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## FOREWORD

This is a continuing report, dovetailing with CHECO Report, "Command and Control 1965," which was published on 15 December 1966. Since then, approximately 16 CHECO reports have been completed, which encompass every facet of Command and Control in SEA. Thus, this volume will not repeat the detailed information available in other individual reports. Rather, it will provide an overview of this highly complex Command and Control structure. Emphasis will be placed on Command Relationships, with the focus on their historical evolution and the prevailing lines of authority from the Pacific Command (PACOM) to Vietnam and Thailand. When it enhances the overview, this report will contain brief sketches of pertinent functional components and the elements of centralized direction so essential to the operation of a Command and Control system.

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## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND

Command and Control is an arrangement "employed by a commander in planning, directing, and controlling operations."<sup>1/</sup> This arrangement embodies command relationships, personnel, and facilities--in short, the dynamic components enabling a commander to control his operational assets pursuant to an assigned mission or objective. The command relationships "can be regarded as the lines of authority...for translating objectives and instructions, as determined at the decision-making levels, into action for producing the desired results." The effectiveness and clarity of these command relations can make (and frequently have made) the difference "between understanding and confusion, timely action and damaging delay, success and failures."<sup>2/</sup>

#### Historical Evolution of PACOM

Ever since Dewey fought the Battle of Manila Bay, competing interests, rivalries, and traditions in the Pacific Ocean Area were reflected in a historic division of military responsibility between Honolulu and Manila. The path toward a unified command structure for U.S. military forces in the Pacific began in World War II, when two organizations evolved between 1942 and 1944 to conduct offensive operations against the Japanese home islands. By the summer of 1944, these two joint staffs were: the Commander-in-Chief (CINC) Pacific Ocean Area under Adm. Chester W. Nimitz and the CINC Southwest Pacific Area under Gen. Douglas MacArthur. They experienced one more change prior to the final offensive against Japan, when it became evident that something would have to be done about the previous division of responsibility into major (but

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somewhat artificial) areas. The boundaries became obsolete and confused the issue once MacArthur captured the Philippines. By early 1945, events, as well as the competing trinity of interests, rivalries, and traditions, suggested the need for other arrangements. In effect, the unified commands which had been created since 1942 were abolished, and no agreement could be reached on a single commander. Instead, MacArthur was named Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Army Forces in the Pacific, in addition to retaining command of the Southwest Pacific area. Nimitz retained his old area and gained control of all naval forces in the Pacific. Under the direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), MacArthur "would normally be responsible for land operations, Nimitz for sea operations"; thus, each controlled the entire resources of his own service, and had authority to establish joint task forces or appoint subordinate commanders to conduct various operations.<sup>3/</sup> When the war ended, forces in the Pacific were organized into three commands--the two already mentioned and 20th Air Force, a strategic bombardment force of nearly equal status with the Army and Navy.

In summary, as the transition to a post-hostilities situation proceeded apace, "all efforts to establish a single commander for the theater had failed, and even the unified commands set up in 1942 had been abandoned under the pressure of events."<sup>4/</sup> The 1945 arrangement, in turn, was superseded by a postwar Pacific area structure that became effective on 1 January 1947, the birthday of the present day Pacific Command. On that date, three commands were established: CINC Far East (CINCFE), CINC Pacific (CINCPAC), and CINC Alaska (CINCAL). This was the situation at the outbreak of the Korean War.<sup>5/</sup> During that conflict, command responsibilities remained divided between United Nations/



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Far East Command and Pacific Command.<sup>6/</sup> After the Korean war ended, there was renewed impetus to establish a single commander for the theater.

In mid-1956, the JCS directed CINCPAC and CINCFE to submit plans for the orderly transfer of the Far East Command to PACOM. These were submitted in October; JCS approved them on 28 December 1956. On 1 July 1957, CINCFE was disestablished, with Korea becoming a subordinate unified command. This marked the termination of a historic division of command of U.S. forces in the Pacific theatre. PACOM became a unified command--one "with a broad continuing mission under a single commander and composed of significant assigned components of two or more services...."<sup>7/</sup> Specifically, PACOM was enlarged and given three service component commanders, in addition to numerous other responsibilities that will be elaborated upon.<sup>8/</sup>

## Definitions

Before any further discussion of command relationships, two important types of authority must be defined: (1) Command and (2) Operational Command (or Operational Control). They determine the degree of authority that a commander in the military service lawfully exercises over individuals and units. The first, Command, is the broadest and most complete form of authority, while Operational Command (or Operational Control)\* represents one of a lesser degree:<sup>9/</sup>

\* Since they are synonymous, and to avoid confusion, Operational Control will be used in this report.

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*"Command includes the authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions. It also includes responsibility for health, welfare, morale, and discipline of assigned personnel.*

*"Operational Command [Synonymous with OpCon]-Those functions of Command involving the composition of subordinate forces, the assignment of tasks, the designation of objectives, and the authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. Operational Command should be exercised by the use of the assigned normal organizational units through their responsible commanders or through the commander of subordinate forces established by the commander exercising operational command. It does not include such matters as administration, discipline, internal organization, and unit training, except when a subordinate commander requests assistance."*

The basic difference between Command and any other distinct form of military authority derives from one important fact--Command carries with it authority over and responsibility for all activities and needs of subordinate units. Any departure from full command means that partial authority or partial responsibility is in effect; any one of several variations is defined and clarified by that part of full command which has been either relinquished or retained. Unavoidably, the definitions are crucial to an understanding of the command relationships originating at Hawaii and radiating outward across the Pacific to embrace Southeast Asia (SEA).

## Chain of Command to PACOM

Before PACOM entered the line of authority in the decision-making process for the Vietnam War, the chain of command ran from the President, as Commander-in-Chief, to the unified command level in accordance with guidelines,

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conceptually consistent with Unified Action Armed Forces. Basically, this concept stated that the U.S. military establishment was an efficient team of land, Naval, and Air Forces and "based on the principle that effective utilization of the military power of the nation requires that the efforts of the separate military services be closely integrated."<sup>10/</sup> Unity of effort was obtained by the authority of the President of the United States through the Secretary of Defense, Secretaries of the Military Departments, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This unity was also sought through common strategic plans and directives. Furthermore, the concept required a sound working relationship between JCS and Commanders of Unified Commands, on the one hand, and JCS and Military Departments and Service Chiefs, on the other.

The chain of command for purposes other than operational control of unified or specified commands ran from the President to the Secretary of Defense to the Secretaries of the Military Departments. This chain embraced the preparation of military forces as well as their administrative support.<sup>11/</sup>

For prosecution of the Vietnam War, the chain of command ran from the President to the Secretary of Defense and through the JCS to PACOM and MACV (as unified and subordinate unified commands, respectively). The unified commands were established by the President; orders to them could be issued by the President or the Secretary of Defense, or by the JCS by authority and direction of the Secretary of Defense.<sup>12/</sup> With this system, unified commanders had operational control over the forces assigned to them for accomplishment of their military missions, while Military Departments and Services were charged with preparing and providing forces for the combatant commands and with

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administration and support of the forces so provided.

Pacific Command

Pacific Command (PACOM) (Fig. 2), with headquarters at Hawaii, was responsible for an area embracing the Pacific Ocean and its islands (except the Aleutians), the Bering Sea, the Eastern Indian Ocean area, Japan, South Korea, and the countries of SEA. CINCPAC exercised operational control of forces assigned to him through three service component commands and five subordinate unified commands. (In four areas having a significant force of two or more services, but where no subordinate unified command had been established CINCPAC designated representatives.) Also, CINCPAC was accredited as the U.S. Military Adviser or Representative to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and ANZUS Councils, the Philippine-U.S. Council of Foreign Ministers, and Japanese-American Security Consultative Committee.<sup>13/</sup>

Expressed in broad terms, the mission of CINCPAC was to "maintain the security of PACOM and defend the United States against attack through the Pacific Ocean; to support and advance the national policies and interests of the United States and discharge U.S. military responsibilities in the Pacific, Far East, and Southeast Asia; to prepare plans, conduct operations and coordinate activities of the forces of the PACOM in consonance with directives of higher authority."<sup>14/</sup> Expressed in narrower terms, specifically with regard to the Republic of Vietnam, PACOM's mission was to conduct operations to assist the Government of the Republic of Vietnam and its armed forces in defeating subversion and aggression so that an independent, noncommunist government could



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function there in a secure environment. The military strategy to achieve these objectives called for selective destruction of NVN war-making and war-supporting capability, coupled with destruction of enemy base areas and defeat of Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army (VC/NVA) forces in-country. Protection of the RVN people, liberation of VC dominated areas, and withdrawal of NVN forces--these were the results sought.<sup>15/</sup> To assist in carrying out this mission, CINCPAC acted through his service component commanders: U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), U.S. Pacific Fleet (PACFLT), and Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), along with five subordinate unified commands located in Vietnam. These were Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), Military Assistance Command, Thailand (MACTHAI), Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. While CINCPAC exercised operational control over PACAF, the latter was responsible for organizing, training, equipping, and employing assigned forces--as well as assuring their optimum readiness for combat and providing logistic and administrative support.<sup>16/</sup>

## Advisory Groups Merge With Unified Commands

The dramatic increase in U.S. forces in RVN during 1964 and 1965 was hardly foreshadowed by the meager U.S. military presence in 1961, a year limited to a Military Assistance Advisory Group. In April 1961, Thirteenth Air Force (13AF) had an advanced echelon (ADVON) at Bangkok, Thailand, comprised of an F-102 air defense detachment at Don Muang RTAFB.<sup>17/</sup> As deeper and deeper inroads were made by enemy forces, and the position of the incumbent RVN government was being further undermined, U.S. assistance beyond the strictly MAAG level was deemed necessary by President John F. Kennedy. In February 1962, he approved the establishment of a subordinate unified command, designated Military Assistance Command Vietnam, and placed it under the operational control of

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CINCPAC. (As will be shown, the scope of USAF activities also expanded.) Between 1962 and 1964, the U.S. effort in RVN was divided and directed through either the MAAG or MACV, with the latter exercising a command function over U.S. forces. On 15 February 1964, JCS requested comments from CINCPAC and COMUSMACV on eliminating the MAAG and merging its functions with those of MACV. Initially, neither favored the merger; however, later in March, MACV accepted its feasibility and endorsed the move despite CINCPAC's continued reservations. Finally, JCS approved the MAAG/MACV reorganization for immediate implementation. While retaining MACV as a subordinate unified command, JCS set 15 May 1964 as the target date for the demise of the MAAG.<sup>18/</sup>

After the merger, there occurred a U.S. buildup of considerable magnitude. The great difference between 1964 and 1965 can be seen in the rapid evolution of MACV from a staff still basically engaged in an advisory role to a full-fledged operational headquarters managing the constantly changing character of the U.S. involvement in the Vietnamese conflict.<sup>19/</sup> Assumptions that the Vietnamese could handle their own insurgent problem gave way to the introduction of a great variety of U.S. forces, many brought into the country under MACV's operational control to help shore up the crumbling position of the RVN Government.

A similar evolution occurred in Thailand in September 1965, when COMUSMACTHAI proposed a consolidation of his headquarters with that of the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG). One key issue in the proposed merger concerned a provision for the Military Assistance Program (MAP) functions. The following January, this was solved with a recommendation identifying the resultant command as USMACTHAI/JUSMAGTHAI, thus making the commander "dual-hatted." Preserving the JUSMAG identity and establishing a MAP Directorate at

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the J-staff (unified command) level was expected to aid in providing for the MAP functions.<sup>20/</sup> This arrangement received JCS and Secretary of Defense approval; meanwhile, CINCPAC was informed that authority to reorganize would be forwarded concurrently with approval of the terms of reference (TOR) and the joint table of distribution (JTD) for the new headquarters. The approved TOR were forwarded to Thailand on 26 August 1966. In addition, MAP responsibilities were spelled out in detail. While the new command successfully handled these two problems, manpower requirements were not so easily resolved. These hinged on the minimum essential spaces required to perform the mission.<sup>21/</sup> Otherwise, COMUSMACTHAI had no forces assigned to him; he was simply Commander Designate of U.S.-Thailand Field Forces. The Deputy Chief, JUSMAG Thailand, performed for Laos the MAP functions of planning, programming, requisitioning, as well as receipt and storage in Thailand, and onward shipping to Laos. He also maintained liaison with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Laos and with attaches.<sup>22/</sup>

Viewed in a larger perspective then, operations in SEA were being determined by a need to check insurgents in RVN and reverse their success, while simultaneously preparing for the eventuality of NVN or Chinese Communist (ChiCom) intervention in Laos and Thailand, as well as in RVN. It was this latter eventuality that made it important to have a command structure which permitted a smooth transition into a SEATO plan, in addition to one which also provided MACV with the forces and freedom of action to cope with the more immediate threat.<sup>23/</sup> The entire command arrangement in SEA was predicated on the two possibilities outlined here, and it must be borne in mind that the eventual

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command structure was tailored both to actual events and potential developments. Should the situation warrant, that is, if combat operations were not confined to RVN, a broader scheme could be activated in the form of Commander, U.S. Southeast Asia (COMUSSEASIA). This reasoning lay behind the separation of MACV and MACTHAI into two commands, thus providing the expanded command/control base for wider operations in both Thailand and Laos. At no time, however, was the Thai arrangement considered in any other light than as second priority to RVN.<sup>24/</sup>

While the time was ripe for increased efforts in and from Thailand, the Thai Government adamantly opposed having Thai-based U.S. forces commanded from any other place but Thailand. This meant an alternate headquarters. Thus, COMUSMACTHAI satisfied Thai sensitivities on who commanded U.S. forces on its soil and also provided the means for progression to a future COMUSSEASIA situation.<sup>25/</sup> In short, the command facilitated the compromise of political and military problems affecting the theater as a whole and the involvement in Vietnam in particular.

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## CHAPTER II

### COMUSMACV AND THE IN-COUNTRY WAR

#### MACV and U.S. Military Organization

While the indigenous military effort was directed by the Vietnamese Joint General Staff (JGS), USMACV had the mission of assisting the Government of the Republic of Vietnam in defeating VC/NVA forces and in extending government control throughout the Republic. COMUSMACV was designated by CINCPAC as the subordinate unified commander having operational control of all U.S. units attached or assigned for the purpose of conducting U.S. military activities and operations in Vietnam, and in other areas of responsibility as CINCPAC directed, such as the extended battle area beyond Vietnam. This operational control was exercised through subordinate commands (such as I and II FFV) and three component commanders: Commanding General, U.S. Army, Vietnam (USARV) located at Long Binh; Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Vietnam (NAVFORV) located in Saigon; and Commander, Seventh Air Force located at Tan Son Nhut. COMUSMACV also exercised operational control over U.S. Marine Corps elements in-country, the III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF). The component commanders and CG, III MAF, reported directly to and received instructions from the respective military service commander of each at PACOM on logistic, administrative, and technical matters. <sup>1/</sup>

COMUSMACV was also the representative of the Secretary of Defense and CINCPAC to the RVN Government regarding military assistance to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) and the Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMFAF). The Chief of the U.S. Mission supervised military assistance matters

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to the extent provided by law and in accordance with Presidential executive orders and instructions. As the U.S. Mission military member, COMUSMACV coordinated military assistance activities with other U.S. governmental agencies represented in the U.S. Mission.<sup>2/</sup>

While the U.S. provided the lion's share of military assistance to RVN, mention must be made of assistance by other Free World countries. The command relationship of US/FMMAF/RVN forces was stated as one of "individual sovereignty and combined coordination and cooperation."<sup>3/</sup> There were approximately seven countries (in addition to the U.S.) contributing combat forces, military advisers, and medical support (or simply some token economic aid). For example, the Republic of Korea provided two divisions, one Marine Brigade, and a Logistical Command. Australia was represented by a brigade and an air element, while New Zealand contributed two rifle companies and one artillery battery. Thailand provided the Black Panther Division. All of these units coordinated their operations at the national level with JGS and MACV, and with the RVN Corps Commanders (and U.S. Field Force Commanders) in each Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ), of which there were four.<sup>4/</sup>

## Ground Forces

Assisting COMUSMACV at the highest level in the control administration, and logistical support of the armed forces in Vietnam were his three component commanders. Operational control of U.S. ground forces within any one CTZ was vested in a designated commander. In I Corps, this was the CG, III MAF, who was also "responsible for the operations of all ground forces within the CTZ and the coordination of their operations with other FMMAFs and RVMAF."<sup>5/</sup> The

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**MACV COMMAND AND CONTROL**

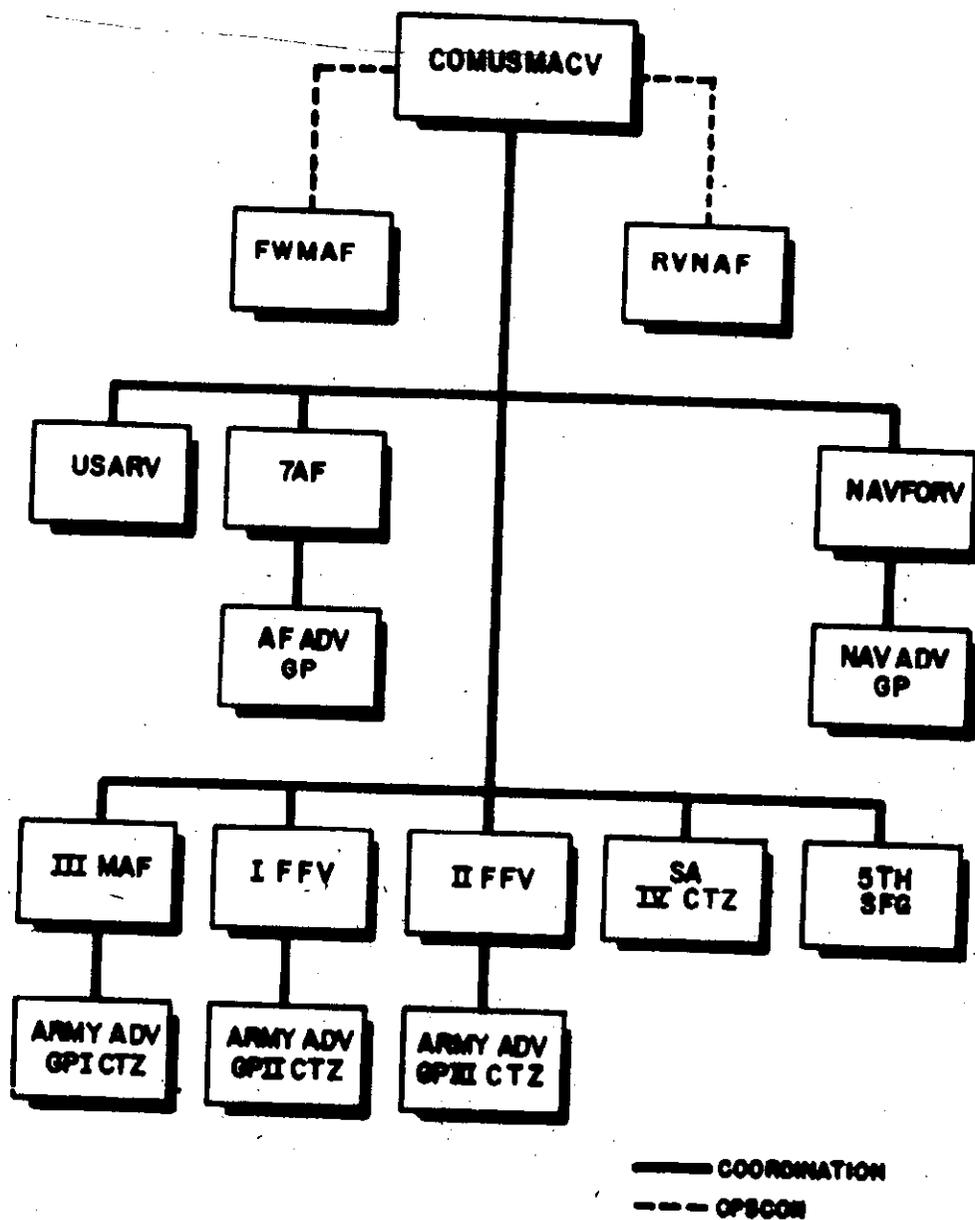


FIGURE 4

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headquarters was located at Da Nang. Similar responsibilities existed in II CTZ for CG, I FFV, located at Nha Trang, and in III CTZ for CG, II FFV, located at Long Binh. No Field Force Commander had been established in IV CTZ; there, the Senior Army Adviser was also the Senior U.S. Military Adviser to the RVNAF Corps Commander.

Two other elements completed the ground force command picture. First, there were U.S. Army personnel acting as advisers in all CTZs, at each echelon of the ARVN down to the battalion--and with Regional and Popular Forces. These advisers were the contacts for coordinating combined operations. Second, COMUSMACV had operational control of the 5th Special Forces Group headquartered at Nha Trang. When Special Forces Teams were deployed, they normally came under the operational control of the U.S. Force Commander or Senior Adviser in the CTZ in which the team happened to be located at the time.<sup>6/</sup>

## Naval Forces

The main task of MACV's Naval Component Commander, NAVFORV, was to control and coordinate the coastal and river surveillance forces that assisted the Vietnamese Navy patrolling the coast and constantly plying the rivers and myriad canals of Vietnam. NAVFORV also provided the transportation, in the form of numerous types of boats, for Army units assigned to the Mobile Riverine Force, as well as logistical support. Finally, COMNAVFORV provided an advisory group to the Vietnamese Navy.<sup>7/</sup>

## Air Forces

Although more details on the evolution of 7AF will appear at a later point in this report, brief mention is made here of several ways in which USAF

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forces fit into the MACV Command and Control picture. The chain began at PACOM (Fig. 2) with CINCPACAF exercising command, less operational control, and MACV exercising operational control over 7AF (with assigned and attached units) for employment of these forces within RVN or COMUSMACV's area of responsibility. In this arrangement, the Commander, 7AF was both Air Component Commander and Deputy COMUSMACV for Air. As the latter, he was responsible for fragging and operational direction of certain specified USMC air elements and coordinated "other air functions" performed by Commanders of the Seventh Fleet, 13AF, III MAF, and VNAF. Another vital task was the tactical airlift support provided through the 834th Air Division. Finally, 7AF was responsible for an Air Force Advisory Group (AFGP) to the VNAF.<sup>8/</sup>

## Air Force Advisory Group (AFGP)

Command and Control lines for the AFGP exemplified the intricacies affecting all agencies in the complicated environment of SEA. The Group was assigned to MACV for administrative control concerning personnel management, supply services, and other matters not included in operational missions. USARV provided logistic support--except for "service peculiar" items, which were provided by the Air Force Component Commander (7AF), who exercised operational control over AFGP.<sup>9/</sup> The Chief, AFGP, was authorized direct communications with the 7AF Commander and Staff, and advisory teams were also authorized direct communications with collocated Air Force units. As appropriate, the head of the advisory group provided COMUSMACV or the Commander, Seventh Air Force, with recommendations concerning VNAF employment, requirements, support, force programs, and any matters pertaining to the VNAF (when requested).<sup>10/</sup>

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## Dep COMUSMACV for Air and Single Management

More than two years after the creation of MACV, Lt. Gen. William C. Westmoreland stated there was no need for COMUSMACV to have a deputy, even though he was serving in that capacity at the time of the statement. It was also believed that if there had to be a deputy, he should be an Army officer because the war was primarily a ground operation. According to MACV historians, in 1964, the Chief of Staff, USAF, had apparently expressed a strong interest in having a USAF deputy appointed; however, COMUSMACV did not agree and believed that an Air Force officer would be more effective as deputy at MACTHAI.<sup>11/</sup>

Between May and October 1964, the title Deputy for Air was discussed within the JCS, culminating in a decision to appoint such an officer in RVN to "promote inter-service harmony."<sup>12/</sup> However, the year 1964 became history and the appointment had not been made. On 14 May 1965, JCS established the position of Deputy Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, for Air, and appointed the Commander, 2d Air Division (2AD), in this capacity as an additional duty. COMUSMACV, on 25 August, provided its Terms of Reference, stating the additional role enhanced the command of 2AD.<sup>13/</sup> This role was defined by General Westmoreland as:<sup>14/</sup>

*"... (1) providing timely advice and recommendations upon which I may form judgments and make decisions on matters relating to air operations; (2) synchronizing the air activities of forces under my command and insuring coordination of these activities with the Vietnamese Air Force and United States military command's furnishing air support to MACV; and (3) promoting a high order of esprit, teamwork, and efficiency among the air elements of the U.S. services assigned to MACV."*

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The Comdr, 7AF, later inherited the position, as well as an office specifically provided for the Dep COMUSMACV for Air, one physically located in the MACV headquarters building.

Thus began a two-year "running battle" to achieve arrangements concerning Marine Air in-country which paralleled those established in the Korean War. The position did permit some leverage in partially achieving that goal through the Single Manager idea. Nevertheless, commenting in March 1968, the Comdr, 7AF, believed there really should be no air deputy if a theatre were organized properly, that it was "a superfluous position." He frankly admitted to CSAF: "For the theater, the position should be a full deputy. You know this position here was a compromise."<sup>15/</sup> The story of Khe Sanh, its influence in bringing Single Management to fruition, and the subsequent arguments (pro and con) have been reported previously.<sup>16/</sup>

Briefly, the Dep COMUSMACV for Air (Comdr, 7AF) was given the responsibility for coordinating and directing the tac air effort in RVN and the extended battle area, to include I CTZ. Simultaneously, CG, III MAF, was directed to make strike and reconnaissance aircraft available to the Air Deputy for "mission direction," a euphemism that did not offend the Marines quite as much as specific or implied references to their air coming under operational control of 7AF. Specifically, III MAF aircraft were fragged by 7AF to meet the daily operational requirements in I CTZ. Where tactically feasible, Marine Air was fragged through the appropriate DASC to support Marine ground units. In addition, 7AF and III MAF TACS components were joined to insure smooth control of air operations. In the process, care was taken to preserve the integrity of

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the Marine air-ground team principle.<sup>17/</sup> The working relationship between Dep COMUSMACV for Air and CG, III MAF, was not clearly defined in JCS or Air Force publications. It came under the heading of Single Management, and was construed by 7AF as "operational direction." It gave 7AF authority to issue frag orders, order scrambles, divert aircraft already airborne, and direct engagement of air or ground targets.<sup>18/</sup> (The term is not completely synonymous with operational command or control.) And consistent with his own desires, COMUSMACV achieved a measure of flexibility and centralized direction of his air assets to better cope with the changing tactical situation. Here the matter solidified, despite Marine reclaims that retention of the Single Management Concept was never intended to go beyond the tactical situation in I CTZ, which gave it birth--a situation that supposedly no longer existed. Other than this controversy, close air support in-country followed a fairly routine pattern.

## In-Country Air Operations

Numerous CHECO Reports and other 7AF publications discuss the functional components of command and control as applied to tactical air operations. The operating techniques were classic in nature, had proved sound in previous conflicts, and were applied in SEA with equal facility and with the adjustments necessary to cope with the complex character of military operations and the unique elements of the environment in SEA. Stated most simply: radars, communications facilities, ALOs, FACs, and operations centers acted together in a tightly-knit composite unit or network called the Tactical Air Control System (TACS). That system provided the means for planning, coordinating, directing, and controlling the entire USAF/VNAF/F/MAF tactical air effort in Vietnam.<sup>19/</sup>

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It was part of an overall 7AF Command and Control complex, one consisting of manual and semiautomatic operations facilities that, while not fully integrated, still enabled a considerable degree of centralized direction and control. "The focal point for tactical air operations conducted within RVN is the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC), adjacent to the 7AF Command Center. USAF and VNAF personnel jointly man this single facility. The Commander, 7AF, exercises control and tactical direction of airlift forces through the 834th Air Division Airlift Control Center (ALCC) which is operationally connected with the TACC by communications links."<sup>20/</sup> Further management of air assets emanated from the jointly manned TACC to supporting Control and Reporting Centers (CRC), Control and Reporting Posts (CRP), and Direct Air Support Centers (DASC).

Operating under each DASC were Tactical Air Control Parties (TACP) positioned with corps, Field Forces, divisions, brigades, and battalions and including ALOs, FACs, radio operators, and equipment. Mission planning, tasking, and controlling were usually accomplished manually with few technological improvements to ease the staff work load. The in-country command center was also a manual system. Unwieldy though the manual system might have been, it got the job done and constituted the framework around which continuous improvements were made." (See CHECO Report, "TACC Fragging Procedures," 15 August 1969.)

A precautionary note is made at this point with regard to balancing limitations against the capabilities of the system as it functioned in RVN. The capability of 7AF to provide unhindered close air support to ground forces was partially attributable to the absence of any challenge to air superiority over RVN. No enemy air force ventured south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)

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to attack command and control facilities and components (or communications networks) that were highly vulnerable. Planners at 7AF were always aware of this vulnerability and pointed to the impact that an increase in enemy capability would have. Determined enemy air or ground attacks against bases in RVN or Thailand could have degraded 7AF's ability to recover rapidly. This vulnerability was always a prime consideration when force improvement was studied.<sup>21/</sup>

## Air Defense

Defense of the Republic of Vietnam against hostile air attack was the responsibility of the Comdr, 7AF, who was designated the Commander of the Mainland Southeast Asia Air Defense Region--directly responsible to CINCPACAF. To accomplish the air defense mission, he was given operational control over a multi-service force of fighter interceptors and surface-to-air missiles, which were controlled through the radar agencies of the TACS.<sup>22/</sup> The fighter force consisted of F-102s deployed from Clark Air Base, Philippines, and a number of 1st Marine Air Wing (MAW) F-4Bs, augmented with forces drawn from tactical fighter units. Hawk missiles of the Army and Marines constituted the ground complement to air defense. Early warning was difficult in a tactical theater such as RVN, because of the lack of forward nets enabling earlier detection and because of the heavy workload imposed on the radar system already in place.

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## CHAPTER III

### 7AF AND THE OUT-COUNTRY WAR

Between 1966 and 1968, the Seventh Air Force Commander was responsible for a vast array of air resources, perhaps the greatest variety ever assembled in one theater of operations. As the addition of these forces proceeded rapidly during 1964 and 1965, it became apparent that a new dimension to the conflict required a command and control arrangement and system much more sophisticated than the one previously in existence. In that light, the evolution of 7AF can be traced against the background of a rapidly changing situation. Effective application of its airpower was complicated not only by an expanded spectrum of air operations, but also by the presence of different services and by the involvement of different nations. From rather inauspicious beginnings in April 1961, 7AF (formerly 2d Air Division) became the most potent air component in the USAF.

#### An Air Division in RVN

The roots of 7AF, and of the subsequent headquarters echelon known as 7AF/13AF, go back to command arrangements associated with PACOM, when CINCPAC became the unified commander for the Pacific Area. Thirteenth Air Force (known as the "Jungle Air Force") constituted one of the establishments over which CINCPAC exercised operational control through CINCPACAF, the Air Component Commander. The difficulty in sorting out subsequent command relationships can often be overcome by recognizing that 13AF was a permanent fixture in PACOM, and that 7AF was established solely to prosecute the Air War in SEA. While 7AF is an ad hoc organization and will probably be discontinued when the

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situation permits, 13AF will remain. This, coupled with the need to placate Thai political feelings, helps explain why 7AF and 13AF seemed to become inextricably intertwined. Usually, ~~7AF exercised operational control over Thai-~~ based units, and 13AF exercised command, less operational control. In all likelihood, full command would revert to 13AF with the demise of 7AF; thus, it was desirable to retain lines of authority embracing a modicum of permanence to facilitate a return to a situation in which a large component such as 7AF was no longer deemed necessary.

An advanced echelon of 13AF (an F-102 Detachment) had been established at Don Muang Airport, Bangkok, Thailand, in April 1961. In that same year, a photo reconnaissance capability became operative in Thailand and RVN to assist the MAAGs. There was also a gradual buildup of the ground radar capability in RVN--along with the introduction of Air Force advisers at Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa Air Bases. Detachment 7, 13AF, was established at Tan Son Nhut in mid-November; it later was changed to the 2d ADVON, with a Brigadier General in charge. By December 1961, this same officer became Chief, Air Force Section, MAAG, Vietnam. His small staff established a TACS, formulated plans, and determined communications and logistics requirements. <sup>1/</sup> During 1962, as troop carrier squadrons, other fighter and recon aircraft, and base support units were introduced into SEA, along with large amounts of supplies, the task of management became more complicated. Simultaneously, the ADVON structure proved more unwieldy. Recall that MACV was established in February 1962; thus, by the end of the year, USAF operations had also expanded to a point that a standard Air Force component was deemed essential. As a result, Headquarters, 2d Air

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Division, replaced the 2d ADVON in October 1962. A standard air division made it easier for the USAF commander to perform his function as the air component commander under COMUSMACV.<sup>2/</sup>

## Seventh Air Force Established

For approximately four years, the placement of an air division seemed to be the answer as 2AD performed the management functions associated with the air war. This situation prevailed until a new set of circumstances made it apparent in 1966 that an even larger headquarters staff was called for. But until then, 2AD masterminded the rapid buildup of air resources during 1964 and 1965, and grappled with the key command-control issues that emerged. Basically, the problems confronted by the Comdr, 2AD, stemmed from two sources: (1) he worked for COMUSMACV and CINCPACAF; and (2) some of his air assets were based in Thailand. Perhaps one more should be added, the conducting of airstrikes in RVN, as well as in NVN and Laos.

One of the most important major reorganizations of the USAF command structure in SEA occurred on 8 July 1965. Changes were instituted to cope with existing problems, while simultaneously providing less complex, more direct and clear-cut lines of authority to more effectively prosecute the war in this complicated environment. All direct links between 2AD and 13AF were severed; instead, the two commands operated separately, but directly under PACAF and on a mutually supporting basis. The Comdr, 2AD, became responsible for all SEATO-US unilateral plans and operations, for a new mainland air defense region, and for a deputy at Udorn, Thailand, to oversee 2AD responsibilities in Thailand. Thirteenth Air Force undertook the air defense of WESTPAC South Air Defense

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region, a smaller area excluding mainland SEA. It also provided support to 2AD as directed by CINCPACAF and took over responsibility for the bases in Thailand. A Deputy, 2AD/13AF, was created to act as a single, Air Force focal point for activity out of Thailand. The Thais found this arrangement politically acceptable. Thus, the Dep Comdr, 2AD/13AF could exercise operational control of air units in Thailand for 2AD and could exercise support responsibilities to these same units for 13AF. Finally, the Dep Comdr, 2AD/13AF, was responsible for providing a close liaison with the American Ambassador in Laos regarding air support in that country. COMUSMACTHAI had no responsibility for USAF operations in Thailand, other than the work of the AFGP assigned to JUSMAGTHAI. These command arrangements seemed to facilitate a compromise of various requirements and issues stemming from a multi-nation environment, service traditions, mission directives, and conducting airstrikes.<sup>3/</sup> Altered very little since its inception, this is perhaps the best evidence that the basic reorganization helped iron out prevailing problems.

However successfully this reorganization dealt with command relationships, it could not satisfy other demands created by the expanded nature of the air war. Very simply, the great variety of forces introduced into RVN from 1965 to 1966, in conjunction with the multiplicity of missions assigned to the air component commander, created the requirement for a much larger headquarters staff. On 1 April 1966, Hq 7AF, was organized at Tan Son Nhut and assigned to PACAF; 2AD was discontinued, and Detachment 1, Hq 7AF, was organized at Udorn RTAFB.<sup>4/</sup> The large span of control gradually acquired by 2AD and the increased composition of USAF resources, suggested the need for a commensurate organizational structure, one provided by a numbered air force. (As if to crown that date as

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special in other ways, two other significant events occurred: (1) NAVFORV was established to exercise operational control of U.S. Naval Forces in RVN and act as the Naval Component Commander; and (2) CINCPAC assigned COMUSMACV primary responsibility for armed and photo recon, and intelligence analysis in Route Package I.) Creation of 7AF did not alter any other command relationships; it only laid the groundwork for a larger staff to manage the air war.

## Commander, 7AF

The Commander, Seventh Air Force, reported directly to COMUSMACV and to CINCPACAF. To the former (or COMUSSEASIA if activated), he was responsible for tasks assigned to the Air Component Commander within the MACV structure, and as Dep COMUSMACV for Air, he performed other additional functions described in Chapter II. With regard to the in-country war, he was given the following missions in support of COMUSMACV: tactical airlift, air traffic control, search and rescue, close air support, and reconnaissance for U.S., FMAF, and RVNAF units. At air bases where 7AF had primary mission requirements, the Comdr, 7AF, performed real estate functions (See MACV Dir. 405-2). In coordination with MACV elements, he exercised operational control of logistical programs, maintained liaison with the VNAF on air traffic control and navigational aids, and managed segments of the Military Assistance Program concerning air matters. Finally, he provided weather and aerial port services for COMUSMACV and supported the in-country Revolutionary Development program through Civic Action.<sup>5/</sup>

The Seventh Air Force area of responsibility also included North Vietnam and a few others designated by higher authority. Related to these, the Seventh Air Force Commander most nearly fulfilled his responsibilities as a subordinate

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commander under CINCPACAF. In regard to one of these areas, air defense of mainland SEA, he came under the direct command of PACAF. In another area, airstrikes in Route Packages V and VIA, he was also responsible to CINCPACAF. Briefly stated, in the chain of command from PACOM, the Comdr, 7AF, was both a subordinate commander of CINCPACAF for those matters that were the latter's responsibility and an Air Component Commander or Deputy for Air of COMUSMACV for those matters that were MACV's responsibility.<sup>6/</sup> In performing the basic task of conducting and controlling Air Force operations in SEA, 7AF had three general areas in which to concentrate air resources: close air support and tactical airlift in the Republic of Vietnam, interdiction and close air support in Laos, and strategic destruction and interdiction in North Vietnam.<sup>7/</sup> The enormity of this challenge which confronted the Commander, Seventh Air Force, may be realized by simply capsulizing his position thusly: a "dual-hatted" Commander, responsible to two bosses for the conduct of air operations in four countries utilizing three different degrees of authority; and managing, at times, the air resources of the USAF, USN, USMC, USA, VNAF, and FMAF. This complexity and wearing of two hats also existed at the next lower level of command to be examined.

## Command Relationships in Thailand

Command arrangements in Thailand were essentially an Air Force matter; while COMUSMACTHAI had no forces assigned, numerous USAF resources were positioned there. (An AF general was also appointed COMUSMACTHAI in 1969.) The existing chain of command relationships involving CINCPACAF, COMUSMACV, and COMUSMACTHAI were in no way changed by the creation of the one agency through

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which all elements in Thailand worked; namely the Deputy Commander, 7AF/13AF. This officer, or the headquarters he commanded, might be likened to the spine of a three-sided revolving door, three-sided because PACAF, 7AF, and 13AF revolved through him regarding the Thai matters for which each bore ultimate responsibility. The Dep Comdr, 7AF/13AF, provided each with an entry into the Thai command picture. He represented the Commanders of PACAF, 7AF, and 13AF as the "single senior USAF representative in Thailand on policy, administration, and operations."<sup>8/</sup>

With regard to policy, the Dep Comdr, 7AF/13AF, served as PACAF's single point of contact for the U.S. Embassies in Thailand and Laos and for COMUSMACV on matters of joint concern. With regard to operations, he was directly subordinate to the Comdr, 7AF, and performed any functions so directed; for the latter, he exercised operational control of USAF strike, air defense, search and rescue, special air warfare, and reconnaissance forces in Thailand. On paper, it appeared as though the Comdr, 7AF, directed the Thai-based units through 7AF/13AF. This was to satisfy the Thais that USAF units in Thailand were under one USAF commander with Headquarters in Thailand. In fact, the Comdr, 7AF, had direct operational control of units, just as he had operational control of Hq 7AF/13AF, and could assign operational functions or not, or go directly to the headquarters or not, as he saw fit (Fig. 2). It is also important to understand that while COMUSMACV had operational control of 7AF in RVN, he exercised no such control of USAF tac air resources in Thailand. With regard to administration and support, the Dep Comdr, 7AF/13AF acted according to his capability on behalf of the Comdr, 13AF, who had command, less operational

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control, and support responsibilities for all Thai-based units. Contingency and long-range planning were accomplished by Hq, 13AF, at Clark, along with responsibility for all comptroller and fiscal matters associated with the Dep Comdr, 7AF/13AF.<sup>9/</sup> Use of the 7AF/13AF Deputy Commander did not in any way relieve the users (7AF and 13AF) of responsibility or authority vested in them for air operations and support in SEA, nor did this use alter command relationships between CINCPAC and his component or subordinate unified commanders.

The functional structure through which the Dep Comdr, 7AF/13AF, operated was the directorate system. This organization was comprised as follows: (1) Directorates of Operations and Intelligence, with manpower authorizations identified as Det. 1, Hq 7AF and (2) Directorates of Materiel, Security, Safety, Information, and Administration, with manpower authorizations identified as Det. 7, Hq, 13AF. A small liaison office was established in Bangkok as the central point of contact on policy matters for which PACAF required representation, and a branch was located in the Royal Thai Air Force, Air Operations Center (AOC) in Bangkok to act as 7AF/13AF liaison for integration of USAF/RTAF air defense capabilities.<sup>10/</sup> With the organization as outlined, the Dep Comdr, 7AF/13AF, managed his assigned responsibilities in five general areas: air defense, tactical air operations, diversion authority, emergency authority, and special operations. The most important responsibility throughout these areas, one usually implied or explicitly stated, was the assumption of command of 7AF in the event all command and control facilities at Tan Son Nhut were destroyed or rendered inoperative. While the Dep Comdr, 7AF/13AF, did nothing operationally without the expressed approval of the Seventh Air Force Commander, he nevertheless had to

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be prepared to assume control of tactical forces committed to out-country operations when directed. The facilities were available at Udorn to insure that any assumption of command and control could be accomplished--and without delay.<sup>11/</sup>

The last command relationship in Thailand frequently misunderstood was that regarding Task Force Alpha (TFA). While TFA was assigned to Hq, 13AF, it came under the operational control of 7AF. The Comdr, 13AF, exercised command, less operational control, through the Deputy Commander, 7AF/13AF.<sup>12/</sup> TFA assisted 7AF in targeting the forces for the interdiction program in Laos. On a trial basis, TFA exercised "operational direction" of forces within the COMMANDO HUNT area during the period of November 1968 to March 1969. It did so through Sycamore Control, a TFA Command and Control function in the Operations Directorate which was parallel in structure to the Infiltration Surveillance Center operations.<sup>13/</sup> Basically, TFA was a wing level organization (and was so depicted on 7AF organizational charts), but with this difference--the Commander, TFA, was authorized "direct coordination" with all 7AF, 7AF/13AF staff agencies, and with eight specified units for the purpose of "obtaining support for IGLOO WHITE operations or for assistance in controlling forces in the COMMANDO HUNT area...."<sup>14/</sup>

Thus, in some respects, TFA was a unique organization created to manage the IGLOO WHITE System, the most publicized element of which was the Infiltration Surveillance Center (ISC) located at Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. Within the ISC, operations, intelligence, and technical activities were merged to receive sensor data and to evaluate and utilize the sensor-derived information for

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directing interdiction operations against enemy supply routes through southern Laos.<sup>15/</sup> This sensor-derived information was relayed from the ISC to the 7AF Command Center or to the ABCCC aircraft (or passed in-house to Sycamore) for confirmation and strike on a real-time basis. It was also used non-real-time for development of targets at the ISC and subsequent nomination for the 7AF frag order. Close liaison involving 7AF, TFA, and the ABCCC complemented the IGL00 white System performance; the result was an enhancement of 7AF's coordinated management of the entire interdiction effort throughout the panhandle of Laos. There seems little doubt that the IGL00 WHITE System has performed well enough in SEA to warrant consideration for future integration into the TACS.<sup>16/</sup>

## Command and Control During ROLLING THUNDER

The ROLLING THUNDER campaign began in March 1965 and terminated on 1 November 1968. For approximately three and one-half years, U.S. aircraft systematically attacked targets in North Vietnam (NVN) to make the North Vietnamese pay a price, to increase the cost of their continued aggression and support of the insurgencies in RVN and Laos. "What began as relatively minor, 'show of force' retaliatory raids...gradually evolved into a full-scale air interdiction campaign primarily aimed at destroying enemy supplies, lines of communication...and will to continue the war."<sup>17/</sup>

The out-country air war precipitated its own debate on centralizing operational control and management of ROLLING THUNDER, much like the controversy in-country over another facet of the same issue. But unlike control of air in RVN, responsibility for ROLLING THUNDER strikes was never in any way centralized in the theater. At the outset, CINCPACAF was of the opinion that strikes against

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NVN should be controlled by the USAF commander in the Pacific. He argued that flexibility was diminished when application of strike forces was tied to limited geographic areas.<sup>18/</sup> His arguments fell on deaf ears. Command and control arrangements for airstrikes against NVN were not centralized at any point below CINCPAC, who exercised control of USAF units through CINCPACAF and the Seventh Fleet aircraft through CINCPACFLT. Despite these Air Force objections, Adm. Ulysses S. G. Sharp divided NVN into six Route Packages (RPs), which were then assigned either to the Air Force or Navy. The closest thing to centralization in the theater was the ROLLING THUNDER Coordinating Committee, an agency created so that 2AD (later 7AF) and Commander Task Force (CTF) 77 representatives could coordinate Air Force and Navy activities.<sup>19/</sup> Eventually, ROLLING THUNDER was conducted under the direction of three commanders. Operating in the Gulf of Tonkin, CTF 77 conducted strikes in RP II, III, IV, and VIB--the areas of CINCPACFLT responsibility. CINCPACAF was responsible for RP V and VIA, and 7AF conducted strikes there with Thai-based aircraft which were referred to as the Alpha Strike Force. COMUSMACV was responsible for RP I, and his Air Component Commander (7AF) conducted air operations in this area. Thus, responsibility was fragmented according to the geographic area.<sup>20/</sup>

Strike operations themselves were subject to numerous restraints from the very beginning. Some of these were self-imposed by the U.S. government because of political sensitivity to the bombing manifested around the world. Other activities were necessarily tempered by accommodations or concessions that were made to host countries. Finally, the decision to divide NVN into geographic areas of responsibility could not help but affect the conduct of ROLLING THUNDER.

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These factors all influenced command and control of strike operations; however, the history of restraints over the years was a story of gradual relaxation. Eventually, the strict "package system" ~~of responsibility~~ gave way to conditions and provisions which permitted strike forces from either or both services to drop ordnance in areas of NVN other than their own--thus improving flexibility. A similar evolution was apparent regarding target lists, which initially had the tightest of controls clamped on them by JCS. While the selection of targets was always controlled by JCS and CINCPAC, a more flexible grouping was developed so that tactical commanders could plan and execute against: (1) targets that could be struck without prior JCS or CINCPAC approval; and (2) targets requiring prior JCS or CINCPAC approval for initial or repeat airstrikes.<sup>21/</sup>

Out-country air operations were managed by the Director of Combat Operations (DOC). Beginning with the USAF strikes that launched ROLLING THUNDER and continuing beyond the 1 November 1968 bombing halt, the 7AFCC (Blue Chip) became the focal point for control of Alpha Strike Force operations, as well as all other out-country air operations. Unlike the situation in RVN, these air activities were managed and executed solely by U.S. personnel and forces. Generally, the Alpha Strike Force attacked NVN twice daily. A fairly stereotyped and syncopated scenario developed as supporting aircraft of all types preceded the strike "birds" in departing runways in Thailand, eventually taking up positions that would assist the strike force in a myriad of ways--from electronic countermeasures (ECM) and refueling to control and search and rescue (SAR). Each day's mission was closely monitored by the alternate 7AF/13AF Command Center (in the event assumption of control was necessary), while the 7AFCC Senior Duty Officer retained primary responsibility for orchestrating the strike through

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numerous command and control elements. COLLEGE EYE (AEW) and RIVET TOP (MIG warning) supplemented tactical unit operations centers and ground radar stations to provide as much information and assistance as possible on enemy threats and support of friendly forces. A specially equipped C-130 (Crow), which could refuel helicopters, served as an airborne SAR coordinator. ABCCC aircraft were used as extensions of Blue Chip for controlling interdiction strikes in Laos and RP I, and if the need arose, the 7AFCC could talk to CTF 77 through a liaison communications center located at Hq 7AF.<sup>22/</sup>

As far as the overall campaign was concerned, ROLLING THUNDER was centrally managed at the CINCPAC level. As for USAF participation in it, planning, tasking, and execution of forces were closely controlled and centralized at Hq, 7AF, through DOC and the 7AFCC. Once the execution order for the Alpha Strike Force was issued, a host of elements made the command and control system function. From rudimentary beginnings in 1965, this system became progressively more sophisticated, particularly through the introduction of automated systems.

## Automated Command and Control

The massive workload associated with 7AF planning and directing of the air operations in support of COMUSMACV and CINCPACAF inevitably led to the placement of some major automated subsystems in SEA, both to ease that workload and to eliminate errors pervading manual systems. In 1967, it was also felt that the 7AFCC should have the capacity for real time control of ROLLING THUNDER and monitoring of the air battle. The proposed answer to both was project COMBAT LIGHTING, the integration of several interrelated subsystems designed to provide Comdr, 7AF and his staff with automated displays in the Command Center and with

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an automated reports and data system. However, the history of automated command and control in SEA really began with the PACAF Integrated Automated Command and Control System (PIACCS), a capability long-desired and then proposed and approved in 1964.<sup>23/</sup>

Initially, equipment was located at Fifth Air Force and PACAF, along with a communications net at 7AF and 13AF, to give PACAF the first elements of a semi-automated command and control system. The increased tempo of the war, the distances involved throughout PACOM, the need for rapid and direct communications for responsive control and support--all these factors accentuated the need for automation. A duplicate of the Hq USAF Integrated Command and Control System was installed at PACAF in June 1966, but it was rated unsatisfactory. This resulted in the development of the PIACCS, which ultimately called for a dedicated digital data communications network to each PACAF operating location and to computers at each headquarters. The network would have permitted "the direct transmission of pre-formatted operational reports from tactical units to data processing centers at 7AF, PACAF, and other command centers" and allowed direct teletype communications among command and control centers such as 7AFCC, 7AF/13AFCC, TACC, and TUOCs.<sup>24/</sup> The status of the project as it concerned PACAF and 7AF was in doubt as this report was being written. Similar doubt had been cast over some of the remaining elements associated with project COMBAT LIGHTING.

COMBAT LIGHTING was designed to assist the Commander, 7AF, accomplish his mission more effectively by providing him with a centralized tactical airspace management system--an automated display of tactical operations over northern Thailand, NVN, and Laos, coupled with a capability for issuing warnings of

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proximity to the ChiCom border, MIG warnings, and SAM firings. The project proceeded in increments; some were completed, while others were not. SEEK DAWN consisted of two automated battle displays, one situated on Monkey Mountain near Da Nang and referred to as TACC North Sector, the other located at Udorn and called ATACC North Sector. By May 1969, three phases of the project had been completed, and track data were fed into computers at both locations from ground and airborne radars (PANAMA, BRIGHAM, and COLLEGE EYE), RIVET TOP, certain intelligence aircraft, the Naval Tactical Data System (NTDS), the Marine Tactical Data System (MTDS), and other sources. The information was correlated and displayed on command consoles for monitoring of air activities. Track data were updated approximately every six seconds. Computers at both locations were linked for crosstell of track information, and one computer was capable of operating both systems. <sup>25/</sup> SEEK VIEW was the code name for the last increment of the project, the installation of an identical computer system in the 7AFCC, which was to be connected with the installations at Monkey Mountain and Udorn. This last part of the program was canceled.

Finally, a discussion of automated command and control of forces may be completed with a glimpse at the automated reports and data system, SEEK DATA. SEEK DATA I was operational in June 1967; it permitted automated reports management--particularly the processing of combat reports such as OPREPs 4 and 5. SEEK DATA II was a further refinement designed to incorporate SEEK DATA I and also permit automated mission planning (frag preparation) and airlift management. <sup>26/</sup> At the time this report was prepared, SEEK DATA II was not operational.

In summary, the 7AF command and control complex consisted of numerous functional elements that permitted the use of manual and semiautomated facilities

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grouped together in a partially integrated system, enabling centralized planning and direction of forces. The systems which actually made up the complex and contributed in some way to the overall management of air activities over Thailand, Laos, and NVN were as follows <sup>27/</sup>

- . ABCCC (Airborne Command and Control)
- . CRC and CRP (flight following and advisory)
- . COLLEGE EYE (airborne early warning and control)
- . SEEK DATA I (automated reports management)
- . Infiltration Surveillance Center and TFA
- . Joint SAR Center (7AFCC and Crown)
- . SEEK SILENCE (secure air and ground voice communications)
- . SEEK DAWN (semiautomatic MIG/Border warning)
- . Navy Tactical Data System
- . Marine Tactical Data System
- . Radio Relay Aircraft (XC-135)
- . IRON HORSE (enemy aircraft warning)

All subsequent plans for fully automated integration between PACAF and 7AF were being reviewed and revised at the end of this reporting period, in view of possible cutbacks and force reduction in SEA.

## Command and Control in Laos

Laos added yet another dimension to the complexity of command and control problems in SEA. Here, by Presidential directive, the U.S. Ambassador was responsible for the overall direction, coordination, and supervision of U.S. activities supporting the Royal Laotian Government (RLG). On the other hand, CINCPAC vested COMUSMACV with the responsibility for U.S. air operations over Laos and the passes from NVN into Laos. COMUSMACV, in turn, delegated numerous responsibilities in the area to the Comdr, 7AF, designating him responsible for planning, scheduling, coordinating, and executing airstrikes. These sorties from Thai-based aircraft were guaranteed to COMUSMACV by CINCPAC. On operational

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matters in Laos, and as coordinating authority for them, the Comdr, 7AF, was delegated responsibility and also authorized direct liaison with the U.S. Ambassador. To complete the chain, recall that 7AF derived operational control of U.S. strike forces in Thailand from PACAF. Lastly, USN and USMC strike coordination with 7AF was required for USN and USMC strike aircraft flying into Laos. These arrangements approximated for Laos, the Single Manager Concept in RVN. By January 1967, flexibility potential existed to use Thai-based aircraft in NVN or Laos and to use RVN-based units in RVN or Laos. Only a check imposed by the Thai Government prevented use of Thai-based units in RVN on a regular basis. This potential for triangular flexibility was in fact implemented in January 1968 to ease the pressure on Khe Sanh. <sup>28/</sup>

For analytical convenience, the air war in Laos was frequently viewed as two conflicts: one an air operation in support of RLG counterinsurgency efforts, and the other an air interdiction campaign against the NVN logistics pipeline through Laos into RVN. The U.S. Ambassador in Laos exercised authority in ways that had an impact on both "wars". He affected both by his authority to validate targets and through his direct control of the Military Assistance Program (MAP), and paramilitary operations against the insurgency. The command and control complexities in Laos are more clearly understood if these relationships are kept in mind: <sup>29/</sup>

*"The U.S. Ambassador...held primary responsibility to our Government for the situation in Laos....The diplomatic 'chain of command' proceeded from him to the State Department in Washington. His primary responsibility ended at the Laotian Border. The 7AF Commander, however, had wider and different responsibilities. His interests in Laos stemmed from relationship with COMUSMACV*

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*and CINCPAC (through CINCPACAF). Although responsive to the Laotian situation, he was directly concerned with SVN and NVN as well as most of Southeast Asia. The military command structure...also extended to Washington, but via CINCPAC and the JCS, to the Department of Defense."*

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## EPILOGUE

Command relationships in SEA were the product of several factors: historical developments, unified action armed forces tenets, operation in a multi-national environment, inter-service traditions, and the nature of war itself. To a considerable degree they resolved any conflicting political and military issues stemming from the interplay of the above factors, while simultaneously establishing clear lines of authority for prosecuting the war. Complexity characterized the entire command structure throughout the period under examination. It could hardly have been otherwise given the dynamic elements that were omnipresent. Because of the heavy responsibility placed on his shoulders, COMUSMACV exercised a significant influence on USAF command and control developments. In a related context, the Seventh Air Force Commander had to navigate between his position vis-a-vis COMUSMACV, as Air Component Commander, and his position vis-a-vis CINCPACAF, as a commander of a subordinate organization that probably would not always remain a permanent fixture of PACOM. At this point, 13AF and 7AF/13AF came into the picture. Many of the commanders in the theater had a kind of "double barreled" responsibility.

The 7AF command and control system in particular, especially the functional components, resulted from a rapid tactical buildup. From 1964 onward, numerous components were added or programmed. What began as a manual, scarcely integrated system was envisioned subsequently as becoming an integrated and automated one. However, circumstances dictated that the system develop to a point between the two extremes. It eventually consisted of manual and semiautomated facilities, which although partially integrated, did provide the elements necessary for

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centralized control of the air effort in conjunction with some decentralized direction. When attempting to understand the application of airpower in SEA, or the command and control system available to plan, direct, and control it, one factor was always prominent--that of balancing seemingly unlimited requirements against the limited resources available to satisfy them.

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\* All extracts from TOP SECRET documents have a classification no higher than SECRET.

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\* All extracts from TOP SECRET documents have a classification no higher than  
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