

834 Fl Air Division History

(declassified)

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were placed on operating location at Da Nang.^{98/}

Ranch Hand

(C) On 15 October 1966, when the 12th Air Commando Squadron (Defoliation) was formed at Bien Hoa Air Base and assigned to the 315th Air Commando Wing, herbicide operations were carried out by the Special Aerial Spray Flight of the 309th Air Commando Squadron. The latter was then based at Tan Son Nhut, as was its six-aircraft segment specifically charged with the defoliation and crop denial mission.

(C) The deactivation of the special flight and activation of the 12th Air Commando Squadron and its concurrent assignment to the 315th Air Commando Wing were provided for in Seventh Air Force Programmed Action Directive 67-7 dated 20 October 1966. While the squadron was to be based at Bien Hoa, Da Nang Air Base was designated as an operating location. The cited directive, which stipulated that augmenting personnel and aircraft would be assigned during the October-December 1966 period, listed certain "basic limiting factors" as to the unit's movement date.^{99/}

(C) In addition to interim herbicide loading facilities at Bien Hoa, the squadron's deployment depended also on the removal there of rebarbed wire on the west ramp of the Bien Hoa runway to accommodate the Ranch Hand aircraft. Finally, the completion of airman barracks was mentioned as a prerequisite for the Ranch Hand BOD at Bien Hoa.

For a comprehensive account of the evolution and concept of herbicide operations, the reader is referred to Project CHECO, SEA, Report, Herbicide Operations in Southeast Asia July 1961-June 1967, Hq PACAF, 11 Oct 67.

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(C) The UE authorization for the 12th Air Commando Squadron was established at 18 UC-123B's of which 14 were already in-country and the remainder expected to be delivered from CONUS in October 1966.^{100/}

(C) Directing that the squadron's Providers be deployed from Tan Son Nhut on 1 December and recovered at Bien Hoa, possibly in conjunction with a preplanned spray mission, the Seventh Air Force PAD scheduled the phasing of priority support elements to begin the same day. Since, at the time, the 315th Consolidated Maintenance Squadron had not yet been formed, field maintenance and supply support for the UC-123B's became a 3d Tactical Fighter Wing responsibility.^{101/}

(C) All actions directed by Seventh Air Force in conjunction with the activation and move of the 12th Air Commando Squadron were considered terminated on 19 April 1967.^{102/} Among the phased projects completed was a 45,000 gallon herbicide dispensing system at Bien Hoa which, with additional tanks, was expected to reach twice its initial capacity.^{103/}

(S) But the intensification of herbicide operations as reflected by the formation of an 18-UC-123B squadron had its price. The last two of the three aircraft losses discussed previously only in terms of Provider modifications occurred on 31 October 1966 and 31 January 1967, i. e., since the 12th Air Commando Squadron was organized. The first and only prior loss of a spray mission aircraft in some four years of operations took place in June 1966.^{104/} With the exception of the last UC-123B downed by enemy ground fire, when the entire crew perished, the aircraft went down

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while on missions over South Vietnam without loss of life. In the case of third, however, the scene was Laos.^{105/}

(S) Also in January, CINCPAC sought information concerning a developing shortage of herbicide by levying a periodic report of actual consumption of on-hand quantities on CINCPACAF. Projection of herbicide indicated a "5.5 Million gallon deficit for FY 1968."^{106/} In reply, CINCPACAF advised that the desired data was not available through USAF channels because the chemicals were procured by the Defense General Supply Center based on requirements established and submitted by COMUSMACV. SAAMA, which was an information addressee of the CINCPAC message, it was emphasized, only initiated purchase request to the above center and assured shipping of the defoliant.^{107/}

(S) The CINCPAC inquiry was prompted by inconsistency in the "in-country accounting records" for the herbicide which were maintained by the RVN army (ARVN) and "available to COMUSMACV." ARVN, CINCPACAF pointed out, had the responsibility of accounting for and issuing herbicides from the time it was off-loaded in-country until it was placed "in the aircraft dispersing unit." And even the operation of placing it in this dispersing unit was an ARVN responsibility, according to the CINCPACAF message.^{108/}

(S) The U. S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, answered in the negative when asked to comment on the matter of making herbicide a USAF general supply. Explaining its position, MACV stated that herbicide operations in RVN were a South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF)

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program "supported by the US." In further elaboration of the subject, the MACV communication had this to offer:109/

...The GVN approves all projects and provides logistical support to include receipt, movement, storage, accounting and loading of the herbicide on the spray aircraft. US provides the aircraft and crews (12th ACS). Crop destruction operations are conducted under the State/DOD approved Farm Gate Concept. VNAF markings are placed on the aircraft and a VNAF observer is present during each mission.

4. (S). The present procedure has been successful from an operational and a public affairs point of view. Any advantages gained by making herbicide a 7th Air Force item of supply would be overcome by the requirement for more Air Force personnel and by the disadvantage of any reduction of GVN participation in the program....

(U) The facilities for the six-plane element of the 12th Air Command Squadron left something to be desired, according to the squadron commander who addressed a letter to that effect to the Da Nang base commander on 3 May 1967. Heading the list of critical items to be corrected was the cement and dirt surface of the herbicide storage area. Apart from dirt and sand contaminating the dispensing system, the composition of the surface failed to support the forklift used in loading operations. Hard surfacing was therefore requested. A drainage system and a source of water essential to the washing of the herbicide aircraft were also asked for, along with a building to house administrative and other offices. It was recommended that the base request command assistance in the accomplishment of the necessary projects.110/

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(C) Although Seventh Air Force PAD 67-7 projected a UMD of "approximately 56 officers and 410 airmen," the 12th Air Commando Squadron's actual manpower authorizations never even approached one half of the combined total. In November 1966, the squadron was allocated 75 officer and 134 airman spaces which, in the opinion of the 315th Troop Carrier Wing, did not reflect the true requirements of the unit. Instead, the troop carrier wing, with the backing of the 834th Air Division, sought to have its subordinate organization's manning increased to 248 spaces and distributed 71 officers and 177 airmen. 111/

(U) The UMD adjustments subsequently made still fell short of the desired level and distribution. In February and March 1967, the 12th Air Commando Squadron was allocated 76 officer and 154 airman positions but lost six of the officer spaces the following month for the remainder of the first half of 1967.

(S) Based on the prescribed crew ratio of 1.5, the squadron was authorized 27 crews composed of pilot, navigator and flight mechanic. Crews actually formed, however, never exceeded 22.5, although only once during the January-June 1967 period did the combat readiness rate of the crews formed fall below 100 percent, and then only by a negligible one half of one percentage point.

(S) The status of UC-123B crews compared favorably in every respect with that of their C-123B, and C-123K, counterparts whose aggregate authorized for the four airlift squadrons numbered 90. Similar percentages held true also for the C-7A units which neither individually

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nor collectively attained their authorized crew strength totalling 144. In the combat readiness category of formed crews, however, the 315th Air Commando Wing had the edge on the 483d Troop Carrier Wing.*

The Second Aerial Port Group

(C) Chronic equipment and personnel shortages marked the reporting period for the Second Aerial Port Group, its three squadrons and their detachments and operating locations. But the two problem areas dated back to before the group's transfer to the 834th Air Division whose command recognized the adversities facing aerial port operations and set about alleviating existing conditions.

(C) Manpower authorizations for the Second Aerial Port Group, including group headquarters and combat control teams (CCT), totalled 2,544 spaces in December 1966 and remained constant through June 1967.** Since April 1966 USAF aerial port manning criteria allocated one space for every 70 tons of cargo and another for every 700 passengers on the basis of ten passengers being equal to one ton of cargo. Applying this formula to the projected workload during the first half of CY 1967 computed by multiplying MACV forecasts by 1.65, it was found that even the number of authorized spaces, many of them unfilled, fell woefully short of the personnel needed to handle the RVN traffic of cargo and passengers.112/

(C) Although manning standards were changed to one position for

*Crew statistics are contained in Appendix V, p. 156.

**SOURCE: 834AD Tactical Airlift Performance Analysis, SEA.

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93. Ibid.
94. Msg C 00150, 834AD to 7AF, Subj: C-123K Modification for Ranch Hand, 22 Feb 67. DOC 48
95. Msg LMM 31966, 7AF to PACAF, subj: Shatterproof Windshield and Side Windows for UC-123B, 22 Feb 67. DOC 49
96. Msg DM 32190, 7AF to 834AD, subj: C-123K Modification for Ranch Hand, 25 Feb 67. DOC 50
97. General Moore's End of Tour Report. DOC 25
98. Ibid.
99. 7AF PAD 67-7, 12th Air Commando Squadron (Ranch Hand), 20 Oct 66. DOC 51
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. Ltr, Col G.A. Browning III, 7AF Dir/Programs, to 315ACW et al, subj: 7AF PAD 67-7, 19 Apr 67. DOC 52
103. Ltr, Col R.A. Goury, 3TFW DCO, to 7AF (CPTM), subj: Report on 7AF PAD 67-7, Ranch Hand, 1 Mar 67. DOC 53
104. Rept, Project CHECO, SEA Report, Herbicide Operations in Southeast Asia, Jul 61 - Jun 67, pp 25, 28 and 29.
105. Ibid., p 29.
106. Msg DM 42780, CINCPACAF to CINCPAC, subj: Status of Herbicide Report, 21 Jan 67. DOC 54
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Msg 04714, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, subj: Status of Herbicide, 8 Feb 67. DOC 55
110. Ltr, Lt Col R. Dennis, 12ACS Comdr, to Comdr, Da Nang AB, subj: Facilities for the 12th ACS, 3 May 67. DOC 56
111. Ltr w/1 Atch, Maj E.J. Huskinson, Dir/Pers, to 7AF (DMET-4), subj: Request for UMD Adjustment - 12 ACS, 19 Nov 66. DOC 57

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APPENDIX V (Continued)

	<u>1966</u>						<u>1967</u>						
	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	
<u>Operationally Ready Rates (%)</u>													
C-123	73.0	72.0	75.0	73.0	72.0	75.0	75.0	74.0	77.0	76.0	77.0	77.0	76.0
C-7A							63.6	70.1	74.5	75.9	75.1	70.5	
UC-123	90.1	85.9	78.2	88.3	80.5	75.4	83.0	87.9	85.8	83.7	79.0	82.4	83.6
<u>Not Operationally Ready, Maintenance (%)</u>													
C-123	18.0	18.0	19.0	19.0	20.0	21.0	20.0	21.0	20.0	22.0	20.0	20.0	
C-7A							27.5	22.4	19.2	21.2	21.5	24.8	
UC-123	9.8	14.0	17.6	10.2	16.6	18.4	15.0	9.4	12.7	13.6	20.4	16.5	
<u>Not Operationally Ready, Supply (%)</u>													
C-123	9.0	10.0	6.0	8.0	8.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	
C-7A							8.9	7.5	6.3	2.9	3.4	4.7	
UC-123	.1	.1	4.2	1.5	2.9	7.1	2.0	2.7	1.5	2.7	.6	1.1	
<u>UC-123 Defoliant Dispensed (Thou/Gals)</u>													
	112.9	199.8	198.4	283.9	377.6	373.1	413.3	365.1	329.5	309.8	367.9	413.7	2,199.3
<u>UC-123 Acres Defoliated (Thou)</u>													
	54.3	80.1	81.9	105.0	126.6	127.2	151.2	135.9	121.5	124.5	150.6	168.9	852.6
<u>UC-123 Insecticide Spraying (Acres)</u>													
									56000	44800	47600	50400	198.8

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