

Employment with Air America

Hired by Air America in Bangkok in late 1972. Former US Army Military Intelligence Officer (rank of Captain, with 4 years active duty). Left active duty to go to Thailand because of a Thai girl I had met while in the service.

Assigned to Udorn to the newly created Air America Security Inspection Service (SIS). Service was instituted by Air America because of Alfred McCoy's book, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. Air America wanted to show it had a top notch countermeasure for the allegations in the book.

Americans (mostly former military) supervised the program under the direction of the Air America Director of Security (Ty Hardin, I believe an Agency employee). There were three Americans at Udorn (CSM (Ret) John Cupp, CW4 (MI Ret) Charlie Meyers and I). From the Air America Air Passenger Terminal at Udorn, we supervised 13 Thais in a program of inspecting all Air America aircraft, cargo and crew member and passenger baggage at Udorn, with the purpose of detecting narcotics moving aboard Air America aircraft.

There were several Americans (I think two) at Vientiane, Laos (supervising some Laotians), and one American in Bangkok. Later, the program expanded to Saigon. Charles Meyers was eventually chosen to be the Chief of Air America Security Office in Saigon.

Sometime in 1973, Air America purchased three narcotics detection dogs (German Shepherds) to assist in the SIS program. I went to Vientiane for training with the dogs. Eventually two dogs came to Udorn and one remained in Vientiane. The dogs had been trained to detect opium and heroin. We had a small supply of heroin to perform maintenance training with the dogs. The heroin had to be constantly cleansed with special equipment to prevent it from becoming contaminated with odors. I was primarily responsible for the heroin and training of the dogs. The other two Americans were not excited about the animals's presence. I even trained two of the Thai inspectors to handle the dogs.

During your conversation in the film about Air America, The CIA's Secret Airline, when you stated you have never being able to verify that Air America aircraft ever moved narcotics, two photographs were shown of a narcotics detection dog inspecting cargo, with a dog handler looking on. The dog in both photographs was named "Rocky". I was the handler.

I worked at Udorn until Air America left Thailand (I think in mid 1974). I still have the final flight schedule ever issued from Udorn plus some other memorabilia. During the entire time SIS was at Udorn (which was until operations ceased there), the only narcotics we ever found were a few opium pipe souvineers, which passengers were bringing out of Laos. These were confiscated and destroyed. We never found any narcotics among any Air America crew member baggage or on any Air America aircraft or cargo. We were allowed to inspect anywhere on the Air America compound. We were only rarely permitted to inspect on the Joint Liaison Detachment (JLD) ramp (opposite from the Air America ramp). Some Air America aircraft flew out of the JLD area and it was always a sore point for me that we could not inspect those aircraft or that area.

Once the narcotics detection dog alerted on a large, wooden cargo container at the Air America Passenger Service Terminal. I reported the alert. The next morning, Rocky and I were invited over to the JLD area. The container had been unloaded and sat empty at the back of a hangar. All of the individual boxes in the container had been removed and were lined up on both sides of the container. We inspected each and every box twice, thoroughly. Nothing. Then we inspected the inside of the wooden container. Rocky again alerted on the same corner of the container which he had alerted on

the day before. My explanation was the wood used to construct the container had, at one time, been used to transport either opium or heroin (most likely heroin since the container had just come from Columbia). When Rocky and I departed the hangar, we met a US Air Force sergeant and his narcotics detection dog, who had arrived to also perform an inspection. I later learned the Air Force dog had alerted at the same place Rocky had. These unusual steps had been taken to inspect the contents of the container because the container comprised the household goods of a CIA agent who had just transferred from Columbia to Thailand.

I also supervised the conduct of select internal Air America investigations at Udorn. Once I even proposed inspecting the Air America bus. If I remember correctly, the bus ran twice weekly between the Mekong River town of Nong Khai and Bangkok. Its intermediate stops were at the Air America facilities at Udorn and Khorat. I theorized the bus would be a way to also move narcotics via Air America transportation. We always inspected the bus, its cargo and baggage and even performed surveillance on it twice. No narcotics trafficking or other illicit activities were ever found.

The narcotics detection dogs were also used to support the inspection of Cambodian dependants, who arrived at Udorn at the far end of the Air America ramp (occupied by the US Military Advisory Group to Laos), the narcotics raids of the Thai Police in Udorn and Thai Border Patrol Police raid of a mountain village in the Golden Triangle, northwest of Chiang Mai. As the primary narcotics detection dog handler and Thai speaker, I participated in those operations. The raid on the village was particularly interesting. Rocky and I were flown to Chiang Mai. The next day we were deposited at a remote training facility out in the middle of nowhere, until a flight of 7-8 helicopters, outfitted with Thai Border Patrol combat troops arrived. Rocky and I, as the only Americans, took off with the raiding party.

When Air America closed its operations in Udorn, Rocky was given to the Border Patrol headquarters in Chiang Mai. I accompanied the dog there, gave some training to the Thai who would be responsible for handling him, then said good bye to my friend. I knew he would not fare well with the Thais, who did not have the dedication to handling the narcotics detection dog, which I had developed. It was a very sad departure.

I later transported the other narcotics detection dog to the US contractor providing security guard support to the US Embassy in Saigon (also I believe in the summer of 1974). I spent a week in Saigon training the contractor to handle the dog and I consider that transition a success. I also visited with John Cupp (formerly an SIS supervisor in Udorn), who had been transferred to Saigon.

When I returned to Udorn, I was released from Air America, the last SIS person to go. Thus ended an exciting time of my life. It was also the end of an era, of Air America in Thailand and Laos. Although my experience with SIS at Air America was not as satisfying as the collection work I had previously done with the Montgnards in Vietnam while in the Army, my time at Udorn was interesting because of the insight into what was going on in that part of the world and Air America's part. Although I was not a pilot, I knew the pilots. I saw the aircraft. I knew what was going on. The film concludes with the observation that those who flew for Air America would not trade that time of their lives and that experience for anything. They lived an adventure. Although I was not a pilot, I know what they mean!

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