CHAPTER 2

THE 1960s – MISSION VALIDATION

Combat Control Teams validated their training, their mission and even their existence in the 1960s. During the same period, a parallel development of special operations and conventional operations shaped CCT career fields and influenced team training. The two mission tracks cross paths and were often blurred, but were roughly defined as:

- conventional missions were drop, landing, extraction zone operations, while
- special operations missions were forward air control and close air support.

The following are highlights of some CCT activities in the early 1960s:

1960 - In July, a combat control team from Europe responded to the Congo crisis. The team was airlifted to the capital city of Leopoldville and disbursed throughout the country working airfields.

1961 - Combat Controllers were instrumental in the development of parachuting tactics, techniques, procedures (TTP) and equipment. As an example, TSgt James A. Howell performed the first live supersonic ejection seat test on 24 June 1961. Two years later, he was the primary jumpmaster establishing the upper limits of special operations free-fall parachuting. He led a team of Air Force and Army special operations troops in a world record-breaking freefall from 43,000 feet; it is covered later in this chapter.

1962 - In November, combat controllers were some of the first Americans sent to support the government of India during a border dispute with China. Controllers deployed to remote airstrips high in the Himalayas near India’s northern border. For several weeks, they controlled re-supply airdrops for the beleaguered Indian soldiers and Sikh refugees.

AFRES COMBAT CONTROL TEAM by Harry E. Thompson, Sgt, AFRES CCT, 1961-1965

1961–1965 - Bakalar Air Force Base, Columbus, Ohio - In early 1961, I was told that I could join the Air Force Reserves (AFRES) and become part of an experimental Combat Control Team. The criteria, qualifications, and job description were relatively simple:

- Be part of a twelve-man team, with one officer.
- Be jump qualified, by prior military experience.
- Be full time jump status.
- Subject to be called at any time.
- Must obtain a SECRET clearance.
- Sign up for a four-year enlistment.
- Would jump in before a US Army airborne drop.
- Set up equipment to direct USAF aircraft.
- Be the eyes and ears of the US Air Force

Upon reporting to the 16th Aerial Port Squadron CCT, I met TSgt Richard E. Moore, who was trained in radio commutations and was in charge of the radio shop, except we didn’t have a radio. All we had were orange panels, colored smoke, and a primitive wind indicator. Other team members included Sgt Weimer, Sgt Richard Fields, and A1C David Burton.
We were each assigned a locker in a building - near the control tower - on the airfield. The lockers were for our equipment, except we had no equipment. Sgt Moore told us that our equipment was ordered, and would be in next month. The first weekend we attended lectures on our jobs and radio procedure. The second weekend we are told our equipment was in, and to go to supply and draw it. It consisted of:

- Smoke jumper suits - a thick canvas suit that covered the whole body.
- Smoke jumper football-style helmet - with wire mesh to cover the face.
- But, no steel helmet, and
- No personal field gear.

So that we would have headgear for jumps, we kept the smoke jumper helmets, but took off the wire mesh faceplate. We turned the suits back in to supply.
Soon, we received orders to go Grissom Air Base at Peru, Indiana and go through the high altitude pressure chamber and received training on how to eject from jet aircraft. Our first jump-training mission was on the air base. We used orange panels on the ground to show direction of wind. We tried smoke bombs but the wind blew it away too fast.

Sgt Moore got his hand on a three-quarter ton (weapons carrier) truck and drove out to give us the orange panels. Some time later Sgt Moore got his hands on a used radio and had it mounted in the back of the truck; until then the panels and smoke were all we had.

It wasn’t long before we started jumping at Camp Atterbury, practicing our mission. Sgt Moore would drive the truck with the radio, because we were not issued any portable radio.

In late 1961 the Sewart AFB (TN) CCT sent TSgt James E. Nelson and SSgt Clifford H. Larimar as training advisors to the AFRES CCT.

In 1962, A1C Jackie L. Barger joined our team and we then had five members that could jump. Others wanted to join us and go to jump school, but the Air Force wanted only ex-army Airborne qualified troops. They would stay for a while then rotate out. Ron Brown was one of them that would have been a good combat controller, but couldn't get orders to go to jump school for three weeks.
Cuban Missile Crisis - When the CUBA missile crisis started in September of 1962, the five of us were told to start watching the news. We didn't know why! President Kennedy announced to the nation on September 13, 1962 that Cuba had been given missiles by Russia and that the United States soon started a naval blockade of the island nation. In mid-October 1962 we received a phone call to stay in touch with the base and were given a phone number to call if we were called up. I called the number just before the actual recall started and was told that the CCT was going to be placed on active duty.

On Monday, October 22, 1962, President Kennedy announced to the nation that the military reserves were being called to active duty. The entire 434th base at Bakalar was activated. I called the phone plumber and was told to report the next day a 6:00 am (October 23, 1962). That morning, I am in my car - in line at the main gate - waiting to be cleared on base by the Air Police. When I showed my ID to the Air Police (AP) and he runs his finger down a list and checks my ID again and tells me to pull over to the side and wait until an AP car comes to get me. Two vehicles came to the gate to get me, I was to follow the one vehicle while the other AP car followed. They took me straight to the airfield and stayed with me while I reported in. Each combat controller was treated the same and we waited under the watchful eyes of the Air Police.

At first, no one would tell us why we were there. No phone calls; no need to know! After an hour passed, an officer walked up to us and told us our plane was on route to pick us up. Then he turned and walked away. We waited about five hours under the watchful eye of the Air Police and the same officer walked up to us and told us, to stand down, that our orders have been changed and we would fly out tomorrow.

We were restricted to the barracks that night. That evening another officer came into our barracks and told us that there would be a plane to pick us up. Four of us - the married ones - would be going to Pope Air Force Base at Ft. Bragg, in North Carolina. We would support the 82nd Airborne. Jackie Barger - was the only one not married - was being sent first to Pope, then on to Eglin Air Force Base.

The next day the plane picked us up and we flew to Pope AFB. Four of us got off at Pope and Jackie Barger flew on to Eglin, where he joined up with the Air Commando CCT. We joined the 3rd Aerial Port Squadron CCT at Pope AFB and started training with them. At Pope we were issued the following kit's:

- Compass
- Knife
- Saw or choking device
- Map case
- Capsule – Cyanide

Later, we were taken to a shooting range and each one of us fired the M3 grease gun and were given portable radios. We trained with the regular CCT and supported the 82nd Airborne; making numerous jumps. All in all we spent around two weeks at Pope AFB.

Jackie Barger stayed for a week at Eglin and then returned to Pope to train with us. After two weeks and the removal of the missiles from Cuba we returned to Bakalar and continued to train with the 434th.

After a month of active duty we were discharged, returning to reserve status.

Before our discharge, our commanding officer, Major John Underwood read the operation orders of the planned invasion of Cuba. The operations plan for us was as follows:

- Jackie Barger was assigned to the 1st Air Commando Wing CCT at Eglin. That team was to drop in to eastern Cuba; supported only by Air Commando aircraft for an Airborne Assault.
- Half an hour later the 3rd Aerial Port Squadron CCT was to jump in and prepare a drop zone for the 82nd Airborne Division drop. A rifle squad of thirteen soldiers of the 82nd was assigned to give us protection.
- Marines were to carry out an assault on their side of the island.
- We were told that if caught by Castro's troops, we would have been tortured.
The Secret Mission - For the secret mission we were going fly to a different location, hook up with another CCT, jump in and carry out our mission and then fly back. We were told that we were going to a southern state, to watch a secret demonstration. No Cameras! No discussions! We were spectators only.

What we saw was a demonstration of the Ground Proximity Extraction System (GPES, pronounced JEEPS), a system that we knew as the MULE. GPES consisted of two gasoline-powered reels with steel cable stretched between them. A C-130 with a payload on a pallet had a steel hook hanging down to catch the cable that would pull the load out onto the ground, without landing. Again we were told that we was there only as spectators.

For the first several planes GPES work fine, but soon the dust clogged, then shut down the gasoline rewind engines. Then an Air Force General looked around for some volunteers to rewind the mule (reel) by hand. Two of us were assigned one mule and two others to the second mule. We were ordered to stay by the mule when the plane dropped its load, and lay spread eagled on the ground. This we did until the General was satisfied. During the demonstration, one of the C-130's hit the ground, just yards away from us and was damaged.

In 1963 everything stayed the same, as far as equipment but we did take a Jumpmaster course.

In 1964, we were told we were getting an officer for CCT that was just out of jump school. It was 1LT John G. Devejian who joined our CCT.

In 1965, we were told that no money was available for CCT and the program was being phased out. They wanted us to cross train as Loadmasters. Sgt Weimer became a Loadmaster, and put twenty years in the reserves. The rest got out of the Reserves.

THE BLUE MASTERS by Donald R. Strobaugh, Colonel, USAF (CCT) Retired

1961 - Wiesbaden Air Base, Germany - The USAFE Parachute Demonstration Team, the Blue Masters started in a very small way. I had started freefall parachuting in 1957 at Sewart AFB and Ft. Campbell, and Bob Lanier had started in 1958 at Pope AFB and Ft. Bragg. Fate put us together in the same general area of the world with him at Wiesbaden AB, Germany and me at Evreux AB, France as members of the 5th Aerial Port Squadron Combat Control Team.

The Europeans (especially the French) had been freefalling for years, but competitively rather than as demonstrations for the general public. In May 1961, Bob and I were trying out for the US Parachute Team that then-Colonel John Singlaub was forming to represent the United States in international competition in Europe. In those days with the modified WWII aviator’s backpack parachutes we were using, a really good parachutist was one who could get within 3 feet of the X on most of his jumps.

Bob and I both made the team, so we were feeling pretty confident about our jumping abilities. About this time, Headquarters USAFE was planning some special C-130 flybys, short-field take-offs and whatever else they could think of as a demonstration in June in Greece for Prince Konstantine and his two sisters, Sophia (now Queen of Spain) and Irene. Bob and I discussed it and decided that we would volunteer to contribute to the Air Force display by making a freefall jump from the tailgate of a C-130 from 12,500'. It was approved surprisingly fast and we started preparing.
The first thing we needed was a name. Bob and I were both Master Parachutists and somewhat impressed with our own skill, so I thought Blue Masters would be doubly appropriate. On 3 June 1961, two rather cocky Combat Controllers exited a C-130 at 12,500' at Athena Airport, Athens, Greece over the largest expanse of concrete that either Bob or I had ever seen from the air.

The reviewing stand for the VIP's sat on a very small patch of grass in the middle of this ocean of concrete. The gods who look out for crazy jumpers were with us that day and we roared in to a landing about three feet from Prince Konstantine. Everyone was impressed, including Bob and me, and we planned to do this again. Headquarters USAFE also liked the idea and started making plans to permit a team.

In October 1961, Bob and I were asked if we would like to make a demo for the Shah of Iran for Iran's Air Force Day, which always remarkably coincided with the Shah’s birthday. We were still only two jumpers operating on our own with USAFE approval, but with no team organization. That jump also went well with my landing in the middle of the huge crowd and Bob giving the bodyguards some excitement by making a perfect landing about 6 feet from the Shah.

The official support for a team was moving very slowly, although we were being asked to make a number of small demos in Germany and given various Air Force aircraft as jump platforms. In March 1962, I was transferred to Wiesbaden AB to become Detachment Commander which made it easier to coordinate with USAFE, which was then in Wiesbaden. We were now training more Combat Controllers in freefall and adding them to our still-unofficial team. Back in those years, everyone was just learning stabilized freefall, so we couldn’t draw from a pool of qualified freefall parachutists.

There is an excellent article about the follow-on Blue Masters (post 1965) in the March 1997 issue of The Controller Magazine. There were several important names left off the list of original Blue Master members that I would like to add the following names:

- Carter Barker was the 3rd man assigned to the team (in 1962) and he allowed us to make a presentable bomb burst with 3 men. A 2-man burst is nice but a 3-man was spectacular with smoke holders on our heels.
- Lundy Hudgins was part of the Blue Masters almost from the beginning but as the team Parachute Rigger. Without his considerable talent and speed, we would not have made one half of the jumps we were scheduled to make for certain shows. While we were unpacking them, Lundy was cheerfully packing others to get us ready to do it again almost immediately.
- Captain Walt McGee was one of the first solo parachutists that we were slowly able to add to our demonstrations.

When you have only 2 or 3 men for a demo, you give the spectators the best act you have and that was the high altitude bomb burst. As we trained more jumpers, we could start dropping a jumper with smoke at various levels - 10-second, 30-second, 45-second delays - and build up to our finale bomb burst. You have to remember that very few people had ever seen a parachute jump, so anything we did was an exciting experience for them, even if it wasn’t anything near the spectacular demonstrations put on today by the Golden Knights and other professional parachute demonstration teams. I saw my first wing-walker/parachute jumper at the little village of Duncansville near my
boyhood home in Pennsylvania at the age of 9 on a Sunday afternoon in 1938 and I have never forgotten it.

On 12 May 1963, Barker, Lanier and I were scheduled to make a 3-man bomb burst from 10,000’ from an H-19 helicopter for Armed Forces Day at Wiesbaden Air Base. We took off well ahead of time to allow the aircraft with its 3-man crew and 3 jumpers to get to altitude and make our jump run on schedule. About 30 minutes before jump time, the Ground Controller called the pilot to let him know that all performance times were running about 45 minutes late. The pilot asked me if I wanted to hold at 10,000’ or keep climbing until it was time for our jump. What a question! We continued climbing until the aircraft was barely responding to the controls. We exited the aircraft at 14,000’ MSL or 13,940’ above the ground. When we landed, we learned that the pilot had claimed a new world record for an H-19 with 6 people aboard.

After scores of air shows, like the 50th Anniversary of Norwegian Aviation; Spanish-American Friendship Day at three bases in Spain; French National Air Show at Perpignan; etc.) and many smaller weekend demos throughout Germany, we performed at Aviano AB, Italy for NATO Day in June 1963. One of the spectators was USAF Major General James Edmundson. He was so pleased with the performance that he called General Truman Landon, USAFE Commander, to recommend that we be an official team representing USAFE.

General Landon agreed and the doors suddenly opened wide. We were scheduled to perform for Patton Remembrance Day in Ettelbruck, Luxembourg the following weekend. During that preceding week, 6 black blazers were purchased, a patch was designed and manufactured and we officially became the USAF Parachute Team (Europe), the Blue Masters. The patch with the title at the bottom resulted from a lot of ideas from many people. The blazers and patches were worn for the first time at an official reception in Luxembourg in June 1963 following the air show. Because of the small size of the team, only 6 of these patches were made. I don’t know if Bob Barinowski had more made after he became the new team leader at the beginning of 1965.

In January 1965, having completed four years in Europe, I was dragged from Wiesbaden to Hunter AFB, Savannah, Georgia while Bob Barinowski, whose home was Savannah, Georgia, was dragged to Wiesbaden. Both of us would have been happy to stay where we were, but the Air Force hadn’t yet learned the wisdom of saving the money by cutting down the number of PCS moves. As it turned out, Bob and I both had excellent follow-on assignments.

I give a great deal of the credit for the original success of the Blue Masters to the late Bob Lanier. I’ve never seen a man with legs as badly damaged as his - from jumping - a man who loved to jump and compete as much as he did. The world is a much duller place without Bob Lanier.
COMBAT CONTROL CANINE CAVORTS IN 'CHUTE by A2C Arnold J. Butler, Kanto Plainsman – Tachikawa
Air Base Newspaper

1961 - Tachikawa Air Base, Japan - "Gidget, the 15 month old mongrel-mascot of 7th Aerial Port Squadron's
Combat Control Team, doesn't lead a dog's life. "She lives the life of a paratrooper.
"Gidget, complete with serial number and a forthcoming rank, makes parachute jumps right along side Combat
Controllers.
"Wearing a miniature T-10 parachute with a 12 foot in diameter canopy made especially for her, the female pooch has
a record of 12 jumps from a C-130 Hercules aircraft.

"The 25 pound Gidget stands 18 inches
high, two feet long, with doe-brown
eyes and a rusty-brown colored coat.
She made her first jump in May 1960.

"Gidget was carried in a bag to the
aircraft and once over the jump area,
her escort, A/1C Kenneth C. Young,
hooked up his static line to the plane
and Gidget's line to his harness.

"When Young bailed out and his chute
opened, he threw the dog into space.

"Her static line opened the chute and
she floated safely down to earth. Her
rate of descend was the same as the airman.

"When she lands, Gidget always goes to her jumping partner to have the parachute removed. Whenever the canine
hits the silk, there is always someone on the ground to make sure she isn't dragged away by the parachute.

"Gidget's serial number is AK 1245602. These numbers were picked for a special reason. The "1" marks Gidget as the
1st Combat Control mascot. Two is for the Second Airborne Dog mascot in Japan. Four is the day, five the month and
60 the year that she arrived in the hands of Combat Control members. The remaining "2" represents Gidget's age upon
her adoption, two months old.

"Combat Control airmen bought her as a puppy for 2,000 yen (about $5.50 at the time) at a Tachikawa City pet shop.

"Although not officially a part of the Air Force, orders are now being cut promoting Gidget to A3C, by Captain Noel
Moore, OIC of the Combat Control Team.

"A regular personnel record file is kept on her, complete with promotion orders, aeronautical rating, shot records and
a physical profile. She is assigned to the barracks of the 7th Aerial Port Squadron.

"Life is full of its ups and downs, even when Gidget isn't flying.

"On July 7, 1960, the Air Force Parachutist badge was presented to her by Captain Moore, along with a pair of shiny

new wings. When she completes 25 jumps, Gidget will wear the senior wings.

"However, last February, the mixed-breed lady lost here chance for promotion because of DNIF--Duty Not Involving Flying. But for a good reason, Gidget became the mother of seven puppies.

"The new offspring given away, she is back to the jump areas at Patton Field, Camp Drew, north of Mito City, about 112 miles northeast of Tachikawa.

“The moment the tail gate of the C-130 opens, she is ready and eager to go,' said her favorite escort, Young. "She doesn't mind flying," he said, then added, "But, Gidget gets car sick!"

Gidget is shown here in a 1963 Christmas card from the 7th Aerial Port Squadron, CCT.

(L to R) Joe D. Willard, Bill Horton, Bob Farmer, Gene Adcock, Stanley P. Williams, Lonnie Lynch and Jimmy T. Mobley. Note the newly acquired berets.

(Gene Adcock collection)

Editor’s Note
Gidget was a teammate during my 1963 – 1966 tour at Tachikawa. In fact, I provided quarters and rations for more than a year. The only time she jumped - during my tour - was for an Armed Forced Day - Open House in 1964.

GIDGET'S ARMED FORCES DAY JUMP
Armed Forced Day, 1964 – Tachikawa AB, Japan - The Open House demonstration jump was a 6-man CCT and Gidget. It was a C-130 ramp jump; the ramp was opened at the six-minute warning. As we were preparing to rig Gidget for the jump, she broke from her leash and ran toward the open ramp - making it all the way to the ramp hinge before seeing the error of her ways. She quickly turned and ran back to us - her tail tucked tightly between her legs. We continued the demonstration jump without further incident.

For the Armed Forces Day demo she jumped her specially designed parachute. At exit, she was cradled in the arms of TSgt Stanley P. Williams - resting on his reserve. After Stan opened - he dropped Gidget - her static line was attached to a D-Ring on his harness. All went well, and she completed the jump without further incident. Open House spectators were duly impressed with Gidget – The Airborne Pooch!

COMBAT CONTROLLER MAKES FIRST SUPersonic EJECTION
June 24, 1961 - Edwards Flight Test Center, California – The F-106 Delta Dart, the Ultimate Interceptor was one of the many in the line of early jet aircraft tested by the US Air Force. The ejection seat tests alone covered more than six years (1 January 1956 through 30 June 1961) at Edwards Flight Test Center and Holloman AFB in New Mexico. Earlier sled test ejections with dummies were run at speeds simulating Mach 2.5 at 9,700 meters (31,500′) altitude,
with statistically satisfactory results. Additionally, 35 human test subject sled runs were concluded, verifying that
ejections up to 560 mph airspeed were within the range of human endurance.

On June 24, 1961, these tests culminated with a live ejection test using a human volunteer at the White Sands missile
test range in New Mexico. TSgt James A. Howell (a long-time combat controller - but at the time assigned to the
6511th Parachute Test Squadron) ejected from a specially instrumented F106B aircraft at an altitude of 23,336 feet,
and traveling at 497 mph. The seat, which employed a unique tilt-articulated, rocket-boosted system, was installed in
the F106A aircraft.

The “tilt-seat”, as some life support people came to know it, was not entirely satisfactory, however, and after several
fatalities were sustained during actual in-flight emergency ejections in the supersonic rated tilt-seat, it was replaced in
the F106 aircraft by a more conventional, rocket-powered seat made by the Weber Corporation (this seat was known
simply as the “Weber Seat”), from 1964 through 1967.

THE TOP SECRET JUNGLE JIM PROJECT

April 1, 1961 – The Pentagon, Washington, DC – In April 1961, Air Force Chief of Staff General Curtis E. LeMay
ordered the creation of the Jungle Jim program at Hurlburt Field, Florida. The Air Commandos — of WW II fame —
were reborn as the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron. Combat Controller Captain Lemuel Egleston was one of
the first to volunteer. The Air Commandos flew the small castoff planes that no one else wanted to fly and did the
kind of job that no one else wanted to do. A natural extension of this relationship included forward air controller
(FAC) duties for the unconventional close air support (CAS) missions.

April 14, 1961 - 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron - Eglin AFB, Florida -- The U.S. Air Force established
the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS), nicknamed "Jungle Jim," on 14 April 1961 at Eglin Air Force
Base, Florida. Jungle Jim had a twofold mission: training and combat (very close to the assistance and integration
levels discussed earlier in this article). Pilots in friendly foreign air forces received a fifty-hour flying course, while
their ground crews were trained to maintain aircraft in very austere conditions. Jungle Jim also provided "USAF
personnel with optimum-type training for supervising the development of unit combat capability in similar-type
aircraft of friendly foreign nations."7 The combat mission was divided into strike, reconnaissance, and airlift
operations.

The Jungle Jim units used vintage aircraft, such as the C-47, T-28, and B-26. These aircraft had proved their ability to
operate from remote, primitive bases and had useful capabilities in terms of firepower, range, and cargo capacity for
counterinsurgency operations.

Jungle Jim was fully operational by 8 September 1961, and everyone assigned to the unit was trained "on the job."
The squadron devised the techniques and tactics for building a counterinsurgency capability in developing countries
from Latin America to Africa to Southeast Asia without a basic Air Force doctrine to guide them. All the people of
Jungle Jim knew was that someone on high had decreed that the Air Force would have a counterinsurgency
capability, and they were it. The idea of visualizing how a small war might be planned and carried out using air
power, by itself or in conjunction with other capabilities, had never been studied in the Air Force.

Jungle Jim put the Air Force into the counterinsurgency activities for the first time. Only four months after activation,
Jungle Jim personnel made their first overseas deployment. Code named Sandy Beach One, this operation involved
training Mali paratroopers to operate from C-47 aircraft. The Jungle Jim people noted that just across the airfield at
Bamako stood Soviet and Czechoslovak aircraft, a stark reminder that superpower rivalry was beginning to occur in
some very obscure places.8 Detachment 1’s commandos completed their mission in November and returned to Eglin.
Their efforts established such good working relationships that air commandos returned to Mali in 1963 to give more
training.

In November 1961, elements from the Jungle Jim squadron deployed to Bien Hoa, Republic of Vietnam. This
operation was called Farm Gate; the requirements of supporting it soon became central to Air Force thinking on small
wars. The air commandos' equipment was not significantly different from that used by the air commandos in World
War II; tactics for using the equipment had to come from the ingenuity and imagination of the men on the scene. To further complicate matters, there was considerable controversy in Washington over just what Farm Gate's mission should be. Some people thought Farm Gate should be involved mostly in operational missions, while others wanted to assign strike sorties to Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) and a training role to Farm Gate. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara chose the latter division of roles in December. However, Jungle Jim elements continued to conduct combat operations, including night strikes with C-47s dropping flares. Meanwhile, President Kennedy pushed for a universal capability to oppose insurgencies.

**LEMA ON JUNGLE JIM**

**1962 – Los Angeles, California** - Most of the questions were perfunctory, until an unknown news reporter asked General Curtis LeMay (Air Force Chief of Staff) about Operation “Jungle Jim.”

General LeMay was silent for a moment - staring stonily at the reporter – then he said:

“I've never heard of it!”

Gen Curtis LeMay, 1962 news conference in Los Angeles

Generals don’t lie. But at the very least, General LeMay’s response stretched the truth like a bungee cord wrapped around the city of Los Angeles ... ... twice. Just a few months earlier, the general had, at the urging of President John F. Kennedy, directed USAF’s Tactical Air Command to establish a counterinsurgency (COIN) unit so secret that even the name of the program was classified. It was called “Jungle Jim.”

**Farmgate Detachment 2A**

Standing at back, fifth from right is a bald Captain John Garrity, a long time Air Commando Intel Officer and CCT associate. He would later fly as a Butterfly FAC in Laos.
October 13, 1961 - TOP SECRET National Security Action Memo Number 104

THE BOUN ENAO PROJECT by Art Fields, MSgt, Special Forces Team Leader; Bill Chambers, Captain, Air Commando Pilot; and Charlie Jones, SSgt, Air Commando CCT

BACKGROUND

October 13, 1961 - The White House, Washington, DC -- On October 13, 1961 a formerly TOP SECRET document was sent from the White House directing the Air Force to deploy the first detachment of Jungle Jim Air Commandos
to Vietnam. The deployment was code named Farmgate and the unit was designated Detachment 2A. From this detachment was the first use of Air Force FAC's using the call sign Dora Corn. Air Commando pilots directed air strikes by the Farmgate T-28 and B-26 aircraft. The combat controllers operated as forward air controllers from U-10D (L-28) Super Helio-Courier aircraft and on the ground at the Special Forces "A" Team Detachments.

CCT’s FIRST COMBAT CASUALTY by Charlie Jones, Art Fields and Bill Chambers

October 15, 1962 - Ban Me Thout, South Vietnam -- The first combat controller killed in action was TSgt Richard L. Foxx. On 15 October 1962, Sergeant Foxx was killed while performing a FAC mission in a U-10. The South Carolina native was a pioneer in Combat Control’s forward air guide program. TSgt Foxx’s plane was shot down near the village of Ban Me Thout (BMT), Republic of South Vietnam, while controlling air strikes for US Army Special Forces A-teams. Combat Controllers performed as either airborne or ground FACs in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and the secret war in Laos. In the following dialog between Fields, Chambers and Jones they discuss the events surrounding the loss of Dick Foxx and two others who were lost during the operation.

DIALOG BEGINS

CHARLIE JONES: Due to the diligence and persistence of Art Fields, the loop has nearly been closed on the events surrounding the shoot down of Captain Booth, Capt. Cordell and TSgt Foxx in an Air Commando U-10 (then frequently called by its old designator L-28), call sign Dora Corn. I appreciate the reawakening by Art of so of the memories relating to the project. Here is, briefly, some of my knowledge.

There were three Air Commando Combat Controllers assigned to the Buon Enao project. We were to be the FACs and the "air support" for the SF team in The Rhade Buon Enao project. TSgt Dick Foxx, the NCOIC; me (Charlie Jones-then a SSGT), and Charles Luckhurst, then an A1C were the USAF guys. We shared a grass house on stilts with Sergeant Major O'Donovan (OD) the team sergeant. We lived in Buon Enao, but had sub-units at Lac Thien, Buon Ho, and the lepersarium South of Ban Me Thout (BMT). We were closely connected with Art Field's guys at Buon Tah Mo and Ban Don.

There was a paved runway east of BMT. There was a grass runway very close to BMT at the very edge of town. Lucky (Luckhurst) and I chopped trees at the east end on the village of Buon Enao for our own U-10 runway. There was a grass runway at the Mewal Rubber Plantation several miles north by NW of BMT. There was a grass/dirt runway near Ban Don. The "regular army" advisors" used an Otter, operating out of the grass runway at BMT. We frequently used it to recce when our own U-10, flown to us from Bien Hoa, was not around.

ART FIELDS: My team from the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) stationed on Okinawa was sent to Vietnam on a special mission to expand the Buon Enao Project in August 1962. Teams back then wore civilian clothes and carried special ID. Our rifle was the newly acquired AR-15.

Our base camp was located in the Rhade village of Buon Tah Mo, Darlac Province, South Vietnam. Ban Me Thout was the largest town around and Buon Enao was located just a few clicks from there. The airfield was located between the two. My base camp of Buon Tah Mo was located some distance from Buon Enao and north of the French owned Mewal Rubber Plantation (which was a hotbed of Viet Cong activity). My job on the team as a Master Sergeant was Team Sergeant (Operations and Intelligence

The "Buon Enao Project" as we knew it, was formally named "The Tribal Area Development Program", then the "Village Defense Program" and finally the "Civilian Irregular Defense Group" (CIDG). There were four "A" detachments deployed on this mission. My team -- from "B" Company and three from "C" Company, 1st SFG (LO T-105, dated 28 July 1962) were assigned to relieve Captain Ron Shackleton's team -- which had set up the initial base at Buon Enao -- and to expand the project. Shackleton only had half a team (7) with him. Since Captain Cordell was the ranking officer, his team was selected to stay at Buon Enao as the control and support team, acting similar to a "B" team.

The vast majority of the work of training and securing the villages, as well as patrolling, was done by the outlying and unheralded "A" teams. We piled our gear and what supplies we were given onto the vehicles, and with a small lightly armed group of Rhade set out through the jungle, for the village. There were no roads so the going was slow and
rocky as we hacked our way through the jungle. The Rhade had no vehicles and therefore did not need roads. Foot and animal paths sufficed. Upon arriving we built our team house, commo bunker, ammo storage bunker, infirmary, and other facilities that were needed. We did this in conjunction with training the men of the village in the use of weapons and tactics. We also trained and armed a strike force battalion. Then we started reaching out and bringing in the surrounding villages. We trained and armed them and then sent them back to their villages, along with a strike force unit to defend them while they fortified their village and made it secure.

All the while we kept up our patrols in ever-increasing range, using secured villages as patrol bases in a stepping stone fashion. As we went along, we had to develop new techniques and tactics.

As we advanced toward the Cambodian border the VC started emptying out the villages that we had not yet reached -- taking the villagers into the jungle and going underground. We discovered the VC had established a training camp in the foothills of the Cu Ken Mountains near Ban Don along the Song Srepok River. This VC base stood between us and Ban Don, so we decided to take it out. We cleared a Landing Zone at our primary base in Buon Tah Mo and readied our Strike Force, equipping them with German 9mm MP-40 submachine guns, new web gear, black uniforms, bush hats and Batta boots. The plan was to hit and destroy the VC training camp and then one company would sweep north in a "U" and the other company would sweep south in a "U", with both companies returning by foot back to base camp at Buon Tah Mo. There were no officers on the ground for this operation. The code name and my call sign for this operation was POWDER BLUE. For air support, we had one WWII B-26 bomber and two FARMGATE AT-28 Trojans.

BILL CHAMBERS: Bob Walker and I were getting bored sitting around and nothing happening. The U-10 was sitting on the ground; we were just waiting for some word from the field that they had made contact with the bad guys. One of the Army Captains said he was sure he could find some targets for us, and he went with Captain Booth and Sgt. Foxx in the U-10. They were going to make contact with the forces on the ground and find us some targets. We were to take off about 30 minutes after they did.

The CIA guy was going to fly in the back seat with me, but he had finished off too many bottles of gin the night before and could not even climb up on the wing of my aircraft. We decided he could fly with me later that was one time that the gin saved his life. (By the way- of the seventy some-odd missions I flew there, I had a Vietnamese in the back seat two times and they were privates, we hardly ever flew with them in the aircraft).

BILL: I well remember seeing the orange smoke on the ground. We had been briefed that you would mark your position with it. Too bad our communications were so bad, maybe I would have avoided being downed. I also remember being briefed that if you needed air support you would lay down panels on the ground with an arrow pointing in the direction of the target with strips - indicating distance to the target. Glad you didn't have to do that- I can think of better things to do than be under fire while trying to lay down panels! Hope our services can talk to each other today.

CHARLIE: I also took those marker panels and cut holes in them and made the Rhade wear them like a cape so you could see us. I was very frightened that you guys would shoot us. One or two of the Rhade kept saying, when they saw you guys scrutinizing us, "We must run, Airplane shoot!!" I kept yelling no, no! If we run we are dead! I finally told my interpreter, Peter Gunn, to tell them that the first man to run I would shoot him myself. They calmed down after you guys flew down and inspected us, and began to over fly us as we traveled.

CHARLIE: My waving included me clasping my hands onto my ears as though placing headsets. I wanted to try,
against the facts, to see if you could contact us on the pitiful PRC-10 (FM) radio set we were using. I remember the one low pass you or Walker made at your own risk to "check us out" and I'm probably alive today because (1) you flying over and seeing we were Caucasians and not Asians, and then (2) orbiting over us till dark!

**ART:** In the early morning of 15 October 1962, three C-21C Shawnee (Flying Bananas) helicopters flew in. The first lift was loaded and the copters lifted off.

I was standing in the door of the lead chopper and it was struggling with a heavy load. All of a sudden the door filled with tree branches and leaves, I thought we were going down for sure, but the pilot gave it the gas and we went up above the treetops. When we landed at the objective we immediately captured two VC. The Viet Cong prisoners were brought over to me and upon questioning them, my interpreter, pointing to the jungle, said to me: "many VC! many VC!!" I threw a smoke grenade toward the VC encampment and the B-26 started its run, dropping bombs and strafing the area. Not all the VC in the camp had small arms and those that were not killed scattered into the thick jungle. They were in small groups that we encountered during the remainder of the operation. We had to be careful of the women and children that were with them.

By the evening of 15 October 1962, we had destroyed the VC training camp and were securing the objective. I was in communication with the senior Special Forces Commander, CPT Terry Cordell, coordinating the resupply of ammo and supplies in order to continue the mission. My Radio Operator was up in a tree putting up the jungle antenna for better communication. CPT Cordell was in the HELIO U-10D observation aircraft, flying overhead -- low and slow.

I was speaking with him on the FM radio (PRC-10) and suddenly he went blank. My Radioman shouted, "Look! Look!!" I looked up and saw the aircraft going straight up with fire coming from the nose area. It looped over and started spiraling down into the jungle. On board the plane were Captain Terry D. Cordell (U. S. Army Special Forces, 1st SFG, Okinawa) and two USAF personnel, Captain Herbert W. "Willoughby" Booth Jr., the pilot, and TSgt Richard L. "Dick" Foxx, the Combat Controller (USAF Detachment 2A, 1st Air Commando Group). All were killed in the resulting crash.

**CHARLIE:** As night approached, we came upon a grass hut village; it was unoccupied. We torched it to give off smoke. We expected the smoke would aid the predicted arrival of T-28s the next morning. Because a raging mad Gaur (a type of wild water buffalo) was charging toward us, our Rhade force was shouting to each other and going crazy. At about the same time, Art's group was at this time approaching the U-10 shoot down site. We soon joined with them.

Art's group got to the downed U-10 before we did. All aboard were dead, and very badly burned, as was the plane. I commend Art; he was the ranking man on site and took charge immediately. We had a few families with crying babies who had joined the group, along the way. We were in VC infested territory and we had a pitiful defense in terms of numbers. They probed us all night, and sounded trumpets or whistles. Under Art's command we decided not to try to out shoot the VC. At nightfall, Helmick and I took the horizontal stabilizer from the wreck and propped it up, using it as a bed during the long night. When daylight finally came I was really happy to see it.

**ART:** It was night and very dark in deep thick jungle when we reached the crash site. The Viet Cong were also trying to reach the crash site and we killed a few in the process of locating the wreckage. When the plane went down through the jungle trees, the left wing had broken and folded over the cockpit. I found all three aboard dead with their bodies severely burned.

I set up a defensive perimeter (circle) around the crash site to keep the VC from the bodies and the still smoldering wreckage. Because I had no way of knowing for sure if there were VC within the circle I gave the order that anything that moved within or without the defensive position would be shot. Luckily we had sealed off the area before the VC had penetrated it. I radioed in my coordinates and called for a chopper to evacuate the KIAs. I was told that the chopper would be coming from Pleiku and would arrive in the early morning. We left the bodies in the wreckage until the next morning. The VC probed our defenses all night with sporadic small arms fire, bugles and whistles.

At daybreak I sent out a party to search for a clearing to be used as a Landing Zone for the incoming chopper. A clearing was found and it was checked out for obstacles and panels were laid out marking the spot. It was later verified from the air that the clearing we had marked for the LZ was in fact the only clearing for miles. First to arrive (unannounced) was a C-47 and an H-34 helicopter. The C-47 made a couple of passes over the crash site and flew off toward BMT. The H-34 with USAF Air Commandos Colonel Mike Doyle (CO), SSgt Hap Lutz (medic) and SSgt
William Cody (combat controller) aboard landed at the LZ we had set up. The H-34 was piloted by an American, with a Vietnamese adviser in the other seat. As it attempted to land, it came under fire and lifted off. It went around a couple of times before they could land again.

We had extracted the bodies from the wreckage and loaded them on stretchers. When the H-34 finally landed we quickly loaded the bodies and the recovery team. Soon it lifted off, headed for Ban Me Thout where the C-47 was waiting to take them to Saigon.

Just as the H-34 was lifting off a FARM-GATE AT-28 came in low and slow; it was shot down. It came screaming into the ground and almost hit us. People were running for cover. I am sure that it was one of the same planes that provided air cover the previous day. It was fully loaded. Ammo was exploding like the 4th of July in the burning wreckage. Despite exploding ammunition and ordnance shrapnel set of by the intense heat and thick smoke from the devastating fire of the burning aircraft I got the pilot, Capt. Bill Chambers out of the wreckage alive. I almost lost some of our people looking for the second pilot before we realized there was none. The pilot had taken off without his Vietnamese counterpart. A short time later a CH-21 came wobbling in and we placed the badly injured pilot aboard for evacuation.

Later that day we tracked down the group of VC that had shot down the two aircraft. They were holed up in a straw shack at the edge of a rice-field. We surrounded the hut and engaged them in a firefight. They were all killed. As we were mopping up, we discovered that the weapon used to bring down the aircraft was an American BAR, probably left over from the Indo-China War.

BILL: Yes, I did fly air support on 15 October but we didn't expend any ordnance. We saw you on the ground but you had not made contact with the VC. It May have looked like there was only one aircraft (you probably never saw us close together - we always flew spread out quite a bit) but we always flew two T-28s together. I'm not sure of the B-26 pilot, but I think it might have been Captain Van Hovel from our unit. We were the only ones flying B-26s and AT-28s at that time. I think that Air America later flew them. Gene Rossel might know about Van Hovel. I was told that the B-26 later bombed my crashed T-28. I learned later that they found only one bullet hole in the aircraft - right in the carburetor. What a lucky (or unlucky) shot.

CHARLIE: First one of the wobbly H-21s came, then the beautiful T-28s. Then, the Air Commando Commander Lt. Col. Miles Doyle and Commando Medic Hap Lutz arrived in either an H-19 or H-34. It was piloted by an American Army pilot and a Vietnamese "advisor". It came under fire, and went around once or twice. Doyle wanted to see the crash site, so we had to move him along the trail to the site. We finally got the bodies positioned on stretchers to place aboard the chopper, when I heard the sounds of gunfire; it sounded like a fifty caliber weapon. Art later said it was a BAR. Billy was overhead flying cover for us. The sad thing in cases like this, is the lack of communication. I could not tell Billy what I was hearing, to warn him, and sure enough, he was downed, almost crashing into us as the H-19 lifted off.

BILL: When I took the hit I quickly considered blowing the canopy and dropping the ordnance but there were friendlies in the area and heavy jungle. An open canopy has about the same drag as the speed brake open. So, I had to take my chances. As it was, I took some tops out of trees before getting to the clearing.

ART: A CH-21 helicopter was called in to take out the bodies, however the KIAs had already been evacuated aboard the H-34 when it arrived. Bill Chambers' AT-28 had just crashed so we placed him aboard the CH-21 and it took him to Ban Me Thout where the C-47 was waiting to fly them all to Saigon. Later that day we tracked down the group of VC that had shot down the two aircraft. They were holed up in a straw shack at the edge of a rice-field. We surrounded engaged them in a firefight and killed them all. That was when we discovered that the weapon used to bring down the aircraft was an American BAR probably left over from the Indo-China War.

I returned to base camp (Buon Tah Mo) with over four hundred villagers that we had liberated from the VC. We were greeted by some brass from Saigon who took pictures and debriefed us. So far as can be determined this was the first helicopter assault of the Vietnam War led by an American.

In November my team split, sending half (six) to open a base camp at Ban Don. They were Captain McFadden (promoted while on TDY), MSG (E7) Chitwood, SFC (E7) Planck, SSG Grabish, SGT Hamilton, and SP5 Van Koevering. In the meantime, we continued to secure and train villagers and kill VC until we deployed back to Okinawa in February 1963.
CHARLIE: When we arrived, we placed the bodies in a one-room masonry structure and posted a Vietnamese guard. We re-boarded the chopper to return to try to get Billy out. We did not know that Art and an H-21 had already extricated him. I was back at the village - Buon Enao - when I was questioned closely by some regular Army Colonels about the incident. We were worried about the possible consequences of not having a Vietnamese crewman aboard either the T-28 or the U-10.

At Bien Hoa, I received a call from some Army Captains in Saigon. They flew me to Tan Son Nhut where I was picked up in a jeep and taken to a makeshift morgue. There I verbally scuffled with the "mortuary officer," (an extra duty, I'm sure) over how I knew the identities of the remains of my buddies! We tagged them, and they were replaced in the cooler. I foolishly had placed Foxx's .44-magnum Ruger in with his body, thinking it would accompany him home. It was ruined, the heat had fired the rounds in the cylinder, and the pressure had badly warped the piece. I thought Joanne, his wife, or his family would cherish it as a memento. But they never got it.

About a week later, we stood in formation as the bodies to be loaded aboard a C-123 for the flight to the Philippines, to be further "groomed" for shipment home.

I was there – in Buon Enao - when Captain Colt Terry came to replace Captain Cordell, and served under him till I left Buon Enao for Father Hoa's village in the South Vietnam, in late November. SSGT Charles Cody came to replace Foxx. Capt. Ramey and Al Wight replaced the needs for the U-10 pilots for our SF work.

BILL: We took off and tried to radio contact the U-10; but could not raise them. We called the camp to see if they had contact with them but they couldn't contact them either. So Bob and I flew around the area looking for them. Finally we saw this smoke coming up from the ground and it was their aircraft. One wing was folded over the cockpit.

The next morning Bob and I were flying cover for the recovery team, which included Lt. Col. Miles Doyle, our commander from Bien Hoa who had flown in the night before. We had contact with the recovery team on the ground and they reported no contact with hostile forces. I was making passes over our people, really just "showing the Eagle" to try to keep the VC from trying anything. I was in the middle of one pass when my engine lost power and smoke started streaming out of it. I didn't know whether I'd blown a jug or what.

I let Walker know I was going down and apparently the Chopper was on our frequency and took off immediately. I was too low to bail out (no ejection seat) and had to ride it in. About all that was left of the T-28 was the cockpit laying on its side. I couldn't get the canopy open more than about one third. I remember when the aircraft finally stopped, I tried to blow the canopy but it wouldn't move (it used compressed air to blow back the canopy and the air line was apparently ruptured). I then moved the canopy handle to manual and tried to pull it open. It opened a few inches, enough to get part of my shoulder on it. I finally got it opened enough to try to squeeze out, but the shoulder holster hung up on the railing. I had to get back inside and move the holster under my armpit, then was barely able to get out. I would never have been able to get the CIA guy out of the back seat.

I then moved - bent over because my back was injured and I couldn't stand up - to the nearest undergrowth and prepared to fight it out as long as I could. We had been told by Intelligence that the VC would capture you if you could travel with them, otherwise they would put a bullet in your head. Almost immediately, I saw the H-21 coming into the landing. A crewman was standing the doorway with a machine gun. I stood up as much as I could and waved my arms and started moving toward the Chopper. The guy in the chopper waved for me to stay put. Unknown to me at the time, Rhade-Montagnard Strike Force troops under the command of MSG Fields had secured the clearing. It was the only one around and had already been marked as a landing zone for the CH-21 flying in to evacuate the bodies of the three KIAs. MSgt. Fields and some of his troops got a stretcher from the chopper, placed me on it, and then loaded me on the H-21 for evacuation. The H-21 took me to the Ban Me Thuot airfield where a C-47 was standing by to fly me out. I have no idea what unit the CH-21 was assigned to. In 1962 the Army was the only one flying the H-21 in Vietnam. I was told it was the same bird that flew the brass into the U-10 crash site.

I know this has been windy but I wanted to tell you everything I remembered. An interesting note: While I was in the hospital at Clark AFB having X-rays taken, I was visited by a CIA caseworker. He wanted to let me know what to say if anyone asked me questions. I was to say that I did have a Vietnamese in the back seat with me. As you know, I can't verify any of what he told me, but he said that the CIA had captured two Chinese advisors. He said that they had turned them over to a French interrogation team.

ART: As I close this story, I am in the process of setting the record straight on the death of Captain Terry Cordell, the
first U.S. Army Special Forces officer killed in combat in Vietnam, and the two USAF Air Commandos, Captain Herbert Booth and TSgt Richard Foxx, killed in the same aircraft with him. The information I have provided will go a long way toward this goal. In my research I was appalled to find that not one person involved in this operation has ever been contacted, yet much has been written. Operation Power Blue has been documented as the first American helicopter assault operation of the Vietnam War. Without question this was the most significant assault operation of the Buon Enao Project and the Village Defense Program.

Soon after the three Americans were killed during this operation, the Army was forced to go public with the story. Sadly this episode greatly influenced the Army’s decision to implement Operation Switchback; a program that put US Special Forces under command and control of the MACV and back in uniform.

SERGEANT VON RYIK - From a well-worn base newspaper article submitted by Jim Stanford, SMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

1961 - Hurlburt Field, Florida -- Many members of the 1st Air Commando Wing at Hurlburt have had very unusual military experiences. SSgt Walter von Ryik, newest member of the Combat Controller Section, 319th Troop Carrier Squadron is such an airman - with a very versatile military career.

Sergeant von Ryik was born in Kronstadt, Romania, of German parents and later, while attending college in Weimer, Germany, studied aeronautical engineering; learned to fly gliders, Fokker and Dornier trainers and became a licensed private pilot.

Member of German AF – In April 1942, von Ryik enlisted in the Luftwaffe (German Air Force), received his basic training at Wetzlar, Germany and in the summer received fighter pilot training in the famous German ME 109 at Chatereaux, France. After graduating from training he was assigned duty at Wiener Neustadt, Austria, ferrying ME 109’s to France, Italy, North Africa and Russia.

Early in 1943, Sergeant von Ryik was sent into combat in Russia and later given a field commission as a lieutenant. He was credited with eight confirmed kills; 5 Rata’s, single-seat Russian fighters, and three PL 2’s - two engine Russian fighter-bombers.

<<< SSgt Walter von Ryik is shown here with his pet cougar Sam, while assigned to the 1st Air Commando Wing Intelligence Office. During that time, the Intel office was never bothered by intruders. Walter was later assigned to the 319th Troop Carrier Squadron’s Combat Control Team.

Combat Action – During combat action Sergeant von Ryik was shot down three times and wounded five times. The first time was early in 1943 when he was attacked by a group of Ratas, Yaks, and King Cobras. He was able to bail out and land safely behind the German lines. The second time occurred in September of 1943 when he was hit by a Yak 9 and crashed in Russian territory. He was captured by the Russians and held prisoner among captured German infantry. That night, although suffering from a wound encounter in aerial combat he and his fellow prisoners broke out of the farm house where they had been locked, killed the guard and escaped to their own lines. The third time was in the summer of 1944 when his aircraft was shot down again by enemy aircraft forcing him to parachute, having received multiple wounds including the temporary loss of his eyesight. He was rescued by a squad of German Wehrmacht (infantry) and helped back to the German lines. Due to his wounds, Sergeant von Ryik was sent to a hospital in Poland and eventually transferred to another hospital in Austria. He recovered in December and reported for duty at Wiener Neustadt, Austria, but was grounded because of his wounds. Having excelled in previous years as a skier, he was assigned as a ski instructor with an infantry unit in Austria.

Captured By Russians – In the spring of 1945 the Russians were through the front lines and Sergeant von Ryik was
sent into battle as an infantry officer. He was wounded again in the defense of Tropau, Germany and sent to a hospital in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Some months later he was captured in the hospital by the Russians and taken to a prison hospital in Poland. Later he escaped by cutting through the barbed wire and trekked 600 miles to Bavaria in the American sector of Germany, where he surrendered. He was discharged from the German Army and released by the Americans later that month.

Sergeant von Ryik then went to Vienna, Austria where he was reunited with his family in the Russian zone. After moving his family from the Russian zone into the American Zone, von Ryik was employed as interpreter for the British and American intelligence sections. In 1951 he emigrated to the USA.

**Left Active Duty** – The next three years of Sergeant von Ryik’s life were spent in Illinois and Indiana where he worked as a farm hand, mechanic, cab driver and truck driver.

In April 1954, Sergeant von Ryik enlisted in the Air Force and became a US citizen the following December. He married the former Joyce Lynn of Philadelphia, PA in 1956 and they now have two children.

**Awards** – Sergeant von Ryik’s awards and decorations include: Luftwaffe Pilot Wings, German Air Medal, German Purple Heart in Gold (wounded five times) Iron Cross 1st Class; German Cross in Gold, German Infantry Badge, for three combat operations; and the German Close Combat Badge.

“My career has just begun,” Sergeant von Ryik commented as he went to the field on another air commando combat control training mission.

Walter F. von Ryik, age 80, died January 27, 2004, after a long battle with cancer. A memorial service in his honor was held on Sunday, February 1 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast in Valparaiso, Florida.

**POPE COMBAT CONTROL TEAM** by Robert Emil Barinowski Jr., LTC, USAF (CCT) Retired

**January 1962 - Pope AFB, North Carolina** — In January 1962, the outcome of a war could well depend on how fast effective troops are delivered to the firing line. One small group of airmen would have an important role in the delivery. Most airmen walk to work. These men parachute. To them, a ‘chute is just another mode of transportation to one of the toughest jobs in the Air Force.

You don’t hear much about this small but very select group of men who make up Combat Control Teams. They are tougher than the job. A few months ago 45 airmen attending Air Traffic Control School at Keesler AFB volunteered for combat control duty. All except three of them were eliminated almost immediately. Not a single one of the three remaining qualified for combat control training. That’s how tough it is.

Just what is this job and what makes it so tough? It is mostly communications and air traffic control work. First, these men must be either control tower operators or ground radio mechanics, which isn’t too hard. Like all traffic controllers, they must be able to think on their feet and make decisions on their own. They must be—and stay—in top physical condition.

The teams locate, identify, and mark the drop zones and landing zones for the Army’s airborne operations. Then they guide TAC’s troop carrier pilots into position so the soldiers can parachute into, or land in, enemy territory as close as possible to their objective. To do this the Combat Control Team (CCT) must be down in the drop zone before the paratroopers are overhead.

The toughest part of the CCT job, the part that demands top physical condition, is getting to their duty station and setting up operations. They May get there by crawling on their bellies through enemy lines guided only by guts, a map, and a compass. Sometimes they May be landed from a submarine, small surface craft, or a rubber boat. More often they parachute ahead of, or with the first airborne troops. Or they May be air-landed from the first assault transport plane. During training, or in a very rare combat situation, they might just drive up in a jeep with the help of friendly natives.

Weightier than their combat gear is a team’s responsibility to be sure the troop carrier pilots drop their troops right on the proper impact point. Jump troops are most vulnerable to enemy action in the few brief minutes it takes them to float down, collect their equipment, and organize into fight-ready combat units.
Using visual and electronic aids, the combat controllers furnish aircrew the information they need to deliver the soldiers and their equipment precisely so that a minimum of effective fighting time is lost. The job demands a full and complete understanding of troop carrier techniques and procedures, along with a cool-headed direction of closely spaced aircraft converging on a single point under combat conditions.

Although the combat controllers carry full combat gear, an Army Assault Team (AAT) accompanies them to set up perimeter defenses and provide protection while the CCT concentrates on its job. The AAT jumps out one side of the aircraft, the CCT out the other. Precise timing is essential. Every man in each team knows what his job is and how to do it in the minimum of time.

The Airman (magazine) visited some of these rare airmen (less than a hundred in the entire Air Force) at Pope AFB, N.C. Pope is located on the Fort Bragg military reservation, home of the Army’s famous 82nd Airborne Division. There combat jump training is almost continuous. Combat controllers from the 464th Troop Carrier Wing’s, 3rd Aerial Port Squadron (3APS) get on the drop zones early every day. They stay quite late sometimes, for night drops are part of the training program too.

There are six active Aerial Port Squadrons in the Air Force: one each in Europe and the Far East; three in Tactical Air Command at Pope, Sewart, and Dyess AFB’s; one in the Military Air Transport Service. Each squadron is authorized one or more combat control teams, but some are operating with less. The 3APS is authorized three teams, each with 1 officer and 13 airmen—11 control tower operators and 2 mechanics.

At this writing the squadron had a total of 26 jump qualified controllers, 2 less than two full teams. But despite the manpower shortage, morale is high which is traditional in Aerial Port Squadrons. “More than once my men have been selected as the sharpest airmen on the base,” Captain John Nightingale, Commander of the 3APS told us. “There’s nothing different about the uniform they wear—nearly always fatigues—except that they blouse the trouser legs. It’s just the personal pride with which they wear it that makes the difference.”

Captain Nightingale is jump qualified and heads one of his own teams. He, too, complies with the team proficiency training requirements: one jump per month as a team member with all the equipment normally used in a tactical operation. Further the jump must be made from a fixed wing troop carrier aircraft. Then the team must establish a tactical drop zone/landing zone with all communication nets, ground-to-air and point-to-point. At least once every six months each member must make a team night deployment. Between jumps and work they solve infiltration, bivouac, map and compass problems in the field. Obviously they stay busy.

“What has caused the personnel shortage?”

“Mostly the lack of volunteers,” said Captain Richard G. Sigman, a jump qualified combat control officer who directs CCT operations for Ninth Air Force. “This is strictly volunteer duty and a lot of the people best suited to this kind of work don’t even know that we have a job for them.” Until 1953, when the Air Force Combat Control Teams were formed the job was performed by the US Army’s Pathfinder teams.

Operation Husky in Sicily during World War II proved that some sort of terminal guidance was essential to a successful airborne assault. Caught by darkness instead of twilight as planned, buffeted by strong winds, and without navigational aids, troop carrier pilots in that operation spilled parachutists all over the landscape. Operation Husky was successful, the history books say, only because the enemy was surprised and the troops were aggressive. “Naturally, Air Force control tower people who know the operating characteristics of troop carrier aircraft and who have been fully trained to handle heavy air traffic in a congested area are best qualified to do this job,” Captain Sigman pointed out. “But you can also see that a combat controller has to be more than a tower operator. He has to do the job with a minimum of equipment under difficult working conditions.”

Captain Sigman’s statement is reflected in the colorful patch worn on the right breast pocket of the 3rd Aerial Port’s fatigue jackets. Walt Disney gave them permission to build the patch around his Jimney Cricket character who is shown with an umbrella for a parachute. Underneath is the slogan Per Astra Ad Asperia. Loosely translated, it means “out of these skies to do difficult things.”

The physical requirement for jump training at the Army’s Fort Benning Parachutist School eliminates a lot of the would-be combat controllers who do hear about the job. Chapter 16, Part II of AFM 35-11, which lists the qualifications and tells how to apply for combat control duty, urges volunteers to commence immediate physical conditioning. To meet the minimum requirements a man must be able to (1) run at a dog trot 2 miles without
stopping; (2) do 30 consecutive push-ups; (3) 6 consecutive pull-ups; (4) 40 consecutive sit-ups; (5) 40 consecutive side straddle hops; (6) and 30 deep knee bends.

SSgt Tom Monley, 3APS liaison to the Joint Airborne Planning Board at Pope, knows firsthand about the physical requirements. Tom was out of the Air Force for a few years and came back to volunteer for combat control. He flunked miserably. The physical test was too much to hack for a 36-year-old man who had been leading a soft civilian life. But Monley was determined. It took a year of exercising before he passed the test. Now, besides jumping and field duty, Monley stays fit with the gym equipment he keeps hanging in his room wall locker.

What other qualities should a prospective combat controller have? We asked a group of jumpers rigging equipment in general purpose bags for a jump. Plenty of good common sense,” said one. “Job knowledge… ability to get along with people… a good cool head… like to work outdoors… and not complain,” others added. “He must know his traffic control job, be able to make the right decision on his own initiative, and not be looking for a soft bed of roses,” 2nd Lt. Dan Sherwood, team leader of the other CCT at Pope, summed up. Lieutenant Sherwood is a crack pistol shot.

TSgt Charles Drew, a former paratrooper, and Operations NCO, said that Lieutenant Sherwood had improved the CCT’s arms qualifications nearly one hundred percent. All CCT members must be well qualified in Air Force small arms. All carry the .45 caliber pistol and on tactical drops, half the team jumps with M-1 carbines, half with .45 caliber “grease guns.”

This training dovetails neatly with their survival and escape and evasion training in the field. They learn all the tricks and take the Code of Conduct very seriously. It’s part of the job. We watched as half of one team made a proficiency-training jump. (The other half was busy at one of the many drop zones and landing zones on Fort Bragg.) The C-123 Assault Transport came in low, 1,250 feet above the trees, the prescribed altitude for personnel drops. It wasn’t blind approach because on the drop zone there were two other combat controllers in radio contact with the pilot. They had already worked another personnel drop and a heavy equipment drop that day. The controllers’ presence was normal training procedure because safety in training is paramount.

Unnecessary risks are frowned on. Combat controllers are plain too hard to get and to train. The navigator used a small lake hidden in the woods just east of the drop zone as his timing point. At 125 knots, C-123 jump speed, it was just one minute to the CARP — or Computed Air Release Point. A CARP is a point in space where the pilot releases 250 pounds of man and equipment to land on a predetermined impact point (IP). The ballistic path the man will follow depends on the speed of his aircraft, wind direction and velocity, and the 12-15 miles per hour rate of descent permitted by his 36-foot nylon canopy. It is the navigator’s responsibility to determine the CARP with a mathematical formula. He gets his information from his drift-meter, pilot airspeed indicator, the wind information given him by the controller on the drop zone, and the hack watch on his wrist.

SSgt. Tom Koller was jumpmaster and the first man out. The others followed quickly. Captain Nightingale watched them go, then “swept the stick.” Later, on the ground, he coached one of the younger airmen on his jump stance in the door. Koller landed within 30 yards of the old truck tire that marked the impact point on Holland Drop Zone, released his canopy, hoisted the 60-pound general-purpose bag loaded with an air-to-ground radio transceiver to his shoulder, and hurried to the IP – Impact Point. The rest had gathered there too before the aircraft disappeared. Nine minutes after Sergeant Koller first appeared in the sky under a still opening parachute, the IP had been set up and the battery-powered radio was in operation.

Within 10 minutes all were at the IP. White cloth panels were spread on the ground to form the letter “A,” and a smoke grenade poured white smoke downwind. The panels and smoke were “just in case the radio was knocked out.” One man had a hand-held wind machine and called out wind velocity and direction to the air-ground radio operator. The last two men were prone with weapons in perimeter defense positions. On other training jumps, we were told, the perimeter defense men would have dog trotted back toward the hidden lake with cloth panels or battery-powered rotating green beacon lanterns to mark the timing point for either a day or night operation.

At night they would have marked the trailing edge of the drop zone with an amber light. The trailing edge is the point beyond which troops should not be dropped either because it is unsafe or for tactical reasons. Had this been a landing zone for a night maneuver the team would have outlined the landing strip with white-beamed electric lanterns with green beacons and amber lights marking the approach and overrun. White and cerise colored cloth panels would have
been used for day operations.

In a whole team deployment they would normally have established point-to-point radio communications with the Army Assault Team, the Air Evacuation point where medics would have assembled any casualties, and the CALSU—Combat Airlift Support Unit—at the rear. The CALSU is the operations center where all elements of airborne operation are coordinated. Air evacuation of wounded and injured is just one more facet of the CCT job.

SSgt Bill Johnson, number two-man out of the plane, spent eight years in the Army as an airborne infantryman and medic. His medical background is an asset to the CCT. This was the 178th official jump for the husky young Kentucky mountaineer. He wears a Master Parachutist’s badge, a small parachute topped with a star inside a wreath. It proves that he has been on jump status for at least five years, has jumped at least 65 times—3 times at night and 15 times with full equipment—and is a certified jumpmaster.

Nearly all the controllers in the 3APS wear Senior Parachutists badges. This takes two years on jump status with 30 jumps logged, 2 jumps at night and 5 with full equipment. They must also be certified as jumpmasters, capable of taking full charge of a stick of parachutists from takeoff until organized into an operating unit on the ground. Most of them have close to a hundred jumps to their credit.

SSgt. Murphy (Murph) C. Rigney was one of the controllers already on the DZ that day. He too has been a medic—in the Air Force. Rigney had been one of the four-man team the squadron had sent to work Swift Strike, an air land assault maneuver, in 1960. The four men directed more than 220 aircraft flying in 9- and 12-plane formations into and out of the airhead. The formations were mixed with three types of aircraft, C-130, C-123, and C-119 transports. The control team brought them in at one-minute intervals. When one plane landed they had another one in position on the approach.

“With seasoned noncoms like these, we could handle our own combat team training easily,” SMSgt. Howard S. Land, NCOIC of the Pope unit, echoed a statement made also by Captain Sigman. “We would like to get the young airmen right fresh out of Air Traffic Control School. In fact, we would like to go there and handpick them ourselves. We know just what sort of man makes the best controller. Then as soon as he finishes jump school we could take over the field training right here on the job. We could guarantee the product.”

Land was combat seasoned by two jumps with the 187th Regimental Combat Team in Korea. He got practical Combat Control Team experience while a member of an Army Pathfinder team. And he also picked up a lot of experience that he could pass along to younger men from his tour with Army Special Forces. He could teach with authority.

Presently, the CCT’s are undertaking to help train Reservists when time permits. The Air Force has six Aerial Port Squadrons in its Reserve components that would be assigned to Tactical Air Command in the event of all-out mobilization. It is pretty difficult for a civilian, training just one day a week except for his two weeks on annual active duty, to retain his proficiency as a combat controller. But until there are enough regular Air Force units assigned and trained in these duties to augment called-up Reserve units, there is no other solution.

The only thing approaching a gripe among the CCT’s at Pope concerned their equipment. Captain Sigman, however, had an answer to this. New communication equipment that had been developed by the Marine Corps was then being modified for combat control use and it would be delivered in early 1962. This equipment is jeep-mounted (Editors Note: The VC-104 was a short lived CCT radio vehicle) and the whole, vehicle and gear, could be air dropped in a drive away condition. They brightened.

Furthermore, the Air Force Systems Command had one of its facilities at Wright-Patterson AFB busy developing still better jump equipment. True, they didn’t have a missile-sized budget, but the captain was confident that they would solve the immediate problems with future improvements looking very promising.

Meanwhile, the Combat Control Teams remain a crack outfit that has earned the respect of all who know them by doing a man-sized job to insure national security. But however difficult these things May be, combat controllers can look anyone in the eye and say without bragging, “In airborne assault, we’re First There!”

PROJECT CLOSE LOOK by Gene Adcock, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

August 1962 - Sewart AFB, Tennessee - In August 1962, General William G. Moore, Jr. began his airlift career as
commander of the 314th Troop Carrier Wing at Sewart Air Force Base, Tennessee. During this time he also completed airborne training at Fort Benning, Ga. In September 1963, he became commander of the 839th Air Division. While at Sewart, General Moore directed Project Close Look, the springboard for many of today's tactical airlift tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs). At the time, the Sewart ramp was bursting at the seams with more than a hundred C-130's; consisting of two Wings and the Combat Crew Training Squadron. At the time, virtually every C-130 in the Air Force was assigned to Sewart.

Combat Controllers of the 2nd Aerial Port Squadron were heavily involved in Close Look, a project that yielded such innovations as:

- Low-Level, In-Trail Flight Formations
- Container Delivery System (CDS)
- All-Weather Aerial Delivery System (AWADS)
- Ground Proximity Extraction System (GPES - pronounced JEEPS), a precursor to LAPES

During the 1962 Project Close Look tests, SSgt Gene Adcock (assigned the project when SSgt Tom Sanders transfered) was the CCT Project Manager for GPES. He was instrumental in the development of TTPs for both the ground and airborne components of GPES. His self imposed duties included the fabrication of the first extraction platform that he helped built at the Sewart AFB Civil Engineering (CE) Sheet Metal Shop.

The final Close Look test of GPES was a three-ship, in-trail formation extraction at Ft. Campbell. The final test was successful; however, wake turbulence would prove so hairy - for the aircrew - that it was never attempted again.

GPES AND CCT MANNING

In 1962, the standard size of a Combat Control Team was 14 men. Because the installation of GPES was so labor intensive, the Tactical Air Command and the Air Staff used the new GPES workload as part of the justification to increase Combat Control Team size from 14 to 24 men.

TESTS OF IMPROVED GPES by Don Horton, LTC, USAF (CCT) Retired

WINTER 1965 - Sewart AFB, Tennessee – In 1965, the manufacturer – The All American Engineering Company – delivered a new GPES configuration for testing. The improved extraction pallets had been beefed up and other minor tweaks made to correct earlier problems. However the major improvement was the addition of a rewind engine on each of extraction pallet. Earlier versions used hand cranks to rewind the extraction cable. In high-density extraction operations, it was physically impossible to hand-rewind the arresting wheels in time to service rapidly approaching aircraft.

<< Installing the GPES arresting gear was a major task. Two extraction pallets were installed 100’ apart, across the aircraft flight path. Each pallet had a water drum that was approximately 24” deep and about the diameter of a 55-gallon drum. Inside was a paddle wheel, it turned in the water and acted as an arresting gear. A hole two-feet deep was dug to accommodate the buried water drum. The pallet was held in place by ten 36” long stakes. Identified in this photo are Frank Hasler and Norris Gentry, both long-time combat controllers. (Don Horton Collection)
In this photo, Marty North (L) is shown driving one of the 36" aluminum stakes into the ground. A removable steel cap is seen on top of the stake. It protected the aluminum stake from splitting. At center, Mo Lattimore is shown adjusting the GPES pallet, while 1LT Don Horton positions one of the stakes for driving.

(Don Horton Collection)

Clearly seen here in the white snow background is the GPES installation. Black rubber disks elevated the arresting cable several inches above the ground to facilitate the easy engagement of the GPES hook. The GPES hook was attached by shear pin to a 15-foot pole that hung below the aircraft. To aid the pilot - on final approach - a microphone was attached to the pole; the audio fed through the intercom system. When the pilot heard a scraping sound in his headphones, he knew he was at the correct extraction altitude. (Horton Collection)

Shown here, a C-130 shortly after it has engaged the extraction cable. The extraction hook has sheared from the pole and the extraction line is seen playing out from the ramp. (Don Horton Collection)
In this photo, the load is almost clear of the aircraft. Traveling at approximately 125 Knots, most of the downward force was dissipated as the pallet arched to the ground. Honeycomb padding, between the load and pallet helped absorb the landing shock. (Don Horton Collection)

The GPES support crew is shown here. From left to right are Charlie Ballard, Frank Hasler, Henry Kelly, Norris Gentry, Don Horton, Donald Stetson, Alva Moore and Perry Kiser. (Don Horton Collection)
GPES AT KHE SANH by Gene Adcock, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired
March 30, 1968 – Khe Sanh USMC Outpost, Republic of Vietnam – The USAF continues to resupply the US Marine Corps outpost at Khe Sanh using everything available to deliver much needed supplies. Today, an Air Force C-130 delivered the first Ground Proximity Extraction System (GPES) load. USAF Combat Controllers – on the ground at Khe Sanh - installed the ground extraction system and controlled the aircraft during the delivery phase.

<<< One of many GPES deliveries made during the 77-day North Vietnam Army (NVA) siege of Khe Sanh.

GPES was discontinued by TAC after the development of LAPES because the latter required no ground support equipment. However, the Air Force has gone to the closet to pull out everything it has to support the Marine Corps at Khe Sanh. The first GPES mission at Khe Sanh included a crate of eggs on the platform and not a single one was broken!

THE AIR COMMANDOS by Chief Master Sgt. Edison T. Blair, Airman Magazine
September 1962 -- Hurlburt Field, Florida - A sign over the doorway of a squat white building near the Hurlburt Field, Fla., runway of Eglin Air Force Base declares, "The Mission of the Air Force is to Fight."
The men wearing tennis shorts and sneakers, flying suits, bloused-legged fatigues, and combat boots who pass through this doorway are members of the 6th Fighter Squadron (Commando).
Sixth Fighter is part of the 1st Air Commando Group, a re-activated outfit with a pride-stirring World War II history of behind-the-lines fighting in the Burma campaign. It is also a throwback in this jet age, and about the most unorthodox, most dedicated collection of rugged individuals in the U.S. Air Force. These men are participating in the strangest war in the history of the United States, battling communism on terms and terrain of the enemy's choosing.

<<< Air Commandos were flying airplanes that were throwback's from the jet age.

This is not a shooting war for these men. Yet as they train they fly planes with hot guns, live bombs, and rockets. Men of the 1st Air Commando Group have died in this hottest of cold wars. Their most potent weapons, as strange as the war itself, are their esprit de corps; their toughness, determination, and ingenuity; their ability to do almost any job by the most direct means. They teach the use of tactical air power against insurrection.
They are experts in the art of counterinsurgency, says Brig. Gen. Gilbert L. Pritchard, commander of the USAF Special Air Warfare Center, parent organization of the 1st ACG and its research and development sister, the 1st Combat Application Group. They have been sharpening their techniques for nearly a year at the request of the government of South Vietnam.

In this sort of undeclared war, the general explained, traditional masses of military force are of little use. The communist infiltrates the country and becomes a part of the population where he foments insurgency, organizes guerrilla forces, and tries to impose his control and politics upon the people. Only the people of the country involved can identify and fight the guerrilla. The role of the 1st Air Commando Group is to demonstrate the use of aircraft and train allied Airmen to rout out and fight the guerrilla in his natural element.

The commandos are living contradictions of the "Ugly American." They live and work with the men who fight. Their classroom is the flight line, the cockpit, and the cargo compartments of airplanes flying over guerrilla-infested territory. The paradoxical 1st Air Commando Group contradicts almost all of the conventional rules except those that early in our own history converted a group of non-conforming colonists into the strongest, most advanced nation in the world.

There are no firmly drawn battle lines in a guerrilla war. Counterinsurgency tactical training takes these airmen dangerously close to the enemy. Flying crews are especially vulnerable to capture. Korea disclosed the communist techniques of getting intelligence from downed Airman and the propaganda use they made of it. Because the commandos don't intend to give the communists any information other than their name, rank, and serial number if captured, this article will not mention them by name nor identify them with photos.

We called the commandos a throwback in the jet age. They are!

The 6th Fighter Squadron, for instance, isn't equipped with Century-series jets. Their most versatile aircraft is the World War II B-26 Invader. It carries .50-caliber machine guns in its nose, rockets under its wings, and a wide variety of bombs in its belly. A platform hung from the bomb bay carries cargo, or becomes a jumping off place for paratroopers.

The 13-year old T-28 Trojan was built as a primary and basic fighter trainer, but it resembles and behaves much like the old P-47 Thunderbolt, better known as the "Jug" by the aces who flew it. The pilots of the 6th Fighter Squadron are flying the T-28 just as the old "Jug" was flown. But they have added rocket pods and anything else effective against guerrillas.

The only new plane in the 1st ACG inventory is the L-28, a four-place, high-wing, all metal monoplane originally designed as an executive aircraft. The commandos have nicknamed it the "Super Spad" after the most effective warplane flown by the old Air Service during World War I. It does an outstanding job on reconnaissance, and on small supply drops with a one-man crew. The "Super-Spad" does exceptionally well on infiltration and exfiltration jobs. The plane lands, discharges its load, and takes off in any clearing the size of a football field where a jeep can do 30 miles per hour. All without turning around.

The 319th Troop Carrier Squadron (Commando) looks after the group's heavy hauling needs with their equally antiquated but reliable C-47 "Gooney Birds" and C-46 Commandos. It could be that some of these very same planes first earned their keep flying the Hump during World War II with the original 1st Air Commando group. The only difference in then and now, General Pritchard says, is that then they fought, now they teach. This same equipment is available to every country that is sociologically, politically, or economically vulnerable to communist-inspired insurrection and infiltration.

We have said that the 1st Air Commando Group is unorthodox. They dress for work like no other members of the Air Force. The fatigues and combat boots are standard items of issue, but they wear them differently. The starched and carefully creased pants are bloused over polished boot tops. The fatigue shirt is worn tucked in. Mechanics on the flight line shed the shirt and work in white T-Shirts with their rank insignia stenciled on the left chest. There's always a rag handy to wipe grease and grime off the boots.

Their hat is the crowning inconsistency. It is made of quilt-stitched denim with a wide floppy brim. Unless a local contractor has been found recently they are bought in Southeast Asia. The first commandos deployed to South Vietnam found the local product did an excellent job of shading the face and neck from the broiling tropical sun. They adopted the hat immediately for off-duty wear.

The hat is even more pliable than a cowboy's 10-gallon felt, and it can express the wearer's personality equally well.
The Airmen began pinning back the floppy brim with personal souvenirs, frequently one of the metal uniform devices given to them by a Vietnamese buddy. The group commander recognized the morale value of the hat and authorized it as part of the uniform for those who served in South Vietnam. More recently the hat was authorized by the Air Force for all airmen in the group -- all except the combat controllers, who already had their distinctive headgear, a blue beret.

Except for the color, it resembles the green beret worn by the Army Special Forces troops. The combat controllers work hand in glove with the special forces so the black beret serves to identify them, their specialized job, and their branch of service even when mixed with troops wearing the same battle dress.

There are other differences found in the 1st ACG. The 6th Fighter Squadron has no first sergeant and only two enlisted airmen, an Air Traffic Specialist and a Personnel Equipment Technician. Like the pilot-officers, they do whatever needs doing. Everyone has at least two jobs. The squadron has no written standing operating procedures. One of the commanders -- they have several fully qualified but only one at a time filling the slot--explained that the absence of SOPs ensures top efficiency. The admonishment "Shape up or I'll write it out" corrects any lax tendencies. All the officers are experienced pilots or navigators, fully aware of the unit's mission and able to do it without supervision. The only two administrative slots are those of commander and operations officer. Both are filled by combat-ready, sortie-flying pilots. Among these officers are multi-engine jet jockeys, some engineers, some school teachers, a could-be astronaut, and a preacher with a degree from West Point, an Air Force commission, and navigator's wings. They have but few problems they can't solve among themselves.

The rest of the Air Force follows Air Force regulation and AF Manual 66-1 which set down the policies, rules, and methods of aircraft maintenance. The 1st Air Material Squadron (Commando) doesn't. It can't. Sometimes it has more airplanes than maintenance men in one or another of its operating locations. In this gung ho organization there are no specialists, just wrench-twisting mechanics. Sure, every man has a primary and control AFSC. But the armament man helps the electrician, the radio man can help change a tire, the prop specialist helps the hydraulic man. One man's job is everybody's responsibility. Even the orderly room is staffed by mechanics on loan from the flight line.

Respect is earned in the 1st Commando Group and every member is respected, not for who he is but for what he does and how well. The maintenance boss, commander of the material squadron, is a wiry, soft-voiced major whose opinion is never questioned by mechanics, pilots, or commanders. He started both his maintenance and his flying career with a crop-dusting plane in Arkansas before World War II. He flew the duster and pulled his own maintenance. An Airman working "just a couple of hours overtime" on the line described the major as "the best maintenance officer in the Air Force." He said it emphatically, even a little belligerently, as if ready to back it up with his fists.

The man had just repeated a story that we had already heard twice that day, once from the acting group commander and once from the major. The commandos had been preparing for their overseas deployment to South Vietnam last fall to help stem the tide of communism there. They waited only for word from the White House. Secretary McNamara's "Go" signal reached the 1st ACG hangar at 0800 and the word spread fast. Shortly after 1,000 hours the first of 13 planes lifted off the runway. Eleven fortunate maintenance men went with them to keep them combat ready. The major, and the colonel before him, had furnished more background that helped explain the obvious pride of these apparently overworked mechanics. Early in the organization of their training schedule the group, known then as the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron, had asked another command with B-26 experience for advice on their Manning tables. They had recommended a minimum of 29 men to keep two B-26s flying under combat conditions. The commandos trimmed a lot of fat off that Manning table.

The same pride of achievement forced the major to reveal a little of the squadron's maintenance figures in South Vietnam. The average Air Force in-commission rate is 75 percent. During their first month in Asia these men had a 90 percent in-commission rate for eight T-28s and 98 percent for four C-47s. The second month the rate dropped to 88 and 96 percent respectively. By the third month the T-28 rate had risen to 92 percent and was 99 percent for the "Gooney Birds." It could have been better, the major admitted, if they hadn't had 24 days with an aircraft-out-of-commission-for-parts. The missing part was a C-47 windshield.

The current in-commission rate are classified but there are no reports of rupture on the commando flight lines in the States, in South Vietnam, or in Panama. The group has its own flight surgeons and medical technicians just as versatile and self-sufficient as the rest of the group.

Doing things normally considered impossible seems to be a way of life with the commandos.
commanding the 319th Troop Carrier Squadron (Commando) talked casually about some of the low-level missions they are flying with high-value cargo in South Vietnam. Any daylight mission that lifts them more than 50 feet above the tree-tops is a high-altitude flight. At night safety demands an altitude of 200 feet above the jungle. At these altitudes the old "Gooney Birds" and C-46s slide across a jungle clearing pretty fast. It makes them poor targets for ground fire.

The C-47s flown by these transport pilots have been strengthened for better operations from rough dirt, sod, or at best, pierced steel plank runways. Admittedly, neither type of transport is useful for high-volume cargo but here the emphasis is on value and mobility. And again, their job is to train the South Vietnamese how to get the most out of the equipment they have available. The "Gooney Birds" have and are doing a big job all over the world -- the Russians have a copy of it.

So far, the modern commandos haven't airlifted any mules or horses as the old outfit did in China, but they have still had a wide variety. Their cargo has included live chickens -- there's no refrigeration in the jungle -- rice, rubber soled canvas shoes, propaganda leaflets, ammunition, and of course, troops. Sometimes their high-value cargo has been a tape recorder with a loud speaker system slung under the fuselage. They delivered messages of freedom, hope and security.

Cargo is delivered by whatever method deemed best for the load and the circumstances. Like everyone else in 1st ACG, the 319th loadmasters were chosen for their resourcefulness and experience. They have loaded, rigged, dropped, and unloaded almost every type of item ever airlifted by the Air Force. Their experience stretches from the Dew line and Arctic Station Bravo to the South Pole; from missile plants to atomic test sites; from South American earthquake scenes to UN battle lines in the Congo.

If there is experience they don't have, they are looking for it. Several of them are already parachute qualified, the rest are waiting for quotas from jump school. Meanwhile they teach themselves in sky-diving clubs.

They are also learning to pack their own cargo and personnel parachutes. Not because they expect to jump and fight, but for the same reason the rest of the group is learning parachute techniques, sometimes the only way to get from an airplane to the place you are needed on the ground is by jumping there. Nearly all the loadmasters are graduates of an aerial port squadron and are thoroughly familiar with Army airborne and special forces operations.

Unlike the very few other Air Force commands still flying C-47s and C-46s, the commandos carry navigators on both their high and low altitude flights. It is a demanding job. There are few navigation aids in the areas where the commandos operate. They eyeball their course, use landmarks as checkpoints, and fly by the seat of their pants. But on a troop infiltration or exfiltration mission timing is more than precise, it must be exact. Missing an objective -- a tiny clearing usually -- by more than a minute and a half is a crime akin to murder. There's no time to circle and line up on a drop zone or landing zone. To a guerrilla an orbiting plane speaks louder than a circling vulture.

Oftentimes these troops are the commando combat control teams or include at least a member of the team who directs the operation. They too have several jobs -- so many that they consider themselves misnamed. They seldom deploy in full team strength as do their counterparts in the rest of Tactical Air Command. They take on the additional duties of forward air controllers, traditionally a fighter pilot's job, to direct air strikes as they handle air traffic control and operations duties for the detachments. And, when needed, they can do more than a commendable job as loadmaster or drop master.

We said that these men were rugged as well as dedicated individuals.

Shorts and sneakers are optional uniform for the first half hour of the commandos' working day. That's when everybody -- the colonels and the lieutenants, the sergeants and the airmen -- turn out for physical training. The Five Basic Exercises (5BX) plan now standard throughout the Air Force is the skeleton for the air commando physical fitness program. They just beef it up with another 19 minutes of modified exercise and finish with a full mile of distance run. The extra time is a conditioning program to ready them for jump training.

It also helps to keep them lean and fit for their jobs -- jobs they literally bought with several pounds of flesh. Completion of a specially lengthened and toughened survival, evasion, and escape course at (former) Stead AFB (in Reno, Nev.) is mandatory for Commando volunteers. Those who survive the course and are accepted in the outfit lose an average of 15 pounds. The men who find the course too tough for them are free to drop out and return to their old organization without prejudice. The commandos' job requires them to be self-sufficient in practically everything. They seldom have nor do they depend on the normal support services available to most Air Force units. (Revival of the 1962 article reprinted on 1/11/2007 by AFNEWS)
COMBAT CONTROL SUPPORTS THE INDO-CHINA WAR

by

- Alicide S. (Bull) S. Benini, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired
- Robert F. Graham, SMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired
- Larry E. Morris, SMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired
- Jay L. Morris, TSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired
- Erwin M. (Red) Gromley, USAF (CCT) Retired

October 1962 - New Delhi, India – In October 1962, the Chinese have two major claims on what India deems its own territory. One claim, in the western sector, is on Aksai Chin in the northeastern section of Ladakh District in Jammu and Kashmir. The other claim is in the eastern sector over a region included in the British-designated North-East Frontier Agency, the disputed part of which India renamed Arunachal Pradesh and made a state. In the fight over these areas, the well-trained and well-armed troops of the Chinese People's Liberation Army overpowered the ill-equipped Indian troops, who had not been properly acclimatized to fighting at high altitudes.

Unable to reach political accommodation on disputed territory along the 3,225-kilometer-long Himalayan border, the Chinese attacked India on October 20, 1962. At the time, nine divisions from the eastern and western commands were deployed along the Himalayan border with China. None of these divisions was up to its full troop strength, and all were short of artillery, tanks, equipment, and even adequate articles of clothing.

In Ladakh the Chinese attacked south of the Karakoram Pass at the northwest end of the Aksai Chin Plateau and in the Pangong Lake area about 160 kilometers to the southeast. The defending Indian forces were easily ejected from their posts in the area of the Karakoram Pass and from most posts near Pangong Lake. However, they put up spirited resistance at the key posts of Daulat Beg Oldi (near the entrance to the pass) and Chushul (located immediately south of Pangong Lake and at the head of the vital supply road to Leh, a major town and location of an air force base in Ladakh). Other Chinese forces attacked near Demchok (about 160 kilometers southeast of Chusul) and rapidly overran the Demchok and the Jara La posts.

On November 21, 1962, twelve USAF C-130s of the 322nd Air Division departed France on a mass deployment to New Delhi. They were deployed to support the Indian government in their defense against the Chinese Communists invasion of India. Combat Controllers form the 5th Aerial Port Squadron at Evreux, France and Detachment 8, 5th Aerial Port in Weisbaden, Germany were included in the deployed package. All arrived in New Delhi on November 23, twenty-four hours ahead of schedule.

The following day, the 322nd established a command post at the Palam Air Port in New Delhi. The Combat Control Team established a communication site adjacent to the command post. The team operated their MRC-94, Communications Central, an International Harvester six-passenger vehicle with a full range of communications equipment; including a 1,000 watt HF/SSB for long-range, over-the-horizon communications; VHF/AM; and UHF/AM ground-to-air communications links for air traffic control.
When China invaded India, the Indian Air Force was not able to respond to the crisis with their Russian-built transport aircraft. They were not capable of delivering heavily loaded troops and supplies to the 10,000+ (MSL) elevations found at the Himalayan airfields. The USAF C-130A-Model aircraft were up to the task. Soon after their arrival they began shuttling Indian reinforcements and war supplies to Himalayan airfields.

Early on, the Combat Control Team was deploying each day to the major resupply point at Leh Airport. Leh had a Perforated Steel Planing (PSP) runway situated on a 10,000' AGL plateau in deep in the Himalayan Mountain's Ladakh District. Leh was an uncontrolled operation, with no visual or electronic navigational aids. Jay Morris was part of the first CCT to arrive at Leh and recalls that his first order of business was to establish traffic patterns and landing procedures. Approaches were steep, from west to east; because of the high elevation and heavy loads each landing was favorably compared to a carrier landing.

The CCT continued its daily shuttle from Delhi to Leh for less than a week before an in-flight incident changed their method of operation.

One day, as C-130 approached Leh, an Indian aircraft just missed the heavily laden aircraft. As a result of this near-miss incident, the Mission...
Commander ordered an element of the CCT move to Leh. From that time, through the end of the operation, a CCT element rotated between Delhi and Leh on a weekly schedule.

- Combat Controllers at Leh stayed in a tent next to the USAF Weather Team.
- It was so cold that even when the sun was shining, it was possible to get sunburn on one ear and frost bite on the shaded ear.
- Since the MRC-94 was permanently based at Delhi, air traffic control was accomplished with survival radios modified with crystals tuned to ATC frequencies. The survival radios was the only portable gear available to the CCT at that time.

During free time in New Delhi, combat controllers visited historic landmarks, such as the Taj Mahal.

Red Ghormley recalls making a parachute jump at Agra, within sight of the Taj Mahal.

Shown here in this poor quality 1962 photograph, Bull Benini – the first US Air Force Combat Controller. In 1962, he was stationed in Germany and participated in the Indian mission. Note the USAF parachute badge on his cap.

Off loading the aircraft at Leh was difficult because there was no fork lifts or other off-load equipment available. In the beginning, loaded aircraft then manually transfer the supplies to waiting trucks. Later they modified the process, by taxiing the loaded aircraft to a clear area, unlocking the load and then simply taxing the aircraft - allowing the load to roll off the ramp. On return trips, the aircraft would be loaded with wounded troops and others returning to Delhi.

To provide direct support to Indian soldiers in the field, the CCT established a drop zone in the Indus Valley, six miles north of the Leh Airport. The drop zone was used to drop rice and other supplies to the Indian troops and Sikh refugees. Bull Benini and Larry Morris clearly remember an exciting trip - by jeep - to the drop zone.

At the drop zone, Morris recalls the aircraft dropping free-fall bags of flour at the drop zone. They burst on impact and were used to determine the ballistics for follow-on free-fall drops of rice. The method worked, but many bags of rice burst upon impact.
The India mission was originally expected to last only a few months, however, Combat Controllers were rotated in country well into 1963. The Indian government later attributed the American C-130s with saving them from the Communist Chinese invasion and probable loss of two provinces. The 322nd Air Division, supporting units, including the Combat Control Team all received th Outstanding Unit Award for their actions in the Indo-China War.

Fourteen Air Force and Army parachutists step out of a Lockheed Hercules to begin . . .

December 16, 1963 - El Centro Naval Air Station California – The morning of December 16, 1963, started like most mornings at the El Centro Naval Air Station in southern California. There was a clear sky above and the predawn visibility extended to the horizon. The Lockheed C-130 Hercules from Sewart AFB, Tennessee, like hundreds of its type around the world, looked huge and powerful, capable of handling most airlift tasks.

Inside the C-130’s spacious flight deck office, Air Force Captains Ricky R. Davidson and Marvin L. Payne worked their way though a lengthy checklist, then guided by the voice of the control tower operator, taxied the Hercules into takeoff position and advanced the throttles. Presently the machine was airborne, climbing rapidly toward the still visible stars.

Before this flight was over the plane would set a new unofficial altitude record for C-130’s, 14 of its passengers would earn the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the new international mass free-fall records would be established. Simultaneously, two Soviet-held parachuting records would fall.

Five of the passengers in the C-130’s comfortably heated, pressurized cargo compartment were Air Force members. The other nine were members of the Army. All were career parachutists assigned to Operation HALO (high-altitude, low opening), a joint Air Force-Army test of troop-drop techniques. Each had received training at the Army Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, NC, prior to his El Centro Assignment.

Their qualifications for this assignment were impressive. The least experienced of the men had parachuted to earth 140 times, one man had hit the nylon 830 times, and the total number of jumps logged by the group tallied up to 6,613. Some of the men had begun their careers in the era of low- and slow-flying Douglas C-47 Skytrains, when paratroopers relied on static lines to open their parachutes and low flight to assure on-target landings. Now they were rated among the world’s foremost skydivers, capable of making precision landing from aircraft several miles above the earth.

Operation HALO required that troops and combat equipment be dropped from altitudes ranging from 25,000 to 40,000 feet, and today’s drop was to be carried out from a minimum altitude of 40,000 feet. Because the Soviet-held international mass free-fall record was 36,702 feet, the HALO parachutists had taken steps to make this mission a
jump for the record. Each man carried a sealed barograph, designed to measure and record variations in atmospheric
pressure. Following the jump, the barographs would be turned over to officials of the Federation Aeronautique
Internationale (FAI) to establish the jump altitude and parachute opening altitude for each member of the team.

Each man also carried a standard Air Force bailout oxygen bottle containing an eight- to ten-minute oxygen supply.
None of the men wore pressurized clothing.

Because a combat parachutist must land near his equipment, and airdropped equipment cannot use sky-diving control
techniques, proper selection of a drop is a necessity. In order to assure that the simulated battle equipment carried on
this flight would land at the pre-selected point, a careful series of calculations had been made, based on wind
directions and velocities at altitudes ranging from ground level to above eight miles. The cargo chutes were set to
open automatically below the 2,500-foot level. Similar automatic opening devices were attached to the jumpers’
parachute, but these chutes could be opened manually in the event the automatic devices fail.

Experience Plus

Project officer for the 40,000-foot-plus airdrop test was Captain Charles J. Corey, USAF, a veteran of 265 jumps.
Corey had selected two other Air Force members – Captain John J. Garrity, Jr. and MSgt James A. Howell, Tactical
Air Command forward air controllers – as lead jumpers. Like Captain Corey, Garrity and Howell were at home in the
air, with or without parachutes. A few weeks earlier these men, accompanied by two other sky divers, had completed
one of the most difficult feats in sport parachuting – a triple baton pass. Howell’s past honors included a
Distinguished Flying Cross and Aerospace Primus Award, presented after he made the first live test by a human being
in a rocket-powered, upper-rotational, supersonic ejection seat. Garrity had logged 360 jumps and Howell had bailed
out 700 times.

According to the plan the equipment would be released first. Garrity and Howell would bail out behind it and use sky-
diving techniques to follow it down. The other parachutists were to follow in pairs.

SSgt Vern Morgan, with 440 previous jumps, and SSgt George D. McLean, who had 336 parachute descents to his
credit, rounded out the Air Force complement of the two-service jump team. Army parachutists and number of jumps
logged were Lt Col Merrill Shepard, 450; LT James E. Garvey, 425; SFC James H. Smith, 300; SSgt James W.
Hauck, 449; SSgt Loren B. Hollingsworth, 140; SP5 William W. Bohringer, 543; SSgt Robert L. Tisdale, 500; SSgt
Paul S. Newman, 675; and SSgt Wilfred J. Charetté, 830.

Charette, in addition to having jumped more often than any of the others aboard the rapidly climbing Hercules, also
could claim participation as a sport parachutist in 19 international group accuracy records.

Only one of the team members, Sergeant Smith, was ineligible to participate in international competition. FAI rules
require membership in the appropriate national parachuting club, in this instance the Parachute Club of America.
Smith was not a member. He would however, be in line for any military recognition that might result from this day’s
assault on the record book.

Going Up…

The Hercules climbed past the 37,000-foot level and continued its upward journey, and it seemed to the parachutists
that a new international record was in the bag. In order to nail down the championship, the airplane would have to
climb high enough to surpass the Soviet team’s 37,720-foot free fall by at least two percent, using an equal or larger
number of qualified jumpers. The Soviet team consisted of nine men, so the American team was qualified in this
respect. No one aboard the Hercules doubted the plane’s ability to carry the team to the required altitude. Pilots
Davidson and Payne kept the C-130 moving upward, past the 40,000-foot level and eventually to 42,000, and finally
to 43,500 feet.

Six minutes before bailout time the gigantic rear cargo door opened and the jumpers, not equipped with pressure suits,
experienced some discomfort in the rarefied atmosphere. The temperatures at this altitude registered 67 degrees
below zero, 137 degrees lower than the air temperature at ground level.

…Coming Down

The parachutists moved into position at the appointed time, and at the appointed place the equipment was shoved
overboard. Someone yelled: “Look out, Garrity, that next step is a big one!” Then Garrity and Howell were plunging
downward, enjoying a sense of pleasure as the moved into warmer temperatures. They marveled again at the familiar
sensation that they were suspended between earth and sky, and that the desert was coming up to meet them. Following behind them, two by two, were the other twelve jumpers.

...On the Ground...
Their controlled plunge through space lasted 3 minutes and 12 seconds. All the chutes opened automatically below the 2,500-foot level and the men touched down on the desert less than six minutes after bailout. So precise was the calculation of wind, so skillful the jumpers’ control, and that parachutists and equipment landed within 200 yards of the pre-selected target point. Had this been a combat jump, the men and equipment would have been ready for almost instant action.

The parachutists were examined immediately by a Tactical Air Command flight surgeon, Dr. (Captain) M. E. Tardy, who pronounced their condition excellent. Meanwhile three Parachute Club of America stewards, officials of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, rushed the barographs to Edwards AFB, California, for official certification.

These instruments proved that the American team had recaptured from the Soviet Union the eight- and nine-man freefall records and established their claim to a new 13-man record. (Editor's Note: Remember, one of the fourteen jumpers was not a member of the Parachute Club of America and could not counted in the FAI record.) The new free-fall distance in all three categories was 41,275 feet.

*General Curtis E. LeMay, Air Force Chief of Staff presented the Distinguished Flying Cross to each of the Project HALO team members. At left, nearest LeMay is MSgt James Howell. At front, center are Captains Garrity (tallest) and Corey (shortest). Standing directly behind them are Sergeants Morgan (L) and McLean (R). All were career combat controllers, except for Garrity, a long-time Air Commando Intelligence Officer, who would later operate as a Butterfly FAC in Laos. (Air Force Photo)*

At the Pentagon...
On January 28, 1964, the parachutists assembled at the Pentagon to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross. On hand to greet them were Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis E. LeMay, Army Chief of Staff General Earle Wheeler, Tactical Air Command Vice Commander Lt. Gen. C. B. Westover, and Continental Army Command Deputy Commander Lt. Gen John W. Bowen.

Before presenting the medals, General LeMay told the parachutists: “I’ve spent a little over 35 years with the Army and the Air Force and I’ve had many occasions to be thankful for occasions such as this, brought on by the fact that we always seem to be able to produce a group of men who are willing to do more than they are required to do – to step a little out into the unknown and produce new methods of doing things – new tactics and new techniques that serve us not only in peacetime, but also pay off handsomely on the battlefield. This is certainly one of those occasions and I’m very happy to participate for the Air Force in this ceremony here this morning.”
CCT @ The Eye of the Storm

Following the award ceremony, the newly decorated officers and noncommissioned officers made themselves available to photographers and reporters to answer numerous questions about their experiences.

One reporter remarked to Captain Garrity that men engaged in so demanding a profession must look forward to off-duty weekends with eagerness.

“We do,” Garrity replied. “Like everyone else, we need our periods of relaxation.”

“And just how do you and the others relax on your days off?” the reporter asked.

“Well,” Garrity answered, “we all belong to sports parachute clubs. We do quite a bit of sky diving.”

AIR COMMANDO'S TRAIN COLUMBIANS by Jim Stanford, SMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

30 December 1963 - Howard AFB, Canal Zone – In December 1963, Combat Controllers of the 1st Air Commando Wing (1 ACW) were deployed to the 605th Air Commando Squadron, Howard AFB, Canal Zone (CZ) in support of OPLAN 72.

The three combat controllers, Captain Lemuel Egleston, Jr., SSgt Jim Stanford and SSgt Chuck Paradise were sent to Panama as part of a mobile training team (MTT). The team arrived at the peak of a Panamanian uprising; protesting the American Occupation of the Panama Canal Zone. Soon after they arrived at Howard, they were deployed down town to the Trivoli Hotel. Their mission, to support government efforts to control the protests and terrorist activities -at night. The specifically problem was snipers, operating on roof tops in the area of the Trivoli. Their mission was to aid the flow of air traffic and control the airdrop of illumination flares from U-10 aircraft.

<<< "The Hotel Tivoli was built for the threefold purpose of furnishing quarters to government employees who had arrived on the Isthmus and had no quarters assigned to them, for the use of persons whose business with the canal administration forced them to come to the isthmus, and the recreation of employees, whose chief dissipation is a trip to the city about once a fortnight." (On-line Photo Service)

None of the three controllers had been to the CZ and thus had to depend on driving directions provided by some one at the Squadron. Driving a MRC-94 radio vehicle, they followed a route that took them along the 4th-of-July Avenue. It wasn’t until they arrived at the Tivoli that they learned that the whole area was under siege and that the July Avenue was now referred to as - Sniper Alley. Their mission was to direct the airdrop of illumination flares from U-10 aircraft. However, high wind conditions prevented the safe drop of the flares and the mission was canceled. For three days, they remained under virtual house arrest at the Trivoli. Finally, on the fourth day, the siege lifted and they were able to return to the 605th Air Commando Squadron at Howard.

When they arrived at the squadron, they learned that they had received orders for to travel to Bogotá, Columbia. When they arrived at the American Embassy - in Bogotá - they were briefed on their three-fold, 90-day mission:

- to provide air-drop training for the Columbian Air Force,
- qualify a Columbian Army jump-school cadre and
- teach the first class of basic airborne students.

Luckily, the Columbian Air Force and Army units were co-located at the Apia Air Base, near the city of Villavicencio. And, since the MTT traveled with its own C-47 and crew it was relatively easy to move around the country; and the airlift needed for the assigned airborne training was available at their finger tips.

Air Force airdrop training started almost immediately as the three controllers worked with the only three jump qualified Columbian airmen. All three were new jumpers with only six jumps each, but at least they knew the basics.

To build confidence and skills, the MTT established a schedule that included physical training (PT) first thing in the
morning. PT was followed by a parachute jump, to build confidence in the parachute equipment and familiarity of the aircraft. The afternoons were filled with classroom and field instruction; ie, drop zone operations, parachute packing and door bundle rigging.

Soon the MTT branched out and began work with the Army Jump School cadre. Working with Army’s the only three jump-qualified soldiers, the team incorporated them into the same training schedule as the three Columbian Air Force cadre.

Facilities for the jump school were readily available, but the controllers had to build the confidence and skills of the three basic parachutists - in an effort to qualify them as Jump School Instructors. The MTT had to work quickly since the Embassy had established the goal of qualifying the cadre and graduating the first class of 125 paratroopers, within 90-days. A tall order and very little time! Within weeks, the MTT had worked into a routine of PT for the joint-service instructors, followed by parachute jumps and then parachute rigger training. It was a full load of morning activities. In the afternoon, they concentrated on Army Jump School Cadre training and working the administrative activities associated with scheduling the first jump class.

After a few weeks, it became clear to the MTT that there was going to be problem with parachutes for the Jump School Class; their shipment had not yet arrived. After checking, it was determined that Columbian Customs was holding them in bond for unknown reasons. To solve the problem, Stanford and Paradise each checked out a 2 1/2 ton truck and drove to Bogotá After meeting with officials at the American Embassy, they were successful in getting the parachutes released by Customs. They loaded them aboard their trucks and drove back to Apia.

The next problem was packing the parachutes; the Colombians had no qualified parachute packers. Over a period of seven to ten days, Stanford and Paradise put more than one hundred parachutes into service, often working nights until 1AM. This was always followed by PT and a jump the next morning. After two weeks, only sixty students completed ground training and progressed to jump week. To support the jump schedule, Stanford and Paradise worked day and night, packing parachutes, while Captain Egleston instructed and supervised the new cadre and jump students.
Near the end of MTT’s 90-day TDY, a joint training exercise was scheduled and successfully completed by the Air Force and Army students. Three Columbian Air Force Combat Controllers (of sorts), three Army Jump School Cadre and sixty basic airborne students were all graduated. The formal graduation brought out scores of Columbian military and civilian dignitaries.

CCT PREPARES FOR COMBAT EXERCISE WITH 173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE

March 20, 1964 – Kadena Air Base, Okinawa – On March 20, 1964, a combined CCT from Naha Air Base, Okinawa and Tachikawa Air Base, Japan was engaged in a combat exercise with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Okinawa. The following year, both units were in Vietnam engaged in real combat operations.
CCT INSTRUCTORS AT THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY

Fall 1964 - The Air Force Academy (AFA), Colorado -- From the early days of the Airmanship Division's Parachuting Program, Combat Controllers were assigned as instructors. Combat Controllers were employed as AFA instructors for approximately twenty years.

Cadet parachuting at the Academy began in Fall Semester of 1964 when a recreational club was formed by interested cadets. The objectives of the parachute program were threefold: train cadets in basic free-fall parachuting, represent the Academy at competitions and demonstrations and provide a leadership laboratory and motivational experience for cadets.

The Air Force Academy course evolved from the original club into a formal military program and was built on the parachute requirements of aircrew members. The 98th Flying Training Squadron handles all training and flying associated with the parachuting program. This program builds character and leadership traits through parachuting. When cadets step out of an airplane at 4,500 feet above the ground, they must trust their equipment, their training, and more importantly, their own self-discipline to get them safely back to the ground. Academy graduates consistently rate the parachute program as having cultivated character and discipline that were key factors to success in the operational Air Force.

Four parachute programs exist in the cadet Airmanship program--basic, advanced, instructor/jumpmaster training, and instructor/jumpmaster duty courses--in which more than 20,000 jumps are made each year. The basic course trains about 700 cadets each year. The final course gives military training credit to cadets who are instructors for the other three programs. Cadets play a major role in training and safety. For example, virtually all cadet jumps are controlled by cadet jumpmasters These duties provide practical leadership experience with a large amount of responsibility. This responsibility includes ground training, equipment fitting, pre-flight inspection, aircraft loading, all pre-jump actions to include emergency procedures, and safe and orderly egress from the aircraft. Airlift support for cadet parachuting is provided by three UV-18B aircraft. The UV-18B is a DeHavilland DHC-6, known as a Twin Otter. It carries a pilot, copilot and up to 17 jumpers. The aircraft has crew and passenger oxygen systems and a navigation/communication package that gives it an all-weather capability. It has a cruise speed of 150 knots, a service ceiling of 25,000 feet and a range of 700 miles. These Twin Otters are the only three owned by the Air Force.

 DRAGON ROUGE – HOSTAGE RESCUE IN THE CONGO

by Major Thomas P. Odom, US Army Combat Studies Institute

November 24, 1964 – Stanleyville, Congo – At exactly 0600 hours on the morning of November 24, 1964, as the sun was breaking over the former Belgian colony of Congo, five four-engine turboprop Lockheed C-130 Hercules transports appeared only 700 feet above the Sabena airport on the outskirts of the city of Stanleyville. As the first Hercules, with ‘U.S. Air Force’ stenciled in large block letters along the fuselage, approached a narrow swath of grass alongside the airport’s main runway, navigator First Lieutenant John Coble called out ‘Green Light’ over the aircraft’s intercom. Immediately, the co-pilot, Captain Robert Kitchen, reached down to the panel by his right armrest and flipped the paratrooper jump lights from red to green. As the lights in the cargo compartment changed from the red ‘Prepare to jump’ signal to green for ‘Go,’ Colonel Charles Laurent, commander of Belgium’s crack Régiment Para-Commando, leaped out into the cool, moist dawn air, followed by 64 other troopers into the African skies. Dragon Rouge, the most ambitious peacetime military operation ever performed by the government of the United States up to that time, was on.

Events of Thanksgiving week of 1964 in Africa were the direct results of years of political unrest in the Congo, which began within days of Belgium’s declaration of Congolese independence in 1960. An outbreak of fighting in the newly independent country led to United Nations intervention as USAF transports under the control of the 322nd Air Division, U.S. Air Force Europe (USAFE), airlifted a peacekeeping team made up of military personnel from several nations to Leopoldville. For three years, the UN peacekeeping force remained in the Congo, supported by American C-130 and Fairchild C-124 cargo planes.
Within weeks of the withdrawal of the UN force in the summer of 1964, fighting again broke out in the Congo. Christophe Gbenye, a Marxist who declared himself ‘President of the Congo,’ led a rebellion of fierce tribesmen calling themselves Simbas-‘lions’ in Swahili. The rebels soon captured large sections of the northern half of the country, leading foreign governments, including those of the United States and Belgium, to urge their citizens to flee the threatened areas.

To combat the rebellion, Congolese President Moise Tshombe recruited a fiery South African soldier, Major Michael Hoare, and gave him authority to raise a mercenary army of white Africans to assist the black Congolese army. Hoare would become a legend in the world of the professional soldier; during World War II he had fought in Burma with Brig. Gen. Orde Wingate, then became a professional soldier after that conflict. With his reputation already made from leading an earlier band during the Katangan secessionist revolt-in which Tshombe had been a participant-Hoare had no trouble training a 300-man unit of mostly South African ‘mercs’ that he dubbed 5 Commando. Hoare, often called ‘Mad Mike’ by those who knew him, enforced only two rules among his men-that they shaved and refrained from drinking before battle. Aside from that, he ‘cared not a whit’ what they did.

Tshombe also turned to the United States for assistance. Lessons from World War II, Korea and the French Indochina War indicated that air support and air transportation were crucial for combating a large rebel force. President Lyndon Johnson responded to Tshombe’s request for aid by sending Joint Task Force (JTF) Leo, a United States Strike Command task force consisting primarily of three Tactical Air Command C-130s and support personnel, to Leopoldville. The transports were from the 464th Troop Carrier Wing, based at tiny Pope Air Force Base (AFB), adjacent to Fort Bragg, N.C. A platoon of paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division provided protection for the C-130s while they were on the ground at remote African airstrips. A fourth C-130 was part of Leo, a ‘Talking Bird’ communications package that allowed long-range radio communications between the task force and Strike Command headquarters at MacDill AFB. Fla., as well as the Pentagon, the State Department and the White House.

Another aspect of U.S. aid was a mercenary air force made up of North American T-28 Trojans and Douglas B-26 Intruders flown by Cuban expat pilots in the employ of a civilian corporation under contract to the Central Intelligence Agency. The Congolese air force consisted primarily of World War II-vintage North American T-6 trainers, which like the Cuban-flown T-28s, had been converted into attack planes.

In August, the Simbas captured the city of Stanleyville with its large concentration of Europeans and Americans. For a time the whites were treated relatively well. But later, with additional American-supplied firepower and airlift support, the Congolese army made steady gains against the rebel forces. As the Simbas saw the tide begin to turn against them, their radio station in Stanleyville began denouncing the United States, accusing it of sending combat troops to aid the government forces. Rebel hostility caused fear for the safety of whites in rebel-held territory, especially after news of atrocities performed by the rebels against their own people reached the outside world.

While the whites were under a semblance of protection by the rebels, Stanleyville’s black residents were not, and a reign of terror began as the Simbas systematically tortured and killed prominent Congolese. Then, evidently realizing that the whites in their territory could serve as bargaining chips, the rebels began taking hostages. On September 5, U.S. Consul Michael Hoyt was taken into custody, along with other members of the consulate staff, and thrown into the city’s Central Prison. Other whites were seized. Some were thrown into the prison with the Americans, while others were held in the Victoria Hotel. Over the next two months, the Simbas arrested foreigners from as many as 20 countries, placing them under custody in hotels, prisons and military bases. The rebels began making threats that the hostages would be killed if the United States did not withdraw its support for the Congolese government.

In late October the rebels accused an American medical missionary, Dr. Paul Carlson, of being a U.S. Army major on assignment for the CIA. Carlson, with the Protestant Relief Agency, was a medical doctor who first went to the Congo on a special six-month mission, then returned in 1963 with his family. Less than a year later, after having sent his wife and four children to safety in the Central African Republic, Carlson was seized by the Simbas because (1) he owned a radio, (2) he was an American and (3) the rebels wanted hostages. Over the next few weeks, Dr. Paul Carlson’s name would be featured in the world’s headlines.

With the fate of the white hostages in doubt, the United States and Belgium tried to negotiate with the rebels. At the same time, they began planning various means of military intervention, even as the Congolese government forces launched a major offensive toward Stanleyville. Several possible schemes were put forth, including a large
paratrooper assault by members of the 82nd Airborne Division, supported by heavy tactical air strikes. While military forces in the United States worked on the larger plan, the U.S. military command in Europe came up with a less involved one, calling for the use of a small force of paratroopers begin airlifted to Africa for the rescue. That plan, formulated jointly by the United States and Belgium, was given the French code name Dragon Rouge (‘red dragon’).

On November 15, Brig. Gen. Robert D. Forman, commander of the 322nd Air Division, was given word to begin preparations to airlift a force of Belgian paratroopers to the Congo for a possible rescue attempt. Forman’s command had supported the UN peacekeeping forces in the Congo from 1960 until early 1964. During those years, however, the 322nd had undergone some changes. Previously, the division had been directly under the commander of USAFE, but a reorganization of American forces in Europe led to the transfer of the division’s transfer to Military Air Transport Service a few months earlier.

Permanently assigned C-130s had been replaced by temporary duty aircraft and crews from Tactical Air Command units in the United States. In 1964, two TAC wings were supporting rotational squadrons at Evreux Fauville Airbase, France, the 317th and 464th Troop Carrier wings from Lockbourne AFB, Ohio, and Pope AFB, N.C. Rotational Squadron A, or ‘Rote Alpha,’ was made up of Pope personnel who flew the newest version of the already proven Hercules, the C-130E, while Rote Bravo was manned by Lockbourne crews and equipped with the older C-130A.

General Forman called Colonel Burgess Gradwell to Châteauroux to brief him on the upcoming mission. Gradwell, commander of Detachment One, 332nd Air Division at Evreux, would have command. Dragon Rouge, as the Americans would come to know the mission, would involve a 14-plane airlift of 600 Belgian paratroopers to Africa.

Since the E-model of the Hercules featured special long-range fuel tanks, Rote Alpha would provide the planes and crews. When Gradwell got back to Evreux that night, he called in Rote Alpha commander Lt. Col. Robert A. Lindsay and the TAC liaison officer with the division, Colonel Gene Adams. Wheels were set in motion for the mission.

Before Dragon Rouge could be launched, the aircraft and crews had to be recalled from their normal missions throughout Europe. By the evening of November 16, all 15 Hercules were back at Evreux and the crews were on ‘crew rest’ for an ‘important’ mission. At 1740 Greenwich Mean Time—Zulu time—on November 17, the first C-130 took off from Evreux, bound for Klinebrogel, Belgium. Aboard the first plane were Colonel Gradwell, Captain Donald R. Strobaugh, commander of Detachment 1, 5th Aerial Port Squadron (APRON) combat control team, in Germany and Ssgt Robert J. Dias, a radio repairman with the 5th APRON (CCT) in France. Like the C-130 crews, Strobaugh had been called back to Evreux from duties elsewhere in Europe. Other than certain key officers, no one aboard the airplanes knew where they were going until after they were airborne with no problems requiring them to turn back. Each navigator had been given a sealed envelope, with instructions not to open it until the airplane’s altitude exceeded 2,000 feet.

At Klinebrogel, elements of the Belgian 1st Para-Commando Regiment, including the 1st Para-Commando Battalion, a company from the 2nd Battalion and a detachment from the 3rd, were loaded aboard the C-130s, along with their equipment. At 2240Z, the first Hercules departed Klinebrogel for a fuel stop at Morn Air Base on the southern coast of Spain, then on to Ascension Island in the South Atlantic. The first airplane arrived at Ascension at 1310Z on November 18. At Ascension, Captain Strobaugh instructed the Belgians on the use of the PRC-41 and PRC-47 radio sets he had brought for Evreux for communication between the men on the ground and the planes overhead. He also instructed 21 Belgian jumpmasters on C-130 jump techniques—few of the Belgian paras had ever jumped from the Hercules—then supervised as they trained the remainder of the force.

For the next three days, the joint rescue force waited while communications were passed back and forth between there and Washington by a TAC C-130 ‘Talking Bird’ that joined the mission at Ascension. On November 20, a special briefing of the various commanders was held to determine exactly how the assault was to be performed. Once it was firm, Captain Strobaugh transmitted the plan to Washington. At 1800Z, the force was put on alert; 30 minutes later, the launch order came over the teletype. Ad hour later, at 1935Z, Chalk One (tactical airlift missions are designated by ‘chalk’ numbers, after the practice of numbering loads with chalk) departed Ascension bound for Kamina, an airfield in the southern Congo, with the other 13 C-130s right behind.

At daybreak, the first Hercules arrived at Kamina after a nine-hour flight across part of the Atlantic and halfway across Africa. The field was obscured by fog, but English-speaking air traffic controllers directed each plane to the airport in turn. Once the force was on the ground more briefings were held, including an update on the mission’s status...
by Colonel Clayton Issacson, commander of JTF Leo and now in overall command of Dragon Rouge and other activities in the Congo. Then the Dragon Rouge force went into another waiting period while Belgium and the United States continued their efforts to win the hostages' freedom through negotiations.

On Monday evening, November 23, the rescue force relaxed at Kamina while watching what one critic in the crowd described as a ‘terrible movie’ in one of the hangars. At 2230Z (2030 local time), the teletype machines in the ‘Talking Bird’ began clattering as messages came in from Washington and Brussels. Dragon Rouge was on, with takeoff scheduled for 0045Z, so as to arrive over the Stanleyville airport at dawn. The first C-130, flown by Captain Huey Long’s Standardizations/Evacuation crew from the 777th Troop Carrier Squadron, lifted off form Kamina’s long runway right on time, followed at 20-second intervals by the other 11 planes of the assault force. The sixth airplane in the formation, piloted by Captain William ‘Mack’ Secord, lost a 20-man life raft from a wing storage compartment after takeoff. Secord left the formation and went back to Kamina for a spare airplane. The rest of the Dragon Rouge formation proceeded northbound at high altitude, following the Congo River, descending to treetop altitudes as the planes neared revel territory.

Nearing Stanleyville, lead navigator John Coble led the formation south of the city, still at low altitude, so as to approach from the west. As the formation reached the one-minute warning point, two B-26s made a low pass over the airport. Laurent and 299 of his men jumped over Stanleyville airport exactly at dawn.

The jump plane crews were briefed to expect only small-arms fire over the airport. Instead, they were greeted by tracers from Chinese-made 12.7mm antiaircraft machine guns. In spite of the unexpected fire, the American pilots held their course as they dropped their troopers right on the narrow drop zone beside the runway, then came back around for another pass to allow the 20 jumpmasters to exit, along with the bundles of extra equipment. Only the first five airplanes in the formation dropped at that time: Dragons Six and Seven were rigged to either drop or land with equipment (Secord’s Dragon Six had gone back to Kamina and was still en route), while Dragons Eight, Nine and Eleven orbited nearby, their troops at the ready to jump in if needed, or land when the field was secure.

Once on the ground, the Para-Commandos began rushing to secure the field so rescue force aircraft could land. Within 30 minutes the Belgians managed to eliminate all resistance at the airport and within 10 minutes had cleared away about 300 water-filled 55-gallon drums and 11 wheel-less vehicles that had been placed on the runway as obstacles. To Captain Strobaugh, who was serving aboard Dragon Nine as jumpmaster, the Belgians’ efforts were ‘nothing short of miraculous.’ At 0450Z, the first C-130 landed at Stanleyville and discharged a load of equipment and troops, then took off again to fly to Leopoldville-where the drop planes had already gone-for refueling and to await word to return to Stanleyville and evacuate refugees. Dragon One remained overhead, serving as a command ship for Colonel Gradwell. Colonel Issacson also made an appearance over Stanleyville in one of the JTF Leo aircraft, using the call sign ‘Dragon Chief.’

After Dragon Seven landed and took off again, Dragons Eight, Nine, Eleven and Ten followed in that order. Each crew offloaded their troopers and then took off again for Leopoldville; no more than three airplanes were to be on the ground at one time. The last two planes, Six and Twelve, flown respectively by Secord and Captain B.J. Nunnally, were told to remain on the ground to bring out the first hostages when they were brought out of town. Dragon One continued orbiting over the airport at 2,000 feet. Navigator Coble was uncomfortable about being so low over a combat zone; he had served four temporary duty tours in South Vietnam flying C-123s. The rest of the crew laughed, calling him ‘combat happy’-until they suddenly felt and heard the sound of bullets striking the airplane. Seven rounds hit the Hercules, knocking out hydraulics and leaving two large holes in the wing fuel tanks. With Gradwell’s approval, Long headed his C-130 for Leopold for repairs.

Once the airport was secure, the Belgian rescue force headed for downtown Stanleyville, where the hostages were known to be held. The hostages themselves were awakened by the sounds of the battle at the airport and the alarmed Simbas who came after them shouting: ‘Your brothers have come from the sky! Now you will be killed!’ Dressed in manes of monkey fur and feathers, the Simbas bashed down the doors of the Victoria Hotel with spears and gun butts, and then roughly hustled their white hostages out into the streets. For more than an hour, the hostages had been hearing sounds of airplanes engines and gunfire while others not in captivity saw parachutes falling form the sky over the airport. Knowing that the Simbas had threatened to kill everyone under their control in the event of a rescue.
attempt, they were fearful.

Now the Simbas ordered the 250 whites from the Victoria out into the broad streets of the city and began marching them toward the city park and toward the Patrice Lumumba ‘monument’-a large photograph of the late prime minister-where the rebels had already slain more than 100 Congolese during recent weeks. The hostages still entertained some hope; they were being marched in the direction of the airport, leading some to believe that the rebel commander intended to turn them over to the rescue force unharmed. Then, rebel-operated Radio Stanleyville shrilled out a message: ‘Ciyuga! Ciyuga! Kill! Kill! Kill them all! Have no scruples! Men, women, children-kill them all!’

Colonel Joseph Opepe, who had befriended some of the hostages, tried in vain to stop the Simbas from carrying out the orders screamed over the radios. Many of the Simbas were drunk from a mixture of alcohol and hemp. According to some survivors, the signal to fire came from a deaf-mute ex-boxer known as ‘Major Bubu,’ who served as a personal bodyguard to rebel defense minister Gaston Soumialot. Whoever gave the word, the rebels suddenly started firing into the assembled hostages with rifles and automatic weapons. The firing was not random-the rebels deliberately chose women and children as their first targets. One of those who fell was Dr. Paul Carlson, shot as he tried to run to safety.

After an initial volley, the rebels temporarily ceased firing. Marcel Debuisson, a Belgian engineer, heard them say, ‘Now we’ll turn them over and finish off the ones left alive.’ Debuisson prayed for a miracle and his prayers were answered. ‘To my amazement,’ he told news reporters afterward, ‘It happened. Round the corner of the square walked a single Belgian paratrooper, submachine gun on his hip.’ The rebels saw the Belgian red beret as well; immediately they turned and fled. What the Belgians found in Sergeant Kitele Avenue was not a pretty sight. About 30 whites had been killed, while dozens of others were wounded. Two Americans were among the slain: Dr. Carlson and Phyliss Rine, a missionary from Ohio. The sight of the bloodshed left the Belgians angered, as would be the white mercenaries who came into the city a few hours later, spearheading a ground assault from the east. For the remainder of the afternoon, it was open season on Simbas in Stanleyville as the rebels paid in blood for their folly.

Back at the airport, the situation was still far from calm. More than 300 rebels occupied positions near the runway. As many hostages were freed, they were returned to the airport for evacuation. The first group arrived at the airport around 0945 and was loaded aboard the two waiting C-130s. The most badly wounded were loaded on Dragon Twelve, the hospital plane. Many of the hostages were wounded, while all were terrified and in a state of shock. Captain Mack Secord took off first with what he reckoned as ‘around a hundred’ hostages aboard. As he taxied for takeoff, the plane passed by a clump of elephant grass. Three Simbas leaped from the grass and ran alongside the plane, trying to force their way inside, although nobody aboard it was aware of it at the time. One of the rebels fired a burst from his submachine gun straight up into the wing. Secord took off with fuel streaming from the wing and headed for Leopoldville, where he landed with no flaps, no prop-reverse and on only three engines.

Although the Belgians spoke English, they were not used to speaking with rapid-talking Americans, many of whom were Southerners with distinct accents. To eliminate possible confusion, Colonel Laurent asked Combat Controllers Captain Strobaugh and Sergeant Dias to take charge of communications with the American air crewmen and radio operators.

With the airport secure and the freed hostages beginning to make their way there, Strobaugh requested an airlift to take them out, along with air support for the strike forces. In addition to the American C-130s, Belgian Douglas DC-6s joined the airlift. Several airplanes landed with bullet holes received while on landing approach. Periodically throughout the day, Strobaugh had to direct aircraft to orbit nearby while the Belgians repulsed attacks on the airport. As the last C-130 of the day landed at 1545Z, impacting mortar rounds signaled the start of a 150-man rebel assault on the west end of the airport. The Belgians repulsed five separate attacks as the airplane landed on the east end of the runway. Thirty minutes later, a Belgian DC-6 came in with a damaged engine that forced it to remain on the ground overnight.

Rebel opposition continued in the vicinity of the Stanleyville airport on November 25 as snipers took potshots at Belgian and Congolese national troops. Early that morning, sniper fire killed one of the Belgian officers from the stranded DC-6. Less than an hour later, a sniper’s bullets hit the control tower. On the 26th, the evacuation of whites and some Congolese from the city resumed. Over the two-day period 41 sorties by the American C-130s and Belgian
DC-6s brought out more than 1,800 American and European whites, as well as some 300 Congolese.

Late in the evening, seven C-130s flew into Stanleyville to pick up troops for another rescue mission to the town of Paulis, 225 miles to the northwest. Early on the morning of Thanksgiving Day, the seven-plane flight took off on Operation Dragon Noir, a repeat of Tuesday’s mission. Arriving over Paulis at daybreak, the crews found their objective enshrouded in fog. The Belgians jumped anyway, making their descent into mist that obscured the ground. Every trooper landed on the designated drop zone. As soon as the fog lifted, the C-130s began landing on the dirt runway, their propellers stirring up a thick red cloud of dust as the pilots brought them into reverse after touchdown. The scene was one that would be repeated by many of those some crews in the same planes in Vietnam, where American involvement was starting to escalate. One pilot, Major Joe Hildebrand, reversed his prop while the plane was still airborne; the resulting hard landing flamed out all four engines of his 'Herky-bird.'

At Paulis, the paratroopers found the condition of the hostages to be as bad as-or worse than-at Stanleyville. An American missionary had been systematically tortured and beaten until death mercifully brought relief. Meanwhile, back at Stanleyville, the Belgians and mercenaries who made their way into the city shortly after the parachute assault found more white victims. A missionary family from New Zealand was brought to the airport. The father had been slain, the mother cut with machetes, while the two young daughters had scalp wounds inflicted by the Simbas. Only the two sons were spared injury.

Such senseless carnage caused the mercenaries and even the well-disciplined Belgian paratroopers to lose their restraint. Most rebels they encountered were slain on the spot. Congolese government soldiers frequently exhibited the same lack of concern for human life as their brothers on the other side, in one case kicking to death a Simba ‘priest’ captured near the airport.

On the evening of the 27th, the last Belgian troopers were withdrawn from Stanleyville and flown to Kamina to begin the first leg of their journey home. Their departure was somewhat premature, largely due to a huge outcry of discontent in the Third World over Belgian and American intervention in Africa, as demonstrators made their feelings known. Sometimes the demonstrations got out of hand, as in Cairo, Egypt, where the new John F. Kennedy library was burned to the ground in protest over the white presence in Africa. A well-organized propaganda effort in Communist and Third World nations placed the blame for the atrocities in Stanleyville on American and Belgian shoulders. Some nations, including China, pledged aid to the Congo rebels.

But even though the fighting in the Congo would continue for several months, with many white still to be slain by the rebels, Operation Dragon Rouge was over. On the morning of November 29, the rescue force departed Africa for Ascension. From there, it flew to the Canary Islands, then on to Melsbroek Airfield, outside of Brussels. There the rescuers were welcomed home by several hundred high-ranking officers, news reporters, television camera crews and relatives. King Baudouin received the Belgian paratroopers and American aircrews at a review on the flight line, and presented Colonels Laurent and Gradwell with the Order of Leopold II. After the ceremony, the Americans were taken on a tour of the city. Later, the American crewmen would all be awarded Air Medals for their role in the mission, while the 1964 McKay Trophy, an annual award for the most meritorious flight of the year by U.S. Air Force planes, would be awarded to the Dragon Rouge force.

For the American and Belgian military personnel involved in Dragon Rouge, the operation was one that all would remember with pride. Even thought the rescue was not without cost to the Belgians, the mission had been an overall success, resulting in the release of hundreds of hostages who doubtless would have been killed had it not occurred.

You've just read an Army account of Operation Dragon Rouge. It was a joint US/Belgian mission with USAF aircraft supporting elements of the Belgian 1st Para-Commando Regiment in an airborne and air landing assault at Stanleyville, Republic of the Congo, on 24 November 1964. The mission was launched to rescue American and European hostages held by Congolese rebels and evacuate them and other Europeans living in the area. The following is a first hand account from the journal of Combat Controller Don Strobaugh.
TOP SECRET - OPERATION DRAGON ROUGE by Donald R. Strobaugh, Colonel, USAF (CCT) Retired

November 16, 1964 – Schongau, Germany – On November 16, was attending the German Airborne School at Schongau, Germany. At that time, I was the Commander of Detachment 1, 5th Aerial Port Squadron located at Wiesbaden, Germany. The detachment consisted of all combat controllers. I was scheduled to leave Germany in January 1965 after a 4 year tour split between France and Germany, so this was my last chance to complete the German course.

In the evening of 16 November, I was notified by phone that I was to report back to Wiesbaden by the fastest available transportation and leave for Evreux, France on the first available aircraft. There were several men from our detachment attending the German course at that time and we had driven from Wiesbaden to Schongau in one of our detachment vehicles. As soon as we received the call, we drove all night back to Wiesbaden arriving there in the early morning of 17 November, and I left for Evreux on a C-54 one hour later. I had no time to go home, so I was dressed in winter flying clothing, designed for the cold German winter.

As soon as I arrived at the squadron, I was briefed by Lt Col Mervin Getty, 5th Aerial Port Squadron Commander, about a TOP SECRET mission to the Congo. I was to conduct a communications course on the AN/PRC-41 (UHF) and AN/PRC-47 (HF Single Sideband) radios for a Belgian airborne unit and then turn the radios over to them for an airborne assault on Stanleyville, Republic of the Congo. I selected SSgt Robert J. Dias, a CCT radio maintenance technician assigned to the CCT at Evreux to accompany me. Our two-man Combat Control Team was on our way by C-130 that evening.

Our first stop was Kleine Brogel, Belgium. We were on the first C-130 to land and were followed at 10-minute intervals by thirteen C-130E aircraft assigned to the mission. There we unloaded elements of the Belgian 1st Para-Commando Regiment (1st Para-Commando Battalion, one company from the 2nd Para-Commando Battalion, and a small detachment from the 3rd Para-Commando Battalion - total of 545 men) and were on our way again within 3 hours.

In the wee hours of the morning of 18 November, we arrived at Moron AB, Spain for a refueling stop. Since this was a TOP SECRET mission, no one was allowed to leave the aircraft during the stop. I remember a young Air Force refueling technician who looked in the door of the aircraft and asked one of our pilots who the guys were with the red berets (Belgian paratroopers). He was told "What guys in red berets"? He asked again and got the same answer. After that, he just walked away mumbling to himself.

The next stop was later that day at Ascension Island in the Crown Colony of St. Helena. There we received our first thorough briefing concerning the reason for the mission and mission planning. I was informed that the United States State Department had specifically forbidden SSgt Dias or me to jump with the Belgians. The State Department didn’t want to have to explain the deaths of any American airborne personnel, if something went wrong. It would be bad enough if we lost a C-130.

At Ascension Island, I conducted a communications course on the two types of portable radios for a group of Belgian airborne communications personnel and then turned the sets over to the Belgian Para-Commando Regiment. I was also told that most of the paratroops had never jumped a C-130. So - during our down time - I was given the job of instructing twenty-one Belgian Jumpmasters in C-130 jump techniques and then supervised the subsequent instruction of the entire Belgian paratroop force.

On 19 November, we reported to the aircraft early in the morning, but were informed that the mission was on hold. The American and Belgian State Departments were still trying to figure out how to accomplish this mission without annoying the rest of the African countries.

On the 20th we were again put on hold, we spent the day with American and Belgian officers preparing a written concept of operations. I was again briefed that SSgt Dias and I were not to jump. They must have heard how much I enjoyed jumping out of perfectly good airplanes.

On 21 November, the staff discovered that they had no one to type the final assault concept. I knew that graduating from the Morse Code typing school as a Corporal, Radio Operator 14 years earlier would come in handy one day. “Combat controllers can do anything!”

Later, in the evening of the 21st we received an alert, followed 30 minutes later by a launch order. We launched 1 hour and 5 minutes later and I was on Chalk 1.

On 22 November the airborne force arrived at Kamina, Republic of the Congo. There we attended briefings on the latest mission developments. Following the briefings, we:
• Contacted the Belgian communications teams and supervised their tuning the radios to the frequencies for the B-26 crews (manned by Cubans), ground to air and point to point.
• Made a satisfactory radio check with Leopoldville, approximately 750 miles west of Kamina, and packed the radios for drop in general purpose (GP) equipment bags.
• Because there was a shortage of Belgian Jumpmasters and by mutual American and Belgian consent, I was assigned as the Jumpmaster for Belgian Para-Commando troops on Chalk 9. I was once again advised that I would not jump.
• DEFCON II Alert was issued on the evening of November 22nd.

I had no weapon when I departed Germany, so the Belgian airborne loaned me a Belgian automatic FAL rifle with folding airborne stock and a 20 round clip. That turned out to be a great weapon with outstanding sights and accuracy. Early morning 23 November the alert status was elevated to DEFCON III. The EXECUTE ORDER was issued later that evening.

On 24 November, at 0044Z two Martin B-26 Marauders made a low pass over Stanleyville airfield. At precisely 0045Z - as scheduled – the C-130 airdrop aircraft began rolling, following the B-26s at one minute intervals.

Chalks 1 through 5 were to drop the airborne attack force at 20-second intervals (plus a second pass for bundles and the Jumpmasters), wait for this force to secure the airstrip and make sure that the runway was clear, and then, after receiving radio or visual clearance from the ground, drop the paratroops in Chalks 8, 9 and 11 as reinforcements or land these troops with the assault equipment (Chalks 6 and 7).

Everything went smoothly and within 30 minutes the troops had secured the airfield. Ten minutes later they transmitted the clearance to land the assault aircraft. This is nothing short of miraculous considering that in the space of 40 minutes, the Belgians not only fought and captured the airfield, set up a perimeter defense and marshaled an attack force for the city of Stanleyville, but also removed approximately 300 filled 55-gallon drums and 11 vehicles without wheels from of the runway. The rebels had placed them on the runway to prevent aircraft from landing.

• During the airborne assault, the rebels moved the hostages to the center of Stanleyville and began killing them as soon as they saw parachutes. However, the Belgian assault force succeeded in saving most of them.
• Because of the small parking ramp and the need for turning the C-130s as rapidly as possible the D-Day plan called for having no more than three C-130's on the ground at one time
• The Belgian Airborne Commander requested that I operate the radios instead of his men because of the language problem in talking with fast-talking American aircrew who are under fire. We went off the air for about a half hour in the morning because of rebel gunfire from across the runway. Unknown to us, there had been approximately 150 rebels west of the end of Runway 28 and another force of approximately 180 rebels in foxholes at the tree line parallel to the runway and several hundred yards north of it.
• The rebel troops didn’t fire until I had only two C-130's left on the ground. The two aircraft took off immediately. Sporadic rebel gunfire from the airfield perimeter constantly required me to orbit aircraft or change runway direction (calm wind) until the Belgian commander determined the area to be secure enough to land aircraft again.
• The Belgians repulsed five attacks while I landed the aircraft on the east end of the runway. Several Belgian aircraft and American C-130's landed at Stanleyville or Leopoldville with holes in the fuselage.
• A Belgian Air Force DC-6 was hit in the engine while landing and had to remain overnight until spare parts could be flown in.
• Our CCT radios provided the only communications between Stanleyville and the outside world until the arrival of a Communications Support Element (CSE) AN/MRC-87 radio vehicle with two radio operators from Strike Command arrived later in the day.
• SSgt Dias kept everything in top working order throughout the mission. In the morning, I transmitted the first news of the murder of Dr. Paul Carlson and Miss Phyllis Rine (American missionaries) and a large number of European hostages by Simbas in Stanleyville just minutes before the arrival of the Belgian troops.
The word Simba is Swahili for “lion.” Before battle, Swahili warriors decorated their spears with lion fur and “priests” filled them with drugs, telling them they couldn’t be killed. I suspect that most of them got one hell-of-a-surprise when they attacked Belgian troops armed with automatic weapons.

- By the end of the day – on November 24th - we had a total of four T-6's, two T-28's and two B-26's providing fire support for our assault force. At 1900Z, I received word that there would be no more aircraft activity for the night and to close the net until 0300Z the next morning.
- Throughout night, there were scores of gunfire exchanges with the rebels around the airfield perimeter.
- On the morning of 25 November, one of the Belgian Air Force officer crew members from the AOCP DC-6 was killed by a sniper. Shortly after, gunfire hit the control tower 20 feet from our position. There were no injuries, but we have relocated our position.
- General Mobutu, Commander in Chief of the Congolese National Army, visited the airfield and then went into the city.
- At the request of Mr. John Clingerman, United States Foreign Service Officer on special duty, SSgt Dias and I served as his armed escort during a search of the European Apartment House and the hotel used as a rebel prison in Stanleyville in order to find known classified material carried by one of the American Consul staff who had been held as a rebel hostage. As we were leaving one of the buildings, 29 rebels were killed in a battle with mercenaries 500 yards from us.
- In the evening, the first of seven C-130's scheduled to land here to unload troops and equipment in support of Operation Black Dragon (airborne and assault on Paulis) arrived.

**Thanksgiving Day 1964**

26 November - Mission aircraft departed for Paulis. The Mission Commander requested that SSgt Dias and I remain in Stanleyville. We spent the day assisting in parking aircraft, locating badly-needed medical supplies and moving them to the Congolese hospital, and coordinating with the Belgian Quartermaster Officer to unload Congolese troops and cargo from incoming aircraft and load them with cargo and refugees.

- Some of the newly-arrived Congolese troops took approximately 40 male Congolese civilians from the Guest House area across the street from the hanger, drove them down to the river and killed them.
- SSgt Dias and I liberated some green beans, two bottles of Congolese cherry soda, a can of peaches and a large can containing a whole chicken from a UN food shipment and had a real Thanksgiving feast.
- Seeing the hostages and refugees who have passed through here after losing everything makes us appreciate the things that we have even more on this Thanksgiving Day.
- Including the C-130's which staged from here to Paulis this morning, there have been a total of 22 aircraft from five countries (United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and the Congo) that have arrived today with Congolese troops and cargo and departed with refugees, Belgian troops and cargo.
- Our ground support aircraft have now been increased to four T-6's, six T-28's and three B-26's. These aircraft flew 23 sorties today.

27 November – We found copies of telegrams sent to Peking, Moscow, Cuba and many Iron Curtain countries during the months of August, September and October 1964. We bundled the up and sent them with Colonel Isaacson on C-130( #896) to be delivered to the American Embassy at Leopoldville. The telegrams for the month of November were found by Belgian troops three days ago and turned over to Belgian Intelligence.

- We found the body of the rebel who was killed last night and whose genitals were then cut off by Congolese Army troops.
- A New Zealand missionary family named Taylor was brought in from across the river. The father had been killed by the rebels, the mother was cut badly with a machete and had a broken arm and leg, two sons aged 14 and 12 had hidden and were all right and two daughters aged 3 and 5 had their foreheads and scalps laid open by rebel machetes. They will recover.
Twenty minutes later, Congolese Army paratroops captured a machete-armed Simba “priest” across the runway, brought him to their quarters in the Sabena Airlines Guest House across from our control tower and kicked him to death.

In the months before the Dragon Rouge operation, the Congolese decided that they needed an airborne unit even though they had no jump aircraft. Soon, they sent a large group to Israel where they completed the Airborne Course, wore Israeli wings, put on red berets. They returned to the Congo as true airborne warriors and participated in the Dragon Rouge operation.

Accompanied the Belgian Advisor to the Congolese Army to Stanleyville. Saw the machete-mutilated bodies of 28 Europeans killed across the river by rebels and recovered by the 5th Commando (mercenaries).

Directed Lt Col Townsend, US Army Attache in Leopoldville, to 5th Commando Headquarters in the Hotel des Chutes in Stanleyville.

Met with Colonel “Mad” Mike Hoare, Commander of the 5th Commando.

There are still a few snipers present, but everything is relatively quiet in the city.

Simbas were spotted and fired on within two hundred yards of the main hanger. We made a house to house search in that area but they apparently escaped into the wooded area toward the river.

Major Vaes, the Belgian airborne officer who directed the Belgian “Air Freight” team, did an outstanding job of getting the remaining refugees, Belgian cargo and troops out of Stanleyville. No aircraft, large or small, left here without carrying refugees, Belgian cargo or troops. I had only to tell him how much weight or how many passengers could be unloaded and he and his men immediately selected the proper amount and loaded it. We may have deviated a little on the maximum number of passengers that could supposedly be carried on a C-130. No families were split, so if it took a few people over the maximum to be carried on a C-130, so be it. As a result, the last seven C-130’s scheduled to fly here tomorrow to remove the last of the Belgian paratroops, equipment and cargo will not be required. SSgt Dias and I departed Stanleyville at 1715Z on the last C-130 aircraft and arrived at Kamina at 1935Z.

During the entire Stanleyville operation, we evacuated a total of approximately 2000 Americans and Europeans and 300 Congolese on 80 aircraft sorties by planes from five countries (United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and the Congo). There were 37 combined T-6, T-28 and B-26 strikes on D+2 and D+3. I don’t have the figures on strikes made on D Day and D+1 other than the two B-26 sorties preceding the C-130 drops on D Day. The Belgian airborne lost two men KIA with several more wounded for both Operations Dragon Rouge and Black Dragon.

When the Belgian airborne received the word that they were going to have to provide over 500 men immediately for a mission, they pulled all of their instructors out of the airborne school and also took the students who had made 7 of the necessary 8 jumps to earn Belgian Parachutist wings. Their 8th and qualifying jump was a combat jump into Stanleyville. At Kamina, the Belgian Airborne Commander presented each of these students with the coveted Belgian wings.

28 November - Spent the day recovering our radio equipment and packing it. The carrying case for one of the AN/PRC-47’s which had been stored empty on the ramp of the aircraft (Chalk 1) had a bullet hole thorough it which had been received when the plane flew over Stanleyville on D Day. This particular aircraft received a total of seven bullet holes over Stanleyville.

The American and Belgian Ambassadors to the Republic of the Congo and their military aides visited our area.

29 November - Departed Kamina on Chalk 1 with the Belgian Airborne Commander and a load of Belgian troops. Arrived at Ascension Island.

30 November - Attended a briefing on aircraft departure scheduling.

Departed Ascension Island on the first aircraft at 0955Z in order to assist in parking the aircraft at our next stop. When we arrived at Las Palmas, Canary Islands, we found a USAF parking team from Chateauroux AB, France already in place. Departed Las Palmas on Chalk 1 at 2220Z with the remaining aircraft following at
10-minute intervals.

1 December - Arrived at Melsbroek Airfield, Brussels, Belgium at 0520Z and were met by hundreds of high ranking Belgian military officers, attaches, newspaper reporters, television cameramen and relatives of the paratroopers.

- Was assigned to brief each arriving aircrew concerning the permanent parking area, transportation, messing facilities and the scheduled military review. The paratroop -carrying aircraft arrived at 10-minute intervals in one group of 6 C-130's and a second group of 4 C-130's. These were followed by 2 C-130's loaded with Belgian equipment.
- At 1100Z, King Baudouin, his ministers and top-ranking generals inspected the Belgian troops and American mission personnel at a review held in a large hanger on the flight lines. The King presented Colonel Laurent, the Airborne Commander, and Colonel Burgess Gradwell, the USAF Airlift Commander, with the Order of Leopold II, a high Belgian military award. Following the ceremonies, all Americans were taken on a sightseeing tour of Brussels and then moved to a downtown hotel with the buses remaining on hand for our use all night.

2 December - Departed Brussels on Chalk 1 in thick ground fog and arrived at Evreux AB, France.

3 December - Attended the debriefing by Colonel Gradwell for all mission personnel.

- Departed Evreux AB and arrived at Rhein Main AB, Germany at 1640Z and Wiesbaden AB, Germany at 1740Z.

SUMMARY: The United States Air Force mission for delivering the Belgian paratroops to the drop zone and air landing the remainder of the assault force for the attack on Stanleyville and Paulis and the rescue and evacuation of all Americans and Europeans in that area was carried out in an outstandingly efficient manner. The Belgian Airborne Commander and his staff were very pleased with the precision of the drop and the enthusiasm displayed by the aircrew members. The entirely-favorable comments that I received from the Belgians during my stay with them could not help but make any American proud to have been a part of this mission. The Belgian paratroop officers and men proved beyond doubt that they are a courageous and intelligent group of fighting men. Their men are well-trained and fought with precision and coordinated tactics. They conducted a clean campaign, killing an armed enemy only when necessary and taking prisoners when possible. This group of men would make valuable allies in any mission. The Congolese National Army (ANC) is a different matter. Perhaps my four days’ experience and events that I witnessed at Stanleyville were not a true representation of the majority of the Congolese National forces, but I saw nothing to convince me otherwise. The senseless butchery and mutilation of civilians and military prisoners is unbelievable. There was absolutely no difference between the everyday acts of the ANC and the well-published atrocities committed by the rebels. Only the uniforms were different. Until you have seen a prisoner who has had his eyes put out and is then bayoneted 12 hours later and left to bleed to death, or another prisoner who was killed by shooting his eyes out or any of the other examples of barbarism that I have already noted, it is impossible to imagine a free world-supported military unit with no apparent human feelings or sense of right and wrong. War against an armed enemy is one thing, but the senseless face to face killing of prisoners and unarmed civilians is the mark of animals, not civilized persons. I wonder if the people of the Congo might possibly find that the cure is as bad as the disease.

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC INVASION by CMSgt Rick Crutchfield, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

April 1965 - The Dominican Republic -- Rafael Trujillo’s assassination in 1961 ended his thirty-year dictatorship and initiated profound changes in the political landscape of the Dominican Republic (DR). By the end of 1961 a coup of military officers with the support of a U.S. Naval force removed the Trujillo family and their associates from power. The new government was known as the “Consejo de Estado”. The main objective of this interim government was to prepare the country for a free and democratic election in 1962. The Dominican Revolutionary Party won the election by 60% of the vote. For the first time in 20th century Dominican history, the popular masses won the election base with a political platform that included agrarian reform, the prohibition of large holdings (which struck at
American sugar interests), restrictions on the rights of foreigners to acquire Dominican land, and the promotion of secular education for ordinary citizens.

Many groups opposed the new political ideas. A political campaign was organized and overthrew Juan Bosch’s legitimately elected constitutional government in 1963. The Dominican Revolutionary Party responded with various legal and illegal tactics. The military regime was overthrown on April 24, 1965 by the Constitutionallists - the objective to reestablish Bosch’s constitutional government. However, the army split into two factions, one in support of Bosch and the other, led by Wessin y Wessin, in favor of the conservative forces. Civil strife quickly erupted. After several days of intensive fighting, the Constitutionalist army was victorious and ready to attack the San Isidro headquarters of Wessin’s army.

At this juncture, President Johnson ordered the second U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic of the 20th century. The civil war was thus transformed into a patriotic war against America and their Dominican allies. According to President Johnson, the American military intervention in Santo Domingo was to prevent the emergence of a second Cuba in Latin America to save American lives and commercial interests in the Dominican Republic. The war against the American military and its allies ended after several months of intense negotiations when an agreement was reached late in 1965. Both governments resigned and a new provisional government was set up with the duty to organize a free election in June 1965.

Combat Control Operations - In April 1965, when civil strife broke out in the DR the United States dispatched troops to protect American interests in the country. Operation POWER PACK deployed lead elements of the 82nd Airborne Division in 111 heavy drop and 33 personnel drop aircraft.

Six combat controllers from Sewart AFB (led by Mayor James Morgan and SMSgt Frank Betty) and six from Pope AFB (led by 1LT Jerry Whitley and MSgt Bobby Hudson) deployed on the Pathfinder aircraft - along with an Army Assault Team (AAT). While en route to the objective area - with troops fully rigged for a combat jump - political and military leaders changed the destination of the mission to San Isidro Airfield. Instead of a parachute drop, a combat assault air landing was ordered.

In retrospect, the decision to cancel the airdrop circumvented numerous problems. It was later learned that the proposed drop zone (DZ) was heavily laden with construction debris, that could have caused numerous casualties among the troops and substantial damage to the air dropped equipment.

The pathfinder aircraft was the first to land and the CCT immediately assumed control of the air traffic at the San Isidro Airfield. In short order the airfield became saturated with 33 personnel airdrop aircraft and 46 equipment aircraft. The change in the original deployment plan generated tremendous ramp congestion because ground-handling equipment was not available to off-load the aircraft.

In addition, 65 equipment drop aircraft were diverted to Puerto Rico where they unloaded and reconfigured for air landing. They air landed at San Isidro the following day.

Responding to the Air Traffic Control (ATC) challenge, A1C Rick Crutchfield (a fully qualified, facility-rated ATC operator at the Sewart tower before moving to CCT) expertly handled the high-density air traffic; quickly landing and launching the 65 equipment aircraft. Combat Controllers operated in the DR from 28 April through 9 May 1965.

During that time, they supported the movements of the 82nd Airborne Division, the 5th Logistics Command, Special Forces, Psychological Units, Signal and Transportation Units.

In the first five days of the operation, 10,500 paratroopers were airlifted into the Dominican Republic by an estimated 180 C-130 air landings, controlled by CCT. By the 9th of May, an additional 3,000 Army combat and combat support troops were air landed. In addition, more than 1,000 Air Force support personnel were sent to establish firm control over the air traffic corridor between San Isidro Airfield and Santo Domingo.

A majority of CCT controlled air traffic was conducted in VFR (visual flight rules) conditions. However, one night IFR (instrument flight rules) prevailed. To meet the challenge, SMSgt Betty, SSgt Bob Booth and A1C Crutchfield imposed conventional approach control (CAC) procedures. Using a TACAN (Tactical Air Navigation system) aboard the USS Boxer - anchored in the nearby waters - as the prime navigational aid, they safely landed scores of aircraft.

In the operation, aircraft were vertically stacked at 1,000′ intervals between 4,000′ and 25,000′, orbiting over the TACAN fix until letdown clearances were delivered. The air traffic challenges and situations encountered during Operation POWER PACK became a catalyst for the increased emphasis on Combat Control ATC training.
Awards and Decorations - Lt Jerry Whitley, SSgt Norris Gentry, SSgt Fredrick Thrower, SSgt Taylor, A1C Rick Crutchfield, A1C Dennis Mazikowski and A1C Frank Woodring were awarded Air Force Commendation Medals for their outstanding performance under austere and adverse conditions during the Dominican Republic Crisis.

FIRST COMBAT CONTROL SCHOOL OPENS
In April 1965, the first Combat Control School opened at Sewart AFB, Tennessee. The school cadre consisted of five instructors; four controllers and a jump-qualified weather observer. The course was 5 weeks long - the first 3 weeks were in the classroom, while the 4th and 5th weeks were devoted to parachuting operations and parachute packing. Upon graduation, combat controllers were awarded the blue beret. CCTs developed their own distinctive image and adopted the motto “FIRST THERE.”

CCT FACS DURING THE VIETNAM WAR
1965 - The Republic of Vietnam -- Combat Controller, 1LT John Teague operated clandestinely for six months with a small indigenous force of mountain tribesmen known as Montagnards. His primary mission was to locate enemy targets and then direct fighter aircraft into the area. On one occasion, Teague used close air support to route a massive communist attack against a friendly village. He then commandeered a helicopter and flew the village leader to the front of the mile-long column of fleeing refugees. Together they managed to talk the villagers into returning and thus denied the enemy a victory. Other controllers assigned to do a similar mission were Sgt Mose McBeth and TSgt Joe Orr. Unfortunately, all of the missions in which they participated have not yet been declassified. However a few have surfaced and they follow.

FORWARD AIR CONTROLLING IN LAOS by Captain Jack Teague
1965 - Lima Site 36 - The Kingdom of Laos - I was the first modern-era Combat Controller to put in a tour in northern Laos. I did not keep a diary, because I was told not to. I was told not to wear a uniform. My call sign was Cherokee. I worked at LS-36, north of the PDJ. I was not a pilot then. I also spent some time on the western edge of the PDJ working with the US Army, who were working with guys out of Kong Le’s place. During that week, I spent most of the time in the back seat of an L-19, directing air strikes against some AAA on the western edge of the PDJ. I also got to do one strike against Ban Ban from the backseat of an L-19. I made it up north twice, helping a couple of Marines get out, which gave me close-up view of the highway Red China was constructing into Laos. And I visited Tony Poe at his Burma border retreat.

When I was directing air strikes, it was not a classroom type-situation where you do this one and that type of thing. I selected targets along with Vang Pao. These didn’t have to be approved by Ambassador Sullivan. In some cases I selected them. We had a code that we used to get airplanes to rendezvous with us. I had a Bayside 990 radio, which was VHF and a PRC-41, which was UHF. The T-28’s used VHF and the F-4s and 105s UHF. One T-28 pilot I remember used the call sign Cowboy.

The first time I was ever shot at, I was getting out of an Air America H-34 helicopter flown by Phil Goddard. I had a PRC-41 when I jumped out of the chopper, but the rigid antenna snapped off. So I was stranded on the ground as Goddard took off. Now I couldn’t talk to the jets overhead. I also had a Bayside 990, so I could talk to Phil. He relayed my instructions to the jets, even though he wasn’t trained to do that. He didn’t do a good job so the F-4s asked him to authenticate. So he said, “Who the hell, do you think I am, Ho Chi Minh?” They left. They scrubbed the mission. Later on, we got chewed out about that. But it is kind of funny now, looking back.

There were other Air America pilots like Herb Baker, and also USAID worker named Blaine Jensen who worked with Pop Buell at Lima Site 20 (Sam Thong). I was there as military, expected to take risks. Probably Phil and these guys were sheep-dipped, but I really didn’t know. I marvel at what they got themselves into and the chances they took and their courage. They were a marvelous bunch of people. You had two groups of Americans there: the feather merchants in Vientiane – a huge bureaucracy supporting a few line operational people out in the field; and the folks who held the place together like Tone Poe and Pop Buell. The people in Vientiane had no idea what was going on up
north — it was like two separate worlds. The only other in-country (illegal of course) USAF military, when I was there were Air Commandos Stan Monnie (PJ at Lima Site 36), Grant McNaughton (an MD at Lima Site 20, Pop Buell’s place) and Glen Frick, who was at Luang Prabang working with Thai/Lao T-28s.

I directed approximately 40 air strikes from an airplane during the rainy season. Later, Heinie Aderholt made it possible for me to get pilot training and I flew 155 combat missions as a fighter pilot. Now I am a teacher of Political science in a college, as well as federal and state prisons.

"General Heinie Aderholt noted: Captain John O. "Jack" Teague was the first man to push the FAC program into Laos. He was a non-rated FAC. His dad, Congressman Olin Teague, was a great hero in World War II. I got Jack into pilot training when he got back from Laos — even though he was colorblind. That had never happened before. Jack got to fly combat in Vietnam in F-100s. He flew missions in the Super Sabre, over half of them scrambled from the alert pad. He picked up enough battle damage to win the nickname Magnet Ass."

A quote from the book ** Classified Secret** by Jan Churchill.

**Classified Secret is a documentary on Combat Control Forward Air Controllers during the SECRET war in Laos; published by Sunflower University Press, Manhattan, Kansas.**

**COMBAT CONTROLLERS DEPLOY WITH CAV TO VIETNAM by**

- Charles J. Corey, Colonel, USAF (CCT) Retired,
- Frank J. Hasler, MSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired,
- Erwin M. (Red) Ghormley, SSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

**1 July 1965 - Ft. Benning, Georgia** — On July 1, 1965, the 1st Cavalry (CAV) Division (Airmobile) was activated by US Army General Order Number 185. What followed was a surprise of major proportions; the CAV was ordered to Vietnam on 28 July 1965. In a matter of 25 days, the newly formed division organized into a 16,000 man combat organization, along the lines of the 11th Air Assault Division (Test). With a total of 434 helicopters, it was prepared to enter combat, the ultimate test of its capabilities. Within 90 days of becoming the Army’s first airmobile division, the First Team was back in combat as the first fully committed division of the Vietnam War.

The 507th Direct Air Support Squadron (DASS), Shaw AFB, SC was responsible for supporting the Army with Tactical Air Controllers or Tactical Air Control Parties (TACP). But because of the rapid build-up of combat units headed for Vietnam, there was a shortage of both pilots (Air Liaison Officers [ALOs] and FACs) and field-qualified ground radio repairmen; ie, the personnel needed to fill the TACP slots in the CAV. For that reason, the Air Force selected CCT Officers and CCT P304s to fill the vacant DASS slots. For the deployment Corey was dual-hatted, serving as both Tactical Airlift ALO and as a Forward Air Controller.

Accompanying the CAV were six Combat Controllers; one CCT Officer and five CCT Ground Radio Maintainers (AFSC P304XX). For the deployment, Captain Corey was tasked as a FAC/ALO while the 304’s served as ROMADs (short for radio operator - maintainer - and driver) in Tactical Air Control Parties (TACP).

The following is a list of those Combat Controllers selected and their unit of assignment at the time:

- Captain Charles Corey, 1st Aerial Port Group, Langley AFB, VA
- TSgt Al Souza, 3rd Aerial Port Squadron, Pope AFB, NC
- SSgt Frank Hasler, 2nd Aerial Port Squadron (2APS) Sewart AFB, TN
- A1C David P. Henry, 3rd Aerial Port Squadron, Pope AFB, NC
- A1C Erwin (Red) Gormley, Detachment 1, 2nd APS, Dyess AFB, TX
- A2C Franklin Fording, 2nd Aerial Port Squadron, Sewart AFB, TN

The following is one story from the deployment.
December 1965 - Bong Song Special Forces Camp - Captain Corey and Airman Ghormley accompanied helicopter-loads of CAV soldiers as they were airlifted into a hot landing zone near Bong Son Special Forces camp. For the first three hours, they were pinned down by intense small arms and mortar fire. However, as CAV reinforcements arrived, they gained the upper hand.

For the next three days, Corey and Ghormley worked around the clock directing air strikes and - at night – directed illumination flare drops in support of combat operations. Finally, on the forth day, the siege was broken.

As the CAV was preparing to depart, a local Vietnamese Army artillery battery initiated a fire support mission to suppress enemy activity and provide cover fire - for the departing troops. During the fire mission, one of the Howitzers was inadvertently sited on a wrong coordinates and round hit the CAV’s Command Post. As a result, the CAV’s entire artillery fire support team was lost and Airman Ghormley suffered multiple, life threatening wounds. The most life-threatening wound severed his femoral artery nearly ending his life. In the words of Captain Corey, “blood was spurtting with every heart beat.” Only the rapid action of the Army Combat Medics saved him. Within 12 minutes, Airman Ghormley was on one of the Army’s Dust Off helicopters, heading for a field hospital.

Airman Ghormley suffered multiple wounds, to include two broken legs, loss of his right elbow, and his right ear. In addition, his head wound required a Teflon plate in the right temporal and his right ear had to be rebuilt. After returning to the United States, Ghormley spent more than 18 months, recovering at the Brook Army Medical Center. While there, he was promoted to SSgt and awarded the Purple Heart. In June 1967, with more than seven years service, he was honorably discharged and was entered into medical retirement by the US Air Force.

FIRST CONVENTIONAL CCT DEPLOYMENT TO VIETNAM by Gene Adcock, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired with Bob Farmer, LTC, USAF (CCT) Retired

July 2, 1965 - Tachikawa Air Base, Japan -- In 1965, President Johnson began a buildup to support General Westmoreland’s new strategy in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). To support Westmoreland’s goals, the Air Force airlift operation increased dramatically. C-123 and C-130 sorties doubled and redoubled as the need to build new operating locations (OL) increased. The new OLs were needed to house and support a score of Army brigades that were sent to support Westmorland’s plan.

As a result, the Air Force ordered the 7th Aerial Port Squadron (7APS), Tachikawa, Japan to deploy a CCT in July of 1965. At the time, the 7APS had a seven man team at Tachikawa and a 14-man team at the Squadron’s Detachment 1, Naha AB, Okinawa. Plans were immediately set to deploy four-man teams on a rotational basis. This was a stopgap measure intended to support the increased air assault operations until a permanent (PCS) CCT could be sent to the 8th Aerial Port Squadron at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN.

The team deployed in July of 1965 was the first conventional CCT to be used in a combat role since the mid-nineteen fifties, ie a structured team providing terminal air traffic control at forward assault strips, concurrently maintaining long range communications between the Air Lift Control Element, (ALCE), and the Air Lift Control Center, (ALCC).
SSgt Louis (Lou) Benavides of the Squadron’s detachment team based in Okinawa. This was a significant event to CCT; however it went quietly unnoticed in the wider Air Force community.

The team was flown by a C-130 from Tachikawa AB, Japan to Naha AB, Okinawa and then on to Tan Son Nhut (TSN) Air Base, arriving at around midnight on 1 July 1965. At the time the status-of-forces agreement forbid origination of combat or combat support missions in Japan. For that reason, the aircraft had to fly to Naha AB, Okinawa and refue for the flight to Saigon.

The following morning, 2 July, around 0600, the team and radio vehicle were loaded onto a C-123 and sent up-country to operate the assault zone at Cheo Reo. Upon arrival at Cheo Reo they arranged quarters at the nearby Special Forces B-Team camp and worked the rest of the day controlling air traffic at the co-located assault strip. After dark they retired to the B-Team camp for the night. An attack on the Special Forces camp welcomed the team to the sharper end of the war. The team spent the rest of the night sharing defensive positions with their Special Forces hosts. Due to the intensity of the LZ operations, it would be two days before they were able to return to home base (TSN), catch their breath and properly prepare for the next mission.

At TSN, the team was attached to the Eighth Aerial Port Squadron (8APS) for logistics and administrative support. The senior personnel at the 8APS had for the most part had never seen a CCT, and they were treated with a bemused but accommodating and friendly attitude. To their credit, the personnel of the Eighth provided a warm in-country home, and when the team returned to Tan Son Nhut Air Base between missions, they were able to establish enough useful logistics and operations contacts, to support the constantly deploying team. The next thirty days the team was extremely busy providing air traffic control at forward operating bases. The first teams operations are detailed in the unofficial log now on exhibit at the CCT museum; was kept by then TSgt (now CMSgt-Retired) Gene Adcock.

HQ, 2D Air Division (PACAF), APO San Francisco, CA 93307
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
14 October 1965 - Bong Son Special Forces Camp, RVN

<<<
CCT TSgt Stan Williams, 32, of Erwin, NC “talks in” a C-123 Provider of the 315th Air Commando Group during an airlift of Army of the Republic of Vietnam troops at Bong Son Special Forces camp. The army unit was heading for Tuy Hoa North, after spending more than two months in the field. Watching the aircraft land is TSgt Gene Adcock, 28, of Christopher, IL, another member of the team. Ed. Note: The radio vehicle pictured here is the MRC-94. The weapon, an Armalite AR-15 and a B-2 ATC light are shown on the ground at the right wheel. (Air Force Photo by SSgt B. W. Cook)
The team operated on a very steep learning curve to say the least; this gave rise to unforeseen difficulties. Chief among these was the US Army aviation’s almost total disregard for the CCT authority for communications, command and control at the airhead - even though they provided an increased measure of air safety. In many cases, helicopters came and went with absolutely no contact. Some Army aviators treated CCT as another speed bump in their private war. Coordinating with aviation command sections did little - in the beginning - to improve the situation. In their defense, most Army aviators had never encountered CCTs and were highly unlikely to have even heard of them.

Several hair-raising events between U.S. Air Force C-123s, C-130s, UH-1B’s (Huey’s), and the occasional Caribou kept the team in a constant sweat; they couldn’t let their guard down. Traffic advisories to in-coming and departing airlift aircraft were - in many cases - the only remedy.

- For example, it was not uncommon for a sixty-ship formation of NORDO (No Radio communications) Hueys to approach and land at an active LZ - to dropping off an infantry unit. When this occurred, the team had no choice but to advise controlled air traffic to remain in the pattern until the helicopters departed the LZ and the dust had settled.

Over time and with steady pressure the Army aviators gained confidence in the Combat Controllers and exhibited a degree of cooperation. As the ops tempo of the war and the associated air traffic increased the teams were welcomed; finally, an acknowledgment of CCT skills.

In those early days, a major problem was equipment. During the preceding years little had been planned or programmed for the to CCT - in terms of the equipment needed to prosecute the war. Much of their equipment was designed in World War Two.

In July 1965, the first team deployed to Vietnam with a MRC-94 commercial six-passenger (six pac) pick-up truck. The MRC-94 was outfitted with UHF-AM, VHF-AM and HF-SSB radios. These radios were used to communicate with US Air Force aircraft, while the HF-SSB (with its 1 KW power output) provided outstanding long-haul communications - back to headquarters. The team added a PRC-77 - VHF-FM - radio to the suite. It provided the important communications link with US Army aircraft and local ground forces. A locally manufactured cover sheltered the six-pac bed and aircraft antennae were permanently installed on the roof. The MRC-94 - International pickup truck - was great for drop zone training in Japan, where we drove hundreds of miles to Patton and Mito Drop Zones. But it was hardly a tactical vehicle and was especially hard to load onto the C-123 Provider - our primary means of transportation. Large and shiny blue with bits of chrome, it was a sitting duck; a visual beacon, perched on the highest elevation and clear vantage point at a landing zone.

Our Army colleagues viewed our communications vehicle with a combination of sarcastic amusement and alarm. At the first opportunity the CCT spray-painted the MRC-94 in an olive drab camouflage pattern. This silenced many of the critics.

A second problem with the MRC-94 was size. Team deployments were usually to sites north of Saigon and most often were flown by C-123 Providers. Loading the MRC-94 on to the C-123 required special effort by the crew chief and loadmaster. Why? The anchor line cables (left & right) in the C-123 were linked at the rear of the aircraft -approximately seven feet above the ramp hinge. The link was a tensioning cable and it was a bear to disconnect/connect. Connected, then highly tensioned it was safety wired to prevent inadvertent release. Loading the MRC-94 required that that tensioning cable be removed, thus providing the needed vehicle clearance. The loadmaster and crew chief often spent an hour - and lots of choice words - disconnecting the cable. Luckily, we were never around to witness the reconnection.

Another major equipment problem was the portable battery powered runway lights, (MX-290- LANTERNS). Surprisingly, these were one of the few items not of WWII vintage. But, they proved barely suitable as markers for the night landing zone. The amount of light they shed was ineffective, and the length of their useful battery service life was less than six hours. Another problem with the MX-290s was their susceptibility to theft. On numerous occasions newly air landed troops would pick up the lights and take them to their bivouac area. It didn’t take many loads of troops to put the team out of the night landing business.

One night, after a C- 123 had attempted several unsuccessful landings - on a poorly lit assault zone – the team
improvised. After talking to the pilot, they parked the radio vehicle at the side of the LZ, just abeam the threshold. The goal was to provide a bright approach marker. It worked, and the aircraft successfully landed. However, the port propeller barely missed the MRC-94. This reinforced the need for more and better airfield lighting.

While CCTs continued to use the battery-powered lights they found that using small canisters (construction lanterns) filled with diesel fuel, JP-4 or kerosene solved two problems. The small canisters had an improved operational life, burning for several hours. Additionally, they were hot and dirty with black oily film over the entire lantern. This made them unattractive to would-be thieves. Equally important, the flickering flame aided depth perception and proved beneficial to approaching aircraft.

- Maintaining the kerosene construction lanterns proved to be a minor problem. During refueling, the team was silhouetted and exposed to hostile fire. For that reason, it was one of the unpleasant duties; however, after the near disastrous C-123 night landings, the risk was worth it. For the remainder of 1965, the TDY CCT continued to use a mix of kerosene and MX-290 lights. As so often the case in haste military operations, improvisation was the order of the day.

- A method of tracking the arriving (stacked) aircraft, while awaiting landing clearance, was to grease pencil call-sign sequencing on the vehicle’s door window - a crude but effective method of flight following the approaching aircraft.

- Early on, a need was seen for issuing altimeter settings to arriving aircraft, particularly at night. The CCT was not equipped with barometric instruments. However within days, the first tea located a C-123 that was permanently grounded. During a midnight requisition operation Sergeant Adcock removed a serviceable altimeter from the aircraft’s instrument panel. The following day, the altimeter was shock mounted the on the dash of the MRC-94. Upon arrival at a landing zone, the team dialed in the published field elevation. The team was then able to read out the LZ altitude setting. To assure accuracy, the altimeter was closely monitored to keep up with changing pressure and readjusted as necessary.

- Many quick fixes followed these patterns.

Soon after the team returned to Tachikawa, after the July deployment, 1Lt Farmer and TSgt Adcock were tasked by Brigadier General Ellis, Commander of 315th Air Division, to install ground-to-air radios at four Air Lift Control Elements or ALCE’s in South East Asia. The purpose was to provide a communication link with arriving aircraft in order to facilitate the rapid ON/OFF-load of critical combat support cargo. The ALCE’s chosen were Tan Son Nhut, Ben Hoa, and Danang in Viet Nam, and Don Muang AB (Bangkok International Airport) in Thailand. The big problem was the lack of allocated assets to get the job done. It was a challenge to procure and install non-existent assets at the four locations; but after ten days of begging and borrowing radios they managed to complete the three Viet Nam stations. The more difficult challenge was the Bangkok ALCE. After several days of scrounging - a marginally suitable AN/PRC-41 UHF man-pack radio - was found and installed. It wasn’t the best solution but it provided a capability of last resort. Unable to find a suitable AC power supply for the PRC-41, Sergeant Adcock scrounged four heavy-duty vehicle 12-volt batteries. Next he fashioned a special battery adapter that interfaced two of the batteries; powering the radio for 24 hours. He then trained the ALCE crew to charge and make a daily exchange of batteries - in order to maintain 24/7 communications.

Before the end of the 1965, new radio vehicles were delivered to the two teams. Several AN/MRC-108 jeep mounted radio vehicles were delivered; after being diverted from the newly formed Tactical Air Control Party, (TACP) Squadron at Yokota AB, Japan. The new MRC-108’s were fitted with UHF, VHF-AM, VHF-FM and HF radios mounted in M-151 (Ford) Jeeps. In addition, they came with 1/4 ton trailers, each fitted with a gasoline generator that remotely powered the MCR-108 via a 50-foot cable. The MRC-108 offered significant improvement over previous radio vehicles; they were genuinely all terrain, smaller and easier to load on C-123 aircraft.

The MRC-108’s were fitted with all the radios needed to support the CCT airhead air traffic control mission. The MILSPEC radios included: UHF-AM & VHF-AM for ground-to-air communications with Air Force aircraft, VHF-FM for short range team communications and air-to-ground communications with US Army aircraft, and HF-SSB for long-haul communications. The radios were mounted on a single waterproof pallet and completely filled the back seat area of the M-151. Although limited to only two passengers, the MRC-108 was a vast improvement over the previous commercial vehicles.
In early August 1965, the first CCT rotated and fresh combat controllers, from Tachikawa and Naha replaced them. In November and December 1965, the first PCS CCT trickled into Tan Son Nhut. By mid-January 1966, the Eighth Aerial Port Squadron Combat Control Team was fully manned and operating. From that point, until the end of the war, the 8th Aerial Port Squadron was responsible for the Combat Control mission in Vietnam. During the ten-year war the PCS CCT varied in size between one 24-man team to as many as three 24-man teams, as mission tasking ebbed and flowed.

The 7th Aerial Port Squadron had detachments throughout the Pacific. Shown here is a copy of the Key Personnel Roster from September 1965. Note that Combat Control Teams were assigned to only Tachiwawa AB, Japan and Naha AB, Okinawa. They were 7 man and 14 man teams, respectively. Page 2, the reverse side is found on the next page.

(Horton Collection)
## KEY PERSONNEL DIRECTORY FOR DETACHMENTS OF THE 7TH AERIAL PORT SQUADRON

### DETACHMENT 1 - NAHA AB OKINAWA, APO 96235

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Duty Phone</th>
<th>Home Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lt Col Jesse C. Bush</td>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>Wabash 6237/1107</td>
<td>Wabash 5262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt Gerald W. Jewell</td>
<td>Operations Officer</td>
<td>Wabash 7220</td>
<td>Wabash 4104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt William M. Butler</td>
<td>OIC, Traffic</td>
<td>Wabash 9290</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Lt Donald H. Horton</td>
<td>OIC, Combat Control</td>
<td>Wabash 3134</td>
<td>Wabash 4187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Lt Robert E. Wittman</td>
<td>OIC, Airl Delivery</td>
<td>Wabash 5245</td>
<td>Wabash 7186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Lt Gerald H. Lucas</td>
<td>OIC, Passenger Service</td>
<td>Wabash 4190</td>
<td>Wabash 6264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSgt James Q. Randolph</td>
<td>First Sergeant</td>
<td>Wabash 6237</td>
<td>Wabash 9175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge of Quarters</td>
<td>Ann Bks</td>
<td>Wabash 9134</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space Control</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wabash 9155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DETACHMENT 6 - ITAZUKA AB JAPAN, APO 96520

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Duty Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSgt Curtis P. Mahnkey</td>
<td>Det NCOIC</td>
<td>2202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge of Quarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>65712</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DETACHMENT 7 - KUNSAN AB KOREA, APO 96264

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Duty Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Lt Robert A. Petersen</td>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>4163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSgt Joseph C. Rice</td>
<td>Detach NCOIC</td>
<td>4347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1C Wayne D. Wright</td>
<td>AIC, Freight Svc</td>
<td>4037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2C Robert E. Halsey</td>
<td>AIC, Pns Svc</td>
<td>4037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge of Quarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>4037</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DETACHMENT 8 - KUNG KUAN AB TAIWAN, APO 96293

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Duty Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capt Franklin E. Willis</td>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>140/165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSgt Walter B. Weeks</td>
<td>Det NCOIC</td>
<td>140/165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DETACHMENT 27 - MISHIMA AB JAPAN, APO 96519

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Duty Phone</th>
<th>Home Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capt Walter E. Seymour</td>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>2195/3580</td>
<td>8-4460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Lt Normand I. Lefebvre</td>
<td>Traffic Officer</td>
<td>2196</td>
<td>3659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSgt William T. Jones</td>
<td>Det NCOIC</td>
<td>3580</td>
<td>2866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge of Quarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>2300/2301</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DETACHMENT 55 - OSAN AB KOREA, APO 96570

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Duty Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Lt Craig M. Ruml</td>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>2488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWO Jack A. Pryor</td>
<td>Traffic Officer</td>
<td>2228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSgt Walter D. Nimm</td>
<td>Det NCOIC</td>
<td>2228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge of Quarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>2488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

7th Aerial Port Squadron, Key Personnel Roster, Page 2.
DET 1, CCT VIETNAM DEPLOYMENT by Donald R. Horton, LTC, USAF (CCT) Retired

July 27, 1965 – Tan Son Nhut AB, Republic of Vietnam - On 27 July a replacement team from Detachment 1, 7th Aerial Port Squadron, Naha AB, Okinawa was rotated into Tan Son Nhut (TSN) - for a 30 to 45 day deployment. The team included: 1st Lt Donald R. Horton, SSgt Melvin Drew, SSgt Richard Callahan and A1C Marvin Smith. After a short overlap, the first team - Farmer, Williams, Adcock and Benavides - returned to their home stations.

>>> Vung Tau - Helo airstrike in distance. (Horton Collection)

Vung Tau Mission – DET 1’s first combat mission was a re-supply operation at Vung Tau. As it turned out, only two aircraft were involved and ATC was not needed - a wasted mission. After that mission the team met with airlift headquarters to establish guidelines for future CCT deployments. In the meeting with the commander and ALCC staff, ground rules for CCT deployments were established. The guidelines were:

1. More than three aircraft must be fragged for the mission
2. Multiple sorties must be scheduled
3. To LZ with no established ATC facility.

These guidelines were not always followed, but they did become the baseline for operations.

Reinforcements - During the month of August further personnel from the Headquarters and Detachment 1 were sent in reinforce the already deployed team, as the 315 Air Commando Group (TC) found more and more jobs for the CCT.


After periods of 30 to 45 days these TDY personnel would alternately rotate between their home stations and RVN. This continued until the first PCS team arrived from CONUS, in December 1965.

<<< Maurice Gentry, Don Horton, Lou Benavides, William Johnson (Horton Collection)

Team Briefings - There were no established procedures for per-mission briefing. Initially, the airborne mission commander - normally the aircraft commander that deployed the team - would informally discuss the mission, the number of aircraft involved, cargo to be hauled, and sorties required. The briefing situation improved as the team gained experience.
**Coordination Problems** - Problems with the 315th Air Lift Control Center (ALCC) persisted in the early days. Commanders at the Division and flying squadron level agreed on how to use the CCT. However, the staff of the ALCC (Call sign HILDA) did not get the word and we were sometimes dispatched missions where ATC facilities were already in place. In these instances the team was sent in to perform ground traffic functions – ie; park aircraft, count and keep records of passengers moved, and coordinate between ground personal and the aircrew. The ALCC also did not monitor the HF radio - complaining of too much static in the office where the radio was located. They did, however, monitor UHF for air traffic coordination. As a result, the team quite often sent information to HILDA, relaying messages through aircraft in flight.

**Mission to Pleiku** – The first large mission for the Detachment 1 team was to operate the new, partially completed airfield at Pleiku. The existing PSP runway at Camp Holloway was in bad shape and would not withstand the number of landings required to move the 173rd Airborne Brigade into the area. The 173rd was being inserted into the area to relieve the siege of the Special Forces CIDG camp at Du Co. A four man CCT was sent on the July 9th to Camp Holloway airfield, where they spent the night. The following day - at sunrise - they traveled to the new Pleku airfield. The Pleku runway was completed but the taxiway and the parking ramp were still under construction. The airlift mission plan, was to land five aircraft, park them at the end of the runway, turn them around, off load them, and then have them take off in the opposite direction. This method was used until mission completion. The USAF Fire Department - already in place at Pleku - assisted the CCT by placing flare pots along the active runway and keeping them lit at night.

**Mission Nha Trang** - The next mission was to the airfield at Nha Trang. It was briefed as an ATC mission but that was not required. What was needed was ALCC passenger control. The CCT mission was to coordinate the loading of Vietnamese refugees. The refugees were brought to Nha Trang in C-123s. It took three C-123 loads to fill up a C-130. While we waited for a C-130 load the refugees set in the shade under the wings of the waiting aircraft. The teams major mission turned out to be watching for people building fires for cooking and making tea.
Flare Missions and Training Time - As the additional controllers arrived from Tachikawa and Naha a minimum of two four-man teams were fragged for deployment each day. ALCC would alert the teams to ATC missions as soon as they published the mission orders for the next day. This usually came at mid afternoon. On down days, some team members would volunteer and fly as additional crewmembers (ACM) on the nightly C-123 flare missions. The CCT job was to set the fuses for the correct altitude and hand them to the loadmaster who ejected them from the aircraft. In addition, the team participated in two training jumps with with RVN Army Airborne School at Hoc Mon Drop Zone.

Mission Commander - A Landing Zone control officer deployed on each mission the CCT. By regulation, the LZ officer had to be a CCT officer or an airlift pilot. Since there was only one CCT officer deployed in country, the ALCC would normally assign pilots to cover the missions.

Typical Mission Load - LTC Horton’s Air Force Form 11 shows that in two Temporary Duty (TDY) tours to Vietnam, he participated in 59 combat missions, with 82 flying hours and a total of 77 days in country. This was typical for combat controllers assigned to support the Vietnam buildup, during the period 15 July - 15 December 1965.

Mission An Khe -- On August 23rd a team was sent to An Khe to control the arrival of the 1st Calvary Division. They spent the night in the Special Forces C-Team camp. The C-Team was the only American presence in the area at the time, but that would change by the night of 25 August.

The combat control team set up an ATC control point near mid-runway opposite an old French Villa.

>>> August 24 - An Khe - C-130 and French Villa
(Horton Collection)

<<<< SSgt Callahan, Lt. Horton, SSgt Drew in MRC-94
(Horton Collection)
On the afternoon of the 24th, a C-130 – based at Mactan, PI - asked if the air traffic controllers were CCT. With the affirmative reply came a welcome pronouncement. “We have a case of San Miguel beer on board sent by the Mactan Combat Control Team.” The next day the same question was asked. I am sure that the Special Forces team thought we were gods after that, with MANNA from heaven.

Kudo’s from the Air Boss - At the end of our TDY, Colonel George L Hannah wrote a letter of appreciation for the team, citing the size and scope of our mission. In addition to those missions covered above, the team’s were deployed to: Dak To II, Cheo Reo, Ban Me Thuot, Phuoc Vinh, Song Be, Duc Ha, Duc Co, just to name a few.

The Order of the Punctured Provider - On the 8th of September the aircraft transporting a CCT was hit by ground fire while flying near Bien Hoa Air Base. As was customary, the 311th Troop Carrier Squadron gave everyone on board a certificate titled The Order of the Punctured Provide - to commemorate the occasion. (Horton Note: The C-123, #533 is now displayed in the memorial park at Hurlburt AFB.)
Second Deployment - Horton returned to Okinawa on 12 September and went back to Vietnam on 11 October 1965. On arrival, Colonel Hannah, Commander, 315th Air Commando Group ordered the team to be at the VNAF hanger near the 315 Group Headquarters the next day and to tell no one. The team arrive and found the mission was to be entertained by the traveling troop of the Broadway play HELLO DOLLY staring Mary Martin. Travel plans for this group was classified to prevent the large gathering from being targeted by the VC. Martha Raye was also in the audience. Her autograph was obtained by Horton.

Martha Raye Autograph (Horton Collection)

Bong Son Mission Fiasco - The following day – on the 13th of September – the ALCC fragged the team for a deployment to Bong Son – a scheduled two day mission. For the next seventeen days the team shuttled back and forth between Tan Son Nhut and Bong Son to operate Landing Zone. The ALCC had a hard time making up their mind as to what they wanted the team to do at Bong Son. Each day they would direct the team to return to TSN on the last airplane - at sunset. Then upon landing at TSN, the ALCC would inform us that we were going back the next day. The round trip flight was five hours, so it took a big bite out of our operational time. However, we did get much needed rest during these flights. Only once did the team stay at Bong Son.

RON - Bong Son SF - That night we remained over night (RON). Very early in the evening, we had already checked off-the-net and had already entered the SF camp; when a C-123 called that they were there to pick the team – and we were ready to go! At the direction of the C-123 pilot we did not light the runway. But he asked that a flare be fired so could locate the strip. As SSgt Bobby Cottingham loaded the flare pistol and before he could pull the trigger, the C-123 pilot said he saw the flare. When told that we had not fired a flare we heard the engines go to full throttle and the pilot said – “Aw shucks, I’ll see you tomorrow.” That night the VC blew the railroad bridge across the river about a quarter mile from the camp.

Bong Son LZ Operations - The Bong Son LZ was a 1380 feet long runway on the top of a hill, with no overrun. It was located between the SF camp and RVN artillery camp. There was parking space for three C-123s on the small ramp that was on the SF sided of the strip. The mission was delivering RVN Marines and was scheduled for three days, then we would start delivering other units (RVN Rangers or Airborne troops) and taking US Marines out. Then it was the same with the Rangers and the Airborne. The RVN troops were conducting missions in the An Lo Valley. The C-123s were shuttling them to Pleiku and then they were taken in C-130s back to their home base or visa versa.

Mekong Delta Operations - There were two missions in the Delta region. The first was moving RVN troops from one base to another prior to a B-52 strike the next morning. The mission was fragged for one CCT to be at the on-load base only. The team was deployed with the usual four people, a MRC 94 with portable gear for backup. The mission was delayed and went into night operations. HILDA called for us to split the team of Lt Horton, Sgt Callahan, Airman
Smith (controllers) and Sgt Drew (radio maintenance). Lt Horton took portable gear and left the other three to complete the primary mission. The first C-123 aircraft that took off, after one that Lt Horton was on crashed during takeoff, all 75 on-board survived. The pilot, kept the aircraft level and landed straight ahead. The aircraft commander was the first lieutenant. (Horton’s Note: I hope he got a medal for his actions that day.)

The arrival airfield was lit with flare pots. The aircraft were flying with no lights, as they were taking ground fire from a village on the approach end of the strip. Consequently, air traffic control was rather difficult. Aircraft location could only be determined by sound and through position reports. Their exact location was not known until they flared for landing. As they flared, landing lights were turned on for touchdown and then turned them off for taxiing to the offload point.

On the second mission to the Delta, we went to a very short red clay strip in the middle of rice paddies. The team deployed with portable gear only, since they did not want to expend a sortie pulling out the CCT at the end of the mission; ie; they just take us out on the last mission aircraft.

A small village was about a half-mile away at the end of the road that led to the LZ. There were no buildings on the LZ just a few mounds of dirt near the road junction with the strip. The CCT arrived just after dawn. After a few hours with no air traffic, the team attempted contact with HILDA - on the HF radio – but they were unsuccessful. Around midday, a man, wearing only shorts and carrying a Thompson Sub-machine gun, walked down the road from the village, stopping about 50 yards away. He waved - and returned to the village. That was the nearest thing to air traffic control on that day. At dusk a C-123 came and picked up the team. The crew said, “our mission was canceled for a higher priority.” HILDA later said, “no one thought about contacting the team in the field”. This, was interpreted as, they had not taken time to turn on the HF radio.

**Last TDY to Vietnam** - A final TDY trip to Vietnam was in early December to retrieve the 7th APS team equipment. A 24 man PCS CCT, with two officers was almost fully manned and the 7th APS TDY team was being withdrawn. During this visit, the 7th CCT deployed with the new 8th APS CCT to the Michelin Rubber Plantation, 45 miles northwest of Saigon. There had been a big battle there in late November and this was clean up operation.

On that mission, we saw the first camouflaged C-123 in Vietnam. Previously, all of the aircraft were silver.
UNIT CITATION FOR THE 7TH AERIAL PORT SQUADRON

For their actions in Vietnam, the 7th APS received the Unit Citation. A portion of the citation - the section pertaining to the CCT - is captured below.

On 2 July 1965, a 7th Aerial Port Combat Control team was deployed to Vietnam for a period of 90 days to provide air traffic control on that country’s many assault strips and landing zones. This was the first modern-day deployment of a CCT team into an actual combat zone. With immediate redeployment upon arrival in Viet Nam, the CCT provided air traffic control at Cheo Reo and then at Dak To II in rapid succession. For these and other missions, this first combat control team has been awarded the Bronze Star.

Subsequent CCT personnel provided the initial air traffic control for the arrival of the 1st Cavalry Division at An Khe, 24 and 25 August 1965. Colonel G. L. Hannah Jr., Commander of the 315th Air Commando Group (TC) said: “a massive airlift of this sort, performed under abnormal conditions … requires precise handling and superior skill. The team handled the operation …so effectively that the mission was accomplished smoothly and expeditiously.”

Throughout the country 315th Air Division aircrew came to depend on the 7th Aerial Port CCT personnel for air traffic control on the forward air fields. The CCT concept of operation was proven by the 7th CCT so well that a full twenty-four man team was requested for the 8th Aerial Port Squadron, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, approved, and was ready for duty on 10 December 1965.

The December deployment concluded the involvement of the 7th Aerial Port Squadron, Combat Control Teams in the Vietnam War. From that point forward, a permanent (PCS) Combat Control Team(s) was assigned to support airlift operations in the war.

COMBAT CONTROLLERS AWARDED AIR MEDALS by Gene Adcock, CMSgt, (CCT) Retired

December 1966 - Tachikawa Air Base, Japan - Three combat controllers from the 7th Aerial Port Squadron at Tachikawa were awarded Air Medals for combat operations in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). The fourth member of the deployed team, SSgt Louis Benevides from the Squadron’s Detachment One was awarded an Air Medal during ceremonies at Naha Air Base, Okinawa.
THE SECRET WAR IN LAOS

1965 - The Kingdom of Laos -- The Ho Chi Minh Trail - a major supply route for the Viet Cong in South Vietnam - ran through Laos and Cambodia. The North Vietnamese never admitted the trail’s existence or their intrusion into the supposedly neutral country of Laos. Consequently, the US administration did not feel compelled to acknowledge its own operations in that area either. This set the stage for a small group of unorthodox combat controllers who did their part to win the so-called secret war.

BUTTERFLY FACS by LTC Robert A. Farmer, LTC, USAF (CCT) Retired

1966 - Long Tieng (LS-20A), Laos -- For three years, beginning in 1965 CCT Butterflies operated in Laos. This is one of their stories.

Captain Bob Farmer and TSgt Charlie Jones were sent to Laos to fight a war that was not officially in existence. They were “sheep-dipped” - meaning their military titles were stripped and replaced with Mister. In addition, military identification and uniforms were exchanged for civilian clothes and ID cards identifying them as employees of the American Embassy were issued. Their job was to work with and blend an incredibly diverse group of civilian and Lao military pilots and their weapons systems into an effect close air support operation. A variety of Air America, Continental and slow moving Air Commando propeller-driven aircraft were operating in Laos. In addition, fast-moving US Air Force, Navy, and other foreign aircraft were sent to support the secret war. In six months, Captain Farmer and TSgt Jones flew more than 800 combat missions - using the call sign Butterfly. Jones was highly decorated, garnering two Distinguished Flying Crosses (DFC) for his work.

THE HOLE IN THE PORTER by LTC Robert A. Farmer, LTC, USAF (CCT) Retired

1966 - Long Tieng (LS-20A), Laos -- We were way out in the east in Laos, and the weather was marginal. I was sitting in the back seat of the Air American Porter, monitoring Jim Stanford as he was controlling air strikes. He was, as I remember, just coming on to the job and this was his check ride. This mission was flown in support of General Vang Pao; he was deeply concerned about an enemy troop position near by, and wanted us to deal with them. The strike aircraft arrived, and sure enough we weren't able to put them on target because of the weather, so we returned to 20-Alternate to refuel and prepare for the scheduled afternoon strikes. While there, we decided that if the weather was still bad, we would do whatever we could to help General Vang Pao and his beleaguered Mao soldiers.
I had some grenades, so while they were re-fueling, I collected them from my room. Jim and I bent the grenade
handles outward, and very lightly taped them with a small strand of masking tape so they wouldn't go off until they
hit the ground. On the second trip the weather hadn't improved and the air strike aircraft aborted once again. At that
point we decided to use what we had, so flew back over the enemy position. I opened the back window, and as we
passed along the enemy ridge I began pulling the pins and tossing the grenades out the window. Just as the fourth
grenade left my hand, there was a bang near me. Jim and the pilot both looked back sharply. I thought maybe they
were afraid that I had dropped one of the grenades in the aircraft, or one had gone off near the plane. I quickly assured them that
everything was OK with me, and the pilot immediately banked left- away from the ridge. As we circled around, we decided we could
do more, so I loaded my M-16, and prepared to fire it out the right rear window. I'm not sure how many passes we made, but I
managed to empty four magazines into the position before we decided that we were pushing our luck, and started back.

<<<   A smiling Captain Farmer, returning from a Butterfly
mission sticks a finger in hole left by an enemy round that pierced
the belly of the Air America Porter; went through control cables;
and exited the fuselage; just missing his posterior. (Stanford
collection)

When we arrived home, at Long Tieng (20-Alternate), I crawled
under the aircraft and found a bullet hole under my seat. Looking
down the top of the empennage I found the exit hole. I knew Jim
had his camera with him, so I stuck my finger in the hole and
asked him to take a picture.

THE STINGING BUTTERFLY by Michael E. Haas, Col, USAF, Retired, Former Deputy Commander, 720th
Special Tactics Group.

Float Like a Butterfly ...
... Sting like a Bee!

Muhammad Ali

1966 – Long Tieng (LS-20A), The Kingdom of Laos – One of the most striking differences between mainstream Air
Force and Air Commando combat operations during the war in Southeast Asia was the relative usefulness of
contemporary doctrine and high-technology systems to their respective efforts. Nowhere was this more evident than
in the “secret” war in Laos, where Air Commandos flew, lived, and sometimes died far removed from mainstream Air
Force doctrine; at airstrips and camps so remote and crude that only the simplest tactics and weapons (e.g., World
War II-vintage aircraft) would prove effective.

At the bottom of this doctrinal and technological “food chain” in Laos were the Air Commando combat controllers.
Beginning in 1961, these all-volunteer, parachute-qualified airmen had been handpicked from conventional Combat
Control Team (CCT) squadrons throughout the Air Force for intensive training in unconventional warfare with the
just-activated Air Commando force. Armed only with rifles and radios, wearing no armor protection thicker than their
cotton fatigues, the CCTs were (and still are) trained to parachute into austere or enemy-controlled territory to
establish aircraft- or parachute-landing zones for follow-on, main-force units. In Laos, they evolved into something
else unforeseen even by the Air Commandos. Working closely with Gen Vang Pao’s irregulars, they fought a “no
quarter given or asked” kind of war against the North.
The Eye of the Storm

A captured Pathet Lao officer (in dark jacket) is interrogated personally by Hmong General Vang Pao (wearing an Air Commando bush hat). Persuaded to cooperate, the Communist was placed aboard a small aircraft to point out the location of his former unit, which was promptly bombed. (Charlie Jones collection)

The Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos could be an all-weather paved road, or a well-worn trail capable of hiding dangerous numbers of North Vietnamese soldiers under the thick foliage. Without forward air controllers like the “Butterfly” forward air controllers (FACs), the “Mach 2 monsters,” as one American ambassador called jet aircraft, had no hope of hitting well-camouflaged targets like this path. (Charlie Jones collection)

Vietnamese and Pathet Lao Communists

Hard work in peacetime and dangerous in war, it wasn’t the kind of work favored by the fainthearted, which accounts for the all-volunteer requirement for combat control duty. Not surprisingly, Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis LeMay’s start-up of the “Jungle Jim” program in April 1961 attracted independent-minded (“stubborn as a mule” also comes to mind) individuals looking for difficult challenges. Jungle Jim was the proving ground for USAF’s activation of the Air Commandos, the Air Force’s response to President John F. Kennedy’s challenge to the military to develop a force capable of fighting the “Communist revolutionary warfare” then sweeping much of the Third World. One of the first to respond to the call for combat control volunteers was Capt Lemuel Egleston, nicknamed the “Gray Eagle” for his
hair color. Egleston soon proved a key figure in establishing the all-critical trust between the Air Commando aircrew flying their aircraft into blacked-out airstrips at night and the Air Commando CCT, often only an unknown voice guiding the pilot over his radio. One measure of this trust can be judged by the fact the controllers on these airstrips were using only flashlights with cut-out, Styrofoam coffee cups taped to the lens as directional beacons to guide the incoming aircraft. Captain Egleston’s imagination and initiative led to another idea, one that proved visionary, timely, and definitely unauthorized. By “bootlegging” instructors from USAF’s Air Ground Operations School, then at nearby Keesler AFB, Mississippi, Egleston began teaching a select number of CCT sergeants the USAF techniques for controlling fighter air strikes against ground targets—techniques taught mainly to officer pilots at the time.

Included in this select group was then-Technical Sergeant (TSgt) Charles L. Jones, a master parachutist with over 250 jumps, a 12-year career that included combat missions in the Korean War, and—unknown to him at the time—a few gray hairs of his own in the months ahead. Several months later in 1966, Sergeant Jones was tapped for his first tour to Laos to assess what role Air Commando CCT might play in a war that didn’t officially exist.

As American military personnel other than the embassy attachés were not officially allowed in Laos, Jones, like all other American and Thai combatants entering Laos, was promptly sheep dipped to civilian status. For Sergeant Jones, this meant surrendering all clothes and papers identifying him as an employee of a commercial firm operating in Laos. “Mister” Jones had arrived. And waiting for him was a major problem tailor-made for his skills. Strike pilots attacking the Ho Chi Minh Trail and other targets in Laos had a particularly difficult time in pinpointing their targets in the rugged, forested terrain. Jagged mountains and low-hanging clouds all combined to weaken the effectiveness of the aerial interdiction program, even when targets could be found. Target identification in particular was proving near impossible for pilots flying high-speed jet aircraft, who at best had only seconds to acquire the target and release their bombs.

What was missing was a coordination link between the fighters and their targets—someone intimately familiar with the terrain, flying in something slow enough to pick out targets all but invisible to fast-moving tactical jet aircraft. Unfortunately, the United States Air Force had no such pilots or aircraft in Laos, or anywhere else. It had long since disbanded the Mosquito airborne forward air controllers that had operated so effectively during the Korean War. It did, however, have Jones and his peers, a group that would soon prove highly innovative even by Air Commando standards.

What Jones and company had going for them was imagination, initiative, excellent (even if it was unauthorized) training to control air strikes, and a lack of USAF regulations spelling out the limitations of young sergeants in Laos. What they needed was an “airborne link” from which to control the attacking jets.

Enter Air America and Continental Air Services, two US civilian firms operating small, propeller-driven aircraft and
CCT @ The Eye of the Storm

helicopters under contract to the Laotian government—aircraft now available to carry out Jones' plan. Thus began the “Butterfly” concept, so named for the radio call sign of the first airborne CCT in Laos. As the first Butterfly, Jones became “Butterfly 44.” The small handful of other controllers subsequently began using “Butterfly” with different numerical designators. Flying in civilian clothes, operating from civilian aircraft, the Butterflies soon became adept at controlling both propeller-driven Air Commando aircraft operating over Laos, as well as US Air Force and Navy jet fighters coming from bases in South Vietnam, Thailand, and aircraft carriers of the Seventh Fleet. Even foreign pilots were controlled through the Butterfly net. Laotian, Hmong, and Thai Firefly mercenary pilots were vectored to targets, with Butterfly talking continuously to strike pilots, the civilian American pilot sitting next to him, perhaps friendly troops on the ground, and the Laotian or Thai interpreter sitting behind him. It was definitely a Rube Goldberg setup by any standard, but also a big improvement over the old standard.

May 1966 found Jones discussing a particularly difficult operation with the Thai mercenary running field operations at Site 2, a mountain top camp 45 miles northeast of Gen Vang Pao’s headquarters at Long Tieng. Jones learned that a Hmong patrol had just come in with a report that it had found the body of a dead American airman some miles away but was unable to recover the body due to the presence of enemy in the immediate area. The Thai commander could only give Butterfly 44 the Hmong patrol’s note with an attempted spelling of what had apparently been the dead man’s name, copied from his dog tag. At Jones' request, the Hmong subsequently reentered the dangerous territory, this time returning with the airman’s body. With this recovery, confirmed identification was later made and next of kin notified for a burial with full military honors in the United States. It was a small touch of humanity in a war known for its atrocities.

Butterfly 44 left Laos in October 1966 with 413 combat missions in six months in his records. Other Butterflies continued their operations wherever needed. Using standard USAF procedures familiar to the strike pilots, the performance of the Air Commando airmen elicited neither curiosity nor complaints from the attacking air forces. Nor for that matter did the pilots or their commanders appear to even realize their attacks were being controlled by non-rated personnel. This lack of awareness was not a matter of any particular secrecy on the part of the Air Commandos but rather the simple fact that in this backwater “secret” war, nobody found reason to ask.

That is, nobody noticed until Lt Gen William Momyer, Seventh Air Force commander, flew up in 1966 from Headquarters Seventh Air Force in Saigon to pay a visit to Air Commando leader Col Heinie Aderholt at Nakhon Phom Royal Thai Air Force Base. Upon hearing that many Butterfly controllers were neither officers nor pilots, the general responded with “one of the more impressive temper tantrums of the war,” according to the recipient of the tantrum. Aderholt describes the memorable meeting:

He [General Momyer] and I had not gotten along well, but I had lunch with him and mentioned the Butterflies. He had asked about the FACs in Laos and where they came from. I said, “Many of the people FACing in airplanes are enlisted.” He went about six feet up and hit the ceiling. “What do you mean? Who is flying the airplane?” I said “Air America [civilian] pilots.” He said, “That will cease!”

Tough lunch! And the general proved as good as his word. The Butterflies were phased out soon thereafter, to be replaced immediately by officer, jet-qualified pilots. To their credit, the new group carried on the Butterfly tradition of bravery and tenacity, in the process achieving well-deserved fame in their own right as “Raven” FACs.
PROJECT LUCKY TIGER by Jim Stanford, SMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

1966 - Nakhon Phanom (NKP), Thailand – Three Combat Controllers were deployed from England AFB, LA to NKP and a mission code named Project Lucky Tiger. 2Lt Robert B. McCollough, SSgt James J. Stanford and A2C Andre R. Guillet were a small part of an advance party responsible for forming the 606th Air Commando Squadron. The advance party was also responsible for the transfer of A-26 aircraft from England AFB to NKP. In the months that followed, the 606th became the 56th Air Commando Wing.

When they departed England AFB, the CCT mission was undefined. The responsibility for finding a job was left up to them. They used their time to become familiar with the local area and assist the Lucky Tiger medical staff on forays into the Thai countryside. The medical teams most often were flown to nearby villages by Jolly Green helicopters. Villagers were notified in advance so they would be lined up with those needing immediate treatment first, Air Force doctors and medic’s worked an assembly line of patients throughout the day. The combat controller helped where needed. On occasion, the CCT would use the helicopter to make a parachute jump, a form of entertainment for the villagers.

In addition to the A-26s, the 606th later received two L20’s (renamed U-6’s). They were delivered by C-124 Globemasters, arriving disassembled. The CCT assisted in the assembly process and the completed aircraft were later test flown by Major German. Now the CCT had two aircraft available to them for future reconnaissance missions.

In April 1966 the combat controllers received permission to participate in flights over hostile territory - specifically Laos. This included ABCCC and FAC missions. Located at NKP was a squadron of FAC O-1E’s with the operational call sign Gombey. The team immediately started flying missions, filling any available rear seat. The team started the area familiarization flights because they felt that the mission areas would soon become their operational area. Missions normally were conducted using two O-1E’s one would fly low the other high to act as radio relay. FAC flights were mostly in the low aircraft flying over all types of terrain and mountains, they would fly into passes out of North Vietnam always on alert for ground fire, truck parks, bridges and troops. When hostiles were spotted, the pilot would radio to ABCCC (Airborne Command and Control Center) to request fighter support for active targets. On FAC missions, the controller’s job was to be the extra set of eyes and to take photographs for intelligence gathering. The FAC aircraft would fly below enemy RADAR, too low for SAM’s, but often received calls from ABCCC that Red Birds (enemy aircraft) were in the area. The O-1E’s most generally flew along lines of communication (roads, trails and paths) in and out of North Vietnam. When returning to base (RTB) the O-1E crew was always relieved to see the Mekong after a long 4 or 5 hour mission. It was especially good when they crossed it back into Thailand.

On May 6, 1966 the CCT and a medical team took a Jolly Green to a Thai village with the primary purpose of making a parachute jump - it was for public relations and entertainment for the villagers. The DZ was very small and the villagers had never seen someone make a parachute jump. All went well except for Andre. When he landed he went through the straw roof of a Buddhist Temple. At the Baci (pronounced bossie - a Thai celebration and social gathering) the hosts tied scores prayer strings (good luck charms) around the team’s wrists, with Andre getting extra special treatment and decorations. Thai legend says that you will have good luck if you leave the payer strings on your wrist for thirty days. According to Stanford, Andre had so many prayer strings that he had to remove them the following day. “When he showered, it was like a wash cloth tied around his wrist.” said Stanford. In the picture above was taken just before their departure from the Thai village on May 6th. Andre can clearly be seen with Baci decorations around his waist and over his shoulder.
They spent the next several days at Udorn RTAFB, before returning to NKP. When they returned to NKP on 17 May, Andre and Stanford learned they were scheduled to fly FAC missions the following day. Just before departure on 18 May, Andre and Stanford switched pilots because Andre liked flying with Captain Harley and Stanford liked his pilot because he let him fly the aircraft. Later that morning the squadron received word that Harley and Andre were down and that a rescue effort was in progress. At dark, rescue attempts were discontinued. The following day, aircraft continued the search, but they found no sign of the aircraft. Andre and Harley were later declared missing. As a result of this incident, McCollough and Stanford were banned from any further flights out of NKP into hostile areas. However, a week later Jim Stanford was picked up by a T-28 for a flight to join Charlie Jones and Bob Farmer in Laos. A short time later, McCollough also joined the trio. NKP flying squadrons continued the search for the missing O-1E with daily flyovers of the reported crash area and through interviews of local civilians. They were looking for any information about the missing airmen.

**COMBAT CONTROLLER STILL MISSING IN ACTION (MIA)**

**May 18, 1966 – Ban Karai Pass, Laos** – Captain Lee D. Harley was the pilot and Combat Controller A/2C Andre Guillet was serving as observer aboard an O1E aircraft (Tail Number 57-2877) that departed NKP for a FAC mission. While in Laos, west of the demilitarized zone and just south of the famed Ban Karai Pass, the little spotter plane was shot down. Air Force officials told the families that the plane burst into flames on impact and the crew could not be recovered.

If this were all there was to the story, critics wonder, why did the Air Force not declare the two men Killed/Body Not Recovered? A reasonable assumption is that there exists no certainty that the two men were killed when their plane went down, and the possibility exists that they could have successfully bailed out before impact.

Regardless, it is strongly suspected that the Lao or the North Vietnamese know the fates of the crew of the O-1E. Guillet and Harley are two of nearly 600 Americans who were lost in Laos during American involvement in the
Vietnam War. U.S. presence in Laos was in violation of Laos’ neutrality guaranteed at Geneva by agreement of several nations. But because the Vietnamese (and also the Chinese) were operating in Laos as well, it was convenient for all parties concerned to “look the other way.” As a consequence, it would not have been appropriate to recognize the communist government of Laos, the Pathet Lao, in a treaty to end the war - since we were not at war with Laos - and the American prisoners the Pathet Lao stated they held were abandoned. As reports continue to mount concerning Americans still missing in Southeast Asia, many authorities are convinced that hundreds of them are still alive today. One must wonder, are Guillet and Harley among them? If so, what must they be thinking of the country they proudly served? Andre R. Guillet was promoted to the rank of Senior Master Sergeant and Lee D. Harley to the rank of Major during the period they were maintained missing.

THE WATER PUMP & BUTTERFLYS by Jim Stanford, SMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

1966 – Nakhon Phanom (NKP) RTAFB, Thailand - After the tragic loss of Andre Guillet on May 18, 1966, the combat status of 1/LT Bob McCullough and I was up-in-the-air. Although initially approved by higher headquarters, our flights into Laos were suspended indefinitely. But that would change the following week.

Change in Status

Around the first of June 1966, LTC Ramsey, Water Pump, Udorn RTAFB, flew a T-28 down to NKP to pick me up. He flew me back to Udorn to replace Charlie Jones who had been admitted to the hospital with a fever. The following day I flew the Air America shuttle to Vientiane, Laos. I spent the next two days being briefed by the American Embassy, Air Attaché (AIRA) staff. On the third day I was again shuttled by Air America, this time to Lima Site 20A (LS-20A), also known as Long Tieng. LS-20A was the home of the CIA’s so called SECRET ARMY, an army of Hmong tribesmen commanded by General Vang Pao.

At about the same time I arrived in Long Tieng, Charlie Jones had recovered and returned from the hospital. After some discussion, LTC Bill Keeler, the LS-20A Air Operations Center (AOC) Commander decided to keep the three of us (Farmer, Jones and I) at Long Tieng.

Area of Responsibility

My first BUTTERFLY FAC mission at 20-Alternate, flying with Captain Bob Farmer – my mentor for this indoctrination flight. On later flights it was only Charlie and I working the missions, since Farmer had been called down south to work with the AIRA staff at the Embassy in Vientiane. Charlie and I were working all the fighter strikes in Northern Laos, north to China, west to Burma and east to Vietnam. On some FAC missions we flew together in the same aircraft, working as a team to find targets and control the air assets. However, some days, the target load was so great that it required we fly separate missions to cover all of them. In most cases, targets were preplanned the night before at General Vang Pao’s residence. Priorities were set based on Vang Pao’s requirements and priorities set by American Embassy intelligence reports. Once determined, Charlie Jones and/or I would go to the 20-Alternate CIA office to encrypt and send air requests for the next day, along with battle damage assessments (BDA) for the past day.

Butterfly Equipment

The aircraft most often used by BUTTERFLY FACs was the PC-6A Pilatus Porter - flown by both Air America (AA) and Continental Air Service (CAS). Charlie Jones - a Ground Radio Maintainer by training - was well qualified to modify the Porters, adding a UHF blade antenna needed to extend the range of the portable PRC-41 we used for air-to-air communications. In addition, he installed a long-wire antenna for the PRC-47 we used for long-range communications.

Typical Day

We would take off at daybreak and head for predetermined targets and rendezvous points. General Vang Pao’s Hmong
soldiers controlled most hilltops in the combat area; but, the valleys around them were controlled by the Pathet Lao (bad guys). On many of the hilltops, were some of shortest runways in the world; many ending at a 100-foot or more shear cliff. We flew in all kinds of weather, often flying along valleys – following roads and looking for vehicle traffic or truck parks. The terrain in northern Laos is quite mountainous with interesting solid rock formations – called karsts.

While en route to the target area, we would check-in with the airborne command and control center (ABCCC) C-47, call sign DOGPATCH. For special missions; ie, anything other than those fragged the day before – we requested Ops Immediate support from DOGPATCH. When we took ground fire we would request special air support to neutralize the gun position. Most Ops Immediate aircraft were diverted from Vietnam missions. Our day generally ended at dusk, since there were no navigational aids or runway lights at the Alternate.

Assignment LS-118

Late in June 1966, I was sent to LS-118, in northwestern Laos, a site along the Burma border. I was sent to be Tony Poe’s air adviser.

- Early on, the CIA was impressed with Poe’s ability to rapidly train paramilitary forces and awarded him the CIA Star in 1959. Two years later he was working independently with Hmong forces along the Burma border. It was my job to provide air support to his troops.

At LS-118, I worked in generally the same fashion as we did at the Alternate. But I had no portable radios, so I was generally limited to working with H-34 helicopters. They had UHF radios available for my FAC operations. The northwestern part if Laos was at the range limit of most jet aircraft – operating with out tankers. Therefore most of my air strike assets were either Lao or Thai T-28s or USAF A-1E’s, operating with the call sign Firefly. When we couldn’t get the needed air assets, Tony would take other measures to raise havoc with the Pathet Lao. He would improvise 100-pound bombs, rocks and hand grenades that I would drop from the helicopter.

Return to 20-Alternate

Near the end of July 1966, I returned to the Alternate because Charlie Jones was being overloaded with missions; he needed the help. I stayed at the Alternate until I rotated back to England AFB, LA in August 1966. I had been promoted to TSgt several months earlier – while in Laos. However, since I had been wearing civilian clothes all the while, I had not yet gotten a chance to wear the new stripes.
Summary
In this account of my Butterfly operations I have used general information, with little embellishment. Truth is that the missions flown were anything but normal. Charlie Jones, Bob Farmer and I primarily blew things away; we destroyed vehicles in parks with POL supplies; blasted ammunition dumps; killed troops in the open, on bridges and along trails. I had the feeling our host-pilots respected our skills and judgment. They could not hear our communications with strike aircraft, but were quick to respond to our requests and directions. In some cases, they even handed over control of the aircraft to us. During my tour, we had everything in the book fired at us, but generally made it back to base with little or no battle damage.

1966 - 1st AIR COMMANDO WING, COMBAT CONTROL TEAM, ENGLAND AFB, LA.

In the following photograph Jim Stanford is shown back on the team at England, after returning from his tour in Laos.


BUTTERFLY 39 by Billy Howell, SMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

1966 - Nakhon Phanom (NKP) RTAFB, Thailand - In 1966 and 1967, my dad - then SMSgt James A. Howell - deployed to the 606th Air Commando Squadron at NKP. At that time, the 606th was commanded by Colonel Heinie Aderholt (aka Air Commando #1).

Shortly after his arrival in Thailand, dad was sent to Laos where he was assigned the call sign Butterfly 39. Upon arrival at the American Embassy - in Vientiane - he was sheep dipped. In the sheep dipping process, all Air Force
identification was taken and stored, Embassy Identification cards were issued and Air Force uniforms were traded for civilian clothes.

In Laos, the Commando Combat Controllers were at the bottom of the doctrinal and technological food chain. They were armed with just M-16s, a radio and some basic survival gear. However, they worked tirelessly directing air strikes from both ground positions and CIA-contract aircraft.

In the SECRET WAR, awards for ground operations were not given. However, for his participation in aerial combat, dad was awarded the USAF Distinguished Flying Cross. Additionally, many of the Butterflies were injured and wounded during combat operations in Laos. However, since they were treated by the American Embassy Medical Team - not a military medical team - and not awarded Purple Hearts.

**CALVIN THE COMMANDO** from The Airman Magazine

**June 1966 – Hurlburt Field, Florida** - After nearly 20 years in a relatively soft job as an air operations supervisor - much of it behind a desk - 40 year old Calvin A. Florian decide to change his way of living. He got married. He bought a sports car. He moved to a house on a beach in Florida. And perhaps even more dramatic, he joined the US Air Force Air Commandos as a combat controller. That was nearly two years ago and now, he says, that he's happier than he's ever been in his life.

I watched the wiry master sergeant hustle across a runway, then through some Florida scrub turf to a small, mobile control tower at Holley Field. No walking for Florian. He double-times everywhere to keep in shape, part of the Air Commando rule of running a few miles every day. But more important to this 20 year-plus veteran is the fact that he gets to use his brains and his hands as a combat controller.

"We couldn't see the 0-1Es landing on that far end of the strip," he said, "so we got out of that control shack across the way and started building this one." We were standing in it, four of us, and Florian and TSgt. Jerry L. Caldwell were putting in some power equipment while awaiting the arrival of the Forward air controller (FAC) trainees from Hurlburt Field. The men had scrounged the plywood, plexiglass and other materials necessary to build their small tower. The top portion, including the floor, is hinged to the bottom box. The two men said they could break it down, fold it up, and load it on a small truck in a hour. They're proud of their handwork.

I doubt that Florian is typical of most Air Commandos, except that they all seem to share certain traits - imagination, ingenuity, industry and instant response. His wings and blue beret are more than proud badges. To Florian, they're symbolic of a strenuous personal effort.

Joining the Air Commandos is tough enough for a man in his twenties, but at Florian's age, to just jump out of bed one day, admit you've had it easy for 20 years and make a decision to strike out for uncharted islands, takes guts. Most of us wouldn't do it.

Their work was interrupted suddenly when the first FAC student pilot radioed that he was approaching Holley Field. We saw the small 0-1E in the distance in the clear Florida sky. Holley is one of those remote facilities adjacent to Eglin Air Force Base. A small unimproved landing strip, Holley Field is out in the boones where future FACs can learn to fly the Bird Dog and practice making targets and directing A-1E air strikes. Three tent structures serve as an operations center, maintenance office, and lounge for instructors and trainees - when they're not practicing takeoffs and landings.

Florian and seven other members of the 319th Air Commando Squadron recently jumped from a C-47 in pre-dawn darkness on Eglin range 5. They spent five days hiking 65 miles, reconnoitered two airstrips, made a second night jump and completed several other training missions while carrying 50 pounds of ammo, communications gear, rations and bedding on their backs. Mud Boots II was their own exercise - "just to stay ready," they said.

"Heck no it's not easy," Cal (the Commando) Florian admits. "These kids walk as fast as I can run and it's all I can do to keep up." The "kids" snort their disbelief.

"When I graduated from jump school, Florian said, "they put these wings on my chest, then they had to put another set in my right hand to keep me balanced."
Florian doesn't look as though he would fall over quite that easily, but I think he meant it when he said it was tough keeping up with the kids. In 17 months he made 68 jumps although he was TDY during half of that time. But he loves a challenge. That's why he's an Air Commando.

CONTROL TEAM SECURES ZONE from 315th Air Division Public Affairs

1966 - Headquarters, 8th Aerial Port Squadron, Ton San Nhut AB, RVN - A Combat Control Team from the 8th Aerial Port Squadron (APS) recently made a combat jump into the drop zone at Xuan Thoi Thuong, a small village approximately 10 miles north of Saigon.

The 14-man team jumped from a 315th Air Commando Wing C-123 Provider along with 30 Republic of Vietnam Army paratroopers who provided security for the team.

Barely 17-minutes after the jump, the DZ was secured and radio contact established with the first 315th Air Division C-130 Hercules. The C-130s dropped a total of 600 paratroopers of the 1st Vietnamese Airborne Division.

Four hours after the first combat controller jumped, a CH-3C helicopter airlifted the team back to Tan Son Nhut Air Base following the completion of the mission.

Combat controllers participating were: Captain Hayden F. Sears, Jr., Jumpmaster; and SMSgt’s Maurice T. Pittman and Frank W. Pumphrey; TSgt’s Matthew J. Bitrick, Paul S. Bisnett, and Donald E. Stetson; SSgt’s Ervin J. Baumgarten, John W. Bradley, Jr., Alvin S. Huddleston, and Wilton H. Whitehead; A1C’s Edward F. Patterson, Gary E.J. Samdal and Jack B. Wylie; and A2C Theron A. Fowler, all team members.

RAVENS BORN OF BUTTERFLY SUCCESS by Gene Adcock, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

1967 - The Kingdom of Laos - USAF Forward Air Controllers controlled the air war in Laos with unique rules of engagement and a totally different command and control structure than that found anywhere else in Southeast Asia.

Beginning in 1965, Air Commando volunteers, in Temporary Duty status, or TDY, worked with the CIA and CIA contracted pilots and aircrew to train and assist the Laotian Army and Air Force in the use and control of tactical air power.

These Air Commando, Combat Controllers used the call sign Butterfly and were deployed to strategic locations in Laos. In 1966, General Momyer, the new 7th Air Force Commander, discovered the truth, that enlisted Combat Controllers were controlling USAF jet fighters. He insisted that USAF FAC pilots replace the Combat Controllers, thus the Ravens replaced the Butterflies in the same role.

The Butterfly Forward Air Control (FAC) program was an unequivocal success with all but one person. When LtGen William Momyer, the Seventh Air Force commander, learned that non-rated personnel (both officers and enlisted) were being employed as airborne FACs, he put an immediate stop to it. The Combat Controllers were quickly replaced by rated pilots. To support the effort, Momyer’s staff quickly assembled the Steve Canyon Program and the RAVEN FACs. The Ravens became a legend and are memorialized in Christopher Robins’ book, The Ravens.

To some, the Southeast Asia War was a single conflict; in truth, the war had many facets. Most historians agree that the “Air War” had four major subdivisions:

1. The strategic and interdiction war over North Vietnam;
2. the war of interdiction and close air support over South Vietnam;
3. the war of interdiction throughout the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Vietnam and in central and southern Laos and Cambodia; and,
4. the other war of interdiction and close air support war fought in support of the people of Laos.

Editors Note: For clarification, CCT Officers were also flying as Butterflies, but Momyer’s objection focused on the enlisted FACs.
Enter the Ravens

Officially, no US combatants were in neutral Laos, in accordance with the 1962 Geneva Accords. Officially then, the Butterflies and Ravens didn’t exist. In fact, they wore civilian clothes and carried no identification as US servicemen. There is very little, if any, ‘Official’ written history of the Butterflies and Ravens. “During the course of American history, there have been many covert military operations. None, however, reached the scope or intensity of the war in Laos during the Viet Nam era. The backbone of this war were the Ravens-Forward Air Controllers (FACs) who flew small, slow propeller driven airplanes.

The mission of the Ravens was to support indigenous forces in Laos in their fight against invading forces from North Vietnam. The Ravens were all volunteers who had previous experience as FACs in South Viet Nam.

Because of international treaties, the Ravens were “divorced” from the USAF. They wore only civilian clothes, and operated out of generally small fields at different sites in the Kingdom of Laos. They had cover stories to explain their presence in Laos, but I don’t think anyone believed the stories other than USAF headquarters types.

Most Ravens knew little or nothing about what they were volunteering for, other than it was classified, exciting, and was far removed from the bureaucratic battles and political rules of engagement in Viet Nam.

The Ravens used three different airplanes to accomplish their mission: the small, light O-1 observation aircraft, armed only with white phosphorous smoke rockets; the heavier, slightly faster U-17 (Cessna 185), with the same armament, but longer range and loiter time. Some Ravens got to check out in the “Cadillac”-the T-28. This was heaven for a Raven, bombs, napalm, high explosive rockets, and 50 caliber machine guns for strafe. Now, you didn’t have to wait for jets when you had a fast-moving target.

The common denominator was that they all flew low, slow, and were highly vulnerable to ground fire. The missions were as varied as the personalities of the Ravens. Some carried a “backseater”-a local who translated, talked to ground troops, and helped locate targets. Others were essentially deep interdiction missions-aimed at stemming the flow of troops and supplies into this ‘neutral’ country. Some were basic visual reconnaissance looking for targets. Many were “troops in contact”-providing life-saving tactical air strikes in support of ground troops being fired upon.”

The preceding from the unofficial Raven Website Home Page, with permission.
FIRST JOINT USAF / US ARMY COMBAT JUMP

From the 315th Air Division AIRLIFTER – The base newspaper of Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN

February 22, 1967 - Alpha Drop Zone, Republic of Vietnam -- The first joint-service (US Army/USAF) combat jump was recorded on 22 February 1967. Operating with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, an 8th Aerial Port Squadron combat control team was inserted to support the 173rd Brigade in OPERATION JUNCTION CITY. The following is a synopsis of the operation.

OPERATION JUNCTION CITY COMBAT JUMP

Alpha Drop Zone
Combat Control Team Members - 8th Aerial Port Squadron
Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN
February 22, 1967
Captain Hayden F. Sears.....Captain Danny M. Pugh
TSgt Arthur P. Arnold........TSgt Dale K. Edwards
TSgt Robert F. Graham..........SSgt Fredrick L. Thrower
SSgt Richard L. Meyers.....A1C Robert A. Rawlick

503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment.....173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate)
BIRTH OF THE VIETNAM-ERA BERET FLASH by Robert E. Barinowski, Colonel, USAF (CCT) Retired

1968 – Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN - At one point in my Air Force career I was assigned as the junior Air Force Officer to the Commander-in-Chief Pacific Staff. I had been a general's aide and when the general returned to CONUS I did not go with him. I was sent to CINCPAC and joined the joint staff that had three Navy admirals, two Air Force generals, two Army generals and one Marine general. I was the flunky on the Joint Secretariat staff and got most of the details that were least desirable. One of those details was heading a team of graphic illustrators that were sometimes temperamental. They provided graphics and illustrated speeches or briefings for the staff.

General Armstrong, of the Alaskan Command and author of the book: God is My Co-Pilot, visited CINCPAC, and the Admiral liked the polar bear emblem that General Armstrong wore for the Alaskan Command. The CINCPAC commissioned my shop to design a badge for the CINCPAC staff. We designed several and one was selected. The emblem became the official emblem of CINCPAC. TIME magazine did a feature article on the staff and the CINCPAC staff badge was in the article. That badge was the seed bed for the CCT emblem.

Several years after my art shop job, I was assigned to my first CCT. I immediately realized that the teams needed a universal emblem, something that would identify a combat controller, no matter which command he was assigned. I waited for the right opportunity - my mother taught me that timing is everything.

I had been in CCT for more than four years when I was sent to Vietnam as OIC of the 8th Aerial Port Combat Control Team. When I arrived, I knew that this was the right time. I went to the Headquarters, 7th Air Force where I knew I would find an artist or illustrator that could take my sketch and make it look professional. One thing that I had found in my research is that all Air Force emblems had to have the same basic shield format, and that was the reason the original badge was designed with the shield as the backdrop. Also the US Army Heraldry Division - part of the Quartermaster Corps, in Washington, DC - had responsibility for all military heraldry. To be approved, a design had to be processed through channels and make it to the Army Heraldry Division for approval. In the United Stated, the coordination process was long and tedious - it could take years. I knew in Vietnam I could work the system and dramatically reduce the processing and approval time.

Part of the design - in my conscious or subconscious mind - was the US Air Force parachutists badge. The USAF parachutists badge was short lived because it was disliked by those authorized to wear it. It was small, did not look like a parachute badge, and lacked a wings. I had a collection of those old USAF badges and decided that the parachute element should become part of the new CCT badge.

When I designed the badge I wanted it to be simple yet incorporate a lot of symbolism. The parachute symbolized our primary mode of delivery, the sky blue background represents the Air Force, the lightening bolt stood for our communications mission, I don't recall why the color gray was chosen, but I think it had something to do with E&E. The compass rose was representative of our world-wide mission to deploy over the globe, and our use of it in E&E and directing aircraft.
Captain Gene Hatfield, an Air Force Academy graduate, was an extremely talented CCT Officer whose mother was an English teacher back in West Virginia. For all those reasons, he was the person I chose to write the description in heraldry format. He checked a book out of the library and did a masterful job of writing the description. Not a word was changed by the Heraldry Department of the Army.

Editors Note: I had an opportunity to meet, then 1LT Gene Hatfield, during his brief visit with the Dyess CCT in 1967. He and my long-time friend MSgt Stanley P. Williams were driving from Charleston AFB, SC to Norton AFB, CA for CCT training. It was during a lunch-time conversation with him that I learned that he was part of the Hatfield & McCoy clans of feuding families in West Virginia.

I submitted the 7th Air Force Graphics design and Hatfield description to the Army Heraldry Office for approval. It was granted, after one change to the flash - the motto. I had chosen the motto - First In, Last Out. However, the Heraldry Office said the US Army’s 65th Engineer Battalion had already selected that motto and that CCT could not use it. I then opted for the motto - FIRST THERE - and it stuck.

During the entire process, no Air Force commanders approved of it, nor did they see it. At that time all Air Force patches had to have a shield format. (That was later changed to a round format that is used today.) Shortly after the shield was approved we incorporated it into the design of a memorial dedicated to four Combat Controllers killed on September 2, 1967, in a crash of a C-123.

During my tour, I personally paid for all of the badges worn by the team in Vietnam. I made badges in silver and gold, but thought the silver looked better. In addition to the metal badges, we produced the same design as a color patch and as a subdued patch. All Combat Controllers wore the CCT badges during their tour in Vietnam.
1968 - VIETNAM-ERA BERET FLASH From documents supplied by Cass Seymore, SMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

<<< The Beret Flash designed in 1968, by Seventh Air Force Graphics Office, Tan Son Nhut AB, Republic of Vietnam. The crest measures 1.5 x 1.25-inches. (Photo from Adcock Collection)

HERALDRY

Per bend sinister, azure and argent, a lighting bolt or, the first charged with a canopy of the second, the second charged with a compass rose the proper barbs East and West party per fess, North and shield firmbriated of the third and a bordure, dexter base to sinister base, of the second, with sable inscription.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Lightning Bolt represents the communications aspect of the Combat Control Team and also portrays the quick reaction of the teams to meet a world-wide challenge. The Parachute Canopy is indicative of the primary form of deployment. The Compass Rose represents the world-wide deployments of the teams and the ability to navigate by land. The Blue Background represents Combat Control's air mission as a proud member of the United States Air Force. The Silver Background is a token to our reliance on aircraft.

MOTTO

First There

DESIGN


THE SEIGE OF KHE SANH by Gene Adcock, CMSgt, USAF, (CCT) Retired

January 21, 1968 - US Marine Corps Outpost, Khe Sanh, RVN – Combat controllers were at Khe Sanh on day one, operating re-supply DZs, LZs and EZs throughout the 77-day North Vietnam Army (NVA) siege of the remote outpost. The US Marine fire support base first came under heavy NVA artillery, rocket, and mortar attack on 21 January 1968. Within in minutes, the CCT Operations Center at Tan Son Nhut (TSN) Air Base – near Saigon – received an ops immediate tasking order to immediately deploy a three-man CCT; they left (TSN) at 1800 the same day.
The following day, a container delivery system (CDS) drop zone (DZ) was set up just outside the base perimeter. The CDS DZ was destined to become a main line of re-supply for the beleaguered outpost. Marines and CCTs secured the DZ and searched for mines every morning prior to the first drops.

The DZ marking was the only thing standard about the Khe Sanh DZ operation. On most days, bad weather and low clouds prevented visual flight rules (VFR) operations at the drop site. Through desperation, an ingenious and very unconventional system for vectoring re-supply aircraft over the calculated release point was devised. In the devised method, USMC approach controllers provided modified ground controlled approach (GCA) vectoring until drop aircraft were handed off to the combat controllers on the DZ. The CCT took control, cleared the aircraft to drop and then relayed the drop scores to the succeeding airplanes. This instrument flight rules (IFR) airdrop system was extremely successful and the clouds offered excellent cover for the slow and low-flying aircraft. In fact the scheme was so successful that when the weather lifted, F-4 Phantoms were often brought in to drop CBU-12 smoke canisters in an attempt to screen the drop aircraft.

On 19 February, the USMC GCA took a direct hit from an NVA rocket. The CCTs quickly set up portable radar transponder beacons that allowed the airdrops to continue without any delay. The Marine ATC tower was eventually destroyed and the Combat Controllers found themselves fulfilling the role of primary ATC until the Marines could rebuild their facility. For the 77 days of the siege, CCTs were on the ground, providing an invaluable ATC service. The CCTs were directly responsible for 8,000 tons of cargo being delivered to the besieged Marine camp.

The Khe Sanh operation became the defining mission for Combat Control Teams. The team’s performance convinced commanders that CCT was the force-of-choice for all future Combat Air Traffic Control operations. 

Combat controllers were awarded five Silver Stars and eight Purple Hearts for their actions at Khe Sanh. The awards reflect the skill and the bravery the combat controllers at Khe Sanh. But most notably, their mission’s success silenced most CCT critics.
LANDING AND TAKING OFF FROM KHE SANH

February 21, 1968 – Khe Sanh, Republic of Vietnam

On or about February 21, 1968, TSgt. Tom Monley, SSgt. Irwin “Dusty” Rhodes, A1C Dave McCracken, and A2C me flew into Khe Sanh on a rotation as “Tailpipe Mike.” Tailpipe Mike was operating the Drop Zone (the road to which had to be swept for mines daily) which was under mortar and AAA attack regularly. Tailpipe Mike was also operating on the runway at Khe Sanh. Our C-123 was on steep final approach when the AAA began poking holes all through the fuselage, tracers flying like it was the Fourth of July, and one of those tracers hit and began burning a pallet of howitzer powder.

I was so green (my second week in Vietnam) I did not immediately know what was going on, except I was in something of a panic trying to figure out how to avoid getting caught in those stitches the AAA was running through the fuselage where we were sitting. I later learned that the AAA gunner was the famous “Luke the Gook.” Luke the Gook was not one individual. No one knows how many replacements for that gunner we killed during the siege. Another live one replaced every dead one.

Dave shoved me between the C-123’s port wheel well and the pallets of howitzer ammo to get me out of the line of fire. Then, when the C-123 touched down, he yelled me to help push that burning pallet off the C-123. We shoved it onto the runway during roll out. Incoming artillery was following us during roll out, punching holes in the PSP runway right behind us. The pilot was keen enough to keep the roll out at high speed.

While turning around on the ramp, still shoving pallets of howitzer rounds off the bird, and, after the last one fell off the ramp, I looked for a safe place to jump. Dave again saved my life, though accidentally this time. He shoved me forward, just as an artillery round exploded in our faces. Why neither of us took shrapnel or had our eardrums burst is only God’s guess. Landing in the hole that artillery made, we were both deaf for a while, mutely mouthing words at one another through the mud and flying debris, but hearing nothing.

Finally, he rose and began walking. I could see the C-123 departing, but heard nothing. I saw incoming artillery exploding all around us, and following the C-123 during takeoff, punching more holes in the runway right along behind him. I saw the Navy Seabees with their road paving roller packing the PSP down, running along behind the exploding artillery. I saw marines staring with bewildered and muddy faces from foxholes and bunkers, as Dave and I wandered off toward the ammo dump. He thought he knew where he was going; I did too. We didn’t know what had happened to Monley & Dusty.

All of a sudden, the incoming artillery concentrated on the ramp, around an area I later discovered was where our radio vehicle was located, in front of Charlie Med, the Navy Corpsmen & doctors’ tent. Dave realized, in the nick of time, that was where Monley and Dusty had gone. Meanwhile, the ammo dump in front of us became the god-awfullest Fourth of July party you could imagine. We began getting our hearing back, and the noise was already deafening but still getting louder.

We changed course, and headed back toward where the incoming artillery was now concentrated. By this time I was in such a panic, I was just following along behind Dave like a lost little puppy, too scared to cry. For whatever reasons, when we crossed the runway and ramp, the artillery mysteriously slackened off. We were running with our rucksacks bouncing against our backs, our M-16s flapping against our sides. We hit the bunker where the radio jeep was sandbagged in, and that was the first relief since we turned short final approach.

So much happened over the next ten days I am still sorting it out. But I remember very well the last minutes at Khe Sanh. The drill was you put your pack on your back, your head through your M-16’s strap, and took hold of one end of a stretcher that carried a black bag containing some marines remains. These remains were headed out to Graves and Registration. Dave and I grabbed a stretcher apiece from the ramp, and skedaddled onto the C-123 during his high-speed turnaround for departure. As soon as we grabbed the stretchers, I knew this was another new drill, so I followed Dave’s lead to do this right.

We ran like rabbits in front of beagles, dragging the stretchers behind, and dived head first onto the floor of the now throttling up Provider. We lay with the stretchers covering our backs until we heard the engines back off climb-out power. I looked over at Dave. He had rolled over and was reading the ID tag on his body bag’s remains. A big, morbid smile crossed his face as he showed it to me. It said: “War is good for business. Invest another son.” Good luck.
Graves and Registration.

I could hardly wait to sit up and read the ID tag on the bag my stretcher carried. It said: “We sent your son back. Please send our bag back.”

**Editor’s Note:** Per instructions of the author, the preceding article is unedited and shall remain unedited and unchanged in the future.

---

### TAILPIPE FREQUENCY CHART

Throughout the Vietnam War, Combat Controllers were readily identified and recognized by their call sign TAILPIPE. The call sign is still used today on many operations. Here is the Vietnam call sign listing.

(Horton collection)
COMBAT CONTROL WORLD WIDE SYMPOSIUM
May 1968 - Langley AFB, Virginia – In May 1968, Combat Controllers from around the world gathered at Langley to for the World-Wide Combat Control Symposium, sponsored by Headquarters, Tactical Air Command at Langley AFB, VA.


COMBAT CONTROLLERS RESCUED
May 12, 1968 - Kham Duc, RVN – On Mothers Day, 1968 mortars crashed around the airstrip as Combat Control Sergeants Mort Freedman, Jim Lundy and the Airlift Mission Commander Major John Gallager moved toward the Kham Duc base camp. An enemy 51-caliber machine gun chattered across the asphalt amid the distinctive sounds of enemy AK-47 rifles firing in a cacophony of lethal death. Moving slowly, the three men kept their rifles leveled at the waist as they moved deeper into the rubble of the heavily fortified Kham Duc perimeter. Kham Duc was under full attack, had been for two days, and Gallager and his men had returned to finish their job of evacuating American personnel as well as South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians.

Technical Sergeant Mort Freedman glanced nervously about, gripping his rifle so hard that the muscles of his arms were sore. Sergeant Jim Lumbie glanced back at the airstrip, now damaged almost beyond use. Midway down the 6,000 foot strip sat the wreckage of an Air Force C-130, and just beyond that was the remains of a downed O-2 aircraft. Nearer to their position was the still burning wreckage of an American helicopter. Evidence of the enemy’s complete control of the surround area was visible in all directions.

Something seemed terribly wrong as the men moved further into the base camp to complete their mission of evacuating its 1,500 friendlies. Amid the crash of mortars, the crackle of burning fortifications, and the whine of enemy rounds, it was the silence that unnerved the three men. No M-14 rifles spoke back at the hidden enemy, no American artillery roared to repulse the ever advancing North Vietnamese, and no American voices shouted out to direct the three Air Force combat controllers to cover. Freedman ran for the battalion command bunker. IT WAS EMPTY! Slowly realization dawned….the evacuation of Kham Duc was complete… the camp was deserted and would soon be swarming with victorious communist soldiers. Across the bowl-shaped valley the three men could see the enemy advancing, moving quickly towards their position at the bunker. Already they had reached the end of the airstrip.

“My God!” Freedman shouted to his team mates. “We gotta get out of here. We’re trapped!” The three Americans turned to run, as fast and furiously as their legs would allow them. But, there was nowhere to run. The valley was
filled with thousands of enemy soldiers, and the only American presence was the three airmen now trapped within the burning corpse of a once-proud Special Forces base camp on the far western border of South Vietnam.

**RESCUE AT KAM DUC**

LTC Joe Jackson would have felt more at home going into combat in a jet fighter than the lumbering C-123 transport serial number 542. Enlisting in the Army Air Corps just prior to World War II, his service in that war as a crew member motivated him to become a pilot. In Korea he had flown 107 combat missions in an Air Force fighter, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross. After that war, he became one of the first Air Force officers to pilot the U-2 reconnaissance planes.

At the controls now of the lumbering, unarmed cargo plane, he was preparing to turn his 296th Vietnam sortie into the most unlikely of routine missions. It was nearing five o’clock in the evening as he raced his twin-engine mail-plane over the hills that surrounded Kham Duc, flying at 9,000 feet. He had a pretty good idea what he would find in the valley below, having heard across his own radio reports of what had been happening that afternoon. Eight American aircraft had already gone down, two Army Chinooks, two Marine Corps C-46s, two Air Force C-130s, an O-2 FAC aircraft and one A-1. Wreckage of three of these, a C-130, the O-2 and one helicopter, was strewn across the badly damaged runway.

Twenty years of experience in the air had taught Jackson that sometimes one has to do the unexpected to accomplish the impossible. Reasoning that the enemy that now controlled the air strip could hear the roar of his engines and were undoubtedly setting up their forces in anticipation of a landing like LTC Jeanotte had made minutes before, Jackson prepared his own surprise. Banking his cargo plane to line up with the runway, the intrepid pilot cut power and dropped full flaps. The nose of Number 542 dropped and the C-123 was in the kind of dive reserved for fighter planes. Diving in at 4,000 feet per minute, eight times a normal cargo planes rate of descent, he was pushing his aircraft beyond its capabilities. Later he said, “I was afraid I’d reach the ‘blow-up’ speed, where the flaps in the full down position, would be blown back up to the neutral position. If that happened, we’d pick up additional speed and not be able to stop.”

On the ground the three airmen could hear the whine of the C-123’s dive as it broke through the fog. Screaming earthward in an impossible maneuver, the men were filled with a mix of feelings… relief that a rescue craft was on the way…despair at the chances of success. As they watched the cargo plane dropping towards them like a rock, Sergeant Lundie thought, “This guy’s crazy. He’s not going to make it.”

---

**RESCUE AT KAM DUC >>>**

In this photo, an abandoned C-130 is seen, in the white area, several meters left of the landing zone. At the far end of the dark-colored LZ, LTC Joe Jackson’s C-123 is seen turning to pick up Airlift Mission Commander Major Gallager; Combat Controller Sergeants Mort Freeman and Jim Lundie. This photo is thought to be the only one ever taken of a Medal of Honor action while in progress. (USAF photo)
And then No. 542 was on the ground, touching down in the first 100 feet of runway amid a hail of enemy machine gun and mortar fire. Plummeting down the battered runway at speeds far too high for any safe landing, Jackson fought the controls. Afraid that if he reversed the propellers to slow the C-123 he would blow out the two auxiliary engines needed for escape, he shoved his feet down hard on the brakes to skid past the enemy. Dodging debris, his cargo plane finally came to rest near the drainage ditch.

“There they are,” Major Campbell shouted as he spotted three ragged figures rise out from the ditch and break for the waiting rescue plane. Staff Sergeant Grubbs opened the cargo door as the men ran towards the waiting plane, enemy fire erupting all around them. Quickly the haggard men were pulled inside the cargo hold and Jackson was revving the engines and turning his C-123 to take off in the same direction from which they had approached.

As the big cargo plane turned to face down the runway and make its escape, Major Campbell shouted, “Look out”. From the edge of the runway the enemy had fired a 122mm rocket to abort the dramatic rescue and destroy No. 542. Both pilot and co-pilot watched in horror as the missile sped towards them, then hit the pavement to bounce and skid within ten meters of their cockpit. As it bounced one final time, the rocket broke in half - then lay there sizzling. Miraculously, it had been a dud.

Pushing power to the engines, Joe Jackson raced down the runway - through the gauntlet of enemy fire. All aboard the cargo plane felt a sense of relief as the wheels lifted off the airstrip, and the C-123 was airborne - racing for home and safety. The plane gained altitude to head for Da Nang, landing shortly after 5:30 in the evening.

Soon after the take-off, a haggard Sergeant Jim Lundie walked over to the flight deck to look at Jackson quizzically for a moment, then said, “I wanted to see how you could sit in that little seat with balls as big as you’ve got.” It was the ultimate compliment from a combat controller who for three days had demonstrated his own brand of valor. “We were dead,” he later summed up the events of that day, “and all of a sudden we were alive.

Before returning to their quarters, Major Campbell and LTC Jackson checked out their aircraft. Amazingly, despite the withering fire from small arms, 51-caliber heavy machine guns, and the torrential rain of mortars they had braved on the airstrip at Kham Duc, they had not been hit a SINGLE TIME!

A weary Jackson then settled back in his room to write home. It was Mother’s Day, a day of tragedy and terror that had robbed far too many mothers of their sons. Joe’s actions that day had spared grief for three mothers. Picking up paper and pen, he began to write a letter to his wife Rose, mother of the couple’s two children.

“Dear Rosie,” he wrote.

“I had an extremely exciting mission today. I can’t describe it to you in a letter, but one of these days I’ll tell you all about it.”

(US Air Force Spotlight Graphic)
COMBAT CONTROL SCHOOL GRADUATES 13 AIRMEN

An article from The Airlift Response.

December 13, 1968 - Sewart Air Force Base, Tennessee -- The 2nd Aerial Port Squadron’s Combat Control School graduated its final class of 1968 on December 13th at the Skyliner Service Club with Colonel Wayne Matson, 839th Air Division Commander, presiding as guest speaker and presenting awards to the honor graduates.

For the second time since the school’s inception in April 1965, two honor graduate awards were presented. Colonel Matson presented the awards to SMSgt Paul Fornarino, Argentina, and A1C Leonard E. Whitten Jr., Forbes AFB, KS.

The remaining 11 graduates receiving diplomas were Sgt Ronald S. Bernard, Sgt Ray Bobian Jr., and A1C James C. Dial all of England AFB, LA.; A1C Ernest M. Chizmar and A1C Robert F. Kurz Jr. from Pope AFB, NC.; and A1C Ernest Hall and A1C James L. Alvarez of Sewart.

The Argentinians graduated in the final class of 1968 were Lt Ernesto H. Paramo, TSgt Juan P. Uribe, SSgt Jose S. Arce and Sgt Ricardo Trujillo.

The ceremony was highlighted by the presentation of Blue Berets to the graduates by Lt. Col. Adam S. Heller, school commander. Upon completion of the school the new Combat Controllers are authorized to wear the famed berets worn by Combat Controllers worldwide.

Before entering the six-week Combat Control School the men either completed Air Traffic Control School or Ground Radio Maintenance School at Keesler AFB, MS., and the US Army Jump School at Ft Benning. The 13 graduates will now return to their respective bases and enter into Phase III combat ready training.
DINING-IN GRADUATION AT SEWART - An article from Sgt Mac's Bar.

June 12, 1969 - Sewart AFB, Tennessee – On June 12, 1969- Ten graduates and 107 visitors gathered here from all parts of the country Wednesday night to attend the 2nd Aerial Port Squadrons Dining-In and Combat Control School graduation.

Among the guest of honor was CMSgt Alcini Benini, non-commissioned officer in charge of all Combat Controllers in the Tactical Air Command and the Air Force’s first Combat Controller.

CMSgt Benini was an 82nd Airborne Division Pathfinder and an instructor with the 10th Special Forces Group of the U.S. Army just before he joined the Air Force in 1953. Applying his army experience, he became the first Blue Beret and helped to establish the Blue Beret’s “First In” reputation.

The Chief, who suffered through the Bataan Death March, will retire in July 1970 with more than 30 years total military service. He is presently a member of the 1st Aerial Port Group, Langley AFB, VA.
Chief Benini chats with General Winn during break at CCS graduation ceremony. 
(Sgt Mac’s Bar collection)

Brigadier General Otis E. Winn, director of transportation, Headquarters U.S. Air Force was the guest speaker and presented the graduates with their diplomas.

Lt. Col. Adam S. Heller, squadron commander presided over the function and gave the new Combat Controllers their blue berets, symbol of the elite Combat Control Team.


CCS Staff shown with Graduating Foreign Students. CCT Staffers, MSgt Skip Arnold, TSgt Chuck Abee are seen standing, center, while MSgt Will Tuttle and TSgt Bill Polston are seen kneeling right. (Sgt Mac’s Bar collection)
<< School Staff shown left to right are: Lt Col Adam S. Heller, Commandant 2nd Lt Robert T. Booth, OIC MSgt Arthur P. Arnold, NCOIC MSgt William J. Polston, TSgt Timothy N. McCann, TSgt Charles N. Abee, SSgt Donald D. Andrews, Weather Instructor.  
(Sgt Mac's Bar)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS MEMBERS</th>
<th>Afghanistan Air Force</th>
<th>Afghanistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captain Mohammed, Dean</td>
<td>Afghanistan Air Force</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMSgt Lagneaux, Charles M.</td>
<td>Det 75, 5th Wx Wg</td>
<td>England AFB, LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSgt McRae, Beverly F.</td>
<td>Hq Sq 1st Sp Op Wg</td>
<td>England AFB, LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSgt Roberts, Carl A.</td>
<td>Hq Sq 1st Sp Op Wg</td>
<td>England AFB, LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSgt Donaldson, James P.</td>
<td>4th Aerial Port Squadron</td>
<td>Langley AFB, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSgt Coleman, Samuel Jr.</td>
<td>62nd Aerial Port Squadron</td>
<td>McChord AFB, WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1C Gentry, James A.</td>
<td>3rd Aerial Port Squadron</td>
<td>Pope AFB, NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1C Ledgerwood, Clyde S, Jr.</td>
<td>2nd Aerial Port Squadron</td>
<td>Sewart AFB, TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1C Marvin, Carl E. Jr.</td>
<td>2nd Aerial Port Squadron</td>
<td>Sewart AFB, TN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Distinguished Guests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonel Wayne C. Matson</td>
<td>Commander, 839th Air Division</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel Richard J. Gibney</td>
<td>Commander, 4442 CCTW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel William F. Brown</td>
<td>Commander, 314th CSGp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt Colonel John A. Barrett</td>
<td>Commander, 839th TAC Hospital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt Colonel Mike Kasarda</td>
<td>Dir of Opns, 4442 CCTW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Richard G. Sigman</td>
<td>Headquarters USAF, Directorate of Transportation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Donald R. Strobaugh</td>
<td>CCT 63rd Aerial Port Sq, Norton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplain Donald G. Phillips</td>
<td>314th CSGp, Sewart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt. Robert A. Farmer</td>
<td>CCT 1st Special Ops Wg, England AFB, LA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt. John Langley</td>
<td>Staff Judge Advocate Office, Sewart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Lt Alan E Schmit</td>
<td>CCT 4th Aerial Port Sq, Langley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSgt Alcini Benini</td>
<td>CCT 1st Special Ops Wg, England</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSgt George Jones</td>
<td>CCT 1st Special Ops Wg, England</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FORWARD AIR GUIDE TRAINING IN LAOS by Gene Adcock, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired

By Summer-67, General Moymer had already terminated the Butterfly FAC mission; but Combat Controllers continued to play an active role in Laos for nearly another decade. In most cases, they operated alongside the Raven FACs and supported other covert air operations in the country. Here is one story.

SUMMER 1969 - Lima Site-54, Luang Prabang, Laos -- MSgt Gene Adcock deployed from the 1st Special Operations Wing (1SOW), England AFB, Louisiana in support of Project 404, Operation Palace Dog. He accompanied Major Don Moody and CMSgt John Joyner who were deployed to fill the Air Commando slots in the Air Operations Center (AOC) at Luang Prabang (LP), the ancient capital city of Laos. Luang Prabang (aka Lima Site 54 or LS-54) was the northern-most of five Lima sites manned by USAF Air Commandos. The other sites were LS-20A (Long Tieng), LS-08 (Vientiane), LS-39 (Savannakhet) and LS-11 (Pakse) the southern-most site. Typically these Royal Lao Air Force (RLAF) Bases were manned and equipped as follows:

- a dozen (or so) RLAF T-28 Fighter/Bombers were operated by RLAF pilots;
- two to twelve observation aircraft (O-1E/U-17/T-28) operated by USAF Ravens - Forward Air Controllers (FAC);
- Air Commando Site Commander, Aircraft Maintenance Chief, Pararescue (or medic) and Combat Controller.
- Detachment 1, 56th SOW aircraft maintainer, weapons maintainer, munitions man, avionics technician, and intelligence specialist;
- the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) handled most base support functions, as well as direct combat operations; and the
- US Agency for International Development (USAID) provided logistic support, to include beans, bullets and other specialized activities.

After about four months in country, Adcock was contacted by Lt Col Howard Hartley. Hartley was the senior ranking Air Commando (1SOW ALO) in the Air Attachés’ (AIRA) Office, American Embassy (Vientiane). Hartley had been tasked by Ambassador Sullivan to establish a formal Forward Air Guide (FAG) training program for Lao soldiers. Hartley, in turn, directed Adcock to report to his AIRA office as soon as transportation could be arranged. The following day, Adcock met with Hartley to discuss the requirement and tasking. Hartley’s plan called for a one-week class each month for eight to twelve Lao military students. Beyond that, there was no guidance, however, Hartley issued a virtual blank check and directed Adcock to go for it.

With his handy-dandy, 45-page Forward Air Guide Pamphlet, Adcock was able to quickly draft a formal course of instruction. With the assistance of the AIRA administrative staff, he fashioned lesson plans and student handouts for classroom instruction. (Adcock Collection)

In the following weeks, Adcock worked with the AIRA administrative staff to transform the 1st AIR COMMANDO WING FORWARD AIR GUIDE (FAG) PHAMPLET into a formal course of instruction. The FAG Pamphlet was reformatted into lesson plans and handouts that were used for classroom instruction. Over the next several weeks Adcock coordinated:
with Special Forces Major Michael Werbiski, Army Attaches' (ARMA) Office in the American Embassy. Werbiski was responsible for the student selection process and preparing the documents required to get them from their home station to the Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB) in Thailand and back. The Detachment 1, 56th SOW training facility at Udorn had already been designated at the training site. (Editors note: Werbiski was KIA, Aug 19, 1969 during an operation near Long Tieng)

• with both the Air Attache' (AIRA) staff at the Embassy and the USAID to test and evaluate prospective students for English comprehension and educational skills;
• at Udorn, with Det 1, 56th SOW for class room space, administrative support and bombng range access for two days of field operation;
• at Udorn, with the Army’s UH-1 Huey Helicopter Mobile Training Team (MTT) who provided airlift to/from the bombng range;
• near Udorn, with the Thai Border Patrol Police, who provided security for instructors and students in the field. Americans were not permitted to carry fire arms in Thailand and the bombing range was near the Lao border, in hostile territory;
• at Udorn, with Det 1, 56th SOW, T-28 flight training cadre to schedule Lao student pilots for FAG training flights;
• and last but not least, it was necessary to coordinate with Headquarters, 7/13th Air Force (Udorn) for instructor support from the 56th SOW Combat Control Team, then stationed at NKP.

Three weeks after the initial Hartley/Adcock meeting, 56th SOW Combat Controllers TSgt Dean Stafford, SSgt Clyde Howard, Sgt’s Donald Swearingen, Mike Fremming and Norman Lutz were sent TDY to Udorn support the training effort. They assisted Adcock with classroom setup, training aids and instruction schedules. To prepare for the field training, the FAG cadre was airlifted to - then rappelled into - the bombing range. With chain saws borrowed from Air America, they cleared an HLZ adjacent to the area overlooking the bombing range. Five weeks after the first Hartley/Adcock meeting, eight Lao students arrived for the first FAG class. Three days of class room training was followed by two days on the bombing range. During the field training, each Lao FAG directed more than a dozen strikes on simulated targets. But most importantly, they were able to direct strikes of Lao T-28 student pilots in their native language. However, since the FAG students would be required to support American strikes in some situations, American T-28 instructor pilots were also used for some of the air strikes.

In an after-action critique by Hartley, Werbiski and others at the Embassy, the training was rated outstanding. In addition to meeting the stated goal, we had introduced the FAG students and T-28 student pilots the Air-Ground coordinated attack mission. This was an added feature that had not been anticipated in the initial planning process.

During the critique, the issue of establishing a permanent FAG Course and cadre was discussed. The American Embassy was reluctant to support the effort with a rotation of TDY Combat Controllers. Instead, they wanted to have a permanent cadre of instructors. With the knowledge that the 56th SOW CCT had just been alerted for reassignment to Vietnam, Adcock recommended that the NKP Team be diverted from the Vietnam assignment and sent PCS to Udorn. The group agreed and tasked Adcock to make it happen.

Accompanied by TSgt Jim Stafford, NCOIC, 56th SOW CCT, Adcock met with Headquarters 7/13 Air Force Operations and Personnel staff (at Udorn) to discuss the requirement and options. All agreed with the approach and in a conference call to Headquarters, PACAF Director of Operations, they discussed the situation and reassignment recommendation. The PACAF DO agreed and immediately issued amendments to the NKP Team’s Vietnam PCS orders.

While Adcock stayed at Udorn to work housing and other support requirements for the Team, Stafford returned to NKP. Within two days, the team cleared the base and prepared to make the PCS move. On the third day, Jim Stafford, Clyde Howard, Don Swearingen, Mike Fremming and Norm Lutz each hired a Taxicab, loaded it with all their gear and made the 150 mile trip to Udorn in a few hours. The new, Detachment 1, 56th SOW CCT was in place for the next FAG training class.

In addition to Forward Air Guide training, the Detachment 1 Team grew their mission to include covert operations across the fence.
AIRBORNE COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTER (ABCCC)

Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB), Thailand - Every day, rain or shine, two C-130 Airborne Command and Control Center (ABCCC) aircraft flew 13-hour orbit missions over the two military regions (MR) in Laos. The regions cut Laos in half along a horizontal line that ran near the town of Ban Nape'.

The aircraft were based at Udorn RTAFB, Thailand, approximately thirty miles south of the Vientiene and the Mekong River. Vientiene, the capital of Laos was a port city on the Mekong.

The northern most ABCCC orbit was code named BARREL ROLL and the southern most was STEEL TIGER.

In the Barrelroll, CRICKET was the call sign of the daytime ABCCC and ALLEY CAT worked the night shift. In the south, HILLSBORO worked the day shift while MOONBEAM worked at night.

An interesting call sometimes heard on Cricket’s primary frequency:

“This is a Cricket advisory. We have detected a (Chinese) MIG in the barrel.

All aircraft are advised to hold south of the fence (Mekong River) until further notice.”

I love the smell of napalm in the morning...

…it smells like victory!

ROBERT DUVALL
as Lieutenant Colonel Kilgore in the movie Apocalypse Now