

DASPO Films ICS Redeployment

It's been stated that the things a person remembers are either the best people and events, or the worst enemies and excruciating experiences during a person's life. The mediocre, frivoious, and mundane events are readily forgotten. A case history of such a routine project was ICS Redeployment. When I first located this lonely reel of DASPO (Dept. Of The Army Special Photo Office) film, I pondered who within DASPO might have filmed this project? Out of curiosity, I checked the film's leader. To my utter dumbfoundment I myself had filmed this project during my 1971 trip to Vietnam. Cognizance that the U.S. war efforts had been winding down for several years, the redeployment must have been of strategic highly technical equipment, not optimal for surrendering to the South Vietnamese Government Forces. This equipment was being retrograded back to the United States, or dispersed to other Army units elsewhere within the Pacific Basin, such as Korea, Alaska, Hawaii or Panama under "Operation Egress Recap."

Discovering this reel of film equates to a person finding a 30 year old grocery store receipt and quizzing yourself what food and household goods you bought for that amount of money three decades ago. You probably say "What a stupid question?" I shop at least weekly and I can't even remember what I got last week. There is no way I can think of what I might have bought 30 years ago. Some photo assignments are just as uninspiring. Especially when you have to search a couple acre complex of deserted buildings to find any human activity. My recollection of filming ICS Redeployment faded long ago, and my memory of this project was totally obscurant to these events.

If details of this 3½ decades old project are scant, even the title ICS Redeployment is ambiguous. I can only guess at the terminology. The "I" may refer to intergraded, intercontinental or something totally different. The "C" most probably stands for communications. The "S" could mean system, satellite, station, site, signal or something else. It's doubtful the few Americans working on the retrograde packing the remaining equipment were members of the signal unit. The two Americans without shirts may have been employed by Pacific Architects & Engineers, a lone time civilian government contractor affiliated with this signal location, as the sign in the film at the complex gate shows.

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Reviewing the footage, my mind was still fog bound, until I spotted the two Americans hand sawing packing material along with several adjacent scenes on that roll of film. My mind started remembering the events. I recall walking past several blocks of empty abandoned barracks and office building before hearing a truck motor a 100 yards ahead, where I found three Americans and an equal number of Vietnamese workers. It's evident from the film that I was assigned this project late in the retrograde process. The troops had packed their duffel bags and departed. The signal equipment had been crated up and transported away. Even the primary structure had been dismantled and hauled off antecedent to my arrival. What was left were a handful of humans crating up miscellaneous parts that resemble ventilation and air conditioning duct parts.

Besides the Americans nailing crates shut, all that remained was a concrete foundation for a building, with bolts sticking out of the floor to secure heavy communications equipment. Around the foundation were numerous cut wires and cables that once supplied power to the signal equipment. A tower that once housed microwave antennas or satellite dishes or both items also stood over the location. There were certain signal units labelled "LONG LINE" units. The tower assured that this signal unit had more advance equipment than the usual Army signal battalion, with land line wire running from phone to phone to telephone pole to the switch board.

The one phantom detail was where in Vietnam was ICS Redeployment filmed? The film's slate doesn't say. It provides the date the project number and cameraman's name, along with film used. The aerials are confusing and add contradiction. Several high obliques shows the horizon, depicting rolling hills and the South China Sea in the background, but that merely means that ICS Redeployment could have been filmed at Da Nang, Qui Nhon, Nha Trang or even possibly at Cam Ranh Bay, a distance of over 300 miles of the South Vietnamese Coast Line. In roll #3 a roof top sign have 228th Hon Tre. Where ever Hon Tre might be? The very last scene on roll #4 also an aerial has a sign 361st Sig, Bn. Vietnam Center staffer Kevin found the 361st was based at Da Nang, while the 228th Sig Co. was on a island between Nha Trang and Can Ranh Bay.

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This blase project had no memorable moments it lacked the intrigue of other highly viable jobs, such as hospital patients pushing intravenous stands, amputees on crutches and other infirmed digging up the hospital grass to plant foods, to feed themselves. Or a Army photographer in a Air Force fighter/bomber with 3000 pounds of fully armed bombs hangings from the wings. At the end of the runway, the pilot crosses his arms, removed his feet from the rudder peddles and tells me to take off. Both stories are available at this website. These were exciting visually moving assignments. ICS Redeployment had little to be proud of. It more or less duplicated a photographer shooting "Still Life" shots using a movie camera.

Watching the news telecasts, we've all seen T.V. news crews who arriving late at a major accident. Ambulances had transported the injured for care. Tow trucks hauled off the wrecked vehicles. The police finished their report and left. What was left for the news crew to film were skid marks, a bent pole with some car paint on the pole and near by street signs to identify the location where the accident had occurred. Eyeballing the situation with ICS Redeployment, I felt in the same predicament and used the same tactics to show and prove this was beyond repair, trying to make a story from nothing, not very inmenoriam. Finding this reel of film is akin to finding a decades old store receipt. This relic comes to mind only VIA a pictorial diary preserved for years of what I did on that day in November, 1971

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ROLL #1

- 1.. LS Building foundation/pad where once a signal building once stood.
2. LS Different angle of building concrete foundation
3. MCU loose wire and cables coming out of foundation, that once connected to communication equipment.
4. CU cables and wire ends coming out of the foundation.
5. CU Different angles of cut wire and cables.
6. MCU bolts sticking out of the foundation that once fastened communications securly in place.
7. CU bolts coming out of concrete foundation.
8. CU cut wires and power cables loose ends.
9. MS Cut wires and cables that once supplied communication equipment with electric power.
- 10 LS building foundation
- 11 Pan of building foundation.
12. MLS tower that once housed microwave antennas or satellite dishes, with tilt down the empty tower.
13. Tilt up of bolts sticking out of floor to show size of building.
14. LS communication site and crates to be packed or already filled with signal equipment.

ROLL # 2

1. CU sign restricted are in English and Vietnamese
2. CU Sign site operated by Pacific Architects and Engineers
3. MLS Soldier putting equipment into crate for shipping out of Vietnam.
- \$. CU soldier nailing crate shut
5. CU Different angle of soldier nailing crate shut
6. LS. Soldier closing crate
7. ECU nail being hit nailing crate shut
8. Sign on packing material
9. Soldier nailing crate shut
10. LS another angle of crates being nailed shut
11. LS High Angle from atop of the tower showing the building's foundation.
12. MLS A series of crates already packed or to be packed
13. LS high angle showing litter on concrete floor
14. LS. From atop of tower showing litter on concrete floor
15. MS Part of the tower top
16. MS Another angle of the signal tower
17. ECU of cut wire and cables
18. MCU litter on floor of foundation.

ROLL # 3

1. ELS Aerial of signal complex
2. LS Aerial of hill side signal unit site
3. MS Aerial of signal unit. Sign on roof states 228 Signal Battalion Hon Tre
4. ELS Aerial of signal site with South China Sea in background

ROLL # 4

1. LS Soldier on crate looking to the roof
2. MS Men on the roof of a building and man on crate is visible
3. MLS Tilt down Vietnamese dismantling wires on roof of building.
4. MS Soldier pulling the loose wire away from the building.
5. MS Two Americans putting duct parts in crate.
6. ECU sawing packing material
7. MS Americans putting the cut packing material into crate around the parts.
8. Pan of duct work parts to men nailing crate shut
9. CU other parts awaiting to be crated up for shipment.
10. Pan from crates to a trailer van
11. ECU nailing a crate shut
12. CU another angle of nailing the crate shut
13. MLS Crates at the signal site with trailer in background.
14. MLS Aerial sign on roof showing 361 Signal Battalion.