Vietnamization

From the beginning of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, Washington officials undertook to strengthen South Vietnam's armed forces so they could deal with their Communist opposition themselves. Thus, shortly after his inauguration President Kennedy approved a buildup of the Vietnamese armed forces along with an increase in the size of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group. In the case of the Vietnamese Air Force, the Defense Department was authorized to replace its obsolete American-supplied aircraft with better aircraft—A-1's, T-28's and H-34's.

When the Farm Gate detachment arrived at Bien Hoa in November 1961, Vietnamese airmen were in the process of activating their first T-28 squadron. In January 1962, as noted earlier, Farm Gate instructors began training 25 Vietnamese pilots to fly the T-28 in methods of day and night operations. The training effort went well and, in the spring of 1962, the first T-28 squadron was declared operational. When a second squadron was activated, Farm Gate pilot instructors again helped with its training. The Vietnamese proved to be apt pupils and soon were flying combat strikes in their new aircraft. By mid-1962, the Vietnamese Air Force had grown to a force of about 5,700 officers and airmen with an operational inventory of 140 aircraft.

As the VNAF buildup continued, the Air Force found itself carrying a heavy training burden both in Vietnam and the United States. Thus, Air Training Command dispatched several mobile detachments to South Vietnam to instruct VNAF personnel how to maintain and operate the new aircraft. For example, in May 1962 it sent a 45-man team to Vietnam for 6 months TDY to teach Vietnamese maintenance personnel the intricacies of the T-28. Other mobile training teams taught VNAF personnel RT-28 reconnaissance procedures and others how to fly the U-17A, an off-the-shelf Cessna aircraft provided South Vietnam under the military assistance program. In the spring of 1963 TAC dispatched 20 USAF L-19 pilots to Vietnam to augment VNAF liaison squadrons so that Vietnamese pilots could begin upgrade training in the A-1E.

By mid-1963 approximately 1,800 Vietnamese airmen out of a total VNAF strength of 7,736 personnel were students, most of them pilots. Of that number, 459 were being trained in the United States. One hundred fourteen attended U.S. Army and Navy training courses since several of the new aircraft in their inventory came from those services.

The Language Problem

Throughout the war the language barrier was a factor that inhibited all U.S. training programs. In early 1962 the Farm Gate detachment—to partly resolve the problem—produced an English-Vietnamese list of basic words for voice communications. Vietnamese airmen studied this as part of their curriculum at the VNAF FAC school at Tan Son Nhut. Also, in October 1962, the Air Force instituted an 8-week language school for Vietnamese airmen in training at Hurlburt Field, Fla.

In July 1963, in a further effort to overcome the language barrier, the Air Force dispatched a 5-man English language training detachment to Vietnam, which it later augmented with five more instructors. These men helped organize three English lan-
guage schools in South Vietnam, two of them operating on two 6-hour shifts per day. One school was located in Saigon, the others at Tan Son Nhut and Nha Trang. By 31 January 1964, a total of 994 Vietnamese students had begun language training and 514 had completed the course.

Subsequently, VNAF personnel sent to the United States for pilot training were required to complete a 15-week English language course at Lackland Air Force Base, Tex. The Lackland school—later assigned to the Defense Language Institute—became the first stop for thousands of Vietnamese airmen trained in the United States. To facilitate the training effort both in Vietnam and the United States, the Air Force also began translating a number of its on-the-job training publications into the Vietnamese language. In South Vietnam, the Air Force used both uniformed and civilian contractor personnel in the OJT program until such time as Vietnamese noncommissioned officers were qualified as instructors. However, the language barrier was never entirely overcome and remained a problem which handicapped all USAF training efforts throughout the war.

As the buildup of the Vietnamese Air Force continued, it reached a December 1964 strength of 10,592 personnel. They manned four tactical fighter squadrons, four helicopter and four liaison squadrons, two troop carrier squadrons, plus other miscellaneous units. In 1965 modernization was accelerated when the single-seat A-1H attack planes and the two-seat A-1G began replacing the VNAF’s T-28’s. The A-1’s were faster and carried a larger bomb load. The transition to the A-1’s was completed by April 1965. During the year the VNAF O-1 liaison fleet more than doubled in size, going from 37 in January to 84 in December. Its U-17 inventory rose from 25 to 46 aircraft. In all, during the year, the VNAF acquired 108 additional aircraft, a 38 percent increase over the previous year.

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Throughout 1965 Air Force training efforts were aimed at increasing the number of VNAF fighter, helicopter, and liaison pilots, while also producing mechanics, communication specialists, and other support personnel. A substantial portion of this growing training took place in Vietnam, with 1,232 VNAF personnel completing OJT and 320 language training in 1965. The Air Force continued to make extensive use of ATC field training detachments and mobile teams (including one from the U.S. Navy), and civilian contract technical service personnel. The last-mentioned group, assigned to the Air Force Advisory Group in Vietnam, taught a variety of technical subjects to the Vietnamese, e.g., engines, communications, and radio navigation aids. At Bien Hoa, the 6251st Combat Support Wing, USAF, provided VNAF pilots A-1 transition training, while the 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron taught Vietnamese airmen to fly the O-1F. A U.S. Marine element provided H-34 helicopter upgrade training for Da Nang-based VNAF helicopter pilots.

As the air war escalated, South Vietnamese officials—particularly the new Premier, Nguyen Cao Ky (he continued to head the VNAF)—pressed the United States to provide Vietnam with jet aircraft. They argued that the North Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Thais already possessed jet aircraft. American officials subsequently approved their request, and on 9 August 1965 the first of four B-57's were turned over to the Vietnamese Air Force. Transition training was begun in the Philippines and initially involved 6 pilots, 4 navigators, 4 maintenance officers, and 16 aircraft mechanics. By year’s end, four combat-ready VNAF crews began flying training missions with the Air Force B-57 unit at Da Nang.

Meanwhile, the Air Force Advisory
(1) VNAF students in a classroom at Sheppard AFB, Tex. (2) Vietnamese officers were trained on oscilloscope sets, its chief use being to serve as an indicator in a radar set. (3) VNAF pilot, Lt. Van Lich Hien, prepares for a mission in his A-1 Skyraider at Bien Hoa AB. (4) An A-37A light ground attack aircraft (in foreground) was turned over to the VNAF in October 1970. (5) Maj. Dang-Duy Lac, commander of the VNAF 524th Squadron makes a final adjustment in his equipment, while Lt. Col. Walter V. Woods, 604th SOS commander, starts up the A-37 engine. (6) Air Force TSgt Bruce A. Miller, a 604th Special Operations Squadron aircraft maintenance technician, shows a VNAF mechanic how to install a canopy safety clamp.
Group studied other options to provide the VNAF an additional jet capability. It focused on the F-5, a new jet aircraft which the Air Force had sent to South Vietnam in October 1965 to begin combat field tests. The Advisory Group recommended, and Secretary McNamara approved, conversion of one A-1 squadron to F-5's. Thirty-two VNAF pilots departed in August to begin F-5 conversion training at the Combat Crew Training Center, Williams AFB, Ariz. Ten of these men, however, were first required to take 9 weeks of language training before entering flight training.

In December 1966, after the first F-5 crews returned from combat crew training in Arizona, an F-5 training detachment arrived at Bien Hoa to continue VNAF pilot training in the jet. The following month 10 USAF non-commissioned officers and a civilian contract engineer were dispatched to Vietnam to provide further training to F-5 officers and airmen. By the spring of 1967 the Vietnamese had flown hundreds of training sorties in their new jet aircraft. On 1 June, at a formal VNAF-USAF ceremony held at Bien Hoa, the planes were officially turned over to the 522d VNAF Fighter Squadron, which immediately began flying combat sorties.

In 1967 USAF personnel also assisted the Vietnamese to modernize their transport fleet. VNAF C-47 officers and airmen were sent to the United States to begin transition training in the C-119. After completing ground courses at Lackland and Sheppard Air Force Bases, they were sent to Clinton County AFB, Ohio, the Air Force's C-119 training center. There they were taught engine and airframe maintenance by ATC's 614th Field Training Detachment and C-119 crewmen of the Air Force Reserve. The first seven VNAF C-119 crews—six pilots, eight copilots, and seven flight engineers—returned home in September 1967. They were followed to Vietnam in October by an Air Force C-119G detach-
ment, which continued their training there. By mid-March 1968, more than 200 Vietnamese airmen had completed all C-119 training.

Air Force modernization plans also called for converting three VNAF A-1 fighter squadrons to A-37 jets and one C-47 squadron into an AC-47 gunship unit. During 1967 the Vietnamese Air Force assigned 103 pilots to three squadrons scheduled to receive the A-37's. On 1 January 1968 the first squadron to receive the A-37's stood down to prepare for the conversion, and the following month the first 18 pilots departed for the United States to begin transition training. In May, an A-37 mobile training detachment arrived at Nha Trang to begin maintenance training.

Actual squadron conversion began in November 1968 with delivery of the first A-37 jets from the United States. By May 1969 the full complement of 54 A-37B jets was on hand and assigned to the 524th, 520th, and 516th Fighter Squadrons. The first A-37 jet squadron was declared operationally ready in March 1969, the last one in July. During 1969 VNAF personnel strength grew to about 29,000 officers and airmen, an increase of more than 5,000 over the previous year.

Shortly after becoming President in January 1969, Mr. Nixon announced that one of the primary goals of his administration would be to end U.S. combat in Southeast Asia while simultaneously strengthening South Vietnam's ability to defend itself. In March Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, after visiting officials in Saigon, ordered an accelerated "Vietnamization" program aimed at turning over combat operations to the South Vietnamese. In May Mr. Laird informed the Joint Chiefs that Vietnamizing the war was the Defense Department's highest priority. In June 1969, after conferring with South Vietnamese officials on Midway Island, the President announced plans to withdraw the first U.S. troops from South Vietnam. In
(1) VNAF students in a classroom at Sheppard AFB, Tex.
(2) Vietnamese Air Force Captains stand at attention before the first of 40 A-37 jets were turned over to the VNAF in October 1970.
(3) Aboard a VNAF UH-1 helicopter gunship, a Vietnamese gunner fires a minigun during a training mission in South Vietnam. An Air Force advisor, Sgt Isidro Arroyo, Jr., looks on.
(4) Two VNAF crewmen check out the Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR) sensor system. Their instructors were members of the 17th Special Operations Squadron at Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam.
(5) An Air Force staff sergeant, member of an air weather unit, instructs a VNAF airman in plotting weather maps.
support of this action, the South Vietnamese requested further assistance for Vietnamization. Among other things, they asked for F-4 Phantoms, C-130 transports, and air defense missiles.

In August 1969 Secretary Laird directed the JCS and the services to prepare plans and programs to develop a South Vietnamese capability to cope successfully with a combined Viet Cong/NVA attack. In response, the Air Force began intensive planning on ways to speed the Vietnamization program. A joint Seventh Air Force-USAF Advisory Group Ad Hoc Committee was established in South Vietnam for that purpose. In Washington, an office for the Special Assistant for Vietnamization was organized within Headquarters USAF on 3 November 1969 to monitor all actions concerning transfer of Air Force combat responsibilities to the Vietnamese Air Force.

**Integrated VNAF Training**

An important innovation in the Vietnamization program took place in 1970 with the start of on-the-job integrated training conducted by USAF C-123 operational crews for their South Vietnamese counterparts. The project was undertaken when it became clear to the Air Force that the VNAF airmen would be completing C-123 combat crew training in the United States about 9 months before activation of the first VNAF C-123 squadron. To maintain VNAF pilot proficiency in the interim, the Air Force decided to integrate the Vietnamese airmen into USAF C-123 units in Vietnam, pending transfer of those aircraft to the VNAF. This was a reversal of the 1962 assignment of 30 U.S. Air Force pilots (the "Dirty Thirty") as crewmen flying with VNAF C-47 transport units. The ensuing on-the-job training by USAF C-123 crews gave Vietnamese pilots current operational experience, reduced the need to train them in the United States, and also lessened Air Force C-123 pilot requirements in South Vietnam.

The idea of both integrated and OJT training for VNAF officers and airmen subsequently was adopted at all bases where Vietnamese and American air units were collocated. Conventional OJT methods were used with courses tailored to fit VNAF requirements. Special emphasis was given to training the Vietnamese in base support operations, a subject not previously given high priority. Individual skill upgrading resulted from this integrated program but it was designed primarily to achieve VNAF self-sufficiency as soon as possible. By 31 January 1970, more than 900 trainees were enrolled in this integrated training program. By mid-year, more than 1,240 officers and airmen were being taught more than 30 different specialties at Bien Hoa, Nha Trang, Binh Thuy, Pleiku, Da Nang, and Tan Son Nhut. Many of the VNAF airmen were trained in security, fire protection, weather, communications/electronics, air traffic control, and civil engineering.

Meanwhile, Secretary Laird approved further increases in VNAF strength—to 35,786 officers and airmen in 1970 and 44,712 in 1972 to support a VNAF force of 34 squadrons. To support this major expansion, the Vietnamese Air Force was completely restructured. It emerged in 1970 with 5 air divisions, 10 tactical wings, 5 maintenance and supply wings, and 7 air base wings. The VNAF Air Logistics Wing was transformed into an Air Logistics Command, equipped with a modern computer and given control of all VNAF inventory assets. Also with the help of ATC, the Vietnamese began expanding their Nha Trang Training Center, which was the location of six military schools and the English Language School. In the military schools, all instructors were Vietnamese.
To further speed VNAF self-sufficiency, 243 Vietnamese technicians were sent to the United States in 1970 to be trained as instructors to serve in the Nha Trang schools. This training consisted of a basic mechanics course tailored to their specific needs, instructor training, and follow-on training in ATC classrooms or with ATC field training detachments. The first instructor course began in March 1970. By mid-1971 more than 5,500 Vietnamese instructors had graduated and returned to Vietnam, while another 1,330 remained in training in the United States. In addition to this program, the Air Force sent ATC mobile training teams to Nha Trang to teach 37 specialized skills. The Air Force Advisory Group also provided teams at each VNAF base to assist the Vietnamese wherever possible.

During 1971 the VNAF flew more combat sorties in Vietnam than the U.S. air arms combined—63 percent of all such missions. This constituted a 69.8 percent increase over the VNAF's 1970 operations. In September 1971 the Air Force transferred a second AC-119G gunship squadron to the VNAF. During the year the VNAF transport fleet was increased to five squadrons following turnover of three USAF squadrons of C-123's. In addition, 3 C-119's were added to the 16 already being flown by the Vietnamese. In November, the VNAF took control of the direct air support centers at Pleiku, Bien Hoa, and Da Nang. By year's end, the Vietnamese also were solely responsible for operating air navigation facilities at eight bases—Binh Thuy, Ban Me Thuot, Bien Hoa, Nha Trang, Da Nang, Chu Lai, and Phu Cat.

Meanwhile, a plan was adopted to phase out most Vietnamese training in the United States. As part of this plan, the Air Force turned its attention to translating technical orders into Vietnamese and building training aids so that all instruction could be performed in South Vietnam. Additional mobile training teams were sent to Southeast Asia equipped with specially built training aids to expedite the teaching of VNAF maintenance personnel.

The partial success of Vietnamization of the air war was demonstrated during North Vietnam's 1972 spring invasion of the south. Responding to the enemy attack, the VNAF began flying the first of more than 20,000 strike sorties, which helped blunt the North Vietnamese advance. VNAF transports carried more cargo and troops than ever before, while fighters, gunships, and helicopters provided close air support to ARVN ground forces. In March and July, the VNAF activated its first C-7A Caribou squadrons and subsequently also acquired its first C-130 Hercules transports. The first VNAF C-130 instructor aircrew took its final check in December 1972.

The turnover of all training programs to the Vietnamese continued throughout 1972. English language training went from an almost entirely USAF effort to an almost entirely VNAF responsibility. In May 1972 the VNAF established a communications and electronics school at Bien Hoa. Also, with the aid of USAF mobile training teams, the VNAF took over maintenance training for the C-130, T-28B, and other aircraft systems. An AC-119K mobile training team started cross-training VNAF AC-119G and C-119G aircrews and maintenance crews into the AC-119K.

By December 1972 the Vietnamese Air Force had almost doubled in size over its June 1969 strength. From an organization of about 29,000 men, 20 squadrons, and an inventory of 428 aircraft in 1969, it had grown to 42,000 officers and airmen (with another 10,000 in training), organized into 49 squadrons equipped with about 2,000 aircraft (22 different types). In terms of numbers of aircraft, it had emerged as the fourth largest Air Force in the world—behind Communist China, the United States, and the Soviet Union.
Chapter XXI.

American POW's and Operation Homecoming

On 23 January 1973 Dr. Henry Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and Special Adviser Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam reached agreement in Paris to end the war in Vietnam and restore the peace. Four days later the four major combatants—the United States and South Vietnam on the one side and North Vietnam and Viet Cong (the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam) on the other—signed the cease-fire agreement. It required the release of all American prisoners of war held by the Communists simultaneously with withdrawal of all U.S. forces from South Vietnam, these actions to be completed within 60 days.

For the nearly 600 POW's the 27 January agreement meant freedom after many years of captivity in North Vietnamese, Viet Cong, Laotian, and Chinese prison camps. Three hundred and twenty-five were USAF personnel, mostly combat pilots. Two were Korean war aces—Lt. Col. James L. Kasler and Col. Robinson Risner—who had spent 6½ and 7 years in captivity, respectively. A third Air Force pilot, Col. John P. Flynn, who was shot down in October 1967, was the senior American POW in North Vietnam. Promoted to brigadier general while in captivity (to protect him against harassment, no announcement was made), Colonel Flynn helped to organize and command the “4th Allied POW Wing” in the last years of the war.

USAF officials did not have much information about the prisoners' living conditions or their treatment during the early years of their captivity. What was known was not encouraging. As early as 25 June 1965, Hanoi radio reported that the Viet Cong had executed Sgt. Harold G. Bennett, an adviser to an ARVN unit, who was captured on 29 December 1964, in retaliation for the execution of Communist terrorists by the Saigon government. In August 1965—after Hanoi radio broadcast the tape-recorded statements of two recently captured Air Force pilots praising their captors for their “human” treatment—fears were expressed that they had been tortured. These fears eventually were confirmed.

Beginning in late 1965 and during the next 7 years, the U.S. government worked to bring international pressure to bear on Hanoi to insure that the rights of the prisoners under terms of the 1949 Geneva Convention were being observed. Although North Vietnam had signed the convention in 1957, it announced that captured American pilots were not entitled to POW status. According to Hanoi, there had been no formal declaration of war between the United States and North Vietnam (the Geneva convention made no such distinction) and the pilots were “criminals” who could be convicted “under the principles established by the Nuremberg war crime trials.”

In its efforts to ease the plight of the POW's, the Johnson administration solicited the assistance of the Interna-
HANOI PARADES YANK
Captive Pilots Jeered by Mob

3 PLANES LOST IN LARGE HANOI RAID
Railway Yards, Thai Base Flies Jeered In Hanoi

Hanoi Jeers Yank Flyers
They're Paraded Streets
(1) Newsmen swarm around Ambassador Averell Harriman (see arrow), who headed the U.S. delegation to the preliminary peace talks, after emerging from a meeting with French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville at the Quai d’Orsay, in May 1968. (2) Dr. Henry A. Kissinger (l.) and Hanoi’s senior representative Le Duc Tho (r.) are shown during a break in the Paris talks on a cease-fire, November 1972. In the center is Tho’s interpreter. (3) A group of wives and relatives of U.S. prisoners of war held in North Vietnam conferred with Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird in his office in April 1970. (4) Secretary of State William Rogers signed the Vietnamese Peace Agreement in Paris, 27 January 1973. Shown on his right is Under Secretary Designate of Political Affairs, Ambassador William J. Porter.
Welcome Home “Ex-POW”s
tional Red Cross and friendly nations to use their influence in obtaining proper treatment. On 29 April 1966, at the request of the White House, the State Department established a Committee on Prisoner Matters which included representatives from several Department of Defense agencies. On 10 May the President designated W. Averell Harriman as his Special Representative and Ambassador to negotiate an exchange of prisoners. The United States also asked the Soviet Union to intervene with North Vietnam to allow Red Cross representatives to visit the POW's, but Moscow referred the Americans to Hanoi.

**Hanoi Threatens “War Crimes” Trials**

During the early summer of 1966, following increased U.S. air strikes against oil facilities in the Hanoi-Hai Phong area, North Vietnam initiated a propaganda campaign leading to the scheduling of “war crime” trials for the captured airmen. As part of this campaign, 52 American POW's handcuffed in pairs were paraded through the streets of Hanoi while agitated crowds stoned, beat, and reviled them. On 7 July 1966 Hanoi radio read depositions from several pilots (they had been tortured) denouncing American war operations and asking for Vietnamese “forgiveness.” On 12 July two East European Communist press agencies reported that 60 American military men would be brought to trial later in the month or in early August.

The United States took North Vietnam’s plans for war crime trials seriously. President Johnson made no public threats but warnings about his reaction should the trials actually take place were soon dispatched around the world. In Washington, 19 senators who strongly opposed Johnson’s Vietnam policies on 15 July issued “a plea for sanity” to Hanoi. Violence against the captured Americans, they warned, would “incite the public demand for retaliation swift and sure.” The next day Sen. Richard B. Russell, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, warned that North Vietnam would be made “a desert” if the trials were held. Sen. George D. Aiken predicted “complete destruction of North Vietnam” if the POW's were killed. The New York Times reported that there was little doubt that “Lyndon Johnson’s reaction would be severe.”

These warnings had a salutary effect on Hanoi, which abruptly ceased its propaganda campaigns about the trials. Its treatment of the captured airmen, however, remained severe. Their lot included torture—ranging from being trussed up by ropes and hung on rafters to being beaten severely by prison guards or having their fingernails pulled out. Some POW's were tortured to persuade them to meet with American antiwar and other visiting delegations and recite dictat-ed statements about their “humane” treatment. Many prisoners—especially senior officers—were placed in solitary confinement for years and fed a bare subsistence diet. Except in certain serious cases, medical care was minimal. Mail privileges were nonexistent for most prisoners. During the Christmas season of 1966, 457 of 467 packages sent to them by their families were returned with the stamp: “Refused by the Postal Authorities of Vietnam.”

During 1967 the U.S. government continued its search for ways to persuade Hanoi to allow Red Cross representatives to visit the prison camps in the North. The South Vietnamese government cooperated by opening its camps for Viet Cong and North Vietnamese prisoners to inspection by the International Committee of the Red Cross and allowing mail privileges. Still Hanoi refused to budge. On 26 July 1967 the Department of Defense established a Prisoner of War Policy Committee. Chaired by Paul C. Warnke, Assistant Secretary of De-
tense (International Security Affairs), it had the job of coordinating all POW matters and planning the eventual recovery and repatriation of the prisoners.

Information about the living conditions and treatment of POW's held by the Viet Cong in jungle camps in South Vietnam or Cambodia came to light from the infrequent successful escapee or from the American captive occasionally released by the enemy for political purposes. Living conditions were extremely primitive, with many POW's succumbing to disease and starvation.

In the case of North Vietnamese camps, the first authoritative information became available in February 1968, when Hanoi released three American pilots shot down 4 to 6 months earlier. They were Lt. Col. Norris M. Overly, USAF; Capt. John D. Black, USAF; and Lt. (jg) David P. Matheny, USN. The North Vietnamese announced their impending release on 27 January, noting that they would be handed over to the U.S. National Mobilization Committee to End the War. Two of its members—the Rev. Daniel Berrigan and Dr. Howard Zinn—flew to Hanoi, where the release took place on 16 February.

The entire affair may have been a North Vietnamese ploy related to the 1968 Tet offensive, launched on 31 January. It, as seems likely, the enemy thought that the 3-man release might ward off U.S. retaliatory strikes in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, they were correct. In Washington, Assistant Secretary Warnke—serving as a member of a working group created by the newly designated Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, to prepare new military recommendations for the President—argued against JCS proposals for such bombings. He recommended that the existing bombing ban "should be continued pending the return of the 3 American PWs."

When the three released captives reached the United States several weeks later, U.S. officials learned for the first time that many of the American POW's were in prison camps in the Hanoi area. The airmen also identified 40 men as prisoners who had been listed as missing in action. Citing their testimony, Warnke argued that heavy and "indiscriminate" attacks in the Hanoi area "would jeopardize the lives of these prisoners and alarm their wives and parents."

Subsequently, the President on 31 March 1968 announced a halt to all bombing of North Vietnam (except for the area immediately north of the DMZ) and invited Hanoi to begin peace talks in Paris. The North Vietnamese accepted and, in May 1968, the first meetings got under way in Paris. Apparently, in an effort to further encourage an end to all bombings of North Vietnam, in August 1968 Hanoi released three more captured pilots, all members of the Air Force and recent captives. They were Maj. James F. Low, a Korean War ace shot down in December 1967; Maj. Fred N. Thompson, captured in March 1968; and Capt. Joe V. Carpenter, captured in February 1968. Turned over to members of the U.S. antiwar movement in Hanoi on 18 July, they were escorted back to the United States.

During the waning months of the Johnson administration in late 1968, little progress was made in the Paris talks. The next major event affecting the POW's involved the efforts of the new administration of President Richard M. Nixon, who took office in January 1969. Within days of his inauguration, the President sent Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge to Paris to head the U.S. delegation to the peace talks. Mr. Lodge very early proposed to the North Vietnamese the release of POW's held by both sides as part of any peace agreement. Hanoi, however, demanded that the United States end its support of Saigon. As the talks deadlocked over this issue, the administration in early 1969 abandoned quiet diplomacy in dealing with the
(1-2) POW's were driven to the Gia Lam Airport preparatory to their turnover to American officials. (3) Col. Emil J. Wengel, USAF greets Maj. Hubert K. Flesher ( ), who was shot down on 2 December 1966. (4) Happy former POW's after boarding a C-141 transport taking them back to the United States. (5) The end of a long journey for Army Sgt. Edward W. Williams, greeted by close relatives at Scott AFB, Ill. (6-7) Welcome signs greet returned POW's.
Scenes of homecoming.
POW issue and proposed discussing it "openly, candidly, forcefully, and repeatedly." In the dozens of meetings with the North Vietnamese during 1969, the Americans repeatedly brought up the subject. They cited "disturbing evidence" that the prisoners were being held "in solitary confinement and being subjected to physical and mental duress." They repeatedly proposed a prisoner exchange, repatriation of the sick and wounded, and inspection of the camps by impartial outsiders. They pressed the North Vietnamese for lists of all POW's so that their families could know "who is dead and who is alive."

Although it rejected all these proposals, Hanoi on 3 July 1969 announced that "in recognition of the American Independence Day," it would release a third group of prisoners. They were: Capt. Wesley L. Rumble, USAF, a captive 15 months; Seaman Douglas Hegdahl, imprisoned more than 2 years; and Lt. Robert F. Frishman, USN, a prisoner for about 20 months. Prior to their turn-over to another U.S. antiwar group in Hanoi on 18 July, the North Vietnamese warned Lieutenant Frishman not to cause them any "embarrassment" since they would retaliate against those left behind. The other POW's, however, had urged him to speak out about their ill-treatment when he got home.

He did several weeks later, with the encouragement of the administration. On 3 September 1969, Frishman and Hegdahl held a press conference at the Bethesda Naval Hospital, during which the lieutenant reported that POW's had been beaten, tortured, placed in solitary confinement, provided minimal medical care, and otherwise mistreated. Frishman, for example, almost lost his injured right arm, which became shorter than his left arm for lack of adequate medical aid. Based upon these statements and other available information, the U.S. government on 13 September reported to the International Conference of the Red Cross meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, on Hanoi's gross violations of the Geneva Convention.

The publicity about the harsh treatment had a galvanizing effect on the families of the prisoners. Starting in September-October 1969, delegations of wives and relatives of POW's descended on the North Vietnamese delegation in Paris to plead for information about their men. The spectacle produced widespread headlines and television coverage and adversely affected North Vietnam's position in the eyes of the world. On 12 November the United States also took its case to the United Nations General Assembly, where it denounced Hanoi's torture and treatment of the prisoners and its refusal to allow mail privileges to the POW's.
These events finally produced a North Vietnamese reaction. Responding to the unfavorable publicity, Hanoi requested members of the American peace movement to form a "Committee of Liaison With Families of Servicemen Detained in North Vietnam" to transmit letters from the POW's to their families in the United States. Subsequently, on 14 December 1969, North Vietnamese prison officials suddenly directed the POW's: "Everyone will write home for Christmas." There followed a dramatic change in the number of letters sent and received. For example, in the 4½ years ending in January 1969, American families had received only 820 letters from 103 prisoners. During the next 11 months, the number climbed to 940 from 294 writers, most of the additional 320 letters being written in November and December. Of those, 191 came from new writers, whose fate for the most part had remained unknown to their families. This was an important break-through for the prisoners and was followed by noticeable improvement in their living conditions.

The administration continued to hammer away at the POW issue in various forums. In early 1970 both houses of Congress adopted a resolution expressing concern about the prisoners' fates. During the summer, President Nixon appointed Col. Frank Borman (he and two companions orbited the moon in December 1968) as his Special Representative on Prisoners of War. Borman traveled to 14 countries (including the Soviet Union) seeking assistance in persuading Hanoi to exchange American prisoners for the thousands of captured North Vietnamese troops. Although the trip was unsuccessful, it helped to focus the spotlight on the plight of the POW's. After his return to the United States in September 1970, Colonel Borman reported to a joint session of Congress on his efforts.

In October the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia held its first annual convention in Washington, D.C., attended by more than 450 family members. The League grew out of the activities of a group of wives on the West Coast in 1966. In November the U.S. government received—via the antiwar Committee of Liaison—the first news from Hanoi about the death in captivity of six POW's. The committee also turned over a North Vietnamese list of 339 American captives, which included 4 new names.

In late November 1970—as a direct result of the daring U.S. raid on the Son Tay prison camp west of Hanoi—the North Vietnamese evacuated all outlying prisons and brought the POW's—352 of them—to the Hoa Lo prison (Vietnamese for "hell hole" but usually called the "Hanoi Hilton" by the POW's). This consolidation
opened a new era for the prisoners. For the first time they were placed in large open-bay rooms housing 20 to 50 men, enabling them to organize to a greater extent than ever before. Their senior officers, although still kept in isolation by the North Vietnamese, were able to issue policy guidance and directives to the younger men via a variety of clandestine communication methods and maintained effective command of the "4th Allied POW Wing" despite efforts to halt this activity.

During 1971-1972 perhaps the most important influence on Hanoi—and the final peace settlement—was President Nixon's state visits to North Vietnam's major military suppliers—Communist China in February 1972 and the Soviet Union in May. Within months after Dr. Kissinger's secret trip to Peking in July 1971 which led to arrangements for the President's trip to China, a North Vietnamese delegate at Paris offered to release all POW's if the United States promised to withdraw all its forces from Vietnam by a fixed date. The proposal became the foundation for reaching a final agreement between Kissinger and Tho in 1972. There were several setbacks and interruptions in their negotiations, including Hanoi's major offensive in the spring of 1972 to seize territory in South Vietnam and defeat the Saigon government. The heavy bombardment of Hanoi and Haiphong in December 1972—following Hanoi's procrastination over the settlement—apparently was a factor leading to the 27 January 1973 agreement and set the stage for Operation Homecoming, the return of all American prisoners.

Planning the POW Recovery

Operation Homecoming plans, refined over a period of several years, called for each returning POW to remain in medical channels from the time he returned to American control until he had completed all post-captivity processing in a hospital in the United States. Representatives of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the military services, and the State Department attended the final planning conference, held in Honolulu, Hawaii, during August 1972. Among the attendees were physicians, surgeons, lawyers, escorts, consular officials, chaplains, public affairs officers, and others. The Commander, 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Group (PACAF), was appointed overall aeromedical evacuation coordinator for the recovery operation.

The operation was divided into three phases. First, there was to be the initial reception of prisoners at three release sites: prisoners held by the Viet Cong were to be flown to Saigon by helicopter; those in North Vietnam, the majority of the prisoners, would be released at Hanoi; and finally, three American POW's held in China—two U.S. pilots and a CIA agent imprisoned during the Korean War—would be set free at Hong Kong. All would be flown to Clark AB in the Philippines for the second phase of the operation—processing through the Joint Homecoming Reception Center. Then the POW's would fly to 1 of 31 military hospitals.
in the United States for detailed medical assistance and processing, the third phase of the operation.

In late September 1972 a realistic rehearsal for Operation Homecoming took place after North Vietnam released three more American POW's: Maj. Edward K. Elias, USAF; Lt. Norris A. Charles, USN; and Lt. Markham L. Gartley, USN. Their release gave Homecoming personnel the opportunity to exercise and refine their procedures. The 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Group, for example, responded five times, sending a C-9A aeromedical aircraft to potential release sites including Vientiane, Laos.

On 27 January 1973, as specified in the cease-fire agreement, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong provided the United States with a list of 578 American POW's of whom 556 were military personnel and 22 civilians. On 1 February the "Lao Patriotic Front" provided the names of nine other American prisoners—seven military and two civilians. Finally, an additional POW in Viet Cong hands also was reported, bringing the total of American personnel to be released to 588. The Communist side also listed nine non-U.S. personnel: two West Germans, two Canadians, two Filipinos, two Thais, and one South Vietnamese. The total number of Americans returning home—including the three released by China—was 591.

Under provisions of the cease-fire agreement, POW's were to be released simultaneously with the withdrawal of American troops, at approximately 15-day phased intervals. The first release took place almost on schedule and was followed by another North Vietnamese "good will" release a few days later. When the North Vietnamese fell behind the release schedule, the President ordered a halt in American force withdrawals from the South to make clear the importance the United States attached to prompt and full compliance with the agreement. North Vietnam responded by releasing additional prisoners, the last of them on 29 March. In the South, Saigon officials released 26,508 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong prisoners while the Communist side released about 5,000 South Vietnamese POW's.

For the American people the return of the nation's captured military men was a moment of tears and joyous celebration as they watched the arrival of their servicemen at Clark and then at air bases throughout the United States. A State Department official, Frank A. Sieverts, Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of State for Prisoner of War/ Missing in Action Matters, told a congressional committee in May 1973 of being at Hanoi's Gia Lam airport on 12 February and his joy when the first group of POW's arrived there for their flight to freedom. He said:

The guards ordered the men off the bus. Suddenly, the senior American officer of the group took command away from the guards and gave the orders for the men to march in formation to the release point. The guards tried to intervene but fell back. It was clear then that, despite the grim experience of their captivity, our men had endured and prevailed. They deserve our thanks and commendation.
# Key Air Force Leaders During the War in Southeast Asia

## Secretaries of the Air Force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eugene M. Zuckert</td>
<td>24 Jan 1961</td>
<td>30 Sep 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Brown</td>
<td>1 Oct 1965</td>
<td>14 Feb 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert C. Seamans, Jr.</td>
<td>15 Feb 1965</td>
<td>14 May 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John L. McLucas</td>
<td>19 Jul 1973</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LeMay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gen. John P.</td>
<td>1 Feb 1965</td>
<td>31 Jul 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McConnell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George S. Brown</td>
<td>1 Aug 1973</td>
<td>30 Jun 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsend Hoopes</td>
<td>2 Oct 1967</td>
<td>30 Sep 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Lucius D. Clay</td>
<td>1 Aug 1971</td>
<td>30 Sep 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Louis L. Wilson, Jr.</td>
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</table>

## Under Secretaries of the Air Force

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>End Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph V. Charyk</td>
<td>28 Jan 1960</td>
<td>1 Mar 1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brockway McMillan</td>
<td>12 Jun 1963</td>
<td>30 Sep 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman S. Paul</td>
<td>1 Oct 1965</td>
<td>30 Sep 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsend Hoopes</td>
<td>2 Oct 1967</td>
<td>3 Feb 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James W. Plummer</td>
<td>20 Dec 1973</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*McLuca served in this post through 19 December 1973 in addition to serving as Secretary of the Air Force.

## Commanders in Chief, Pacific Air Forces

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>O'Donnell, Jr.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Jacob E. Smart</td>
<td>1 Aug 1963</td>
<td>31 Jul 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Hunter Harris, Jr.</td>
<td>1 Aug 1964</td>
<td>31 Jan 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Lucius D. Clay</td>
<td>1 Aug 1971</td>
<td>30 Sep 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Louis L. Wilson, Jr.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Commanders,
Seventh Air Force

Organized at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, 1 April 1966. Replaced 2d Air Division.

Lt. Gen. Joseph H. Moore 1 Apr 1966-
Gen. William W. Momyer 30 Jun 1966-
Gen. George S. Brown 1 Aug 1966-
Gen. Lucius D. Clay, Jr. 31 Aug 1970-
Gen. John D. Lavelle 1 Sep 1970-
Gen. John W. Vogt 7 Apr 1972-
Lt. Gen. Timothy F. O'Keefe 30 Sep 1973-

Commanders,
Seventh/Thirteenth Air Force


Maj. Gen. Charles R. Bond, Jr. (Dep Cmdr) 6 Jan 1966-
Maj. Gen. William C. Lindley, Jr. 1 Jun 1966-
Maj. Gen. Louis T. Seith 31 May 1967-
Maj. Gen. Robert L. Petit 1 Jun 1969-
Maj. Gen. James F. Kirkendall 15 Apr 1970-
Maj. Gen. Andrew J. Evans, Jr. 12 Oct 1970-
Maj. Gen. Dewitt R. Searles 15 Apr 1971-
Maj. Gen. James D. Hughes 9 Sep 1972-

Commanders,
Eighth Air Force

Moved, without personnel or equipment, from Westover AFB, MA to Andersen AFB, Guam on 1 April 1970. Replaced 3d Air Division. Moved without personnel or equipment, to Barksdale AFB-LA on 1 January 1975.

Lt. Gen. Alvan C. Gillem, II 1 Apr 1970-
Brig. Gen. Leo C. Lewis 13 Jul 1970-
Lt. Gen. Sam J. Byerley 1 Aug 1970-
Lt. Gen. Gerald W. Johnson 14 Sep 1971-
Lt. Gen. George H. McKee 30 Oct 1971-
Maj. Gen. Charles F. Minter, Sr. 9 Sep 1972-

Division, Wing, and Group Commanders

2d ADVON

Established by Thirteenth Air Force on 15 November 1961; with four numbered detachments, three located in South Vietnam, and one in Thailand. Inactivated October 1962; replaced by 2d Air Division.

Commanders, 2d Air Division

Organized 8 October 1962. Discontinued 1 April 1966; replaced by Seventh Air Force.

Maj. Gen. (Later, Lt. C. 21 Jan 1964:

*Anthis also wore a second hat as Chief, Air Force Section, MAAG, Vietnam.
Commanders, 3d Air Division


17th Air Division (Prov)

Activated 1 Jun 1972 at U-Tapao AFB, Thailand, attached to 8 AF (SAC). Inactivated 1 January 1975.


57th Air Division (Prov)


315th Air Division


G. Kershaw
Col. Lester R. .............. 16 Jun 1965- Ferris, Jr. (Interim) 12 Jul 1965

834th Air Division

Organized 25 October 1966 at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN.

3d Tactical Fighter Wing


Col. Robert A. .......... 8 Nov 1965-
Ackerly 31 Oct 1966
Col. Richard C. ........ 1 Nov 1966-
Catledge 29 Sep 1967
Col. George W. ....... 30 Sep 1967-
McLaughlin 4 May 1968
Col. Homer K. .......... 5 May 1968-
Hansen 31 Mar 1969
Col. Howard M. ....... 1 Apr 1969-
Lane 10 Apr 1970
Col. William E. ....... 11 Apr 1970-
Charlson Unkn
Col. Abner M. .......... 11 Mar 1971-
Aust, Jr. 20 May 1971
Col. Clement D. ....... 20 May 1971-
Billingslea (Temp) 6 Jun 1971
Col. Abner M. ....... 7 Jun 1971-
Aust, Jr. 16 Nov 1971
Col. Charles A. ....... 17 Nov 1971-
Watry 4 Oct 1972
Col. Paul A. ........... 5 Oct 1972-
Kattu 18 Nov 1973
Col. Harry W. ......... 19 Nov 1973-
Schurr

Col. James A. .......... 19 May 1971-
Young 27 Feb 1972
Col. Carl S. Miller ... 28 Feb 1972-
24 Nov 1972
Col. Francis A. ....... 25 Nov 1972-
Humphreys, Jr. 24 Jan 1974
Col. Tom M. ........... 25 Jan 1974-
Arnold, Jr.

12th Tactical Fighter Wing

Arrived Cam Ranh Bay AB, RVN, on 8 November 1965.

Col. Levi R. Chase .... 8 Nov 1965-
17 Oct 1966
Col. Jones E. Bolt ... 18 Oct 1966-
19 Mar 1967
Col. Joel D. ........... 20 Mar 1967-
Thorvaldson 8 Apr 1967
Col. Woodard E. ....... 9 Apr 1967-
Davis, Jr. 4 Apr 1968
Col. Floyd White ....... 5 Apr 1968-
6 Apr 1969
Col. Ramon R. ....... 7 Apr 1969-
Melton 30 Mar 1970
Col. Harry B. ....... 31 Mar 1970-
Trimble 12 Apr 1970
Col. Larry M. ....... 13 Apr 1970-
Kilpack 3 Oct 1970
Col. Ralph S. Parr .... 4 Oct 1970-
18 Feb 1971
Col. Richard H. ....... 19 Feb 1971-
Schoeneman 3 Oct 1971
Col. Albert L. ....... 4 Oct 1971-
Melton 17 Nov 1971

8th Tactical Fighter Wing

Organized at Ubon AB, Thailand, 8 December 1965.

Col. Joseph G. ....... 8 Dec 1965-
Wilson 29 Sep 1966
Col. Robin Olds ....... 30 Sep 1966-
22 Sep 1967
Col. Robert V. ....... 23 Sep 1967-
Spencer 4 Jul 1968
Col. Charles C. ....... 5 Jul 1968-
Pattillo 7 May 1969
Col. Donald N. ....... 8 May 1969-
Stanfield 5 May 1970
Col. David J. ....... 6 May 1970-
Schmerbeck 1 Oct 1970
Col. Lloyd R. ....... 2 Oct 1970-
Leavitt, Jr. (Temp) 3 Oct 1970
Col. Larry M. ....... 4 Oct 1970-
Kilpack 18 May 1971

Col. James A. ....... 19 May 1971-
Young 27 Feb 1972
Col. Carl S. Miller ... 28 Feb 1972-
24 Nov 1972
Col. Francis A. ....... 25 Nov 1972-
Humphreys, Jr. 24 Jan 1974
Col. Tom M. ....... 25 Jan 1974-
Arnold, Jr.

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Davis, Jr. 4 Apr 1968
Col. Floyd White ....... 5 Apr 1968-
6 Apr 1969
Col. Ramon R. ....... 7 Apr 1969-
Melton 30 Mar 1970
Col. Harry B. ....... 31 Mar 1970-
Trimble 12 Apr 1970
Col. Larry M. ....... 13 Apr 1970-
Kilpack 3 Oct 1970
Col. Ralph S. Parr .... 4 Oct 1970-
18 Feb 1971
Col. Richard H. ....... 19 Feb 1971-
Schoeneman 3 Oct 1971
Col. Albert L. ....... 4 Oct 1971-
Melton 17 Nov 1971

Col. James A. ....... 19 May 1971-
Young 27 Feb 1972
Col. Carl S. Miller ... 28 Feb 1972-
24 Nov 1972
Col. Francis A. ....... 25 Nov 1972-
Humphreys, Jr. 24 Jan 1974
Col. Tom M. ....... 25 Jan 1974-
Arnold, Jr.
14th Air Commando Wing


Col. Gordon F. Bradburn .......... 9 Apr 1967
Col. Forrest L. Rauscher 16 Nov 1967
Col. William K. Bush 5 Mar 1969-1 Sep 1969
Col. Clyde S. Cherry 2 Sep 1969-2 Apr 1970
Col. William H. Fairbrother 3 Apr 1970-12 Sep 1970
Col. Mark W. Magnan 14 Mar 1971-12 Sep 1971

35th Tactical Fighter Wing


Col. Franklin H. Scott 8 Apr 1966-9 May 1966
Col. Allan P. Rankin 10 May 1966-9 Oct 1966
Col. Herndon F. Williams 1 Feb 1968-22 Sep 1968
Col. Frank L. Gailer, Jr. 23 Sep 1968-8 Aug 1969
Col. Cregg P. Nolen, Jr. 1 Jan 1971-30 Jun 1971

31st Tactical Fighter Wing


Col. Warren R. Lewis 28 Nov 1966-6 Dec 1967
Col. William J. Evans 7 Dec 1967-2 May 1968
Col. Abner M. Aust, Jr. 3 May 1968-7 Feb 1969

37th Tactical Fighter Wing


Unkn 1 Mar 1967-5 May 1967
Col. Raymond C. Lee, Jr. 6 May 1967-14 May 1967

345
43d Strategic Wing
Activated 1 April 1970 at Andersen AFB, Guam, assigned to 8 AF (SAC) and later attached to Air Division Provisional, 57 during existence of latter. Replaced 3960th Strategic Wing.

Col. Lawrence E. Stephens        1 Apr 1970-30 Jun 1970
Col. James R. McCarthy          1 Dec 1972-1 Jun 1973

Col. Robert E. Wayne             1 Dec 1972-29 Jun 1973
Col. Ralph H. Bowers, (Temp)     15 Sep 73-25 Sep 1973

72d Strategic Wing (Prov)
Activated 1 June 1972 at Andersen AFB, Guam, attached to Air Division Provisional, 57. Inactivated 15 November 1973.

Col. Kenneth M. Holloway         1 Jun 1972-8 Oct 1972
Col. Thomas F. Raw               8 Oct 1972-16 Mar 1973
Col. Thomas W. Sherman, Jr.      16 Mar 1973-16 Apr 1973

56th Air Commando Wing
Organized at Nakhon Phanom AB, Thailand, 8 April 1967. Redesignated 1 August 1968 as Special Operation Wing.

Col. Harry C. Aderholt           8 Apr 1967-18 Nov 1967
Col. Roland K. McCoskrie         19 Nov 1967-6 Nov 1968
Col. Edwin J. White, Jr.         7 Nov 1968-30 May 1969
Col. Edwin J. White, Jr.         5 Jul 1969-4 Oct 1969

Col. Robert E. Wayne             1 Dec 1972-29 Jun 1973
Col. Ralph H. Bowers, (Temp)     15 Sep 73-25 Sep 1973

307th Strategic Wing
Activated 1 April 1970 at U-Tapao AB, Thailand, assigned to 8 AF (SAC) and attached to Air Division Provisional, 17 while the latter was in existence. Replaced 4258th Strategic Wing. Inactivated 30 September 1975.

Col. Donald M. Davis             1 Jun 1972-10 Feb 1973

Col. Robert E. Wayne             1 Dec 1972-29 Jun 1973
Col. Ralph H. Bowers, (Temp)     15 Sep 73-25 Sep 1973

72d Strategic Wing (Prov)
Activated 1 June 1972 at Andersen AFB, Guam, attached to Air Division Provisional, 57. Inactivated 15 November 1973.

Col. Kenneth M. Holloway         1 Jun 1972-8 Oct 1972
Col. Thomas F. Raw               8 Oct 1972-16 Mar 1973
Col. Thomas W. Sherman, Jr.      16 Mar 1973-16 Apr 1973

307th Strategic Wing
Activated 1 April 1970 at U-Tapao AB, Thailand, assigned to 8 AF (SAC) and attached to Air Division Provisional, 17 while the latter was in existence. Replaced 4258th Strategic Wing. Inactivated 30 September 1975.

Col. Donald M. Davis             1 Jun 1972-10 Feb 1973
310th Strategic Wing (Prov)

Activated 1 June 1972 at U-Tapao AB, Thailand, attached to Air Division Provisional, 17. Inactivated 1 July 1974.

315th Tactical Airlift Wing

Organized as 315th Air Commando Wing, Troop Carrier, on 8 March 1966 at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN. Moved to Phan Rang AB, RVN, on 15 June 1967. Redesignated 315th Air Commando Wing on 1 August 1967. Redesignated 315th Tactical Airlift Wing on 1 January 1970.

355th Tactical Fighter Wing

### 366th Tactical Fighter Wing


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colonel</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George S. Weart</td>
<td>9 Oct 1966</td>
<td>20 Mar 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan P. Rankin</td>
<td>10 Oct 1966</td>
<td>26 May 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones E. Bolt</td>
<td>20 Mar 1967</td>
<td>27 May 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert W. Maloy</td>
<td>27 May 1967</td>
<td>18 Dec 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifford H. Meier</td>
<td>19 Dec 1967</td>
<td>16 Jan 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul C. Watson</td>
<td>17 Jan 1968</td>
<td>1 Jan 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Later BG) John W. Roberts</td>
<td>3 Jan 1969</td>
<td>30 Sep 1969</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel C. Perry</td>
<td>19 Sep 1970</td>
<td>17 Feb 1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>John R. Spalding, Jr.</td>
<td>18 Feb 1971</td>
<td>6 Jul 1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julian D. Sawyer</td>
<td>7 Jul 1971</td>
<td>21 Mar 1972</td>
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<tr>
<td>George W. Rutter</td>
<td>22 Mar 1972</td>
<td>1 Aug 1972</td>
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### 376th Strategic Wing

Activated 1 April 1970 at Kadena AB, Okinawa. Replaced 4252d Strategic Wing.

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Col. Monroe S.</td>
<td>8 Apr 1966</td>
<td>Aug 1966</td>
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<tr>
<td>Col. James M.</td>
<td>5 Dec 1969</td>
<td>29 Jun 1970</td>
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<tr>
<td>Col. Webb Thompson</td>
<td>26 Jul 1971</td>
<td>14 Dec 1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Col. Stanley M. Umstead, Jr.</td>
<td>15 Dec 1971</td>
<td>4 Aug 1972</td>
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### 374th Troop Carrier Wing


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<tr>
<td>Russell D. Crane</td>
<td>16 Jun 1967</td>
<td>24 Jan 1969</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noble F. Greenhill, Jr.</td>
<td>11 Jul 1970</td>
<td>31 May 1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andrew P. Issue</td>
<td>1 Jun 1971</td>
<td>17 May 1973</td>
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<td>James I. Baginski</td>
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### 388th Tactical Fighter Wing

Organized at Korat AB, Thailand, 8 April 1966; replaced 6234th Tactical Fighter Wing.

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<th>Colonel</th>
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<td>Aug 1966</td>
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<td>James M.</td>
<td>5 Dec 1969</td>
<td>29 Jun 1970</td>
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<td>Irby B. Jarvis, Jr.</td>
<td>1 Aug 1970</td>
<td>25 Jul 1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Webb Thompson</td>
<td>26 Jul 1971</td>
<td>14 Dec 1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stanley M. Umstead, Jr.</td>
<td>15 Dec 1971</td>
<td>4 Aug 1972</td>
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</table>
Col. Mele .......................... 25 Jan 1973-
Vojvodich, Jr. .................. 30 Jun 1973
Col. Robert K. ..................... 1 Jul 1973
Crouch

405th Tactical Fighter Wing
Activated 9 April 1959 at Clark AB, Philippines.

Col. Edward P. .................. 5 Feb 1968-
McNeff .......................... 9 Jan 1970
Col. Walter J. ........................ 10 Jan 1970
Brown .......................... 31 May 1971
Col. James E. .................. 1 Jun 1971-
Tilton .......................... 31 Dec 1971
Col. John R. Geyer .................. 1 Jan 1972-
5 Jun 1972
Col. Henry C. .................. 6 Jun 1972-
Gordon .......................... Mar 1973

432d Tactical Reconnaissance Wing
Organized at Udorn AB, Thailand, 18 September 1966.

Col. Robert W. .................. 18 Sep 1966-
Shick .......................... 17 Sep 1967
Col. Victor N. .................. 18 Sep 1967-
Cabas .......................... 3 Sep 1968
Col. Wendell L. .................. 4 Sep 1968-
Bevan, Jr. .................. 6 Jun 1969
Col. Darrell S. .................. 7 Jun 1969-
Cramer .......................... 27 Jul 1970
Col. David S. .................. 28 Jul 1970-
Mellish .......................... 25 Nov 1970
Col. Lloyd R. .................. 26 Nov 1970-
Leavitt, Jr. .................. 2 Apr 1971
Col. Lyle E. Mann .................. 3 Apr 1971-
28 Oct 1971
Col. Charles A. .................. 29 Oct 1971-
Gabriel .......................... 14 Jun 1972
Col. Scott G. Smith .................. 15 Jun 1972-
18 Mar 1973
Col. Robert W. .................. 19 Mar 1973-
Clement .......................... 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing

Col. Edward H. .................. 18 Feb 1966-
Taylor .......................... Jan 1967
Col. Robert G. .................. Jan 1967-
Williams .......................... 20 Dec 1967
Holbury .......................... 7 Jul 1968
Col. Leslie J. .................. 8 Jul 1968-
Westberg .......................... 27 May 1969
Col. Hal L. .................. 28 May 1969-
Fitzpatrick .......................... 20 Jun 1969
Col. Harry M. .................. 21 Jun 1969-
Chapman .......................... 30 Apr 1970
Col. James E. .................. 1 May 1970-
Tilton .......................... 14 Apr 1971
Col. Dale L. .................. 15 Apr 1971-
Flowers .......................... 31 Jul 1971
Col. Jerome F. .................. 1 Aug 1971-
O'Malley .......................... 31 Aug 1971

463d Troop Carrier Wing
Constituted 463d Troop Carrier Wing (M), 1 December 1952. Redesignated Troop Carrier Wing (Assault), 1 October 1962; Troop Carrier Wing (M), 15 May 1965; Troop Carrier Wing, 8 December 1965; 463d Tactical Airlift Wing, 1 August 1967. Inactivated at Clark AB, Philippines, 31 December 1971.

Col. Arthur E. .................. 17 Oct 1964-
Aenchbacher .......................... 6 Nov 1966
Col. Lopez J. .................. 7 Nov 1966-
Mantoux .......................... 6 Dec 1967
Col. Thomas A. .................. 7 Dec 1967-
Twomey .......................... 11 Apr 1968
Col. Marion F. .................. 12 Apr 1968-
Caruthers .......................... 8 May 1969
Col. Charles S. .................. 9 May 1969-
Wolfe .......................... 1 Jul 1970
Col. John R. Geyer .................. 2 Jul 1970-
1 Sep 1971
Col. Stewart Young .................. 2 Sep 1971-
31 Dec 1971

349
483d Tactical Airlift Wing
Organized at Cam Ranh Bay AB, RVN, 15 October 1966, as 483d Troop Carrier Wing. Inactivated May 1972.

Col. Wilbert Turk ........... 30 Sep 1968-3 Sep 1969
Col. Rodney H. .............. 11 Apr 1971-Newbold 24 Feb 1972

553d Reconnaissance Wing

Col. Ted H. ........ Ostendorf 6 Dec 1969
Col. Robert A. ........ Sloan 11 Dec 1970

633d Special Operations Wing


3960th Strategic Wing

Col. Edward C. ....... Apr 1964-Unger 21 Jul 1964
Col. Edward D. .... 22 Jul 1964-Gaitly, Jr. 9 Jul 1965
Col. Joseph J. .......... 10 Jul 1965

4133d Bombardment Wing (Prov)
Activated at Andersen AFB, Guam 1 February 1966. Turned over its combat mission to 43d Strategic Wing and inactivated on 1 July 1970.

Col. William T. ........ 1 Feb 1966-Cumiskey 31 Mar 1966
Col. Harold J. ........ 1 Apr 1966-Whiteman 12 Jun 1966
Col. Albert H. ........ 13 Jun 1966-Schneider 20 Sep 1966
Col. Willard A. .... 21 Sep 1966-Beauchamp 27 Sep 1966
Col. Earl L. .... 28 Sep 1966-Johnson 28 Feb 1967
Col. Robert E .... 1 Sep 1968-Blauw 25 Sep 1968
Col. Robert E ........ 26 Sep 1968-Brofft 20 Mar 1969
Col. Robert E. 21 Mar 1969
Blauw 19 Sep 1969
Col. Raymond P. 20 Sep 1969
Lowman 29 Sep 1969
Col. Howard P. 30 Sep 1969
McClain 24 Mar 1970
Col. Harold E. 25 Mar 1970
Ottoway Jun 1970

4252d Strategic Wing

Col. Holly W. 12 Jan 1965-
Anderson (Acting) 17 Feb 1965
Col. (Later, Brig. Gen.) ... 18 Feb 1965-
Morgan S. Tyler, Jr. 18 Jul 1967
Col. (Later, Brig. Gen.) ... 19 Jul 1967-
Eugene A. Stalzer 3 Aug 1969
Brig. Gen. Alan C. 4 Aug 1969-
Edmunds 31 Mar 1970

4258th Strategic Wing
Activated at U-Tapao AB, Thailand, 2 June 1966 to 1 April 1970. Replaced by 307th Strategic Wing.

Capt. Ralph W. 2 Jun 1966-
Ingram 20 Jul 1966
Col. John W. Farrar ... 21 Jul 1966-
30 Jun 1967
Col. Alex W. ... 1 Jul 1967-
Talmant 4 Aug 1968
Brig. Gen. Richard ... 5 Aug 1968-
M. Hoban 10 Jul 1969
Brig. Gen. Woodrow ... 11 Jul 1969-
A. Abbott 31 Mar 1970

6234th Tactical Fighter Wing

Col. William D. 5 Apr 1965-
Ritchie 13 Dec 1965

Col. Monroe S. Sams ..... 14 Dec 1965-
8 Apr 1966

6251st Tactical Fighter Wing

Col. Philip Brooks ........ 8 Jul 1965-
20 Nov 1965

6252d Tactical Fighter Wing
Organized at Da Nang AB, RVN, 8 July 1965. Discontinued 8 April 1966.

Col. Franklin H. ........ 8 Jul 1965-
Scott 8 Apr 1966

3d Aero Rescue & Recovery Group
Organized 8 January 1966 at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN.

Col. Arthur W. ........ 8 Jan 1966-
Beall 31 Oct 1966
Col. Albert P. ........ 1 Nov 1966-
Lovelady 5 Oct 1967
Col. Paul E. Leske .... 6 Oct 1967-
19 Sep 1968
Col. Hollon H. ........ 20 Sep 1968-
Bridges 16 Jun 1969
Col. Rayvon ........ 17 Jun 1969-
Burleson 16 Aug 1969
Col. Malcolm C. ...... 17 Aug 1969-
Frazee 16 Jul 1970
Col. Frederick V. ..... 17 Jul 1970-
Schle, Jr. 17 Oct 1970
Col. George C. ........ 18 Oct 1970-
Pinyerd Unk
Col. Warner A. ........ Unk-
britton 12 Jan 1972
Col. Cecil N. .... 13 Jan 1972-
Muirhead, Jr. Unk
Col. Herbert R. .... Unk-
Zehnder 16 Dec 1973
Col. Richard F. ...... 17 Dec 1973-
Burdett Unk
315th Troop Carrier Group

Col. Thomas B. ........ Mid-June 1964-Kennedy 14 Jun 1965
Col. George L. ....... 23 Jun 1966-Hannah, Jr. 8 Mar 1966

Col. George L. ....... 23 Jun 1966-Hannah, Jr. 8 Mar 1966

504th Tactical Air Support Group

Col. Robert L. .......... 8 Mar 1968-Herman 3 May 1968
Col. Fleetwood .......... 24 Feb 1971-Pride, Jr. 10 Jun 1971

505th Tactical Control Group
Activated, 8 November 1965 at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN. Inactivated 26 February 1973.

Col. Charles L. ........ 8 Nov 1965-Daniel Unk
Col. Deibert R. .... 16 May 1967-Smyth 17 Apr 1968
Col. Emanuel A. .......... 18 Apr 1968-Pelaez 6 Apr 1969
Col. Paul L. Park .... 24 Jul 1971- Unk
Col. Robert A. .......... Unk-Coffin 28 Feb 1973

552d Airborne Early Warning Task Force

Col. Gus Weiser .......... 4 Apr 1965- 30 Jun 1965
Col. Ross Davidson ..... 26 Sep 1967- 12 Sep 1968
Col. James L. .......... 13 Sep 1968-McAllister 8 Sep 1969
Col. Harold P. ........ (1973) Knutty (Interim)
Col. Richard E. ........ (1973) Williams

1964th Communications Group
Organized at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, 1 May 1962, as 1964th Communications

Lt. Col. Kenneth .................. 1 May 1962- 
Keyte 
19 Apr 1963
Lt. Col. John M. .................. 20 Apr 1963- 
O'Reilly 
27 Oct 1963
Col. Gilbert H. .................. 28 Oct 1963- 
Bertie 
1 Dec 1964
Col. Erwin F. .................. 2 Dec 1964- 
Matelski 
6 Jan 1965
Col. Lewis L. .................. 7 Jan 1965- 
Bradley, Jr. 
19 Jan 1966
Col. Charles Y. .................. 20 Jan 1966- 
Shultz, Jr. 
9 Dec 1966
Col. Louis A. .................. 10 Dec 1966- 
Raeke, Jr. 
31 Aug 1967
Col. James M. Neff .................. 1 Sep 1967- 
1 Aug 1968
Col. Howard R. .................. 2 Aug 1968- 
McKendrick 
8 Jul 1969
Col. Ivey J. Lewis .................. 9 Jul 1969- 
14 Mar 1970
Col. Joseph H. Weeks .................. 15 Mar 1970- 
5 Jul 1970
Col. Robert E. .................. 6 Jul 1970- 
Sadler 
Apr 1971
Col. Forrest K. .................. 1971- 
Looney 
1972

1974th Communications Group

Organized at Korat AB, Thailand, 1 November 1965. Moved to Udorn AB, Thailand, on 1 April 1968.

Lt. Col. Charles R. .................. 1 Nov 1965- 
McMahan 
20 Dec 1965
Lt. Col. Dirk Duys .................. 21 Dec 1965- 
28 Jan 1966
Col. George C. .................. 29 Jan 1966- 
Kouigas 
6 Jan 1967
Lt. Col. Joseph A. .................. 7 Jan 1967- 
Bailey 
13 Jan 1967
Col. Albert J. Brown .................. 14 Jan 1967- 
11 Dec 1967
Col. Robert P. .................. 12 Dec 1967- 
Baumann, Jr. 
14 Nov 1968
Col. Joseph H. Weeks .................. 15 Nov 1968- 
21 Aug 1969
Col. Robert A. .................. 22 Aug 1969- 
Bourcy 
24 Jul 1970
Col. John M. Bolger .................. 25 Jul 1970- 
6 Jul 1971
Col. William R. Yost .................. 7 Jul 1971- 
2 Jul 1972
Col. Theodore F. .................. 3 Jul 1972- 
DeMuro 
19 Jun 1973
Col. Richard A. .................. 20 Jun 1973- 
Goldfogle 
6 Jun 1974
Col. Ben P. Lee .................. 7 Jun 1974-
On 10 March 1966, Major Bernard F. Fisher took off in an A-1E Skyraider from Pleiku, South Vietnam, to fly a routine bombing and strafing mission. Soon after taking off, he was diverted to Ashau where a Special Forces camp was under heavy attack by 2,000 North Vietnamese troops.

Arriving over the area, Major Fisher found four Skyraiders, which had also been diverted, circling over a dense cloud cover. He led his wing man and two of the other A-1E's down through a hole in the overcast. As they flew down a valley leading to the camp, the pilots were informed that it was being overrun by the enemy.

The A-1E's were making strafing runs against the attacking troops when one of the aircraft was hit by ground fire. The pilot crashlanded on the airstrip at the camp, and ran from his burning plane to seek refuge down an embankment. With enemy troops all around him, it appeared certain that he would be captured before a rescue helicopter could reach him.

Major Fisher, quickly realizing his fellow pilot's predicament, made a perilous landing on the airstrip. The steel planking runway was torn up and littered with debris. As he taxied under fire, Major Fisher saw the downed pilot dashing from his hiding place. The A-1E stopped and he clambered aboard. Dodging shell holes and debris, Major Fisher took off safely despite many hits on his aircraft by small arms fire.

The Medal of Honor awarded to Major Fisher for this daring rescue was presented to him by President Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House on 19 March 1967.
On 24 February 1967, Captain Hilliard A. Wilbanks, a forward air controller, was dispatched in an unarmed O-1 Bird Dog aircraft to assist in an operation against enemy forces attacking near Dalat, South Vietnam.

While flying reconnaissance for a South Vietnamese Ranger Battalion, Captain Wilbanks discovered hostile units concealed on two hilltops. He promptly called in helicopter gunships by radio and alerted the Rangers advancing into the area.

Realizing that their ambush was being compromised, the enemy reacted with a barrage from mortars, machine guns, and automatic weapons. Captain Wilbanks received much of this fire as he marked the enemy positions with white phosphorus rockets for the gunships. He himself opened fire with an M-16 rifle that he carried in his plane when he spotted forward Ranger squads that were pinned down and about to be overrun. Firing out of the side window of his O-1, Captain Wilbanks distracted the enemy troops and momentarily slowed their advance.

The outnumbered Rangers were afforded a chance to withdraw as the attackers diverted their fire against the low-flying aircraft. Despite the hits being scored on his plane, Captain Wilbanks persisted in covering the withdrawal. On his third pass, he was severely wounded and crashed in the battle area. The Rangers managed to rescue Captain Wilbanks from the wreckage of his plane, but he died while being evacuated to a hospital.

For his heroic support of the Rangers, Captain Wilbanks was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. The presentation was made to his widow by Secretary of the Air Force Harold Brown at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C. on 24 January 1968.
On 10 March 1967, Captain Dethlefsen flew on a mission against the steel works at Thai Nguyen some fifty miles north of Hanoi, North Vietnam, with three other F-105 Thunderchief pilots. Their task was to go in ahead of a strike force of fighter-bombers and attack the surface-to-air missile (SAM) complex, antiaircraft guns, and automatic weapons ringing the target.

On the first pass against these defenses the F-105 flight leader was shot down and his wing man was forced to withdraw with severe battle damage. Captain Dethlefsen decided to continue the attack on his own. As he maneuvered, he evaded an intercepting MIG-21 by flying into heavy enemy antiaircraft fire but his F-105 was seriously damaged.

Captain Dethlefsen nonetheless made repeated strikes with his wing man against the defense positions, even after they became obscured by the smoke and dust of the exploding bombs being dropped by the fighter-bombers. The bombing completed, the strike force withdrew but the two F-105’s remained over the target.

Evading a second MIG, Captain Dethlefsen was diving through the obscuring haze to locate the missile complex when he was again hit by flak. Making a final dive bombing attack and a strafing run with 20-mm cannon fire, Captain Dethlefsen effectively destroyed two missile sites before leaving for home in his battered F-105.

For this action, Captain Dethlefsen was awarded the Medal of Honor. The presentation was made at the White House by President Lyndon B. Johnson on 1 February 1968.
Major Leo K. Thorsness

On 19 April 1967, Major Leo K. Thorsness piloted an F-105 Thunderchief on a combat mission over North Vietnam. He was flying with a strike force sent out to suppress surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites.

Acting with his electronic warfare officer, Major Thorsness first detected one site as it was about to launch an attack and destroyed it with a Shrike missile. Almost immediately, another site was discovered. Major Thorsness flew through heavy antiaircraft fire to score direct hits on the site with cluster bombs.

On this second strike Major Thorsness’ wingman was hit and the two crew members bailed out. As he circled the descending parachutes, a MIG-17 appeared in the area. Major Thorsness promptly dived but his shots missed the enemy fighter. Attacking again, he closed rapidly to pour 20-mm cannon fire into the MIG. Just as he pulled up sharply to avoid a collision, he saw the fighter go into a tight spin and crash.

Major Thorsness then had to leave because he was low on fuel. While searching for a KC-135 Stratotanker, he learned from the Search and Rescue Center that two helicopters were waiting for an escort before attempting a rescue of the downed crew. Major Thorsness flew back alone, spotting four MIG-17’s as he neared the bailout area. He immediately attacked and damaged one of the enemy aircraft with a long burst of cannon fire. He drew the others away by diving and flying close to the ground until they gave up pursuit.

Although now critically short of fuel, Major Thorsness advised another F-105 to fly to the nearest tanker when the crew reported that it would have to bail out unless their aircraft could be quickly refueled. He then diverted to a forward base where he landed with only a 10-minute supply of fuel remaining.

Major Thorsness was awarded the Medal of Honor for his deeds of extraordinary heroism on this mission. Only 11 days later he was shot down over North Vietnam and held prisoner for nearly 6 years. Following his release, Major Thorsness received this highest decoration for valor from President Richard M. Nixon at the White House on 15 October 1973.
Shortly before midnight on November 8, 1967, Captain Gerald O. Young, the commander of a HH-3E rescue helicopter, was dispatched to evacuate the survivors of a U.S. Army reconnaissance team. The soldiers were surrounded and about to be captured in enemy-held territory in the Laotian Panhandle. Two helicopters had already been lost trying to rescue them.

Captain Young and his crew were flying as backup for another helicopter on this night operation. The first aircraft managed to pick up three members of the team before extensive battle damage forced it to withdraw. The commander of the craft advised Captain Young that intense enemy fire made the rescue of two soldiers left behind all but impossible. Accompanying gunships were also running low on fuel and ammunition.

Intent on completing the evacuation, Captain Young guided his helicopter down into the flare-lit darkness, touching down on a slope not far from the two soldiers. Both wounded, they were loaded aboard under heavy attack with enemy troops closing in. As it moved forward for takeoff, the helicopter was fired on at point blank range. It plunged downward and crashed in flames in an upside down position.

Captain Young dropped out of a cockpit window and rolled down the slope, his parachute afire. Although badly burned, he beat out the flames and gave aid to another crew member, a sergeant, who had also escaped. He then tried to reach the burning helicopter but was driven back by the intense heat. When enemy troops approached the crash scene, he led them away from the wounded sergeant hidden in the underbrush.

At dawn, Captain Young reached a clearing and helped to pinpoint his position for searching aircraft with flares and radio signals, but he broke contact when he realized that he was being used as bait by enemy gunners in the area. He again concealed himself in the dense foliage and continued to evade throughout the day despite the mounting pain of his burns. After 17 hours, Captain Young was finally rescued by a helicopter that he attracted with his radio and by firing tracers with his revolver. He then immediately informed his rescuers of the position of his fellow crew member.

For his heroism in this action, Captain Young was awarded the Medal of Honor. It was presented to him by President Lyndon B. Johnson on 14 May 1968 at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C.
On 12 May 1968, Lieutenant Colonel Joe M. Jackson, commander of an unarmed C-123 transport aircraft, flew from Da Nang to Kham Duc, South Vietnam, on an emergency mission. A Special Forces camp at Kham Duc was being overrun by enemy forces. They had taken the forward outpost and were in complete control of the airstrip. Located in a valley, the airstrip was surrounded on all sides by mountainous terrain.

While orbiting over the battle area Colonel Jackson learned by radio that in the evacuation of the camp by air a three-man Combat Control Team had inadvertently been left behind. Another C-123 transport was ahead of Colonel Jackson in the traffic pattern. The aircraft landed successfully on the airstrip littered with debris, including a wrecked helicopter, but failed to evacuate the team.

Colonel Jackson then descended rapidly from 9,000 feet and made an assault landing on the strip under heavy enemy fire. After he stopped, a rocket fell in front of the transport. A dud, it bounced harmlessly toward the nose of the plane without exploding. Colonel Jackson had landed near the spot where the three men had been reported to be hiding. With the team safely on board, he quickly took off under a mortar barrage and intense automatic weapons fire from the surrounding hills. After landing at Da Nang the crew found that not a single bullet had touched their aircraft during the entire flight.

Colonel Jackson was awarded the Medal of Honor for rescuing the three-man team. The presentation was made by President Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House on 16 January 1969.
On 1 September 1968 Lieutenant Colonel William A. Jones, Ill, led a flight of four A-1H Skyraider aircraft on an escort mission. The flight was accompanying two helicopters sent out to rescue the pilot of an F-4 Phantom downed about twenty miles northwest of Dong Hoi, North Vietnam.

Arriving over the area, Colonel Jones made several low passes across a valley to find the pilot and pinpoint enemy gun positions. On one pass he felt an explosion beneath his aircraft and his cockpit was filled with smoke. After the smoke cleared, he continued his search and finally spotted the downed pilot near a towering rock formation. Enemy gunners occupying a position near the top of the formation opened fire on the propeller-driven Skyraider.

Colonel Jones realized that the gun position had to be destroyed before a rescue could be made and that strikes against it would endanger the survivor unless his location was known. He himself attacked with cannon and rocket fire while relaying the pilot’s location by radio. While making his second pass, Colonel Jones’ aircraft was hit and his cockpit was set ablaze. He sought to eject but the damaged extraction system only jettisoned the canopy without pulling him from the cockpit. At the same time his transmissions to the rescue force were being blocked by repeated calls from other aircraft that he bailed out.

Before the fire died out Colonel Jones was badly burned and his radio transmitters were disabled. He chose to return to base to report the downed pilot’s exact location. Despite his severe burns he landed his damaged aircraft safely, and insisted on passing on the vital information before receiving medical treatment. The downed pilot was rescued later that day.

The Medal of Honor was awarded to Colonel Jones for his selfless heroism, but he died in an aircraft accident in the United States before it could be presented to him. His widow received the decoration from President Richard M. Nixon at the White House on 6 August 1970.
On 26 November 1968, First Lieutenant James P. Fleming and four other UH-1F helicopter pilots were returning to their base at Duc Co, South Vietnam, for refueling and rearming when an emergency call for help was received from a Special Forces reconnaissance team.

The home bound force—two gunships and three transport helicopters—immediately changed course and sped to the area without refueling. The six-man Special Forces team was pinned down by a large, hostile force not far from a river bank. As the gunships descended to attack the enemy positions, one was hit and downed. The remaining gunship made several passes, firing away with its miniguns, but the intense return fire from enemy machine guns continued. Low on fuel, the helicopters were being forced to leave and return to base.

Lieutenant Fleming, piloting the only remaining transport helicopter, descended over the river to evacuate the team. Unable to land because of the dense foliage, he hovered just above the river with his landing skids braced against the bank. The lone gunship continued its strafing runs, but heavy enemy fire prevented the team from reaching the helicopter. The leader advised Lieutenant Fleming by radio to withdraw.

After pulling away, Lieutenant Fleming decided to make another rescue attempt before completely exhausting his fuel. He dropped down to the same spot and found that the team had managed to move closer to the river bank. The men dashed out and clambered aboard as bullets pierced the air, some smashing into the helicopter. The rescue craft and the gunship then returned safely to Duc Co, arriving with their fuel tanks nearly empty.

For this miraculous rescue, in which not a single life was lost, Lieutenant Fleming was awarded the Medal of Honor. He received this highest decoration for valor at the White House from President Richard M. Nixon on 14 May 1970.
On 24 February 1969, Airman First Class John L. Levitow flew on a combat air patrol over South Vietnam as the loadmaster of an AC-47 Dragonship. The gunship was patrolling in the vicinity of Tan Son Nhut, when the Army Post at nearby Long Binh came under mortar attack. The aircraft was diverted to aid in the defense of the post.

Firing its miniguns at the enemy, the gunship knocked out two mortar positions, but further firings were observed a few kilometers away. As the AC-47 flew in that direction, a mortar shell fell on the top of its right wing. A brilliant explosion shook the aircraft violently and the fuselage was riddled by thousands of shell fragments.

Airman Levitow and another crew member were standing near the open cargo door at that moment, dropping parachute illumination flares. The explosion knocked both of them to the floor, and a flare that they were handling was tossed inside the cargo compartment. Spewing toxic smoke, the activated magnesium flare was due to separate explosively from its canister and ignite within seconds.

Although stunned and wounded by shrapnel, Airman Levitow moved forward in the compartment and flung himself on the flare to keep it from rolling. He then dragged himself and the flare back toward the cargo door and tossed it out. The flare ignited just as it cleared the aircraft.

Airman Levitow was awarded the Medal of Honor for his selfless heroism that saved his fellow crew members and the gunship. The presentation was made by President Richard M. Nixon at the White House on 14 May 1970.
On 29 June 1972, Captain Steven L. Bennett, a forward air controller, was flying an OV-10 Bronco on an artillery adjustment mission near Quang Tri City, South Vietnam. A Marine gunfire spotter occupied the rear seat of the lightly armed reconnaissance aircraft.

After controlling gunfire from U.S. naval vessels off shore and directing air strikes against enemy positions for approximately 3 hours, Captain Bennett received an urgent call for assistance. A small South Vietnamese unit was about to be attacked by a much larger enemy force. Without immediate help, the unit was certain to be overrun. Unfortunately, there were no friendly fighters left in the area, and supporting naval gunfire would have endangered the South Vietnamese.

They were between the coast and the enemy.

Captain Bennett decided to strafe the advancing soldiers. Since they were North Vietnamese regulars, equipped with heat-seeking SAM 7 missiles, the risks in making a low-level attack were great. Captain Bennett nonetheless zoomed down and opened fire with his four small machine guns. The troops scattered and began to fall back under repeated strafing.

As the twin-boomed Bronco pulled up from its fifth attack, a missile rose up from behind and struck the plane's left engine. The explosion set the engine on fire and knocked the left landing gear from its stowed position, leaving it hanging down. The canopies over the two airmen were pierced by fragments.

Captain Bennett veered southward to find a field for an emergency landing. As the fire in the engine continued to spread, he was urged by the pilot of an escorting OV-10 to eject. The wing was in danger of exploding. He then learned that his observer's parachute had been shredded by fragments in the explosion.

Captain Bennett elected to ditch in the Gulf of Tonkin, although he knew that his cockpit area would very likely break up on impact. No pilot had ever survived an OV-10 ditching. As he touched down, the extended landing gear dug into the water. The Bronco spun to the left and flipped over nose down into the sea. His Marine companion managed to escape, but Captain Bennett, trapped in his smashed cockpit, sank with the plane. His body was recovered the next day.

For sacrificing his life, Captain Bennett was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. The decoration was presented to his widow by Vice President Gerald R. Ford on 8 August 1974.
On 26 August 1967, Major Day was forced to eject from his aircraft over North Vietnam when it was hit by ground fire. His right arm was broken in three places, and his left knee was badly sprained. He was immediately captured by hostile forces and taken to a prison camp where he was interrogated and severely tortured. After causing the guards to relax their vigilance, Major Day escaped into the jungle and began the trek toward South Vietnam. Despite injuries inflicted by fragments of a bomb or rocket, he continued southward surviving on only a few berries and uncooked frogs. He successfully evaded enemy patrols and reached the Ben Hai River where he encountered United States artillery barrages. With the aid of a bamboo log float, Major Day swam across the river and entered the demilitarized zone.

Due to delirium, he lost his sense of direction and wandered aimlessly for several days. After a number of unsuccessful attempts to signal United States aircraft, he was ambushed and recaptured by the Viet Cong, sustaining gunshot wounds to his left hand and thigh. He was returned to the prison from which he had escaped and later was moved to Hanoi after giving his captors false information to questions put before him. Physically, Major Day was totally debilitated and unable to perform even the simplest task for himself. Despite his many injuries, he continued to offer maximum resistance. His personal bravery in the face of deadly enemy pressure was significant in saving the lives of fellow aviators who were still flying against the enemy.

Major Day continued in internment by the North Vietnamese until his release on 14 March 1973. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his personal bravery by President Gerald R. Ford on 4 March 1976.
On 9 November 1967, while on a flight over North Vietnam, Captain Sijan ejected from his disabled aircraft and successfully evaded capture for more than 6 weeks. During this time, he was seriously injured and suffered from shock and extreme weight loss due to lack of food. After being captured by North Vietnamese soldiers, Captain Sijan was taken to a holding point for subsequent transfer to a Prisoner of War camp. In his emaciated and crippled condition, he overpowered one of his guards and crawled into the jungle, only to be recaptured after several hours. He was then transferred to another prison camp where he was kept in solitary confinement and interrogated at length.

During his interrogation, he was severely tortured; however, he did not divulge any information to his captors. Captain Sijan lapsed into delirium and was placed in the care of another prisoner, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Craner, to care for him. During Captain Sijan's intermittent periods of consciousness until his death, he never complained of his physical condition and, on several occasions, spoke of future escape attempts. Due to his extreme weakness, adverse living conditions, insufficient clothing, and an inadequate diet, Captain Sijan contracted pneumonia on 18 January 1968. Removed from his cell on 21 January 1968, he died at the Hoa Lo prison camp, as reported by his Vietnamese captors.

The Medal of Honor was presented to his parents on 4 March 1976 by President Gerald R. Ford.
Appendix III

Vietnam War Aces

Capt. Charles D. DeBellevue, USAF

Lt. Randy Cunningham, USN

Capt. Jeffrey S. Feinstein, USAF

Lt. William Driscoll, USN

Capt. Richard S. Ritchie, USAF

6

5

5

5
Appendix IV

USAF Air Munitions Consumption

WW II, Korea, and Southeast Asia

(Cumulative through period shown)

Million Tons

WW II  KOREA  SOUTHEAST ASIA

2.150  .537  .454

1.613  FAR EAST

2.150  1.613  6.162

Source: USAF Southeast Asia Summary, 28 Sep. 73, p. 18
## U.S. Air Force Losses – Cumulative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIRCRAFT ¹ (Combat and Operational Causes)</th>
<th>COST (Millions)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2,257</td>
<td>3,129.9</td>
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<tr>
<th>CASUALTIES ²</th>
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<tr>
<td>Deaths</td>
<td>Wounded</td>
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<td>2,118</td>
<td>3,460</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Missing 99</th>
<th>POW’s Returned to Military Control</th>
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<td>599</td>
<td>368</td>
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¹ Losses From February 1962 Through 31 August 1973
² From January 1962 Through 25 August 1973

Sources: USAF Southeast Asia Summary, 28 Sep 73, p. 18
Southeast Asia Review, Final Issue, 31 May 74, pp. 12, 25
# Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbr.</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Alternate Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>antiaircraft artillery</td>
<td>FAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>air base</td>
<td>GPES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>air division</td>
<td>I&amp;C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVON</td>
<td>advanced echelon</td>
<td>ICC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFB</td>
<td>Air Force Base</td>
<td>AFSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFLC</td>
<td>Air Force Logistics Command</td>
<td>AID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFROTC</td>
<td>Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps</td>
<td>ALCC</td>
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<td>AFSC</td>
<td>Air Force Systems Command</td>
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<td>AID</td>
<td>Agency for International Development</td>
<td>ANG</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALCC</td>
<td>Airlift Control Center</td>
<td>AOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALO</td>
<td>air liaison officer</td>
<td>ARVN</td>
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<td>ANG</td>
<td>Air National Guard</td>
<td>APOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOC</td>
<td>Air Operations Center</td>
<td>ARVN</td>
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<tr>
<td>APOE</td>
<td>Aerial Port of Embarkation</td>
<td>ARVN</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARVN</td>
<td>Army of Republic of South Vietnam</td>
<td>ATSC</td>
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<td>ATSC</td>
<td>air traffic regulation center</td>
<td>BBR</td>
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<tr>
<td>BLU</td>
<td>bomb, live unit</td>
<td>CBU</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>combat air patrol</td>
<td>CBU</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBU</td>
<td>cluster bomb unit (anti-personnel weapon)</td>
<td>CCK</td>
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<td>CCC</td>
<td>Combat Control Center</td>
<td>CCK</td>
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<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency (U.S.)</td>
<td>CCTW</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDG</td>
<td>Civilian Irregular Defense Group</td>
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<td>Central Office for South Vietnam (Vietnamese Communist headquarters)</td>
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<td>Low-Altitude Parachute Extraction System</td>
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<td>landing craft, medium</td>
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<td>long-range electronic navigation</td>
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<td>Lima Site - Temporary aircraft landing sites in Laos</td>
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<td>on-the-job training</td>
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<td>PACAF</td>
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<td>PMEL</td>
<td>Precision Measurement Equipment Laboratory</td>
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<td>POW</td>
<td>prisoner of war</td>
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<td>Prime Beef</td>
<td>base engineering emergency force</td>
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<tr>
<td>R&amp;R</td>
<td>rest and recuperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAM</td>
<td>rapid area maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAPCON</td>
<td>radar approach control</td>
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<tr>
<td>RASS</td>
<td>rapid area supply support</td>
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<tr>
<td>RATS</td>
<td>rapid area transportation support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recce (Recon)</td>
<td>reconnaissance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Horse</td>
<td>rapid engineering deployment and heavy operational repair squadron, engineering support</td>
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<td>RESCAP</td>
<td>rescue combat air patrol</td>
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<td>RLAF</td>
<td>Royal Laotian Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>RLG</td>
<td>Royal Laotian Government</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RTU</td>
<td>replacement training unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVNAF</td>
<td>Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>Strategic Air Command</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>surface-to-air missile</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAR</td>
<td>search and rescue</td>
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<tr>
<td>SARTAF</td>
<td>SAR Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAW</td>
<td>special air warfare</td>
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<td>SEA</td>
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<td>TAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>tac</td>
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<tr>
<td>TACC</td>
<td>Tactical Air Control Center</td>
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<td>TACC(NS)</td>
<td>Tactical Air Control Center, North Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>TACC(SS)</td>
<td>Tactical Air Control Center, South Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>TACS</td>
<td>Tactical Air Control System</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDY</td>
<td>temporary duty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFW</td>
<td>tactical fighter wing</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTF</td>
<td>Tanker Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>USAF</td>
<td>United States Air Force</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>VNAF</td>
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