SPECIAL ISSUE-LAOS

AIR AMERICA LOG

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EDITORIAL

AAM LOG'S LAO SPECIAL ISSUE

We do not publish many editorials in the AIR AMERICA LOG because we believe the vast majority of our readers would be bored to tears with editorials — and bored readers make poor readers.

We are making an exception to our self-imposed rule in this case because we are begetting our second Special Issue as a tribute to the outstanding Air America effort in Laos. This effort is manifold: we hire Laotian employees to the point where the Company is the largest single commercial employer of Laotians in Laos; then we train and up-grade these Laotians in special classroom training courses and in practical on-the-job training courses. We provide air transportation for their Royal Lao Majesties King Sri Savang Vatthana and Queen Khampoui and other high Laotian officials as requested; we feed countless tribespeople throughout Laos by landing or by air dropping rice and other edible commodities to them — and we throw in an occasional employee diversion to give life in Laos a reasonable perspective.

This Special Issue cannot begin to cover the broad spectrum of the Company's activities in that landlocked country. But we hope we have featured a few highlights which will illustrate for our readers — in abbreviated form — some of Air America's functions in the fascinating, beleagered kingdom of Laos.—***ED.***

Lane Xang Avenue (meaning in Lao "Avenue of a million elephants"), one of the main thoroughfares of Vientiane, the Administrative Capital of Laos, is dominated by the impressive "Monument des Morts" (Monument to the Dead), seen in the center of above pix. At extreme right can be seen umbrellas which are a portion of Vientiane's morning market.

ABOVE
His Royal Lao Majesty King Sri Savang Vatthana at Nam Tan, Laos. *(Pix by ED.)*

BELOW
The Royal Lao flag with the Erawan (three-headed elephant) in the center.

"AIR AMERICA'S MOTTO: 'ANYTHING, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE—PROFESSIONALLY'"

AAM'S VIENTIANE BASE HIRES, TRAINS, & PROMOTES LAOTIANS

55.1% OF VIENTIANE PERSONNEL ARE NOW LAOTIAN NATIONALS

by: G. L. Christian, III, DRPA/TPE

The objective of Air America's Vientiane, Laos Base — initiated some years ago — to hire, train and promote native Laotians, is being vigorously pursued with such success that AAM is today the largest single commercial employer of Laotians in Laos.

Here are some of the impressive results achieved to date:

- Increase in number of Lao employees from November 1967 to July 1971 — 84.7%
- Monthly Laotian payroll increase — approximately 238.1% over the same period. Monthly payroll now stands at over 28.5 million kip (almost US$57,000). This reflects the considerable growth in the number of Air America's Laotian employees and also an appreciable increase in their pay scale.
- Percentage of Laotian employment to total Air America employment at Vientiane has climbed from 41.9% to 55.1% over the same base period.
- Many Laotians have been trained as aircraft and other types of mechanics. Some were trained at the Company's facilities at Vientiane, but the majority were given a comprehensive one-year mechanic's training course — called International Line Service Mechanic Course — at Air Asia Company Limited's Main Maintenance Base at Tainan in Southern Taiwan. (Air Asia is a subsidiary of Air America).
- One class of 25 Lao trainees completed the one-year training course at Tainan and graduated in June, 1970. A second class of 25 apprentices is currently in training at Tainan and is scheduled to graduate in November, 1971.
- Another group of 15 Laotians, brought in from local labor market, was given a three-month Generator Operator Training Course — all on Company time — at Vientiane and the 13 who passed have been sent out to operate and maintain gasoline engine-driven generators at various sites throughout Laos.
- Savings to Air America, resulting from recruiting Laotians many of whom have replaced Third Country Nationals (TCNs), runs about US$10,500 a month because the TCNs are paid a station allowance which is naturally not paid to the Laotians since they live in their native country.

Here are details concerning the various training courses given to Air America's Laotian trainees.

INTERNATIONAL LINE SERVICE MECHANIC COURSE

In the first properly organized and implemented course — a pool of some 100 Laotians, who either held various jobs within the Company such as Utilitymen, or Traffic or Supply Clerks, or were recruited from technical schools in Vientiane — were given an initial screening by personnel for Technical Services; this screening brought the number of candidates down to about 50 men. The 50 were then given a battery of detailed tests, ranging from English comprehension to mechanical aptitude; the top 25 men were selected to be sent to Tainan. As one of our Tech Services men put it: "The good trainees were like 'technical sponges' — they wanted to absorb every bit of information they came in contact with."

Once selected, the first group of 25 Air America trainees were sent by air from Vientiane to Tainan — via Hongkong and Taipei — all at Company expense. They departed in June, 1969, and returned exactly one year later, in June, 1970. All 25 trainees graduated from the Tainan course, some with outstanding grades. While in Tainan, each trainee recived a daily living allowance from the Company, in addition to his AAM trainee pay.

Upon returning to Vientiane — also at Company expense — each of the 25 men was screened again in three ways: by personal interview, by a skill proficiency test, and by a review of an evaluation of each man made by the Technical Training Division in Tainan.

Purpose of this after-training screening was to determine which — if any — men in the class were susceptible to specializing in one of three Company-recognized specialties: Aircraft Electrical Systems (AES), Quality Control, or Avionics. Of the class of 25, two men were selected for AES, two for Quality Control and none for Avionics. Those selected were then given additional, specialized training by the Technical Training Department in Vientiane. This specialized training, which is done on Company time, involves spending 50% of the men's time in the classroom and 50% On-the-Job-Training (OJT) or in the laboratory. The man's specialized work is super-imposed on his regular work in the Regional Maintenance Department (RMD).

Of the 25 trainees who returned to Vientiane from Tainan, the performance of 23 of the men ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Only two men are considered to be below average and a special effort is being made to raise the competence of these two men to acceptable levels.

For the moment, all 25 men carry the classification of Mechanic II and each man will undergo recurrent training at planned intervals.

Because of the considerable success of the 1969-1970 Mechanic Training Program and because of the need for additional Laotian RMD mechanics, another group of approximately 100 Laotians was assembled and given intensive interview/screening in the fall of 1970. The top 25 were selected and sent to Tainan for training in November, 1970; they are scheduled to graduate and return to Vientiane in November, 1971. There is every indication that this new group of trainees will be just as capable as the 1969-1970 group, if not more so.

> **CONTRACT TRAINING**
>
> *Almost all trainees are under contract to work for Air America for a specific period of time, depending on the length of the training program. For instance, those men who go through the one-year International Line Service Mechanic Course in Tainan, Taiwan, are obligated to work for the Company for five years uqon completion of their training program. Men taking shorter training courses are obligated to work for the Company for shorter contract work periods.*

GENERATOR OPERATOR TRAINING

Air America, in an effort to still further expand its employment of Laotians within Laos, set about recruiting a group of 15 men to take a three-month Generator Operator Training Course. The recruits were selected by Mr. Faiz Yaganagi, Technical Training Department Instructor at Vientiane, who was also the instructor for the course. All the men came from outside the ranks of Air America.

Triple primary objectives of the course were to teach:

1) Operation of the Onan, gasoline-powered, 15 KW generators used in up-country Laos.
2) How to perform preventive maintenance on the equipment.
3) How to perform minor field maintenance on the equipment.

The training course consisted of 50% classroom work and 50% On-the-Job-Training. The latter included a complete generator tear-down, to the last component part, then build-up to the point where the generator was fully operational again. The trainees performed the generator tear-down and build-up entirely on their own with no outside assistance.

Of the 15 men selected, only two dropped out; the remaining 13 are working at eight sites throughout Laos (six at manned sites, two are ready to service on-call sites).

Duties of the 13 men now on-station in Laos are to operate and maintain the Onan generators which supply power for all customer weathernet, communications and navigational equipm[...]t throughout Laos and which is used by Air Am[...] flight crews, among others.

Every station has 100% stand-by power in case of failure of the operating generator.

The Laotians, now classified as Mechanics III, have taken over jobs formerly performed exclusively by TCNs. They have been discharging their duties quite satisfactorily for well over two years. Not one has quit; the attrition rate has been nil.

ELECTRONICS TRAINING PROGRAM

Another training endeavor initiated by Air America at Vientiane was a Basic Electronics Training program undertaken in August, 1970.

Idea for the one-year program came from Mr. J. C. Riggle, now Superintendent of Training at AAM's Udorn Base, and was given support by Mr. Andy Zanella, S/AED (Supervisor-Aviation Electronics Dept.).

While not a 100% Lao Training project, the initial class of eight men included two Laotians, the remaining six trainees being Thais. A month after the class began, three more men were brought in — two Thais and an Iranian.

The Basic Electronics Training Progra[...] being taught by Vientiane's Technical Training Department. Instructors are a Laotian, a Filipino and a Thai brought in especially from AAM's Avionics Department to teach the course.

AUTOMOTIVE TRAINING COURSE

An Automotive Training Course was begun by AAM at its Vientiane Base in July, 1971; it is scheduled to run for six months.

To make as sure as reasonably possible that the men — all Laotians — selected for this course were well suited to its requirements, over 200 applicants were given a battery of tests including comprehensive testing of their knowledge of English, their aptitude for automotive training, and their technical abilities. Out of the 200 tested, 50 were first selected; then the field was narrowed to the final choice of the top eight men.

The Course starts out as 100% automotive theory, then gradually phases into OJT as the emphasis on theory diminishes.

When the trainees graduate, they will be able to service, maintain and overhaul not only all automobiles operated by Air America, but they will also have the capability of performing the same type of work on almost every piece of ground equipment used by the Company's Ground Maintenance Department at Vientiane.

Mr. James A. Cunningham, Jr., Base Manager, VTE, currently responsible for implementing the Lao Promotional Program outlined on the preceding page.

Mr. Yang Yi, who belongs to the North Laos Meo tribe (his home is Long Chieng), is currently an AAM trainee. Soon he will become a supervisor concerned with aerial delivery matters. Above, he is shown packing a G-13, 500 lb. capacity cargo parachute.

Emplaning at Vientiane are 23 Lao trainees who are now taking a second (for the Laotians) International Line Service Mechanic Course at Air Asia's Main Maintenance Base at Tainan, Taiwan; two trainees followed later.

Miss Khing N-geune Singharaj, a Lao Statistician in AAM's Accounting Department, looks up from the venerable abacus so useful in her work.

Miss Nang Thong Lian, Lao driver/Traffic Department, expertly maneuvers her forklift to carry loads to a truck at Air America's Vientiane Base.

AIR AMERICA LOG ★ MỸ QUỐC HÃNG KHÔNG

VIXAY:LAO INSTRUCTOR EXTRAORDINARY

Vixay — the man's only known name — is a Lao Technical Instructor who is currently teaching eight fellow Laotians Air America's Automotive Training Course.

And being an Automotive Instructor is far from Vixay's only accomplishment. Before becoming an instructor, he had been trained in electronics and was a Mechanic II in Air America's Vientiane Electronics Shop where his performance was outstanding.

And some of his numerous, aviation-oriented, non-Company activities are quite interesting. Vixay decided that working on and around aircraft was not satisfying enough — he had to fly. So he financed his own flight training at a local Flying Club.

But this ambitious young man's most remarkable undertaking to date is the design and construction — from scratch and without any outside help — of a single-seater helicopter to be powered by a modified Volkswagen automobile engine which he soon hopes to acquire. He has conceived and drawn all of his own blueprints, scorning available chopper prints as unsuitable.

Vixay started with Air America in 1968 as a trainee at Vientiane in a Line Service Mechanic Course. He has advanced to his current status in only three short years.

* * * * * *

CAPTIONS:

1. *Vixay, vigorously drives home a point in a classroom at Vientiane where he is teaching eight fellow Lao Trainees AAM's Automotive Training Course.*
2. *The eight Lao Automotive trainees cluster around an Air America's Volkswagen engine during an OJT (On-the-Job-Training) session in the Company's Automotive Shop at Vientiane. Vixay can be seen in the background; a Foreman in white is in the foreground.*
3. *Vixay (right) rushes around the group of eight Lao Automotive Trainees he is instructing during an OJT session in Air America's Automotive Shop at Vientiane.*

VIENTIANE AT PLAY

by: C. Morehouse, Captain PC-6/VTE

One of Air America's contributions to the sporting world of Laos is the Annual Samlor Race held yearly in Vientiane, Laos. The last race, held recently, surpassed the events of previous years in both driver entries and spectator participation. Ironically, the race was won by a non-Air America-ite — George C. Crandlemire, a talented sportsman from Honolulu — who readily adapted himself to that tricky machine, the samlor. Although closely challenged, his accomplishments in such demanding sports activities as water and snow skiing, sailing, surfing, and trail bicycling, gave him the stamina to win the samlor contest. He just happened to be visiting some Air America friends when the race took place.

Air America's 1968 and 1969 champion, Dick Graham (First Officer, C-123/VTE), presented George Crandlemire with his winner's trophy — appropriately enough, it was a brass replica of a samlor.

Ten of the three-wheeled machines were entered in the race. Due to track limitations, three preliminary heats had to be run off before the final race for the championship was held. This year's course started and finished in front of the house of the host, "Smokey" Maxwell (Captain PC-6/VTE), and proceeded around Wat Dong Si Song Vong, a total distance of 8/10 of a mile. The course was replete with natural and unnatural hazards to thoroughly test the skills and endurance of each driver (samlor driver, that is).

For those who had no previous experience operating the three-wheeled machines the skills involved were complex and the samlor casualties were many. For example, take Dick Owston (First Officer, C-46/VTE) who spent a considerable amount of time decorating his machine. On departing his driveway to proceed to the race track, his samlor obstinately insisted on making an uncontrolled 180 degree left turn directly into a barber shop adjacent to his home. The resultant sudden stoppage was more than the samlor could cope with and Dick was left holding the handle bars while the samlor's forward fork broke into three sections: result — scratch one samlor.

Then there was Pete Lavin (First Officer, C-123/VTE), who was testing his samlor prior to the race. He failed to negotiate the initial turn out of the pit stop, proceeded across the track and crashed into the inner guard rail, causing collapse of his samlor's front wheel.

And Pete Hanley (Captain, C-7A/VTE), after leading the start in the third preliminary heat, lost directional control and climbed the inner guard rail, causing his samlor to overturn. Captain Clyde Morehouse, by exerting maximum driving skill, narrowly averted a pile-up at the point; he only drove over Pete's hand as he maneuvered around the crash site. Pete, shaken but otherwise unhurt, remounted in an attempt to complete the race; unfortunately, he experienced additional control problems which caused his samlor to crash two more times within 50 yards of the starting line and finally forced him to leave the race.

Numerous other incidents of a less spectacular nature also occurred; however, all other entrants managed to complete the race.

In addition to champion George Crandlemire, the following competed in the race: Dick Graham, Clyde Morehouse, Bud Wienker (First Officer, C-123/VTE), Pete Lavin (in a replacement samlor), Joe Conde (First Officer, C-123/VTE), Pat Howrigan (First Officer, C-123/VTE), George Newell (son of Phil Newell, FIC/VTE), "Smokey" Maxwell and Pete Hanley.

Next year's Annual Samlor Race will hopefully be held at the That Luang Race Track which will provide greater comfort and better viewing for the spectators, who turned out in gratifying numbers this year.

On your mark! A samlor heat about to be run. (l. to r.) F/O Joe Conde, George Newell, and Champion George Crandlemire.

Captain Pete Hanley comes a cropper, overturning his samlor. He was shaken but uninjured.

A good time was had by all. (l. to r.) F/O Joe Conde, Captain "Smokey" Maxwell, Captain Clyde Morehouse, Champion George Crandlemire, Captain Jim Russell, standing under a parachute canopy.

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''NAME THE CHALLENGE—WE CAN MEET IT''

AIR AMERICA LOG ★ 美國航空公司雜誌

AIR AMERICA'S VIENTIANE-BASED AIRCRAFT

C-46 Commando

PC-6/C Porter

C-7A Caribou

H-395 Courier

''NAME THE CHALLENGE—WE CAN MEET IT''

AAM FLIES LAO KING, QUEEN TO DEDICATION

Recently, at the request of the Agency for International Development/Laos, Air America's Base at Vientiane, the Administrative Capital of Laos, supplied three aircraft (A Royal Laos Air Force helicopter stood by in case it was needed) to transport their Royal Lao Majesties King Sri Savang Vatthana and Queen Khampoui, their personal retinue, Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, high-ranking Laos Government officials, members of the Vientiane Diplomatic Corps, and a group of newsmen from Vientiane to Nam Tan, a small village near Sayaboury, , to preside over the ceremonies attendant to the inauguration of a new irrigation dam.

The three aircraft involved in this project were a Caribou for their Royal Majesties, their personal retinue and Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, and two C-123Ks for the Government officials, the Diplomatic Corps and newsmen. (AAM LOG VOL. V, No. 5, p.1).

The dam enterprise, named the "Nam Tan Irrigation Project" is a perfect example of a worthwhile undertaking planned and successfully executed with the full cooperation of the Royal Lao Government with the assistance of the United States Government. According to a USAID/L brochure, this is what the project accomplishes: "The irrigation system, in the province of Sayaboury, consists of a seven-meter high diversion dam that channels water into left and right main lateral canals, which in turn divert water into the 90 kilometers of sublateral canals leading directly to the rice paddies. More than 250 structures, built across the lateral and sublateral canals, regulate the flow of water for equitable distribution to the fields.

"Fifty timber bridges and more than 60 kilometers of fence were built in connection with the project. In full operation, the irrigated area has the potential of producing annually 23,000 metric tons of rice. The project has also brought some extra benefits to the people of the valley: new bridges, like the three-span bridge made of locally cut **mai du** wood; fish ponds for extra protein in the diet of the people; more roads, shops and schools; a thirty-hectare demonstration research center; and perhaps most important, the development among local, native Laotians of new skills in agriculture, carpentry, metalworking, construction and equipment operation.

"The immediate agricultural benefits of the Nam Tan project to the agriculture community will be matched by long-term advantages to the province of Sayaboury and the nation in term of rice surplus, commerce, and social and educational advancement."

The enterprise took three years to accomplish and involved the work and cooperation of some 1,000 local farmers.

(The photographs on this and the following three pages depict their Majesties' departure from Vientiane and the dam dedication ceremony at Nam Tan. Pix by BM/VTE & ED.)

1. Traffic Dept. men lay out red carpet; ABM chats with Capt. Stuart, PIC.

2. Their Majesties in front of their Russian-made Zis; AAM crew at left.

3. King shakes hand with P. Ngarmmuangpak, AFD; Queen with J. Ryder, TM(T).

4. P.M. Souvanna Phouma boards plane; their Majesties in background.

5. King and Queen board Air America Caribou.

6. Nam Tan villagers awaiting their Majesties.

7. Village women line way to dedication ceremony.

8. Nam Tan Buddahist monks in front of AAM C123Ks.

1. Lao official (center) takes his place at airstrip.

5. Their Majesties' AAM Caribou sports Lao ERAWAN.

9. Ladies-in-waiting kneel before their Queen.

2. Nom Tan ladies-in-waiting arrive at airstrip.

6. Color Guard greets their Majesties at Nom Tan.

10. The King is proffered gift in ceremonial bowl.

3. Nom Tan ladies-in-waiting waiting at airstrip.

7. Their Majesties (center) review Color Guard.

11. The King accepts offerings from his subjects.

4. Their Majesties' AAM Caribou lands at Nom Tan.

8. King, Queen and Prime Minster proceed to subjects.

12. The King accepts gift from ceremonial bowl.

AIR AMERICA LOG ★ AKLAT SULATAN NG AIR AMERICA

1. The Queen of Nom Ton followed by lady-in-waiting.

2. The Queen accepts offerings from her subjects.

3. Loyal Lao subjects await their Queen.

4. Colorful Meo tribeswomen await her Majesty.

5. Young Meo Miss sports silver necklaces.

6. The Queen inspects a Meo tribeswoman's headdress.

7. Her Majesty chats with a Meo tribeswoman.

8. Their Majesties listen to dedication speech.

9. P.M. Souvanna Phouma (l.) and U.S. Ambassador Godley (r.).

10. Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma addresses audience.

11. Ambassador Godley addresses audience.

12. His Majesty and Ambassador Godley chat.

"A PLANE IS NO BETTER THAN ITS MAINTENANCE"

1. King cuts dedication ribbon as Queen watches.

5. His Majesty leaves dam site at Nam Tan.

9. Ambassador Godley helps himself at buffet.

2. Their Majesties walk to irrigation dam site.

6. Close-up of the King and Ambossador Godley.

10. "Kitchen" staff and "stoves" at refreshment area.

3. Queen opens valve; King and Ambassador observe.

7. His Majesty makes a point with this reporter.

11. Part of village of Nam Tan; AAM Caribou (r.).

4. King and Ambossador Godley at dam site.

8. Refreshment area, Nam Tan. Nate parachute covers.

12. A chopper and three AAM planes at Nam Tan.

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ABOVE

Aerial view of Air America's Base at Wattay Airport, Vientiane, Laos. Aircraft on the ramp are: at left is a C-123K; at right, nearest camera, is a C-46, then two C-123Ks above which are a Porter and an Aero Commander; remainder of small aircraft in the group are Helios. The tail of a Caribou can be seen extending from the hangar. Buildings are (starting at lower left and going clockwise): Fire Station, Air America Traffic Terminal, USAID (United States Agency for International Development) Cargo Warehouse, USAID Rice Warehouse (with parachute drying loft protruding from roof), AAM Supply Warehouse, AAM Hangar, Technical Services Building, then Powerhouse, Operations Building, Administration Building (including AAM Club), AAM parking lot.

BELOW

Local Lao laborers mixing cement to build a truck-bed height loading ramp in front of the Rice Warehouse. This raised ramp replaces a previously-used sunken truck-bed height ramp which was unsatisfactory during the rainy season when it turned into a swimming pool and required constant pumping out.

AIR AMERICA LOG

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"CAUTION IS THE OLDEST CHILD OF WISDOM"

Aerial view of part of Air America's ramp at Vientiane. Aero Commander is at top left, Porter at top right, remaining five aircraft are Helios. Ramp equipment and Base Powerhouse are at bottom of photo.

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"SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT"