

18 JAN 1968

~~SECRET~~

MEMORANDUM

For your information

See Contact

any info regarding de-activation of station and please take note of equipment.

TO : BM via SOM/VTE
FROM : SCC/VTE
SUBJECT: L61 Recovery Trip Report

DATE: 1 January 1968

REF. No. R/S-L08-68/001

REC'D WAS JAN 16 1968

28/Dec.

Departed VTE 0758L, arrived L39 0922L via PBW. Standby for aircraft and information from AB-1 customer, however reported L61 area still not secured till 1400L, customer said will try to-morrow then returned L08 with PEA. It was too late to receive SOM's message for L39 RON while I arrived L08 at 1350L.

29/Dec.

Departed VTE by M/R/S 58Z 0830L, arrived L39 0950L. Proceed to AB-1 customer office. Have learnt that friendly troop already moved to L61 but security information still expecting from LS54 Army Headquarter. At P.M. I went to confirm with AB-1 customer again, said that search aircraft PCL still unable to land L61 presumed situation still questionable, the team probably will go there by to-morrow morning. Rough briefing has been given by AB-1 customer. Returned to L39 radio station for standby and RON.

30/Dec.

Arrived airport 0730L and proceeded to AB-1 customer office at 0820L. There PIC of H52 gave all SAR team briefing as following:

- 1) A red panel made by rubber cloth was handed over to me by customer.
- 2) I was appointed by PIC of H52 that I will on board H54, also I am supposed in the first aircraft to land at L61. As soon as aircraft touches ground, the aircraft will pull up and circling over head. All I have to do is open my signal panel with red color up place it to a location where considered suitable for chopper to pick up the bodies and myself.
- 3) If I receive ground fire, stay where I am with the red panel, lay down and do not move, the chopper will pick me up and forget about the bodies. No questions arose by team personnel after briefing then our ETD set 0900L proceeding to LS54 where one Lao army colonel and one liaison officer will be picked up. Both choppers standby on ground LS54 for final situation confirmation from L61.

~~SECRET~~

1/18/68
-enoy 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

Accidents
Missing Airplane

SECRET
MEMORANDUM

TO :

FROM :

SUBJECT: Cont'd

DATE:

REF. No.

Parties departed LS54 1107L, arrived L61 after few circling made in area and landed in front of the station about 50 yards. After we jumped off from the aircraft. The U.S AIR ATTACHE Capt (NAME UNKNON) and 3 U.S specialists directed to station with me, Captain told me to watch out the unfriendly's booby-trap. I got into the station and looked around has no bodies found, then I rushed to take some photos and walked alone carefully to check both side of the runway, I reached the TACAN area, not seen the rest of us, I also took some snap shots than follow the road to the bodies site. I arrived the body site, the rest of us already there, I have to wait them to complete inspection of all bodies search for possible praps before I can pack the bodies into the bag.

The first one bag was completed by AIRA personnel, it was our late radio operator K. Ratanakosoon, I opened the bag and use inside blanket to clean his face then I took a photo for him, I closed the bag and the local people brought the bag by walk to station site. I walked further about 30 feet where the smell was terrible beyond 30 feet away, one of U.S. Army captain was shown me how to package the bodies then he left the place with other inspection party to TACAN site. While the local people covered their noses and standed there, I could not speak any local language but I presented cigarettes to all soldiers and local people who besides to me, I started to open the blanket and bags to package each body, smell makes hard to breath without physical protection, thousands of flies on their bodies, all of them faces and began deterioraing but still identified except R/O K. Ratanakosoon still in good shape. Other completed three bodies packing in 20 minutes and delivered to station site with army truck, then I inhaled fresh air for about 5 minutes as much as I can, and all my uniforms got wet, 5 minutes later I went to station to double check if anything left, I walked into the building step by step, there radio log, message form and records all messed inside the operating room, the room was directly hit by shell blasted in the center of roofing and no walls left, broken glasses scattered over 30 feet away wide, only ~~four~~ SSB sets on the floor and one of them seems to be repairable, no tubes and crystals can be found inside, one airconditioner also considered repairable only cover damaged. I took one SSB set to the bodies site then I returned again to station to picked another airconditioner. Nothing can be done of the refrigerator due to time limited. I opened my signal panel and standby for chopper pick-up. About 30 minutes later H54 landed our site and H52 landed TACAN side at same time. I got one aircraft and pull up 4 bodies with the fly mechanic. Everything set and departed L61, arrived L39 about 2:00 P.M. returned to L08 by 545 L39/T08/L08 with bodies ATAL08 1707L.

AIR AMERICA

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MEMORANDUM

TO :
FROM :
SUBJECT: Cont'd

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Furthermore, R/O Ampol Chan-aium and R/M Sorita were captured by unfriendly reported by one of Lao paratrooper captain, he said they were taken away to 18 KM north of L61 (Houay Poun) on 27th Dec..

Viewing of no blood stain on station floor, I believed that all five of them (four R/Os one mechanic) had escaped the shell blast but obviously they were captured and three R/Os been shot to dead while run out for safe alone the road side (body site) about 1 KM away from the station.

As for destroyed equipment left on scene are:

One ea 90T150	(Repairable, brought back to VTE)
One ea 90S150	
Two ea 9SR	(Beyond repair)
Two ea Generators	(Completely burnt)
One ea Airconditioner	(Repairable, brought back to VTE)
One ea Ice box	(Beyond repair)

All WX observation equipment, personal effects and two telephone sets were lost.

Antenna masts (2) still standing with guy wires on, antennas missing.

HSE
SGC/VTE

cc: DCD/TPE - One set of photo attached
CS via BM OM/UDN
CU via VR KG KZ/VTE
File

LAST FLIGHTS: IN MEMORIUM



SO ENDS THE LAST
SENTENCE OF THE FINAL
PARAGRAPH OF A SAGA THAT
MAY HAVE AN EPILOGUE, BUT
NEVER A SEQUEL.

Why We Care

On Sunday the 30th of June 1974 the last flight schedule was published at the Air America Udorn, Thailand Base. Two Volpar Beech aircraft flown by Berl King and Jim Rhyne were being ferried to Saigon, Vietnam. Both King and Rhyne are aviation icons. This faded mimeographed schedule must surely hang framed on many an ex-employee's wall as it does mine.

C.J. Abadie, the Air America Vice President for Northern Thailand, asked his Assistant Richard Ford to write an appropriate commentary to be printed on the last flight schedule for this last day of operations in the Thailand/Laos region,

"So ends the last sentence of the final paragraph of a saga that may have an epilogue, but never a sequel. It has been to each participating individual an experience which varied according to their role and perspective. However, there is a common bond of knowledge and satisfaction of having taken part in something worthwhile, and with just a slight sense of pity for those lesser souls who could not, or would not, share in it.

This last flight schedule is dedicated to those for whom a previous similar schedule represented an appointment with their destiny."

Air America continued to fly the customer's requirements in Vietnam. Those operations came to an inglorious end in April of 1975. These events were recorded by film and have been viewed by the entire world for the last 34 years. This was a sad end to this saga that should have concluded much differently.

Civil Air Transport (CAT) began USG contract operations in Vientiane Laos in 1957. This division of CAT became Air America in 1959. The purpose of this aviation company in the Kingdom of Lao at the time was largely humanitarian. CAT/Air America aircraft flew many missions to drop food (rice) to Lao and Hmoung in northern Laos after a bad harvest. In 1961 the company added rotor wing (helicopter) aircraft based in Udorn which greatly increased operational capabilities. Short field Takeoff/Landing (STOL) aircraft had also been added to the fleet. These types of specialized aircraft required exceptionally skilled pilots, loadmasters, and maintenance support. Operations control, area security information specialists, and logistical capability developed to support flight operations in a very difficult and often dangerous environment. Navigation aids, landing strip and HLZ development, and weather forecasting services were rudimentary at best.

The ability of the CAT/Air America management to find, train, and control what we knew to be a very unusual (the term crazy is often used) team of employees for so many years, is now acknowledged as absolutely astounding. Over forty nationalities, worked, played, and often bled together. "Their individual experiences varied according to their role and perspective."

There were heroes and villains of course, as in any form of quasi-military human endeavor. But for those who toiled throughout the CAT/Air America, SAT, and Air Asia system, as well as our brothers in direct government service - the 'Customers', Continental Air Services (brand 'X') who were involved throughout this part and place of American

History, - who would have imagined that after nearly four decades that "common bond" remains so much a part of our lives. This bond is as solid and viable today as it was then, is now, and forever will be. - (except, of course, for those same lesser souls, who cannot or will not understand why.)

As civilian veterans of a very sad and misunderstood conflict in South Asia, we have not fared well in the media, or in some literature. Even though company aircraft and crews rescued more than 150 downed U.S. airmen, provided food and medical aid to thousands of refugees, assisted our primary customer's directed Lao and Hmong forces in holding down 2 crack NVA divisions until 1974 when they were released to participate in the final siege of Saigon that ended the war, very few knew or cared. But we knew that we had "taken part in something worthwhile."

The continued myths of customer/Air America participation in drug trafficking are still being found and published by unknowing and uncaring writers. The silly 'Air America' movie advanced this agenda by those who seek to savage the reputation of this great country, our customers, and our fellow workers.

So why do we care? Our fraternity—The CAT/Air America associations exists largely because we see and believe it is proper and necessary to meet periodically; to access our mutual place in history, learn of our consequences, and celebrate the lives of our friends and associates—our family, and particularly those who have gone before. We should continue to build and strengthen this legacy which history will receive from us. It is our 'epilogue'.

Over the years there was never a concentrated effort to refute these fables. We



Earthquake's Final Flight by Jeffrey W. Bass
Donated Courtesy of the Fairchild Corporation

now see that it is possible and entirely proper to stand up and confront those who would tarnish our history. Though the efforts of the Central Intelligence Agency who has provided the materials, and the McDermott Library at The University of Texas at Dallas, who has archived the true and accurate records for the unbiased students of history, we are greatly appreciative. We also are grateful that the Vietnam Center at the Texas Tech University that also provides excellent resources to serious students of history. This association is proud that so many of our members have contributed their personal accounts.

CAT/Air America associations are indebted to the McDermott Library where our Memorial plaque is located. It is our 'Wall' and provides a place for quiet and respectful contemplation of the lives of our brothers whose names were on the flight schedule of destiny.

"And God will raise you up on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn, make you shine
like the sun, and hold you in the palm
of His hand."

And hear the piper,

L. Michael Kandt,
Chaplain and General Secretary
Air America Association, Inc.

The CAT/Air America Memorial Plaque

Robert P Abrams 25 October 1964	James H Ackley MIA	Rizal S J AlaMarches 13 November 1965
Alfredo J Alor 19 May 1972	Prinya Ashavanond 1 October 1967	Timoteo Bagnot 8 March 1969
Howland D Baker 12 September 1964	John M Bannerman 23 November 1972	Paul C Barrow 15 April 1967
Nai Bay 4 October 1963	William H Beale Jr 6 April 1962	John W Beardsley 10 March 1970
Wallace H Bell 13 October 1962	Edmund J Benkert 28 November 1967	David W Bevan 13 August 1961
Roelf Bijil 17 November 1967	Gerald A Booth 17 July 1969	Howard H Boyles Jr MIA
Earle E Bruce Jr 8 August 1967	Wallace Bufford 6 May 1954	Lawrence R Buol 26 May 1956
William P Cagney 26 July 1962	Antonio C Calderon 17 June 1967	James C Campbell 18 June 1968
Reynaldo Castillo 8 September 1972	Pablo C Castro 12 March 1963	Jack W Cavill MIA
Montano L Centeno 27 July 1969	Prasit Chaichana 9 February 1973	W K Chan 29 July 1948
Ampol Chan Aium 24 December 1967	W H "Jimmy" Chang 9 December 1950	Yung Kung Chang 20 June 1964
Johnny Y H Chang 14 January 1966	Banching Chanluachai 11 June 1971	KV Chen 8 November 1949
N C Chen 20 June 1964	C K Chen 20 June 1964	H S Chen 20 June 1964
Ching Ching Chen 20 June 1964	Vivian Chen 16 February 1968	JoSeptemberh C Cheney 5 September 1963
Chudchai Chewcherngsuk MIA	Suthi Chimpaibul 23 November 1972	Duong Chinh 20 March 1968
H G Cho 20 June 1964	HY Choi 20 June 1964	C C Chou 20 June 1964
Herbert W Clark 2 June 1971	Terry D Clark 7 April 1973	Kevin N Cochrane 10 April 1970
Benjamin F Coleman 25 July 1972	John J Cooney 8 August 1967	Romeo B Crisologo 9 April 1966
Robert N Crone 12 February 1969	Ernesto M Cruz 10 January 1971	Cecelio Daque 14 January 1973
Ralph S Davis 19 August 1969	Eugene H Debruin MIA	Victor Dejamco 20 April 1966

PASSENGERS

REMARKS

Gerald C Delong 10 April 1970	Rafael A DeVera 24 July 1962	Charles T Dieffenbach 22 July 1964
Reggie Dimaculangan 22 December 1967	Carlos Dominguez 30 March 1971	Clarence N Driver MIA
Jean H Dubuque 16 July 1960	Bernardo L Dychitan 7 December 1968	Wayne W Esminger 6 March 1966
Darrel A Eubanks 13 August 1961	Frank Farthing 11 January 1967	Roberto O Finney 2 December 1972
Norwood N Forte 13 August 1961	Benjamin A Franklin 11 January 1967	William J Fraser 7 December 1968
Vincente B Garza MIA	William J Gibbs 13 May 1969	Norman A Grammer 14 August 1969
John Grover 25 July 1972	Joel M Gudahl 27 August 1972	Nguyen van Hahn 16 January 1972
Y S Har 29 July 1948	Truett H Harper 6 March 1970	Robert Hartle 28 April 1972
Howard F Heinrich 4 February 1962	Robert Heising 9 December 1950	Charles C Heritage 27 November 1968
Charles G Herrick 5 September 1963	Billy K Hester 10 April 1970	Fu Shuyong Ho 13 September 1967
Emmons B Hodgkins Jr 25 November 1968	Paul Holden 7 June 1967	D M Hoskins 18 June 1972
Kenneth A Houp 17 March 1971	Jack T Houston 5 December 1967	Tsuan ho Hsieh 27 December 1963
T H Hu 20 June 1964	Quang Huang Du 11 July 1964	Hua Ming Huang 16 October 1968
Throng Lien Huynh 12 August 1971	Alfredo Joco 31 July 1966	Norman R Jones 8 November 1949
Charles D Jones 5 March 1965	K C Kan 20 June 1964	Niram Kasorphon 3 July 1973
Howard W Kelly 16 January 1969	Throngkham Khammanephet 27 August 1972	Souphang Khamphanh 2 March 1969
Thanom Khanthaphengxay 25 July 1972	Paul Y H King 16 February 1968	George Kirkland 22 July 1973
Mu Shuen Kung 20 June 1964	Manu Latoi 18 April 1974	Thi Mau Le 5 September 1965
Xuan Duc Le 4 February 1962	Hsu Chiu Lee 4 February 1962	Z T Lee 17 August 1963
CY Lee 20 June 1964	Ruby Lee 20 June 1964	Robert E Lee 5 May 1968
V L Lee Jr 27 July 1974	Arthur Leonard 1 December 1969	John S Lewis 13 August 1961
Richard H Lieberth 12 October 1965	Benji Lin 20 June 1964	Herbert Liu 27 December 1963

The CAT/Air America Memorial Plaque (cont.)

Nicholas B Loss 11 December 1967	Justin G Mahony 27 September 1965	Feliciano C Manalo 16 July 1972
Abdul H Marchecar 6 December 1972	Bruce C Massey 23 March 1967	Charles H Mateer 30 May 1961
Milton N Matheson 16 January 1969	L T Mau 5 April 1969	Patrick F McCarthy 7 December 1968
Charles J McCarthy 23 November 1972	James B McGovern 6 May 1954	Roger B McKean 10 April 1970
William L Meek 31 December 1973	Jon Christian Merkel 18 February 1970	Charuk Milindre 17 July 1963
Robert S Moore 3 December 1972	Vincent Morales 1 July 1968	Harry E Mulholland 29 April 1971
Jon Charles Murray 25 November 1968	Thomas J Murray 4 March 1969	Frank Muscal 3 October 1965
Caferino B Nabung 11 July 1961	Kenekeo Narissack MIA	Gideon A Newton 17 July 1963
Edward Norwich 19 July 1949	Charles L Osterman 7 April 1973	Norman M Owens 22 October 1967
John L Oyer 27 September 1965	Cornelio N Pascual 18 August 1964	W A Peng MIA
Phanomphom Phochan 24 December 1967	Hua Khan Phuoc 31 December 1966	Nguyen Thi Phuoc 5 April 1969
Lowell Z Pirkle 3 August 1967	Lester M Porter 25 November 1968	Harvey B Potter 2 March 1970
Billy P Pratt 22 September 1971	Prasit Promsuwan MIA	Gerald I Prudhomme 17 July 1963
William P Pruner 14 January 1966	Lloyd Randel 24 April 1972	James A Rasmussen 18 February 1962
Kosoom Ratanakosoom 24 December 1967	James E Rausch 12 June 1972	William E Reeves 27 August 1972
Baltazar Reyes 25 November 1968	Frederick J Riley 27 November 1962	George L Ritter MIA
Hury D Rogers 10 April 1970	Valeriano P Rosales 7 April 1973	Corrintang Samburan 17 February 1972
Albert Sandoval 24 August 1964	Roger J Sarno 13 August 1961	Meiko Sase 11 April 1969
Praves Satarsakij 27 August 1972	Khamphonh Saysongkham MIA	Alexander Scandalis 5 July 1965

Norman A Schwartz
3 December 1952

K H Shia
20 June 1964

Milton E S Marcht
10 April 1970

Wilson P Smith
15 March 1973

B Somchai
23 November 1972

Sampas Sreesuraj
6 January 1968

William J Sullivan
12 April 1962

Narong Tantilohakul
17 July 1963

Nguyen Van Thai
14 January 1966

Trikrit Thuttanon
2 June 1971

Nit Tongkorn
24 December 1967

Roy F Townley
MIA

Leon M Tucker
21 September 1966

George A Varney
6 April 1962

S C Wang
2 June 1971

T W Wen
9 December 1950

John W Wilmont Jr
19 May 1966

Glen R Woods
14 August 1969

C Youthipana
22 July 1966

Welcome A Scott
30 September 1960

K H Shih
20 June 1964

Franklin D Smith
12 October 1965

Robert C Snoddy
3 December 1952

R Somphone
16 February 1966

Somboon Sripa
6 January 1968

Eduardo T Sunga
26 November 1968

Clyde T Tarbet
29 July 1948

Prasidhi Thanee
MIA

Yik Chiu To
MIA

Jaime Torres
19 March 1967

Earl Trager
7 December 1969

BY Van
20 June 1964

George A Verdon
17 July 1963

Arnold Weir
1 April 1949

H C Weng
20 June 1964

Walter L Wizbowski
30 May 1961

Aubrey A Wooten
17 July 1963

L S Yu
27 December 1963

Pratheep Sermsakul
11 October 1971

Buncha Sirisapya
4 July 1969

Thomas C Smith
22 February 1969

Louis B Soha
9 October 1956

Khamouth Sousadalay
4 February 1972

Herbert S Strouss
4 February 1962

Betty Tang
16 February 1968

James Tate
26 June 1967

Frank G Thorsen
32 July 1973

S L (Eddie) Tong
26 November 1960

Vichit Tovira
18 June 1968

T B Trai
22 June 1969

Tu Van
28 August 1972

Boumy Vongachak
28 December 1970

Edward A Weissenback
MIA

Leonard I Wiehrdt
8 April 1972

K S Wong
26 November 1960

Morimitsu Yazima
20 June 1962

Chaveng Yuphaphin
25 November 1968