

On-the-spot coverage of Army cold war activities is the mission of Department of the Army Special Photographic Office

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Soldiers with Cameras

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SOMEWHERE in the Republic of Viet Nam a patrol wades waist-deep through a rice paddy in pursuit of the Viet Cong. With them moves a U. S. soldier armed with a 35mm motion picture camera, alert to

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"shoot" any fast-breaking skirmish.

In the heat of the El Peten jungle, Guatemalan soldiers with their American Civic Action advisors labor hard on a road building project. An Army photographer captures the scene in a filmed progress report.

These are but two examples of the daily history-recording and history-

making activities of the Department of the Army Special Photographic Office known as DASPO.

This recently-created unit has the mission of providing Department of the Army with timely pictorial coverage of the Army's numerous, global Cold War activities—to bring to the halls of the Pentagon a vivid presentation of the Army's daily work around the world.

A big order, to be sure, even in the jet age. But already hard-driving DASPO cameramen have provided the Department of the Army with hundreds of still pictures and thousands of feet of motion picture film—most of it in color—on the Army's world-wide Cold War efforts. Film coverage has extended to a dozen countries in Asia, Africa, Central and South America, in addition to Okinawa, Hawaii and locations in continental United States.

DASPO's small, mobile, lightly equipped photo teams have thus enabled the numerous briefing sessions at Department of the Army and higher level to come alive with colorful, high-impact motion picture footage. Pentagon briefing officers at all levels are now able to spice their presentations with freshly produced film, shot only days earlier. No longer must the outdated slide or motion picture be relied upon for illustrative aids.

Officers of the Chief Signal Officer's Audio-Visual Communications Directorate (formerly Army Pictorial Division) had long felt the need for a quick reaction photographic unit with teams located strategically throughout the world—a unit designed for the sole purpose of procuring documentary coverage on the Army in action.

Until DASPO was established, such a capability was lacking. Reliance for documentary motion picture footage was placed upon photographic units and personnel assigned to major field commands throughout the Army. An

independent unit within the Army was advocated as the only adequate solution.

With the establishment of DASPO in mid 1962 under Lt. Col. Arthur A. Jones, two elements were organized and deployed—the U. S. Army Special Photographic Detachment, Pacific, and the U. S. Army Special Photographic Detachment, Panama.

The 24-man Pacific unit took up headquarters at Fort Shafter, Hawaii. Immediately, photographic teams were deployed throughout the Pacific area, wherever significant Army Cold War activities were under way. Emphasis initially was given to operations in Republic of Viet Nam and Thailand.

The seven-man Panama Detachment established its home base at Fort Clayton, Canal Zone. From there DASPO cameramen fanned out across Central and South America to record widespread Army programs.

Next, a capability to produce finished documentary motion pictures was created with a staff writer and staff film editor added to the headquarters element.

With the assistance of experienced personnel of the Army Pictorial Center at Astoria, Long Island, a finished "answer print" of U. S. Army Special Bulletin No. 1 was delivered to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Military Operations on 6 September 1962. Since then, the regular delivery of DASPO Special Bulletins has become a monthly event of interest in numerous Department of Army agencies and offices.

Simultaneously, DASPO began organizing what was to become a 21-man CONUS special photographic detachment. Based at the Army Pictorial Center, this unit has the mission of covering Army stateside Cold War programs and reinforcing, if necessary, oversea detachments. Thus, within a year of its establishment, the framework of a globe-spanning DASPO operation was in being.

TO MAKE DASPO's services readily available to Department of the Army offices and agencies, a simplified procedure has been established. Activities desiring photographic coverage of specific overseas or continental United States Cold War programs need only refer their requirement to the Doctrine, Organization and Training Directorate, Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development (ACSFOR), which has now assumed general staff responsibility for this activity.

Upon ACSFOR approval, the requirement will be forwarded to the appropriate oversea detachment commander, if applicable, through the major oversea commander involved. DASPO detachment photo teams follow through with professional, comprehensive coverage.

Immediately after exposure, foot-

age is forwarded direct from the field to the Army Pictorial Center for laboratory processing. DASPO headquarters reviews the processed film and immediately forwards the material to ACSFOR.

Direct channels of communication are authorized between photographers in the field and the New York headquarters. In this way, problems arising during coverage are quickly resolved.

DASPO motion picture footage and still pictures serve a variety of purposes—not only for staff briefings and production of special film bulletins, but also for Army information needs.

Now Pentagon planners and the public alike have the benefit of on-the-spot coverage—close up and in color—of the many-faceted Cold War activities of the Army around the world.

Briefing sessions in Pentagon are supplied with filmed records of Army activities world wide, such as this resupply movement by water in Republic of Viet Nam.

