

Air Force Logistics Command's Early Support to Southeast Asia

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Paths to the Present
FLASHBACK

In April 1961, General Curtis LeMay, USAF Vice Chief of Staff, directed Tactical Air Command (TAC), to take the first steps to develop what became one of the Air Force's first counter-insurgency capabilities. Tactical Air Command activated a special training unit at Hurlburt Field, Florida, the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) and used a covert logistics system, code name *Jungle Jim*, for all supply efforts. While the unit had an official designator, it quickly adopted the *Jungle Jim* moniker as a

nickname. The CCTS had three missions: 1) train both Air Force and foreign air force personnel in the operation of World War II-type aircraft and equipment; 2) prepare World War II-type aircraft for transfer to foreign governments; and, 3) develop and improve conventional weapons for counter-insurgency tactics and techniques.



A-26K parked on ramp in Southeast Asia.

Three months prior to the establishment of the 4400th, Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC), based at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, had already taken steps in preparing World War II-type aircraft for use by Pacific Air Forces. At the end of January 1961, AFLC leadership instructed the Ogden Air Materiel Area at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, to rehabilitate twelve Martin B-26 *Marauder* aircraft stored at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, under Project *Millpond*. Maintenance personnel completely dismantled and rebuilt eight aircraft prior to shipping them to the Pacific with an average of 11,500 manhours expended per aircraft.

In April, AFLC took its first steps in support of the 4400th when Middletown Air Materiel Area, Olmsted Air Force Base, Middletown, Pennsylvania, dispatched a team of thirty technicians to Davis-Monthan to rehabilitate and modify sixteen North American T-28A *Trojan's* for the squadron. A few weeks later, AFLC leadership notified Middletown that the *Jungle Jim* outfit needed an additional sixteen B models and



T-28 in flight over Southeast Asia.

requested that Litchfield Park Naval Air Station in Phoenix, Arizona transfer the aircraft to Olmsted AFB, for rehabilitation and modification. Middletown technicians completed the work on both the A's and B's by October with all but eight B's sent to Hurlburt Field, Florida, and the other eight B's disassembled and shipped to South Vietnam aboard five Douglas C-124 *Globemaster II's*.

In November, the 4400th deployed one of the first Air Force detachments to South Vietnam. This detachment, *Farm Gate*, possessed sixteen aircraft: four Douglas SC-47 *Skytrain's*, four Douglas RB-26 *Invader's*, and eight *Trojans*. The following month, two other units deployed to this detachment. The first, *Mule Train*, consisted of sixteen Fairchild C-123 *Provider's* and the second, *Ranch Hand*, consisted of six *Providers* outfitted



SC-47 in flight over Southeast Asia.

with special spray equipment for

defoliating the Southeast Asia jungle areas. Of note, some *Skytrains* had been in South Vietnam long enough by 1961, having been in possession of Republic of Vietnam through the Military Assistance Program (MAP), to require depot maintenance; in 1961, Air Vietnam completed Inspect-and-Repair as Necessary (IRAN) work on thirteen MAP *Skytrains* for \$343,000 in Saigon.

Through 1963, the Air Force continued to send small groups and individual aircraft into Southeast Asia. These aircraft units carried 30-day mission support kits with AFLC resupplying the kits through its aerial resupply system. Contrasting this, Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, the main operating base (MOB) for the area, supplied all other aircraft located at various forward operating bases (FOB) in South Vietnam and Thailand. Occasionally support delays occurred due to the long supply line from Clark to the FOBs with PACAF deciding to covert Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon into a MOB and moving part of the supplies from Clark AB. As a result, AFLC assigned Tan Son Nhut an Air Force supply account number in December 1962 and three months



Douglas RB-26 Invader.

later PACAF instructed *Jungle Jim* units to use the normal Air Force procedures rather than the STAR (Speed Through Aerial Resupply) system for supply support. In June 1963, Tan Son Nhut assumed supply support responsibility for *Provider*, *Trojan*, and *Marauder* aircraft as well as Douglas C-48 *Skytrains*, Cessna U-3A *Blue Canoes* and Helio U-10D *Super Couriers* aircraft in South Vietnam and Thailand.

However, not soon after the establishment of Tan Son Nhut as an MOB, new support problems arose as not operationally ready support rates (NORS) for aircraft in South Vietnam and Thailand began to climb; AFLC utilized the NORS rates to determine how well it supported the various airframes. A number of issues played into why NORS rates rose: lack of warehouse space at Tan Son Nhut for supply storage; unusual climatic and operating conditions in South Vietnam and Thailand; lack of adequate usage data to base stock levels; change from STAR system to normal Air Force supply support; and, frequent communication difficulties in submitting supply requisitions from Tan Son Nhut to AFLC's inventory managers back in the United States. In an effort to remedy these issues, a supply assistance team consisting of personnel from



C-123 in flight over SEA with paratroopers deploying.

Headquarters AFLC, the Sacramento Air Materiel Area, and Headquarters PACAF visited Tan Son Nhut. Out of this meeting, in August 1963, AFLC and PACAF agreed to reinstate a modified aerial resupply system to improve support, and by the end of August, Headquarters AFLC outlined new supported procedures for the command's field units and instructed them to give top priority support to Tan Son Nhut's materiel requirements.



C-123K's (RANCH HAND) in flight over SEA.

C-123 ferrying troops in SEA.



Developed from: Bernard J. Termena, Layne B. Peiffer, and H.P. Carlin, *Logistics: An Illustrated History of AFLC and Its Antecedents, 1921-1981*, (Wright-Patterson AFB: HQ AFLC, n.d.), pp. 158-160; HQ AFLC/HO, *AFLC Support of Forces in Southeast Asia: Cargo Aircraft Support, 1965-1968*, (WPAFB: HQ AFLC, 1968); HQ AFLC/HO, *AFLC Support of Forces in Southeast Asia: Procurement Support, 1964-1966*, (WPAFB: HQ AFLC, 1966).



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