

ALLEN CATES

October 22, 2003

Mr. James D. Johnston
Executive Secretary
DoD Civilian /Military Service Review Board
SAF Personnel Council
1535 Command Dr., EE Wing, 3rd Fl.
Andrews AFB, MD 20762-7002

RE: Your letter dated October 6, 2003

Dear Mr. Johnston:

I am enclosing a copy of the letter sent to the CIA on February 17, 2003 that reflects the proper date. I am also enclosing a copy of a book written by William M. Leary entitled **Perilous Missions**. Dr. Leary wrote the paper that I included in my original application entitled **CIA Air Operations In Laos**.

Your letter and our telephone conversation bring up some very good points. I can see how one could argue one way or the other and perhaps both may be correct. It would be easy to remove CAT as you suggested, and to only include those Air America Personnel who were operating on JUSMAG contracts in Laos. That would be the prudent thing to do I suppose, and probably give those in that era and place the best chance for approval.

I'm not going to do it Mr. Johnston. All too often I have led from the heart instead of the head and it has created many problems. It probably would be better for an unbiased person to make the application. I tried to look at the data and come up with important dates where I could provide supporting evidence and can't, but there is no guarantee that Laos will qualify either.

This is my argument. CAT/Air America employees were civilians and not U.S. Military personnel. None of them were conscripted. They volunteered to be employed by a subsidiary U.S. Corporation and accepted a specific payroll and benefits package. They could resign any time they wanted without legal penalty and did not fall under the jurisdiction of the Uniform Code Of Military Justice. The employees did not work directly for the U.S. Military at any time and answered to superiors, who also were employees of the subsidiary corporation. Accordingly, none of them have the right to

demand any benefit other than what was promised at the time of their employment.

All of that is true. So, how do I justify a request for Veteran Service eligibility? Do I dare to suggest that CAT/Air America employees were in the same category as the Air Commandos, Special Forces, Seals and other elite groups?

Yes, I do so dare. Why? I served in the United States Marine Corps in Vietnam as a combat aircrew member. Therefore, I can say with absolute certainty that the missions under fire and the bravery in battle were exactly the same when I served with Air America. In fact, it was in the same type of aircraft. More important, it was an aircraft that still belonged to the Marine Corps and may have been one the Marines operated in Vietnam. That was just my experience, but there were countless others. Operation Book Lift in Korea, Dien Bien Phu, the B-26 operation in Indonesia where Allen Pope was captured and sentenced to die, Tibet and that was just a few and all by CAT personnel before the name change to Air America In 1959. How could I in good faith exclude these brave people?

Your argument that these operations did not directly involve support for U.S. military personnel has definite merit, but it does not address the fact that CAT/Air America personnel performed paramilitary operations for the benefit of the United States Government because U.S. Military personnel couldn't because of treaty restraints or capability. The United States Government needed a fast moving, immediately available, already trained air force to handle military responsibilities and requirements and CAT/Air America filled that role. I can say with absolute certainty that no U/S. Military force could have accomplished what CAT/Air America did on a routine basis without losing many lives for the simple reason there would not be adequate time to train them for the mission and orientate them to the terrain and enemy situation. CAT/Air America employees lived in the exact area that they operated in and had years of experience to lean on to safely tackle a very difficult job.

As such, CAT/Air America employees, qualify under the DoD Directive 1000.20 requirements for *Uniqueness of Service, Paramilitary Operations, Use of U.S. Military Aircraft & Training* and the undeniable intent on the part of the United States Government was to use these employees as if they were U.S. Military personnel and for the same purpose as if they were in fact U. S. Military personnel.

Mr. Johnston, I cannot in good faith eliminate any one of them. We were in it together and together we should be remembered. The historians may probably look at it differently, as well as some of the former employees. Therefore, I will alter the title so as to allow for changes as appropriate. I am suggesting this title:

The U.S. Civilian employees of CAT, Inc. who were Flight Crew Personnel that included Pilots, Co-Pilots, Navigators, Flight Mechanics and Air Freight Specialist, and Aviation Ground Support Personnel that included U.S. Maintenance Supervisors, Operations Managers and FIC personnel who conducted paramilitary operations in Korea, French Indo China, Tibet and Indonesia during the years 1950 through 1959, and Air America Flight Crew Personnel and Ground Support Personnel as described with CAT, who conducted paramilitary operations in Laos from 1961 through 1974

when the war in Laos ended, and Air America Flight Crew Personnel and Ground Support Personnel as described who conducted paramilitary operations in Vietnam from 1964 through 1975 when Saigon was evacuated and Air America flight operations ceased.

I am acutely aware that I may have painted with too broad a brush. I am also aware that it eliminates any office personnel in the USA, Taipei, Okinawa, Japan or any other area except those described in the suggested title. It does *not* eliminate Mr. Robert Rousselot, who was the VP of Operations and lived in Taipei, because he was constantly involved with paramilitary operations in the areas mentioned. Nor does it eliminate Mr. Hugh Grundy, whose managing expertise and attention to detail as the CEO of CAT/Air America saved many lives and provided the catalyst for successful operations. It also does not eliminate Mr. Richard Ford, who often made hazardous trips in to Laos with his duties as an assistant to the Base Manager. Nor does it eliminate the Base Managers of Vientiane, Laos, Udorn, Thailand and Saigon South Vietnam for the same reasons.

I therefore submit the title in good faith and hope that the historians will see my argument in the manner it was presented. Please let all those involved know that I would be willing to travel to any place at my own expense should a personal interview be needed to clarify the history as I know it.

Sincerely,


Allen Cates

