

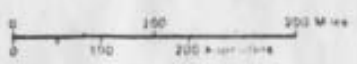
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**AIR WEATHER SERVICE
IN
SOUTHEAST ASIA
1961-1976
A PICTORIAL ACCOUNT**



**MILITARY AIRLIFT COMMAND
SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE
ILLINOIS**

Mainland Southeast Asia



AIR WEATHER SERVICE

I N

SOUTHEAST ASIA

1961 -- 1976

A P I C T O R I A L A C C O U N T

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Office of MAC History

1979

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"In military air operations weather is the first step in planning and the final determining factor in execution of any mission."

General Carl A. "Tooney" Spaatz
30 June 1948

Preface

The Air Weather Service became involved in weather support to the United States Air Force and Army in Southeast Asia in December 1961, when it placed a forecaster in Saigon to support some reconnaissance aircraft. It received the first formal statement of requirements for support at Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa, Vietnam, and Don Muang, Thailand, on December eighth.

The rapid buildup of the Air Force and Army units in Southeast Asia was reflected in the increased weather support requirements and Air Weather Service's response to those needs. Weather support increased and waned as needed through the advisory period, the combat period, and withdrawal from Southeast Asia.

Mr. John F. Fuller, the Air Weather Service historian, suggested that since the history office had so many good photographs of weather personnel and operations in Southeast Asia that I screen them for compilation into a pictorial history. The following is the result. I am grateful for the direction and assistance given me by Mr. Fuller and Mr. Charles W. Dickens, Chief, Office of MAC History.

Margaret C. Faulbaum
Margaret C. Faulbaum
Editorial Assistant to
the AWS Historian
Office of MAC History
15 March 1979

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The Setting



The face of Southeast Asia was varied and beautiful,-- long coastline, many rivers, lowlands, rugged mountains and dense vegetation.







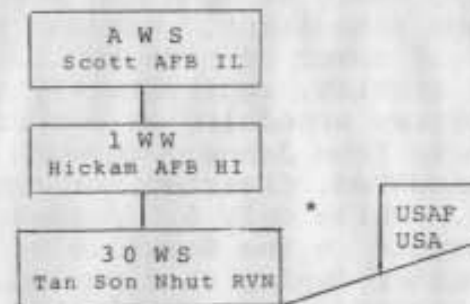
Above, Tuy Hoa Airfield, RVN, and below, Tay Ninh, RVN. These photos show typical clouds of Southeast Asia. Position of clouds on mountain gives cloud height.



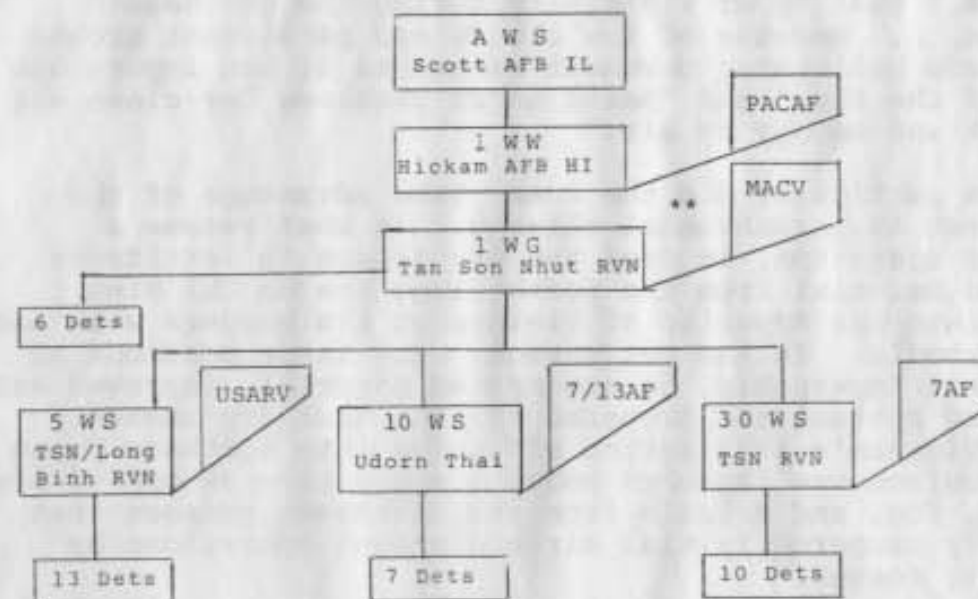
ORGANIZATION

1962 - 1965

(Advisory Assistance)



1966 - 1972
(Combat Support)



* Weather Squadron Provisional (1st) activated 25 May 1962, inactivated 8 November 1962, when 30WS was activated. The seven dets organized 1 January 1962 grew to 25 dets by 8 July 1966.

** 1WG activated 8 July 1966, together with 5th and 10WSs, and 30WS reassigned to 1WG.

As in all wars past, weather was a factor that bore directly on the success or failure of operations conducted by both sides during the Southeast Asian conflict. For example, Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, U.S. Navy, Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), in referring to the air operations of January-March 1966 (Rolling Thunder 48), wrote that "weather was a limiting factor throughout the period" which "caused a high percentage of cancellations or diversions and greatly limited the information obtained from bomb damage assessment," because pilots often "found 100 percent cloud cover or haze to 12,000 or 14,000 feet." Excluding B-52 sorties, approximately one out of every five strike sorties scheduled or conducted by USAF aircraft in Southeast Asia from January through 15 December 1966, were either cancelled, diverted, or rendered ineffective due to weather. While only 6.7 percent of the sorties ordered for targets in the Republic of Vietnam were affected by weather during that period, 41.9 percent of those against targets in North Vietnam were affected.

Writing later of the 1968 battle for Khe Sanh, General William C. Westmoreland, U.S. Army, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV), noted that weather was "another critical factor [which] had to be considered," that "poor visibility during the northeast monsoon, . . . because of low clouds and persistent ground fog, made helicopter movement hazardous if not impossible much of the time" and "posed major problems for close air support and supply by air."

In particular did the enemy take advantage of the Southeast Asian monsoonal climate. In what became a classic operation, he used the dry season to infiltrate men and materiel from the north along the Ho Chi Minh Trail into the Republic of Vietnam at its borders with Laos and Cambodia. In the wet season, with large portions of the trail impassable, he stockpiled materiel, improved and expanded routes, and prepared for the next dry season. North Vietnam's 1972 spring offensive into northern Quang Tri Province was launched under a protective canopy of low clouds, fog, and drizzle from the northeast monsoon that severely hampered initial air and ground operations by friendly forces.

Responding to requirements for meteorological support, Air Weather Service (AWS) ordered twenty-three weathermen to Southeast Asia on temporary duty in December 1961--Tan Son Nhut, and Bien Hoa in the Republic of Vietnam, and Don

Muang Airport in Thailand. Some assignments soon became permanent with the activation of seven weather detachments in Southeast Asia, effective 1 January 1962. By mid-January detachments had been established at Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, Pleiku, Qui Nhon, Da Nang, and Nha Trang in the Republic of Vietnam, and at Don Muang Airport in Thailand.

The provisional weather squadron established in May 1962 was replaced later that year by the 30th Weather Squadron of the 1st Weather Wing. In January of 1963 it was moved to Tan Son Nhut. It was assigned twenty officers and eighty-two enlisted.

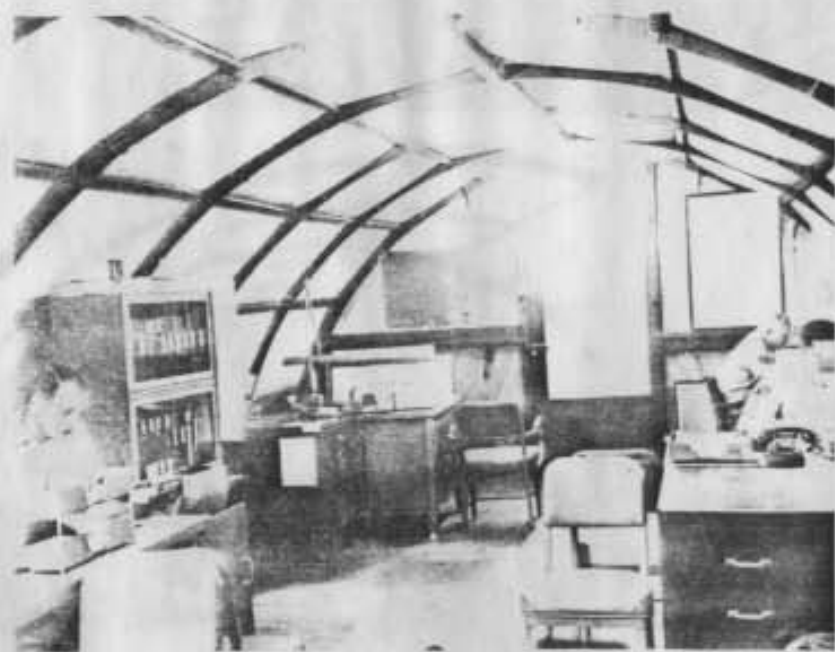


Above and at right: a Jamesway shelter housed the base weather station at Tan Son Nhut in 1962, then called Detachment 20, 1st Weather Wing.

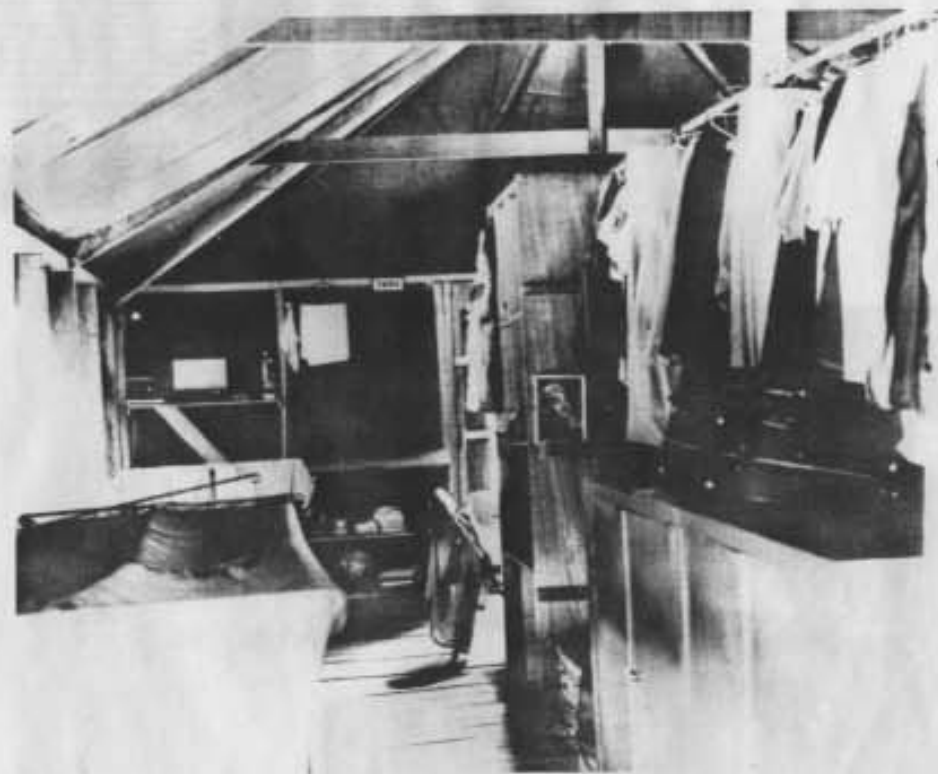




Above and below: 30th Weather Squadron Headquarters, Tan Son Nhut, November 1962.



Tan Son Nhut billets, 1962, for AWS weathermen.





Bien Hoa, RVN,
1962.

Left: Base
Weather Station.



Right and
below: Billets.



Representative observing site, Detachment 19, 30th
Weather Squadron, 1962, at Don Muang Airport, Bangkok,
Thailand. The photo below shows a Thai observer inside
the site recording an observation.





Detachment 20-3, 1st Weather Wing, Pleiku, RVN, 1962.

Above: Headquarters complex.

Right: Base Weather Station.

Below: Inflation shelter.

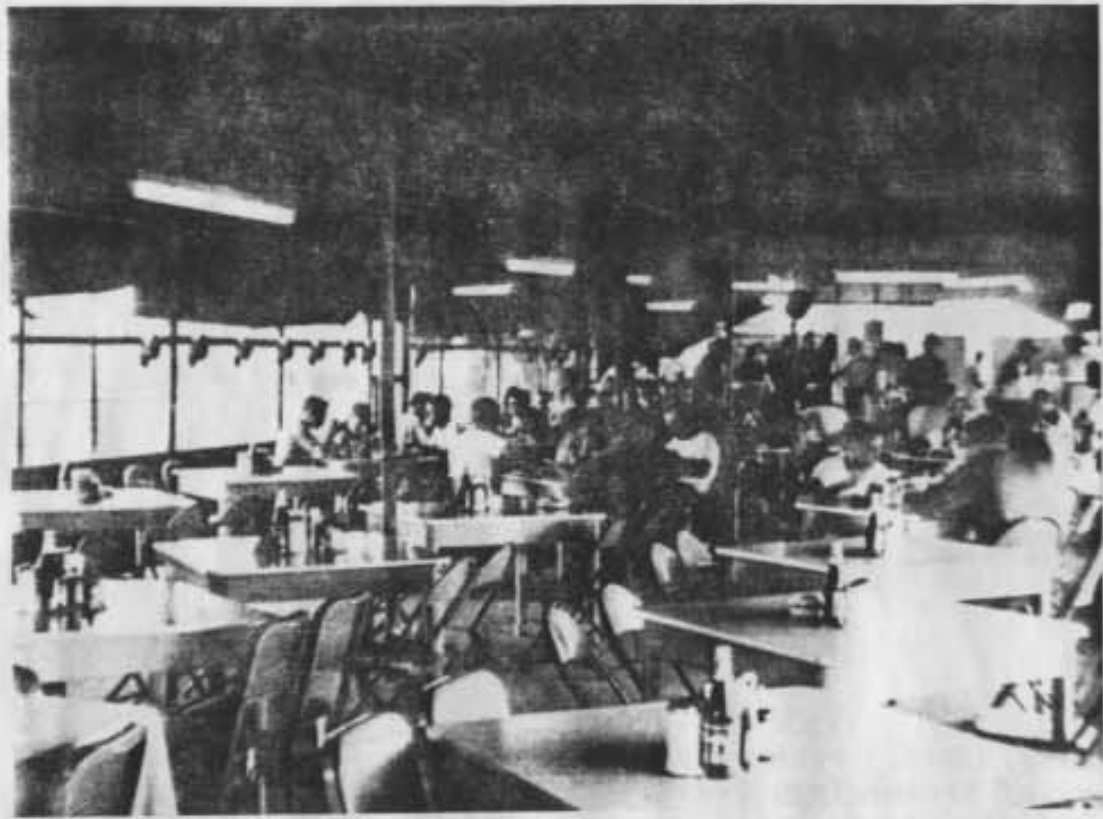


Da Nang, 1962. Vietnamese Department of Meteorology weather station and rawinsonde building.

Right: Advising a member of the Department of Meteorology on reading the mercurial barometer.

Below: Inflation shelter, Detachment 21, 1st Weather Wing, Da Nang.





Da Nang mess hall, 1962, above, and below, showers and latrine.



Qui Nhon -- weathermen's living quarters and parking space, and below, officers' quarters.





*Above, Qui Nhon,
1962, temporary
base weather station.*

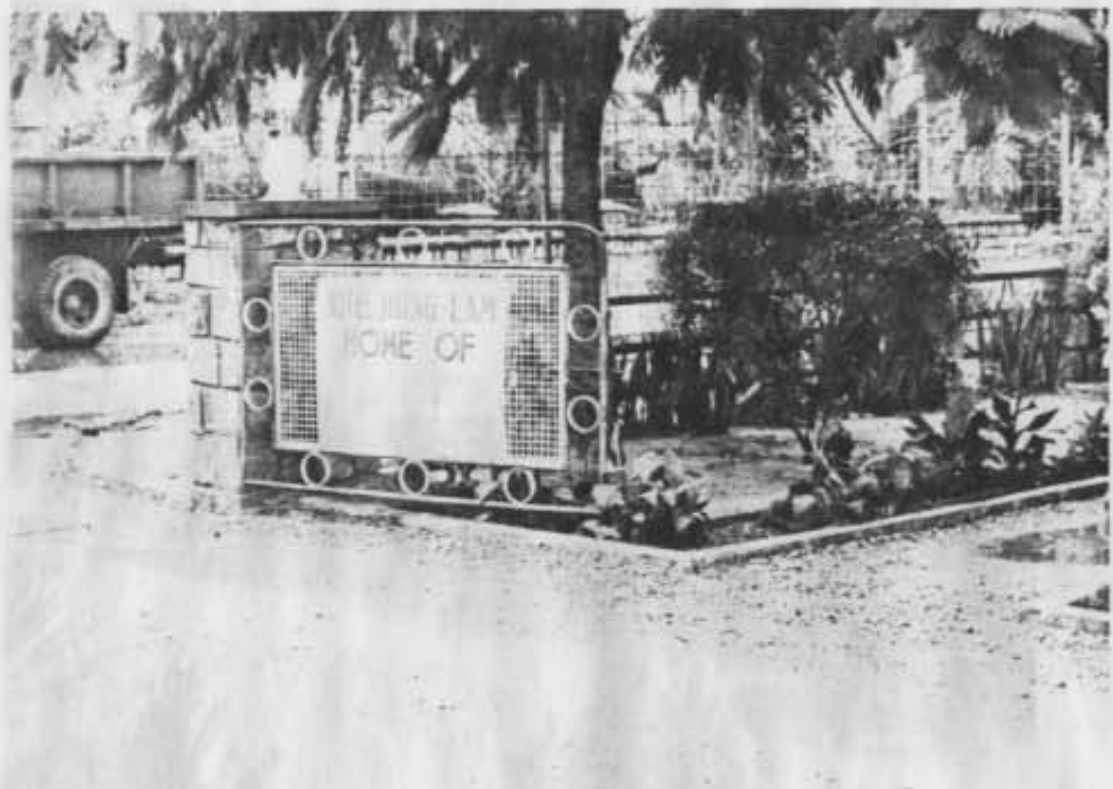


*Above and left,
newly-completed
permanent BWS, November
1962.*

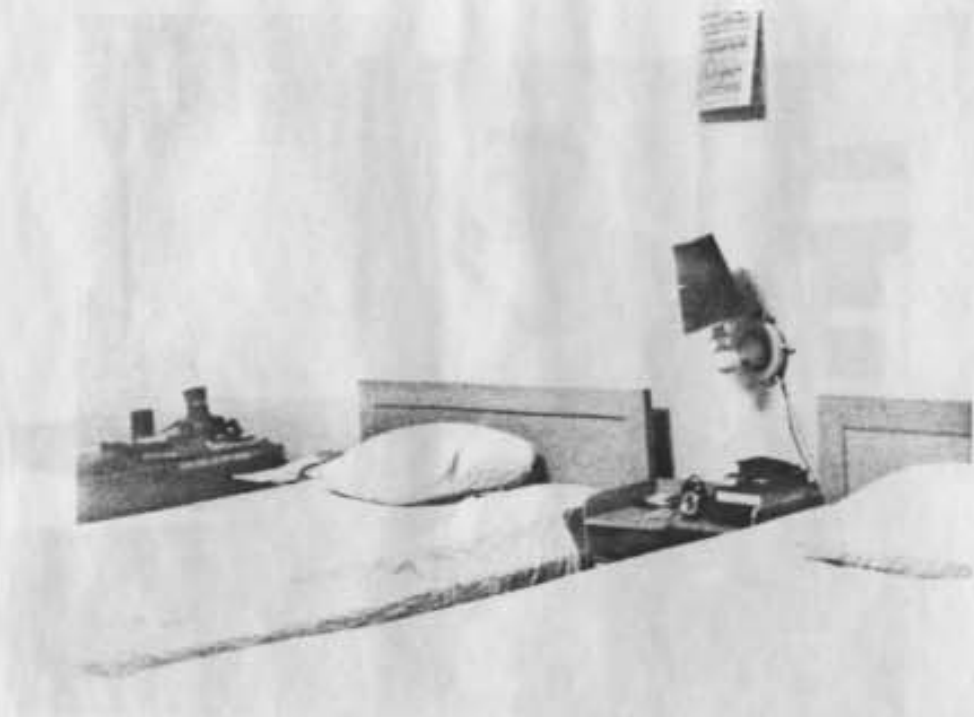


*View of Nha Trang airfield with mountain background.
Below, Pilot-to-Forecaster Service, base weather station,
Nha Trang Airbase, Detachment 20-2, 30th Weather Squadron.*





Entrance to an Air Force leased hotel, Nha Trang.
Below, one of the hotel rooms.



Soc Trang, December 1962. Instrument and inflation shelters above, and base weather station below. Ceiling light shown.





Takhli Air Base, Detachment 12, 30th Weather Squadron, 1963. Below, checking observation on table from MA-1 kit.



Phan Rang Air Base tower. Below, base weather station. Detachment 22, 30th Weather Squadron, was located at Phan Rang from October 1965 to 15 March 1972.



Advisory Assistance (1962 - 1965)

From 1962 until the Gulf of Tonkin incidents in early August, 1964, the 30th Weather Squadron's basic mission was to provide meteorological support to all Air Force and Army units in Southeast Asia. But its major task, like most United States military units there, was to advise and train indigenous military forces. In South Vietnam, most of the training was accomplished at informal weather schools and supplemented by on-the-job training (OJT) administered by squadron personnel at base weather stations. In March 1964, eleven VNAF students were graduated from the first class of an observer school established at Tan Son Nhut.



Vietnamese weather observer class at Nha Trang, taught by TSgt Anthony D. Gallant, military weather advisor with Det 4, 30th Weather Squadron.

Right: Computing observations at Pleiku Air Base.



The program to train and advise the indigenous forces came to be called "Vietnamization."





Captain Tu Bo Cam, commander, VNAF Air Traffic Control and Weather Squadron, learns the U.S. Air Force method of recording a weather observation from 30th Weather Squadron commander, Lt Col Lewis L. Howes.



Checking surface wind speed is TSgt Ralph Smith, advisor to a group of Vietnamese weather students, and Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Weather Technician John Dinh, on Ca Mau Peninsula, RVN.



Weather Forecaster Captain John J. Elliff prepared for a trip "up country" during temporary duty as the only helicopter pilot assigned to hauling men and equipment for the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) Exercise Air Boon Choo, held April 20-30, 1964, in Thailand.

Weather forecasters and observers from 1st Weather Wing stations throughout the Pacific-Southeast Asia theater, and the Thai weather personnel were responsible for the total military

weather support to ground and air forces taking part in the exercise.

The weather task force was commanded by Colonel Bampen Xupravati, normally Director of the RTAF Meteorological Division. Below, at Bangkok, Colonel Xupravati points to weather map for Colonel Robert L. Sorey, 1st Weather Wing commander.



Rawinsonde operators waiting for release signal --



then instruction in the use of weather sounding equipment, at Da Nang AB, RVN.

A weather observer with the 30th Weather Squadron in the Joint Air Operations Center, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, teaching his counterpart the "ropes" in plotting a surface map.



Training was also given to weathermen of the Royal Thai Air Force, both in class and on-the-job.





At Bangkok, Thailand, Captain Thomas Connolly, Jr, 30th Weather Squadron, holds orders sending (L to R) Second Lieutenant Tawatana Rajanatana and Lieutenant Uthai Sonchaeng, Royal Thai Air Force weather forecasters to a meteorological course at St. Louis University in 1963. Below, A1C Sawek Yamkum receives some instruction from A2C Clinton Gibbs, Jr, at Takhlī, Thailand, 1962.



Sgt Donald K. Rowe, Det 12, 10th Weather Squadron, aids Sgt Prasan Ounrueng of the Royal Thai Air Force Weather Division in plotting a chart.



Left, A3C Pramote Sakul of the RTAF checks the graph made by a wind measuring instrument.

Here RTAF Sgt Watlama Eaimaman learns to operate a teletype machine under the guidance of SSgt Robert E. Doucette, Det 12, 10th Weather Squadron, Takhlī AB, Thailand.





Vietnamisation took another step forward on 1 June 1972 as the Da Nang Air Base ROS was turned over to the Vietnamese Air Force by Detachment 9, 1st Weather Group.



Left, maintenance training at 1st Weather Group. Right, Major Frank G. Johnson, 30th Weather Squadron, discusses the Vietnamese improvement and modernization program with Lt Colonel Tran Van Minh, Hq VNAF/ATC/Ops and Weather Division, outside Lt Colonel Minh's office, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN. Below, Colonel Morris H. Newhouse, 1st Weather Wing commander, at graduation of VNAF equipment repair class, 14 September 1971.



A unique aspect of AWS' mission involved deployment of some commando weathermen to Thailand in early 1965 where they trained Laotians as forward weather observers for use in developing a limited weather observing net in Laos to support air operations. After providing some initial training in Thailand, Captain Keith R. Grimes and some of his men entered Laos later that year to establish the net. Operating in an atmosphere they described as "super secret, cloak and dagger," they functioned not only as weathermen and advisors, but as forward air controllers, intelligence gatherers, and fighters. Posing as civilians with varying cover stories and carrying only a civilian identification card, they labored in Laos under the most hazardous conditions without diplomatic protection--for there was no official United States recognition of their presence. AWS special warfare weathermen remained in Laos nearly continuously until the conflict's end keeping the vital weather-observing net functioning.



The six commando weathermen in this photograph taken in 1964 formed the nucleus of Detachment 75, 2d Weather Group (later the 5th Weather Wing), and most saw action in Laos. They were, from left to right, A1C Wayne L. Golding, A1C Andrew V. Wilder, Captain Keith R. Grimes (the detachment commander), A1C James P. Williams, MSgt Thomas M. Watson, and A1C Lloyd W. Mitchell. Wilder and Watson were at sites in Laos in late 1965 and early 1968 which were overrun by Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops--Wilder barely escaping with his life.



Above, Sergeant Tom Watson (left, back row), and a class of Laotian weather observers at Nam Lieu, Laos, with some of their basic weather observing equipment. Below, Captain Grimes (center, facing camera) and Sergeant Watson (right, back to camera) giving basic weather observing instructions to the class.





Above, Sergeant Watson instructing at Nam Lieu, and below, his weather observing class.



The commando weathermen were also forward air controllers and fighters, with the Laotians. Above is an arrow of faded cerise panels pointing to the target. Below is during a T-28 strike.





T-28 being loaded at Vientiane. It could carry four 500-pound bombs and two .50-caliber guns, one in each wing. Below, a T-28 over the Mekong Delta, left--and right, a hill just after it was hit.



Devastation and death followed. Above: three Meo soldiers with rifles viewing the scene below them--a ridge in Laos after repeated bombings for several days, by T-28s, and a few F-4s. In the foreground of the

picture is abandoned North Vietnamese equipment. Mortar shells were carried in the black cardboard cannisters.

Left above: A Meo looking at a dead North Vietnamese soldier.



In spots too tight for light planes, helicopters like this Sikorsky H-34 were used. Helicopters provided the bulk of forward position airlift in Laos. Below, looking southwest on a 600-foot dirt strip as an H-34 prepares to land. Beyond the mountains in the background is the Plaine des Jarres.



In Cambodia AWS worked to upgrade their Khmer Air Force weather service in late 1974 and early 1975. Khmer Rouge advances made it impossible to continue.

Above: SSgt Steven D. Roush (second from left) and Lt Heng Touch, acting commander, KAF Air Weather Service, (far right), with KAF crew and UH-1 used to transport them to various sites to look over observing procedures and inspect (and repair or calibrate) weather equipment. Right: KAF director of training. Below: SSgt Roush (with glasses, front row) with KAF weathermen celebrating their successful completion of Pibal training.





KAF Air Weather Service personnel at weather instrument shelters at Pochentong.



Above: Lt Heng Touch at Nakhon Phanom during one of his trips to Thailand in 1974 to help train Cambodians. At the right is Capt Steven L. Richter, of 10th Weather Squadron, at Nakhon Phanom.

Left: SSgt Miguel C. "Mike" Salas, a weather equipment repairman who accompanied SSgt Roush on training trips in Cambodia. SSgt Salas is standing beside a .50 caliber machine gun on the KAF UH-1 used to transport them.



Some Architecture in Southeast Asia.

Primitive shelters were built of the materials at hand. The 6-to-8 foot savanna grass that grew in Laos became thatch and matting. Grain bags became walls.



Right, Captain Grant McNaughton (USAF commando doctor) with staff in front of his hospital--built of 105MM howitzer boxes, at Na Khang.