



*Vientiane*  
by: Frank L. Dunn, BM/VTE

Air America's Laos Base is located at Wattay Airport, Vientiane, Laos, the country's Administrative Capital; Luang Prabang, the Royal Capital, is 145 miles to the north.

AAM operates in Laos to meet contractual commitments with such organizations as the International Control Commission (C.I.C.), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

To meet these commitments, AAM performs these services in Southeast Asia:

1. Maintains C. I. C. helicopters based at Wattay Airport and provides ground services to the organization's four-engine Boeing Stratoliners transiting Vientiane. AAM also supplies weather information for C. I. C. flights in to and out of Wattay.

2. Provides airlift throughout Laos under contract with USAID. (Note: the Air Transport Operations Group—ATOG—is a cargo and traffic handling function which AAM performs under contract with USAID).

Of AAM's Laos airlift operations, 85% are cargo flights, 15% personnel flights. Cargo delivered in Laos is mostly rice and related commodities which are both free air-dropped without parachute or landed on-site. AAM also parachutes commodities which would not withstand the impact of a free fall—such as drums of kerosene. Air-dropping accounts for over 80% of the deliveries; the rest is landed. AAM air-delivers over 8-million pounds of commodities a month.

In addition to its Main Base at Vientiane, AAM operates stations at these far-flung Laotian localities—going from north to south: Ban Houie Sai, Luang Prabang, Sam Thong, Savannakhet and Pakse.

AAM operates flights on a regular schedule between Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Savannakhet, Pakse and Attopeu, Laos, and a regular twice-a-week commissary flight to Bangkok, Thailand.

AAM planes also fly throughout Laos non-sched. They operate off of all kinds of strips—ranging from Wattay's 6,000 ft. concrete runway to 600 ft. dirt strips perched on mountain ridges, carved out of hillsides or snuggled in remote valleys.

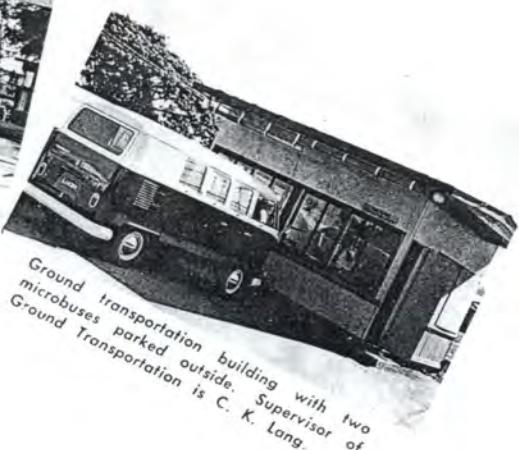
A total of 43 planes are based at VTE: Helios, Porters, Volpars, Ten-twos, Caribous, C-47s, C-46s and C-123s

VTE employs over 1,100 personnel who, by passport check, cover the astonishing range of 13 nationalities. The large majority, however, are Lao.

Air America's aircraft operate seven days a week the year-round. And this is done in the face of such harassments as a 21-day flood (which, in 1966, covered Wattay with 5 ft. of water), actions by unfriendly forces, tornados and the like.



Operations building seen under the wing of a Porter PC-6C. Adjoining the building to the left is the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Air Support Branch.



Ground transportation building with two microbuses parked outside. Supervisor of Ground Transportation is C. K. Lang.



Filipino Administrative Assistant to the Base Manager P. S. Rosales, Jr., AAM/VTE.



Chinese RMD Crew Chief F. Hsieh, AAM/VTE.



Asian and American personnel enjoy a snack (or a full meal) and a hot or cold drink in the newly-enslaved, a wood-paneled dining room which is part of the headquarters administration building. This eating facility serves Western cuisine.



ATOG Fire Station at AAM's Vientiane Base at Wattay Airport. Modern fire engine with foam-pumping capability is shown at left; ambulance in center.