disguised”, in the case of the helicopters, as a simple change of the operator (from the Marines to Air America) in order to comply with the neutrality of Laos. Thomas Ahern even calls *Operation Mill Pond* “the contingency plan for a US invasion of the Plain of Jars” and quotes a document of June 61 from the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. This document says that the “helicopter portion of *Mill Pond* operations is falling apart at the seams”<sup>391</sup> – apparently referring to the many Air America UH-34Ds that had already been lost at that time.<sup>392</sup>

Then, “negotiations were conducted with Air America, Inc. and resulted in the issuance of the first contract (F04-606-1674). [...] In order to preclude any interruption of flying support to MAAG Laos, and knowing that it would be impossible for the contractor to recruit and position all of the personnel required to replace the Marine squadron at one time, an agreement was worked out whereby the Marines would be replaced on a one for one basis as rapidly as civilians could be positioned. This resulted in a condition where civilians and

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<sup>382</sup> Col. George R. Hofmann, Jr., *Operation Millpond. U.S. Marines in Thailand, 1961*, Quantico, VA (USMC History Division) 2009, pp. V, 7, and 8 (see [http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/Operation%20Millpond%20US%20Marines%20in%20Thailand%20PCN%2010600001800\\_1.pdf](http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/Operation%20Millpond%20US%20Marines%20in%20Thailand%20PCN%2010600001800_1.pdf)).

<sup>383</sup> Hofmann, *Operation Millpond. U.S. Marines in Thailand*, p.8.

<sup>384</sup> Hofmann, *Operation Millpond. U.S. Marines in Thailand*, pp.5+9.

<sup>385</sup> Hofmann, *Operation Millpond. U.S. Marines in Thailand*, p.10.

<sup>386</sup> Hofmann, *Operation Millpond. U.S. Marines in Thailand*, pp.10+14.

<sup>387</sup> Hofmann, *Operation Millpond. U.S. Marines in Thailand*, pp.20-23.

<sup>388</sup> Hofmann, *Operation Millpond. U.S. Marines in Thailand*, p.10.

<sup>389</sup> Hofmann, *Operation Millpond. U.S. Marines in Thailand*, p.8.

<sup>390</sup> See my file: *Air America in Laos III – in combat* within this *History of Air America*.

<sup>391</sup> Ahern, *Undercover armies*, p.94.

<sup>392</sup> Air America UH-34D losses by June 61 were: H-D on 22 January 61; H-Q on 5 April 61; H-I on 19 April 61; H-K on 15 May 61; H-G on 30 May 61; and H-W on 18 June 61. For details see my file: *SIKORSKY UH-34s (1st series)* within my *The Aircraft of Air America*.

Marines were working side by side doing the same work, and the civilians were resented considerably by the Marines due to the difference in pay scales. Despite this condition, the transition was accomplished without any disruption of the flying services. [...] During the time the Marines were handling the program, they were operating out of tents, and it was either a mud or dust condition depending upon the time of the year.<sup>393</sup> It became apparent that in order to maintain the level of flying required, it would be necessary to construct facilities to support the aircraft. From the mud and dust operation in the beginning, which supported only H-34 aircraft, the facility has been expanded over the years to its present capability.<sup>394</sup> On 22 September 61, Air America assumed all responsibility for aircraft maintenance, and the last Marines returned to Okinawa on 26 October 61.<sup>395</sup>

In 1972, Jack L. Forney, at that time AVPTS/UTH (Assistant Vice-President Technical Services, Udorn), recalled the beginning of Air America operations out of Udorn from a Company point of view: “On 29 March 1961, 16 HUS-1 (UH-34D) helicopters were flown by Air America crews from Bangkok to Udorn<sup>396</sup> – with a refueling stop at Korat – to start AAM’s operations at that heat-soaked locality in northeastern Thailand. The flight of 16 choppers was led by Captain Clarence J. Abadie, Jr. – now VP/UTH – who piloted the lead aircraft, H-H, and he had as a passenger Mr. Joseph L. Madison, who was then Air America’s General Manager for Laos and Northern Thailand and is now VPA/TPE. Mr. Madison was in charge of the ferry operation from Bangkok to Udorn; total trip time was four hours and fifty minutes.



One of the original Air America UH-34Ds, H-G, in Laos in the early sixties  
(UTD/Landry/B1F4)

“There were 20 HUS/1s that were supposed to make that flight on that historic day of 29 March, but four choppers experienced mechanical difficulties and were flown up to Udorn later. Air America’s operation at Udorn – referred to by the Thais as Udorn Thani since Thani

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<sup>393</sup> Photos of Camp Udorn at the time of the Marines can be found in: Hofmann, *Operation Millpond* ([http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/Operation%20Millpond%20US%20Marines%20in%20Thailand%20PCN%2010600001800\\_1.pdf](http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/Operation%20Millpond%20US%20Marines%20in%20Thailand%20PCN%2010600001800_1.pdf)).

<sup>394</sup> James E. Spencer, End of tour report, 19 September 1974, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F5.

<sup>395</sup> Hofmann, *Operation Millpond. U.S. Marines in Thailand*, pp.V+31/2.

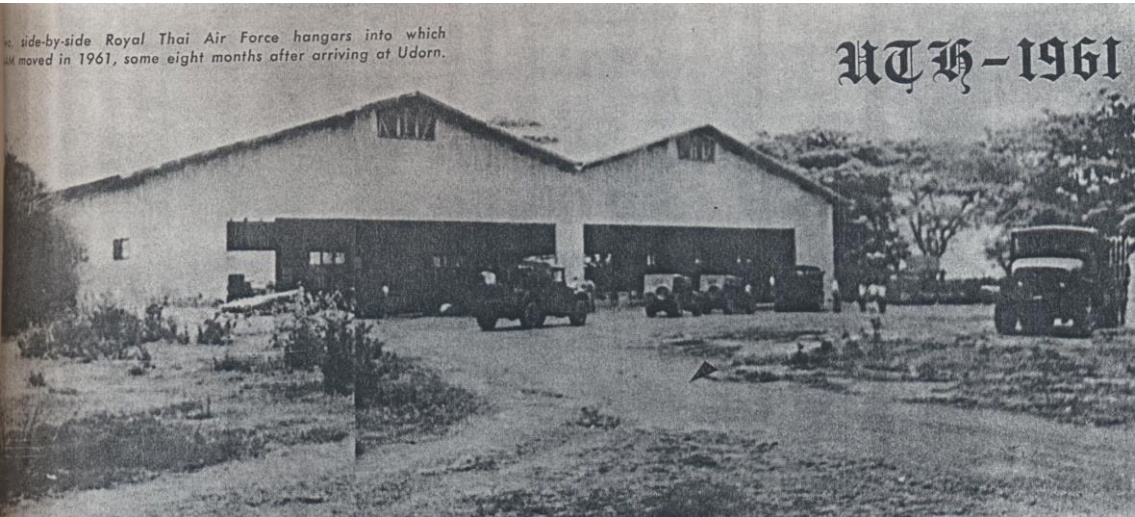
<sup>396</sup> On 28 March 61, a total of 20 UH-34s had been flown from the *USS Bennington* to Bangkok, but 4 aircraft had experienced mechanical problems and so were delivered later (Leary, Manuscript, chapter V, p. 366, in: UTD/Leary/B19F3.

means city in Thai – started as a relatively modest effort. Today this base is the most extensive operations and maintenance facility in the Air America system. When Mr. Madison, Captain Abadie and the rest of Air America personnel arrived at Udorn, conditions were rudimentary to say the least. Although the provincial seat, Udorn was just a sleepy little crossroads settlement which boasted few amenities. There was only one bar in town – and it had a dirt floor. Streets were unpaved – a condition which generally persisted until recently. There were two sedans in town: the local doctor had one, and the local governor had the other. Large ten-wheel trucks, Jeeps and Land Rovers were the common means of transportation, many of them dilapidated and badly broken-down. Then there were motorcycles, bicycles and samlors – unless one wanted to take a dusty or, alternatively, muddy walk.

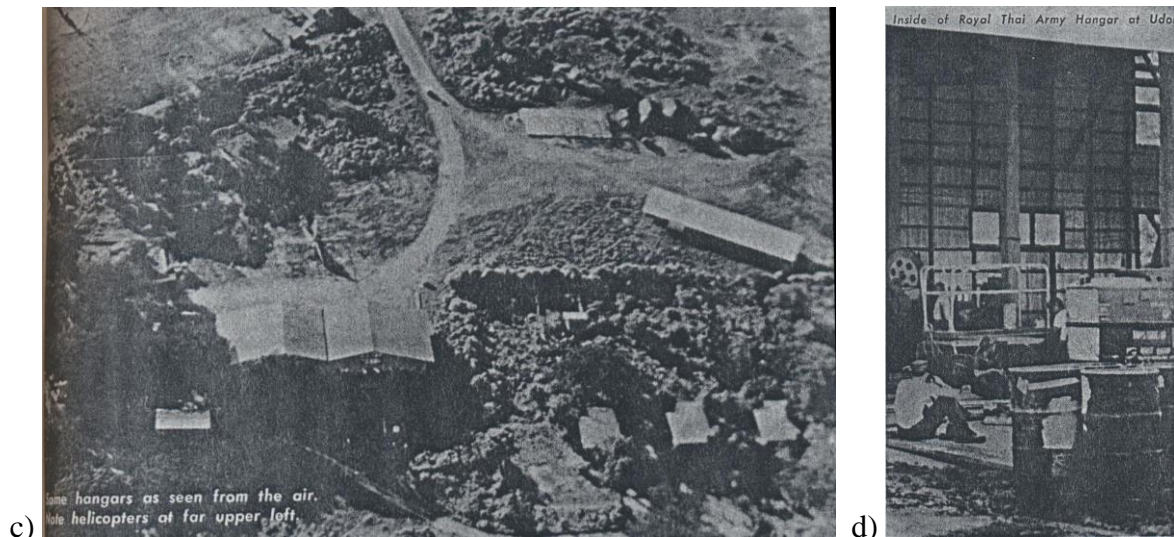


a)

a) The original Air America office tents at Udorn in 1961, with Mr. Madison standing in front (Air America Log, vol. VI, no. 5 [1972], p.4)



b)



Air America's second home at Udorn since October 61, the Royal Thai Army hangars:  
 front side (b), from the air (c), and inside (d)  
 (*Air America Log*, vol. VI, no. 5 [1972], p.4)

“At the airport there were a new (1958) 5,000-foot concrete runway (since enlarged to 10,000 feet), and a tower which was manned one day a week when Thai Airways flew a DC-3 on scheduled service from Bangkok. This concrete runway was on a heading of 300-120 degrees; at its east end was a laterite runway (heading 030-210 degrees) which had been built by the Japanese. It was used as a parking ramp for AAM's helicopters. At the north side of the runway, at the intersection of the new and old runways, tents were pitched to house operations and maintenance functions. Company vehicles were Jeeps at first; later the Project Manager acquired a sedan. Primitive but professional operation symbolized Air America's initial tent-housed functions at Udorn, well-blended with red, powdery laterite dust and sticky heat. Examples: the method of aircraft refueling – by hand pump from 55-gallon drums; method of runway lighting – by kerosene flare pots. At first, Flight Operations had one full-time Operations Clerk plus one Chief Pilot Clerk. Operations functioned from sunrise to sunset. Four hand-written flight schedules were prepared each day (now 200 are prepared). There were neither a Flight Watch nor a Flight Information Center. Despite these hardships and difficult flying conditions, more than 15,000 UH-34D revenue hours were flown in the April-December period of 1961. In October 1961, Air America moved to the south side of the concrete runway into renovated Thai military barracks where offices were established to house the basic administrative functions. The helicopter maintenance effort was also moved to the south side and into two side-by-side Royal Thai Army hangars with floor space of 6,612 sq. ft. Up to this time, all maintenance had been done outside.”<sup>397</sup> The rest of the article deals with Udorn's maintenance facility, but it is evident, that from the very beginning, flying out of Udorn instead of Vientiane meant military or secret paramilitary support to the Royal Laotian government; and the new helicopter fleet was evidently considered to be a secret increase of US support to Laos.

After the arrival of the UH-34Ds, the next type of aircraft to be based at and operated out of Udorn were the Beavers of the *Madrivier* contract, i.e. contract no. AF62(531)-1674 with the USAF. Between April and October 1962, the Beavers were used to transport US Army White Star and Special Forces (SF) advisors who worked in Laos, plus their supplies. Former Beaver pilot Jim MacFarlane recalls: “The mission of the Beavers was specifically to support

<sup>397</sup> Jack L. Forney, “Air America at Udorn, Thailand – a brief history” (with notations by Clarence J. Abadie, Jr., VP/UTH), in: *Air America Log*, vol.VI, no.5 (1972), pp.4-5.





Air America's 6 Beavers lined up at Udorn, probably in 1962  
(UTD/Fink/ photo no. 1-JF25-16-PB1)

SF in Laos. The planes were based in Udorn. They would fly a variety of supplies to teams to include medical supplies, food, soft drinks, water and beer. [...] At Pakse we had tin roofing we dropped to SF teams on Plateau des Bolovens for the locals. [...]. Yes, we would move SF teams mostly to Udorn for R&R, to BKK or other places. We would also bring replacement SF troops into Laos from Udorn. For the SF we would drop rice to pro western Laotian and Meo troops. The Beavers were not used for operations other than for SF that I ever saw. [...] Don't recall if I ever took them ammo but most likely yes. Did a medevac on one of them once from Pakse. We could not land on the Plateau des Bolovens so we used to drop to SF up there.”<sup>398</sup>

Probably the next customer to have its fleet based at Udorn was the “Consolidated Electric Equipment Company” or CEECO, a CIA front. Since 1959, Air America had a contract with CEECO – contract no. 59-069 –, but initially, this contract only covered flying services with and maintenance of the CIA-owned B-26 bombers based at Tainan on Taiwan. It was probably in the summer of 1960 that this contract with CEECO was extended to also cover CIA operations in Laos and Thailand, that is “flying and maintenance services in Thailand”.<sup>399</sup> In his “Oral history” interview, former CIA officer Bill Lair, who ran the operation, states that when Major Vang Pao was included into the CIA’s list of receivers in January 1961, “we had three Helio Couriers that we could count on at all time. They were ours. Then

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<sup>398</sup> E-mail dated 5 July 2005, kindly sent to the author by Major James MacFarlane.

<sup>399</sup> See the definition of this contract in the Dixon Speas audit dated 12 July 73, p. D-5, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F4.

we could get a C-47 or C-46 to drop stuff like that.”<sup>400</sup> This was exactly the number and types of aircraft assigned to the CEECO contract in 1964.<sup>401</sup> As Air America’s base at Udorn did not yet exist in January 61, the aircraft assigned to the CEECO contract for CIA operations in Laos may initially have been based at Takhli. For the time for which Flight Operations Circulars are available, that is for the time between February 64 and November 65, we can see that the Air America aircraft assigned to the CIA contract no. 59-069 were all based at Udorn.<sup>402</sup>

In May 1964, a new military aid program clearly shows the difference between aircraft based at Vientiane and aircraft based at Udorn. After the USAF’s *Water Pump* detachment had set up shop at Udorn to train Royal Lao Air Force pilots to fly T-28s, more pilots were needed, and so some Air America pilots stepped forward to fly Laotian T-28s on attack missions and as cover on rescue missions. “On acceptance, we were asked to resign from Air America Inc., our personal records were sanitized in the event we were shot down and captured. We would then be classified as mercenaries for the Royal Lao Air Force to protect the US government from violating the Geneva Accord Agreement.”<sup>403</sup> These Air America pilots, called the A-Team, flying for the *Tango program* as mercenaries for the RLAF,<sup>404</sup> were officially based at Vientiane, but would go to Udorn to pick up their T-28s, then return to Vientiane, where USAF ground technicians would load on ordnance (bombs, rockets, and 50 caliber, later napalm),<sup>405</sup> and then go on a mission designated by the US Embassy and Air America’s Flight Information Center.<sup>406</sup> Vientiane was the airport for humanitarian aid and one of the bases of the Royal Lao Air Force; Udorn was the airport from where all military and paramilitary aid that had to be kept secret was flown into Laos.

Probably already at that time, if not even since late 1962, Air America aircraft that were “directed by PPG”, picked up ammunition destined for the Royal Lao armed forces, especially ammo for the RLAF, at the *Peppergrinder* ammo dump south of Udorn and transported it into Laos. In the early days, all types of aircraft assigned to contract AID-439-342 made flights for *Peppergrinder* and the *Requirements Office*. Joe Hazen recalls that he flew ammunition and even parts of a captured Russian tank in his Caribou “392”, when it was assigned to contract AID-439-342.<sup>407</sup> Later, *Peppergrinder*-flights mostly used C-123s that were based at Vientiane, assigned to the “regular” USAID-contract AID-439-342 and normally used for hauling fuel drums or heavy equipment into Laos. Another type of more or less covert flights

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<sup>400</sup> Bill Lair, interview with Steve Maxner, December 2001, written version, p.90, at: <http://star.vietnam.ttu.edu/>. As Lair states that he had never seen a Helio Courier before August 1960 (p.95), CEECO-Thailand did not yet exist at that time.

<sup>401</sup> AAM Aircraft availability of 1 April 64 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4) lists Helios B-839, B-845, and B-861 plus C-46 B-920, plus C-123 N5006X as assigned to the CEECO contract. AAM Aircraft availability of 3 Feb. 1964 (kindly faxed to the author by Ward S. Reimer on 17 February 2004) lists the same aircraft minus B-861 which had been positioned at Saigon for 90 days on 21 January 64.

<sup>402</sup> On 7 July 64, we have C-123 N5006X, C-46 B-138, and Helios B-839 and “531” (Aircraft Status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1). On 1 November 66, we have C-123 N5006X, Caribou B-851, and no less than 5 Helio Couriers: B-839, XW-PBY, XW-PBZ, XW-PCA, and XW-PCD, as well as Porters N9444 and N285L (Revised Status of Aircraft owned, operated or supported on long-term basis, as of 1 November 1965, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1).

<sup>403</sup> Wiren, “It takes five to Tango”, in: *Air America Log*, vol.17, no.4, p.5.

<sup>404</sup> The name *Tango program* is testified for the early years by the article of John Wiren (“It takes five to Tango”, in: *Air America Log*, vol.17, no.4, p.5), while William Leary notes that in 1966, the T-28 fighter operation was called the “Alpha program” (Leary, *Outline - Air America in Laos*, 1966, p.1).

<sup>405</sup> Letter dated 18 April 2002, sent by John Wiren to the author. The bombs for these T-28s were carried to their take-off sites by Air America transport planes (Robbins, *Air America*, p.132).

<sup>406</sup> Letter dated 18 February 2001, kindly sent to the author by John Wiren.

<sup>407</sup> Caribou “392” was used out of Vientiane under the provisions of USAID contract AID-439-342 at least between 27 May 64 and 1 Oct. 64 (Availability list, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F8; Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1).

out of Udon were the flights “as directed by AB-1”. AB-1 was the designator for CIA air and ground operations in Laos.<sup>408</sup> The aircraft involved were those assigned to CIA contract 59-069 and its follow-on contracts, especially the Udon-based C-123, but also Vientiane-based C-123s operating under USAID-contract AID-439-342, which would first fly from Vientiane to Udon, then pick up their cargo at the “Q-warehouse” located within the AB-1 area at Udon Air Base and then deliver it “as directed”. These flights supported General Vang Pao’s irregulars or other CIA-sponsored programs or even covert missions.<sup>409</sup> And as sometimes, Air America’s C-123s carried “C/L seats”, that is centerline seats when flown on missions for AB-1 out of Udon,<sup>410</sup> these flights may also have transported troops or PARU units.<sup>411</sup>

On 21 October 65, the follow-on contract to the CIA contract no. 59-069 was signed: contract no. AID-439-713 between Air America and “the Government of the United States of America, hereafter called the ‘Government’, acting through the Agency for International Development”<sup>412</sup> – a formula that indicates that this was a contract that Air America had with the CIA. For the next couple of years, Air America’s aircraft assigned to contract no. AID-439-713 were all based at Udon: In April 1966 we still have C-123 N5006X, then C-47 B-879, Caribou B-851, 5 Porters (N285L, N9444, N12235, N152L, and N192X), 8 Helios (B-839, B-849, B-875, B-877, XW-PBX, XW-PBZ, XW-PCA, and XW-PCD) plus C-45 N9518Z for daily calls.<sup>413</sup> In May 66, the fleet assigned to contract no. AID-439-713 was almost the same – with the exception of Helio B-849 that had passed to contract no. AID-493-50 for operation out of Udon.<sup>414</sup> In May 68, the big transports assigned to the CIA contract were still the same – with the exception that C-123 N5006X had changed its tail number to “576”. While all Helios had been positioned elsewhere, seven new Porters were assigned to the CIA contract (N193X, N195X, N196X, N197X, N359F, N392R, and XW-PCB), but all of them were based at Vientiane. The real new aircraft assigned to contract no. AID-439-713 and based at Udon were five Bell 205 helicopters (XW-PFF, XW-PFG, XW-PFH, XW-PFI, and XW-PFJ), which had arrived at Udon in late 1967 and which served the CIA’s Hmong army as an airborne cavalry. The other newcomers to the CIA contract were six Volpars. While photo bird N9542Z was based at Udon, the remaining five Volpars (N3728G, N7770B, N9577Z, N9664C, and N9671C) were officially based at Vientiane, but worked out of Savannakhet (L-39) for the CIA’s *Aerial Survey Project* or HARP (*High Altitude Relay Project*).<sup>415</sup> Their mission was to circle border areas in high altitude at night and relay the signals received from the road watcher teams to the main computer.<sup>416</sup>

In 1967, Air America’s Udon facility also received a new Traffic building. “Conveniently located adjacent to Air America’s ramp, the building has a total area of 3,440 square feet which is subdivided as follows: open storage area – 1,440 sq.ft.; closed storage area – 960 sq.ft.; passenger lounge – 560 sq.ft.; Traffic Agents’ office – 120 sq.ft.; Traffic Manager’s office – 108 sq.fr.; rest rooms – 84 sq.ft. The facility will handle an average of 450 passengers and approximately 200 tons of cargo per month for the time being. The building is capable of

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<sup>408</sup> Fax dated 7 August 2000, kindly sent to the author by Brigadier General Aderholt.

<sup>409</sup> Joe Hennessy notes that “on occasions it would be necessary to give AB-1 preference and allocate them additional C-123s” (Hennessy, *Air America*, p.13).

<sup>410</sup> For example, on 1 September 72, C-123K “545” had to taxi to the Q-warehouse at Udon at 0700L, pick up seats, fly to Vang Vieng (L-16) at 0800L, then to Long Tieng (LS-20A), and return to Udon (T-08) ASAP, that is “as soon as possible” (Udon daily flight schedule for 1 September 72 in: UTD/Severson/B1F7).

<sup>411</sup> For more details, see my file *Air America in Laos II – Military Aid*, Part I

<sup>412</sup> The text of the contract is available at UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.27.

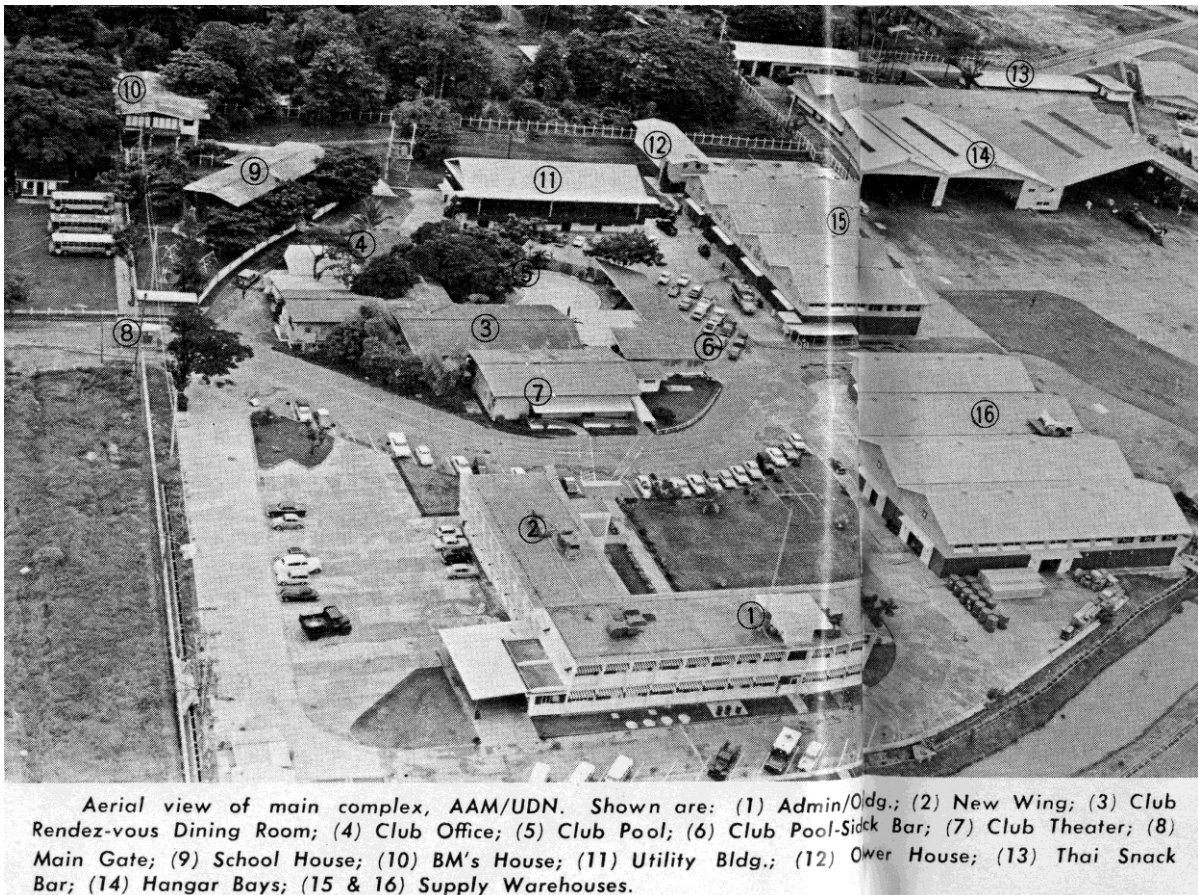
<sup>413</sup> Revised Status of Aircraft owned, operated or supported on long-term basis, as of 8 April 1966, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>414</sup> Status of Aircraft owned, operated or supported on long-term basis, as of 4 May 1966, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2; Planned Aircraft Assignment as of 1 June 66, formerly in: UTD/Leary/Ser.I/B3F4, now B32F5?

<sup>415</sup> Status of Aircraft owned or operated on long-term basis, as of 1 May 1968, in: UTD/Herd/B2.

<sup>416</sup> For details see my file *Air America in Laos II – Military Aid*, part 1.

handling a considerably larger volume of both passengers and freight should the requirements arise in the future.”<sup>417</sup> In June 1968, “a brand new wing to the existing Administration/Operations Building was [...] completed at our Base in Udorn, Thailand. The two-story reinforced concrete wing, which measures 90 feet long by 30 feet wide and has a total floor space of 5,400 square feet, was erected in less than one year: it was started on August 8, 1967 and completed on June 15, 1968. Twenty tons of air-conditioning keep the interior comfortable in the Udorn heat. The 2,700 square foot ground floor houses the following: 1. Flight Operations Department. (a) Flight Information Center. (b) Emergency Equipment, Dehumidified Storage and Issue Rooms. (c) Pilots’ Briefing and Flight Planning Room. (d) Pilots’ Locker Room. (e) Crew Lounge. 2. Chief Air Freight Specialist’s Office. 3. Ground Transportation Department. 4. Accounting Office. 5. Personnel Employment Office. 6. Toilets and Showers (men). The second floor, also with an area of 2,700 square feet, encompasses: 1. Personnel Office, with private offices for the Personnel Manager and Assistant Personnel Manager. 2. Security Office, with private offices for the Chief of Security, Assistant Chief of Security and a Security Staff. 3. Toilets (men & women).”<sup>418</sup>



Air America facility, Udorn Air Base in the late sixties  
(*Air America Log*, vol. III, no.1, 1969, p. 4)

The Flight Operations Circulars for 1969 still list, as Udorn-based, one C-123 (“293”) for AB-1 flights, the special mission Caribou B-851, photo Volpar N9542Z, the 4 remaining Bell 205s, plus 3 Bell 204Bs (N1196W, N8511F, and N8513F) as aircraft assigned to contract no.

<sup>417</sup> J. P. Hardeman TM/UDN, “Udorn’s Terrific Traffic Terminal”, in: *Air America Log*, vol. I no.1 (November 1967), pp.2-3.

<sup>418</sup> (Anonymous), “New Udorn office wing opened – operating”, in: *Air America Log*, vol. II, no. 4 (1968), p.1.

AID-439-713, while seven Porters flying for the same CIA contract (N195X, N196X, N197X, N355F, N359F, N392R, and XW-PCB) were still based at Vientiane.<sup>419</sup> The real new thing, however, does not appear in Air America's Flight Operations Circulars of that period of time, and this was that Air America's Project C-130As bailed from the USAF, which previously had only departed Takhli, also departed Udorn since 1969. Air America pilot Donald D. Wharton flew C-130A "704" from Udorn (T-08) in project "69-49K" to Long Tieng (LS-98) on 2 and 3 October 69. Between 24 June 69 and 1 July 69, Donald D. Wharton flew C-130A



Air America C-130A "605" at Takhli RThAFB, taken by Ken McClintick  
(with the permission of the photographer submitted by Bob Vaughn)

"605" from Udorn (T-08) in project "69-35F" to Vientiane (L-08), Luang Prabang (L-54), Long Tieng (LS-98), Xieng Dat (LS-26) and Korat (T-13); on 11 November 69, he flew the same aircraft from Udorn to Naha, Okinawa.<sup>420</sup> During the remaining years that Air America flew out of Udorn, the situation was more or less the same: All helicopters and most special mission aircraft including, since the spring of 1971, 5 C-130E aircraft ("218", "404", "405", "786", and "787"), flew out of Udorn, while the more regular aircraft that were to fly into Laos were based at Vientiane. Of course, Udorn had also become Air America's most important maintenance facility outside Tainan, but this aspect will be dealt with in a later chapter.

## **B) Takhli**

In 1958, Takhli (T-05) north of Bangkok became the starting point of CAT's and later Air America's flights to support the Tibetans against Red China. First, the USAF's special mission C-118A 51-3820 was used on the flights: "During 1958, Ropka would be assigned to

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<sup>419</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-69-34 of 15 August 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1.

<sup>420</sup> Log book of Donald D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2.

the project every month during the moon phase for 6 months of the wet season. They operated out of Clark for a couple of months, then moved to Takhli (the C-118 had to make a refueling stop out of Clark at Dacca). There was nothing at Takhli except a long SAC recovery runway and jet fuel. The Thais provided a guest house. There were two hangars. The Thais turned it over to the USAF. One side was cleaned out and rooms were put in for operations and communications. They had to take everything that they needed from Okinawa in one airplane. They used the C-118 for most of the year, then got C-130As out of the 315<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Wing on Okinawa.”<sup>421</sup> Such CAT / Air America-piloted C-118A flights to Tibet are known to have taken place in mid-October 58, in November 58 (when Air America was still called CAT Inc.), in mid-April 59 (after the company had been renamed Air America), in mid-May 59, and in June 59<sup>422</sup> – probably, a total of 10 missions to Tibet were flown in the C-118A until mid-1959.<sup>423</sup> Already in June 59,<sup>424</sup> the C-118 used on the airdrops into Tibet had been definitively replaced by USAF C-130As belonging to the 21<sup>st</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron, which was part of the 483<sup>rd</sup> Troop Carrier Wing, Naha, and then part of the 315<sup>th</sup> Air Division at Tachikawa. Because of political sensitivities between Pakistan and India, the staging area for the flights into Tibet was moved from Kurmitola near Dacca to Takhli (T-05) in Thailand at the same time, so that from the beginning of the expanded program in July 59, all C-130A missions were flown out of Takhli. Since that time, Kurmitola was used only as an emergency recovery location for the C-130As. But in spite of this move, the multiple flights made to drop zones in Tibet were not interrupted.<sup>425</sup> In July 1959, some 20 C-130As belonging to the 483<sup>rd</sup> TCW were based at Naha,<sup>426</sup> and as many different aircraft were used on the airlift,<sup>427</sup> probably most of these 20 C-130As were used at one time or another. The USAF unit that ran the airlift was then upgraded to Detachment 2, 1045<sup>th</sup> Operational Evaluation & Training Group, reporting directly to CIA headquarters,<sup>428</sup> as the command and control of the operation rested completely with and by the CIA in Washington.

For the Air America crews, there was a 24 hours’ notice. Then they would go to Kadena, receive a briefing there before leaving for Takhli. “There was a system of go-no go messages from headquarters at specific intervals: 24 launch alert, 12 hours, 6 hours, 2 hours, 1 hour, launch. If all was well, the message simply would say AFFIRM. These messages had to arrive for the launch to continue. They came from the Air Branch in Washington.”<sup>429</sup> Then one to three USAF C-130As – which were always different aircraft<sup>430</sup> – were flown by USAF pilots

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<sup>421</sup> Interview conducted by Prof. William Leary with Lawrence Ropka at Ft Walton Beach, FL, on 29-30 August 1990, transcript preserved at UTD/Leary/B43F4).

<sup>422</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *The CIA’s secret war in Tibet*, pp. 74-79; 80-105.

<sup>423</sup> Leary, Manuscript, p.304, in: UTD/Leary/B19F3.

<sup>424</sup> Leary, Manuscript, p.304 (in: UTD/Leary/B19F3) gives June 59; Leary, *Secret mission to Tibet*, p.68, gives July 59; these dates fit with the last known C-118A mission which had taken place in June 59. Conboy / Morrison, *The CIA’s secret war in Tibet*, pp.117/8, state that the first C-130 drop of agents into Tibet took place on 18 September 59; Jim Keck states that from his C-130, he observed the convoy of the Dalai Lama going to exile in India (Letter dated 11 September 2002, written by Jim Keck to Tenzin Taklha, Deputy Secretary, Office of the Dalai Lama, kindly forwarded to the author). As the Dalai Lama went into exile in the second half of March 59 (Conboy / Morrison, *The CIA’s secret war in Tibet*, pp.90-93), there must have been at least that March 59 C-130 flight prior to July 59.

<sup>425</sup> Letter by Roger E. McCarthy to Jim Keck; details kindly forwarded to the author by Jim Keck with kind permission from Roger McCarthy; letter dated 12 August 2001 written to the author by Jim Keck.

<sup>426</sup> See the USAF’ Assignment Records preserved by the AFHRA at Maxwell AFB, AL; the aircraft are listed in the C-130 file of this database.

<sup>427</sup> Fax dated 14 June 2000, kindly sent to the author by Brigadier General Aderholt.

<sup>428</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, p. 83. The insignia of Det.2 / 1045<sup>th</sup> OE&TG are depicted in: Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.77.

<sup>429</sup> Written resume, p. 3, of an interview with B.G. Aderholt conducted by Prof. Bill Leary at Fort Walton Beach, FL, on 28-30 August 1990 (Interview dated 28-30 August 1990, in: UTD/Leary/B68F9).

<sup>430</sup> Fax dated 14 June 2000, sent by Brigadier General Aderholt to the author.



An unknown Air America C-130A in 1959-60, after the USAF tail markings had been removed prior to a flight to Tibet – reportedly taken at Kadena, Okinawa, but probably at Takhli, Thailand (with kind permission from Ken Conboy)

from Naha Field, Okinawa, to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, located some 20 miles apart, loaded with cargo (mainly arms and ammunition packaged into individual loads)<sup>431</sup> by personnel of the CIA’s main logistics base in East Asia, and then flown to Takhli by Air America crews who were accompanied by pilots from the squadron for monthly currency checks. At Takhli, where Detachment 2 had taken residence in 1960,<sup>432</sup> the C-130As were “sanitized”, i.e. stripped of military markings to make them non-attributable. One of the pilots in command was “Doc” Johnson, whose log book lists these flights to Tibet mostly as flight training of more than 50 hours done out of Kadena, Okinawa,<sup>433</sup> but for the mission flown in mid-December 61, his log book clearly shows that the 3 C-130As involved staged at Takhli: On 16 December, he flew C-130 “74” from Kadena, Okinawa to “Romeo” (i.e. Takhli in Thailand) in 7.3 hours, on 19 December 61, Johnson flew C-130 “77” from “Romeo” to “Romeo” in an 11.3 hour flight – evidently the mission to Tibet or Mustang and back. On 20 December 61, he flew C-130 “76” back from “Romeo” (Takhli) to Kadena in 6.5 hours.

16	"	KADENA	ROMEO	"	7.3	"	74
19	"	ROMEO	X	"	11.3	"	77
20	"	ROMEO	KADENA	"	6.5	"	76

#### Flights to Tibet/Nepal in December 1961

(Page from “Doc” Johnson’s log book kindly supplied by his son James on 10 August 2013)

<sup>431</sup> “The packages came from the CIA supply facility at Chinan on Okinawa and contained different mixtures of guns, ammo, radios, and other supplies” (Written resume, p. 3, of an interview with B.G. Aderholt conducted by Prof. Bill Leary at Fort Walton Beach, FL, on 28-30 August 1990 (Interview dated 28-30 August 1990, in: UTD/Leary/B68F9).

<sup>432</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.89; Major Aderholt moved from Okinawa to Takhli in January 1960 (Conboy/Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.25).

<sup>433</sup> For details see the file *Missions to Tibet* with my *History of Air America*.

The next covert operations to use Takhli as its starting point were the deliveries of arms and ammunition into Laos in 1960/61, when neutral Laos was forbidden territory for such flights: The Air America C-46s that hauled those arms and ammo operated under the provisions of contract no. 57-060 that the Company had with the Program Evaluation Office inside the United States Operations Mission, Laos. As has been shown above and so has not to be repeated here, in the fall of 1960<sup>434</sup>, Air America's C-46s assigned to USOM contract no. 57-060 moved thousands of tons of arms and supplies from Bangkok and from the secret base at Takhli (S-05) in Thailand to General Phoumi Nosavan at Savannakhet and then at Vientiane. Since January 61, Air America aircraft also delivered supplies to a drop zone near Vang Pao's headquarters at Pa Doung in Laos.<sup>435</sup> These supplies could be arms and ammunition or rice bags and elephant-skin containers filled with water, and Air America aircraft even carried royalist paratroops to jump zones near Vientiane in operations leading to the flight of Kong Le's forces northward.<sup>436</sup> Although it was the CIA who secretly assisted Phoumi's forces and armed the Hmong tribesmen under Vang Pao,<sup>437</sup> this was not possible without massive assistance from the USAF: Lots of USAF C-124s and C-118s hauled in tons of palletized supplies of arms and rice to Takhli for distribution to the friendly forces in Laos. In May 1962, even C-130As belonging to the 21<sup>st</sup> TCS, Naha, ferried supplies into Laos.<sup>438</sup>

Since December 1960, Takhli was also the center of *Project Mill Pond*: Between then and March 61, four black CIA B-26s were delivered from Tainan to Takhli and placed under Major Aderholt's command.<sup>439</sup> The aircraft were to be used for air strikes against the center of Pathet Lao support at Vang Vieng, but although Detachment 2 had the bombers ready to go, all air strikes were called off. Then, the target was to become the Plain of Jars. The loss of the critical junction of Routes 7 and 13 at Sala Phou Khoun in early March 1961 also had as a consequence that on 9 March 61, President Kennedy approved plans for a major B-26 strike against the Plain of Jars.<sup>440</sup> Major Aderholt was charged to work out the requirements of such a task force for an attack to be carried out on 17 April 61, within hours of the Cuban invasion.<sup>441</sup> In March and April 61, a total of 18 USAF pilots,<sup>442</sup> all volunteers, were discharged from the USAF, given civilian clothes and fake identification, and flown to Takhli, Thailand, where they were given Royal Lao Air Force commissions. These pilots were to fly additional B-26s, and in the second week of April 61, twelve more B-26s and two RB-26Cs, all of them natural metal and devoid of any markings or serials, were flown in from Okinawa.<sup>443</sup> Compared to the situation of one year earlier, the facilities at Takhli had been extended, as Navy Seabees had built barracks with open bays and a small mess hall – facilities

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<sup>434</sup> On 10 October 60, Air America planes began flying supplies (mostly parachutes at the beginning) to Pakse and Savannakhet (Conboy/Morrison, *Shadow war*, p. 36).

<sup>435</sup> Leary, *CIA air operations in Laos*, p. 58; Trest, *Air Commando One*, pp. 109 and 116; Ahern, *Undercover armies*, p.60.

<sup>436</sup> Bowers, *The USAF in South-East Asia*, p. 441.

<sup>437</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, p. 108.

<sup>438</sup> For the C-124s and C-118s see Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.109. For the C-130As, the official history of the 21<sup>st</sup> TCS notes for the period between January and June 1962: "Our finest work, as a newly integrated unit, began in May with the airlift to Laos. Although a 7 day week around the clock operation was in progress for nearly a month, we had a very successful operation" (Microfilm no. K0716, preserved at the AFHRA, Maxwell AFB, AL).

<sup>439</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p. 45.

<sup>440</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p. 51.

<sup>441</sup> This aspect is mainly based on the excellent description contained in: Hagedorn / Hellström, *Foreign Invaders*, pp. 132-36; Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.110.

<sup>442</sup> Letter dated 25 September 1990, written by R. L. Allaire to William M. Leary, preserved at: UTD/Leary/B43F8.

<sup>443</sup> Ronald L. Allaire recalls: "On the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1961 Heinie checked me out in the Helio Courier. Then we were flown to Kadena AFB, Okinawa in an Air Force plane. After staying overnight, we flew several B-26s back to Takhli, two pilots per airplane, on April 11, 1961. Our route was over the Pacific Ocean most of the way, east





The *Mill Pond* fleet, taken at Takhli by B.G. H. Aderholt in 1961  
(former photo no. 1-WL1-28-23-PB369, now preserved at UTD/Leary/B74F1)

that occupants soon called the “Ranch”.<sup>444</sup> The CIA’s paramilitary logistical base at Takhli RThAFB was called “Salt Shaker”.<sup>445</sup> The additional B-26s arrived at Takhli from 11 April 61 onwards, and while awaiting the order to conduct air strikes, *Mill Pond* operations were limited to reconnaissance missions flying the RB-26Cs.<sup>446</sup> On 16 April 61, all B-26s were loaded with bombs and rockets, and the pilots were given papers identifying them as officers of the Royal Lao Air Force. Four simultaneous strikes against key targets were planned, each one performed by a group of four aircraft led by an Air America pilot. The planned primary mission of *Mill Pond* was a dawn attack on the airport of Xieng Khouang, with orders for eight B-26s to crater the runway and to destroy aircraft on the ground, while the other 8 B-26s were to attack the Pathet Lao concentrations in the Ban Ban valley and on the southern flank of the Plain of Jars. The following day, on 17 April 61 in the very early morning, the pilots were told by Major Aderholt that Washington had cancelled the strike because of the disaster in the Bay of Pigs in Cuba.<sup>447</sup> All *Mill Pond* aircraft remained on standby at Takhli until August 61, when the B-26s were flown to Okinawa.<sup>448</sup> The only exception were the two RB-26Cs, which were still based at Takhli and flew photo reconnaissance missions on a demand basis (Project *Black Watch*) between October 61 and May 62, when both aircraft were returned to the USAF.<sup>449</sup>

After the end of the C-130 missions to Tibet and after the end of *Project Mill Pond* in mid-1962, Takhli continued to be primary airfield in Thailand that Air America and other CIA “airlines” used for secret missions. At that time, Takhli had already become the home of USAF combat recon and combat units.<sup>450</sup> As has been shown elsewhere,<sup>451</sup> between 1962 and 1971, US support to the Tibetan resistance fighters functioned in a different way: Air America-owned DC-6s operated by Southern Air Transport flew supplies destined for the Tibetans from Kadena, Okinawa to *Oak Tree*, i.e. to Charbatia Air Base in Eastern India, from

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of Taiwan, north of the Philippines, then almost straight west over South Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. The flight took eight hours and thirty minutes, with bomb bay tanks. We maintained complete radio silence all the way.” (Letter dated 25 September 1990, written by R. L. Allaire to William M. Leary, preserved at: UTD/Leary/B43F8).

<sup>444</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.110.

<sup>445</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.113, note 9.

<sup>446</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, pp.109-10, 113.

<sup>447</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, pp.114-15.

<sup>448</sup> Ronald L. Allaire recalls: “We ferried the B-26s out of Thailand starting on August 5, 1961. Howard Naslund and I flew one of them to Tainan, Taiwan and turned it over to CAT. This was a six hour and ten minute flight. [...] On August 15, 1961 Bill Healey and I flew one of the birds back to Kadena AFB, Okinawa, and eight hour and fifty minute flight. We went right back to Thailand and on August 18, 1961 Matt O’Hare and I flew the last B-26 (I believe) from Thailand to Okinawa in eight hours and 5 minutes” (Letter dated 25 Sept.1990, written by R. L. Allaire to William M. Leary, preserved at: UTD/Leary/B43F8).

<sup>449</sup> See Hagedorn/Hellström, *Foreign Invaders*, pp.135/6, and for Project *Farm Gate*: ib., pp.137-47; also see my file *Air America in Laos III – in combat*.

<sup>450</sup> The first USAF F-100 units arrived in the spring of 1961, and the first USAF F-105s arrived in May 64 (Phil Carroll, “Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base and the Vietnam War. ‘PACAF’s Pride’”, at: [http://www.vdha.us/stuff/contentmgr/files/2c6caa5c7afa07a519e1768984fc1785/docs/takhli\\_historical\\_brief.pdf](http://www.vdha.us/stuff/contentmgr/files/2c6caa5c7afa07a519e1768984fc1785/docs/takhli_historical_brief.pdf)

<sup>451</sup> See the file *Missions to Tibet* within my *History of Air America*.

where they were flown to their final destination by the aircraft of the Indian *Aviation Research Center* (ARC). The normal route was from Kadena to Takhli and on to *Oak Tree*. What happened at Takhli is well described by Cliff Costa: On the last flight to *Oak Tree* mentioned in his diary, that of 27/28 October 64, he was aboard DC-6 N90782, piloted by N.D. Hicks and A.R. Gibson: “This was a ‘white’ SAT flight as far as Takhli. Then crew and aircraft [were] sterilized and left Takhli as Marathon Aviation aircraft [N]2782 with phony FAA documents and no flag. [The] flight to India (Charbatia) was ok – [the] route is now changed. We used to cross directly over Burma (Tavoy), but as of late, have been going south out of Takhli over [the] Gulf of Siam, till we hit past Burma, then cross over and take up a direct route to Charbatia, India. Still going down to low level 150 miles out, to duck radar. This trip we had 50 more ‘insurgents’ on board. They all look same – still believe they are Tibetans or Nepalese. Also supplies. [...] They have tightened up security a lot. Don’t want us back aft around our passengers any more than necessary. They (the passengers) are really kept in the dark. They never know where they have come from. Keep their trucks covered and aircraft curtains pulled; so they never know where we land, who we are, etc. etc. Same old C-46 pick-up as soon as we landed at *Oak Tree*.”<sup>452</sup> In 1966, the CIA even scheduled four Boeing 727 flights between Okinawa and *Oak Tree*”, to be made at low level to avoid radar and anti-American opposition at New Delhi – evidently using the aircraft of Air America / SAT.<sup>453</sup> One such flight is known to have been flown for LSG in the night from 5 to 6 April 71, with “Doc” Johnson at the controls of 727 N5055. In later years, the Boeing 727s were even tested

Apr 2	V227Y	YOK-KAD-SGN-KAD-YOK	"	"	"	195	54
5/6	LSG	TKL-OAKTAK- TKL	"	055	"	78	
13	V277Y	YOK-KAD-CHANK-SGN-BKK	"	055	"	82	

#### The Boeing 727 mission to *Oak Tree* on 5-6 April 71

(Page from “Doc” Johnson’s log book kindly submitted by his son James on 10 Aug. 2013)

at Takhli for air drops with conveyer belt and rollers, because the aircraft could be pressurized until the drop, but although the system worked well, it was never used in operation.<sup>454</sup>

The managerial aspects of these flights to *Oak Tree* are well described by David Hickler who was General Manager of Air America in Laos from 1964 to 1966: “In central Thailand, there was an American air base located at the city of Takhli. The U.S. Air Force used it extensively as a combat base during the Vietnam War. Also located there, was an important CIA Communications Center as well as out-of-passing-sight parking areas for aircraft. I had two of my American mechanics working there directly under the day to day supervision and control of the CIA Station Chief. Their purpose in life was to sanitize aircraft belonging to Air America, Southern Air Transport, Civil Air Transport, and others all belonging to the CIA. CIA supplies, destined for a CIA operation in a country located well west of Thailand, were loaded on board a special AAM, SAT, or CAT plane in Okinawa for a routine international flight to Bangkok. However, just prior to landing at Bangkok, the pilot would call the Bangkok Air Traffic Control and request approval to divert to Takhli. It was always granted because ‘arrangements’ had been made with the Thai authorities although sometimes a lower

<sup>452</sup> Costa, Diary, pp.25-27, in: UTD/Leary/B44F5.

<sup>453</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *The CIA’s secret war in Tibet*, p.210; for the aircraft see the file “The jets” of this database.

<sup>454</sup> Thomas C. Sailer, interview conducted by William M. Leary at San Francisco on 8 September 1985; professor Leary’s notes, preserved at UTD/Leary/B43F5. The LSG flights that “Doc” Johnson made to Takhli, Thailand between 22 and 24 April 70 probably included air drop and jump exercises as can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrqdmXxBZjI>. The *Air America* documentary, where these scenes are taken from, was made in 1970.

level Royal Thai Air Force officer would question this strange procedure. The situation was always quickly corrected through prompt intervention by the CIA working with the Thai Air Force high command.

“At the CIA base at Takhli, the aircraft would be completely sanitized; that is, all identification marks, serial numbers, everything and I mean everything, would be eliminated to prevent positive identification if the aircraft were to crash on land or in the sea. The aircraft became a nothing – it never existed – it had disappeared from all records, control tower logs, air traffic logs, everything. This loaded aircraft, without any aircraft markings (all paint and registration numbers had been stripped/removed and new numbers painted on) would take off from Takhli and, through RTAF arrangements, head west without passing through normal air traffic control procedures used on all international flights. This airplane never was reported on the logs as having arrived at a destination. It simply went away and about two or three days later, depending on circumstances at destination, it would suddenly and quietly arrive at Takhli loaded with supplies. The aircraft would now go through the procedure of being repainted, the USA civil registrations would be repainted on, the proper U.S. FAA papers and licenses would be placed on board, serial numbers would go back on to component parts, and the aircraft would be ‘legal’ again. The aircraft would file for an international clearance to Okinawa and away it would fly to Okinawa with the cargo from the west. [...]

“My first indication that a resupply flight was scheduled would be when I would be called to the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, CIA Section, and be shown a long-winded message giving all the details on the forthcoming flight: crew names, route planning, work to be done to the aircraft prior to departure from Takhli, dates and alternate dates in the event of weather problems, contingency planning, emergency measures, radio signals and identification numbers to be used, and on and on. Also, there was a lengthy section on cover stories to be used in the event the aircraft crashed on land, in the sea, or was intercepted in the air by fighter planes. I was the designated person to pass out the cock and bull story if it had to be done in the event someone had to admit that the plane belonged to either Air America, Southern Air Transport, or Civil Air Transport. I helped work on the cover stories as I was best qualified to know what I would be facing from the local press and the foreign correspondents should we have an unfortunate incident. [...] Fortunately we never had a crash or missing aircraft although the flights were fairly hazardous.”<sup>455</sup>

Even some of Air America’s secret missions into Laos and Vietnam had their base point at Takhli. From the second half of 1965 to the spring of 1971, Air America used 2 C-130As at a time, bailed from the USAF as “project aircraft” from Takhli (T-05), Thailand, to fly large supplies of ammunition into “forbidden territory under cover of darkness”,<sup>456</sup> that is to Laos (Long Tieng, Luang Prabang, Savannakhet, Pakse, etc.). On 17 July 65, a C-130A started the Takhli-Long Tieng service, the CIA’s logistic support pipeline. At Takhli, the operation was run out of Det.3, a secure area on the base. The area was fenced, with guard towers. There was a barracks, mess hall, movie theater that showed films every night, shot gun for skeet shooting, etc. There also was a high-tech communications bunker. The first missions with the C-130A were airdrops of 30-40,000 pounds of cargo for Long Tieng; later, the cargo was landed on a short asphalt strip. There were also missions to LS-118 in support of Tony Poe. The crews usually flew 3 missions a day, using call-sign “Gooneybird 1, 2, 3”. They flew every day for about a week – except when weather prevented a flight.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Dave Hickler, Exhibit no. VIII supporting Hickler’s claim of CIA supervision, pp. 22-24, in: UTD/Leary/B21F8 or F9, probably a photocopy from UTD/Hickler/B13F7.

<sup>456</sup> Robbins, *Air America*, p.126.

<sup>457</sup> Written summary of an interview with Cliff Costa that William Leary tape recorded on 5/6 November and 4/5 December 84.

15	"	KDNA-CLARK-RANCH	"	8.4	"	50047
17	"	RANCH LCL	"	6.3	"	"
18	"	RANCH LCL-RANCH-BKK	"	6.4	"	"
19	"	BKK-NAHA	"	6.7	"	"

The beginning of the “CIA pipeline” Takhli-Long Tieng in July 1965  
 (Page from “Doc” Johnson’s log book kindly supplied by his son James on 10 August 2013)

The extract from “Doc” Johnson’s log book given here shows the beginning of this type of missions from the pilot’s point of view: After several days of training at Naha, Okinawa with C-130As of the 315<sup>th</sup> AD Headquarters, Naha, Johnson took C-130A “50047” (= 55-047) from Kadena, Okinawa via Clark to Takhli (“Ranch”) on 15 July 65 in an 8.4 h flight. On 17 July 65, he began the “CIA pipeline” flying Takhli-Long Tieng-Takhli (“Ranch” local), a 6.3 h flight, and on 18 July, he repeated the same route, but added the leg Takhli-Bangkok at the end (6.4 hours), so that on 19 July, he could return the aircraft from Bangkok to Naha. – A final note shows the importance of Takhli (T-05) in the early seventies: In 1972, the CIA planned a wiretap mission to Vinh in North Vietnam. After initial training of the crews on Taiwan, the 2 Hughes 500P helicopters to be used in the mission were carried to Takhli in a C-130, from where they were flown to the actual new training site in Southern Laos (PS-44).<sup>458</sup> During the entire period of training, the trainees and their instructors were supplied by Air America transports, probably out of Takhli, and after the mission, the 2 special helicopters returned to Thailand,<sup>459</sup> also underlining the importance of Takhli as base point for some of Air America’s secret special missions.

<sup>458</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *The Quiet One*, p. 46.

<sup>459</sup> For details, see the file *CAT, Air Asia, Air America – the Company on Taiwan III: Work for the US Government* within my *The History of Air America*.

## V) Training programs in Thailand

Thailand was also the country where the CIA, then Air America personnel, and later the Royal Thai Police conducted a variety of training programs. The trainees were members of the Royal Thai Border Patrol Police and later also members of the Royal Lao Army and General Vang Pao's irregular army as well as pilots of the Royal Lao Air Force and later also of the Khmer Air Force. As to training arranged by the CIA, it has already been said above that under the direction of James W. "Bill" Lair, SEA Supply had established a camp at Lopburi (S-15, later T-15) north of Bangkok in March 1951, which was called *Camp Erawan*. There, he had begun airborne training for selected members of the Thai Police, who were soon joined by members of the Royal Thai Army, Air Force, and Navy. Between 1951 and 1953, more than 4,000 men graduated from the SEA Supply school, which was relocated to Hua Hin (S-10, later T-10) in 1953.<sup>460</sup>

### Training and other support for the Royal Thai Police

Shortly before May 1962, i.e. still prior to the Geneva Accords of 23 July 1962, Air America personnel started working with personnel of USOM-Thailand and the Thai Government Police on a contract to provide assistance to the Royal Thai Border Patrol Police. Two Sikorsky H-19 helicopters – believed to be two of the three former Air America H-19s delivered to USOM / Thailand on 10 March 61 (H-1, H-8, and H-9) – were involved along with a supply of parts for the aircraft,<sup>461</sup> and Air America also started to give still another type of support to the Royal Thai Border Patrol Police: training and maintenance. On 30 June 1962, contract AID-493-11 between Air America and USOM-Thailand became effective, stating that Air America "shall furnish services, facilities and supplies necessary to provide supervision and training of Thailand Border Police [...] personnel in a maintenance system for aircraft at Don Muang Airport, including establishment and monitoring of inspection, time control and record systems; inspection of work performed; classroom and on-the-job training of Border Patrol maintenance personnel; assistance in running a supply facility at Don Muang Airport for Border Patrol aircraft; assistance in solving maintenance problems on aircraft at other locations in Thailand. Air America also accomplishes repair and overhaul of Border Patrol Police aircraft and assists in procurement of parts and materials."<sup>462</sup> At that time, the Royal Thai Border Patrol Police had 1 Cessna 180, 4 Cessna 310s, 14 Hiller 12Bs, and several C-47s.<sup>463</sup>

As to contract AID-493-11, providing for training and maintenance support of the Thai Border Patrol Police, it was revised in May 1964, then saying that Air America was to furnish personnel to supervise aircraft maintenance performed by the Border Police mechanics. In 1966, the contract was amended again, and thereafter Air America was to provide both supervision of aircraft maintenance and training of police personnel in maintenance and supply support. By that time, the police aircraft fleet had increased to about 26 aircraft. Pilot training and aircraft mechanic training plans became part of the considerations, as the police aviation activities increased. The police, using Instructor Pilots trained by Air America, set up their own pilot training program. A separate contract was set up for an aircraft mechanic training program providing for a year's training at facilities used by the Contractor. In 1967, a new contract with USOM-Thailand was set up, which continued the services previously performed by Air America, encompassing advice and training in aircraft maintenance and supply support, pilot ground school instruction as well as providing for personnel on an on-

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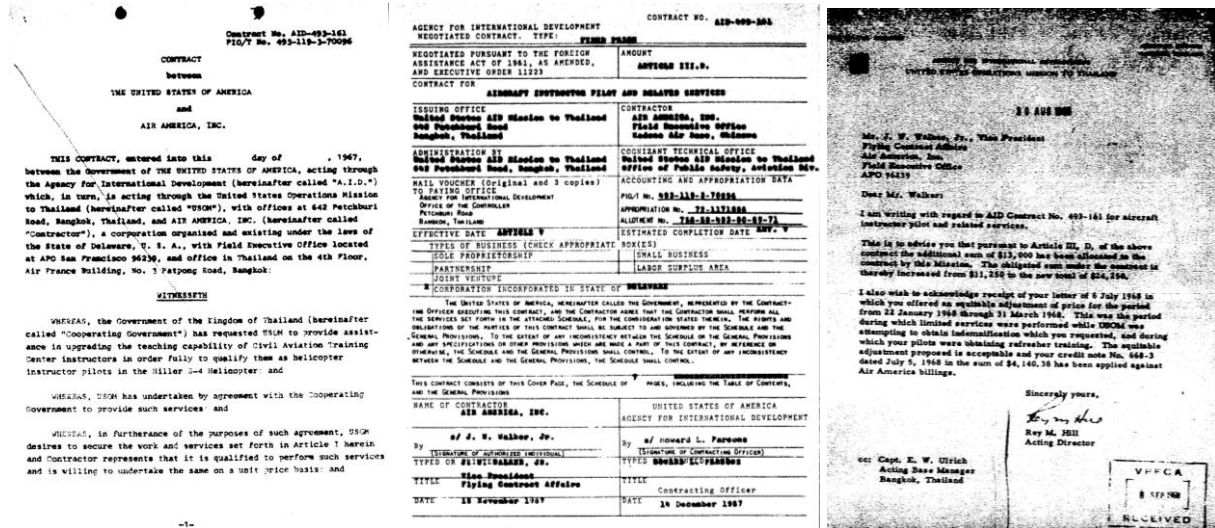
<sup>460</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.37/8; Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.117.

<sup>461</sup> Jerry Fink, "Air America and the Thai Police", in: *Air America Log*, vol. VII, no.4 (1973), pp.4-5.

<sup>462</sup> Description of contract AID-493-11 in: Jerry Fink, *Brief history of Air America operations in Thailand*, p. 4, Memorandum dated 6 June 1967, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.

<sup>463</sup> Mick Forrest, "Air America participates in Thai Police ceremony", in: *Air America Log*, vol. II, no.3 (March 1968), pp.4-5.

call basis. By this time, the former Border Patrol had become the Aviation Division of the Thai National Police Department.<sup>464</sup> This was contract no. AID 493-161 between Air America Inc. and the United States Operations Mission to Thailand, signed on 14 December 67 and financially adjusted on 30 August 68.<sup>465</sup> And there was a lot to do for the Thai National Police Department: Although Communist activity in Thailand was small compared to other South



Contract no. AID-493-161: draft, signed copy (14 Dec. 67), and adjustment of 30 August 68 (in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28)

East Asian countries, it had become a serious problem by 1966. There had been a marked rise in terrorist activity in the border regions, including the assassination of government officials. But with US assistance, the Thais won that war.<sup>466</sup> As Mick Forrest, Chief Mechanic of the Thai National Police Department Advisory contract, states in an article in the November 1967 issue of *Air America Log*, “Royal Thai Police aviation has progressed, with the assistance of Air America’s advisors staff, from a shade tree operation with little support, to a large, efficient air wing capable of piloting, maintaining and overhauling its wide range of over 30 aircraft and helicopters at Bangkok’s Don Muang Airport. Police fixed wing aircraft include Cessna 310Fs, de Havilland Caribous, and Douglas DC-3s and C-47s. Its rotary wing aircraft include Kawasaki KH-4s, Hiller 12E4s, Bell 204Bs and Sikorsky S-62As. Besides contributing maintenance and overhaul advice to the Royal Thai Police air arm, Air America personnel helped establish supply channels and record-keeping, which were lacking. They also set up an all-important maintenance control and planning system” (p.2). In late 1967, some 45 mechanics and helpers coming from the border, marine, traffic and metropolitan branches of the Thai National Police were trained at the Air Asia Training Center at Tainan, and a large number of police pilots took advanced helicopter training courses with the US Army in the United States.<sup>467</sup>

In 1968, Air America’s advisory staff numbered 14. They worked closely with Air Asia’s Technical Training Division in Tainan, Taiwan, where many Royal Thai Police mechanics

<sup>464</sup> Jerry Fink, *Brief history of Air America operations in Thailand*, p.4, Memorandum dated 6 June 1967, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B, and Jerry Fink, “Air America and the Thai Police”, in: *Air America Log*, vol. VII, no.4 (1973), pp.4-5.

<sup>465</sup> Contract no. AID-493-161, signed 14 December 67, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28; letter dated 30 August 68, sent by USOM Thailand to Air America, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.28.

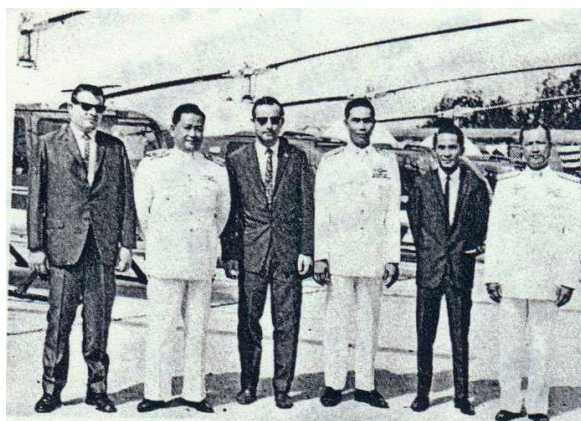
<sup>466</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.188.

<sup>467</sup> Mick Forrest, “AAM in Thailand. Air America helps Royal Thai Police Aviation make progress”, in: *Air America Log*, vol. I no.1 (November 1967), pp.2/3.

underwent training. In August and September 67, 22 Fairchild Hiller 1100 helicopters were exported to Thailand, and in early 1968, they were officially handed over to the Royal Thai National Police by the United States under the sponsorship of USAID, and Air America also assisted in helicopter instructor-pilot training in conjunction with TNPD and USOM personnel. Air America captains regularly trained Royal Thai Police and Civil Aviation Technical Center pilots in Hiller helicopters. The TNPD base at Bangkok's Don Muang airport was a focal point of activity where an international staff from the Royal Thai Police, USOM, and Air America worked diligently and harmoniously towards a common goal.<sup>468</sup> In March 68, *Air America Log* published some photos taken at the presentation ceremony of the 22 new Fairchild-Hiller FH 1100s at Pak Nam Marine Police Station, Bangkok:



Buddhist blessing ceremony of a new FH1100. His Holiness Patriarch of Thailand Somdej Pra-Ariyawongsakatyarn stands in front of the machine; kneeling behind him is Police Colonel Payome Chantaragga, Deputy Commander, TNPD Aviation Division. Thai personnel (standing in dark coveralls, l. to r.): Police Pvt. Anuroj Prommareong — mechanic; Police Lt. Pompert Nakathon — pilot; Police Sgt. Bunlue Rongvilit — mechanic. AAM personnel (standing in white, l. to r.): H. S. Hsing — supply advisor; H. F. Choy — maintenance advisor.



Senior officers of the Royal Thai National Police Aviation Unit and Air America advisors. Left to right: Mick Forrest-Supervisor, Thai Police Contract; Lt. Col. Sompot, Deputy Commander Police Aviation; Tom Karman, Maintenance Advisor; Maj. Kiattisak, Royal Thai Police Chief Pilot; Max Tinio, Supply Advisor and Lt. Col. Nikom, Royal Thai Police Maintenance Officer.

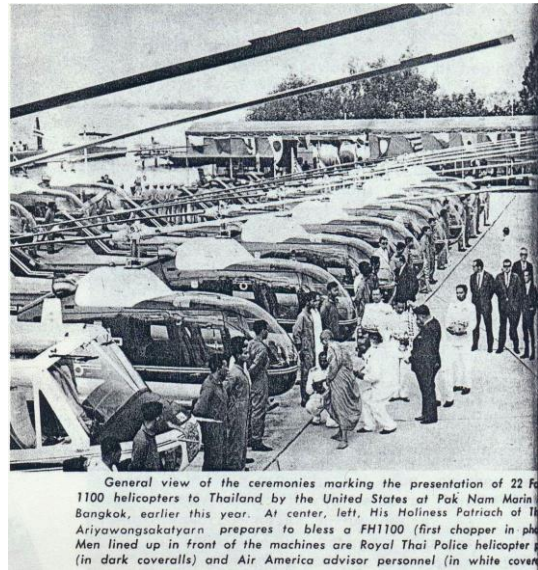


Thai National Police Department flight crews and Air America advisors — surrounded by spanking new Fairchild Hiller 1100 choppers — stand by during the presentation ceremony at Pak Nam Marine Police Station.



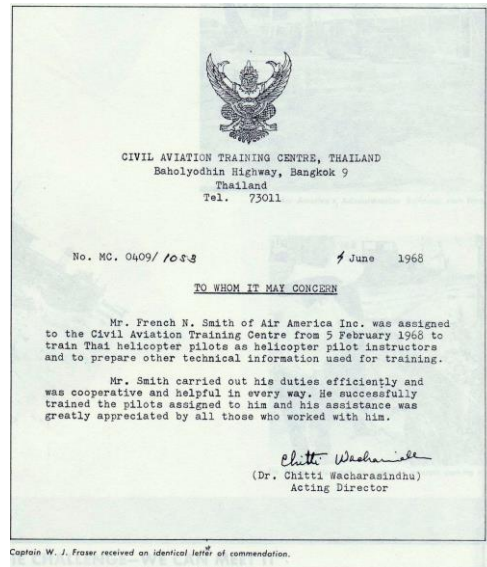
An example of the close cooperation between Thai Police Aviation personnel and Air America advisors. W. D. Lee (left) and Lt. Chaluy (right) assist a departing Bell 204B at the Pak Nam Marine Police Station.

<sup>468</sup> Mick Forrest, "Air America participates in Thai Police ceremony", in: *Air America Log*, vol. II, no.3 (March 1968), pp.4-5.



Presentation ceremony, photos in: *Air America Log*, vol. II, no.3 (March 1968), pp.4-5

In the spring of 1968, Air America Captains French N. Smith and W. J. Fraser trained two Thai National Police and two Civil Aviation Training Centre pilots to be flight instructors in the first civilian helicopter training program undertaken in Thailand.<sup>469</sup> French N. Smith's log



(*Air America Log*, vol. II, no.4 [1968], p.3)

book gives more details: From 22 January to 15 February 68, he flew Hiller UH-12E's TNP 1003 and TNP 1005 out of Bangkok (T-09), aspiring, as he notes in his log book, "to set-up [a] first helicopter training school for [the] Border Police and train pilots, along with Bill Fraser." This flying included 40 autorotations. On 15 February 68, there was a Thai Police banquet.<sup>470</sup> From 2 April to 28 June 68, French Smith – and, until 17 May, also Bill Fraser – continued the instruction of Thai National Police men at Hua Hin (T-10), using Hiller UH-12E's TNP 1003, TNP 1004, TNP 1005, TNP 1006, and TNP 1008. The instruction at Hua

<sup>469</sup> (Anonymous), "An Air America First in Thailand", in: *Air America Log*, vol. II, no.4 (1968), p.3.

<sup>470</sup> Entries in the log book of French N. Smith, in: UTD/Leary/B48F6.



Hin was completed on 30 June 68 and ended with another Thai party and banquet in honor of French N. Smith.<sup>471</sup>

In 1969, Air America provided the Thailand National Police Department with “advisory aircraft maintenance and supply and related services” under the provisions of contract no. AID-493-333, which expired on 30 September 69. So contemplating a possible follow-on contract on 14 January 1969, the members of the Executive Committees of Air America and Air Asia discussed the utilization of Thai Pacific Services Co Ltd for the period after 30 September 69, but then rejected the idea, as USAID agreed to continue this project for another four years.<sup>472</sup> The Thai Police Aviation Division also used a Sikorsky S-62A – mainly as a VIP aircraft. “It is equipped with a plush interior of comfortable design that can easily be removed for cargo transport if so required. [...] Besides being a VIP aircraft, the S-62A performs a variety of missions – a few of which are: surveillance of all Thai Royal Family water excursions and activities, including boating. [...] Because of its water landing and take-off capabilities, the chopper accompanies these excursions as a logistics and support vehicle



Royal Thai Police S-62A “801” in: *Air America Log*, vol. III, no. 4 (1969), p.2

and is also available as an emergency recovery aircraft. When not being used for the above purpose, the S-62A is usually assigned to the Thai Marine Police and Customs Department. Here its tasks include: customs investigations, shoreline patrols and marine surveys. The helicopter is one of many assigned to the Thai Police Aviation Division on which an Air America Advisory team is giving assistance as required.”<sup>473</sup> As to Air America’s relations with the Thai Police, Air America started a tripartite contract with USOM-Thailand and the Thai National Police Aviation Division in January 1970, which remained in effect until 31 January 1973. The services performed included advisory services relative to all phases of aircraft maintenance and supply support to make the TNPD totally self-supporting at contract completion except for depot level maintenance.<sup>474</sup> In October 1971, 36 young men of the Thai National Police Department, Bangkok, underwent technical training at Air Asia’s facility at Tainan, sponsored by USAID, which paid all expenses involved, including per diem to each

<sup>471</sup> Entries in the log book of French N. Smith, in: UTD/Leary/B48F6.

<sup>472</sup> Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committees of Air America Inc. and Air Asia Company Limited of 14 January 69, p.3, in: UTD/CIA/B8F3.

<sup>473</sup> T. J. Karman (S/TPC BKK), “Thai Police Aviation Division VIP helicopter”, in: *Air America Log*, vol. III, no. 4, 1969, p.2.

<sup>474</sup> Jerry Fink, “Royal Thai Police”, in: *Air America Log*, vol. IV, no.2, 1970, p.1.

student during the trainee courses; the 10 supervisors of the group were trained for 24 weeks, while the 26 mechanic trainees went thru a 50-week course.<sup>475</sup> In January 1973, the TNPDP fleet had grown to 48 helicopters and 16 fixed wing aircraft, which, in January 1973, flew some 1,800 hours. To commemorate the 11 years of cooperation between Air America's advisory personnel and the TNPDP, a ceremony was held at Bangkok in early 1973, as after that date, the TNPDP was considered to be totally self-supporting.<sup>476</sup> On 31 January 1973, Air America / Bangkok was awarded a plaque by the Thai Police Aviation Division "in an expression of our gratitude and appreciation for contract services rendered in the technical areas of Aircraft Maintenance and Logistics."<sup>477</sup>

### **Training Lao soldiers in Thailand**

In March 55, 30 Lao officers were sent to Thailand for a month of heavy-weapons instruction by the Thai Border Police at Hua Hin.<sup>478</sup> In 1958, Vang Pao was among the Laotian officers sent to the Philippines for a counterinsurgency seminar arranged by the Filipino military.<sup>479</sup> In 1959, four Lao junior officers were sent for training to Fort Benning, GA, to attend six months of airborne and infantry training, while others were sent to the Philippines for Scout Ranger instruction, infantry training or counterinsurgency seminars.<sup>480</sup> In September 59, the Royal Thai Army provided an eight-week retraining course, called *Project Erawan*, for some 1,400 Laotian paratroopers in guerrilla and anti-guerrilla tactics at *Camp Erawan* near Lopburi (T-15), 165 kilometers north of Bangkok, and this training continued into 1960.<sup>481</sup> After the Thai "Kaw Taw" unit had been established at Bangkok, Laotian General Phoumi Nosavan was allowed to choose 30 candidates for commando and sabotage training under Thai Border Police auspices at Udorn in the fall of 1960.<sup>482</sup> Beginning on 29 April 61, eight Lao infantry battalions received one-month refresher courses at *Camp Erawan* near Lopburi (T-15) in a new program named *Ekarad* (Liberty) that continued into 1962.<sup>483</sup> To sum up: "Small groups of Lao soldiers had, unofficially, been trained at Thai military bases since 1957. The US-funded instruction occurred on a random basis and mostly involved Lao airborne companies and logistics specialists. This changed in April 1961 when, under Project EK/ARAD, the Royal Thai Army began accepting entire FAR battalions for military training in Thailand. In May, the United States and Thailand agreed to expand the program to include basic training for officer candidates and recruits, specialized artillery training, and basic pilot training for the Royal Lao Air Force. By the end of the year the Thai military had graduated five Lao infantry battalions, two artillery batteries, one hundred officer candidates, over two hundred recruits, and more than a dozen pilots."<sup>484</sup>

In August 61, 120 Hmong – candidates for Special Operations Teams (SOT) intended to represent all clans in Xieng Khouang Province – were sent to Hua Hin for four months of leadership, weapons, communications, and parachute training and were lifted back to MR 2 in December. In February 62, a second group of 160 Hmong trainees were sent to Hua Hin for three months of instruction, and upon completion of training, they joined existing PARU groups or opened new positions in Xieng Khouang or Sam Neua provinces. On 6 August 62, a final Hmong SOT cycle finished its instruction at Hua Hin and was shuttled via Air America

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<sup>475</sup> H. P. Lee, "TNPDP students training at TNN", in: *Air America Log*, vol. VI, no.1, 1972, p.2.

<sup>476</sup> Jerry Fink, "Air America and the Thai Police", in: *Air America Log*, vol. VII, no.4, 1973, pp.4-5.

<sup>477</sup> (Anonymous), "Air America BKK Awarded Plaque", in: *Air America Log*, vol. VII, no. 8, 1973, p. 8.

<sup>478</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.17.

<sup>479</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.60.

<sup>480</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.24+38.

<sup>481</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.24, 45+440.

<sup>482</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.35.

<sup>483</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.67+440.

<sup>484</sup> Castle, *At war*, pp.36/7.

Caribous to Sam Thong, which, at that time, was still considered to be the future headquarters of Vang Pao. In May 62, 500 Hmong trainees were sent to Hua Hin for 4 weeks of guerrilla and parachute training, and after their return in mid-June, they formed multi-company Special Guerrilla Units (SGU) at locations like Pha Pheung or Pha Khao.<sup>485</sup> In December 62, i.e. after the new Geneva Accords, the CIA sent 35 Lao nationals – mostly Hmong from MR 2, along with 2 Khmu and 2 Lu from MR 1 – to Thailand, where they were trained at *Camp Surat Sena* (“Pitt’s Camp”), 29 kilometers east of Phitsanulok. “Most received seven months of SOT instruction, emphasizing communications with the RS-1 long-range radio, others were given Special Leadership Training, a quad-level basic infantry and parachute course designed to polish guerrilla leaders,” and some trainees even “remained an additional 11 months for advanced instruction in radio repair.”<sup>486</sup> In early 63, half a dozen men of Colonel Siho’s paramilitary police wing (DNC, Directorate of National Coordination) was sent to Hua Hin for parachute jumpmaster training.<sup>487</sup> In the summer of 1963, a group of Lao Theung from the Bolovens Plateau was sent to Pitt’s Camp for training in leadership and road-watching techniques, graduating in the fall that year.<sup>488</sup> Also in the summer of 1963, the CIA revived its operation in Houa Khong province by secretly sending a class of Mien students from that province to Phitsanulok for radio and leadership instruction.<sup>489</sup> In January 64, 11 BP (*Bataillon de Parachutistes*) was flown from Thakhek to Lopburi (T-15) in Thailand as the first Lao unit for a resurrected Royal Thai Army training program named *Project 007*, the successor to the *Erawan* and *Ekarad* projects that would last until 1967.<sup>490</sup> In July 65, an entire battalion, Nam Yu’s new 1 SGU, was flown down to Hua Hin for instruction, returning in the fall of that year.<sup>491</sup> In the spring of 67, a Lao Theung battalion from Luang Prabang was sent to Hua Hin for training, while team leaders from Military Region I were trained at Pitt’s Camp from 1965 onwards.<sup>492</sup> In late 66 and early 67, spy teams that were to tap a telephone line inside China, were sent for instruction to Pitt’s Camp.<sup>493</sup> From March to May 66, 40 Royal Lao Army officers went sent to Pitt’s Camp for leadership instruction.<sup>494</sup> In August 66, Vang Pao even sent 18 Hmong trainees for nine months of intensive commando instruction to MACV-SOG’s Long Thanh training camp near Saigon in South Vietnam.<sup>495</sup> In March 67, *Project 007* shifted from Lopburi (T-15) to Pran Buri (T-708) south of Hua Hin, whereupon it was renamed *Project 009*.<sup>496</sup> In the summer of 1968, BG 227 was the first guerrilla battalion to receive instruction at Pitt’s Camp.<sup>497</sup>

Pitt’s Camp was also the location, where Lao teams were given a special instruction and elite training as Commando Raiders since late 1968, the first unit coming from Savannakhet in MR 3: “The first MR 3 Commando Raiders – 40 young, educated, fit guerrillas – were selected from the cream of the kingdom’s southern SGU crop; another 40 came from MR 2. Once assembled, both contingents were shipped to Phitscamp. By that time, Phitscamp had blossomed into one of Southeast Asia’s foremost centers for unconventional warfare training. A sprawling facility divided by a river, Phitscamp’s layout reflected a split in funding between the CIA stations in Bangkok and Vientiane. Facilities north of the river – the runway,

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<sup>485</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.89-90.

<sup>486</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.98.

<sup>487</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.106.

<sup>488</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.119.

<sup>489</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.135.

<sup>490</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.102, 104, note 52, and p.442.

<sup>491</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.136.

<sup>492</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.164.

<sup>493</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.167.

<sup>494</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.175.

<sup>495</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.180, note 22.

<sup>496</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.203, note 3.

<sup>497</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.197.

jump tower, and barracks for the Special Battalion – were funded by Bangkok station; everything south of the river came from the budget of Vientiane station and was devoted to Lao training. To manage the sprawling camp, the number of CIA advisors had increased exponentially during the late 1960s. On hand were experts in road-watching, communications, evasion and survival, demolitions, and medicine. There were parachute instructors – mostly ex-smoke jumpers – and, for a brief period in September 1968, an advisor for the experimental Sky Hook extraction system. Also present was a detachment of PARU trainers. By late 1968, even this sizable crew could not handle the growing number of trainees from Laos flowing through Phitscamp's doors. To assist, the Lopburi-based USSF 46<sup>th</sup> Company in January 1969 was ordered to prepare a 17-man team to support CIA efforts at Phitsanulok. [...] During the first week of March, the requested USSF team relocated from Lopburi to Phitscamp. In command was Capt. Willie Card [...]. Once installed at Phitsanulok, Card's team developed a three-month training schedule using a program of instruction forwarded by MACV-SOG in South Vietnam. A few weeks later, the 80 Commando Raiders arrived from Laos. [...] Receiving intensive demolitions and weapons instruction, the budding commandos were broken into 10 teams of eight, with one Special Forces advisor per team. Airborne training was given shortly before graduation in August.”<sup>498</sup>

As to the “Skyhook” system, already in the spring of 1965, Air America had bought 2 “Skyhook” installations for Caribous – special equipment that could be used to retrieve agents and that was also used by the top-secret Studies and Operations Group in Vietnam: So, retrieving agents from enemy territory was another type of missions flown by Air America Caribou B-851, as their other Caribous were based at Bangkok or Saigon at that time.<sup>499</sup> The training base for retrieving agents was Pitt's Camp, Thailand (T-603), and among the CIA case officers involved were Shep Johnson and of course his boss Bill Lair. Among the Air America pilots who flew Caribou “851” during those pick up flights was Jim Rhyne.<sup>500</sup> While this flying was apparently performed for the CIA, in June 68, the USAF's Logistical Support Group asked Air America to equip 1 or 2 Caribous with the Fulton Skyhook capability to be used in South East Asia, and so, an agreement was signed on 3 July 68. On 9 July 68, Air America's Managing Director George Doole advised Taipei how to handle future invoices representing charges under the “Fulton Contract”.<sup>501</sup> Apparently, both Air America-owned Caribous, B-851 and B-853, were modified: Caribou B-853 msn 52 was “input MMB 5 Aug [1968] for modification, 1-6 PE service and lease to another user. Renumbered 61-2388,”<sup>502</sup> and Caribou “B-851 Skyhook mod in conjunction MMB no.3 service mid Sept. [68]”.<sup>503</sup> Interestingly, Caribou B-853 (msn 52) was the second Caribou to use the serial 61-2388, after the “regular” US Army Caribou 61-2388 (msn 45) had crashed in August 63.<sup>504</sup> Such a second use of the serial of an aircraft that had already crashed makes believe that it was to be used for clandestine operations, perhaps by the top-secret Studies and Observations Group in

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<sup>498</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.237/8.

<sup>499</sup> The purchase of the Fulton Skyhook equipment was approved in May 65 (Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc. of 25 May 65, in: UTD/CIA/B7F4); see also Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.59; and Status of aircraft reports of 1 November 65 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1), 8 April 66 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1), and 5 May 66 (in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2).

<sup>500</sup> Shep Johnson photos exhibited at the Air America Reunion at Washington in June 2006.

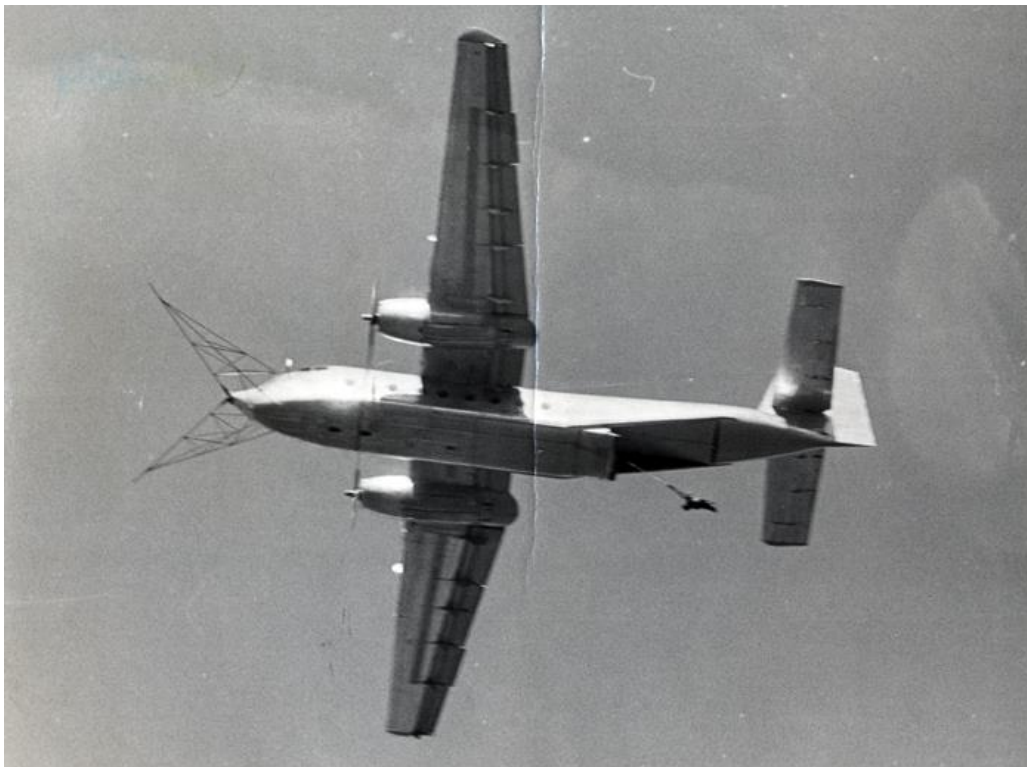
<sup>501</sup> Air America-LSG agreement dated 3 July 68, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.24; Memorandum dated 9 July 68 regarding the Fulton Skyhook Contract with the USAF's Logistical Support Group (LSG), in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.24.

<sup>502</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-68-22, dated 15 August 68, note 4, in: UTD/La Shomb/B14.

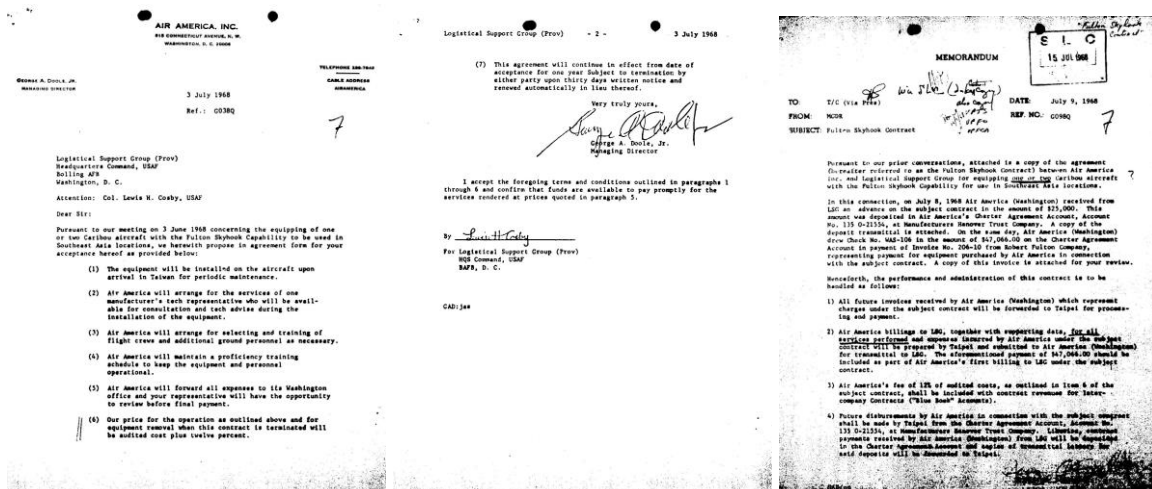
<sup>503</sup> Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-68-22, dated 15 August 68, note 3, in: UTD/La Shomb/B14.

<sup>504</sup> See <http://www.c-7acaribou.com/history/BouRoster.pdf> .

South Vietnam,<sup>505</sup> and perhaps under the Fulton Skyhook Contract that Air America had with the USAF's Logistical Support Group. Other sources say that the Skyhook system was never used on a combat mission during the Vietnam War.<sup>506</sup>



Caribou "851" with the "Fulton Skyhook" system attached, picking up an agent (UTD/Leary/B77F2, formerly photo no. 1WL1-28-11-PB170)



Air America's Skyhook Contract with the Logistical Support Group: contract and financing (in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24)

<sup>505</sup> See Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.59. For Fulton Skyhook use in South Vietnam, however with the system mounted not on a Caribou, but on a MC-130, see John L. Plaster, *SOG. A Photo History of the Secret Wars*, Boulder CO (Paladin Press) 2000, pp.80-84.

<sup>506</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.245, note 4.

As to the Commando Raiders, more trainees arrived in the fall of 1970, including a second 60-man group from Savannakhet. “By early 1970, the first cycle of southern raiders had been repatriated to Whiskey-3 [east of Savannakhet in MR 3], where they waited as their CIA advisors decided on the time and place to introduce the young commandos in combat. [...] [In MR 4,] Pakse Unit became smitten with the Commando Raider concept. Accordingly, case officer Forrest ‘Dutch’ Snyder [...] selected 50 trainees and headed for Phitscamp. Returning to Laos by the late summer of 1970, the raiders were grouped at PS 22. Over the next few months, Snyder employed the new unit primarily around Attapeu, occupied by PAVN forces since April. [...] Up in MR 2, the first 40 Commando Raider trainees had returned from Phitscamp in late 1969 [...]. Posted to Pha Khao, Long Tieng Unit in mid-February 1970 handed the fresh commandos their first assignment: a cross-border strike against Dien Bien Phu. [...] In all, three 40-man MR 2 cycles passed through Phitscamp, while a forth contingent was locally trained at Pha Khao. [...] Along with MR 4, Luang Prabang Unit in early 1970 began recruiting a Commando Raider company and sent it to Phitscamp for training.”<sup>507</sup> The end of all these groups was the same: Not fulfilling expectations that had been exaggerated and considered to be too expensive, the Commando Raiders were integrated into other existing units in the early seventies.<sup>508</sup>

However, the training of other Hmong and other Lao troops in Thailand continued: In September 69, 106 Hmong students were dispatched to Kokethiem for 2 months of 155mm howitzer training.<sup>509</sup> “In late 1969, 25 FAR instructors completed M60 machine gun training at Pranburi. In addition, 76 FAR students were dispatched to the RTA Artillery Center at Kokethiem for training in M706 armored car tactics and maintenance under the auspices of a U.S. Army mobile training team; by mid-March 1970, the first two of an eventual 15 M706s were turned over to FAR 1 Armored Brigade.”<sup>510</sup> By 1970, the training facility at Pitt’s Camp had been expanded to a company-sized element called B-461 that was entirely devoted to training CIA paramilitary forces for Laos. Yet, as it was still too small, some Hmong battalions had to be diverted to other Thai camps run by B-461, the Thai Special Forces and/or the Thai Border Patrol Police. The first of them was at Pak Chong (T-68) northeast of Bangkok, but after graduating two battalions, the Special Forces advisors packed their bags in the fall of 1970, as there was not enough water at the camp. The second B-461 training camp opened in 1970 was located southwest of Sakhon Nakhon at Nam Pung Dam (T-439), which was already the site of a Royal Thai Army counterinsurgency training center.<sup>511</sup> Also in 1970, four Royal Lao Army (FAR) battalions, including a battalion of former military policemen, received refresher training at Pran Buri under *Project 009*,<sup>512</sup> and during the same year, three 100-man FAR companies were sent for commando and airborne training at Lopburi (T-15).<sup>513</sup>

In January 71, four Lao officers from the SGU camp at Nong Saphong north of Savannakhet (MR 3) were sent to the RTA Infantry Center at Pranburi, Thailand, for basic heavy-weapons training. Later that spring, they shifted to a new training camp near Ban Nong Saeng in Thailand, adjacent to southern Laos; when opened in 1971, Ban Nong Saeng (T-303) offered basic infantry training to Lao paramilitary units, but by year’s end, the program had expanded to also include SGU heavy-weapons instruction.<sup>514</sup> Also in 1971, the CIA recruited near Vientiane a battalion of Black Tai hill tribesmen and sent them for training to Xieng Lom

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<sup>507</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.238, 240, 243, 246 (note 22), and 245 (note 10).

<sup>508</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.243 and 245.

<sup>509</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.249.

<sup>510</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.366.

<sup>511</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.264.

<sup>512</sup> *Project 009*’s training cadre was made up of Royal Thai Army advisors, assisted by a US Special Forces A-Team from the 46<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Company (Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.374 note 7).

<sup>513</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.366 and 368.

<sup>514</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.310 note 33.

(LS-274), Nam Pung Dam (T-439), Pitt's Camp (T-603) and, finally, rocket pod instruction at PS-44.<sup>515</sup> In late May 72, Vang Pao's *Groupement Mobile* (GM) 22 was sent to Pitt's Camp for retraining, but with facilities designed to accommodate just one battalion at a time, Pitt's Camp was overcrowded when it had to handle an entire GM; GM 22 returned to Laos in August 72.<sup>516</sup> In May 72, four Hmong battalions – among them more than 100 boys younger than 16 – were sent to Nam Pung Dam (T-439) for training, and returned in August 72.<sup>517</sup> Also in the summer of 1972, GM 21 was retraining for 2 months at Pitt's Camp, while its organic heavy-weapons company was trained at Ban Nong Saeng (T-303).<sup>518</sup>

With the cease-fire in Laos approaching, however, things changed. Already in late 72, the training team at Nam Pung Dam (T-439) closed doors, followed in January 73 by the team at Ban Nong Saeng (T-303) and in February 73 by the training team at Nam Phong (T-712) used for training *Unity* troops. In March 73, the CIA arranged for a special training of a security force for Vang Pao, when two dozen Hmong that month arrived from Long Tieng at Pitt's Camp (T-603), where they were taught bodyguard and protection techniques. In the summer of 1973, the Special Forces shifted its headquarters from Nam Phong to Lopburi (T-15), reverting from the operational control of the CIA to the US Army Special Forces Thailand, and in the fall of 1973, the training teams at Nam Phong and Pitt's Camp closed their doors.<sup>519</sup> There is no doubt that transporting first PARU teams, then Royal Lao Army units and Lao irregular troops and from 1970 onwards even Thai *Unity* troops from their bases in Laos to these training facilities in Thailand and back to their bases in Laos was one of the greatest tasks of Air America's transport fleet of Caribous, C-123s and C-130s. In mid-1974, the Royal Thai Government, fearing that Pathet Lao might be among the trainees, halted all Royal Lao Army instruction at Royal Thai Army bases.<sup>520</sup>

### **Pilot training: RLAf pilots**

The aviation branch of the ANL (*Armée Nationale Laotienne*) was officially formed on 28 January 1955, and the MMF (*Mission Militaire Française près du Gouvernement Royal Laotien*) conducted pilot training at Wattay and at the *Plaine des Jarres* airfield; in late 1955, another 22 Lao students were sent for instruction, including T-6 training, to France and Morocco.<sup>521</sup> In December 1960, FAL (*Forces Armées du Laos*) pilots were to be trained in T-6 gunnery and bombing techniques at Kokethiem Royal Thai Air Force Base, 10 kilometers east of Lopburi.<sup>522</sup> In reality, the first four Lao students – including detachment leader Major Thao Ma – arrived at Kokethiem on 3 January 61. After 5 days of Thai instruction, the Lao flew the first 4 out of 10 ex RThAF T-6s destined for the Royal Lao Air Force, each sporting fresh Laotian markings, to Savannakhet Air Base on 9 January 61 and then to Wattay the following day to wait for their first mission. This came on 11 January 61, when all four T-6s attacked Vang Vieng.<sup>523</sup> In mid-1962, MAAG Laos had arranged for a class of RLAf students to be trained under USAF auspices using 3 T-28Bs at Kokethiem Airbase, Thailand.<sup>524</sup>

On 6 December 63, CINCPAC recommended a detachment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Air Commando Wing, Eglin AFB, FL, deployed to Udorn to help the RLAf, and in mid-March 64, 38 USAF

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<sup>515</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.354 note 18.

<sup>516</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.343, 353 note 1, and 346.

<sup>517</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.347.

<sup>518</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.354, note 16.

<sup>519</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.405/6.

<sup>520</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.412.

<sup>521</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.27, note 24.

<sup>522</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.44.

<sup>523</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.48/9.

<sup>524</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.103, note 38.

officers and airmen of Detachment 6, 1<sup>st</sup> Air Commando Wing – code-named *Water Pump* –, arrived at Saigon in a C-135.<sup>525</sup> Half of them assembled 4 crated T-28s which had arrived at Bien Hoa in C-130s, the others flew to Udorn. On 1 April 64, Detachment 6, 1 ACW with 4 T-28s and 41 personnel arrived at Udorn, where the detachment established a T-28 maintenance facility using Air America equipment. This *Water Pump* training facility for RLAf T-28 pilots was located at Udorn adjacent to the Air America parking ramp,<sup>526</sup> and they immediately began a T-28 ground-and-flight school for Lao pilots.<sup>527</sup> On 20 May 64, the 4 original *Water Pump* T-28s<sup>528</sup> were turned over to the Laotians,<sup>529</sup> that is were temporarily loaned to the RLAf, giving them a total of seven aircraft.<sup>530</sup> Also on 20 May 64, the original *Water Pump* T-28s were replaced by 5 T-28s and 5 RT-28s that CINCPAC transferred from MACV to the *Water Pump* unit. Here at Udorn, they were immediately painted in RLAf markings, and probably 6 of them were loaned to the RLAf the same day.<sup>531</sup> On 22 May 64, the *Water Pump* unit began T-28 refresher training for the six Air America volunteers for 2 days, and by 27 May 64, the first group of Thai volunteers reported for T-28 certification by *Water Pump*.<sup>532</sup> Some of *Water Pump*'s new T-28s – probably 4 in the beginning<sup>533</sup> – continued to be used for training new pilots. *Water Pump* aircraft changed from time to time: Some of them were handed over to the RLAf, others were added. At least in later years, *Water Pump* training T-28s normally dropped the “0-” for “obsolete” at the beginning of their serial, which consisted of 5 numbers only. As late as September / October 1973, the *Water Pump* unit is known to have flown T-28s, as this photo of T-28B “38325” proves:<sup>534</sup>



*Water Pump* T-28B “38325” in RLAf colors at Udorn in September / October 1973  
(with kind permission from Ward S. Reimer)

<sup>525</sup> The function of the *Water Pump*-Detachment is described in footnote 5 of telegram no. 942, sent by the US Embassy Vientiane to the US Dept. of State on 3 March 1964: “The Special Air Warfare Detachment was a proposal of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to deploy four T-28s and pilots and 30 to 40 support personnel in Thailand. The detachment could augment the Royal Lao Air Force in the event of a serious offensive by the Pathet Lao/North Vietnamese, assist the Lao Air Force’s maintenance training, provide advice for planning and employment of T-28s in Laos, and give impetus to Thai up-country development programs and counterinsurgency efforts. It would also serve as an adequate cover to justify the presence of US T-28s in Thailand” (in: US Dept. of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, vol. XXVIII, Laos, document 13: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v28/d13>).

<sup>526</sup> Moody, *The great adventures*, Prelude, p.2.

<sup>527</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.66; Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.140; Leary, *Outline...*, 1964, pp.6+8.

<sup>528</sup> They are believed to have been “51-7616”, “51-7622”, “51-7635”, and “51-7863”.

<sup>529</sup> Castle, *At war*, p.69; Leary, *Outline - Air America in Laos*, 1964, p.7.

<sup>530</sup> Moody, *The great adventures*, Prelude, p.3.

<sup>531</sup> Moody, *The great adventures*, Prelude, p.3.

<sup>532</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.109/10.

<sup>533</sup> The second group of *Water Pump* T-28s are believed to have been “0-40044”, “0-40456”, “0-40533”, and “0-46244”.

<sup>534</sup> For more details, see the file *Air America in Laos III – in combat* within my *The History of Air America* and the file *RLAF/Raven T-28s* within my *The Aircraft of Air America*.



In August 69, “a 21-man USAF detachment<sup>535</sup> was dispatched to Udorn to restart RLAF C-47 training, which the Lao themselves had been trying (with marginal success) to conduct at Savannakhet since early 1965. At the same time, Thailand-based U.S. trainers were able to increase the number of RLAF H-34 pilots from three in 1964 to 32 men in early 1970.”<sup>536</sup> Also during 1969, RLAF T-28 pilots were rotated thru a Survival Training Course at Hua Hin.<sup>537</sup> After the end of the war in Laos, flight instruction at Udorn continued to exist, but under a new name, i.e. as Training and Liaison Detachment.<sup>538</sup>

### **Hmong pilots**

In 1966, Bill Lair, head of the CIA’s 4802<sup>nd</sup> Joint Liaison Detachment at Udorn, established a flight training program at Nong Khai (T-22) north of Udorn, which later shifted to Khon Kaen (T-40) south of Udorn. The original equipment were a Piper Cub and a Cessna 180,<sup>539</sup> and the instructor pilots came from the PARU, the RThAF, and CASI. By the summer of 1967, three classes of Hmong students were graduated, and at that time, Vang Pao was permitted to choose the 2 most promising of them for T-28 training at the USAF’s *Water Pump* school at Udorn; he chose his nephew Vang Tua and his brother-in-law Ly Lu, and their graduation was set for January 1968.<sup>540</sup> The Khon Kaen program briefly expanded in 1968 with the addition of a second Piper Cub and Cessna 180, and some non-Hmong Lao students were accepted in the program; but when, in 1969, Vang Pao was allowed to send more students to *Water Pump* training, the Khon Kaen program was discontinued.<sup>541</sup>

### **Flight training for the Khmer Air Force**

The Flight training program of the Khmer Air Force AU-24A Helio Stallion was organized at **Takhli** (T-05) in March 73.<sup>542</sup> “Actually, the Helio Stallion may be an interesting story. The way I understood it, the US Navy decided they needed twelve STOL aircraft to work with their Swift Boats in the Vietnam Delta. However, they only told the Helio Company in Mass about their request, and did not put out an open bid. When other aircraft manufacturers found out about it they complained to congress – but too late, the 12 aircraft were already built – and had been paid for out of Defense Dept funds. So the Navy never got the aircraft and they were just put in storage! To hide this snafu, and get the aircraft off the books – some legislation was passed to assist the Cambodian government in fighting the Khmer Rouge, and the aircraft were written off in this effort. Since there was no safe location in Cambodia, the training was carried out in Thailand (in the middle of the summer, where the hardware on the shoulder harness would get so hot, they would blister your face in you leaned into them!) I might further add, that to my knowledge, the FAA would not certify the aircraft due to longitudinal control problems. They finally certificated it after Helio attached a 20 inch rod, with a weight on the end of it, to the center leading edge of the stabilizer (or stabiliator). This rod protruded up inside the dorsal area of the fuselage. To my way of thinking – this did not completely

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<sup>535</sup> “Named Combat Wombat, the C-47 training team hailed from the 548<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Training Squadron” and was distinct from *Water Pump* (Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.374 note 13).

<sup>536</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.366. “In mid-1964, the United States turned over a single H-34 to Laos, for which the RLAF had three qualified pilots. To train additional pilots and mechanics, a Thailand-based USMC team instructed RLAF chopper students until late 1966. Beginning in 1967, the Marines were replaced by U.S. Army advisors” (Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.374 note 14).

<sup>537</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.367.

<sup>538</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.412.

<sup>539</sup> The Memorandum “Competitive aircraft” of 18 June 68 (in: UTD/Herd/B2) lists 2 Piper Cubs with CASI, N711 and N712. Both are said to be Customer owned and used for training at Udorn and Vientiane in June 1968 together with Cessna 180 N713. So these may have also been the training aircraft earlier used at Nong Khai.

<sup>540</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.170.

<sup>541</sup> Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, p.180, note 27.

<sup>542</sup> Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for March 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1.

solve the problem, and the aircraft was never safe. Sometimes flying it, the air flow over the tail would move the stabilizer surfaces up or down, and the stick would ‘walk’ forward and backward in the cockpit, and the aircraft would consequently nose up or down. Also, in a dive, if you reduced power – flattening the blade pitch to a certain critical angle, it would radically change the airflow over the tail – to the extent that you could get into a violent porpoise that was almost uncontrollable!”<sup>543</sup>



Khmer Air Force AU-24A “21322”, taken in May 73 by Jake Wehrell  
(with kind permission from Jake Wehrell)

In his e-mails dated 6 and 9 September 2008, Air America’s Project Manager Jake Wehrell answered several questions about this training: “My Position? I was the Project Manager, although two Forward Air Control (light plane) pilots from Eglin Air Force base were originally assigned to head up the program. (I think their names were Major Bob Donaldson and Major Chuck White.) The reason I was in charge is because there were three requirements for the Manager who would head up the program: He had to have done rocket and bomb training at some time in his career. He had to have flown tailwheel airplanes at sometime in his career, and he had to speak French. In the whole United States Air Force there was no one who qualified on all three counts! Thus, they asked the State Dept, who checked with Air America. Voila - me! [...] There were a total of four Instructor Pilots. The two USAF pilots, me, and my cohort from Air America: L.J ‘Jason’ Broussard, a cajon French speaking crop duster from Louisiana, who although he had no previous rocket or bombs qualifications, was a helluva pilot and spoke fluent French. (Incidentally he was killed last year – still crop dusting at age 75 – his aircraft had just come out of heavy maintenance.) [...] All the students were from one squadron – specifically set up for this assignment. I think there were twelve of them. Only one spoke some English. They were all well brought up, courteous and respectful. The tallest was 5'8" – many were only 5'2" – so for them – just SEEING over the instrument panel while in the landing attitude was a big problem. Unfortunately, when they would sit on cushions to correct this problem, the sad result was that they could not adequately reach the rudder pedals! (Reaching the rudder pedals in a Helio is REAL important, inasmuch as the

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<sup>543</sup> E-mail dated 5 September 2008, kindly sent to the author by Jake Wehrell.

aircraft has a great tendency to ground loop on landing – especially the turbo Helio Stallion we were flying – since it had a lighter turbo engine, and the fuselage was stretched, there was a greater moment arm rearward. In fact the Demo Pilot from the Helio factory ground looped two of them landing at Phnom Penh!) [...] I believe the time period was completely within 1973. [...] Of course this Helio Stallion aircraft was designed using the original prop driven Helio Courier. It had a Pratt Whitney turbo prop engine, and a STRETCHED fuselage (perhaps three feet), one whole side of this fuselage REMOVED, and a 900 round per minute, 50 caliber GATLIN GUN MOUNTED in that opening, and an electric control panel at the rear of the cabin to operate this gun. In addition to a pilot, and possibly a co-pilot, there was a third crew-member – the gunner. (Incidentally, during one flight, the electric control panel for the gun caught fire. I handed the fire extinguisher back to our gunner. He used it, but it turned out to be an extinguisher, whose agent is not allowed in aircraft, and it sucked every last molecule of oxygen out of my lungs, and I was sure I was going to expire at the controls.) [...] Did we lose any aircraft during training? No, but that porpoise I told you about occurred with one of my students during a 45 degree bombing dive, and the only way I could get out of it – at 800 feet above the ground, and headed almost straight down, was to ADD power. (Not an easy thing to do at this altitude and attitude.)”<sup>544</sup> [...] I do not believe there was ever a second group. Think just those original twelve flew them. (SMALL Air Force. They didn’t have a lot of applicants to pick from.) [...] As I recollect, the training lasted about two months.”<sup>545</sup>

Apart from Takhli, there were also other locations in Thailand that were used to train Khmer Air Force pilots, especially **Udorn**. On 8 October 73, Brigadier General Aderholt was



Air America facility, Udorn Air Base in the early seventies, courtesy Judy Porter

<sup>544</sup> E-mail dated 6 September 2008, kindly sent to the author by Jake Wehrell.

<sup>545</sup> E-mail dated 9 September 2008, kindly sent to the author by Jake Wehrell.

promoted to Major General Thomas W. Mellen's deputy, and one of the first steps taken was to take the *Water Pump* unit out of the 56<sup>th</sup> ACW at Nakhon Phanom and to transform it into a training unit for *Khmer Air Force* pilots, reporting to the Thailand Liaison Detachment, and this *Khmer Air Force* training program was carried out at Udorn, Thailand.<sup>546</sup> Later a training program for KAF O-1s and T-28s was organized at Udorn, but "the much sought project to send 30 KAF mechanics to TNN [= Tainan] for Basic Mechanics Course appears to have been completely scrubbed, due to political restrictions involved."<sup>547</sup> In June 73, 3 Khmer Air Force T-28Ds were flown to Udorn to be used for flight training,<sup>548</sup> and in July 73, 19 out of 30 T-28Ds assigned were at Thai-Am, Bangkok, for heavy maintenance or at Udorn for pilot training.<sup>549</sup> Apparently, aircraft delivered to Thai-Am at Bangkok were flown there by Air America pilots,<sup>550</sup> but the maintenance itself was done by mechanics of or hired by the *Khmer Air Force*.

On 1 November 73, 6 O-1Ds departed Phnom Penh's Pochentong airbase for pilot training at Udorn for approximately 20 weeks;<sup>551</sup> they returned to Pochentong on 11 March 74.<sup>552</sup> *Khmer Air Force* C-123K training was also done at Udorn.<sup>553</sup> In July 73, Khmer Air Force T-28B "38241" was used as at Udorn to train *Khmer Air Force* pilots, but needed an engine and propeller change.<sup>554</sup> A photo of "38241" minus insignia can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/60121715@N00/3762240503/in/photostream/>. The following extract from Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report shows, to which extent the *Khmer Air Force* at that time depended upon Thai institutions: *Water Pump* offered flight training at Udorn, and heavy maintenance and other technical services like inspections were performed at Bangkok by Thai-Am, i.e. the Thai Airways Maintenance Corporation:

**The following aircraft departed from Pochentong Air Base to out-country:**

<u>TYPE/Aircraft Number</u>	<u>Date Departed</u>	<u>Destination</u>	<u>Reason</u>
O-1D 55-4689	1 November 1973	Udorn, Thailand	Pilot's Training
O-1D 57-2815	1 November 1973	Udorn, Thailand	Pilot's Training
O-1D 57-2887	1 November 1973	Udorn, Thailand	Pilot's Training
O-1D 57-2816	1 November 1973	Udorn, Thailand	Pilot's Training
O-1D 57-2969	1 November 1973	Udorn, Thailand	Pilot's Training
O-1D 57-2945	1 November 1973	Udorn, Thailand	Pilot's Training
T-28D 51-3706	20 November 1973	Thai-Am	TCTO Compliance
T-28D 51-7729	20 November 1973	Thai-Am	Over"G" Inspection
T-28D 51-153647	20 November 1973	Thai-Am	Over"G" Inspection
T-28D 51-153649	20 November 1973	Thai-Am	Over"G" Inspection
T-28D 51-153656	20 November 1973	Thai-Am	Damage repair
C-123K 54-0578	20 November 1973	Thai-Am	Phase Inspection
C-123K 56-4377	21 November 1973	Thai-Am	Phase Inspection
UH-1H 71-20274	28 November 1973	Thai-Am	Damage Repair

(Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for November 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1)

<sup>546</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, pp.231/2, 240-42.

<sup>547</sup> Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly reports of March and May 73 (in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); quotation: May report, p.1.

<sup>548</sup> Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1.

<sup>549</sup> Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for July 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1.

<sup>550</sup> Grandolini/Cooper/Troung, *Cambodia*, part 2.

<sup>551</sup> Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for November 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1.

<sup>552</sup> Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for March 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8.

<sup>553</sup> Trest, *Air Commando One*, p.242.

<sup>554</sup> Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for July 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1.

It should not be forgotten, however, that administratively, Air America's maintenance station at Phnom Penh in Cambodia, which was run under the name of LMAT or "Logistics Management Assistance Team" to help maintain the aircraft of the *Khmer Air Force* and which was headed by Ward S. Reimer (MTS/LMAT – Manager, Technical Services for LMAT), who was promoted SCR (Senior Company Representative) at Phnom Penh, effective 1 January 1972,<sup>555</sup> reported to Bangkok. Ward Reimer recalls: "The first liaison between MEDTC [= Military Equipment Delivery Team – Cambodia] and LMAT and where we got the orders was with Lt.Col. George Doll. He provided the overall direction and controlled the dollar line. As time wore on, we provided battle reports and accomplishments of the fighter sorties. [...] My administrative boss was Dave Hickler. Dave spent very little time at Phnom Penh and remained in Bangkok. The maintenance boss was my longtime boss George Stubbs in Tainan."<sup>556</sup>

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<sup>555</sup> Circular "Announcement" dated 23 March 72, in the possession of Ward S. Reimer, who kindly sent it to the author.

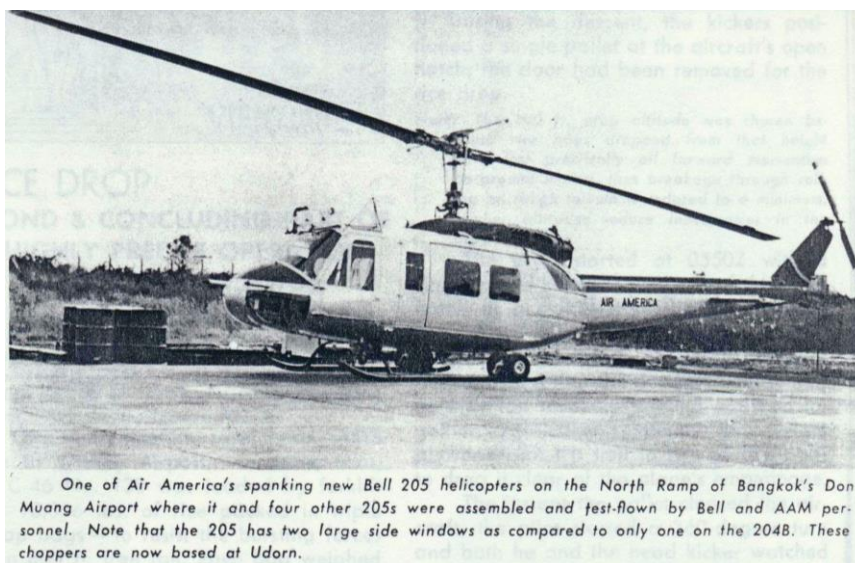
<sup>556</sup> E-mail dated 31 December 2005, kindly sent to the author by Ward S. Reimer.

## VI) Maintenance

### 1) Bangkok Station

In the early days, CAT and Air America aircraft had to return to Tainan for maintenance, but certain types of aircraft maintenance were also performed by CAT and then by Air America at Bangkok – probably since early 1951. Probably since the late 1950ies, smaller aircraft operating in Laos like the Helio Couriers also flew to Bangkok for periodical maintenance. On 31 May 61, for example, Bill Andresevic ferried Helio B-835 from Vientiane (V-08 at that time) to Bangkok (S-09) for maintenance and tests and returned it to Vientiane on 26 June, and on 8 June 61, he ferried Helio B-833 from Bangkok back to Vientiane.<sup>557</sup> On 11 September 1961, Andresevic ferried Helio “326” from Vientiane to Bangkok for maintenance and tests and ferried it back to Vientiane on 17 September.<sup>558</sup> In 1963/64, Caribou “853”, which was assigned to the PARU contract at that time, was based at Bangkok, where also most of the maintenance was done.<sup>559</sup>

For only a couple of months in 1962, Air America operated 7 DHC-2 Beavers on loan from the US Army. The Beavers arrived at Bangkok in crates on 15 February 62,<sup>560</sup> were assembled by Thai Airways according to contract no. BKK 62-001,<sup>561</sup> and were then officially handed over to Air America at Bangkok on 1 March 62.<sup>562</sup> Training flights at Bangkok started immediately, and on 11 March 62, a group of 5 Beavers – L-201, L-202, L-204, L-205, and L-207 – was ferried to Udorn, with Captain Adams in L-201 as formation leader.<sup>563</sup> They were assigned to contract no. AF62(531)-1674 and were flown inside Laos. In 1962, Air America also entered into a contract with the Military Air Transport Service to provide ground handling at Bangkok for twenty C-121 and C-124 turnarounds per month.<sup>564</sup>



*Air America Log*, vol. I, no.2 (December 1967), p.1

<sup>557</sup> Log book of William Andresevic, in: UTD/Leary/B43F9.

<sup>558</sup> Log book of William Andresevic, in: UTD/Leary/B43F9.

<sup>559</sup> Joe Hazen recalls: “Maintenance on [Caribou] 853 was done at S-09 [Bangkok] or S-08 [Udorn], so we had to go, mostly to S-09, every 2~3 days. [...] I don't recall any serious problems with 853 while flying this contract” (e-mail dated 5 May 2013 kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen).

<sup>560</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Co Ltd. of 23 January 62, in: UTD/CIA/B7F1.

<sup>561</sup> Memorandum dated 9 February 62, in: UTD/Fink/B2F16.

<sup>562</sup> Aircraft list of June 62, corrected to Sept.1963, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.

<sup>563</sup> Proposed operations order for L-20 ferry flight BKK-UDN, in: UTD/Leary/B48F4.

<sup>564</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air Asia Company Limited of 8 May 1962, in: UTD/CIA/B7F1.

In 1967, Air America's Bangkok Station assembled the Company's new Bell 205s. "Our BKK base recently received five spanking new Bell 205 helicopters. Each machine was packed in three large crates which were hauled from Bangkok's dockside to its Don Muang Airport on two huge trucks. The three crates contained respectively the chopper's fuselage, tail boom, and rotor blades. The 205s were uncrated and assembled in the open on the North Ramp of the airport. A maximum effort was put forth by all AAM and Bell personnel concerned and the aircraft were made ready for flight test in very short order. Assembly of the 205s was done under the supervision of Robert (Bob) Davis, Superintendent of Maintenance. The reams of paperwork involved in importing the choppers were efficiently handled by Norbert Wynn, Superintendent, Supply."<sup>565</sup>

Apart from maintenance, Air America's Bangkok base "has support responsibility for AAM facilities at Udorn and Chiang Mai, Thailand; Vientiane, Laos and Saigon, South Vietnam. BKK furnishes support in virtually every area: personnel recruitment; procurement; aircraft servicing; pilot check-out; payroll disbursement; passports and visas; contacts with the Royal Government of Thailand, with Embassies, or with fuel suppliers. Base Manager Dave Hickler, and his staff of 300 plus, gladly do anything and everything to support AAM's facilities throughout SEA."<sup>566</sup> This explains why, when the Taipei Station was phased out during the second half of 1973, some of the administration offices were transferred to Bangkok: From vol. VII, no.5 onwards, the *Air America Log* was no longer published at Kadena, Okinawa, but at Bangkok. On 1 April 73, Air America's Operations Support Group from Taipei took office at Bangkok,<sup>567</sup> and even Air America's Managing Director and CEO Paul C. Velte Jr. switched from Washington DC to Bangkok in 1973 – at least for some time.<sup>568</sup> "It was noted that as of 1 July 1974, Udorn and Chiang Mai activities having been closed for the most part, Air America's strength in Thailand was down to 148, 81 of those being retained at Udorn for PIPO (Phase in Phase out) purposes; the balance being at Bangkok."<sup>569</sup> Also on 1 July 74, Bangkok's Assistant Vice President David Hickler sent a telex to CEO Paul Velte and to the President Hugh Grundy, both at Washington, saying: "We have no more operational or non-operational aircraft in BKK. The last aircraft N3612R and N367F had departed BKK for SGN this noon."<sup>570</sup>

## **2) Udorn Maintenance Base Company aircraft**

As has been shown above, Air America's Udorn facility began in March 1961 as the home base and repair station for Air America's new fleet of UH-34D helicopters. "When MABS-16 and H&MS detachments rotated to Okinawa, in addition to leaving critical tools and rolling stock, AAM maintenance acquired possession of two high-speed field generators. Maintenance utilized both units outside the hangers, but never designed for 24 hour, seven-day operations, they proved inadequate to sustain long periods of night work. Personnel staged one low wattage generator at the decrepit line shack alongside the taxiway. Capable of illuminating only a few 100-watt bulbs, the unit could not light even a single spotlight."<sup>571</sup> "By the end of September 1961, Air America had taken over all project maintenance and supply responsibility."<sup>572</sup> In 1962, the aircraft maintenance capability was expanded to

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<sup>565</sup> (Anonymous), "AAM acquires five beautiful Bell 205s", in: *Air America Log*, vol. I no.2, Dec. 1967, p.1.

<sup>566</sup> Dave H. Hickler, "Bangkok: big, bustling base", in: *Air America Log*, vol. II no.1, Jan. 1968, pp.4-5.

<sup>567</sup> (Anonymous), "Air America, Inc.'s Operations Support Group", in: *Air America Log*, vol. VII, no. 9, pp. 4-5.

<sup>568</sup> (Anonymous), "Air America, Inc.'s Operations Support Group", in: *Air America Log*, vol. VII, no. 9, p. 1.

<sup>569</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committees of Air America Inc. and Air Asia Company Limited of 9 July 74, in: UTD/CIA/B10F2.

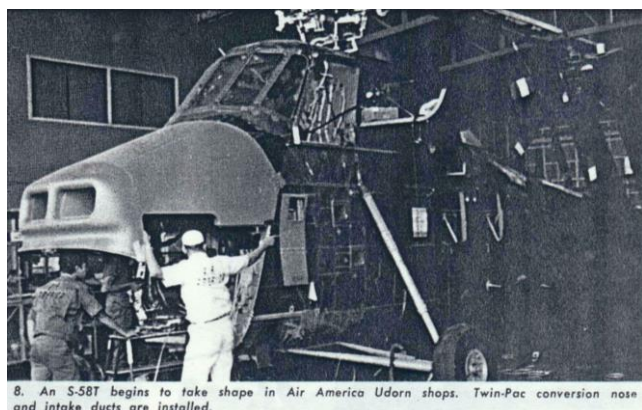
<sup>570</sup> Telex dated 1 July 74, BKK to WAS, in: UTD/CIA/B18F4.

<sup>571</sup> E-Mail dated 5 February 2015 kindly sent to the author by Dick Casterlin.

<sup>572</sup> J. Forney, "Briefing notes on AAM Maintenance Operation-Udorn", in: UTD/Leary/B45F3.

accommodate Company aircraft like the DHC-2 Beaver and the Helio Courier. “By mid-1963, the first C-123s were assigned. By the end of 1964, \$272,000 had been expended to improve facilities and over 400 personnel were employed. Growth continued, and by the end of 1966, a further \$900,000 had been spent improving and expanding facilities. The maintenance facility was now maintaining 72 aircraft of twelve different types.”<sup>573</sup> In October 1970, the Executive Committee “reviewed the current status of construction of the additional facilities which have been approved by the Deputy Chief JUSMAG for Udorn to accommodate the expanded helicopter and fixed wing operations at that base. The additional facilities have been under construction since July. It is estimated that the total construction project will cost \$892,000, which cost is being paid by the customers under Form F procedures. The project consists of paving the so-called South 40, provision of taxiways and access roads, vehicular bridge, security fencing and lighting, utilities, sewage pump station, two hangers, offices and shops, warehouses, and operations building. The last phase of the construction project is scheduled for completion by May 1971, with some major elements scheduled for completion as early as December, 1970.”<sup>574</sup>

Udorn was also the place where, in 1970-71, five former US military UH-34Ds were converted to Air America S-58Ts. “Each of the five helicopters to be converted is first put through overhaul to make the airframe airworthy. Then, Udorn Technical Services personnel make a simultaneous installation of a conversion kit to change the chopper from a UH-34D to an S-58D (which is a Federal Aviation Administration certificated helicopter) and an engine kit which converts the machine from a piston-powered S-58D to a turbine-driven S-58T. The engine kit consists of a twin turbine powerplant combined in what is called a ‘Twin-Pac’. The engine is a PT6T-3 turboshaft powerplant, produced by United Aircraft of Canada, which incorporates a combining gearbox; it has a single output drive of 1,800 shaft horsepower. The combining gearbox reduces engine revolutions-per-minute from 33,000 to 6,600 turns. It also contains a pair of overriding clutches, a torquemeter for each turbine, and an independent oil system to assure maximum reliability should emergency single-engine operation become necessary. This gearbox drives a second, angle change gearbox which further reduces rpm. from 6,600 to 2,804 turns and changes the drive angle of the horizontally-mounted powerplants to accommodate the main rotor drive shaft. Some other changes involve the following: a substantial re-work of cockpit consoles and instrument panels, modification of the aircraft’s electrical system, addition of an engine compartment fire warning and extinguishing system, and moving some avionics equipment forward to keep the chopper’s center of gravity within limits.”<sup>575</sup> The first operational heavy lift of Air America’s S-58T:



8. An S-58T begins to take shape in Air America Udorn shops. Twin-Pac conversion nose and intake ducts are installed.



9. H-73's engine successfully slung under XW-PHA.

(*Air America Log*, vol. V, no. 4, 1971, pp. 5 and 7)

<sup>573</sup> J. L. Forney, “Air America at Udorn, Thailand – a brief history”, in: *Air America Log*, vol.VI no.5, 1972, p.4.

<sup>574</sup> Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committees of Air America Inc. and Air Asia Co Ltd of 27 October 70, pp.4/5, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4.

<sup>575</sup> (Anonymous), “UTH Converts UH-34D choppers to S-58Ts”, in: *Air America Log*, vol. V, no.3, 1971, p.5.



“Air America’s helicopter H-73 experienced an engine failure near Nong Khai, Thailand, where it landed. [S-58T] XW-PHA flew the failed engine back to Udorn for overhaul. This occurred while the S-58T was undergoing local evaluation and pilot / engineer Captain R. D. Davis, S-58T Project Manager, was conducting pilot training. The normal dry season dust problem is quite vividly depicted in some of the accompanying photos. XW-PHA and four other piston-powered choppers were converted to turbine-driven machines in Air America’s Udorn shops.”<sup>576</sup>

“As of June 1972, \$3,772,000 had been spent developing and expanding facilities at Udorn. During U. S. Government Fiscal Year 1972, 93,300 revenue helicopter and fixed-wing flying hours were generated or supported by the Base. During the same period 1,453,550 direct skilled maintenance manhours were expended on Company and Customer maintenance contract operations. Two hundred Company and Customer aircraft of 19 types are now based or maintained at Udorn. Currently employing 2,143 people (1,715 of whom are Thai), AAM Udorn has grown to the size of a small town. Administration and training space alone totals 85,700 sq.ft.; hangars, shops and warehouses total 236,000 sq.ft.; 1,066,000 sq.ft. of aircraft maintenance hardstands are available. In a typical month, the Base powerplant produces 627,000 kilowatt hours of electricity; the water plant purifies 4,850,000 gallons of raw water; and the Club and Snack facilities serve approximately 58,000 meals. A training school graduates nearly 200 Thai technicians each year – all employed by the Company. Like all small towns, AAM Udorn requires a fire station and a police force. Four modern fire trucks, 32 firemen and a Security Department of 102 men protect personnel, aircraft and plant facilities.”<sup>577</sup>

### **RLAF and Raven aircraft maintenance at Udorn**

It is unknown, if and how maintenance of RLAF and Raven aircraft at Udorn was covered by the old *Madrider* contract. The original *Madrider* contract (no. AF62(531)-1674) was effective 1 July 61,<sup>578</sup> and at that time, the Raven program did not yet exist, and the RLAF base was at Savannakhet.<sup>579</sup> The follow-on contracts to AF 62(531)-1674 were all concluded between Air America and Deputy Chief, JUSMAG, Thailand: Between 1 July 63 and 30 June 65, this was contract no. AF 62(531)-1758,<sup>580</sup> followed by contract no. AF 62(531)-1841 between 1 July 65 and 30 June 67.<sup>581</sup> Visibly, these contracts only cover Air America’s UH-34D helicopters. But an undated report called *Maintenance Operation-Udorn* that was probably written in 1967 or 1968,<sup>582</sup> states: “In August 1963 UH-34D IRAN began at Udorn; in October assembly and regular maintenance (damage and routine) of U-17’s and L-19’s began; in December 1963 IRAN of U-17’s was undertaken; T-28 support, primarily electronics and structural repairwork, started in mid-1963.”<sup>583</sup> For 1965, the report states: “Regular periodic maintenance of L-19’s, U-17’s, C-123’s, Helios, Caribous, and regular repairwork on T-28’s increased several fold.”<sup>584</sup> The successor to contract no. AF 62(531)-1841 was contract no. F62531-67-C-0028, covering the period between 1 July 67 and 30 June 70, which was followed by a more comprehensive contract on 1 July 70, that is by F04606-

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<sup>576</sup> (Anonymous), “AAM’s S-58T Workhorse”, in: *Air America Log*, vol. V, no. 4, 1971, pp. 6-7.

<sup>577</sup> J. L.Forney, “Air America at Udorn, Thailand – a brief history”, in: *Air America Log*, vol.VI no.5 (1972), p.4.

<sup>578</sup> In: UTD/Kaufman/B1F12.

<sup>579</sup> Pratt, *The Royal Laotian Air Force 1954-1970* (CHECO Report), pp.9-11; Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-1972*, pp.30 and 150.

<sup>580</sup> In: UTD/Kaufman/B1F10.

<sup>581</sup> In: UTD/Kaufman/B1F9.

<sup>582</sup> (Anonymous), *Maintenance Operation-Udorn*, in: UTD/Leary/B45F3. The report gives a very detailed picture of the years 1961-66 and then adds some very short notes about 1967/68.

<sup>583</sup> (Anonymous), *Maintenance Operation-Udorn*, pp. 2/3, in: UTD/Leary/B45F3.

<sup>584</sup> (Anonymous), *Maintenance Operation-Udorn*, p. 4, in: UTD/Leary/B45F3.

71-C-0002.<sup>585</sup> Unfortunately, these two contracts are not available, but dated 1 September 71, modification no. P00035 to contract no. F04606-71-C-0002 quotes among the points covered “Inspection and repair as necessary (IRAN) of T-28 type aircraft at Udorn in accordance with Appendix ‘A’ entitled ‘Work Specification for IRAN of T-28 type aircraft’ dated 28 Sept. 67.”<sup>586</sup> So according to these documents still available, 1963 seems to be the year, when Air America first maintained RLAf T-28s at Udorn. The same paper also mentions “Inspection and repair as necessary (IRAN) of O-1, U-10, U-17 and T-41 aircraft at Udorn. Supply procedures for O-1 and U-17 aircraft shall be in accordance with Appendix ‘B’ dated 10 July 1971”.<sup>587</sup>

However, it was probably much earlier that Air America’s Udorn facility began maintenance and repair of these types of RLAf and Raven aircraft: In 1964, Udorn became home of *Water Pump*, the USAF unit deployed to train Lao pilots to fly the T-28. Maintenance of the RLAf T-28 was initially done by the USAF’s 432<sup>nd</sup> Support Group,<sup>588</sup> but then by Air America’s Maintenance Base at Udorn. As Jack Forney, who had been in charge of the Air America maintenance at Udorn, says: “The AAM operation at Udorn provided all heavy maintenance and almost all intermediate maintenance for the entire RLAf fleet during the period in question [i.e. the 1964-69 period]. In the case of the T-28s, we provided the heavy and intermediate maintenance at Udorn and at Vientiane and up country Laos (LS-20, et al). For the RLAf H-34s, we contracted with Air Vietnam (because of political considerations) for the periodic heavy maintenance operations conducted at Saigon, but virtually all other H-34 maintenance was performed at Udorn. For the O-1s all maintenance was performed at Udorn, though the T-28 pilots and USAF support personnel were to accomplish daily maintenance up country.”<sup>589</sup> Already in 1965, “regular periodic maintenance of L-19’s [= O-1s], U-17’s” and “regular repairwork on T-28s” for RLAf aircraft covering 5 T-28s and 9 O-1, U-17As and Beavers were carried out at Udorn by Air America.<sup>590</sup> It is also known that since 1968, the entire O-1 and T-28 fleet of the *Ravens* was maintained by Air America’s Udorn facility.<sup>591</sup>



T-28B “0-37644” in RLAf colors at Udorn in the seventies  
(photo by Tom Lum, photo no.VA024829, No Date, Allen Cates Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, with kind permission from Steve Maxner)

<sup>585</sup> Mentioned in: Price negotiation memorandum dated 20 October 71, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F8.

<sup>586</sup> Contract no. F04606-71-C-0002, Modification no. P00035 dated 1 September 71, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.23.

<sup>587</sup> Contract no. F04606-71-C-0002, Modification no. P00035 dated 1 September 71, p.2, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.23.

<sup>588</sup> E-mail dated 14 June 2009, kindly sent to the author by Col. Al Shinkle.

<sup>589</sup> E-mail dated 2 April 2002 kindly sent to the author by Jack Forney.

<sup>590</sup> J. Forney, “Briefing notes on AAM Maintenance Operation-Udorn”, pp. 4,6, and 8, in: UTD/Leary/B45F3.

<sup>591</sup> Robbins, *The Ravens*, pp.75-78.

AMENDMENT OF SOLICITATION/MODIFICATION OF CONTRACT		PAGE 1 OF 1	
F04606-71-C-0002-P00035		FR 72-1-AM-8	
1. NAME OF CONTRACTOR Air America, Inc. Field Executive Office Box 20019 APO San Francisco 96239 c/o 824th Hq. Sq.		2. ADDRESS OF CONTRACTOR Sacramento Air Materiel AFMA Directorate of Equipment & Production McClellan AFB CA 95652 Buyer: Capt.N.L. Kaufman/PPWCB/68L/643-6665	
3. CONTRACT NUMBER F04606-71-C-0002-P00035		4. MODIFICATION NUMBER P00035	
5. DATE OF MODIFICATION 70JUL61		6. CONTRACTOR'S REPRESENTATIVE James E. Spencer	
7. BUYER'S REPRESENTATIVE Var N. Green		8. DATE OF MODIFICATION SEP 17 1971	
9. CONTRACTOR'S ADDRESS Air America, Inc. Field Executive Office Box 20019 APO San Francisco 96239 c/o 824th Hq. Sq.		10. CONTRACTOR'S PHONE NUMBER 70JUL61	
11. THIS AMENDMENT SHALL BE SUBJECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE CONTRACT AND THE AMENDMENTS HERETO.		12. CONTRACTOR'S SIGNATURE James E. Spencer	
13. BUYER'S SIGNATURE Var N. Green		14. DATE OF MODIFICATION SEP 17 1971	
15. CONTRACTOR'S ADDRESS Air America, Inc. Field Executive Office Box 20019 APO San Francisco 96239 c/o 824th Hq. Sq.		16. CONTRACTOR'S PHONE NUMBER 70JUL61	

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"5AG Inspection and repair as necessary (IRAN) of O-1, U-10, U-17 and T-41 aircraft at Udorn. Supply procedures for O-1, and U-17 aircraft shall be in accordance with Appendix 'B' dated 10 July 1971."

(d) By amending Items Nr. 10AA and 10AB of Part I, to read:

"10AA Depreservation and preparation for flight of UH-34 type aircraft at Udorn RTAFB Thailand and other SEA locations.

10AB Where required, aircraft flying services necessary to ferry UH-34 aircraft prepared at locations other than Udorn under 10AA above."

(e) By amending Item Nr. 14, as amended by Modification P00025, to read:

"Item Nr. 14 Aircraft Maintenance - Other than Udorn  
Services for scheduled and unscheduled maintenance on up to twenty-seven (27) O-1, U-17 type aircraft at five (5) locations other than Udorn in accordance with Attachment '23', 'Work Specification for non-Udorn based O-1, U-17 aircraft, dated 27 August 1971'."

(f) By adding the following monthly report (Data to be reported as of end of each month and submitted by the 10th day of the following month) to Item Nr. 18AC of Part I:

"7. Report of Government Furnished Material, UL-112, for UH-34, T-28, O-1, and U-17 aircraft --- AFLO & ACC.  
Report issues to aircraft at Udorn against applicable aircraft serial/tail number.  
Report issues to other location, at time of issue from Udorn, against type aircraft and location number."

(g) By amending Item Nr. 21, as added by Modification P00025, to read:

"Item Nr. 21 TACAN Operation and Maintenance  
Services necessary to operate and maintain one (1) TACAN site at a designated SEA location in accordance with 'Work Specification for the Operation and Maintenance of SEA TACAN facilities and associated equipment', dated 23 August 1971, added to Order 0004 by Modification 08 thereto."

Contract no. F04606-71-C-0002 Modification P00035 of 1 September 71, p.1. and 2 (in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 23)

On 26 January 72, *DepChief* (Deputy Chief, Joint United States Military Advisory Group, Thailand) asked Udorn's Detachment 11, AFCMC (Air Force Contract Maintenance Center), to advise Air America's Udorn Base Manager Clarence Abadie that 41 UH-34s (apparently 18 RLA and 23 Air America aircraft), 8 UH-1Ms (the *White Horse* fleet whose planned phase out was 31 May 72), 3 UH-1Ds (apparently of the UTT Flight Detachment) and one or two CH-54s "in addition to non-contract rotary wing aircraft" were to be maintained under contract 002 and that all other UH-34s should be retained in cocoons – probably including the aircraft intended for the Indonesian Air Force.<sup>592</sup> Apparently, a phone call had preceded that



A *White Horse* UH-1M at Udorn in the fall of 1973 (courtesy Ward Reimer)

<sup>592</sup> Deputy Chief, Joint United States Military Advisory Group, Thailand, letter dated 26 January 72 to USAF, Det.11 AFCMC, Udorn, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.24.



A US Army CH-54 Skycrane airlifting Air America's ill-fated Caribou "392" out of Ban Muang Ngan (LS-236), Laos, on 21 May 69  
(with kind permission from the Air America Association)

**DEPUTY CHIEF**  
**JOINT UNITED STATES MILITARY ADVISORY GROUP**  
THAILAND  
BOX 62, APO SAN FRANCISCO 96237

*RAB*

DCH-L/AFCM 26 JAN 1972

SUBJECT: Rotary Wing Aircraft Maintenance Contract 0002

USAFPO/ACO  
Det 11 AFCMC  
APO 96237  
Attn: Mr. Mc Grath

1. Request you advise Mr. Abadie, Base Manager, Air America, Inc. that forty-one (41) UH-34's, eight (8) UH-1M's, three (3) UH-1D's and one or two CH-54's in addition to non-contract rotary wing aircraft will be maintained under Contract 0002 at Udorn.
2. Plans are to retain all other UH-34's in cocoons and/or temporary storage. Aircraft to be utilized as replacement aircraft for RLAF or contractor operated aircraft losses or aircraft undergoing CBD/IRAN.
3. Only limited maintenance beyond crew chiefs capability will be applied to UH-1M's (planned phase out is 31 May 72), UH-1D's and CH-54's. No consideration being given to IRAN of these aircraft at Udorn.

FOR THE DEPUTY CHIEF:

*Rome D. Smyth*  
ROME D. SMYTH  
LTC, USA  
Adjutant

DepChief letter of 26 January 72  
(in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24)

0002AG C-7 Aircraft. Flying services as directed by USAID/ASB, utilizing one (1) Contractor furnished C-7 type aircraft. The Base Point for operation shall be Don Muang Airport, Bangkok, Thailand.

As set forth in Exhibit "B" to this Section E.

0003 Flying Services - Additional Flight Personnel:  
Flying Services as directed in accordance with Attachment "6" or "11" utilizing additional flight crew personnel as set forth in Exhibit "C", Section E. The furnishing of additional flight personnel shall be as requested by USAID/ASB in accordance with the provisions of Section F-4. The additional flight personnel shall be utilized to meet the requirements of Item 0001 and 0002 and other requirements of USAID/ASB.

Item 0003 Prices  
As set forth in Exhibit "C" to this Section E.

0004 Emergency Flying Services:  
Emergency flying services in accordance with provisions of Section F-11.

Item 0004 Prices  
As set forth in Exhibit "A", "B" or "C" of this Section E for Government furnished aircraft, Contractor furnished aircraft, or additional flight personnel flying services, respectively. For purchase of non-Contractor operated flying services or for rental by Contractor of aircraft, at Contractor's cost therefor.

0005 Aircraft Maintenance:  
Maintenance services as hereinafter specified in this Item 0005 as directed by the ACO. Functional check flights performed in accordance with F.O. 1-1-800 on O-1, U-17, U-4, U-6, U-10, C-47, T-28, and T-41 aircraft will be the responsibility of the Government.

Item 0005 Prices  
As set forth in Exhibit "A", "B" or "C" of this Section E for Government furnished aircraft, Contractor furnished aircraft, or additional flight personnel flying services, respectively. For purchase of non-Contractor operated flying services or for rental by Contractor of aircraft, at Contractor's cost therefor.

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F04606-71-C-0002-P00061

0005AA Scheduled and unscheduled maintenance at Udom of UH-34 aircraft as set forth in Attachment "10".

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0005AB Scheduled and unscheduled maintenance on C-47, UH-1, O-1, U-4, U-6, U-10, U-17, T-28, T-41, C-46 and CH-54 type aircraft and UH-34 aircraft at Udom excluding those in 0005AA, above.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0005AC Inspection and repair as necessary (IRAN) of T-28 type aircraft at Udom in accordance with Appendix "A" entitled "Work Specification for IRAN of T-28 Type Aircraft" dated 28 Sept. 1967, and Appendix "B" dated 10 July 1971.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0005AD Inspection and repair as necessary (IRAN) of UH-34 type aircraft at Udom in accordance with Appendix "A" file Nr. WR/H-34D/58M, dated 8 February 1967, Revision Nr. 1, dated 10 May 1967, and Revision Nr. 2, dated 7 July 1967; and Appendix "B", dated 10 July 1971.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0005AE Scheduled and unscheduled maintenance services on UH-34, CH-54, U-4, C-46 and UH-1 type aircraft at locations other than Udom.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0005AF Unscheduled maintenance at locations other than Udom.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0005AG Inspection and repair as necessary (IRAN) of O-1, U-10, U-17 and T-41 aircraft at Udom. Supply procedures for O-1, and U-17 aircraft shall be in accordance with Appendix "B" dated 10 July 1971.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0005AH Repair and maintenance overhaul of UH-34 components and equipment at Udom not otherwise provided for under subitems 0005AA and 0005AD above.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

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F04606-71-C-0002-P00061

0005AJ Scheduled and unscheduled maintenance on C-123 type aircraft at Udom, and at other locations as directed by the ACO in accordance with Attachment "24", Appendix "A", File Nr. WR/C-123/FY72/2/SP dated 21 Jan 1971, revised 16 Jun 1971, 1 Dec 1971, 12 Jan 1972, and 21 Mar 1972; and Attachment "25", Appendix "B", File Nr. WR/C-7A/C-123/FY72-3/SP dated 3 Mar 1971, Revision Nr. 3, dated 1 Jun 1972.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0005AK Scheduled and unscheduled maintenance on C-7A type aircraft at Udom and at other locations as directed by the ACO in accordance with Attachment "26", Appendix "A", File Nr. WR/C-7A/FY72/3/SP, dated 1 Feb 1971, revised 16 June 1971; and Attachment "27", Appendix "B", File Nr. WR/C-7A/C-123/FY72-3/SP, dated 3 Mar 1971, revision Nr. 3 dated 1 Jun 1972.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0005AL Inspection and repair as necessary (IRAN) of C-46 and U-4 type aircraft at Tainan, Taiwan or other locations as directed by the ACO.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0006 Other Maintenance at Udom:  
Maintenance services on vehicular and ground power equipment at the facility at RTAFB, Udom, Thailand, as directed by the ACO, which is not organic to the Government furnished property provided to the Contractor at the facility at RTAFB, Udom, Thailand, and the maintenance and operation of which is not provided for under Item 0012.

Item 0006 Prices  
\$2.37 per Direct Skilled Labor Hour.

0007 Orders - Udom and Other Locations:  
Maintenance, aircraft flying and other services as hereinafter specified in this Item 0007 necessary to accomplish work set forth in Orders issued pursuant to the provisions of Section F-13 at the facility at RTAFB, Udom, Thailand, or at other locations as directed by the ACO.

Item 0007 Prices

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0007AC Recovery of aircraft other than those contemplated by Item 0008, below.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0007AD All other services set forth in Orders.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0007AE Aircraft flying services necessary to ferry the aircraft or perform functional check flights as set forth in Orders.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0008 Crash Battle Damage (CBD) Repair - Udom and Other Locations:  
Maintenance and aircraft flying services as hereinafter specified in this Item 0008 for aircraft under Deputy Chief surveillance at the facility at RTAFB, Udom, Thailand, or other locations as directed by the ACO.

Item 0008 Prices

0008AA Preparation of an aircraft for one-time flight from a designated location to the facility at RTAFB, Udom, Thailand.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0008AB Aircraft flying services necessary to ferry the aircraft prepared under 0008AA, above, to the facility at RTAFB, Udom, Thailand, or other locations.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0008AC Crash Battle Damage (CBD) repair on designated aircraft at the facility at Udom or other locations.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

0009 Modification/Re-configuration of Aircraft - Udom and Other Locations:  
Maintenance services as hereinafter specified in this Item 0009 at the facility at RTAFB, Udom, Thailand, or other Contractor facilities as directed by the ACO.

Item 0009 Prices

0009AA Modification of Contractor-owned aircraft as agreed to by the Contractor.

As set forth in Exhibit "F" to this Section E.

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F04606-71-C-0002-P00061

Contract no. F04606-71-C-0002: Modification no. P00061 dated 9 August 72, pp. 4 to 7 (UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24)

letter, as already Modification no. P00044 to contract no. F04606-71-C-0002, dated 7 January 72, had included the UH-1s and CH-54s. As can be seen, repair and maintenance of UH-34s, UH-1s and CH-54s will also be performed "at locations other than Udom", i.e. at other locations in Laos or after an accident.<sup>593</sup> On 1 July 72, the original contract no. F04606-71-C-0002 of 1970 was combined with former contracts AID-439-342 and AID-439-713 to become Modification no. P00054 to contract no. F04606-71-C-0002, with another conversion into

<sup>593</sup> Modification no. P00044 to contract no. F04606-71-C-0002, dated 7 January 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24.

“the uniform contract format” by Modification no. P00061 dated 9 August 72.<sup>594</sup> As can be seen below, especially Modification no. P00061 shows that at that time, Air America’s Udorn Maintenance facility was responsible for maintaining and repairing nearly all RLAf aircraft also inside Laos. In 1972/73, Air America also reconstructed 14 former US Navy and US Marines UH-34Ds at Udorn and delivered them to the TNI-AU or Indonesian Air Force. This was called “Project Peace rotor”.<sup>595</sup> While the cease-fire agreement of 21 February 73 did not very much affect Air America’s Maintenance base at Udorn, the end came in mid-1974.

### **Sale of Udorn Maintenance Base**

“Due to the increased political pressure being applied to get Air America, Inc. out of Thailand, it became apparent in the early part of 1974 that Air America Inc. would not be permitted to operate in Thailand after 30 June 1974. Many meetings were held with American Embassy, Thailand officials, JUSMAGT and DEPCH attending. As a result of these meetings, it was determined that beginning the first of July, 1974, the operation and maintenance of the Udorn facility would be taken over by the Thai Airways Maintenance Co. When this determination was made, joint meetings were arranged with Thai Airways Maintenance Co., Air America Inc., PACAF Procurement Center, and DEPCH personnel in attendance. The purpose of these meetings was to work out the necessary details for the Phase-in of Thai Airways Maintenance Co. and the Phase-out of Air America Inc. Some of the details were as follows:

- a. That Thai Airways Maintenance Co. would position a number of key personnel at Udorn the first of June 1974 to determine the number of employees that would be required to operate the facilities and provide the maintenance for the FY74 requirements.
- b. That Thai Airways Maintenance Co. would offer employment to the Air America Inc. employees.
- c. That Air America Inc. would retain as many key personnel, for up to 90 days, as Thai Airways Maintenance Co. requested to assist them during the Phase-in Phase-out.

“The transition went smoothly, and the last Air America Inc. employee left the Udorn facility the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1974. After the signing of the peace agreement [...] and agreements reached thereon in April 1974, Air America Inc. immediately started a pullout from Laos and all operations, both flying and maintenance, were completely terminated on 3 June 1974. As a result of the termination of all contractor operated aircraft in Laos, the level of effort for maintenance dropped to about twenty-five percent of the Udorn facility capability. It was at this level when Thai Airways Maintenance Co. started operating the facility 1 July 1974.”<sup>596</sup>

As Air America pulled out of Thailand, the US Government entered into an agreement – Contract no. F62272-74-C-0060 – with Thai Airways Maintenance Co. Ltd (Thai-Am) to perform aircraft and facilities maintenance work at Udorn. The contract called for such services as light and heavy (including IRAN) aircraft repairs, extensive aircraft parts (shops) work, operation of an electrical power plant and water processing and distribution system, functional check flights for helicopters, and management training, to name a few. The contract was to consist of capital items (GFE) and estimated values amounting to more than US \$ 38,089,000.00, including more than \$ 3,700,000.00 for buildings, structures, roads and ramps, more than \$ 600,000.00 for the utility plants and distribution system, more than \$ 18,000,000.00 of equipment, and more than \$ 15,500,000.00 for parts and material. The contract requirement for the production of 31,000 direct skilled labor hours per month was to

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<sup>594</sup> Contract no. F04606-71-C-0002, Modification no. P00054 dated 1 July 72 (UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 23), and Modification no. P00061 dated 9 August 72 (UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24).

<sup>595</sup> For more details see the file *Sikorsky UH-34Ds*, part 2, in my *The Aircraft of Air America*.

<sup>596</sup> James E. Spencer, End of tour report, 19 September 1974, pp.3-4, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F5.

require approximately 260 skilled personnel.<sup>597</sup> On 3 June 74, at 2.00 p.m., a contract signing ceremony took place at the Supreme Command Headquarters, which was attended by high representatives of the Royal Thai Air Force, the Royal Thai Army, Thai Airways Maintenance Co. (Thai-Am), the US Military Assistance Command, Thailand (MACTHAI), the USAF's Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), and Air America. As one of the persons present at that ceremony, David H. Hickler wrote a report about it that has survived. Here it is:

CONTRACT SIGNING CEREMONY  
Supreme Command Headquarters  
3 June 1974, 2.00 p.m.

Present: Air Chief Marshal Dawee Chullasapya (in Army uniform)  
General Kriangsak Chamarnard  
Admiral Somchit Thumarakkidd  
Air Chief Marshal Harin Hongsakul  
Air Marshal Perm Limpisawasti  
Mr. Sanya Yamasmit  
P/O Plob Verunan  
Maj. Gen. Mellon  
Col. Rackley  
Capt. Bryant  
Lt. Col. McKinley  
D. H. Hickler

Thai-Am  
Thai-Am  
Thai-Am  
MACTHAI  
MACTHAI  
PACAF  
PACAF  
Air America

Plus numerous others including photographers.

General Dawee opened the meeting by requesting General Mellon to say a few words.

General Mellon spoke briefly on the development of Thai aviation and how he was pleased to note that the Udorn facility would aid in Thailand in the field of aviation progress and so on.

General Dawee then asked the Air America representative to say a few words.

The following prepared remarks were then made by D. H. Hickler:

"We are pleased to learn that the Government of Thailand has designated Thai-Am as the operating instrumentality of this excellent and well equipped aircraft maintenance and overhaul plant at Udorn.

Air America will fully cooperate and assist in turning over the operation and management of this plant to Thai-Am.

In all sincerity, we wish them well and we are confident that Thai-Am will produce superior results in workmanship and skill in the field of aircraft overhaul and maintenance.

Air America is proud of the hundreds of loyal Thai employees that have been trained and developed in the complex and highly technical skills required to operate and maintain the Udorn plant on the Royal Thai Air Force Base. We have left behind a viable operation for the further development by Thai-Am and the Royal Government of Thailand."

During the presentation of my remarks, lots of photo flash bulbs went off, TV movies were filmed.

Next General Dawee asked the Thai-Am representative to say a few words.

Marshal Perm said he was glad for Thai-Am to takeover the Air America facility at Udorn and that they would do their best to do outstanding work and keep up the high standards of Air America.

After Marshal Perm finished speaking, General Dawee asked General Mellon to proceed with the contract signing. General Mellon asked Capt. Bryant to present the contracts to Marshal Perm for signature. The signing took place with flash bulbs going off and TV movies being filmed.

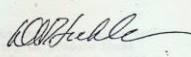
After the signing lots of hand shaking and more photos.

At the end of the signing of the contract, General Dawee made a few remarks to the effect that he hoped that the friendship between Thailand and the United States would continue on a long term basis. He thanked General Mellon for his active participation in this aid to Thailand. General Dawee said that many people in Thailand did not fully know or understand the present day political facts of life.

This ended the ceremony. Everyone stood and shook hands all around.

Everyone seemed to be in a most congenial mood and pleased with the acquisition by Thai-Am of the U.S. Air Force contract and facility at Udorn.

Ceremony was all over by 2.25 p.m.

  
D. H. Hickler  
3 June 1974

Contract Signing Ceremony of 3 June 74, formerly in: UTD/Leary/Ser.I, B23F2

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<sup>597</sup> Anonymous, untitled note about the sale of the Udorn maintenance facility to Thai-Am and the requirement of maintenance work to be done for aircraft of the US military, formerly in: UTD/Leary/Ser. I, B23F2.