



My AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Dick Iversen - Colonel, USAF, Ret.



My AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Overview

How & Why AC-119s

- C-119 Background/Performance/Specs
- Gunship History
- Why Vietnam - War of Interdiction
- USAF Project Gunship I, II, III
- Gunship III – The AC-119K "Stinger"
- Combat Mission/ROE/Threats & Tactics
- Igloo White/Task Force Alpha
- War Stories – The MacKay Trophy
- Combat Video Clips
- Summary



My AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

How/Why it all Happened:

- Before Gunships (1965-70)
 - T-41/T-37/T-38/KC-135/T-39/F-4
 - 15 Months in SEA
 - SAC Command Pilot (C-135/T-39)
- AF Assignment System – Form 17
 - 90% 1st Choice = A-1E "Sandy"
 - AC-119K Gunship "Stinger"
 - Life Insurance?
 - AF Training
 - Ohio



My AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

The C-119



C-119 (Redesign of C-82 'Packet')

- Fairchild Hiller 1949-74
- Airlift, Airdrop, Fire, Rescue
- Corona 1960 - Midair Recovery (Wien)
- USN-USAF-USA - 1183 Built/16 Nations
- Berlin, Korea & Vietnam
- Primary Airlift 1950-64
- 2004 Film – Flight of the Phoenix
- "*Flying Boxcar*" - "*Widow Maker*"
"*Shadow*" - "*Stinger*" - "*Dollar 19*"



My AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Comparative General Specifications

	<u>C-119</u>	<u>AC-119K</u>
Crew	4 (63 pax)	10+
Length	86'	
Wing Span	109'	
Height	27'	
Empty Wt	40,125Lb	61,200Lb
Max Tk of Wt	68,500Lb	80,400Lb
Power	2 x Wright-R-3350's	Same + 2 GE Jets (2850 lbs Thrust Ea)



My AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Performance

	<u>C-119</u>	<u>AC-119K</u>
Max Speed	257 Kts	295 Kts
Duration	6 Hrs 30 Min	5 Hrs 45 Min
Service Ceiling	24,300'	27,300'
Rate of Climb	1,010 fpm	1,315 fpm
Range	2,280 NM	2,850 NM

(Engine loss on takeoff max load=More than a handful)

AC-119K ~ 8,000 lbs. overgrossed on takeoff



My AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Gunship History

- 1942 AF Lt. Col. McDonald (Proposed 50 cal on fixed wing)
- 1943 AF Maj. Paul "Pappy" Gunn (B-25 Gunship)
- 1962 Ralph Flexman, Bell Aero (Proposed Side Firing Gunship)
- 1964 A-26K – First Gunship in Vietnam



Basic Principle-Pylon Turn:

"An aircraft flying in a level turn around a point on the ground (as if tethered to a pylon) can deliver accurate firepower from guns firing perpendicular to the line of flight."



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Why Gunships in Vietnam?

- Not a "fast-mover" Strategy
- War of Interdiction: Basic Strategy in SEA since 1965
 - Most important aspect of modern warfare
 - Use armed force to slow or stop flow of supplies/food/ammo/personnel
 - Eventually he will lay down and surrender
- Demand for Loiter/Firepower
- 1963: AF Capt Ron Terry (Gunship I)
- C-131/C-47 Project Tailchaser



Beginning of the Most Effective Night Interdiction & Support Weapon in History



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

USAF Project Gunship I, II, III

Gunship I (1964-68) AC-47 "Spooky"

- 14th SOW – Phan Rang - 53 Aircraft
- 4th SOS
- Modified DC-3/4 – Twin Recip
- 6-8 Man Crew
- 3 x 7.62mm side fire
- Flare Launcher



"Successful , but needed more capability"

AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

USAF Project Gunship I, II, III

Gunship II (1965-Current) AC-130 "Spectre"

- 16th SOW – Ubon
- Modified C-130
- 10-12 Man Crew
- 4 x 7.62mm Side Fire
- FLIR
- Laser Target Designator
- MTI Radar
- 40mm Cannon
- 16 Aircraft
- 4 Eng Turbo Prop
- 4 x 20mm Side Fire
- Fire Control Computer
- Low Level Light TV
- 105mm Howitzer (71-74)



"Very successful , but needed more aircraft"

AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Gunship III AC-119G "Shadow" AC-119K "Stinger"

- Replacement for AC-47 "Spooky"
- High Wing – Best suited for Gunship
 - C-130 or C-119
 - C-130 = Airlift Requirements
- AC-119G – "Shadow" (1968-73)
 - 17th SOW – Phan Rang/Tan Son Nhut/
Nha Trang/Phu Cat
 - 28 Aircraft
 - 8 Man Crew
 - 4 x 7.62 mm
 - Night Operation Sensor (NOS)
 - Flare Launcher
 - Illuminator



"Successful , but demand still for more"

AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Gunship III (Continued)

AC-119K "Stinger" (1969-1973)

- 18 SOS – Phan Rang/Nha Trang/DaNang/Nakhon Phanom
- 26 Aircraft (13/13)
- MAJOR CAPABILITY ENHANCEMENTS:
 - 10-Man Crew (Pilot/Copilot/FE/NOS/FLIR/NAV/IO/3 Gunners)
 - 4 x 7.62 mm and 2 x 20mm
 - FLIR /-NOS/- RHAW/- FCS/-HUD/-IO
 - 2 x Wright R-3350s
 - 2 x GE Turbofan Engines
 - Ballistic Cloth Armor
 - Forward Looking Radar
 - Flare Launcher
 - Beacon Tracking Radar
 - Illuminator

8,000 lbs. overgrossed on takeoff



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Gunship Evolution 1964 • 1973

Photo



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

The Gunship Mission



<u>Priority</u>	<u>Mission</u>
1	Close fire support of friendly troops in contact w/ enemy.
2	Close fire support of US/friendly installations/forts/posts.
3	Close fire support of strategic hamlets/villages and towns.
4	Armed recce and <i>interdiction</i> of hostile areas/infiltration routes.
5	Search and Rescue (SAR) support. (#1 W/O other SAR)
6	Night armed escort for road & offshore convoys.
7	Illumination for night fighter strikes.
8	Harassment & <i>interdiction</i> .

We were known as "Truck Hunters"



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Rules of Engagement (ROE)

Published Gunship ROE - "Hazardous & Stupid"

- No fire on religious sanctuary's
 - Pagodas/Shrines/Temples
- No fire on river water vessels south of DMZ (Viet)
- No fire on river water vessels west of Saigon
 - When vessel is heading west or east
- No fire on engine powered water vessels over 21'
- No fire on boats near shore with less than 4 passengers
- No fire on coastal boats traveling in excess of 17mph
- No fire in 'NO-FIRE' Zones
- *Others - even more absurd!*



Pilots had their own "unpublished" ROE

AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Mission Profile

- 10 + Sorties Per Night (Schedule)
 - Shadow/Spooky/Stinger/Spectre = 100 + Sorties Per Night
- N/S Viet/Laos/Cambodia
 - SEA Operations Area (Map)
- Intelligence Bfg (Tgt/ROE/Threats)
- Preflight (1-2 hours)
- Crew Duties
- TAC Doctrine (AAA/SAM)
 - "Scanner's Key"
- Postflight/Intell (TFA)



("Stinger" Happy Hour: Midnight – 0600 hrs)

AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Mission Detail



- Interdiction/Hamlets/Lima Sites/TIC's/SAR
- NKP = "Barrell Roll" (N) - "Alleycat"
- DaNang = "Steel Tiger" (S) - "Moonbeam"
- TOT = 1.5 - 2.5 Hrs ("Bingo Fuel")

"Focus on Offensive Ops *Outside* Viet Nam- Not Defensive *Within*"

Combat Aircrew Tactics



- Jets Off - Radios (non-secure) - Pylon Turn
- Individual Crew Duties
- 1 Gun/ 6 guns/any combination
- Flares/Lights.....*Think Twice*



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Threat & Tactics

- AAA: Small Arms 7.62 12 23 37 57 (Scanner's Key)
 - Destroyed: - 3 "Stingers" - 6 "Spooky" - 1 "Shadow"
 - Tactic: *BREAK... Very Hard*
- SAM: SA-2 (1957 - Russian)
 - Most deployed air defense missile in history
 - Mobile 4 Hrs
 - 2 Radars: Detect/Track Acquire/Guide
 - Mach 3.5/Blast Frag/60,000'
 - Tactic: *120 BANK & DIVE... Very Quickly*
- SAM: SA-7 (1968 - Russian)
 - MANPAD/IR/HE/15,000'
 - 1972-74: 204 Hits of 589 firings
 - 51 Acft Destroyed - 2 "Shadow" - 1 "Spectre"
 - Tactic: *120 BANK & DIVE & FLARES...NOW*



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

"Igloo White/Task Force Alpha

Operation Igloo White (Top Secret until 2006)

- Covert EW Ops (1968-1974)
- Joint Service Task Force
- Telemetry
(Sensors/Computers/Communications/Aircraft)
- OBJECT:

"Direct strike aircraft along Ho Chi Minh Trail"

"Became the Keystone of US Aerial Interdiction Efforts of the Entire Vietnam Conflict"



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Task Force Alpha (TFA) 68-74

- Infiltration Surveillance Center (NKP)

“We wired the Ho Chi Minh trail with telemetry from thousands of mic’s hidden in Vietnam jungles and fed them to a massive intell processing center in Thailand.”

AF/MSgt Paul Polyman

- Nakhon Phanom (NKP)
 - Heavily Guarded 250,000 sq ft Bldg
 - 100 + Military/Civilian
 - IBM 360/65
 - Vehicles: <70,000/Found & <10,000 Destroyed

“Highly Successful Operation”



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Task Force Alpha - 'The Operation'

- SENSORS (Thousands air delivered)
 - Accoustic/Seismic/Comm-Mic's
 - Rubber Tree Branches
 - 80% effective after delivery - 100-Day Life
- DELIVERY
 - P-2's/Helo's/F-4's
- RELAY/DATA LINK
 - EC-121R's/QU-22's/C-130's - 24/7



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Task Force Alpha "*Personal*" Experience

- Commanders: Col. Dick Rumney/Col. John Boyd
- Raquetball - Pathway to:
 - Unique Friendship
 - TFA Gunship Flights
 - Higher Clearances TS-ESI (C-STK)
 - TFA Tour (Iversen only outsider to come inside)

TFA's "FAVORITE STORY"
(1969 SAR)

"You're gonna' love this one.....!"



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

The TFA Story (TS-ESI 1969-2006)

- RF-4 Climbing to RTB
- Hit by SA-2
- Pilot KIA
- 'GIB' Landed high in trees (Mangrove)
 - Broken leg
 - Lost part of survival kit

"Here's the part you're gonna' love.....!"



AC-119 "Stinger" Gunship Story

My "Stinger" War Stories

- DFC SAR (Hue Phu By)
- Flight Controls on Takeoff
- Crew Chief Error (Life Saver)
- Rocket City - DaNang
- SAM's are Bad News - Very!
- North sans Escorts (Nukes/Atomic Bullets/Specials)
- Missing Scanner/Gunner
- Mission Tape (ROE)
- Secure Voice Radios (PDJ)
- 3 Aircraft Lost (AAA) - 34 Aircrew



"The MacKay Trophy" - Capt. Alan Milacek



AC-119 "Stinger" Gunship Story

MacKay Trophy - Created 1912



- *For Most Meritorious Flight of the Year*
Oldest Award Given to AF Flying Officers
 - *National Air & Space Museum*
- Capt. Alan Milacek in AC-119K Gunship
 - May 8, 1970
 - Laos
 - 57MM AAA - Destroyed 14' of right wing
 - Crew jettisoned equipment
 - Full left Rudder/Aileron & Assymetric Thrust
 - Skillfully managed to land at Saigon



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

My "Stinger" FUN Stories



- TFA Hootch
- Trailer Storage
- Commanders File Cabinet
- " No Hab" Kitchen (Omelets / Blueberry Pie)
- Stolen Police Dog
- "The Bob Hope" Show
- "Stinger" Flag Pole
- FUI (Flying Under the Influence)
- Royal Thai Navy
- Schumann/McGillis



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Summary

Interdiction – Fundamental Wartime Strategy

- WWII – *"Stop Flow of Axis Supplies"*
- Pacific – *"Disrupt Flow of Troops/Materiel"*
 - 1943: Maj "Pappy" Gunn Proved Gunship Concept with B-25 (50cal) - Destroyed 26 ships in 3 missions
- Korea – *"Thwart/Destroy Enroute Supplies"*
- Vietnam – *"Slow/Stop/Disrupt Logistics Train"*
 - Side-Firing Gunships at Night (Capt. Terry)
 - Vital Multi-Mission Weapon System

USAF Project Gunship – "Extremely Successful"

AC-47 "Spooky" – AC-130 "Spectre"

AC-119G "Shadow" - My AC-119K "Stinger"



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Summary (Continued)

Lessons Learned – A Comparison

- USAF Archives (1979)

“USAF gunships were the most effective night Interdiction and Support weapon of the Vietnam conflict.”

- North Vietnam Archives (1983)

“Of all the weapon systems utilized against ‘The Trail’ – the fixed wing gunship was the most formidable; they established control over and suppressed our attempts to move troops and supplies.”



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

Summary (Continued)

Lessons Learned – "Gunships Most Feared!"

- Perhaps the most vivid description of the role played by U.S. Gunships in Vietnam is this:

“U.S. Gunships were the aircraft most feared by our troops. They called Them ‘Dark Death.’ Other aircraft came in, made a quick strike and were gone. But the Gunships lingered over the battlefield and when they sighted a target, the deadly cannons released sustained destruction such as our ground troops had never seen.”

General Nguyen Duc Huy
Commander, NVN 351st Div.
(In a 1989 Interview with "The Weider History Group")



AC-119K "Stinger" Gunship Story

The Gunship of Today & Tomorrow

- C-130/A/E/H/U/K
- 4 x Allison T56 Turboprops
- 4 x 7.62 mm – 4 x 20mm – 2 x 40mm – 1 x 105mm
- Modern high tech cockpit, precision weapons, radars, fire control systems, etc.
- Laser Cannon that will melt a tank from 5 miles/10,000'
- Plus much more!



"Highly effective in Vietnam, Grenada, Desert Storm, Panama, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan"

AC-119K "Stinger" Story

The Vietnam conflict ended in 1974

"Over there" I met real heroes, the finest people I've ever met, men such as.....

McGillis, Schumann, Morgan, Turlington, Fitzgibbon, Blick, Petrie, Robertson, Williams, Moore, Courtney, Denfeld, Bautz, Bott, Collins, Glass, Kearney, Oliver, Stevens, Armstrong, Benedict, Breen, Doyle, Fowler, Grossman, Reid, Guerrieri, Hitzemann, McCann, Mack, Nohmer, Wargowsky, White, Webb, Griffin, Field, Tracy, Rizzo.....and many, many more.

Some came home . Some didn't. All Great Americans.

AND I LEARNED THAT.....

Freedom has a special meaning to those who have fought and nearly died that those protected will never know.



Close

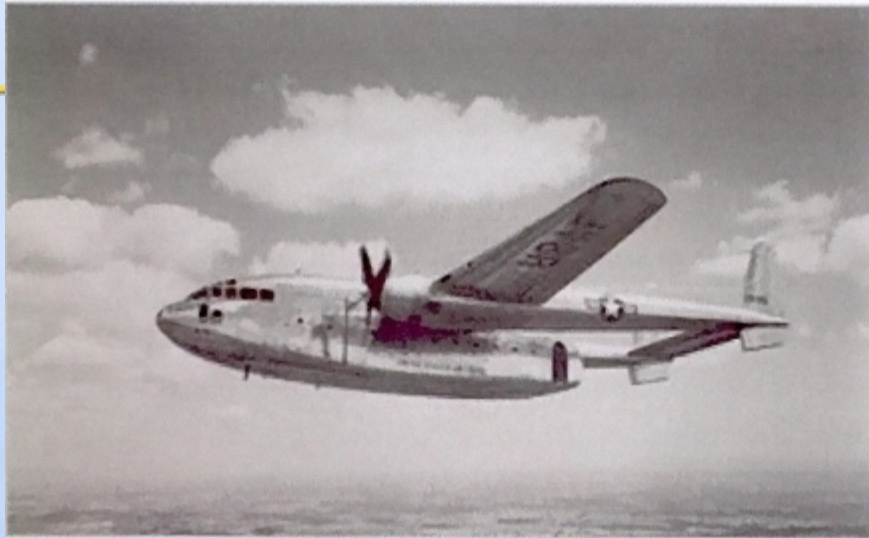






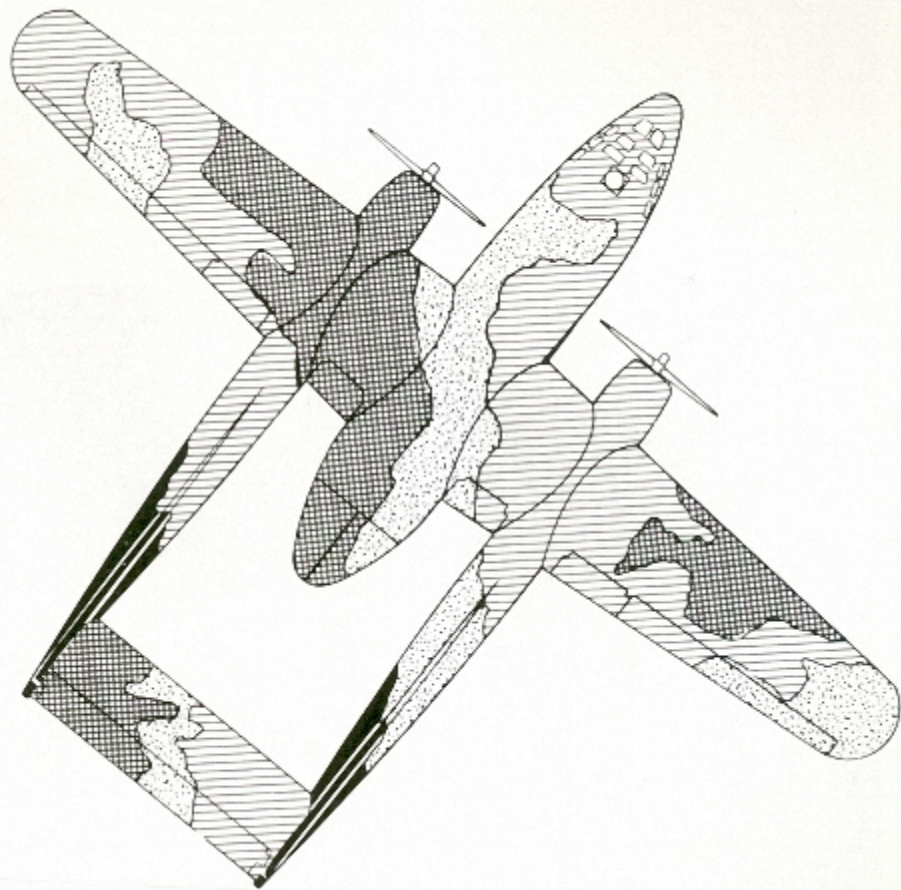
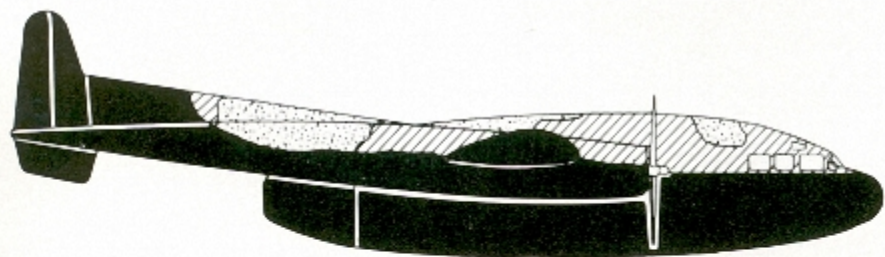
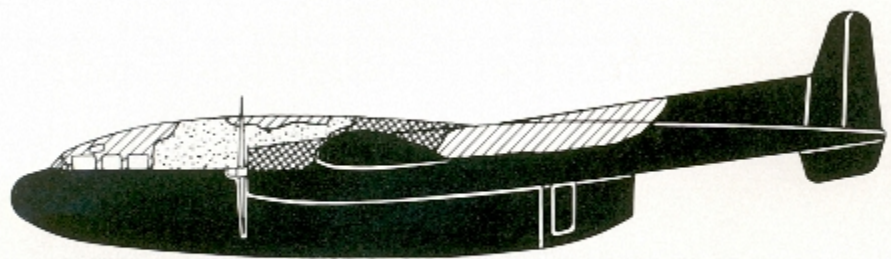


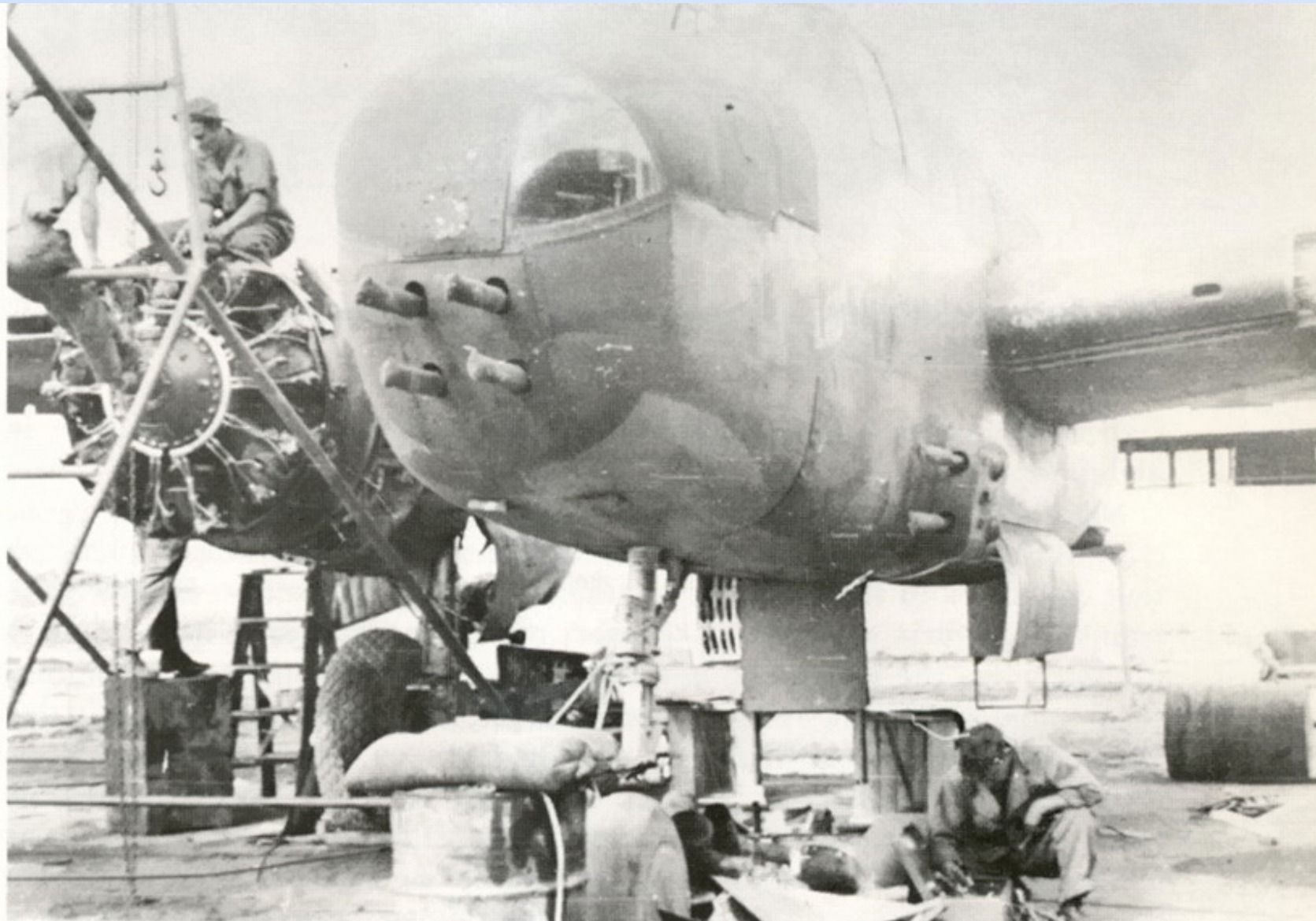
C-119 Flying Boxcar



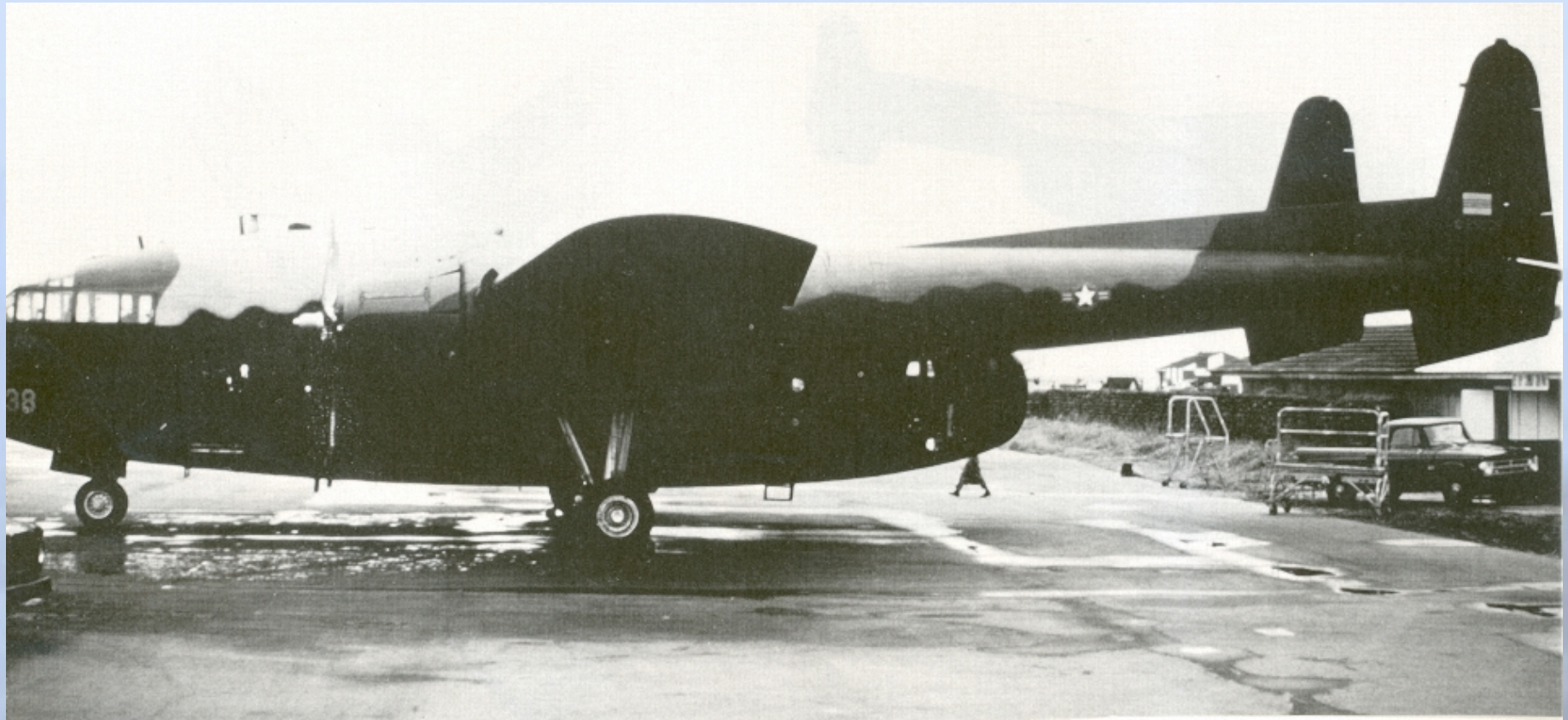
Role	Military transport aircraft
Manufacturer	Fairchild Aircraft
First flight	November 1947
Introduced	December 1949
Retired	1974
Primary user	United States Air Force
Produced	1949-1955
Number built	1,183
Developed from	C-82 Packet
Variants	XC-120 Packplane Fairchild AC-119



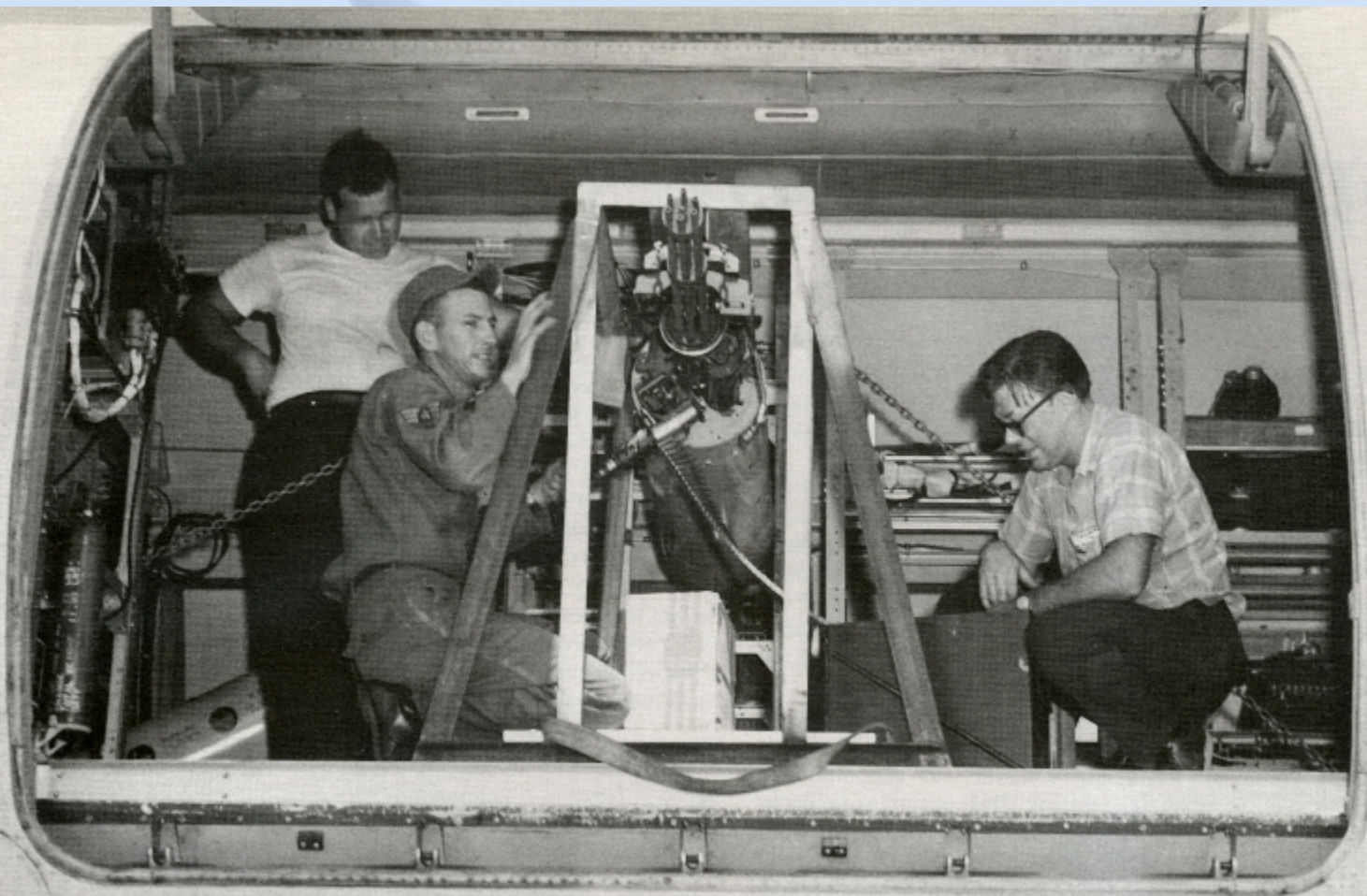




During World War II, Major 'Pappy' Gunn conceived the idea for heavily armed B-25 gunships to be used against Japanese shipping in the South Pacific. All of his gunship aircraft were field modifications. (USAF)

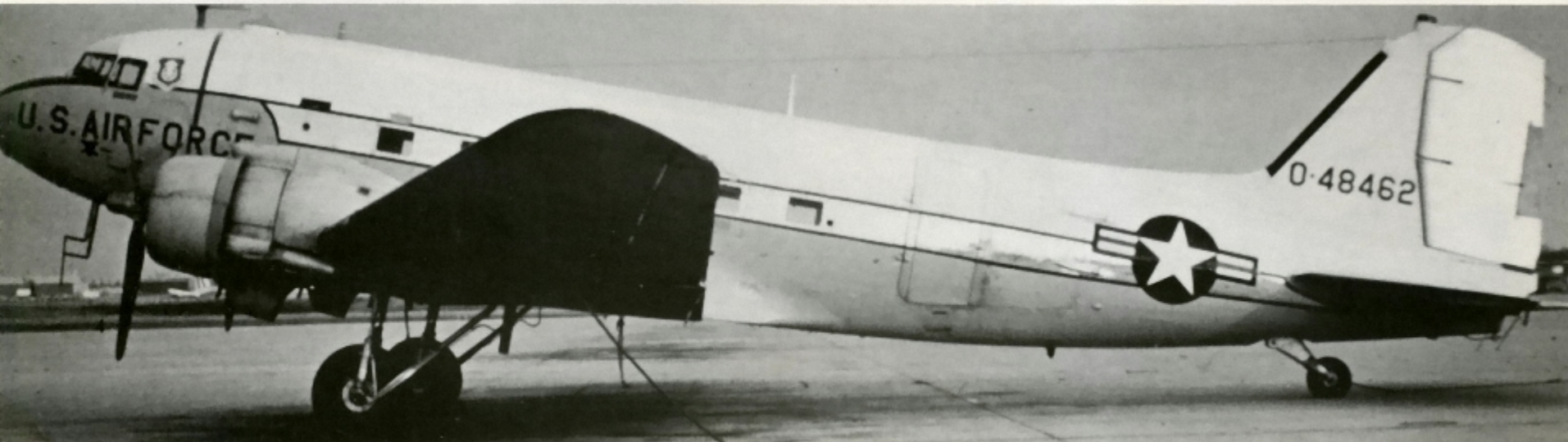


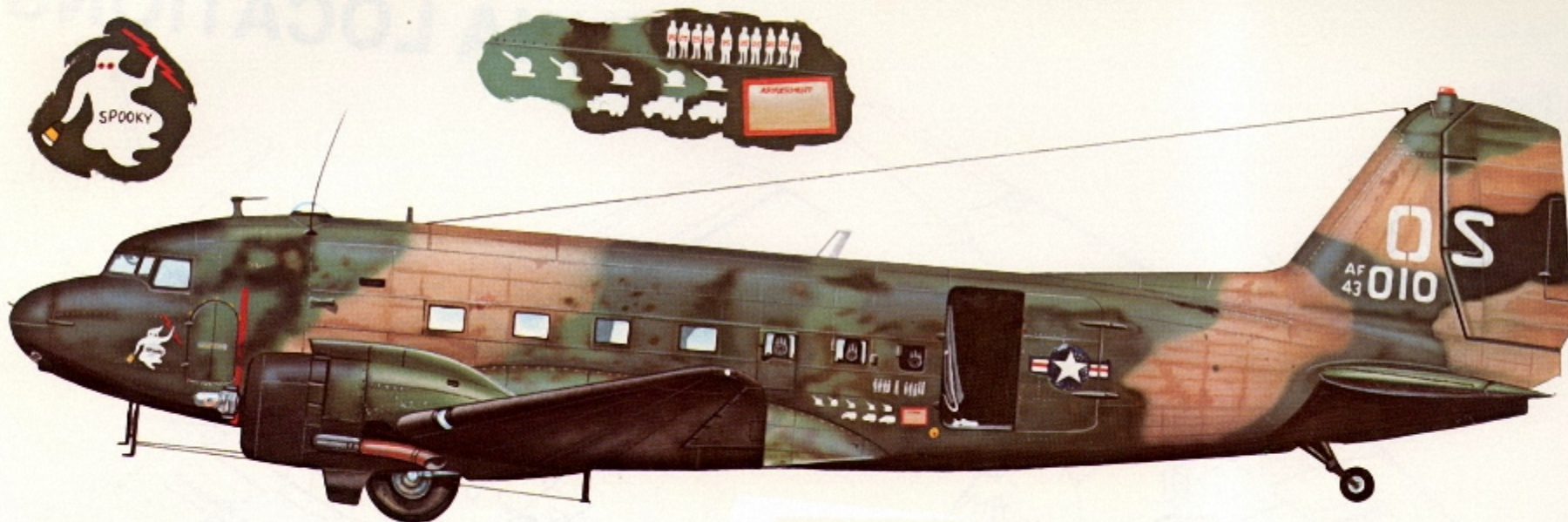




The first installation of a side-firing minigun was in a C-131B, #53-7820. The mount was fabricated from aluminum I-beams in the machine shops at Eglin. (Morris)

The first armed C-47 was this aircraft pulled off the flight line at Wright-Patterson. Capt. Ron Terry installed a single SUU-11A/1A minigun pod on homemade mounts, in the left cargo door area. Someone has appropriately tacked the name *Terry & Pirates* on the nose, since most of the parts were pirated from various other sources on the base. (Morris)





AC-47D Spooky attached to the 432nd Tactical Fighter Wing at Udorn R.T.A.B., 1970.



"Spooky"

AC-47 Dragonship

RVN'S #1 Fly By Night Outfit

We Defend: Outposts • Hamlets • Special Forces Camps
• Ambush Patrols and Any Other TIC

Our 7.62 Devastates: Rubber Trees • Monkeys
Sampans • Ground Markers • Campfires • Water Buffalo

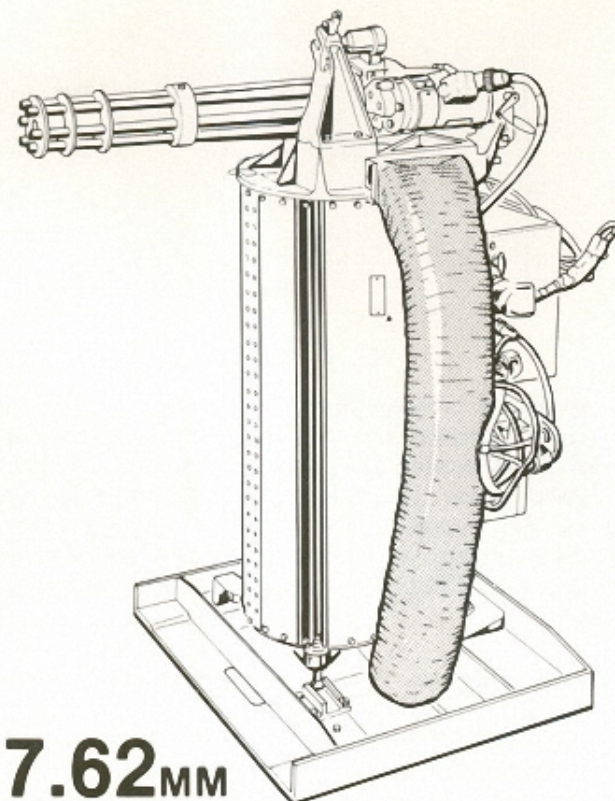
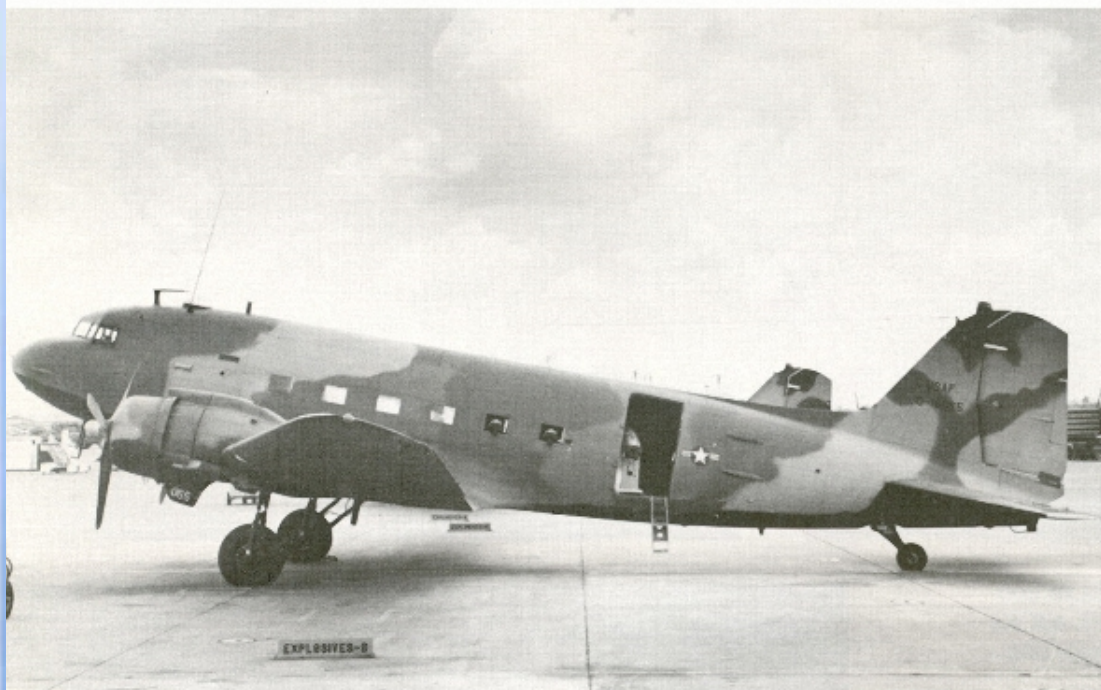
14th SPECIAL OPERATIONS WING

Call: Phan Rang Tuoc Daily: 1800-0600

"When You Hurt Enough to Want the Very Best"

Frank Eaton

Spooky Boss

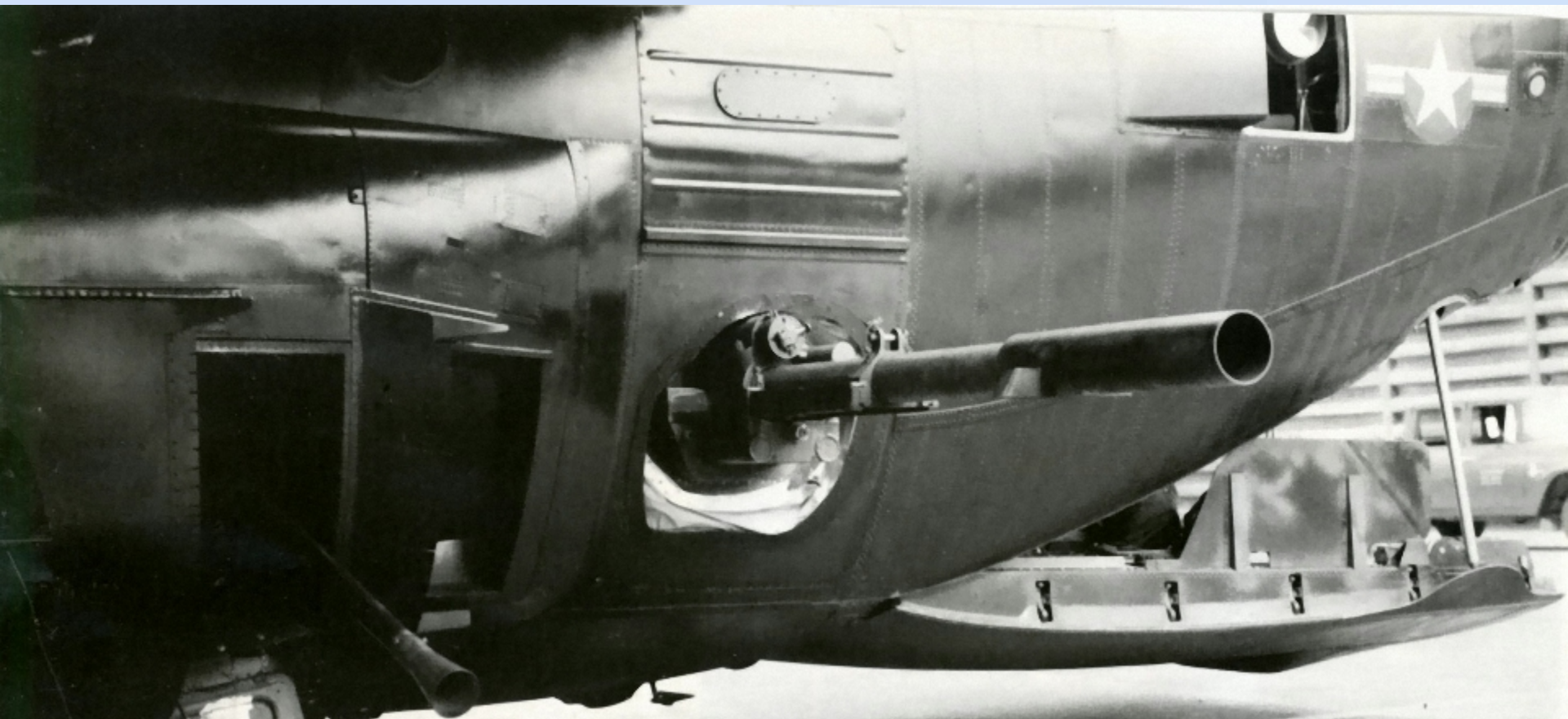


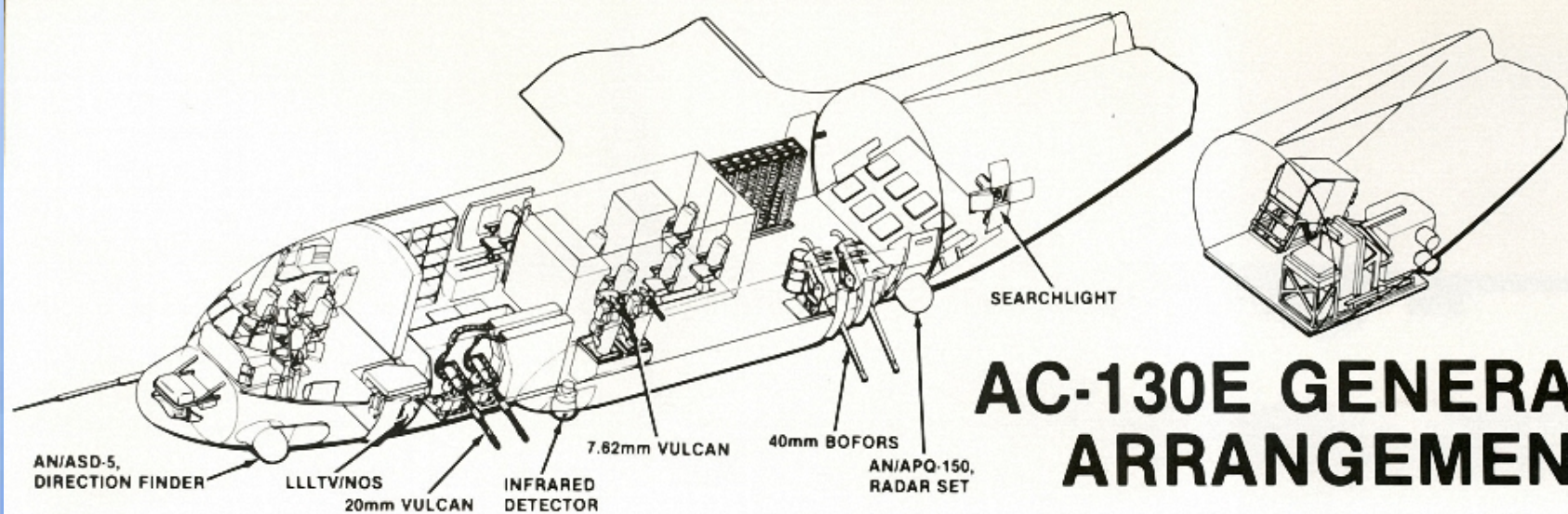
7.62_{MM}
MINIGUN







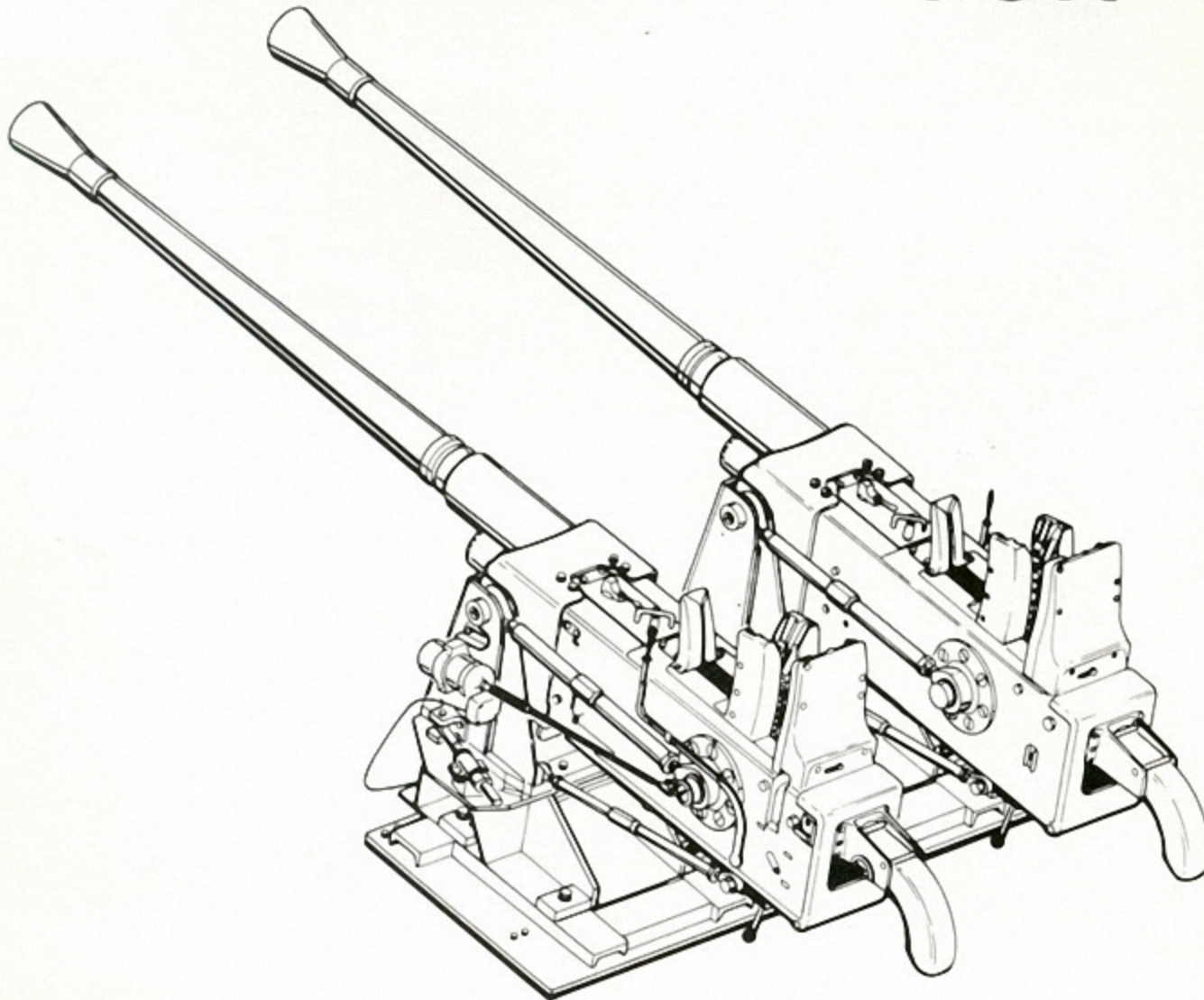


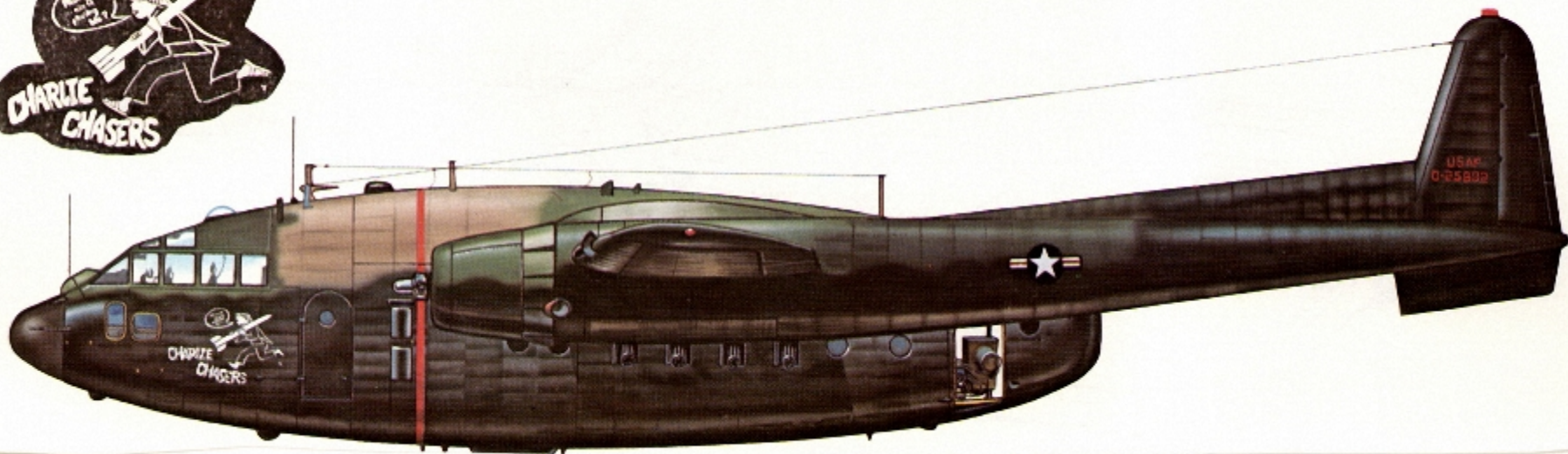


AC-130E GENERAL ARRANGEMENT



40_{MM} BOFORS GUN





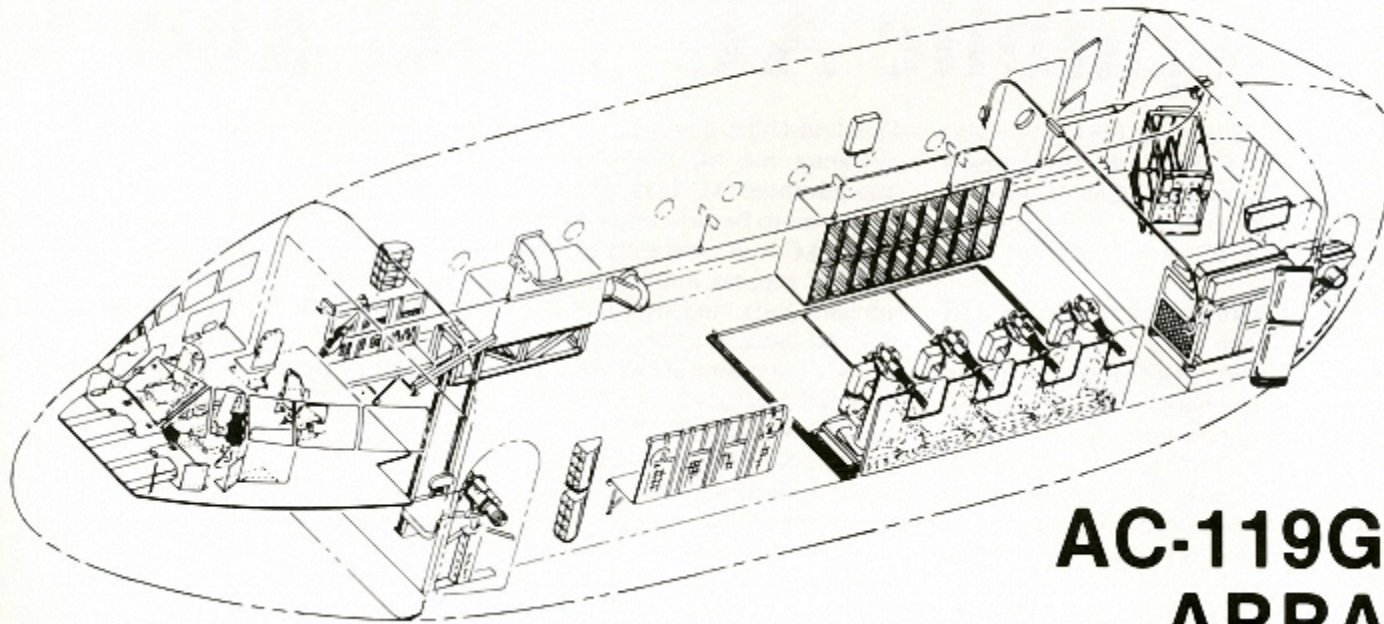
When Uninvited Guests Drop In . . .
Call For
"THE SHADOW"

We Provide:
Lighting for
All Occasions
Beaucoup 7.62
Mortar Suppression



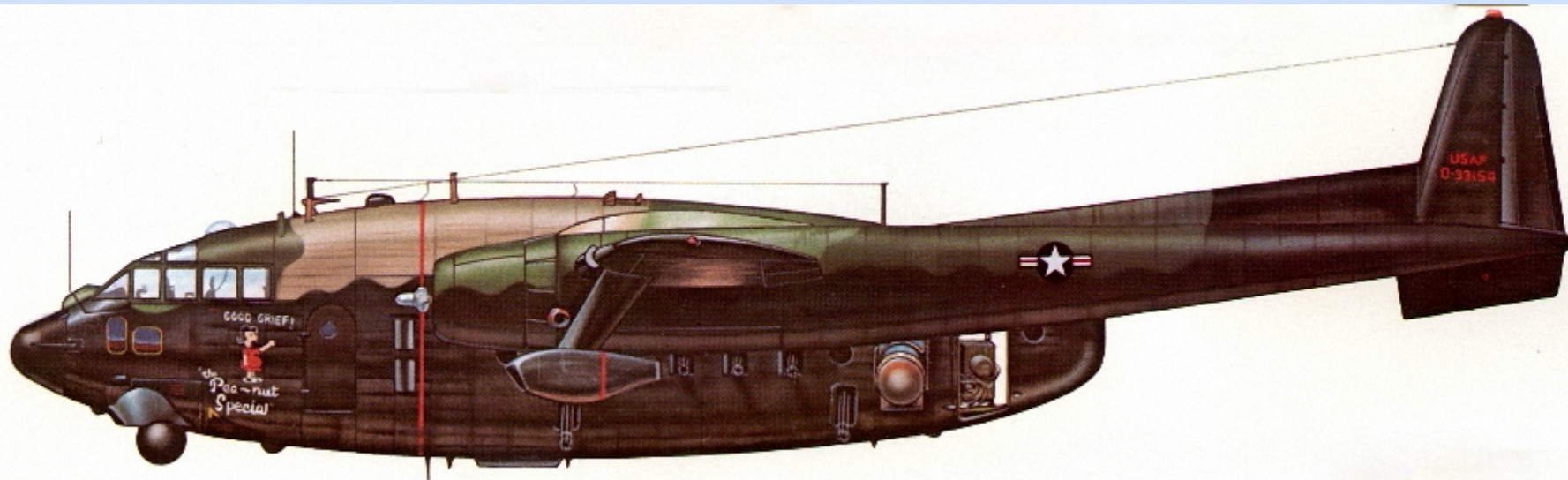
We Defend:
Special Forces Camps
Air Bases
Outposts
Troops in Contact

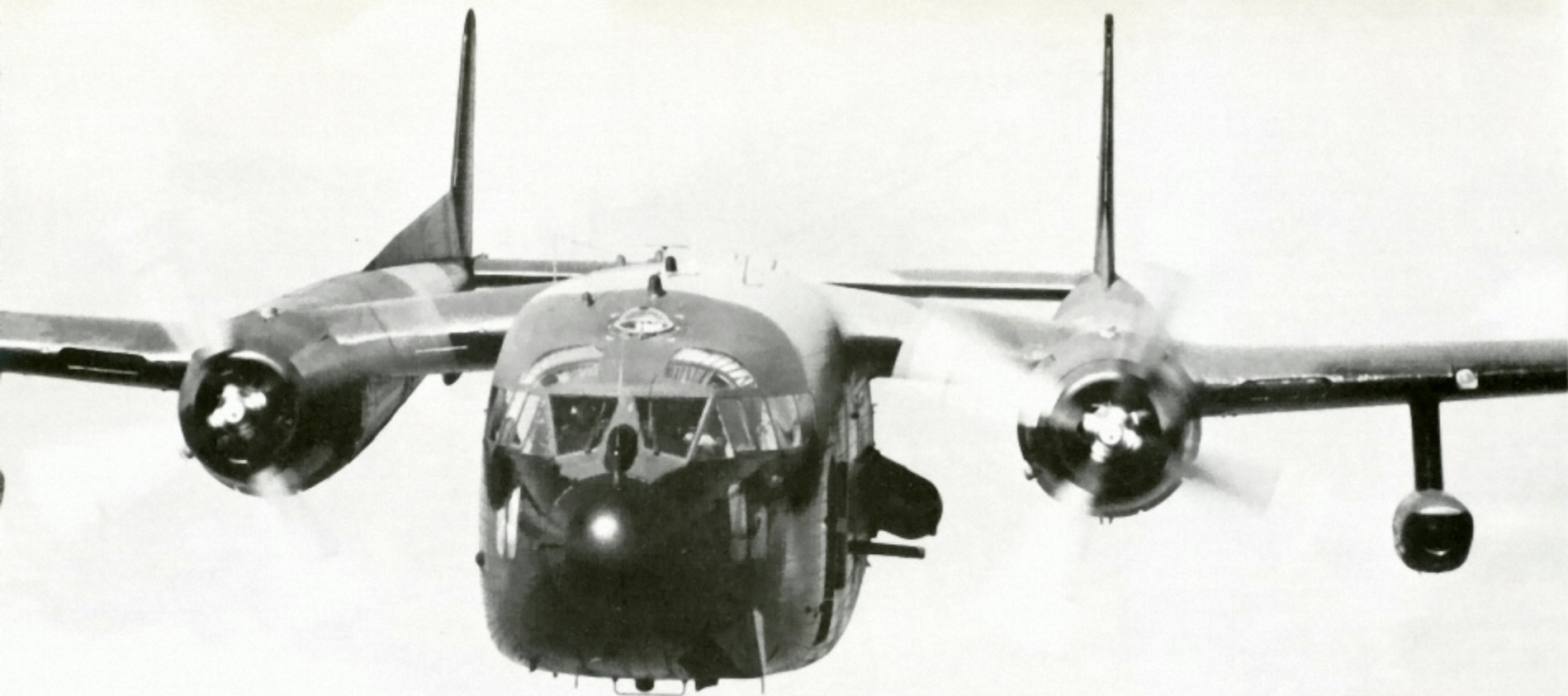
Who Knows What Evil Lurks Below the Jungle Canopy?
THE SHADOW KNOWS!



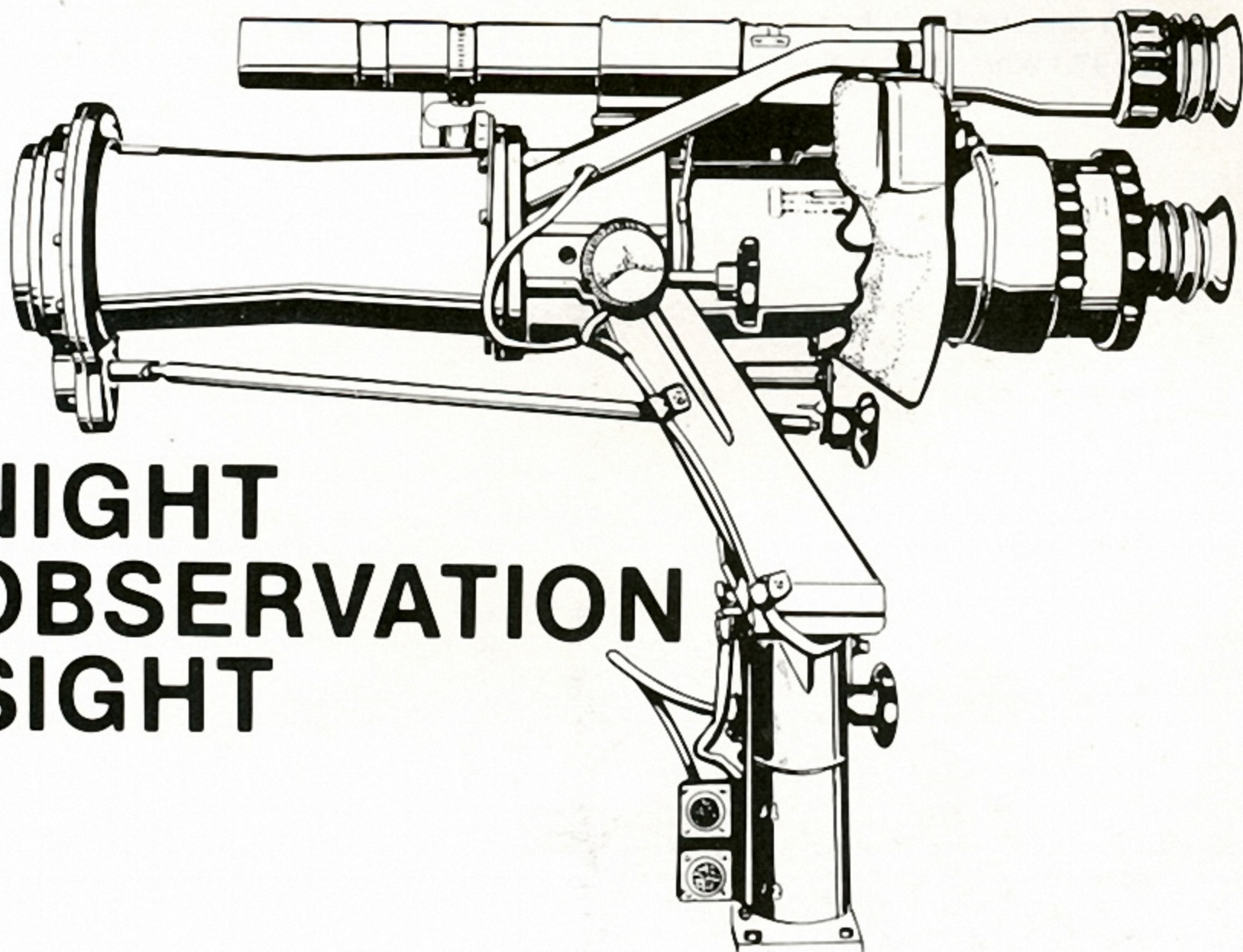
AC-119G GENERAL ARRANGEMENT



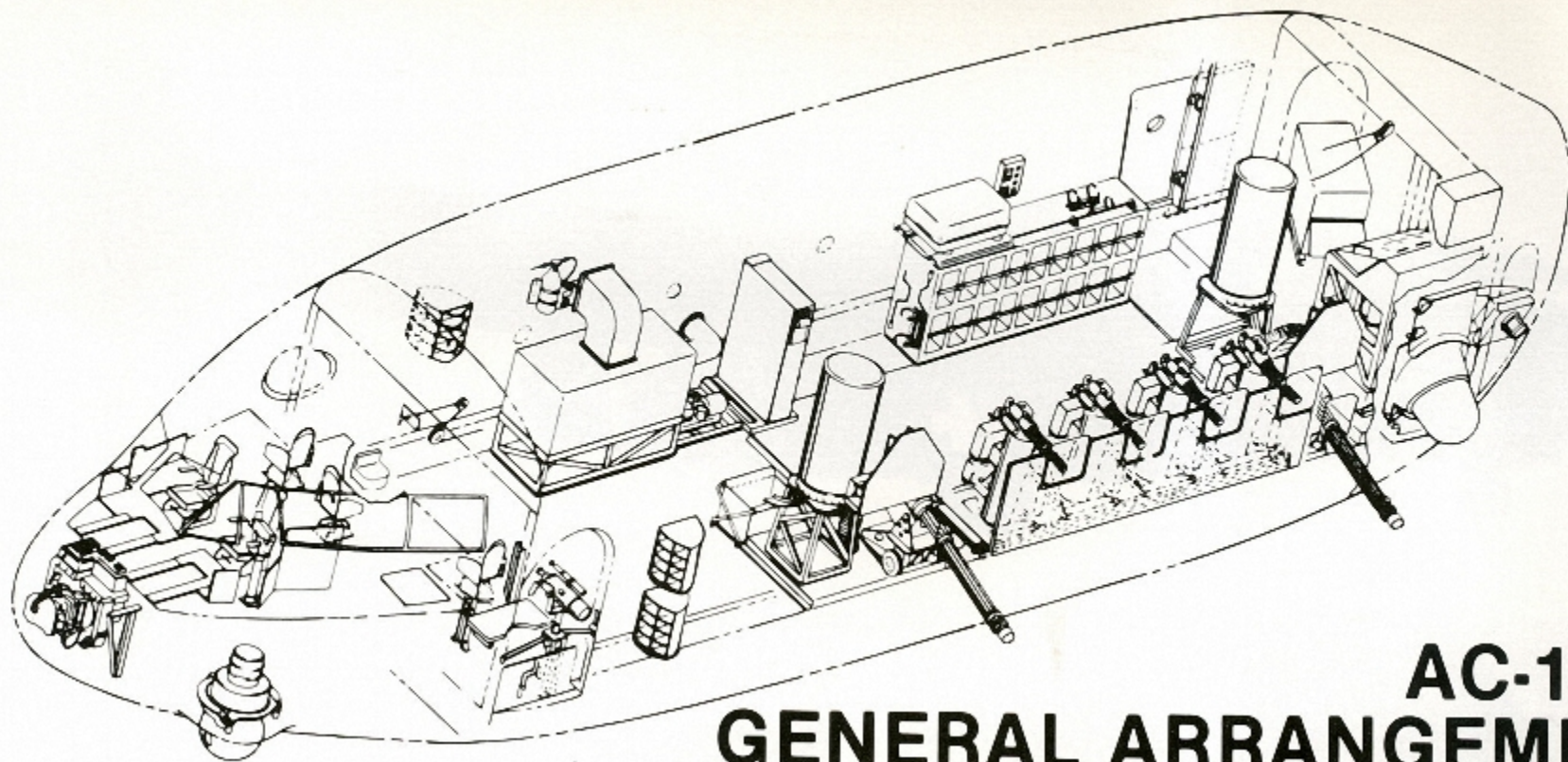




NIGHT OBSERVATION SIGHT







AC-119K GENERAL ARRANGEMENT

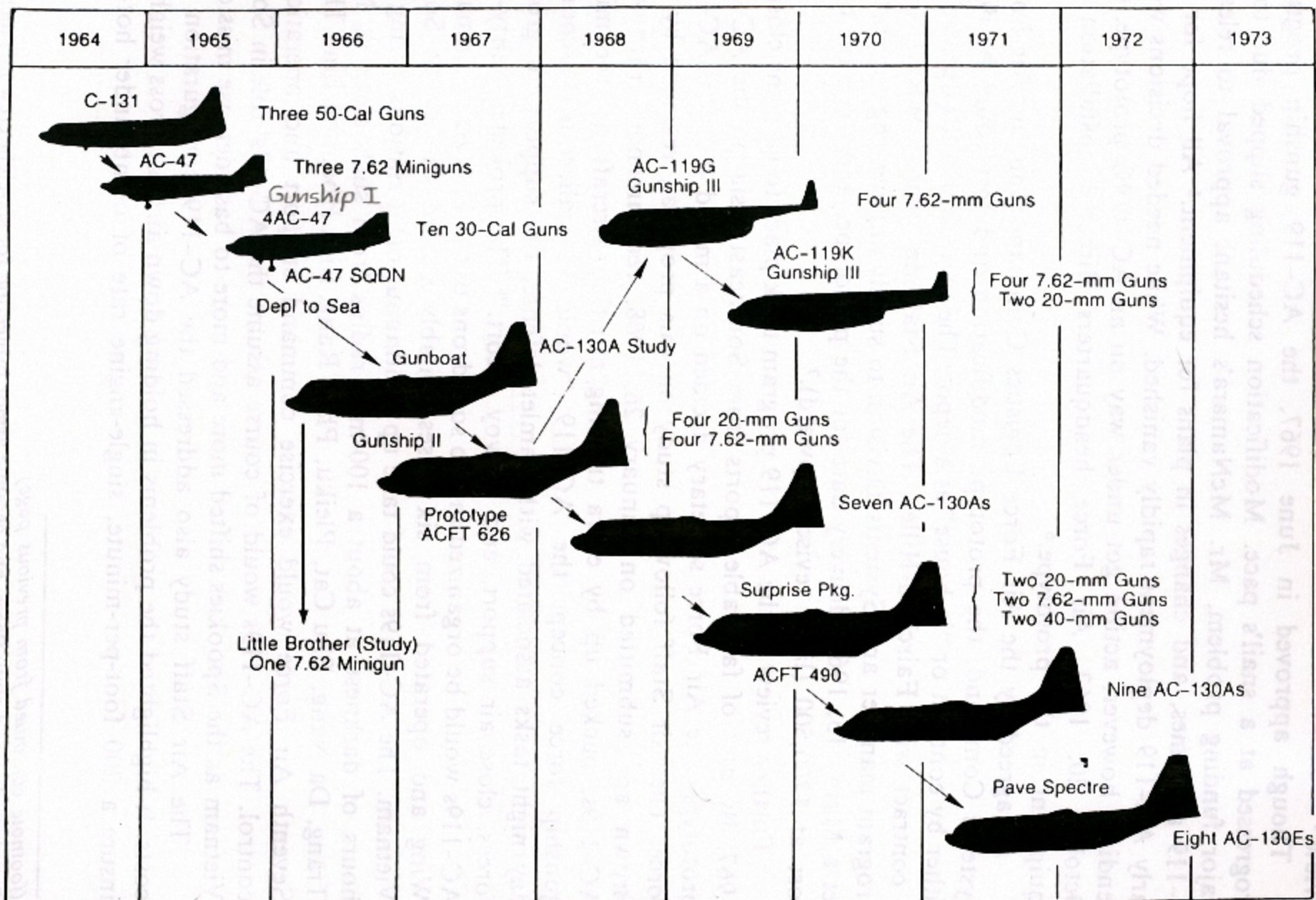






REMOVE BEFORE FLIGHT

GUNSHIP EVOLUTION



WE'LL GET 'EM TO BURN
ANOTHER NIGHT, COLONEL,
IF WE'RE JUST A BIT
MORE PATIENT!

I DON'T THINK THOSE
MOTHERS EVER BURN OR
BLOW FOR COMPANY
GRADE PILOTS!

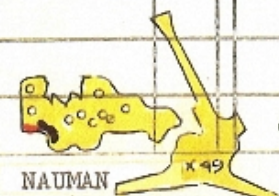
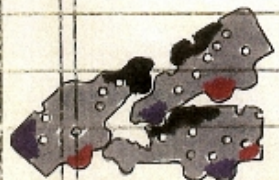
WAIT! I
TELL BUFFALO
SHIP ABOUT THIS
ONE!

SO THAT'S HOW
IT'S DONE!

THEY TOOK AWAY OUR CAS &
THEN THEY CANCELLED OUR AG'S
P/P

18th SOS FLYING SCHEDULE FOR FRIDAY, DEC 3RD, 1971

MSN	ST-03	MSN	ST-07	MSN	ST-06	MSN	ST-05	MSN	STAND-BY
BRF		BRF		BRF		BRF	0040	BRF	E&E = P.E.
P/F		P/F		P/F		P/F	0145	P/F	INTEL & SQDN
T/O		T/O		T/O		T/O	0245	T/O	4 DEC 1300/1400 SATURDAY!
PLT	MCGUIRE (G)	PLT	KALBERT (C)	PLT	MCGILLIS	PLT	IVERSEN	PLT	WHITE
COP	WILLIAMS	COP	STEVENS (G)	COP	WHITE (C)	COP	TURLINGTON	COP	PORTER
NAV	BLOOMFIELD (A)	NAV	O'NEIL	NAV	ROSS	NAV	FIELD	NAV	COOPER
FLR	COOPER	FLR	O'LEARY	FLR	BARBER	FLR	FITZGIBBON	FLR	GARCIA
NOS	GUNSTER	NOS	HYDEN	NOS	HANSEN	NOS	HUPE	NOS	KALBERT
PTR	MOORE	PTR	GARCIA	PTR	DOONS	PTR	KNIGHT	PTR	KILGORE
AG1	ZEILER	AG1	KRAUSS	AG1	SHIPLEY	AG1	MCGINNIS	AG1	O'LEARY
AG2	CARWILE	AG2	BOBBITT	AG2	BAKER	AG2	BIEDKA	AG2	KRUGER
AG3	SANDLASS	AG3	DAY	AG3	WEISENFLUH	AG3	GOLDBECK	AG3	
ILO	BEHRENS (F)	ILO	ATWOOD	ILO	WILKINSON (A)	ILO	LAU	ILO	



VERY GRAM- 5

GO: NAUMAN

NDO-2: PORTER

BACK-UP CREW- 2

REASON FOR SUBSTITUTION

WOOD: (4th) TIPTON

DAY DRIVER: (4th) TAYLOR

NITE DRIVER: DORAZIO

2-NITE DRIVER- WILSON

A-ADMIN B-LEAVE C-OTHER

PRE-FLY: KRUGER, KILGORE, BASSETT

MAIL RUN: KILGORE

SOF: MORAN

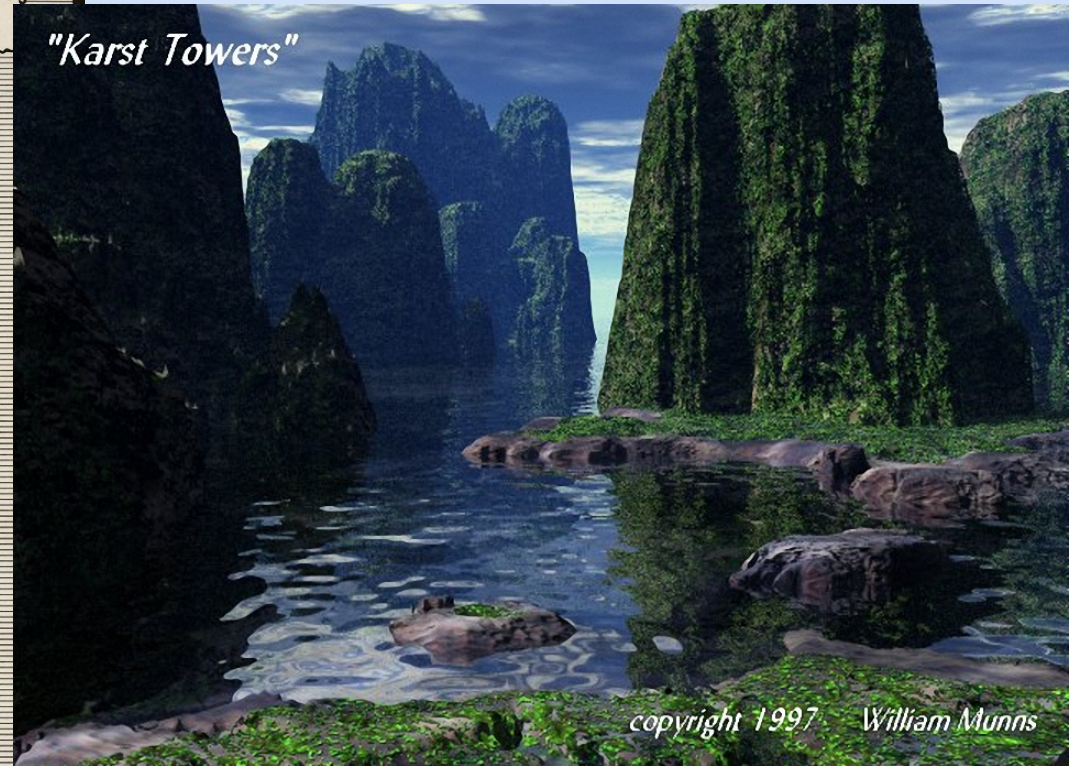
F-PCS G-OTHER

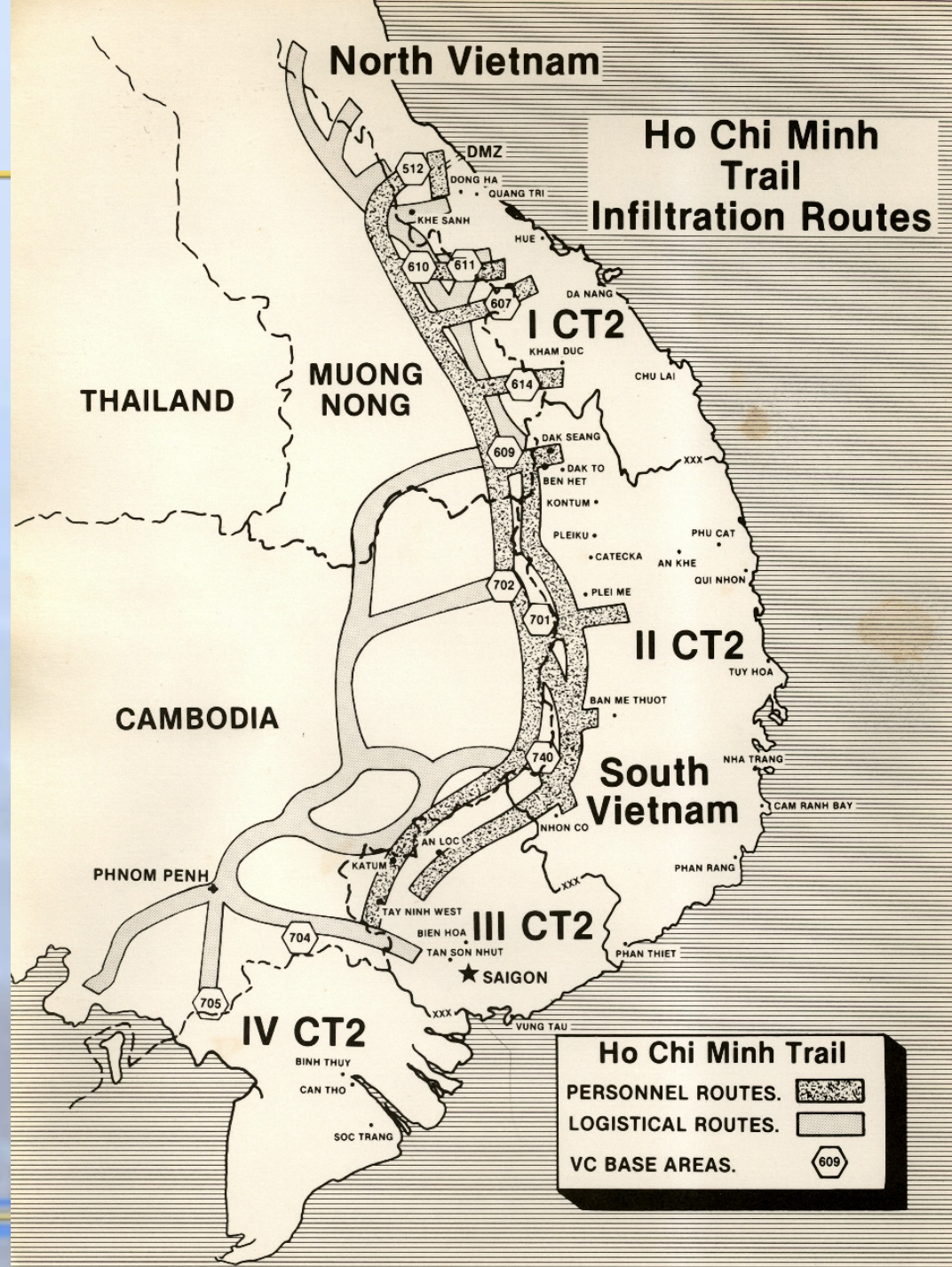
MEDICAL/PHYSICAL/DENTAL APPT: TURLINGTON 1530

WAPS STUDY & TEST 3rd & 4th: KRASNAY

DAY DRIVE TODAY: ATKINSON

SECURITY MEETING CHAPEL #4 (CAMP SWAMPY) 1500: GUNSTER, DORAZIO







OP-2E from Observation Squadron 67 at Nakhon Phanom R.T.A.B., 1967. VO-67 OP-2Es dropped sensors along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.



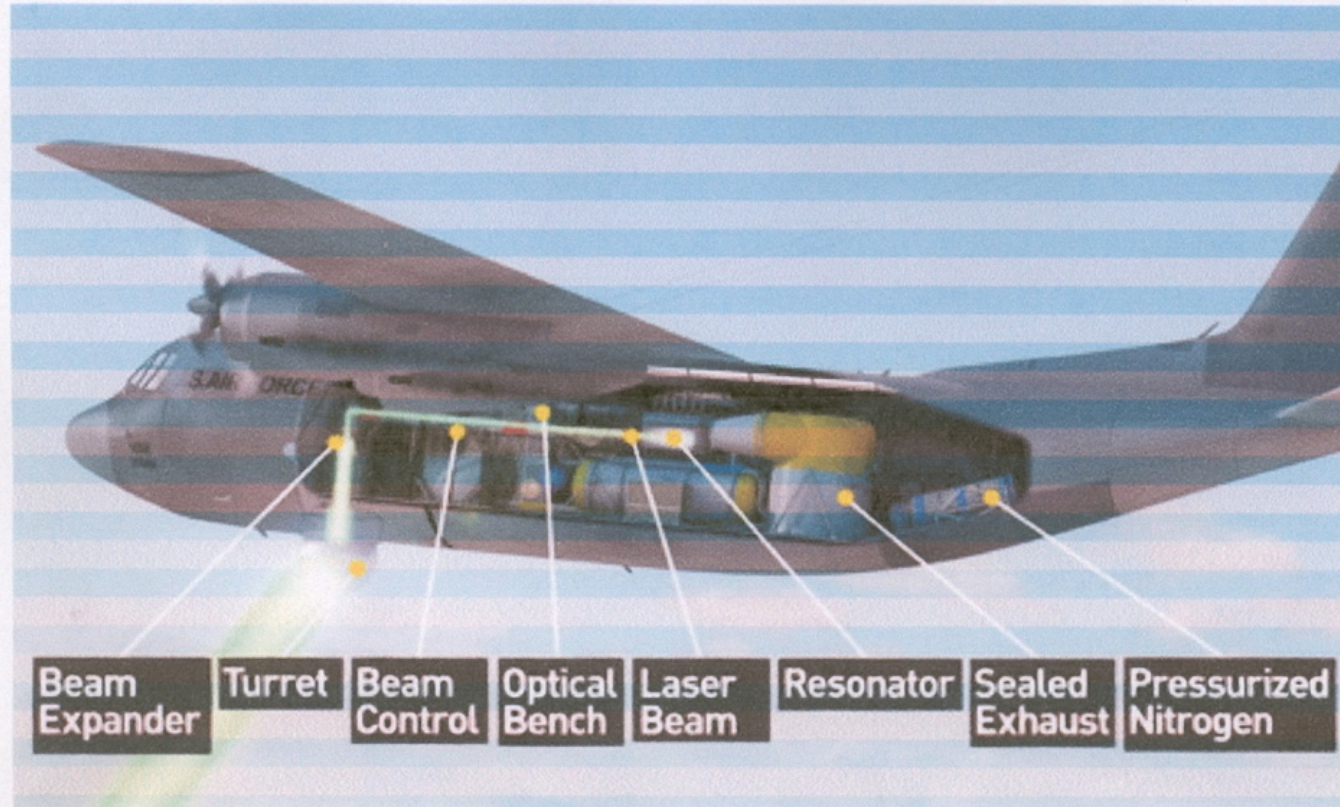
The Airborne Laser Cannon

□

Boeing's new laser cannon can melt a hole in a tank from five miles away and 10,000 feet up □ and it's ready to fly this year.

By Eric Adams Posted 03.13.2008

□



Inside the Advanced Tactical Laser : Photo by Bob





























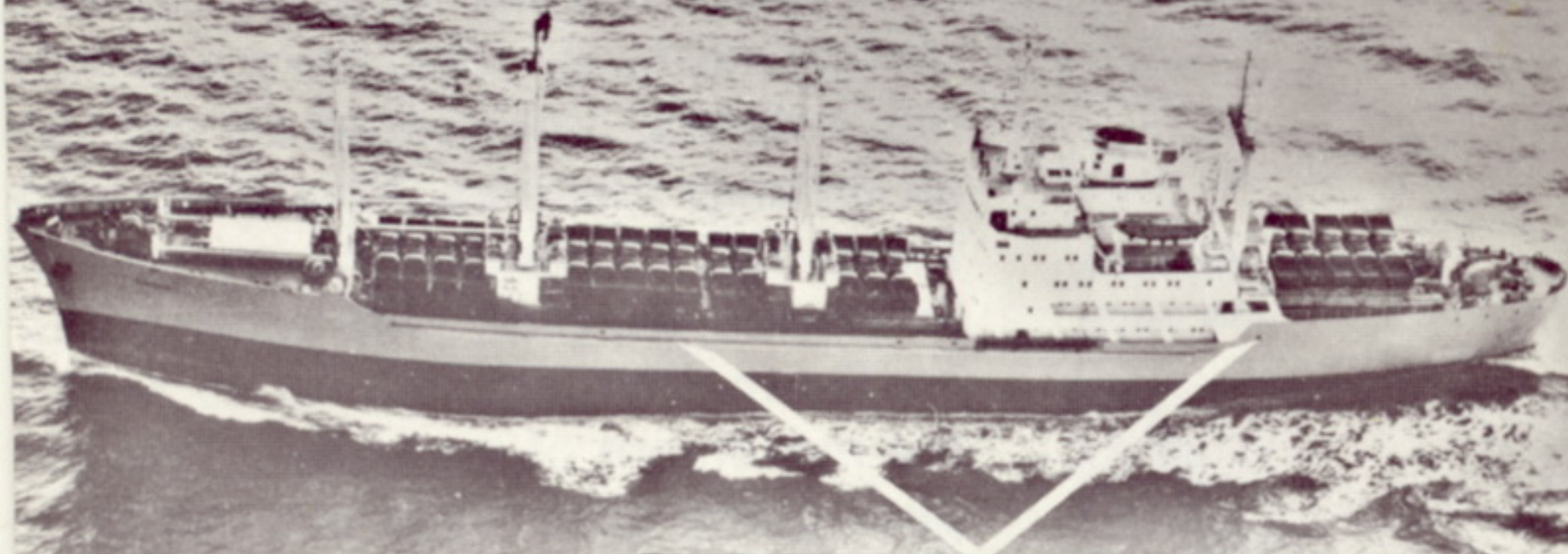




**Fire Support Base – Cambodia
1971**

**USSR MER SHIP VITIM
ENROUTE TO HAIPHONG**

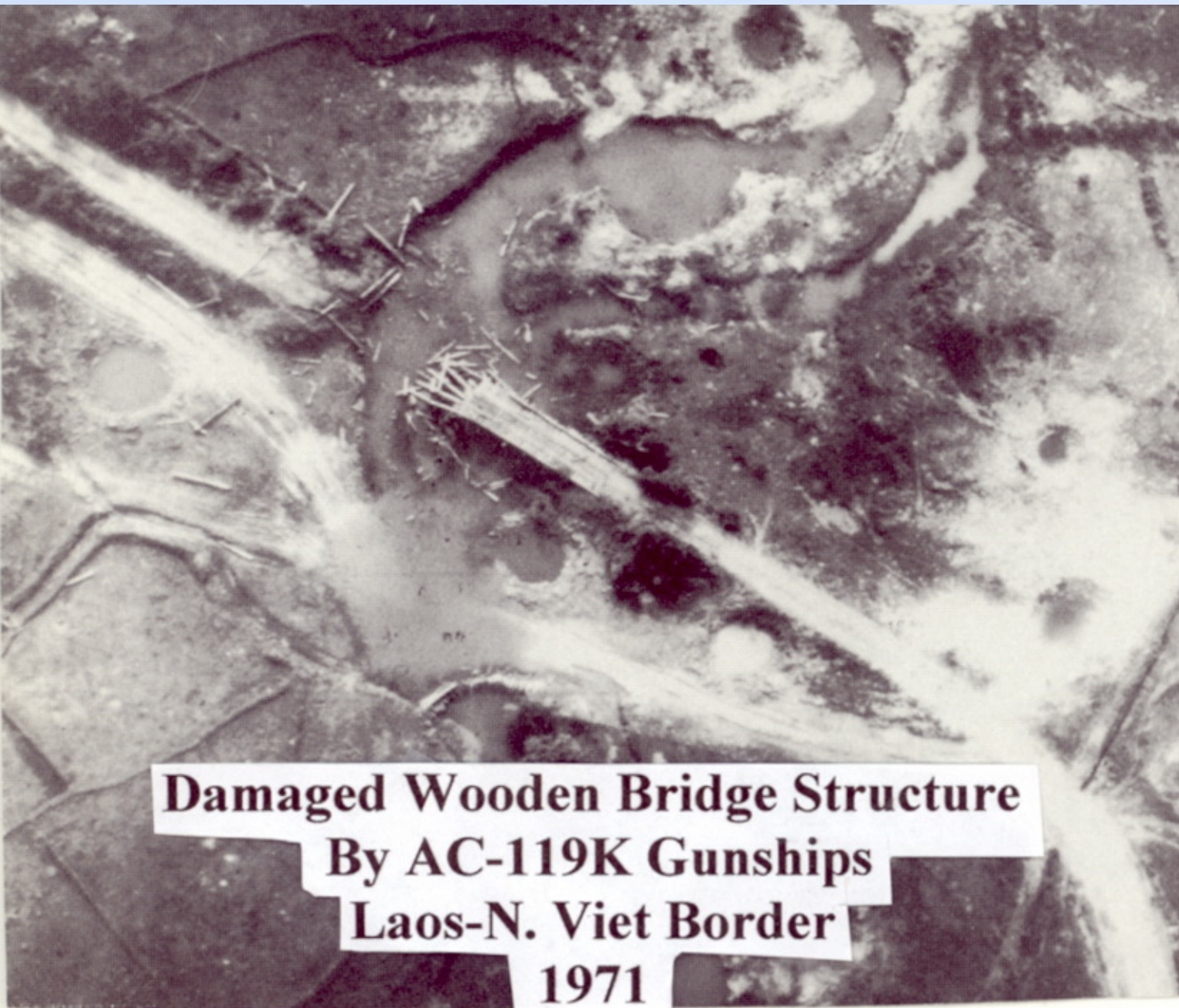
10 JAN 69



DECK CARGO 51 ZIL-151 TRUCKS




Chinese Built Truck
Ho Chi Minh Trail – Laos
1970



**Damaged Wooden Bridge Structure
By AC-119K Gunships
Laos-N. Viet Border
1971**



An aerial photograph showing a dense, hilly landscape. A light-colored, winding road, labeled 'ROUTE 12', runs from the bottom left towards the center. Several other paths or trails branch off from this main road, extending into the forested hills. The terrain is rugged with varying shades of brown and green, indicating different vegetation and possibly cleared areas. The overall scene depicts a complex network of roads in a mountainous region.

ROUTE 12

**Road Interdiction Operations
Rte 12-Ho Chi Minh Trail
1970**



**N. Viet Enemy Truck Traffic
Ho Chi Minh Trail Near Mu Gia Pass
1971**





**Lima Site – Laos
1971**



Lima Site – NE Laos (PDJ)
1970



**PT-76 Tank – Russian
Departing Hanoi
1971**

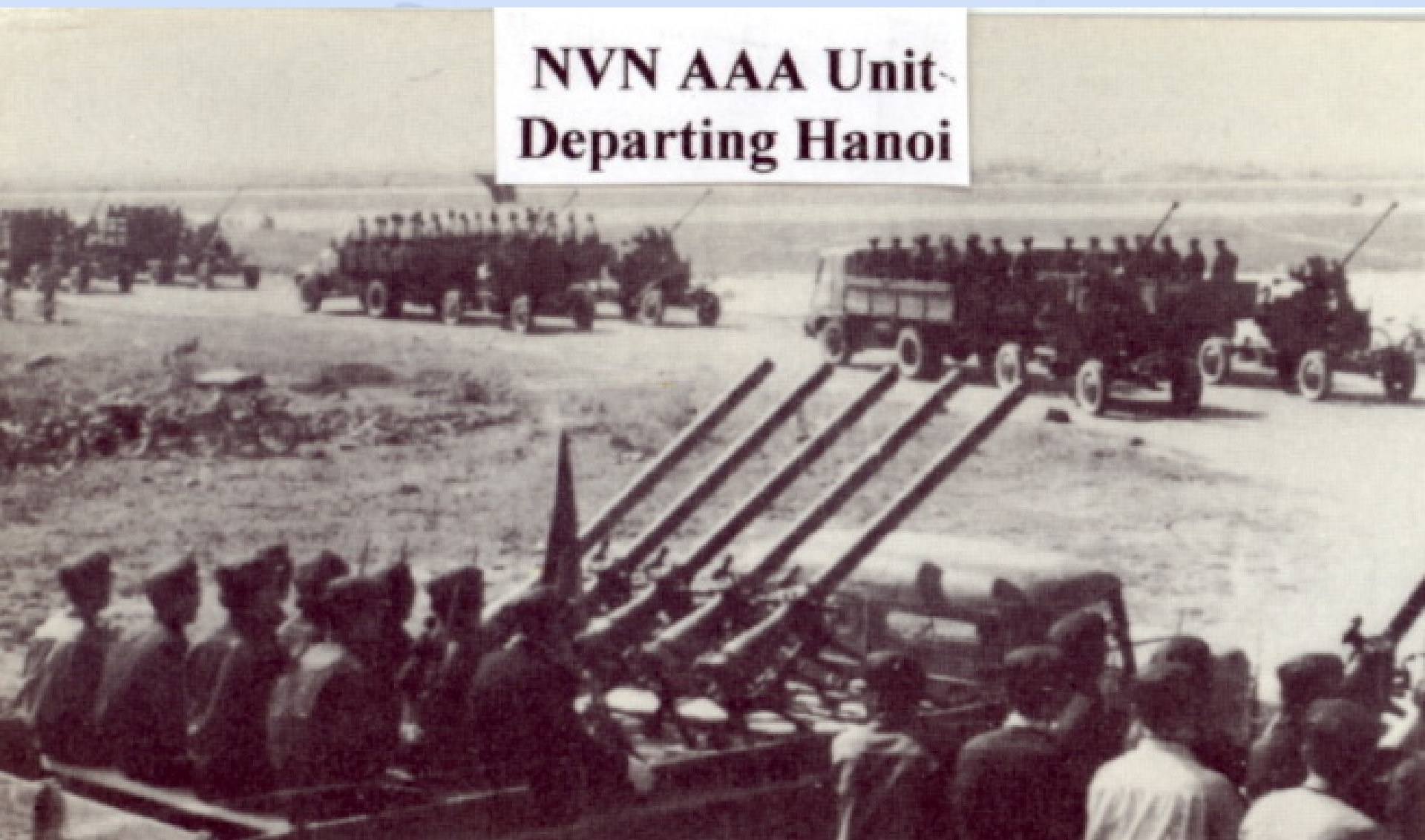


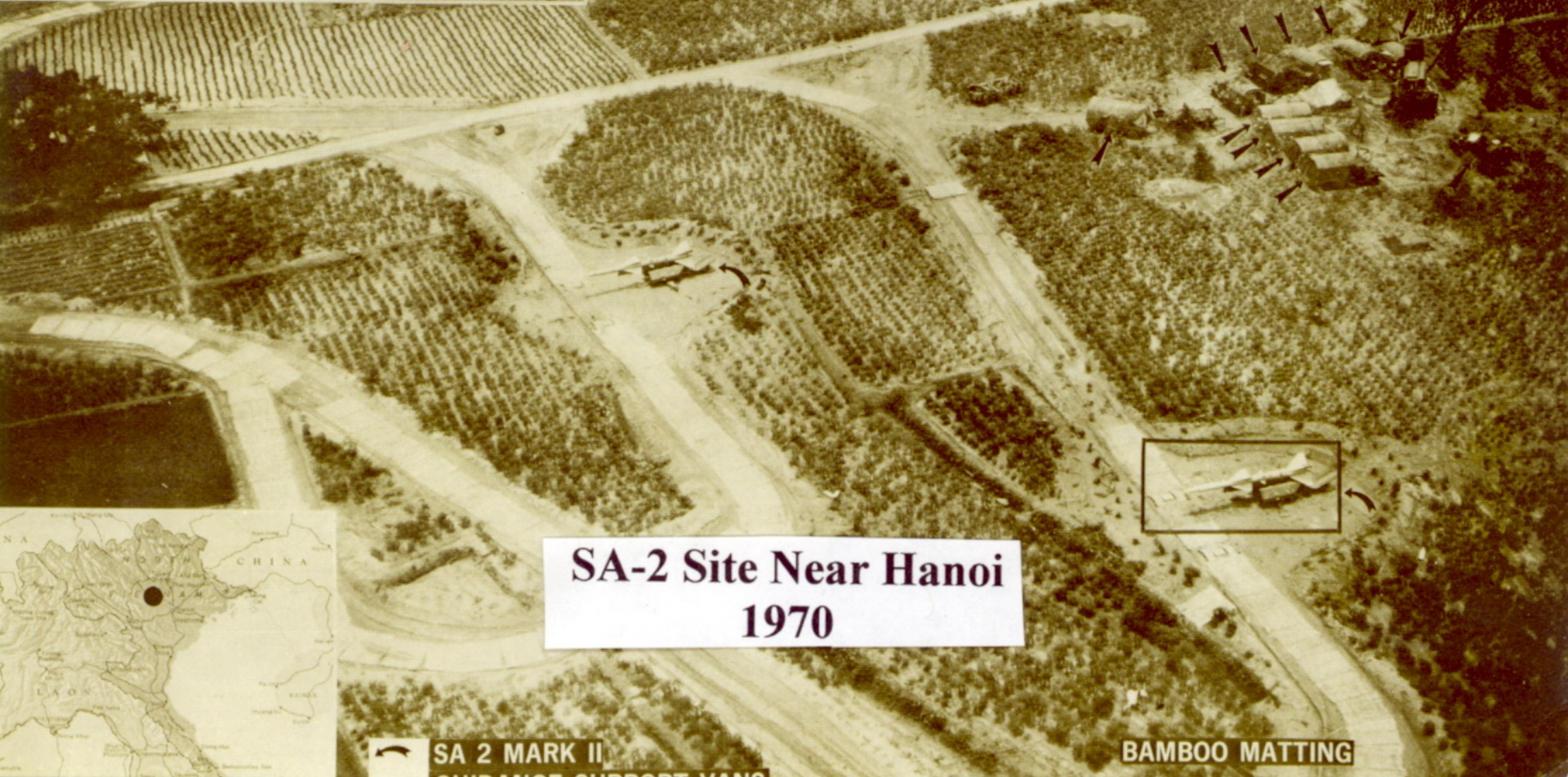
**3 PT-76 Tanks
Destroyed by AC-119K gunships
1971**




**4 NVN Enemy Trucks
Near Mu Gia Pass - 1971
Destroyed by "Stinger" Gunships**

NVN AAA Unit Departing Hanoi





**SA-2 Site Near Hanoi
1970**

 **SA 2 MARK II**
CHINESE SUPPORT VANG

BAMBOO MATTING

SHADOW OF SA-2 DETONATION



SA-2 IN FLIGHT





**SA-7 "Grail"
Portable SAM**

