

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS 351ST STRATEGIC MISSILE WING (SAC)  
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14 December 1976

*Waye Leasing Copy*

Mr. and Mrs. Lambert B. Lubbers  
132 Bayview Drive  
Ferguson, Missouri 63135

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Lubbers,

Attached is the draft copy of the book, "The Shadow in Southeast Asia". It should be printed by the Government Printing Office in late 1977.

It was a privilege to dedicate it to your wonderful son, Tom. He was a superior Air Force Officer.

I welcome the chance to continue our friendship. Merry Christmas. May the New Year be one to cherish.

Sincerely,

*Earl J. Farney*

Earl J. Farney, Lt Col, USAF  
Commander, 508th Strat Msl Sq



*P.S.  
Sorry  
late  
Still  
will  
I'm so  
on this. Am  
hoping the book  
be published.  
E.F.*

Peace . . . . is our Profession

AIR UNIVERSITY  
SOUTHEAST ASIA MONOGRAPH SERIES

THE SHADOW IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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FOREWORD

"THE SHADOW" is another in the Air Force Monograph series on the use of airpower in Southeast Asia. The guerrilla war in Vietnam and Cambodia required many innovations in doctrine, tactics, and hardware. This is a story of one of the new ideas that a small group of airmen put together to cope with the problems of insurgency. The "SHADOW in Southeast Asia" focuses on the role of the fixed wing gunship over South Vietnam and Cambodia. It describes how American airmen combined new and old technologies to provide accurate firepower for troops-in-contact, convoy escort, air interdiction, and armed reconnaissance.

This monograph will provide students of airpower with increased insight into the tactical doctrine behind US airpower. For the general reader, it tells a combat story in human terms and gives some understanding of the spirit and professionalism of US airmen.

WILLIAM V. McBRIDE  
 General, USAF  
 Vice Chief of Staff

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

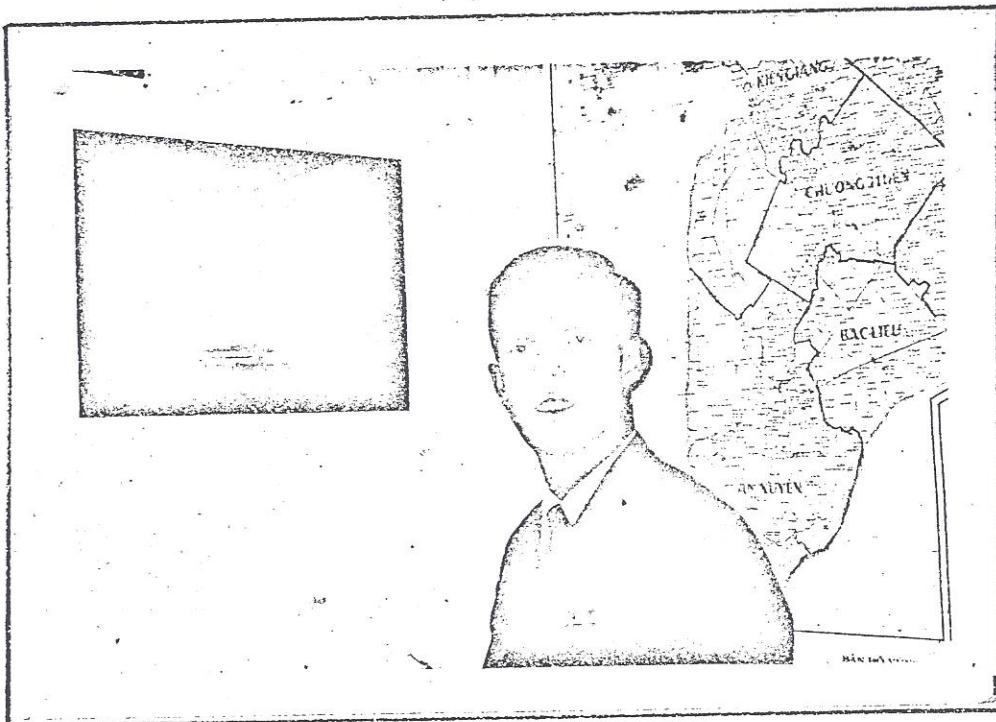
The author acknowledges the contribution of all members of the 17th Special Operations Squadron, Republic of Vietnam. It was their dedication to the gunship mission that inspired this monograph.

I also thank Colonel Don Frizzell, Air University, for editing the story.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel Earl J. Farney (B.S., U.S. Naval Academy, M, G&C, Troy State University) served as executive officer and crewmember in the 17th Special Operations Squadron at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN. His tour was from June 1970 to June 1971. He logged over a hundred Shadow missions in South Vietnam and Cambodia. Colonel Farney returned to Southeast Asia in June 1972 for a year of Arc Light operations in the B-52. This included the Linebacker II Operations during the eleven-day war of December 1972. He holds the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster. He is a graduate of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and the Air War College.

IN MEMORY



TOM LUBBERS  
AIRCRAFT COMMANDER, SHADOW 82  
20 MAY 1970



PREFACE

War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things;  
 The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling  
 Which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse.  
 A man who has nothing for which he is willing to fight,  
 Nothing that he cares about more than his personal safety is a  
 Miserable creature who has no choice of being free, unless made and  
 Kept so by better men than himself.

John Stuart Mill

It was a small country, half a world from home...and it  
 shook with the fire and thunder of war. But our nation  
 shared its struggle. And so we came--to Vietnam. Here, in  
 the sounds of the country and its people, in the sounds of  
 battle, are danger, and fear...and courage.

For every man the war begins on a different day. For  
 some, when a jet transport touches down at Tan Son Nhut or  
 Da Nang. For others, the war begins at the foot of a gang-  
 plank at Vung Tau, Qui Nhon, or Cam Ranh Bay. So this is  
 Vietnam! First impressions are disarming. Those green,  
 peaceful hills, quaint, inviting villages, rice paddies and  
 small, gentle appearing people.

You are the best trained fighting man our country has  
 ever sent to war. But this is a new kind of war. And  
 your enemy is resourceful, brave, and cunning. You train  
 some more, and every man listens up. Because the next time  
 is for real.

You carry the lessons of training to the test of war.  
 And Vietnam engraves itself on a new set of senses. Trails,

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punje stakes, Vietcong, elephant grass, ambush, sampans,  
jungle canopy, rubber plantations, SAMs, AAA, ground fire.

Tonight's gunship mission is at 1930 hours. Crew members are briefed on weather, intelligence, and mission profile. Briefing finished--all go to the aircraft for preflight. The black machine is ready.

The engines cough. We lunge forward--half man, half machine, guns at the ready. We've got troops-in-contact, just west of Pleiku.

Their call sign is CORPSMAN. "CORPSMAN" is on the radio. He is taking mortar and rocket fire from the North Vietnamese. The gunship eases into firing orbit. The commander orders: "Four guns, rapid fire." Pipper on target--the guns put out a solid curtain of tracers.

Charlie ducks, he will wait for another day. Don't mess with B-52's or gunships, the word spreads fast on the guerrilla grapevine. You have but one life, it's precious, no matter your country or nationality.

The mortars are quiet. "CORPSMAN" digs deeper. He has four wounded. The war is shorter by one more sleepless, fear-filled Vietnam night.

And then there is Saigon--fevered capitol of a country at war. It's an oasis for the American fighting man. In every rice paddy of Vietnam, her name is a promise of light. Saigon streets are the noisest, riskiest, no man's land in

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Vietnam. The sidewalks swarming with people, cluttered with the wares of sidewalk vendors, awash in the strange sounds and smells of the city.

Then there's the reassuring sound of that home away from home--good old Armed Forces Radio, Vietnam. "Today we salute the 8th Tactical Bomb Squadron. And now here is the news of the hour on the hour." And then you hear the sounds of your countrymen 10,000 miles away. Life as usual --baseball, quiz shows. It's all so strange. Do they know? Can they know the battle of Hua Trang, the Rockpile, the Delta, Happy Valley, LZ Xray, Hill 400, Paul Revere, Hastings . . . names, big names for a million small acts of heroism. For a thousand yesterdays of American courage. But they are yesterday, and the war goes on.

Then comes the battle. Not every day, but once is enough. Here's a veteran's recollection. He knew what hell was like.

It was like just one great nightmare--but then again it's reality. Men weren't just hit once, they were hit multiple times. Both arms, both legs head, chest. I've seen men with three or four holes in 'em say, "Doc, I'm alright, just gimme my rifle. I'll be O.K.--can't win 'em all. Doc, I don't want to die just laying here, give me my rifle dammit! I'm going to die fightin'."

Bullets were coming in so close you could hear them whistle past your ears. I looked up and saw one come through the trees about 3" from my head. I then looked off to my side and saw one hit the dirt next to my ass. A grenade went off in front of me. I looked at it go off. Just for a second I thought I couldn't see--thought I was blind. Then I looked up and was O.K. But the tracers, looked like the 4th of July. Green tracers, yellow,

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white, red. None of us thought we'd get out of there alive, believe me--none of us, not a one. Rifle fire, machine gun fire, grenades, moans, groans, gooks all over the place. At first I was scared. Then all I wanted to do was kill. I can't explain it in words. Your blood gets hot and you want to shoot 'em. But you can't shoot enough of 'em. Definitely I was scared. Anyone that goes out there and isn't is crazy. You concentrate so hard you don't think about death.

Then came the sky jocks--crazy, sweet fools, napalm was slammin' so close. If I'd had a couple of eggs, I could have fried 'em. They were great. One dropped his bombs so close it nearly ripped my helmet off. They're beautiful, ask any foot soldier.

And the gunships--they'll bring the fire right down on your bunkers if you're really hurtin'. The damn fools don't know when to quit. . . and they have no place to hide-- a circlin' up there.

Another day of fighting ends. It is only the day that ends, the fighting never stops.

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CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH OF THE SHADOW

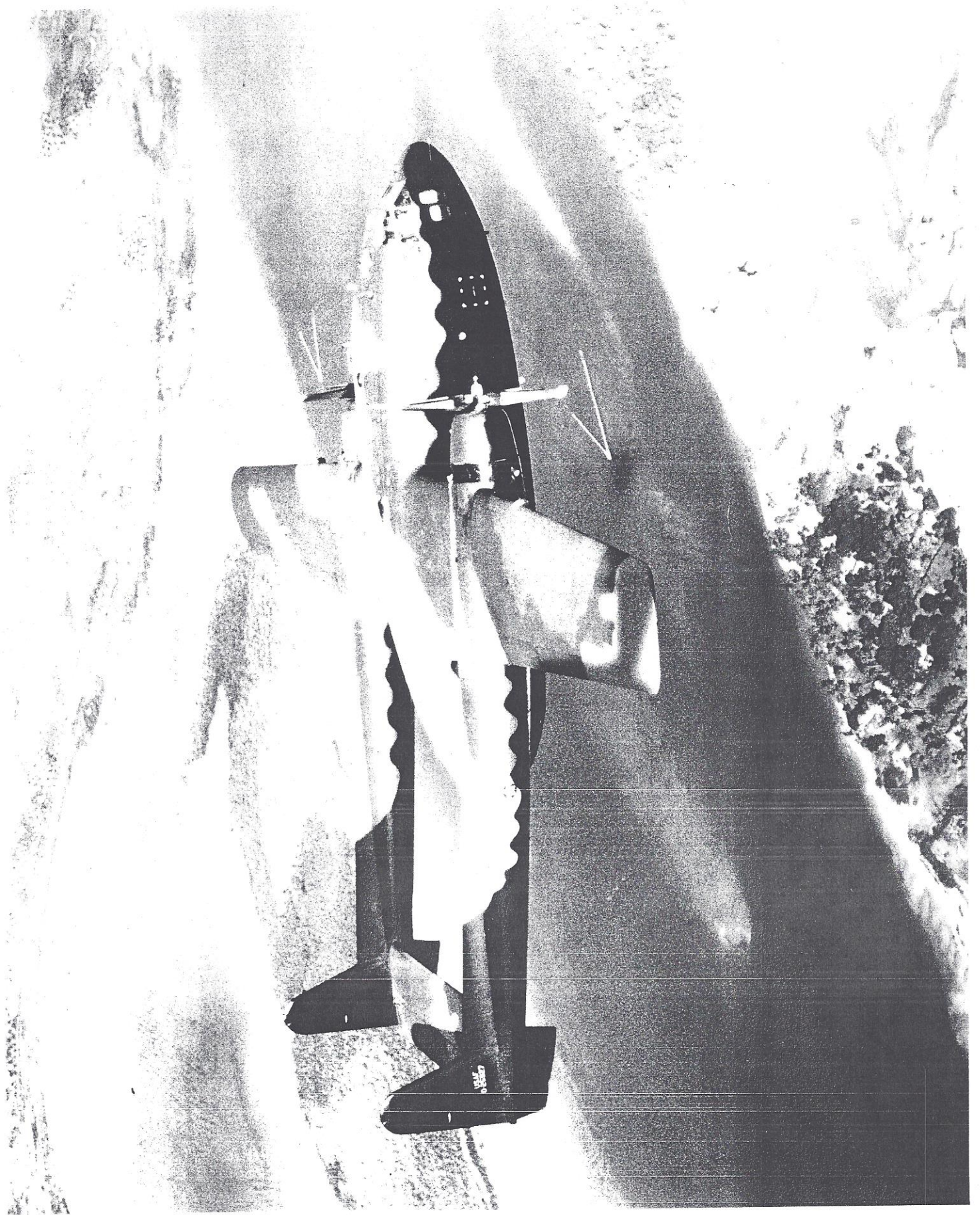
Introduction

South Vietnam, 1964. It was spring and the war initiative had passed to the Communists. South Vietnamese ability to repel Vietcong and North Vietnamese attacks had deteriorated rapidly. Their troop morale was low, losses of weapons and desertions were high. Recruiting problems were severe. The enemy was bold, professional, and hungry for battle. "Incidents" surged to 1,800 per month. Two hundred of 2,500 villages were owned by the enemy.

As spring waned, American concern grew. Vietcong activity in the Mekong River Delta increased. Compounding this problem was the political turmoil in Saigon. The South Vietnamese suffered a major defeat in the Delta area in July. August brought the Tonkin Gulf incident and attacks on U.S. facilities. In October the Vietcong attacked Bien Hoa AB, casting serious doubt on airbase security. Seven U.S. and three Vietnamese aircraft were destroyed; eighteen aircraft were heavily damaged.

It was time for a reassessment. Events strongly indicated the need for more U.S. military aid if the country was to be saved. Increased airpower would be part of the equation but the question was: What kind of aircraft? What kind of









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airpower was most useful in a counter-guerrilla war? The Air Force was actively seeking new methods for use in counterinsurgency operations.

One of the new ideas that came along was the fixed wing gunship, an idea conceived by Major Ronald W. Terry at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. While on a tour of duty in South America, he saw mail and supplies lowered to remote villages from the air in a unique operation. As a slow flying cargo plane circled in a steep pylon turn, a bucket was suspended on a rope from the cargo door of the aircraft. The bucket tended to orbit in one spot over the ground and supplies were easily picked up by the villagers. Terry substituted a ballistic path for the rope and put sidefiring guns in transport aircraft. The pilot aimed the guns, directing a steady stream of fire onto a ground target.

The fixed-wing gunship concept was a simple one. It was an unlikely conversion of relatively slow, large-cabin aircraft into heavily armed gun platforms. The gunship filled a gap in our weapons systems. It could saturate small targets with accurate gun and cannon fire during the hours of darkness, in difficult terrain, and under varying weather conditions. The Vietcong learned very quickly that daylight operations were vulnerable to airstrikes. Besides, the guerrillas had traditionally used darkness as their ally. They moved supplies at night, they trained at night. They attacked at night. The gunship ended this sanctuary because



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it could operate effectively in defense of South Vietnam villages and camps after sundown.

### Basic Gunship Principle

The gunship attack philosophy was to orbit the target in a 360 degree, approximately circular path around the enemy. This brought nearly continuous, accurate delivery of ordnance from a firing point at any bearing angle from the target. The attack permitted little recovery time for the enemy. He was constantly being flanked or attacked from the rear unless he had 360 degree shielding. The basic attack maneuver was to fly the aircraft in a left pylon turn around the target. The pilot sighted the target through a side looking, side mounted, optical sight located at his command station. As he maneuvered the aircraft, the pilot held the target in his sight reticle. If all parameters were met, the guns pointed broadside to the target and put a continuous barrage of projectiles down on the enemy. If the pylon turn was perfectly coordinated, the target theoretically received continuous fire until all ammunition was expended.

The gunship story has one very refreshing aspect to it. The weapon system did not spring out of the think tanks, it did not move from the drawing boards to the wind tunnels, or undergo exacting scientific engineering and analysis. Instead, it came from Air Force men improvising with equipment already in the inventory, parts from various systems matched with a new operational concept to create a new weapons system. It

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took initiative and a lot of tinkering; it was a story about that "good old yankee ingenuity."

In 1963, Major Terry was working as a member of the US Air Force Systems Command team investigating new ideas for counterinsurgency warfare. Major Terry developed his gunship idea and took his argument to anyone who would listen. At that time the proposal was to mount several 7.62mm gatling guns on the old C-47 "Gooneybird."

Major Terry's briefings moved steadily up the chain of command. On 2 November 1964, Terry and Lieutenant Sasaki gave their presentation to General Curtis B. LeMay, Chief of Staff, USAF. General LeMay reacted favorably and sent a Systems Command team to Vietnam to modify and test the C-47 in combat.

The gunship concept offered many advantages. The plane could loiter in the target area for hours, change firing patterns quickly, and could correct malfunctions in flight. With its slow speed and side-firing guns, it could deliver ordnance on target rapidly and accurately. It was ideal for night and counterinsurgency operations and its excellent slant range capability enabled it to strike targets on steep slopes that had long been considered inaccessible to airpower.

Three conversion kits were shipped to Bien Hoa Air Base, South Vietnam. Two C-47's were reconfigured for the combat tests. They were designated FC-47's at first, the "F" for fighter and the "C" for cargo; this later changed to AC-47, the "A" meaning attack.

One sortie of the combat test typified the instant popularity of the lumbering cargo battlewagon. On 23 December 1964 the aircraft was on airborne alert out of Bien Hoa AB. The moon was high, there was a light scud layer on the horizon. At 2237, the crew was directed to Thanh Yend, west of Can Tho in the Mekong River Delta area. A little outpost was under heavy attack by the Vietcong.

The AC-47 went in blacked out, turned into a firing orbit, and quickly brought fire on the enemy positions. Apparently this Vietcong unit had not seen the "fire breathing dragon-ship" before; when the gunship attacked they immediately broke off the assault.

A second aircraft was diverted just after midnight on the same night to Trung Hung, an outpost 20 miles west of Thanh Yend. A VNAF C-47 was there dropping flares, but the Vietcong continued the attack. The AC-47 arrived at 0040 and pumped a stream of 7.62mm rounds into the surprised Vietcong. Trung Hung defenders were speechless; the VC attack had stopped with the first burst of fire! Those gatling guns, with a steady stream of tracers, had quite a psychological impact. At night the dragon was a fearsome sight and soon was in great demand because of its accuracy and firepower. But many forts, hamlets, and fire bases needed help and there were only a few of the gunships in service.



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~~At night the dragon was a fearsome sight and soon was in great demand because of its accuracy and firepower. But many forts, hamlets, and fire bases needed help and there were only a few of the gunships in service.~~

The success of the gunship in night defense was easy to understand. The entire South Vietnamese pacification program was at stake. Under the cover of darkness, the Vietcong assaulted and sometimes overran forts and strategic hamlets in government-designated "safe areas." They showed that the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) could not protect the villages and outposts. They frustrated ARVN attempts to reestablish control over vast areas.

With the gunship concept proven, the Air Force looked for better airframes to carry the guns into battle. The old C-47 lacked payload capacity, single engine climb performance, and adequate loiter time. The C-130, a four engine turboprop aircraft, had the engine power, payload, and fuel capacity to correct these deficiencies. A gunship version called the AC-130 "Spectre" was quickly developed and sent to Southeast Asia for evaluation. It carried four 7.62 miniguns, four 20mm cannons, and a variety of sophisticated sensors and navigational aids. Later versions of the AC-130 also mounted a 105mm gun which gave this aircraft an excellent capability against tanks and fortified positions.

The problem with the AC-130 was that there was a shortage of C-130 airframes available for conversion, the C-130

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being in great demand as a cargo and troop carrier. But there was still a big demand for a better gunship and the Air Force turned to the C-119 "Flying Boxcar." The C-119 was developed after World War II. It was the follow-on to the C-47 which had been built by Douglas in the 1940's.

The AC-119 development was planned in two phases. First, 25 C-119G's would be modified to carry four 7.62 miniguns, detection gear, and crew armor. In the second phase, 26 more C-119K's would receive four 7.62mm gatling guns, two 20mm cannons, plus two J-85 jet engines for added payload and performance. Both models would have a smoke elimination system, computerized fire control system, automatic flare launcher, new radio and navigation gear, beacon tracking radar, forward looking infrared radar, polyurethane foam in the fuel tanks for explosion protection, and a strobe light.

The first action was to recall the 71st Tactical Airlift Squadron, an Air Force Reserve unit, from Bakalar AFB, Indiana. Three hundred reservists moved to Lockbourne AFB (Rickenbacker AFB), Ohio, in May, 1968 and the unit was redesignated the 17th Tactical Airlift Squadron. They joined with the newly organized 4413th Combat Crew Training Squadron and began training crews for combat.

In an age of supersonic jet aircraft, nuclear weapons, and electronic warfare, nothing seemed quite so incongruous







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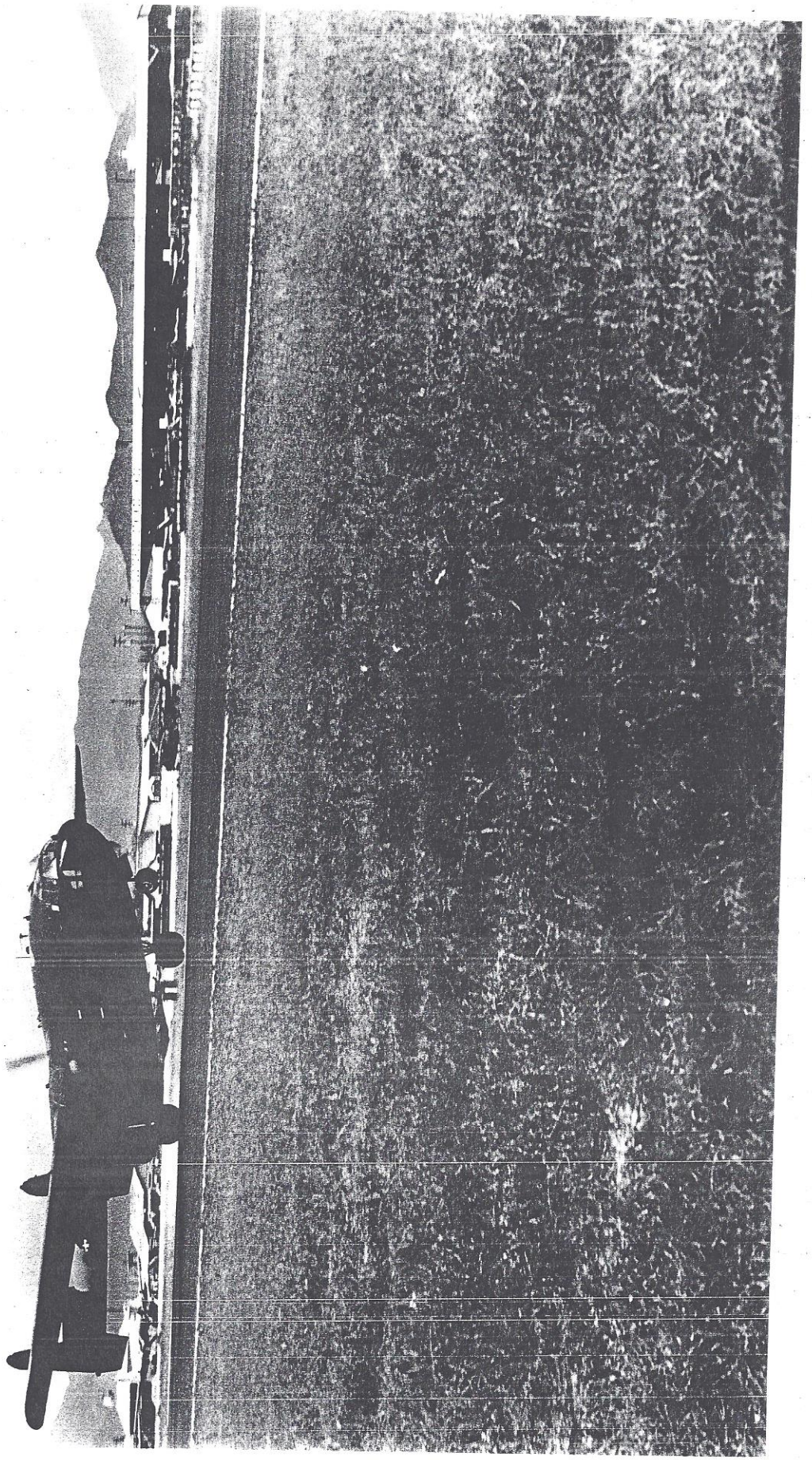
as a lumbering old C-119 "Flying Boxcar." It didn't look like it could be turned into a potent weapon system, but then, counterinsurgency warfare was different. There were a number of anomalies as old T-28's were converted into attack aircraft, the battleship Missouri came out of mothballs, and jet fighters went in for strategic bombardment. The fixed wing gunship fit right in with this pattern. Starting with a few simple modifications to the old C-47, it had evolved into a highly complex weapons system. The AC-119 was the third gunship developed. The "G" model would become known as the SHADOW.

#### Introduction to Vietnam

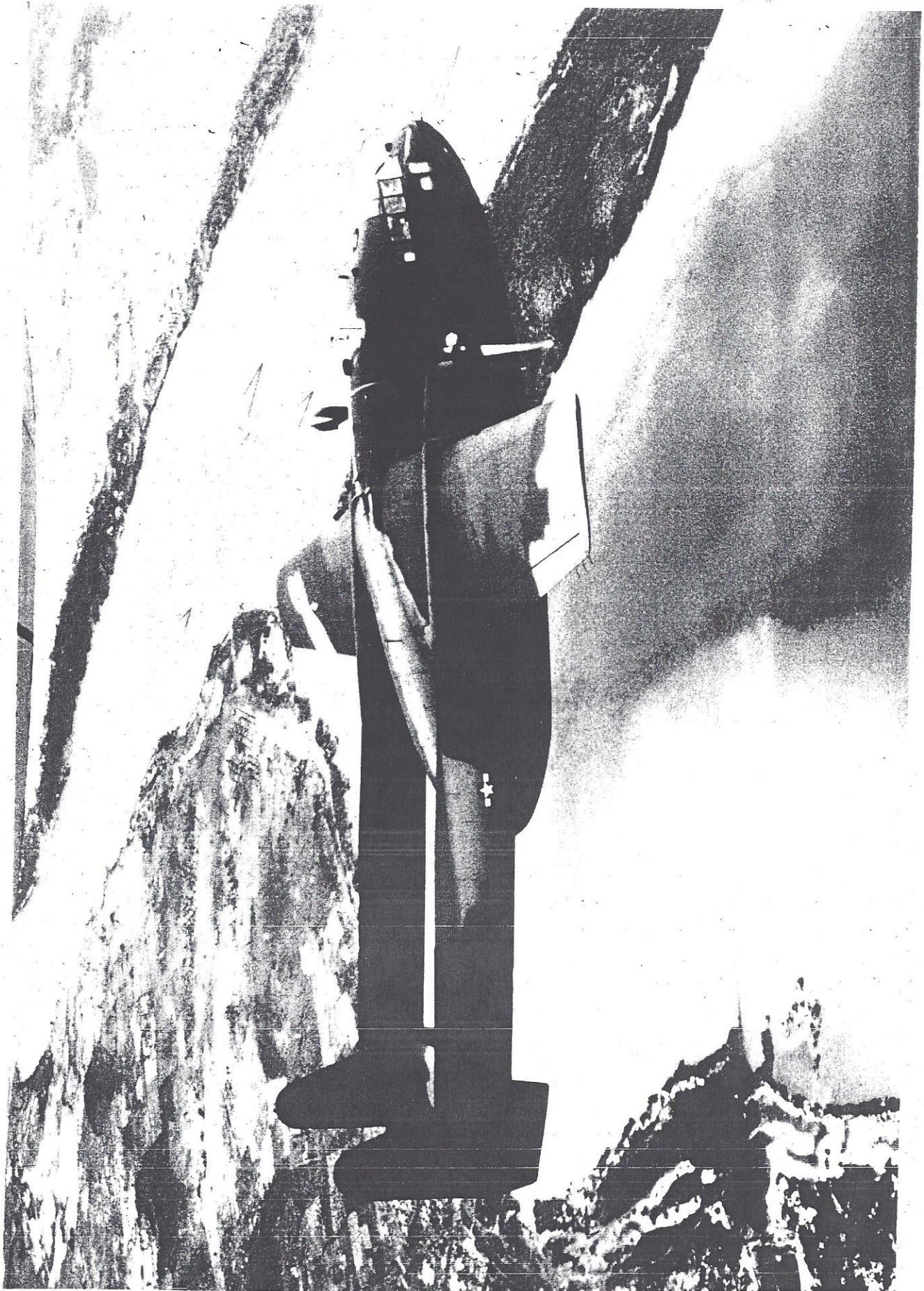
Mid-December 1968. Advance elements of the 71st Special Operations Squadron were moving to Nha Trang Air Base, RVN. Two AC-119G's left Lockbourne AFB, Ohio, on the 5th for the long overseas flight. They reached Nha Trang on the 27th, four aircraft had arrived by the end of the month. Maintenance personnel went to work immediately, it was a tough job to get this machine operational. Crews reinstalled and adjusted the miniguns, special ferry fuel tanks were removed, there were a number of maintenance problems--broken gunsight, inoperative spark advance on an engine, and a faulty illuminating device.

The AC-119G's were stationed at Nha Trang under the 14th Special Operations Wing. They would fly in the Southern half of South Vietnam. The AC-119K unit would handle the











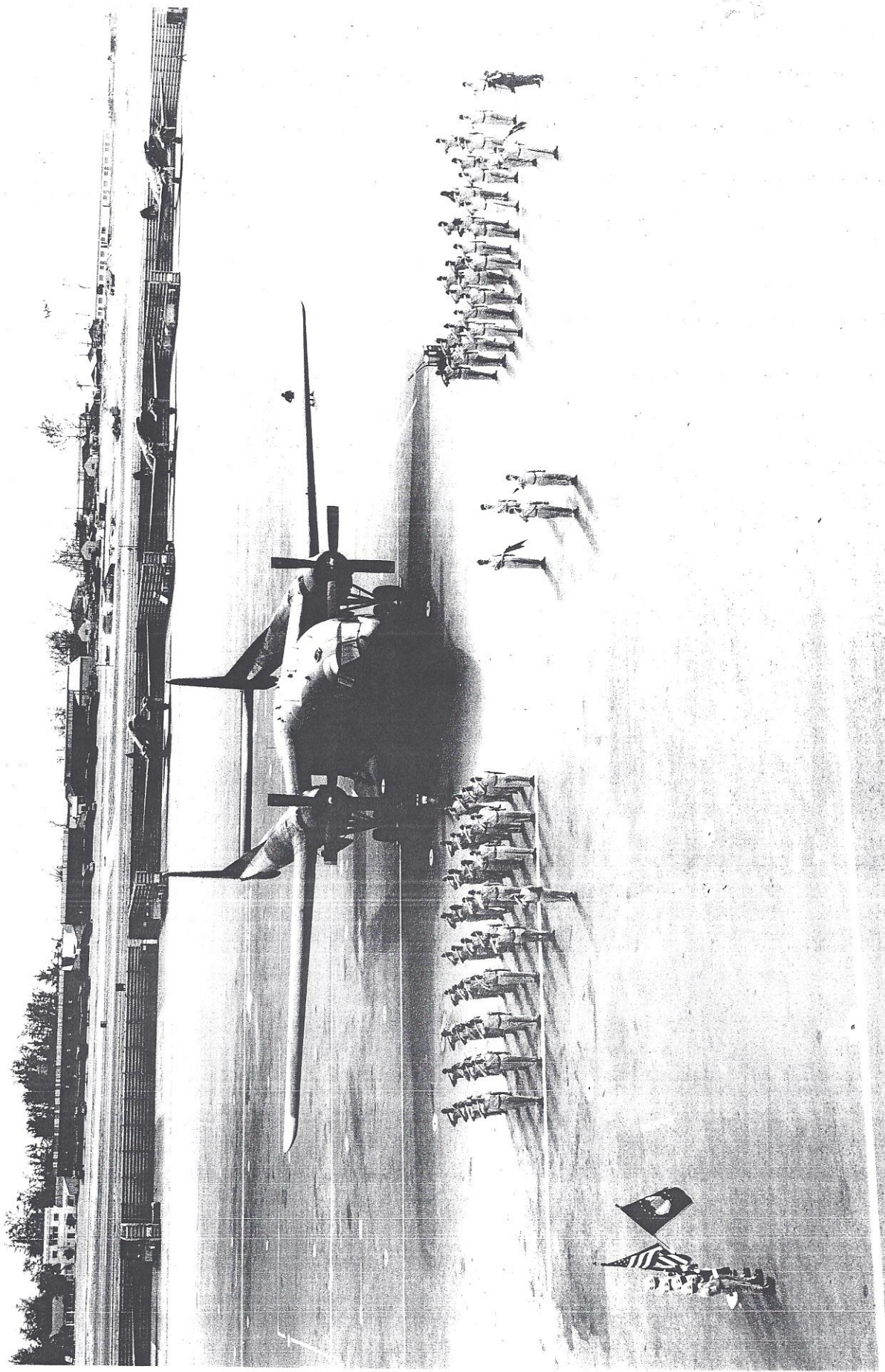
northern half. Their aircraft had the extra jet engines and were better suited for the higher terrain there. Forward Operating Locations (FOL's) for the Nha Trang gunships were established at Phan Rang Air Base, Phu Cat, and at Tan Son Nhut, Saigon. Aircraft were divided evenly among the three.

The first call sign assigned to the 17th was "CREEP." It bounced off the party hooch walls as the crews hooted, "Hello Rustic, this is CREEPING CRUD 69, over." Who thinks up such names? The crew members protested, and were allowed to pick their own call sign/ they chose "SHADOW." It became effective 1 December 1968. The call sign fit the color and stealth of the machine. It was painted black and flew at night. Somehow SHADOW reflected the character of the mission too.

The first operational combat mission flew on 5 January 1969, call sign SHADOW 41. Lieutenant Colonel Donald Beyl took off from Nha Trang at 2226 hours in aircraft No. 905. SHADOW 41 fired only 1,300 rounds that night, but those folks on the ground were grateful for the help.

Combat evaluation continued until March 1969 by a team from the Tactical Air Command under Major Darrell E. Wood. They analyzed SHADOW's performance in interdiction, base/hamlet defense, armed reconnaissance, close air support, and forward air controlling. It was judged not suitable for





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forward air control work. Size and speed of the AC-119 made it impossible to maintain visual contact with the fighters that was necessary to safely direct a fighter strike and adjust ordnance delivery.

The SHADOW had limitations. One was the engines, it didn't have good single engine climb performance. It did not have an all-weather capability which hampered its operation in fog and haze. It was slow and vulnerable to ground fire and couldn't logically be used in a high-threat environment.

The armed reconnaissance missions were designed to interdict enemy supply lines and harass his units. The AC-119's were assigned an area to patrol. The area was bounded by precise coordinates and soon the crews were calling them "shadow boxes." The first boxes were located west of the cities of Kontum and Pleiku, Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam converged there -- the so-called Tri-border area -- one of the Ho Chi Minh Trail terminus areas. The gunship crews quickly showed their aggressiveness in searching for targets. They frequently pressed in at 500 feet using the light observation device, the illuminator and flares to find the North Vietnamese.

When they got firing clearance, they would mark the target with a MK-6 flare and then climb back up to firing altitude. This was usually 2,500 or 3,500 feet above ground



level because the guns were boresighted for these altitudes; they couldn't fire as accurately at 500 feet. Weather, threat, and crew judgment were the limiting factors. Some of the more aggressive crews would take her right down on the deck to get at the target. There was one report on hitting sampans at 300 feet in the night. SHADOW put the white spotlight on the sampan and the VC jumped into the water. Just like shooting fish in a barrel. . . . down goes the sampan.

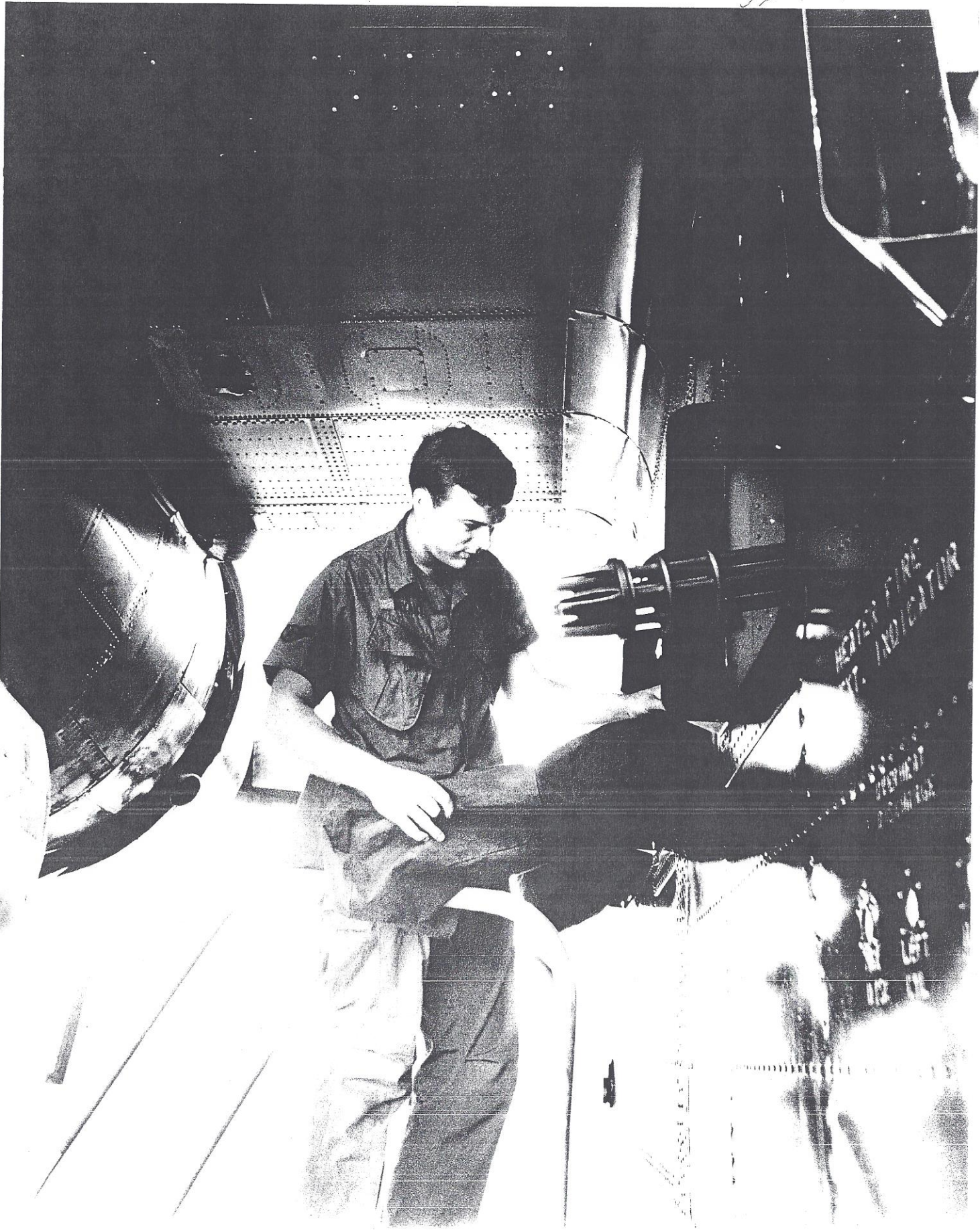
One bird was directed to an outpost near Dak To. The ground unit requested flares. Charlie was lobbing mortars on the perimeter. Flares were put out and the 20KW light turned on. The gunship fired all four guns at high rate-- a steady stream of tracers. The Vietcong made a hasty exit. He had little stomach to tangle with this unpredictable shower of metal. Close air support and hamlet defense by the AC-119G was very effective.

As the evaluation progressed, a mission statement emerged: To search out enemy infiltration routes, installations and destroy his means to wage war. Respond with firepower and illumination in close support of strategic hamlets under night hostile attacks. Supplement strike aircraft in defense of friendly forces and provide harassing interdiction fire support. Insure escort for convoys and respond as directed in support of defense of friendly forces.

Aircraft and crews continued to arrive at Nha Trang. By the time the evaluation was complete, all 18 aircraft assigned were on station. The 71st Special Operations

Squadron was fully deployed under command of Lieutenant Colonel James E. Pyle. The old "Flying Boxcar" was converted into an attack weapon and had proved itself in action.







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TABLE I-1

TECHNICAL DATA ON THE AC-119G

Crew--the basic crew of the AC-119G is the pilot, co-pilot, navigator/safety officer, flight engineer, illuminator operator, two gunners, and NOS (Night Observation Sight) operator.

Armament--four 7.62 miniguns firing out the left side of the fuselage. Each gun has a rate of fire of 3,000 or 6,000 rounds a minute. The 7.62 is comparable to the US Winchester .308 caliber. It exists the barrel at 2760 feet per second. And strikes the target with nearly 1,000 foot-pounds of energy. Its impact is similar to a .38 special service load at 12 feet. Each gun holds 1,500 rounds. It can be loaded inflight by the aerial gunner. Guns are sighted and fired by pilot. The aircraft carried 31,000 rounds of 7.62mm.

Illuminator--it's a precision device that produces high-intensity illumination in either the visual or infrared (IR) spectrum. The system was developed to illuminate objects on the ground from a standard operational aircraft. Operating at full power (20KW), the system's light beam with rhodium collector is rated at approximately 425,000 lumens and has a beam spread that is adjustable from 20° to 40°. The lamphouse assembly is capable of directing the light beam through a roll angle of + 10° to - 60° and through a yaw motion of + 15°.

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Flare launcher--a four tube, semi-automatic pneumatic powered flare launcher was installed on the right side of the cargo compartment. The launcher fully loaded contained twenty-four MK 24, MOD 4 flares, rated at two million candle power each. The launcher ejected these stores singly, in a starboard-aft direction.

Night observation device--a precision electro-optical instrument used for covert observation of distant objects at night. It also had a day sight and yoke assembly. The assembly allowed the night sight to travel 180 degrees max in azimuth, and - 70° to + 30° in elevation. The night viewing device amplified reflected ambient night illumination (moonlight or starlight) to produce a visible image of the object when viewed through the eyepiece. The night sight was equipped with controls that allowed the operator to adjust for focusing distance and viewing clarity. The device could be used in conjunction with the airborne illuminator when it was used in the infrared (IR) spectrum. The day sight assembly is a standard 3X power sight, mounted on the housing of the night sight. A focus control adjustment ring on the night sight permitted optimum operator viewing and bore-sighting adjustment.

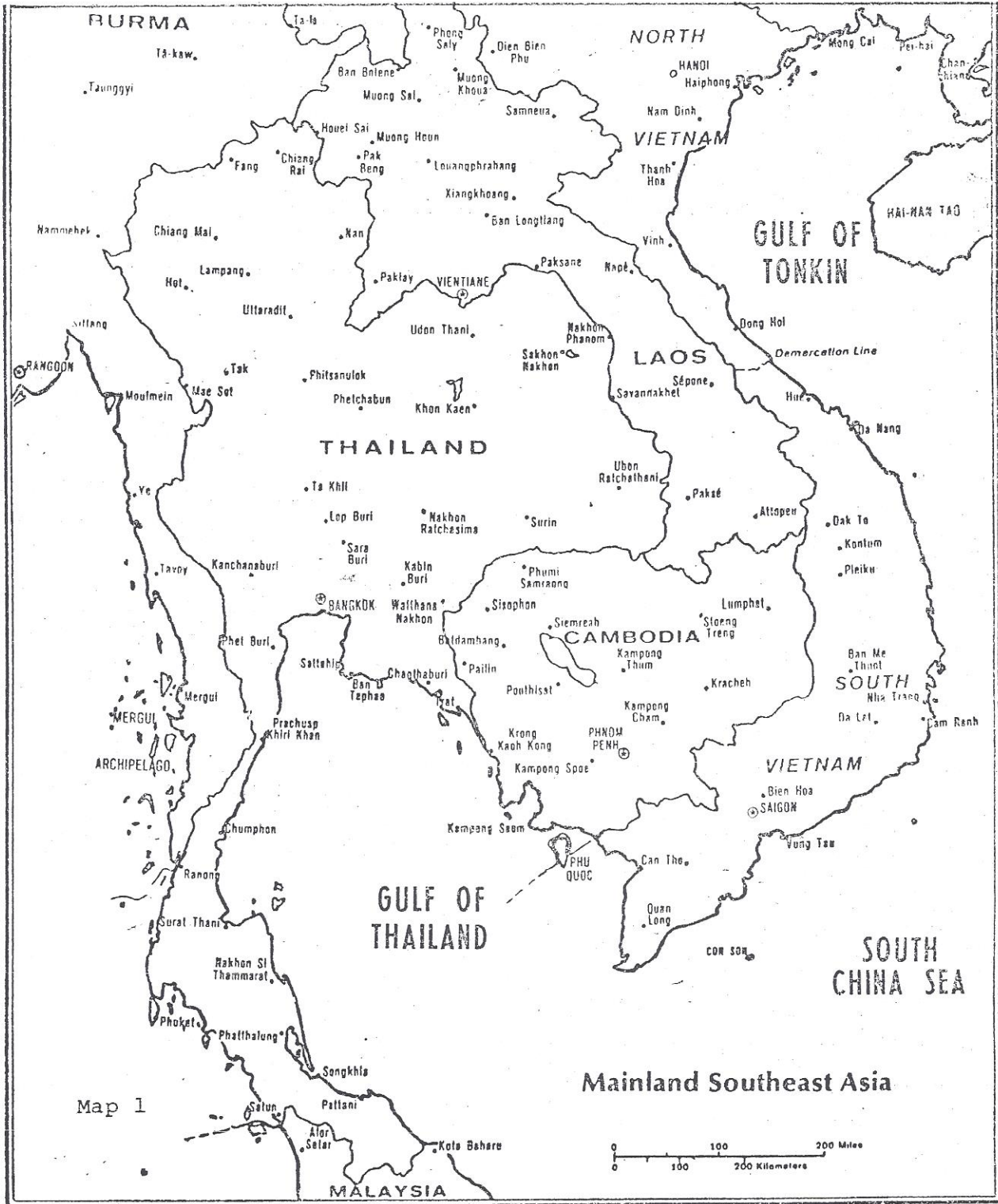
Gunsight--a lead-computing optical gunsight was located on the left side of the pilot.

Fire control system--target identification is accomplished with a four power telescope observation device. It is designed for night viewing when light intensity is low. When aimed at a target,

it transmits angular data of line-of-sight to that target, versus the aircraft lateral axis. This is combined with aircraft magnetic heading and attack altitude to compute the aircraft target relationship. A moving reticle is positioned, representative of the target, for the pilot's viewing. Three modes of firing are available at the pilot's discretion--automatic, semi-automatic, and manual. In both the automatic and semi-automatic functions, the pilot visually aligns the fixed and moving reticles on his gunsight by maneuvering the aircraft. This achieves target alignment. In the manual mode, the pilot must be able to see the target. He maneuvers the aircraft into position so that the target is visible through the fixed position reticle. It must be aligned with it. The aircraft must be in a 30° left bank, and at the specific altitude for which the guns are boresighted. If the pilot manages all parameters, a coordinated pylon turn about the target will result. The guns may be fired from any position in the turn.



SOUTHEAST ASIA





CHAPTER II

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CAPABILITIES AND MISSION GROW

1969 Operations

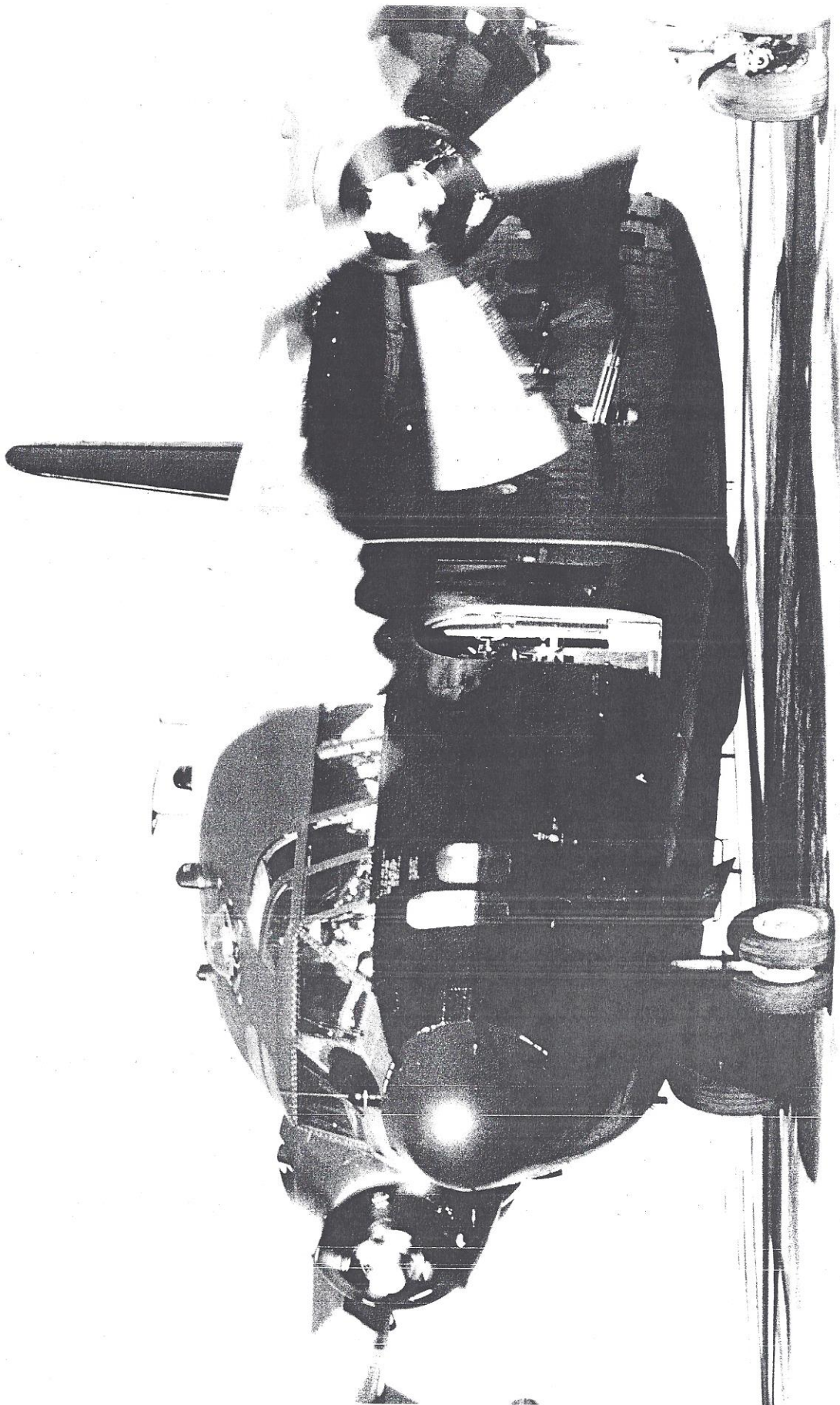
The SHADOW Squadron worked hard for the rest of 1969. There were many problems: aircraft corrosion, equipment problems, redeployment and reorganization ceaseless re-training of aircrew and support personnel. There was no end to it; some called the camouflaged boxcar a "maintenance nightmare."

In June the 71st Special Operations Squadron (SOS) changed its name and became the 17th SOS. While it was the 71st, it flew 1,209 fragged missions (1,516 sorties), 6,251 combat hours, and fired 14,555,150 rounds of ammunition. It dropped 10,281 flares, killed 682 enemy troops and destroyed 43 vehicles. Impersonal facts. . . they mean little.

From June through December, the 17th set a scorching pace exceeding 2,000 sorties and 8,000 combat hours. They fired 20 million rounds of ammunition, expended 12,000 flares, killed 800 enemy and destroyed 150 sampans. The 14th Special Operations Wing laid claim to a hard fact: No allied outpost had been overrun while the gunships were on station. It begins to get personal.

In early '69 at a compound near Tay Ninh electric power was lost. The Vietcong were attacking. A local doctor bent

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over a wounded Vietnamese soldier, prostrate on a stretcher. The night was muggy too muggy for a delicate operation-- especially without light. The Direct Air Support Center (DASC) at Bien Hoa directed SHADOW in - go up the river to Go Dau Ha, then direct to Tay Ninh. Lieutenant Colonel Burl C. Campbell pushed up the throttles a bit more, the auxiliary power unit was put on line and the illuminator was ready to go.

Campbell rolled the bird into its pylon turn - on target the white light illuminated patient and doctor. A disciplined orbit was held despite enemy fire - minutes dragged - operation complete--Vietnamese trooper lived. He'd fight another day.

The reputation of SHADOW grew. Some thought it could see anything in the dark. It was directed to check out the unidentified flying objects (UFO's) in the Duc Co area of Western II Corps. That's right, UFO's! Tactical radars were picking up low flying objects. The matter had aroused operational interest. The enemy might be transporting men and equipment by helicopter. The logistics line of this covert operation ran from Cambodia to strategic locations in South Vietnam. The AC-119's were sent to investigate. They worked with US Army Hawk radar elements and Army helicopter gunships. SHADOW made several runs into the area. The crew saw UFO's of helicopter speed and altitude, but couldn't



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identify or intercept them. When the unidentified flights stopped the matter was left unresolved.

Initially, the SHADOWS had joined the AC-47, SPOOKY. Together, they protected outposts, special forces camps, district towns, and other fixed military positions. The SPOOKY patrol became the SPOOKY/SHADOW patrol. The ground commanders even interchanged the call signs. But nobody cared. That steady stream of 7.62mm tracers spoke a common language. The first two 119's defended 1,296 positions during the first three months of 1969. Not one was overrun. That record helped build the great morale of the 17th Special Operations Squadron. Results and morale fed on one other. There was a snowballing affect.

#### SHADOW and the Army

Cooperation between SHADOW crews and the ground units steadily improved. Controlling agencies and allied troops soon recognized the capability of the gunship. Units in distress mastered the "SHADOW" call sign real fast. And so did the Direct Air Support Centers.

7 June 1969--fire support base "CROOK."

As the night moves in on a fire base  
And the rain starts to fall,  
Here stand many sentries, these men  
Are the bravest of all.  
First they pick up movement, then  
The bullets start to crack.  
Now the soldier is ready for  
The main attack.  
Although the enemy are all around  
These fighting men hold their ground.

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Gunships are called up to their aid.  
The enemy know the mistake they've made.  
The battle is over, they're on the run.  
For these brave men, a job well done.  
But they all know they'll be back again  
And these brave men will fight to win.

Sgt Bobby Jones  
HHB 2/20th Arty  
Republic of Vietnam

Fire base CROOK nestled in Tay Ninh Province near an enemy infiltration route. Captain Larry B. Thomas of the 22nd Infantry, Bravo Company, was the Commander. The night was corrosive -- hot and sticky. Too heavy for mosquitoes.

Suddenly, Charlie was on the perimeter. III Corps DASC echoed the distress call. SHADOW powered into a good pylon orbit. Clearance to fire. The pilot opened with rapid fire, rocked the wings just a bit and worked the rudders to cover the area. The VC faced a solid sheet to lead but they had pride and charged time after time. Eventually they fell back, bloodied bad with 323 killed, no one knows how many wounded. VC prisoners were awestruck by the firepower.

Captain Thomas wrote to the SHADOW outfit, saying thanks from Company B. That made the men feel ten feet tall. When a fellow GI was in trouble, flight crews pulled out all the stops, made them feel good.

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COMPANY B  
3D BATTALION 22ND INFANTRY  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96385

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17 June 1969

SHADOW,

We in the Infantry usually complain about the support we receive; however, we know this criticism isn't necessarily justified. The perfect example of this is the tremendous support we received in the "Battle of Crook," the sixth and seventh of June 1969.

Due to your outstanding performance, extremely accurate firepower and professionalism, a determined enemy force was turned back time after time. The staggering losses suffered by the enemy and minimal amount of injury upon our own men was due to the direct result of your efficiency and effectiveness.

We of Bravo Company wish to thank you for your support. If there are any questions concerning awards on your personnel who participated, contact me at Tay Ninh.

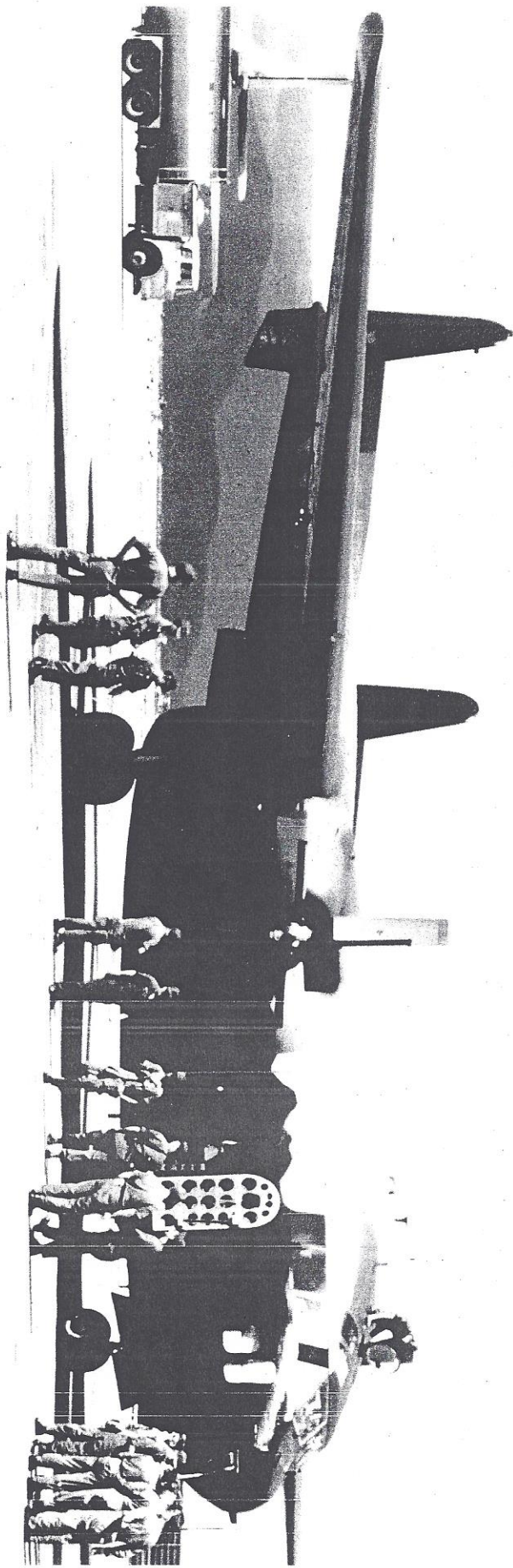
Larry B. Thomas  
Captain, Infantry  
Commanding

The role of the AC-119 gunship in close air support for the US Army was of great concern. To enhance this capability, the Air Force added a variety of special sensors. Included, was a UHF homing and ranging device on the SHADOW and an X-band transponder tracking radar on the AC-119K's.

Visits were arranged between gunship crewmembers and US Army unit commanders. These informal sessions sought to strengthen perspectives and pinpoint requirements for effective operations. Crewmembers of the 17th Special Operations Squadron at Tan Son Nhut AB visited the Americal Division in the last quarter of 1969. A written guide for aiding Army commanders on gunship employment techniques grew out of these exchange visits.



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SHADOW 77

It was 19 August 1969. SHADOW was on alert, mission No. 4038. 0315 hours--77 was scrambled. Engines coughed to life and the mags checked good. The black bird lifted into the night and headed toward the target. Everything in the machine vibrated, worse than a corn blower in August. We wondered at the decibel level of noise. It was tough on the ears and made the mission duration deceptively long. But what the heli. In this business, if noise wasn't the problem, something else was. And the aircraft radios--the continuous diatribe on them put any auctioneer to shame.

SKILLED TRENCH BRAVO of the U.S. Army was taking enemy mortars. His location was 2 miles northwest of Moc Hoa, 3 miles from the Cambodian border. The target was given to the crew by the Direct Air Support Center. They used the universal grid system as they read, "WS 980956."

Assistance was urgently needed. Five U.S. advisers were on station. Two were killed by direct hits on their building. Dust and debris was everywhere. The weather, sticky and muggy. A GI feverishly worked the radio. He was wounded with blood caked on on his left arm. Red and yellow, it resembled a Vietnamese flag.

The radio crackled. SHADOW 77 was on station at 0318, cleared to fire. Six enemy positions opened fire. They trained automatic weapons on the sluggish SHADOW. Two of the six were fortified.

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0334 hours. Seventy-seven took her first hit. The enemy had lost interest in SKILLED TRENCH BRAVO. The nasty night bird had to be killed. Tracers passed abeam off the right wing. She continued to circle, firing on every pass. Death to the Communists. The crew was frenzied. One of the gunners pulled out his personal .38 and fired a few shots through the gunport. Insanity. The guns at WS 982963 and WS 975962 were silenced.

The cockpit was hectic. It was dark as hell. The pilot maneuvered to evade ground fire. SSgt Benzi, the illuminator operator, took a deep cut in the index finger of his left hand. The edges of those flare cans were mean.

Seventy-seven called in the active gun positions to IV DASC for fighter strikes. She remained on station for MEDEVAC and flare illumination. Spat 04 and a VNAF flare ship arrived in the area to aid in air strikes.

Ground fire again. This time it was from WS 981973. SHADOW poured in a few bursts on high rate. Silence at 0530.

0550. The dead and wounded were evacuated from SKILLED TRENCH BRAVO. Army reinforcements came in by chopper. The gunship returned to base.

Benzi needed six stitches in his finger. The crew hit the party hooch for beer until noon. The mission was "reflown" and critiqued three times.

SHADOW 76

Major Boschian commanded SHADOW 76 on the night of 3 September 1969. "The Quarterhorse" unit of the U.S. Army



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was in trouble. The 1st Squadron of the 4th Cavalry could vouch for that. Headquarters and Bravo Troops were garrisoned at Thunder I near Nha Trang.

Lights appeared near the perimeter fence. The sensors began to indicate heavy movement on three sides. Friendly snipers located and killed one Vietcong in the woodline to the south. Thunder I was under attack. Powder smoke was everywhere. Not a breath of air, and there was a persistent low bank of fog.

Lieutenant Colonel John T. Murchison, Jr., was calm. He liked the Army, Armor, and Vietnam. This was his type of war. Those that didn't believe in it could get the hell out. But even Murchison needed help on the 3rd.

*What did they call that sorry flying boxcar? It wasn't much faster than a tank, and had a lot less punch.*

SHADOW rolled in over Murchinson's marauders. It was time to get the respect of these "grunts." But 76 had problems. The fog and smoke were in Charlie's favor.

Then a break, and the sensor operator got a fix on the perimeter. The guns whined at high rate. Ground spotters adjusted for accuracy. Deadly. . .right on the fence. Siege, smoke, fog, and spirits all lifted around midnight. And the war was shorter by one more goddam day.

Colonel Murchison wrote:

There is no doubt in my mind  
that SHADOW 76's magnificent crew  
was instrumental in stopping

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enemy action against Thunder I on 3 September 1969. The men of the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, commend the men of "SHADOW 76" and look forward to operating with them in the future.

Army field units showed their appreciation in many ways. Regardless of method, they all had a profound meaning to us. One of the more common gifts of gratitude was captured enemy weapons. We mounted and displayed three of the best in the SHADOW Operations building: a Soviet 7.62mm light machinegun, RPD, a Soviet 7.62mm assault rifle, AK-47, and a Soviet antitank grenade launcher, RPG2, VC B-40.

One problem--they were unauthorized. We had mounted them with quick disconnects to the plaques. This gave us the option of rapidly storing them in the minigun shop if the 7th AF Inspector General arrived.

Funny thing about the minigun shop at Tan Son Nhut-- it too was unauthorized. I found that out when I attempted to get a phone installed in it. Someone had constructed it <sup>for</sup> ~~and~~ Lord knows what. And without the approval of Civil Engineers. It appeared nowhere on their official engineering drawings. Yet, in it we repaired the miniguns for 15 aircraft. GI ingenuity was tough to beat.

But, back to the phone. I just ordered one for the main operations building with a mighty long extension.

SHADOW Calling Cards

Psyops refers to psychological operations. It consisted of means short of combat designed to convince the enemy to join the friendly side. It's rather unusual how the AC-119 got into the psyops business. It wasn't planned that way. Certain weapons or strikes were tremendously feared by Charlie. A good one for instance, was the B-52 Arc Lite strikes. They were awesome--craters pockmarked enemy hideouts. They make shambles of underground tunnels. Charlie was never sure just where the massive iron would impact. We nearly flew through one of those strikes at night. No wonder Charlie was psychologically hung up on them! His life was continuously threatened. Similarly, the AC-119 gave the enemy fits. The SHADOW could put four guns on high rate, and rock the wings. It would cover an area the size of a football field in six seconds. Enough coverage to deny easy camouflage, or unlimited movement. Charlie couldn't expose his backside or fight in the open. From the ground, the tracers looked like a solid sheet of steel coming at you. And an accomplished pilot was accurate to within 25 to 50 meters.

Against the night sky, the gunship was tough to hit. Charlie repeatedly miscalculated the lead angle. He had a tendency to lead the craft too much, and to the outside. But he'd see that curtain of tracers spewing earthward at him-- his respect grew, and so did the story. He called them "dragonships."



Since the enemy had such a healthy fear of the machine, might as well leave a calling card for psychological purposes. One bird was assigned duty to distribute the leaflets. The propaganda was dropped from the flare hatch after a successful attack. Hopefully, it encouraged survivors to convert to the friendly side. This particular card was made up for the "K" model of the AC-119.

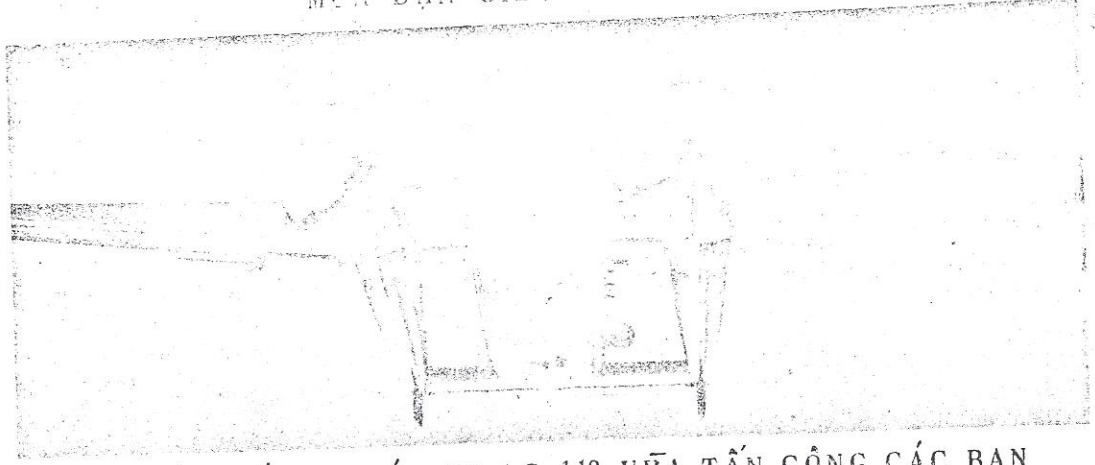
Frontside of the card: Title--"Rain of Death." Underneath the aircraft picture was the caption--"Here is the AC-119 gunship that just attacked you." Then on the back:

Men in the Communist ranks, you were just attacked by the AC-119 gunship. This gunship is equipped with two 20mm cannons and four 7.62 miniguns. Each has a rate of 6,000 rounds per minute, meaning that it can fire six rounds into each square meter of your area in a few seconds. The aircraft can carry great quantities of ammunition, enough to saturate its target. Moreover, the AC-119 is equipped with modern electronic devices to determine your positions, your hideouts even at night. We will continue to attack you. Next time, will you escape death? We hope you will make the clearsighted decision to rally to the National Just Cause to bring peace soon to the nation and allow you to escape a dreadful death.

Whether or not this psychological ploy had any affect or not, we never found out. The dead weren't talking and prisoners gave no feedback.

Not to be outdone by psyops, the crew members came up with their own "calling card." The card summarized, in brief, the operations of the AC-119G SHADOW. We took great

MUA ĐẠN GIEO CHẾT CHỚC



ĐÂY LÀ PHÓNG PHÁO CƠ AC-119 VỮA TẤN CÔNG CÁC BẠN

FIGURE II-1

AC-119 Psyops Leaflet (front)

Các bạn cán binh trong hàng ngũ Cộng Sản,  
 Các bạn vừa bị phóng pháo cơ AC-119 tấn công như vũ bão. Loại phóng pháo cơ cận chiến này được trang bị 2 đại bác cỡ 20 ly và 4 tiểu liên cỡ 7.62 ly xạ tốc của mỗi khẩu là 6.000 viên mỗi phút, đủ để bắn 6 viên đạn vào mỗi thước vuông nơi vị trí trú đóng của các bạn, trong giây phút. Phi cơ có thể mang một số lớn đạn được đủ để bắn phá quét sạch mục tiêu. Ngoài ra, phi cơ AC-119 còn được trang bị những dụng cụ điện tử tối tân để khám phá, xác định vị trí nơi các bạn ẩn núp, ngay cả vào ban đêm.

Chúng tôi còn tiếp tục tấn công các bạn. Liệu lượt sau các bạn có thoát khỏi tử thần được không? Mong các bạn nên sáng suốt quyết định ra hồi chánh với chính nghĩa Quốc Gia để sớm đem lại cảnh thanh bình cho đất nước và tránh được cái chết khủng khiếp.

4-47-70

FIGURE II-2

AC-119 Psyops Leaflet (back)

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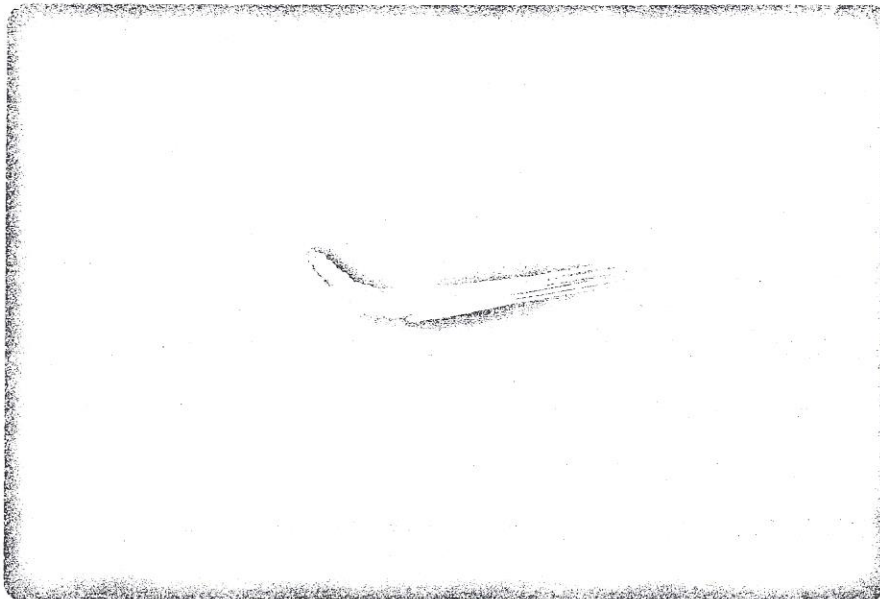


FIGURE II-3

Shadow night tracers

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!"**

FIGURE II-4

Shadow Calling Card

29.2

7.1.3



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pride in leaving the card as a mark of excellence. Never passed up a chance to give them to the FAC's. Cards cropped up all over Tan Son Nhut. So did our painted decals of the "SHADOW." The masked man marked everything from vehicles to quarters. Morale was high as a kite. Everyone on the sprawling base knew SHADOW stories. The 17th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) had grown into a seasoned combat unit.

#### Goodbye 1969

Maintenance was behind the power curve. It was August and four SHADOWS were grounded for battle repairs. On 6 August, one more took .51 caliber hits in the fuselage and one engine. The engine caught fire and extensive damage resulted. Aircraft problems were compounded by corrosion control work, maintenance inspections and disruptions in parts supply. Aircraft had to be sent to Kadena AB, Okinawa, for the work. The 17th SOS requested relief from one mission per night.

The 17th had its first aircraft fatality on 11 October. SHADOW 76 lost an engine and crashed on takeoff from Tan Son Nhut AB.

Another SHADOW sustained severe damage on 10 November when its right gear collapsed on landing at Chu Lai AB. So the old machine had a few chinks in its armor. Not critical or impossible to fix, but they got our attention.

Enemy activity declined --the weather worsened, and there was a drop in squadron sortie rate. Less time was

spent looking for Charlie. It became more of a "combat  
air patrol" operation--protecting the friendlies. By mid-  
December most of the problems had eased. The squadron pos-  
ture strengthened and the 17th prepared for the new year.

CHAPTER III

CAMP DEFENSE

1970 ushered in the second year of SHADOW operations. Enemy action had slowed in South Vietnam. So several missions were directed to border areas that had lucrative interdiction targets. Specific strike zones called "Shadow Boxes" were designated for armed reconnaissance. Intelligence set the priority, and a box would be assigned a line number for the night sortie. Enroute, the navigator secured artillery ("arty") clearances. These approved routes often dictated a roundabout approach to the target.

To permit SHADOW a direct response to troops-in-contact with the enemy, a request for artillery "shutdown" was made. The pilots commonly flew a TACAN radial to a prominent landmark in the box. The night sensor operator would lock on to the landmark for reference, and the crew dropped a MK-6 ground marker for positive positioning. The pilot then eased to firing altitude and took up a search pattern.

The crewmembers put in hours of detailed study on these SHADOW boxes. Before they got airborne, they were intimately familiar with all roads and trails. Crews were expected to reconnoiter any new parallel routes.

As the year wore on, Charlie became more aggressive. The waiting game was over. He overtly probed hamlets,



special forces camps, and military installations. His logistics pipeline was a beehive of activity. The AC-119's called in to help out. We worked extensively with U.S. Special Forces from Da Nang to the Delta. The story of gunships grew. It wasn't unusual to have the ground commander demand our presence in preference to other airpower options. We could loiter for hours and keep Charlie down. The besieged could eat, sleep and relax in some degree of safety.

And we could put tracers right on the edge of the bunkers inside the perimeter. Not advisable, but the request was granted on more than one bloody skirmish. Along toward April, we were giving the camps top priority. The VC 's were on the offensive.

I might add one thought. We had gained the grudging respect of the fighter jocks and the FAC's. The 17th crews went looking for trouble, and thrived on it. They'd risk lives for a Cambodian or Vietnamese. An American on the ground was something special. I couldn't believe it myself. If a GI's life was a stake, the crews would virtually lapse into a frenzy. They'd go through hell and back to save one grunt. It made your spine creep. The ~~the~~ rescue choppers made the gunships look like pikers. We saw them repeatedly descend into waves of enemy crossfire and zero visibility to pull out the wounded. Unbelievable--made me choke up.

It gave me a new perspective of man--one not easily forgotten.

Dak Pek, Hanging in There

If the SHADOWS had to isolate their proudest moments, one of them would be the defense of Dak Pek. The Civilian Defense Group (CIDG) had a special forces contingent there.

15 April 1970. Dak Pek is 75 miles southwest of Da Nang and seven miles from Laos. It overlooked a significant communist supply route.

It was afternoon--and sultry hot in the bunker atop the American Hill. A U.S. Special Forces sergeant dropped an 81mm shell into a mortar and hollered, "Hanging one round."

It was bad. The defenders needed more than mortars to hang in against the enemy. CIDG troops used machineguns and hand grenades. SHADOWS poured in curtains of tracers. Fighter bombers pounded the hills with 750 pound bombs.

Despite bombs, bullets and mortars, the Reds were tough. They fought head on and didn't flinch. Machinegun fire, AK-47's, 122mm rockets, recoilless rifle and tear gas. Over 200 assorted rounds pounded the hapless camp daily.

Communist sappers nearly destroyed a highly fortified U. S. Special Forces bunker complex. One hill was taken by the North Vietnamese Army, held for 2 1/2 days, then recaptured by the ARVN.

There are a dozen hills at Dak Pek. One of them is called the U.S. or American Hill. It was hit by Charlie at 2 a.m. on Sunday the 12th.

The men were bearded, patched and weary. One of them was the Vietnamese camp commander of the CIDG troops, the other an American Special Forces advisor.

The sappers came up through the wire from the north-east. Before any warning was sounded, they were blowing bunkers with powerful satchel charges. The main U.S. bunker crumbled in a flaming pile of concrete. One U.S. advisor was temporarily trapped inside. A guard, a CIDG soldier, and the soldier's wife were killed. For 30 minutes, U.S. Green Berets held only one circular mortar pit. They escaped through bunker tunnels. The enemy had them, and blew it. They blew it, partly, within 10 minutes after the 30-odd sappers hit the hill. One of the enemy stood and hauled the Vietcong flag halfway up a pole in a symbolic climax.

Sgt First Class Thomas Weeks raised his M-16 above the bunker and fired. The red dropped. Trenches were flaming and there was in-fighting on the hill. Enemy tear gas was heavy. Allied troops wore gas masks. A VC jumped in the mortar pit and flung a satchel charge at Weeks. It blew Weeks back into the tunnel--he came out fighting. Comrades followed.

CIDG security leader, Dang Van Ban, led his group up the back side of American Hill. Together, the friendlies held. Thirty sappers were killed.

Hill 203--not so good. The VC tied up the Vietnamese company commander. They cut his head off, killed his wife



and children. The communists "had inside help."

Lieutenant Nguyen Quy Dinh knew something was wrong. He couldn't raise his commander on the radio.

The enemy struck and burned villages surrounding the camp. The civilians made for a district compound south of the camp. Sunday morning. Airstrikes were called in on Hill 203 and on villages that could be cleared by bombing. 750 pounders carpeted the friendly perimeter.

Sunday afternoon. Preparations to take Hill 203. Assaults were made up the steep face of the hill squarely into the face of the enemy. Bloody. Unadulterated trench warfare--5 assaults across a saddle and into the fire. What good had those goddam fighter strikes done?

Sunday's assault--Civilian Irregular Defense Group troops, mobile strike force reinforcements, U. S. and Vietnamese Special Forces were unable to take the hill. CIDG forces were really spooked. They were trained as jungle fighters. Direct assaulting was a new ball game. They needed a victory. And they needed it now.

Monday. More bombs and napalm on Hill 203. No good. The enemy took an outpost near the hill. Enough of this, bring in the gunships. Operating out of Phan Rang and Tuy Hoa, the 17th Special Operations Squadron doubled their sortie rate. They put a bird continuously over Dak Pek. Beleaguered friendly forces gained a toehold.

Tuesday. Direct enemy fire was taken from both the hill and the outpost. Forces--American, CIDG, mobile strike and Vietnamese went through two wire gates under enemy fire. It appeared to be a deadly suicide mission. But then gunship cover arrived, and the grunts made three bloody rushes. They took the hill and outpost. Search and destroy -- from bunker to bunker lobbing in hand grenades, then hit the ground. Thirty-one enemy dead. Eight AK-47's, four B-40 rockets, satchel charges and bangalore torpedoes were captured. The camp's integrity was restored.

And the war was over by one more miserable, stinking, lousy hill. And who the hell cares, now that they gained the high ground? The sniping, firefights, and probes continue. There's an estimated two enemy battalions in the ridges and valleys around Dak Pek. To American Special Forces troops, Dak Pek is a "damn difficult camp." War is not nice. . . it's ugly.

Wednesday night --waiting for Charlie at Dak Pek. The flares and moon silhouetted the complex of fortified hills. In the command bunker there was only a flickering candle. Next to the candle was an ashtray full of butts. Sgt Doug Hull was a Green Beret advisor. He hunched over a radio. The only personal belongings Hull had left were his boots, undershorts, and trousers. The rest he burned or buried in the enemy sapper attack on Sunday.

Incoming rounds hit regularly, 20 meters away. Last night a 122mm rocket hit just outside the door. Still, this was what Hull wanted to do. He was tough. Doug wanted to practice his profession with soldiers he respected and civilians he loved.

Sgt Charles Young, 21, was lying on the concrete floor. He nursed his wounded foot and tried to get some sleep. Three days ago, when he was in the main U.S. bunker, he got a rude awakening. A sachel charge blew the bunker in on top of him. "I felt like a rat in a trap."

His buddies dug him out. Four nights later they were still prying open the trap. Green Beret, Captain Gordon Strickler sat atop a bunker in the moonlight. The air had cooled. He briefed the battle plan. He could barely see the other hills. In the black silence came the hushed nervous voice of a GI over the radio. It was from a hill to the west. "It's quiet out here -- too quiet. . . ."

Yes, too quiet. The breather in war is always an uneasy one. It's borrowed time. Things will be worse. A plane droned toward Hill 203. Streams of red tracers. Then the sound of the guns -- an eerie, brittle screech echoed across the valley. The soldier stammered, "Too close, SHADOW."

The controller growled, "100 meters." The radio man was Lieutenant Don Andrews. He had a bandage on his head --



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claimed he'd stuck his ear in a fan. His map, marked and numbered, was his pants. That afternoon, Sgt Tom Weeks had called the numbers out to Andrews. He wrote them on the most available place. "MY PANTS ARE LIKE A DAMNED SECRET DOCUMENT."

Apparently the document was good. The fire was accurate, "Looking good. Looking real good."

In the Dak Pek camp, a Civilian Irregular Defense Group fighter named A Jong was making the round of his platoon. He had led the successful charge up Hill 203. They called Jong "the camp hero." He was put in for a U.S. Silver Star.

"Tonight," Jong said, "I want the VC to come, and I wait."

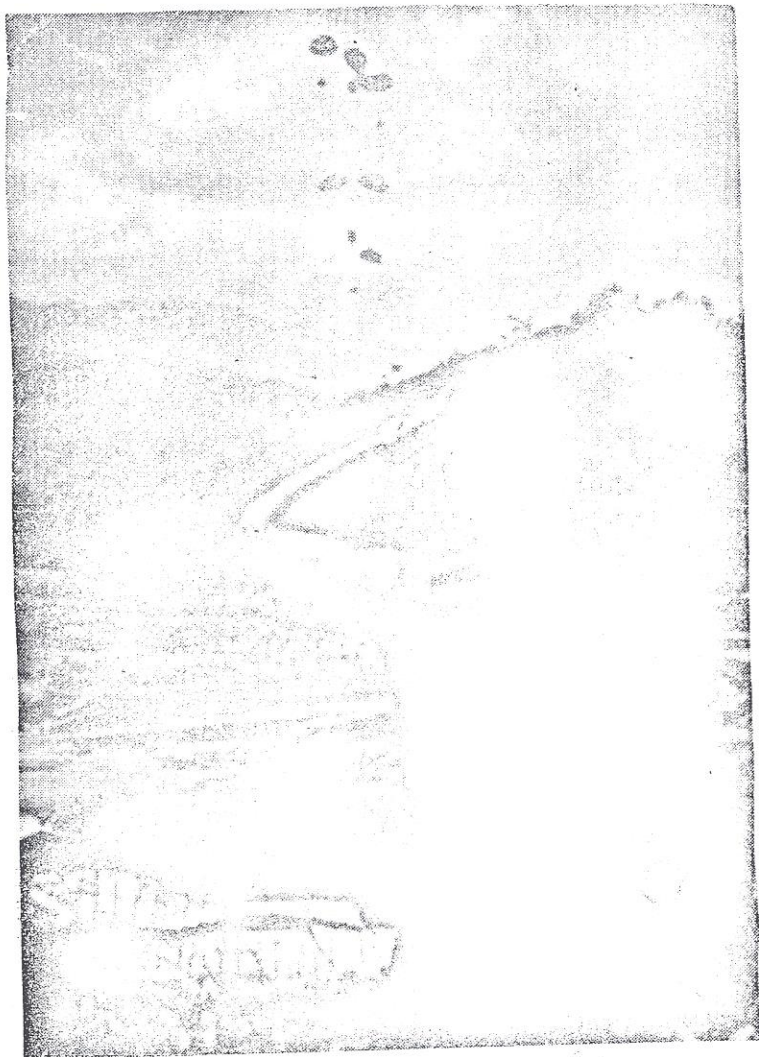
But only the aggressive or the stupid wish the VC to return. Smell the ghost of his last visit -- the stench of rotting bodies still on the ground. When the VC return, people at Dak Pek die. Hyenas in the night. That is the unforgettable fact of Dak Pek.

A Matter of Record. With the siege of the Dak Pek and Dak Seang Special Forces camps beginning on 1 April 1970, AC-119 gunships displayed their unique capability of providing continuous air cover during the hours of darkness. This is particularly noteworthy, since the movement of the Tuy Hoa location to Phu Cat was accomplished in the same time frame. During this action, a SHADOW aircraft pioneered the

tactic of night aerial resupply using the gunship's illuminator to mark the drop zone and provide fire support. Prior to the development of these tactics, 3 Caribou airlift aircraft had been lost to hostile ground fire. The gunship would orbit the posts and provide fire support until the Caribou reached the initial point for its drop. At that instant the gunship turned on the illuminator. The cargo away -- and upon signal from the C-7A, SHADOW switched off the white light and the Caribou escaped in the darkness. The tactic worked in a total of 68 drops from 6 April to 1 May without a Caribou being hit. The commander of the resupply aircraft organization sent a letter of thanks to the gunships for their efforts in protecting his crews and aircraft. During the first ten days of the siege, SHADOW aircraft compiled 73 hours on station. In that time, they expended 817,000 rounds of ammunition and dropped 440 flares. On many occasions, as the sun rose, the last 119 was still overhead. The crew was greeted with comments from the ground. "Beautiful, just beautiful."

They continued to orbit -- they did their job, until the siege was broken, 22 May 1970. Yes, Andrews and Weeks -- the SHADOWS respect you too.

FIGURE III-1  
SUPPLIES TO DAK PEK



**Supplies—Drop Everything**

Supplies are parachuted into the Dak Pek Special Forces camp where U.S. troops and Civilian Irregular Defense Group soldiers are defending against North Vietnamese attacks. The Laotian border outpost and the neighboring outpost of Dak Seang are surrounded by the Communists. (UPI)



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TABLE III-1

DAK PEK SHADOW SUPPORT

13 April 1970

|            |           |                          |
|------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| SHADOW 48  | 1925-2230 | 31,000 rounds, 16 flares |
| SHADOW 61  | 2150-2400 | 11,000 rounds, 18 flares |
| SHADOW 46  | 0010-0255 | 31,000 rounds, 14 flares |
| *SHADOW 48 | 0255-0445 | 16,000 rounds, 6 flares  |
| SHADOW 62  | 0445-0625 | 34,500 rounds, 18 flares |

\*Also expended at Dak Seang on the same sortie.

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CHAPTER IV

AIRMEN IN JEOPARDY

8 May 1970

The SHADOW usually flew in a non-threat environment. By that I mean there was little chance of one getting knocked out of the sky -- no fighters, no surface-to-air missiles, no big guns. The biggest danger was losing an engine on takeoff. So there was a fundamental lack of heroism in the usual context. No glamor of air-to-air combat. No MIG aces. We didn't ride any into the teeth of the enemy or bail out over the South China Sea. And they didn't fly fast. They were ugly -- looked like pregnant guppies.

But we had our own aces. They flew the beast on one engine and overgrossed. They sweated out bad mags, spark advance, and hydraulic problems. The craft was very unforgiving. . . she could turn on you in a minute. No crash landing capability. It would break up on impact. Tough to fly. In her better moods, you could forgive all that.

Just ask Captain Milacek of Waukomis, Oklahoma. Alan and his crew were over Ban Ban, Laos. They reconnoitered a heavily defended road section -- found two trucks and rolled in on target. Captain Ron Jones locked on them with his sensor. Steady in attack orbit. Six enemy positions opened up with a barrage of AA fire. The copilot barked

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instructions to the fighter escort. O'Brien was from Monroeville, PA. He could be as abrasive as coal dust. The gunship pressed the attack as the F-4's drilled the enemy.

Another truck exploded. Then near disaster. Charlie must be a "7 level" -- a gunner with top expertise. Enemy rounds tore a gaping hole in the aged bird's right wing. Captain Clancy, the navigator, noted the time -- 0100 hours.

The machine swung violently out of its left turn into a 60 degree right bank. And nosed over in a sickening dive. Milacek called "Mayday, Mayday, we're going in."

Orders were shouted to jettison the flare launcher to reduce weight. SSgt Lopez responded, "launcher away."

Captain Milacek directed the entire crew to prepare for instant bailout. The wounded beast lost a thousand feet within seconds. Milacek and O'Brien hosed back on the stick. They pulled the hapless craft from its death dive. The night was dastardly black. No way to assess damage. The pilots threw in full left rudder, full left aileron, and max power to the right engine. Stabilized flight! Thank God. The crippled machine headed for friendly territory.

Clancy gave Milacek a heading direct to homeplate. One problem. The stricken night bird was too low to clear the next range of mountains. It was even too low to pick



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up the TACAN reading for navigation. The F-4 escorts nursed the gunship homeward. Milacek made a tough decision. Clear the decks. Dump all loose gear to lighten the aircraft. Firewall the throttle. The stubborn battlewagon inched its way to 10,000 feet. Terrain cleared.

Not home free. Not yet. The flight engineer was sweating. TSgt Nash rechecked his figures. Dry tanks 30 miles short of home base. Damn. What next? No autopilot. Milacek could bailout the crew. But he'd have to ride it in. No. There had to be a better way.

The high terrain was cleared and power pulled off. The Captain eased the ship into a gradual descent. Airspeed increased and the fuel rate dropped off. The crew stood by for controlled bailout.

In came the additional escorts -- the Jolly Green rescue helicopters. Bless their hearts. And dark as pitch. You just couldn't beat rescue. I swear, they had more balls than the rest of the jocks together. Another fuel reading. Best estimate now -- 600 pounds of gas at touchdown.

Milacek checked his controls. Full left rudder and aileron would do it. Tower notified and emergency standing by. The HH-53 monitored the glide path. Straight in approach -- no turning, no go around. One landing tonight.

Flap damage was uncertain. Milacek would use a noflap landing approach at 150 knots. The approach was extra long --



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really shallow. It took forever. Nothing fancy -- simply superb, professional airmanship.

The aircraft greased in and the right engine was pulled to idle. AC-119 #53-7883 had landed on half a wing and a prayer.

The crew surveyed the jagged right wing. Fourteen feet of the leading edge and seventeen of the trailing edge was shot off. One aileron lost. There was a gaping hole in the hatch and one in the right vent.

Captain Milacek and crew received the Mackay Trophy for "the most meritorious flight of the year." General Ryan, Chief of Staff, presented the trophy, 5 August 1971 during a Pentagon ceremony.

#### SHADOW Operations

20 May 1970. SHADOW Operations, Tan Son Nhut AB. Captain Jose Cachuela had just come on duty. Rod Sizemore left to catch the flightline bus. The time was 2005 hours.

Moments passed. Open the log. Then, broken silence. And it wasn't the UHF radio. Rod screamed through the doorway, "SHADOW 82 just crashed on takeoff -- just off the end of the west runway!"

Bob Bokern was Jose's closest friend. He was on board -- my God. . . . Run the checklist. Call tower. Not a hitch. Dammit, why was everything so impersonally efficient? Buddies were dying.

Dark outside -- pitch black. And sticky hot. Army rescue choppered toward the flaming wreckage. Back to the checklist. Notify the commander. Go through GCI -- Paris. Lieutenant Colonel White was aboard SHADOW 80 in III Corps. Prompt acknowledgment. Notify Headquarters at Phan Rang AB. The DO, Colonel Bruce Brown issues terse instructions. "Notify the safety officer."

Then the lull. Like in most disasters. The adrenalin slows. You feel weak -- even dizzy. Jose wanted to wretch. That song. . . "Cecilia," by Simon and Garfunkel. It drifted in, pulsing louder and louder like a cicada stacatto. Worse than a rain forest. It echoed off the walls, and the gun racks. Jose's head throbbed with the melody. Weird.

Tom Lubbers was the aircraft commander on 82. He lived in the BOQ next to Jose. Every day he turned his stereo on high volume and played "Cecilia" over and over. Tom was a gentleman bachelor and a hell of a fine officer. One of the best pilots in the SHADOWS.

Usually, SHADOW ops was filled with people -- crew members, maintenance, and staff. Even in the night -- after all, this was a night operation. Jose almost swore. No people, no telephones, no word on the crash. Deathly silence, now sacrosanct -- an impossibility at Tan Son Nhut. He glanced at his disaster checklist. It didn't help. Just he and Cecilia, over and over. Couldn't leave his post. Duty



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officer, just a damn desk and telephones. They normally violate all rules of privacy and decency, except now. It could be a morgue.

A phone rang. Jose delayed to clear the grime from his throat. He could vomit. The muggy heat was stifling. Don't they ever fight where it's cold? Sweaty everything. The place stunk. Death has a pungent odor. Friends get killed. It's a new ball game.

"SHADOW Ops, Captain Cachuela."

"Hey, Jose, Bob here! Thank God, Bob was alive. He was in the 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon.

#### The Crash

SHADOW 82 waited for takeoff clearance. The target was a "box" of coordinates in IV Corps. The flight engineer nursed the throttles to keep the engines clean.

Tom Lubbers ran a good crew. He was young but mature, competent, and dedicated. Always thinking of others -- a fine sense of humor. They relaxed and bantered remarks over the interphone. Another mission. The tour would be one day shorter. This crew was over the hump, past the half way mark. In fact, the war had reached a routine stalemate. Almost complacent, they felt South Vietnam would stand. Despite the riots, criticism, and Tet, the combined U.S. RVN effort was certainly paying off.

Bob Bokern, the sensor operator, secured his flight

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lunch and stepped up to the Instructor Navigator (IN) seat. It was not recommended for takeoff or landing. Had to do with safety. Bob wanted to watch the takeoff. He sat down and fastened the skimpy nylon belt. His fireproof Nomex flight suit seemed extra hot.

Trans International landed and tower cleared the black toad for takeoff. The throttles went forward and the mags checked within limits. Taxi to the active was normal and SHADOW 82 accelerated with full power. Funny how the 119 made more noise on takeoff than other planes. With the props in sync, the vibration was felt all the way to the Officer's Club--another bird on schedule.

The armored beast rotated, and clawed its way into the air at max gross weight. Then it happened -- God help them. The one disaster that could defeat the feisty SHADOW. Number 2 engine quit, gear still down. Level off and feather the prop. The good engine whined in desperation, not enough. 82 began to mush in. No time for bailout. Tom had to make a controlled crash. Chances of surviving, none. Nothing was said. No panic. Just professional airmanship. Over one dike, then the grinding touchdown. Bob lurched forward. The seat belt cut into his stomach. Horrified, he saw a dike 50 yards away. The nose hit it and folded under, instantly killing the pilot and copilot. Next, the flight engineer and navigator were sucked under in the debris. Miraculously,



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the craft lunged to a halt in its tangle with death. Then the flames. Bob saw the open sextant mount overhead.

A voice cried, "Please help me."

The heat was unbearable. He had to get out. He wedged himself through the small hole and escaped from the wreckage. A gunner, "Van" had survived in the rear. He escaped from the flare ejector doorway.

Then the choppers -- almost too efficient. Didn't they know airmen were dying in the flames? Leave us alone. Just the dead and almost dead. The heavy smell of death -- worse than nerve gas. Ever notice how people react when they pass traffic fatalities on the highway? Slow down and meditate. Just for a minute. One can afford to go slow for a mile or two. But no more.

Jose was still at the desk when Colonel White landed. SHADOW Ops had started to fill. No one talked. Was it bereavement for the dead or apprehension for the future? You couldn't tell. In either case, it didn't last.

"Gentlemen, press on. We got a war to fight!"

Under the circumstances, it was a godsend that Colonel White said that. We had passed our mile or two. It was time to speed up.

Tom Lubbers

Before Tom was commissioned, he had been a seminarian for eight years. He was characterized by most as the campus clown. He wore rolled-up pajamas and sneakers under his

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cassock to classes. He lured classmates to his dorm room during Grand Silence with the aroma of freshly popped corn. And he sneaked out on occasion for pizza and beer. But he was a very serious student of the priesthood who conscientiously considered his motives for being there.

Ultimately, he decided he didn't belong. He was a volunteer for Vietnam.

Tom spent a lot of time consoling and cheering other airmen. He was one of those "natural" leaders--all 6' 4" of him. Sometimes, though, Tom could be very philosophical about Vietnam. He loathed the war and wanted desperately to leave. He was troubled that the war was unpopular at home. He questioned his motives--but ended up with tremendous compassion for the Vietnamese people. Particularly the children. Never in their lifetimes had they known peace. The slight chance of success for peace he felt, was reason enough to be there.

Death did not augment the image of Tom Lubbers. Everyone knew he was special long before he died. A real man. At his funeral, after the first tears--few people cried. It was impossible. The memories were all happy. Visitors stood around in bunches, talking to Tom, and laughing at their separate thoughts of him.

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His parents wrote to us. Not one of those automatic, demand-response types of social courtesies. Every man in the unit read it--and gained something. I read it. It made me walk tall. I was proud to be a SHADOW.

132 Bayview Drive  
Ferguson, Missouri 63135  
June 20, 1970

The Officers and Men of the 17th SOS  
APO San Francisco 96307

ATTN: Lt Col White, Commanding Officer

Dear Friends:

We wish to thank you for your kind expression of sympathy at the death of our son Tom. The delay in writing has not been because of neglect, but possibly because this is a most difficult letter to write. You knew Tom and we are confident that even in your short acquaintance with him, you knew him as his family and friends at home did. He was a treasure to us, a superbly fine, funny, charitable, and loving person. Time will never fill the great vacancy this death has made in our lives. Many of his friends have written and expressed these same sentiments and they seem to be as overwhelmed as we are by the tragedy.

Perhaps we can take our turn now to offer you the kind of consolation that is helping us live through these times. Tom loathed bitterness and sadness, and his exuberance and joy of living often helped us and others get over other hard times. He had a supply of jokes and antics to get us all through. We are sure he, being the example of selflessness he was, must have offered you this same kind of assistance. Just a week before he died, he wrote the only depressed letter ever received from him. A friend of his from pilot training was killed and Tom seemed to be asking us to help him in his sadness once. Other than that, he never allowed us anxieties over the dangerous positions he and all of you are in. And he made us proud. Many acquaintances have remarked about the necessity of your operations in Vietnam. They mentioned SHADOW Company in particular, and asked us to pass the thanks to Tom. We still receive those comments and now we pass them to you. There is no Tom now and we must help each other.



His death is a tremendous loss, but Tom's life was a tremendous, joy-filled life. And though our memories are tender, they are all wonderful and remarkably lacking in regret for so much as one wasted minute of his life. Thank you for taking the time to remember those of us who wait for you all to return safely. You are all in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,

Lambert & Elvira Lubbers

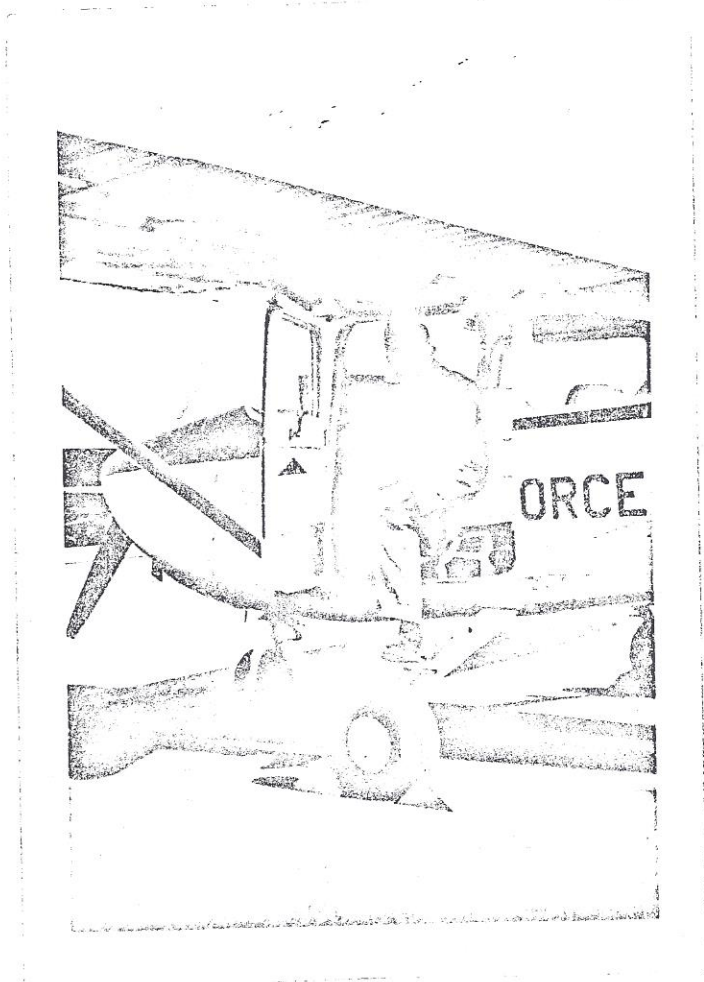


FIGURE IV-1  
Tom Lubbers

In Memory

Seven days passed after the accident of SHADOW 82.

SSgt John A Murdock III was moved to write about his fallen friends: John was a gunner in the 17th Special Operations Squadron.

THE SHADOW MEN

The SHADOW men fly by night  
 In the land of Vietnam.  
 They have many tales to tell  
 Of battles they have won.  
 They fly on night patrols  
 To help the friendlies out,  
 To give them some security  
 With the VC all about.  
 These crews of courageous men  
 Fight the battles long,  
 But not always do these crews come home.  
 Some have made the sacrifice  
 For a reason they believed.  
 The rest of us fight the war  
 So they died not in vain.  
 Where do they go from here?  
 To Heaven I believe.  
 They went there to be with God,  
 To wait for you and me.  
 Walk proud my friends who fly the SHADOW,  
 For a crew went down today.  
 Let us not let them down,  
 For the sacrifice that they made.  
 We'll take them with us in memories  
 For great guys were they all!  
 Now let us go out and fight the battles,  
 And bring an end to wars.

JOHN A MURDOCK III  
SSgt, USAF 28 May 70



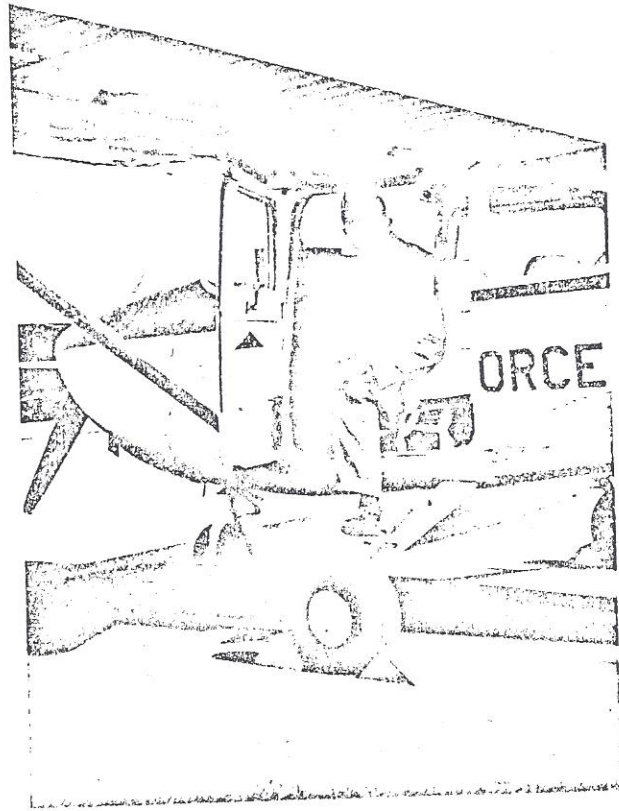


FIGURE IV-1  
Tom Lubbers

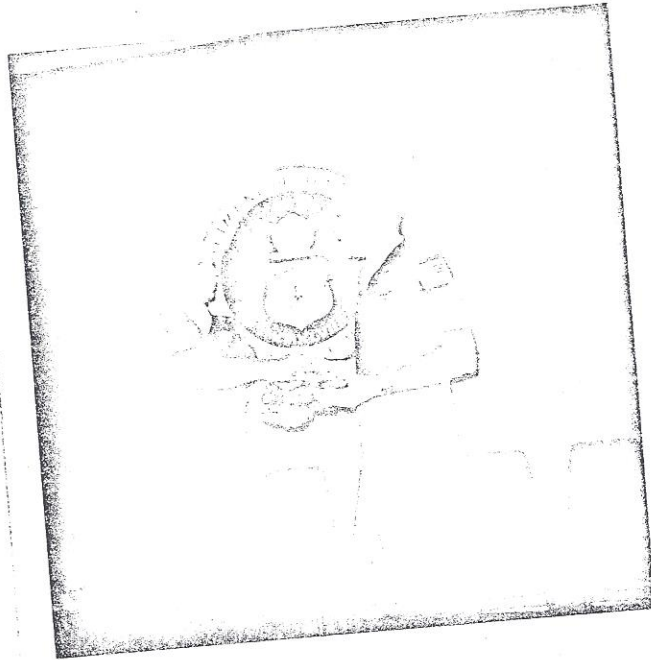


FIGURE IV-2  
Bob Bokern (R) receiving departure "Shadow" plaque from  
Lt Col Tom Teal, Commander, 17th Special Operations  
Squadron, C Flight.

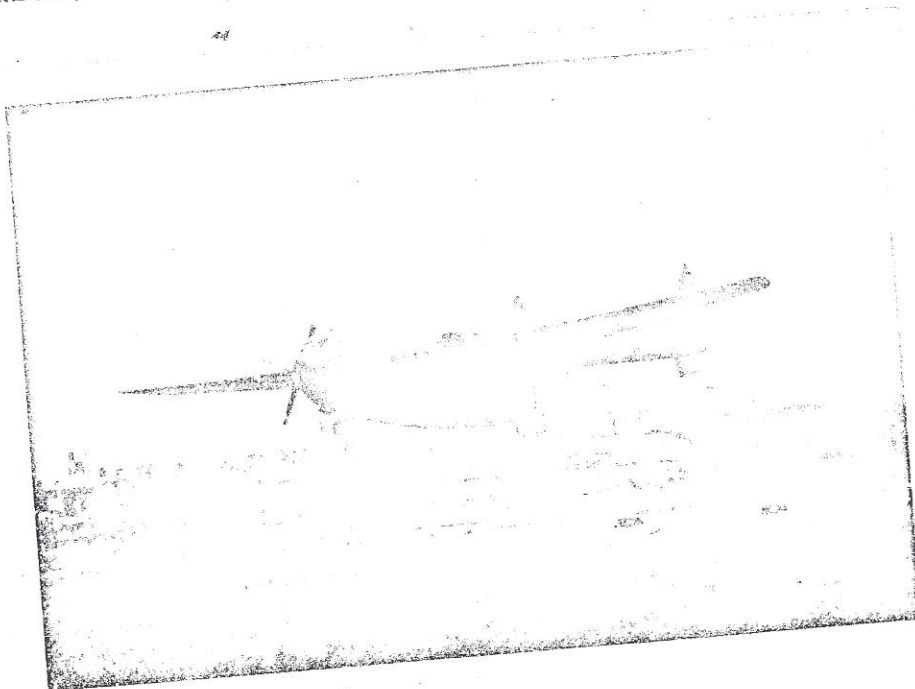


FIGURE IV-3  
Shadow landing on one engine

15 November 1970. Kompang Cham--40 miles to the northwest of Phnom Penh. The city was located in Cambodia at a choke point in the Mekong River as it turned to the west toward the capital. It made an ideal debarkation point for the Communist troops and supplies coming down the river. They could offload and quickly hide in the nearby Chup rubber plantation to the southeast. From there they'd select the best infiltration routes into Military Regions III and IV of Vietnam. Or they could press on down the Mekong to Phnom Penh. Charlie liked it either way. He had a dedicated sampan mission. And we had a healthy respect for the makeshift bamboo watercraft. It was a professional, effective logistics system. Boat after boat--they slyly inched their war downstream by the hundreds. So innocent looking. Women, children, monks. You name it. Sometimes it would take some coaxing and convincing to get a new pilot to fire on one of the "defenseless" pirogues. Until it belched some .51 cal in return--then he got religion real fast. The rules of engagement had experienced somewhat of a traumatic evolution. They now followed logical rationale. It increased the effectiveness of the Shadow, especially on the night sorties. Charlie preferred the nightshift.



Despite determined action by the gunships, interdiction of water traffic had limited success. Just as you'd establish a good patrol or reconnaissance pattern, a TIC priority would divert your sortie. Very exasperating.

SHADOW 83 had taken off at 1230 hours--a day sortie for Major Carter's crew. Rod was a gung-ho bachelor. He liked day sorties, so he could fire manually at the lousy VC. Great sport, watching them jump in the water and swim for the beach. Get 'em before they hit the brush! But the rest of the crew, not so adventuresome. They weren't completely sold on these day flights. The SHADOW was a night bird. Day-anything was an incongruent concept for this machine.

Things happened fast today, as Carter drove in over "Cham." The friendlies were taking heavy mortar fire. Bill Gericke, on the sensor found one of the mortar sites. 82 lurched into pylon orbit and opened fire. Possible trap--four .51 cal sites belched lead at the sluggish guppy. Carter blazed away on high rate. He rocked the wings and kicked in some rudder.

Tracers--no mistake, you could tell by the perfect lead angle. Charlie had himself a bullseye--dead center. No time to gamble. Carter pulled off target to check the damage. The bird had taken two big hits. One impacted at the forward jamb of the NOS door, ricocheted, and exited

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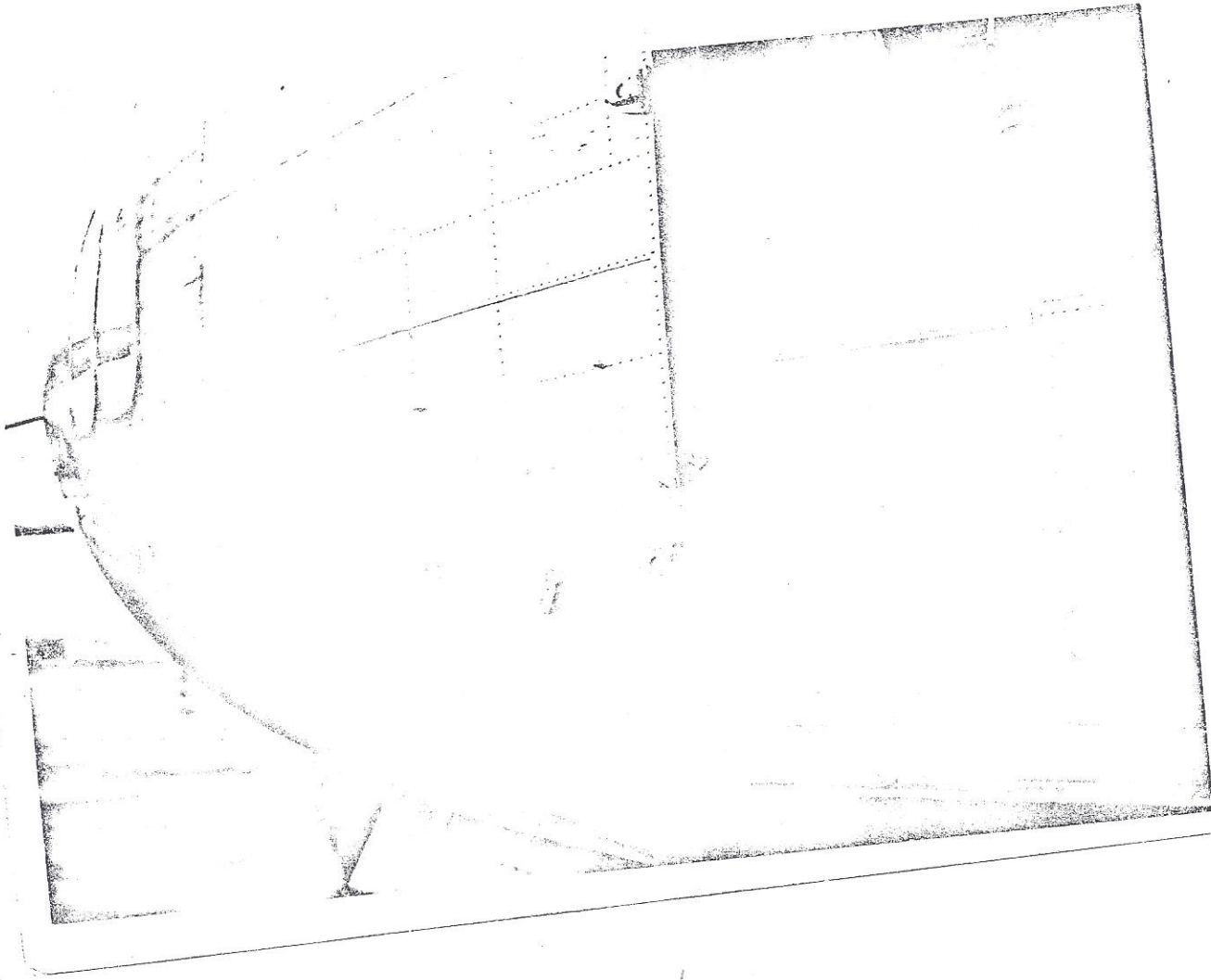


FIGURE IV-4  
Shadow 83 with damaged door jamb from .51 cal fire

53.4

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86.



FIGURE IV-5  
Shadow 83 - 2" hole in fuselage skin, where .51 cal  
projectile exited aircraft.



the fuselage high right. It left a 2" hole. The second hit the right wing on the leading edge near the tip.

Weather was fair, but not what you'd call good. A low fog bank lay over the Mekong. Carter's crew patrolled the Mekong until 1630, then headed for Tan Son Nhut. Quite a day's work.

The surprising aspect of this mission was told later by Major Gericke. He had stepped away from that NOS hatch only moments before the .51 cal slug had torn through it. Probably less than two or three minutes.

## CHAPTER V

## SHADOW IN CAMBODIA

1 May 1970. Thousands of allied soldiers drove into Cambodia 65 miles north of Saigon. This drive included American armored cavalry and foot soldiers. They ramroded their forces toward the Communist headquarters. US and South Vietnamese forces combined for the dual objective: (1) shore up the weak Cambodian army struggling with North Vietnamese units, and (2) destroy the enemy forces and the supplies long cached in numerous border base camps. Nixon administration strategists gambled. They figured these heavily supplied North Vietnamese bases inside Cambodia were critical. A successful offensive against them would cripple Hanoi's war machine for months.

Monsoon rains came soon. Tanks from the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment slogged their way westward. They crashed through dense jungles--crushed enemy troops in bunkers and trench lines.

A Vietnamese tank column thundered north up Route 1 to meet Cambodian troops at the town of Svay Rieng. By agreement, the ARVN stopped at the edge of town. Fifty-five miles west-northwest of Saigon, in the Parrot's Beak Area, the ARVN met stiff resistance. Two ARVN armored

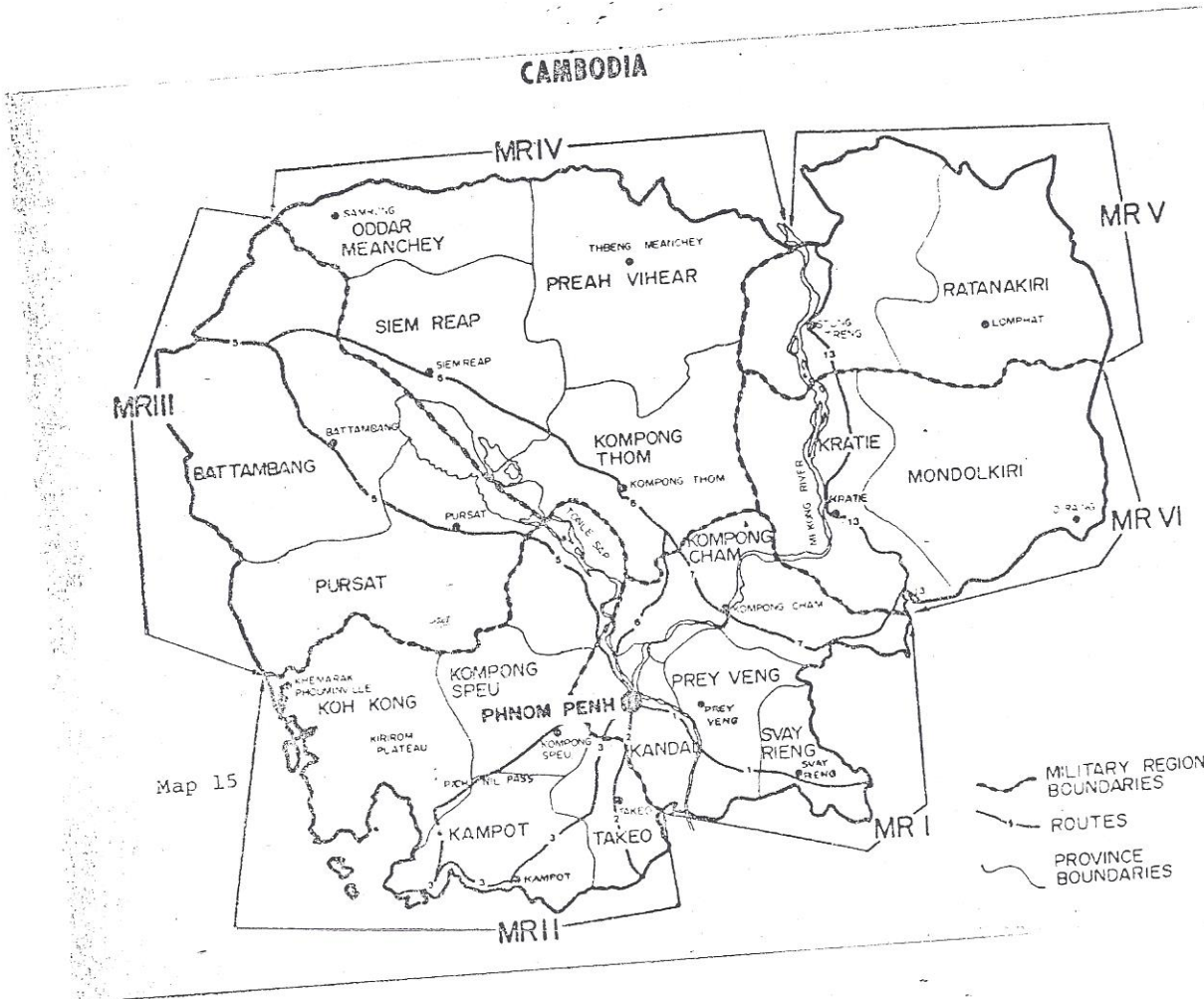


FIGURE V-2  
Map of Cambodia



columns and foot soldiers engaged North Vietnamese Army units and Vietcong.

The Cambodian invasion had been anticipated for US commanders. Gunships were shifted to Tan Son Nhut and Phan Rang from other bases. The force at Tan Son Nhut grew to 15 AC-119s and remained such for the duration of the Cambodian campaign.

The whole operation was a shot in the arm for the South Vietnamese forces. Tan Son Nhut was a beehive of activity. Morale went sky high. The Shadow Operations building became an armed command post for the crews. We got a good UHF radio from the US Army. Traded two M-16 rifles for it. Company frequency selected was Channel 69. Crews called in their status over this radio as they crossed the "fence"--Cambodian border. Maintenance operations were hectic. Imagine going from five birds to fifteen, with limited space and a premium of qualified personnel. French-speaking interpreters were brought in. They came from all over--Phu Cat, Ban Me Thuot East, you name it. These men were a dedicated sort. No flight pay, no air medals, just personal satisfaction. SSgt Pommerelle was a Security policeman from Phu Cat. He volunteered to fly as often as the schedule permitted.

SHADOW sorties clawed their way into the sticky air every three hours--around the clock. Out the 310° VOR

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radial from Saigon to the "dog face," direct Kompong Cham. The "dog face" was that portion of the Vietnam-Cambodian border shaped like a dog's head. It was located 30 miles northwest of Tay Ninh. References such as "dog face", "fish hook", and "parrot's beak" were frequently used in air traffic nomenclature to expedite actions of the clearing authority.

In the battle for the "Fish Hook" area, alone, the Air Force flew 172 sorties. The Shadows had their share. The operation was a solid success--quick and decisive. Things were looking up. Charlie's logistics pipeline was broken.

The Air Force gave first mission priority to support of troops in contact (TICs). Next, was convoy escort and armed reconnaissance. On many occasions, the Shadows supported friendly units under night attack. Assaults were frequently broken when the gunship appeared overhead. The Cambodian radio controllers soon learned the names "SHADOW," "RUSTIC," "SPIKE," and other similar "call" signs. From Kompong Cham to Siem Reap, from Kratie to Kompong Som (Sihanoukville), the "Hotel" voice wanted help. "HOTEL" was the call sign of the Cambodian controllers. He was most assuredly a friend in need.

We never got accurate data on enemy dead. The offensive was too fluid. Furthermore, the friendly forces

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were reluctant to sweep battle areas before daylight. By then, the enemy had disposed of the killed or wounded.

At first, we had some problem with artillery clearances. It was a sporty course from Tan Son Nhut to the "fence". And frequently meant costly time delays. Then, we got with the Army and resolved the situation. Artillery clearances were granted to the Cambodian border prior to takeoff.

Cambodia occupies a strategic position in Indochina. It was a frontier with South Vietnam, across which NVA/Vietcong forces could withdraw when pressed. Its frontier with Laos connects to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. And its port on the Gulf of Thailand (Kompong Som) offers an alternative supply route into South Vietnam.

Air activity over Cambodia had been sporadic at best until the invasion of April 1970. It was confined to the regions near the South Vietnamese frontier. After that date, ground fighting was heavy and continuous. US air power flew in direct support of Cambodian and South Vietnamese soldiers. And they flew interdiction raids against communist base areas in the northeast. The intensive deployment of air power clearly conferred local tactical advantages to the South Vietnamese military regions. But it did not seem to stabilize the overall military situation. In December 1971, 80 percent of Cambodia was under communist control.

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Area of Operation

The 119s concentrated their firepower within a 60 mile radius of Kompang Cham ("Cham"), strategically located 41 miles northeast of the capital, Phnom Penh. Numerous sorties extended from "Cham" along Route 6 to Kampong Thom, and Route 7 to Skon. Occasionally, Route 5 south from Kampong Chhnang, and Route 4 west from Phnom Penh were the subject of concentrated enemy interest. The plan of the Reds was simple: Strangle the Cambodian capital and ship supplies and men to South Vietnam.

Armed reconnaissance missions in Cambodia zeroed in on river sampans and trucks. The SHADOW was in for a rough time when Charlie armored his bamboo fleet. Not to be outdone, we got 7.62 armor-piercing incendiaries from the US Army. It gave the SHADOW limited capability against vehicles and watercraft. Additionally, the impact sparkle of the rounds helped the pilot gauge his firing accuracy.

From 5 May to 30 June 1970, the '119 gunships flew 178 sorties, fired 1,412,028 rounds, and dropped 1,463 flarés. With this preponderance of air support the US ground operations closed. But Shadow stayed--and stayed. The black bird covered for Vietnamese and Cambodians. We blanketed the country with tracers. Sortie after

sortie, day and night. Fortunately, Cambodian air was lightly defended. Small caliber enemy fire put several holes in the AC-119s, but couldn't down any. This gave the crewmembers the necessary confidence which eliminated the normal worry associated with day missions.

In the latter half of 1970, SHADOW operations continued to expand in Cambodia. From Tan Son Nhut AB, they interdicted communist supply lines. And they were the chief defenders of Kompong Cham, Kompong Thom, Skon, and Phnom Penh. Protection of these towns was crucial. They were control points on key highways.

There was much high level interest in the safety of all convoys traveling in Cambodia, both by land and water--they were the life blood of the friendly forces. Escort missions became increasingly important because of the critical petroleum shortage in Phnom Penh. The decision was made to provide continuous FAC and/or gunship coverage within the capability of available resources. Fighter bombers would be used only when required.

Friendly waterborne elements traversing the 65 miles of the Mekong River from the RVN border to Phnom Penh were subject to enemy attacks by fire at practically any point on the waterway. Enemy elements had relative freedom of movement throughout the area. All points on the river

were within recoilless rifle and mortar range. River width varied from 400 meters to 2,000 meters during the dry season (Dec-May). The terrain along it is flat to gently rolling, with light vegetation in most areas. Because of the poor drainage, there were many swamps and extensive rice paddies in all areas along the Mekong.

When attacking waterborne elements, the enemy usually chose narrow spots that provided him protection from aerial observation and at the same time, afforded him adequate escape routes.

After assessing the various threats to convoy movement, 7AF made the decision that convoys would take maximum advantage of daylight transit. Particularly when transiting areas of greater threat. In addition, fixed wing gunship coverage of the convoys would be augmented by Army attack helicopters and USAF armed OV-10 FAC aircraft. Fighters would be available, but with a reaction delay. If night movement was absolutely necessary, gunships would be on station and FAC coverage would be provided by unarmed (except for marking rockets) O-2 aircraft.

Seventh Air Force controlled an air-cover package of aircraft from three services to supply convoy defense. The Navy generally gave a 3-day advanced planning notice for their river convoys. SHADOW would circle the convoy



for 24 hours at 3,500 feet. An Army light fire team (a command-and-control helicopter, two Cobra helicopter gunships, and two light observation helicopters) flew coverage at 1,500 feet during daylight. The helicopters cycled between the convoy and their base at Chi Lang for refueling. The Navy employed two OV-10s for low-attitude coverage at night. These planes cycled from their command-and-control vessel anchored in the Mekong River at Tan Chau, across the border in South Vietnam.

Shadows escorted road convoys in Cambodia either alone or with a FAC aircraft. When paired, the FAC searched for enemy ambush preparations along the convoy's route while the AC-119G flew in a large elliptical orbit overhead. The Cambodians often upset convoy-escort planning. They scheduled their own convoys and failed to coordinate the air cover.

51-Truck Convoy

Missions. An excellent example of a successful convoy-escort mission occurred a year later when the enemy was aggressively attacking convoys. On 30 Jun 71, a 51-truck convoy left Phnom Penh headed southwest on Route 4 for Kompong Som (Skhanoukville). An escort FAC detected enemy movement north of Route 4 and suspected an ambush in the making. The FAC requested strike aircraft and a diverted AC-119G arrived. A recheck of the

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area confirmed his suspicions, the FAC cleared the Shadow for attack. The gunship poured 7.62mm fire on three clusters of troops. They responded with ground fire. SHADOW raked the enemy position until the last truck had rolled safely past the planned ambush site.

#### A Cambodian Sortie

I flew my first combat mission over Cambodia. Lieutenant Denny Davis was the pilot. Denny was a jewel--pragmatic and professional. He was a dedicated family man and didn't screw around in Saigon. But he liked to kill gooks.

We crossed the "fence." A firebase was taking rockets and mortars. The Radio man's voice sounded cool--his message wasn't. "Shadow, can you give us a hand? We're getting the hell kicked out of us down here. Can you assist?"

Davis responded, "That's a Rog, ground. We'll be with you." The throttle advanced and the bird trembled.

Another voice--GI type. "Hello, SHADOW 61, welcome to Cav country. It's good to have you up there." The crew was pumped up. When you went to V Corps (Cambodia), out came the welcome mat.

This base knew their stuff. Immediate clearance was given to fire. Denny rolled into his pylon turn with guns blazing. He glued the pipper to the target. Tracers

raked the perimeter. It was a fine performance by the pilot. Charlie elected immediate retreat. And we pressed on into the sultry night. We'd patrol the Mekong from "Cham" to Kratie. We looked for any moving watercraft.

So I learned a valuable lesson about the Shadow. It's extremely effective for the assigned mission. But, only if you have a first rate crew aboard. You had to expedite target acquisition, and fire with precision. No fooling Charlie. He'd recognize a clod at the controls.

Truck Convoy - 303

Then there was the truck convoy of "303 Cambodian Troop." The trucks started out in late June from Phnom Penh to relieve the seige of Kompong Thom. The Cambodian convoys were something else, school buses, Pepsi Cola trucks, hoptacs, anything that rolled. We flew cover for days. Progress up Route 6 was hardly noticeable.

303 got as far as Phum Khley, 20 miles short of destination. A bridge was washed out short of the town, with no prospect of getting it fixed. So the hapless convoy turned about and headed south toward the capital. Then it happened. Ambush! And the SHADOWS flew in to save them. Exasperating...it was weeks before 303 pulled safely into the capital.



Hotel 26

The friendlies controlled small areas. Like villages, pagodas, shrines, hotels, and the like. Charlie seemed to own the country. So it wasn't unusual to be flying cover along the Mekong from pagoda to temple. HOTEL 26 was a Cambodian Army commander. He was located 17 miles north from Phnom Penh on the eastern side of the Mekong. One night in late August, he got himself in serious trouble. Aggott was the controlling agency in Phnom Penh. He was aware of the situation. Airstrikes were requested, also a follow-on Shadow.

26 was holed up in a pagoda. He was taking incoming from the riverbank 50 meters west, and from a barn 30 meters east. There was also sporadic incoming from a bridge to the northeast.

Shadow 83 was on target. Major Fraker eased to firing altitude, coaxed in some rudder, and rolled into a good pylon turn. There was 3½ cans of ammunition left.

"HOTEL 407 was the same way."

"Check the tracers. 11 o'clock."

"I don't see anything. There, level on the horizon."

"There's quite a wind down there. Watch the flares drift."

Then HOTEL 407, a few miles upriver, started taking hits. Bad. Our man had problems with the barn, a long

100

metallic building. It was ringed with palm trees.

Charlie was lobbing mortars onto the pagoda. Don opened up on high rate--tracers bounced off the rooftop. Looked like the 4th. 3200 pounds of gas left...good for a little bit.

"SHADOW, this is 26."

"Now I would like to inform you that my commander, who would like to inform you and your chief of the base. He speak English very free so he told me to inform you. This place is very dangerous. It is important that Shadow and Rustic is coming to help us. Otherwise, we cannot stand. You copy?"

"Yes, 26, we copy."

"This evening around 6 o'clock my second in command is wounded. Many, many VC. So I would like you to call another SHADOW."

"Do not worry, 26. It has been requested."

"Alright, you say that from 28, 29 and today on the 33, we cannot eat. We have very little food...and cannot sleep. My commander cannot sleep because he is worried. Please help us. Four or five hundred VC. You copy?"

The crew was silent. Only the chatter of the guns. Efficiency. SHADOW circled--time after time. The ground fire ceased. 26 was quiet. He had fallen asleep. One last calculation of the fuel, and we had to leave.

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We were dead tired, mentally debilitated. Eyes were moist and you know why. Charlie waited. Time was on his side.

Two days later. We swung south to raise Hotel 26. We circled and keyed the mike several times. 26 was silent. Only the ripples of the muddy Mekong.

#### Mission to Angkor Wat

We liked the Cambodians. So peaceloving and religious. They didn't really want war. And their country was a beautiful land. We felt like airborne tourists at times. Kodaks on every flight. Some of their temples, shrines, and modern buildings were just superb. We felt a kindred spirit with these people. Glad to fight for them. Many vowed to visit the country someday.

Major Bill Gericke flew on SHADOW 81. The day was 6 September 1970. The mission was to Siem Reap, a few miles from the northwest tip of the Tonle Sap Lake, and 143 miles northwest of Phnom Penh. This sortie indicated some of the complexities of fighting an air war in the hinterlands of Cambodia. I'll make a quote from his diary.

We were briefed well in advance to go to Siem Reap. That's the village near the northwest end of the Tonle Sap Lake. All was quiet when we arrived on scene. Hotel Juliet wanted us to shoot in an area about five clicks southeast of town. All we could see was yoked oxen, several bicycles, a couple of carts, and a few field workers. They could have been part of the 150 Vietcong Juliet said are there, but we still didn't shoot. We did fire north of town between Siem Reap and Angkor War.

6



Took several pictures of Angkor Wat. We reconned a couple of more points for Juliet, and spotted the fall of two rounds of 105mm. The rounds lobbed into the old Air France Hotel just west outside of Angkor Wat. Juliet got on a talking jag, a political speech. He hates Vietnamese and French. Claims the Communists are selling the Angkor Wat antiques in Hong Kong. He talked about peace and independence and thinks a republic is coming. He invited us to visit, and said he needed breakfast. We reconned the Tonle Sap Lake for TACC on the way home. Fired 25,000 rounds.

Here is the flavor of Hotel Juliet's speech:

"To all SHADOWS, RUSTICS, SPIKES--I'd like to inform your commanders. We came to Siem Reap over 3 months ago. This place is very dangerous. So when we came down here--never quiet. Always contact by the VC. If no contact with SHADOW and RUSTIC, we cannot stand. My folk are Cambodian descent. It is important that your government help my folk. Please call another SHADOW to come and help us. When we came here from Kompong Cham, we had over 100 wounded and 15 killed.

I used to be a guide at Angkor Wat and talked to your people from the states. But now I am a soldier. I'm not very high class--just a lowly soldier. You copy?"

"Roger, you're a very good soldier."

"Roger, roger. I'd like to join you in the aircraft, but I cannot. I am happy now because you're here, but my stomach is empty. When I'm talking to you, it's like talking to my folk, and I'm so happy to think you'll help us."

"Roger, we'll help you as long as we can." Well stated, Bill Ware.

"That poor guy is really hurting--makes you wish we could really help them."

"Yes, he just wanted someone to talk to--poor son of a gun. These Cambodians seem to have a lot more sincerity than anyone else."

"You said it! I like working with them."

The temples of Angkor Wat were built by the kings of the Ancient Khmer empire between the 9th and 12 centuries. They were lost in the thick jungle for more than 500 years. The temples were two of Southeast Asia's most precious art treasures.

The gunships had explicit instructions against firing anywhere within the areas. Even though they had been held by the invading North Vietnamese and Vietcong for over a year. Cambodia's acting prime minister, Sisowath Sirik Matak unsuccessfully broadcast an appeal for international control of the temples. The request was made after one building was hit by 82mm mortars. The temples remained in Communist hands.

CHAPTER VI

VIETNAMIZATION OF SHADOW

AC-119 operations were expanding still further in early 1971. But the big plan was to turn over the Shadows to the Vietnamese Air Force. This was consistent with the Nixon administration push for Vietnamization of the war. It spawned proposals for a bigger and better VNAF gunship capability. A plan emerged to activate the VNAF 819th Combat Squadron at Tan Son Nhut AB on 1 September 1971. Major Duc would be the commander. He was a talented C-119 pilot.

On that September date, the 17th Special Operations Squadron would turn over the Shadows and specified maintenance and supply support equipment. The VNAF would then frag all AC-119G missions. VNAF/USAF Joint Programmed Directive 71-106, 30 Nov 70, charged the 17th Squadron with VNAF combat crew training in the AC-119G. Pilots were checked out in Phase I at Clinton County AB, Ohio. Phase II aircrew training was at Phan Rang. Twenty-four VNAF crews would be combat ready by 1 May 1972.

Thus, as 1971 began, the 17th SOS got ready to transition from a combat squadron to a training one. Shadow would become "Hac Long" or "Black Dragon."



VNAF training at Phan Rang was a three phase program. First, a week of ground school, then basic flying training with emphasis on instrument and emergency procedures. The third phase concentrated on combat tactics during actual combat missions.

Training of the VNAF crewmembers was quite an experience. It brought out the best in everyone. The first hurdle was to convince the GI types that their lives were not in jeopardy by flying on integrated crews. You might have a Vietnamese pilot and an American copilot, for instance. Nearly all the VNAF pilots had excellent command of the aircraft and their flying skills were superb. They had flown the cargo version for years. And their safety record was tops. After a VNAF pilot, Captain Bich demonstrated his expertise bringing in a crew with engine out, we heard no more about safety. Actually, in comparison to the US pilots, the VNAF were substantially more seasoned. It showed in their well-coordinated pylon turns in firing orbit.

But from there, the situation deteriorated. All checklists had to be run in English. And some of the VNAF spoke little. Neither the instructors nor the ground commanders could easily understand.

Navigators were held in low esteem--trash. Bad enough to be a pilot in a non-fighter. But a navigator,

unheard of. In fact, they didn't have them at all until 7th AF insisted that they man the gunship with a standard crew. The VNAF navigators went into combat with roughly twenty hours of experience. The pilots preferred to disregard the navigator and do their own pilotage. If one of them got tired, they'd turn the controls over to the other pilot and go to sleep. According to one instructor, "The pilot is a character--when he gets tired, he just quits! Tonight he ran the VNAF flight engineer out of his seat and just crumped out in it for the last 45 minutes of the mission."

We just were not used to running a railroad like this. Not on combat sorties anyway. But then, we had a one-year tour with the end in sight. The VNAF were faced with an entire career of fighting.

One of our instructors once asked a VNAF gunner to wake up an officer. They were in the firing circle. The gunner indicated he was prohibited from touching an officer. If they had to abort a takeoff, many of them felt it was unlucky to try again on the same day. I'm not saying they were derelict in duty, their ways were simply different.

They didn't like night sorties, and were very family oriented. Our military ways of putting job first and family second, just didn't sell.

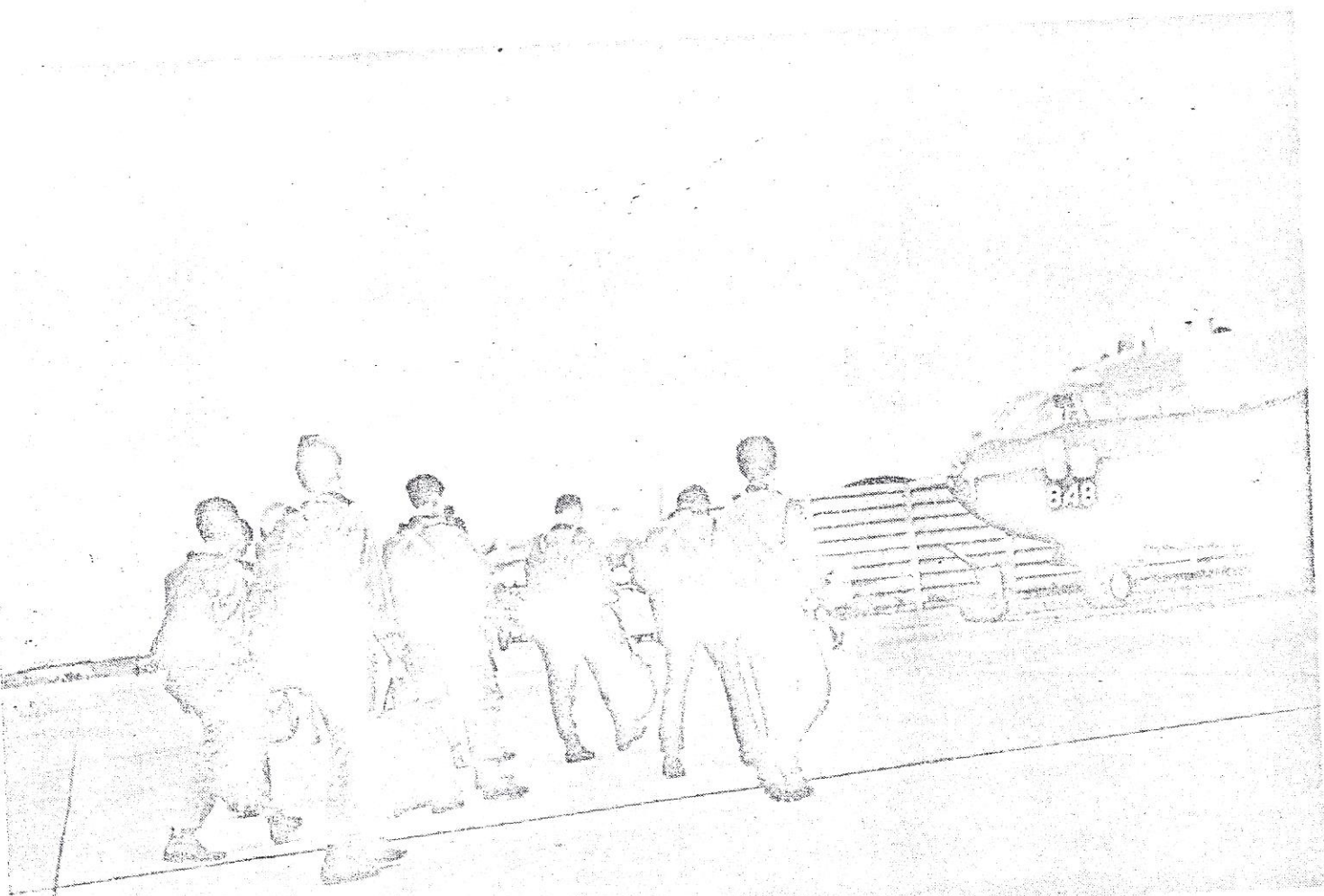
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Overall, however, progress was satisfactory. The VNAF crews could do the job--alone. We could see some further problems downstream, though. The Cambodians didn't want Vietnamese of any kind firing guns over their territory. Not on a routine basis. They would frequently query us about this in flight. It was a trifle embarrassing, to say the least, because most of the crews were now integrated.

Late April 1971--graduation ceremony at Phan Rang AB for the 18-member class of AC-119G VNAF crewmen. Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky attended. The graduates were pilots, navigators, flight engineers, gunners and illuminator operators. They formed the cadre of the VNAF Black Dragon unit, the 819th Combat Squadron.

24 September 1971--the Air Force announced that the Shadow gunships of the 17th Special Operations Squadron were turned over the VNAF. A big milestone in the VNAF Improvement and Modernization Program was reached.





An eight-man VNAF AC-119 Hae Long aircrew and an American advisor approach their deadly Black Dragon

FIGURE VI-1

A Vietnamese AC-119G Crew

CHAPTER VII

OFF DUTY AIRMEN

Off duty time in the Shadow Squadron was limited. A very precious commodity and extremely important. The batteries had to be recharged. Activities ran the complete gamut--parties, poetry, reading, writing, letters, eating out. You name it. The base operated on a seven-day work week. Each unit set up their own schedules for time off.

I'll cover but a few of these diversions. They were important to us, a change of pace, an outlet, a relief valve. Most contributed to the high morale of the 17th. They were moments of pride. Some tempered our mood for the air battle, and contributed to our effectiveness. Others simply shortened the tour.

A Simple Thought

Sometimes when you feel it's all wasted  
When it seems not worth the pain  
When the answer's far in the future  
But the men die today just the same  
Is it worth the blood of an army?  
Is it worth the blood of one man?  
To be spilled on a spot so foreign  
From his own beloved land?  
There must be very few times recorded  
When a man ever went to war  
To fight for a people so different  
From those he left on his shore  
For a people so different in culture  
In appearance, in values, in law

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That we naturally pause and give thought  
To just what we are fighting for  
The important thing to remember  
Is that we were asked to come.  
To aid a people in trouble  
And we didn't say--none of our business  
We didn't say--too far away  
We remembered the past and its lessons  
That it might be our turn one day  
Some say we are leaving too early  
And perhaps we arrived too late  
And some say we should never have come here  
And let's leave at a faster rate  
The answer is not in the present  
Men have died in vain often before  
Perhaps here too, it has happened  
We will tell better after the war!  
But we leave a freer country  
Than was here before we came  
And we helped to make it stronger  
With God's will, they will maintain  
And what finer words be spoken  
Over those of us who die  
The United States was needed  
She came, she saw, she tried.

Captain A. I. Fradkin

A Visit From the Cambodians of Kompong Thom

Cambodians Captain Nil and Major Bory came to Tan Son Nhut on a VNAF C-119 transport. 7th AF protocol asked if they wished to see the Headquarters. They responded graciously and indicated they preferred to go immediately to Shadow Operations on the flight line.

They stood before Lieutenant Colonel Tom A. Teal with tears in their eyes. Both had directed endless hours of Shadow air cover of Kampong Thom during the December 1970



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Last known location:

Captain Hul Saren dit Nil  
No. 224 Monivong Road  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Major Chak Bory  
No. 224 Monivong Road  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

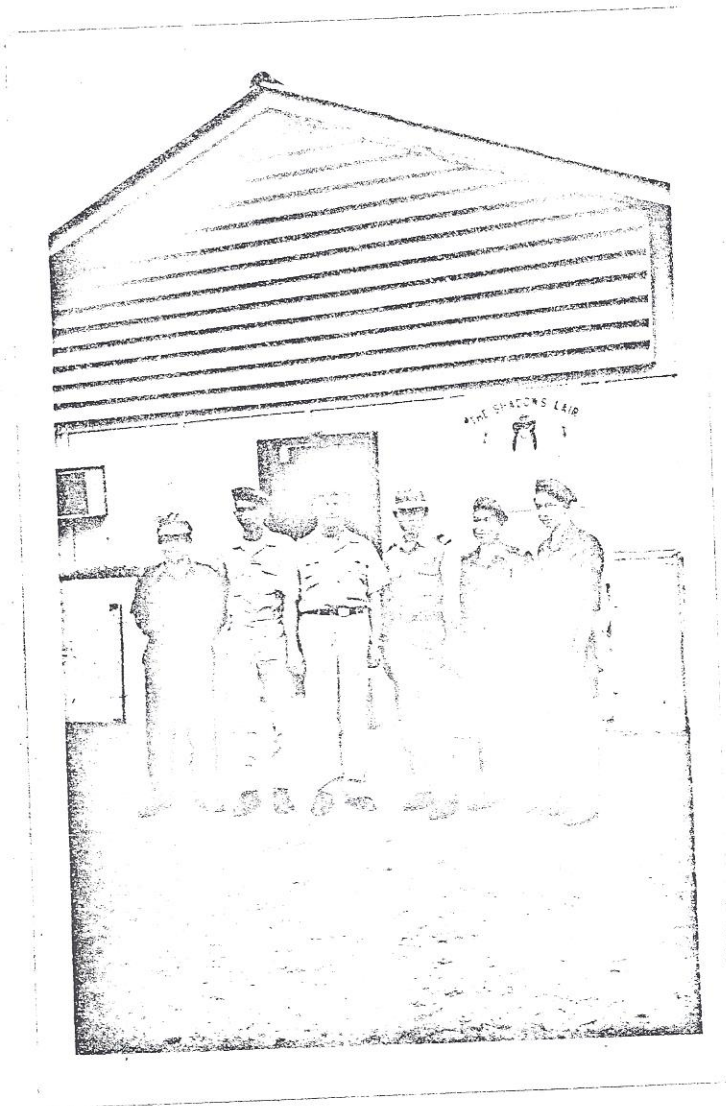


FIGURE VII-1

LTC TEAL  
LTC Oum

1/2

CAMBODIANS OF KAMPANG THOM

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14-day seige. Town residents had gotten so low on food, they were eating animals from the zoo. Captain Nil was HOTEL 302 and Major Bory, HOTEL 303.

Captain Nil spoke in a choked up voice. "Colonel Teal, I am having difficulty expressing myself. We of the Cambodian 90th Brigade wish to thank the Shadows for saving our lives..." His words broke and he could say no more. I was next door in the Admin office. The tough crewmembers present got up and walked out. They didn't want anyone to see their tears. The GI walks tall, my friend. Particularly today.

Every Shadow crew and staff man received a grateful gift from the surviving men of the 90th.

Later that night, in the party hooch, Captain Nil, HOTEL 302, spoke: I'd like to salute all you gentlemen. I am so glad to be able to come over here. My dream has come true. I thought it was not possible. Thank you for all you have done for us. You always came in time when we needed help."

"On behalf of our commander and our families, we want to thank you. We are so happy to be able to see you. We were many, many months away from our families in Phnom Penh...I'm short of words, sir."

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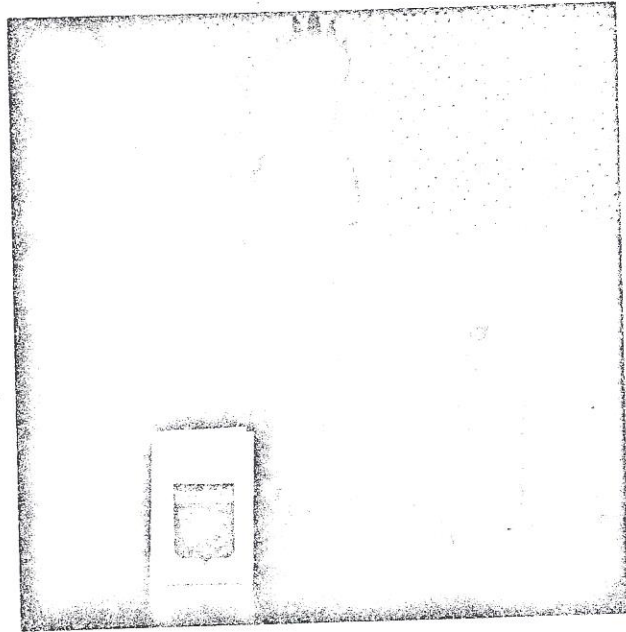


FIGURE VII-2  
Trophies from 90th Brigade

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"I can tell you, all you gentlemen--you not only came over our places to fight away the bad guys, you always took care of us. You inquired every time you came over our position. Well, how is your situation, HOTEL 302? Looks like you're going to stand; how is your ammunition, how many wounded?"

"Oh, sir--we took some rounds from the south from the 'sawmill'. Well. SHADOW it's hard to express our opinion--anytime you came over--one, two, three hours, we got some sleep. No fresh food, no cigarettes, very little anything. But you got the convoy through!"

"I say once again...our true thanks, and to all the people of the United States--you helped a peaceful people get their freedom back. I hope it lasts. Thank you and we salute you once again."

Then HOTEL 303, Major Bory spoke, "Captain Nil's expression of gratitude was great. I wish to say thank you one more time."

After the Cambodian officers finished, a SHADOW crewmember responded.

"This is Lieutenant Fletcher, one of the Shadow pilots. I was there in the beginning of June 1970, when Kompong Thom was first starting to be attacked by the Vietcong. In those days, we were known as Shadow 75, 77 or 78. We only flew at night and I'm sure that many times you wondered what we looked like and what kind of an airplane we flew. Your

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call sign then was CAMBODIA TROOPER 302 and HOTEL TONLE. We'd shoot at the edge of the city limits and sometimes within the city. Almost always we shot at the "Chinese graveyard" and at the "sawmill." Seemed like the VC always launched an attack from these positions. As we started flying in the daytime, we could see Kompong Thom much better and it was such a beautiful city in the beginning, before the bombing started. We all admire Hotel 302 and 303 and all you Cambodians for the stamina and bravery you have shown in these months and in the months to come.

We'd see mortars, rockets, and machine gun tracers. We'd see all that fire into Kompong Thom and wonder how you survived it, but after meeting you personally, we know how strong and wonderful Cambodian people really are. I hope we can always be friends and your country and my country can live in peace forever. Thank you."

Bill Christie

Bill Christie was a civilian specialist that helped keep the Shadows flying. He was a technical representative of the Fairchild-Hiller Corporation of St. Augustine, Florida. His company converted the old C-119 of World War II and the Korean action from its status of Flying Boxcar to respected gunship configuration.

Aside from his work, Bill had the great American weakness. He was a pushover for kids, especially orphans. During his years with the Air Force, Bill dug into his wallet many times to contribute aid to them.

His heart was captured by a tiny Vietnamese girl who was cared for in a Buddhist establishment not far from

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his base. Bill hoped to take the child back to the States for adoption by his sister-in-law. But Bill left to rejoin his wife, Grace, and three children who stayed in Hampton, Virginia. The Vietnamese child did not go with him. On one occasion, Bill arranged to give a soda pop and hot dog party for the children. All that day, Bill held the little girl. He had a yearning tenderness you see in a man far from his own children or grandchildren. On the way back to base all he could talk about was her orphan status. Warnings about the sucker role in which the Vietnamese cast all Americans fell on deaf ears. So-called orphanages, both Christian and Buddhist, were frequently guilty of using funds in ways that had nothing to do with the welfare of the children.

The dream of taking his tiny sweetheart back to America ended when Bill learned from a civilian advisor with Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) that the Buddhist establishment wasn't an orphanage at all. It was a nursery. Children were kept by the week for a fee while parents worked. The child was a part of a large family.

It was suggested that it would be better to first remember the underprivileged and orphaned children in America. Especially since there were so many shenanigan deals pulled in Vietnam. Bill could only shake his head



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sadly. It was all very hard to understand. He finally spoke aloud. Bill's voice shook with a deep feeling, "I really loved that little doll. I really did."

And he did what strong men always do, turned back to his work with renewed concentration.

#### Boy Scouts of Vietnam

Scouts seemed the same the world over. Just as earnest, wondering, and eager to please as the ones in the States. Many of the 17th airmen were extremely active in the Vietnamese scouts. It was considered one of the most rewarding civic action projects at Nha Trang, Phan Rang, and Tan Son Nhut.

The Shadows attended the weekly troop meetings, and scrounged up surplus field and camping gear. They wrote to the Boy Scouts of America national office. Scouting materials and publications were requested.

Visits to the bases were arranged for the troops. The kids saw the flight line and had lunch at the base mess hall. Surprisingly, most of the squadron instructors had no previous scouting experience. They just had the desire to work with the kids. And they recognized the need to break down the barriers of mistrust and suspicion between the US military and the Vietnamese populace.

They thought of the potential good will. Some of these scouts would be future leaders of the country. Dividends would be far in excess of the effort involved.



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I've included a letter from Nguyen Quang Can, the Vietnamese scoutmaster of Khanh Hoa Troop, at Nha Trang. The message indicates that the bearer would like to participate with his scout troop in whatever manner appropriate.

### Christmas

It's supposed to be a home-type family affair. Except in war--then everything is one step away from reality. And, thank God that someone in America realized this. Even in this war. Suddenly, at Christmas the human spirit just came alive. Hearts opened up. Every man had a family, regardless. I wish you could have seen those faces--age meant no difference. All got letters and gifts...from complete strangers. They cared, they really cared! It's something to be remembered. You never forgot it.

The letter to us was extra nice, and so were the cookies.

Cub Scout Den 1  
% 928 Abbeville Hwy  
Rayne, LA 70578

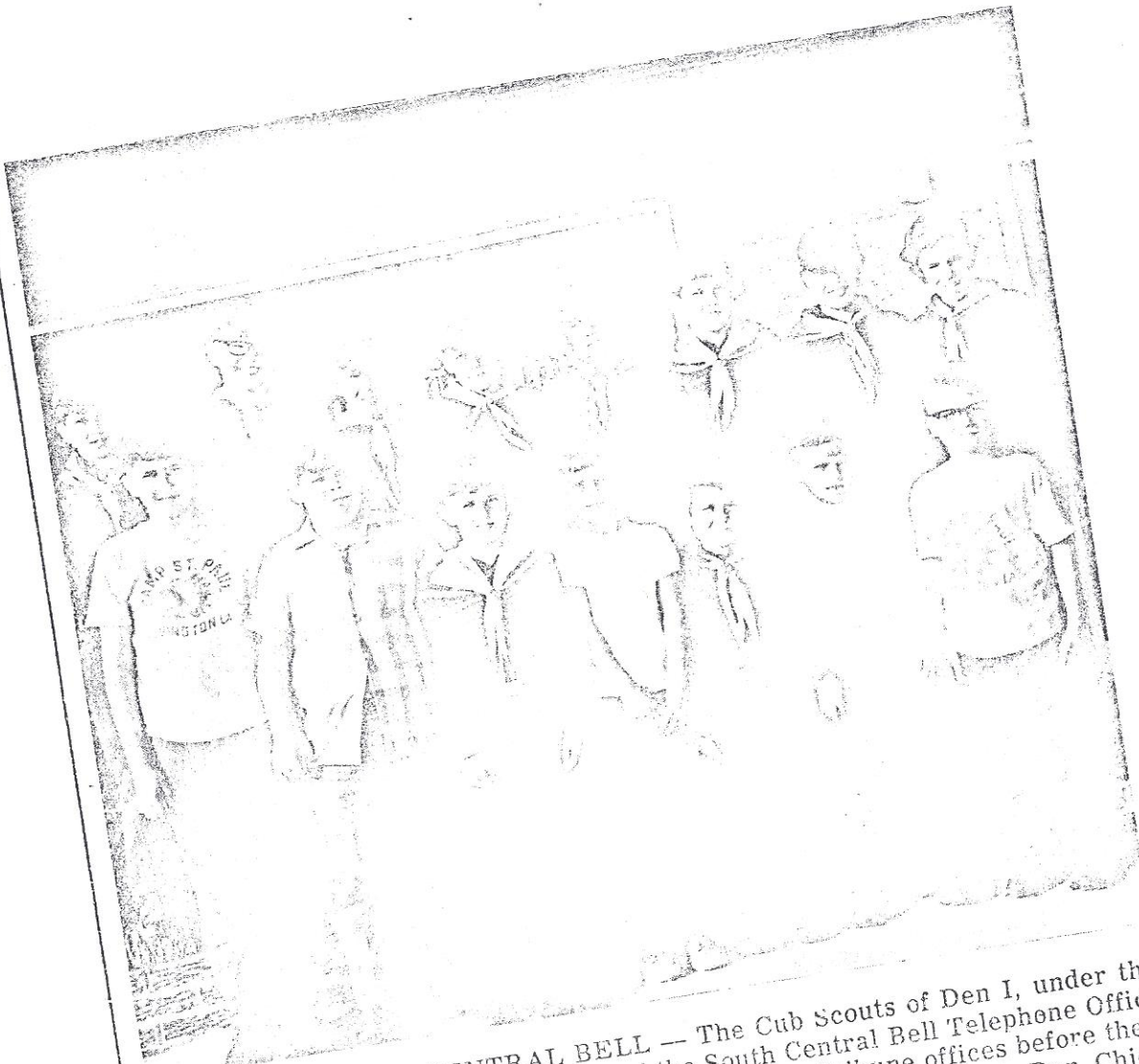
Hi there,

We the boys in Cub Scout Den 1, want to wish all of you guys a very Merry Christmas.

We really hope you'll like our cookies.

Please send us a short note in care of our den mother, Mrs. Jesse Leger. We pray for each of you and pray for your safe and speedy return.





CUBS VISIT SOUTH CENTRAL BELL — The Cub Scouts of Den I, under the leadership of Mrs. Jessie Leger, visited the South Central Bell Telephone Office in Crowley on Monday, October 26. Stopping by the Tribune offices before their field trip were, front, from left, Dale Credeur and Brent Beard, Den Chief, Tommy Beard, Marlin Leger, George Melancon, Phillip Meaux, and Berlyn Credeur; back row, from left, Mark Suiter, Melvin LeBlanc, Wayne Royer, Glen Whatley, Scott Johnson, Chad Gilbert, Larry Bearb, and Ralph Dupuis. Aiding Mrs. Leger with transportation was Mrs. Tom Johnson.

FIGURE VII-4

The Cub Scouts from Den 1  
Rayne, LA

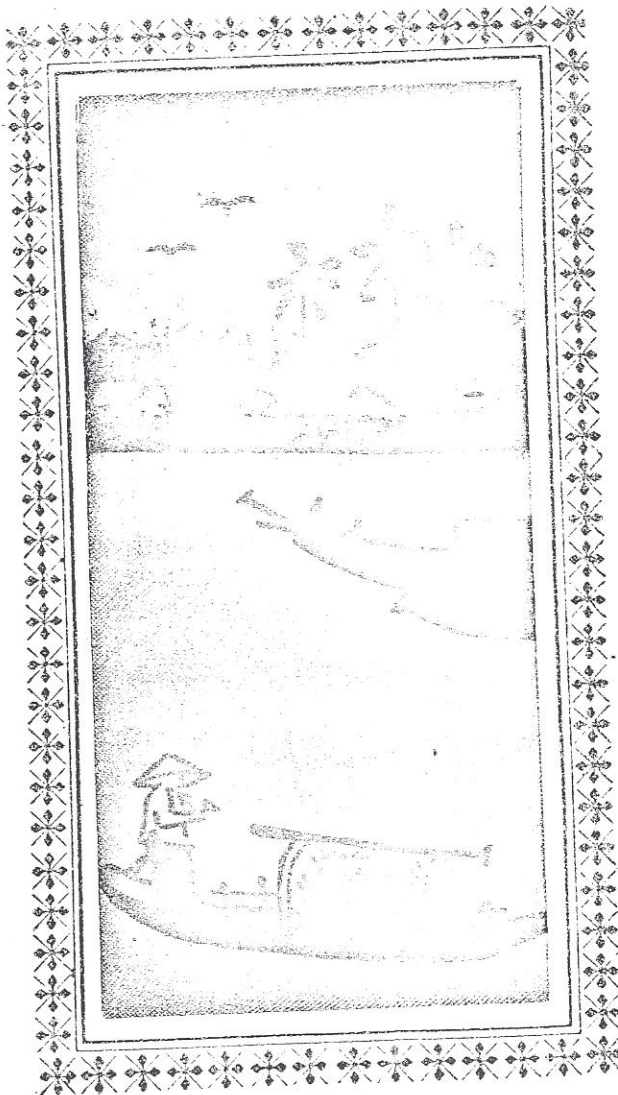


FIGURE VII-5

Every GI in the war zone is remembered at Christmas. Here, Shadow pilot, Marty Noonan, gets a "ditty bag" from home. American Red Cross representative, Chris Forester, makes the presentation.

80.2

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MERRY  
CHRISTMAS

FIGURE VII-6

Christmas Greetings from the Vietnamese

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We are boys between the ages of 8 and 9 years old and we really are enjoying the Cub Scouts, but are looking forward to becoming Boy Scouts. There are 14 of us in Den 1.

Well, again we say Merry Christmas and God bless all of you.

Take care and hurry home.

Sincerely,

Your 14 buddies

### Shadow Parties, Celebrations

Please, reader I have one request. Don't get the impression that the Shadows were a melancholy unit with our heads in our beer. It was quite the opposite. We out-partied and out-celebrated every unit on the base. The Cambodian mission kept us pumped up. Morale peaked in June 1970 and stayed there until the unit was disbanded.

We emphasized the old tradition of "hosing down" a crewmember when he passed his 100th mission. And also on his last (fini) flight in combat. The Shadows didn't just throw a few buckets of water on the victim. The flightline fire trucks were scrambled! They really cut loose--no mercy. Even decked a few.

Shadow parties were frequent. We'd start upstairs at the o'club, usually in the Jackson Room. The waitresses and attendees wore party suits--all specially tailored

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FIGURE VII-7

Fini Flight

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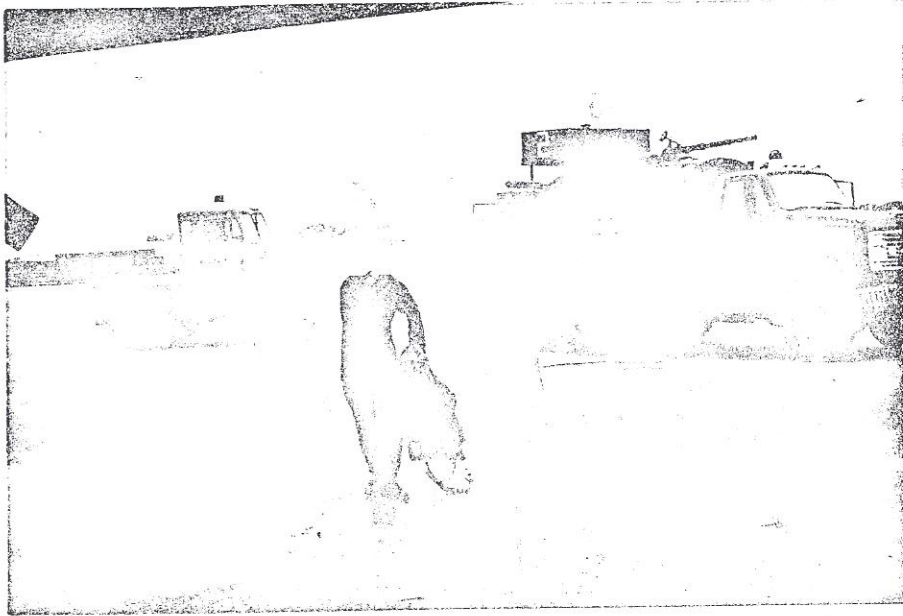


FIGURE VII-8  
100th Mission

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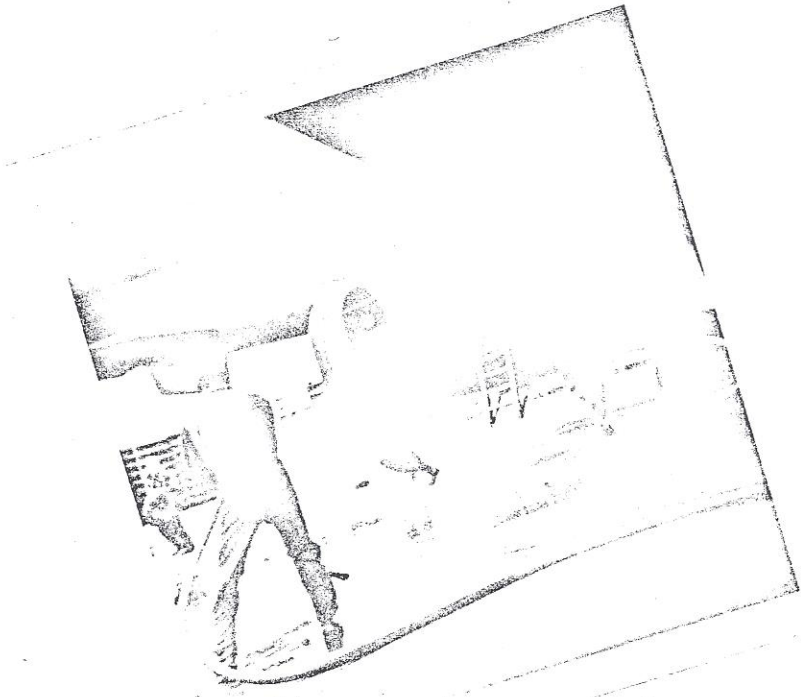


FIGURE VII-9  
No Escape



FIGURE VII-10  
Frequent Picnics

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in Thailand. The 7th AF commander and General Ky usually attended. The guest speaker was frequently Mr. Sams from Project CHECO. Awards were presented. When the party broke up, we'd head for downstairs.

One night, the club hired an all-female band. Not only could they play good, they were astoundingly attractive. At about 12:30, the security police had to escort them from the club for their own safety. The place was an absolute madhouse. "Combat" in the Tan Son Nhut o'club staggered the imagination. Too bad they burned down the place when Saigon was evacuated.

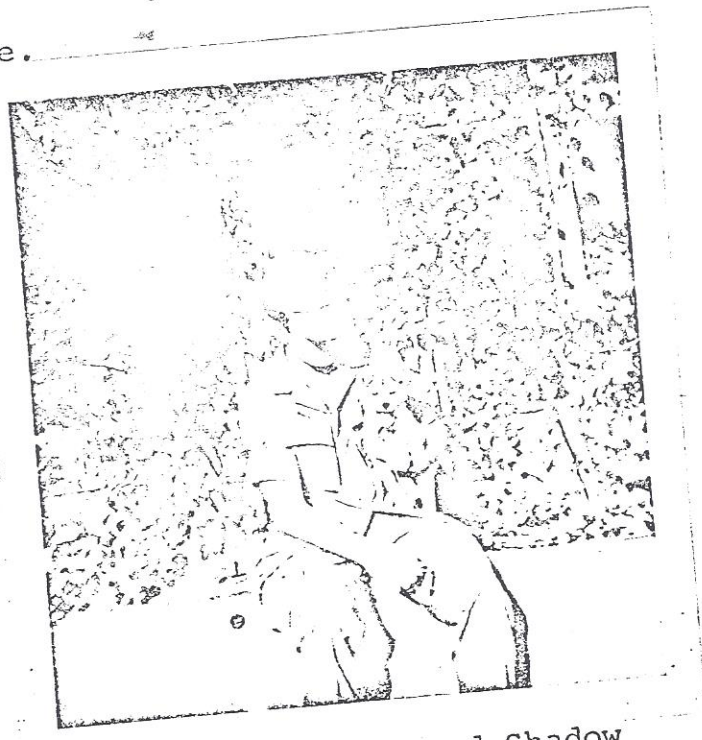
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The Dog, Shadow

The gunship crews began to leave Tan Son Nhut AB. Left behind was Shadow, a friendly gum-chewing mascot who had seen them through many dangerous missions.

Shadow had followed the 17th Special Operations Squadron from Nha Trang to Phan Rang to Phu Cat and to Tan Son Nhut. She always waited for her crews to taxi in and give her a pack of gum.

When the squadron had only a few people left, they passed the hat for Shadow. She flew to the US in grand, commercial style to be reunited with TSgt Albert Leach, a flight engineer. Al had been reassigned to Pease AFB, New Hampshire.



Sgt Bobby Jones and Shadow



CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The SHADOWS were thrust into the Southeast Asian conflict at a time when the war moved in new directions. Hostilities had spilled over into Cambodia and quickened in Laos. AC-119 operations steadily spread over a larger and larger area. Attention focused more on gunship offensive operations outside South Vietnam than on defensive missions within. These shifts of emphasis forced Shadow deployment to constantly adjust. In addition, Vietnamization grew in importance. The turnover of the AC-119G's to the VNAF paralleled the downswing in U.S. strength. Despite new operational demands, the black gunship did well. They built a significant "Shadow count," enemy killed by air. Their reputation grew as they saved special forces camps, defended troops, flew convoy escort, interdiction missions, and reconnaissance sorties.

The road to combat was long and twisted. The machine originated in a climate of skepticism and opposition. Its development was difficult, delayed, and costly. It endured the higher priority of the AC-130 program. It was overweight. Production of its sub-systems lagged. Yet, with all these handicaps, the <sup>it</sup>beast survived, 373

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Shadows played a significant and successful role in the war.

The fixed wing gunship proved to be a superior concept for the assigned mission categories. SHADOW kept the enemy honest. No villages or convoys were lost while they circled overhead. Despite its efforts, however, the enemy got supplies through, ambushed troops, bombarded bases, and overran positions. Furthermore, the gunships occupied only a thin band in the wide spectrum of Southeast Asia air power. U.S. air operations were supplemented more and more by those of the VNAF. They had grown infinitely complex with a great number and variety of missions, munitions, aircraft, and tactics. At their 1969 peak, the gunships totaled only 53 of over 1,800 U.S. aircraft employed in the theater.

Also, if you compare total sorties, the gunship number was relatively low. The highest monthly average stood at 368, while fixed wing tactical USAF sorties averaged 9,797.

The SHADOW virtually ranged the entire war area except North Vietnam. It was continually confined to less well-defended enemy-held areas. The bird preferred friendly control of the skies. Even with the flak suppression of a jet fighter escort--its vulnerability remained a worry.

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In summary, the gunship was a good, limited weapon in a limited war. SHADOW had definitely met a combat air operations need, albeit in a "conflict." As General Momyer, TAC Commander (and former 7AF Commander) put it, "With its multiple sensors, I think it is the best weapon for either air or ground support of a night engagement." Considerable evidence points to "wars of national liberation" (Vietnam-type wars) as being the most acceptable level of conflict by enemy nations in the future. If so, the side-firing gunship concept would continue to be advantageous.

John Paul Vann was one of the most knowledgeable and respected of American advisors in Vietnam until his death in 1972. He remarked in the early years of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, "This is a political war and it calls for discrimination in killing. The best weapon of killing would be a knife." The side-firing gunship and the helicopter gunship were probably the closest that air power could come to Vann's knife.

#### The End

When South Vietnam fell to the Communists, the SHADOWS had all been turned over to the Vietnamese Air Force. The AC-119's were renamed "Hac Long" or "Black Dragons."

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The last few days, during the evacuation of Saigon, all of us felt emotional turmoil--even though we were now a world apart. There had been so much hope invested, so much pride. The VNAF crews were confident and skilled. We really thought the little country would survive to live in freedom.

Several of us called other ex-SHADOWS long distance and rehashed old times. Many sponsored refugees. Some visited the camps to renew old acquaintances. It was like a bad dream.

Later, on 29 April 1975, Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger gave a message to members of the U.S. Armed Forces. It meant a lot--and buoyed our spirits:

As the last withdrawal of Americans from Vietnam takes place, it is my special responsibility to address to you, the men and women of our Armed Forces, a few words of appreciation on behalf of the American people.

For many of you, the tragedy of Southeast Asia is more than a distant and abstract event. You have fought there; you have lost comrades there, you have suffered there. In this hour of pain and reflection, you may feel that your efforts and sacrifices have gone for nought.

That is not the case. When the passions have muted and the history is written, Americans will recall that their Armed Forces served them well. Under circumstances more difficult than ever before faced by our military services, you accomplished the mission assigned to you by higher authority. In combat, you were victorious and you left the field with honor.

Though you have done all that was asked of you, it will be stated that the war itself was futile. In some sense, such may be said of any national effort that ultimately fails. Yet, our involvement was not purposeless.

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It was intended to assist a small nation to preserve its independence in the face of external attack and to provide at least a reasonable chance to survive. That Vietnam succumbed to powerful external forces vitiates neither the explicit purpose behind our involvement--nor the impulse of generosity toward those under attack that has long infused American policy.

Your record of duty performed under difficult conditions remains unmatched. I salute you for it. Beyond any question you are entitled to the Nation's respect, admiration, and gratitude.

The courage of the fighting man speaks of something in the human being that goes beyond man as an animal. It speaks of a deeper level of experience that cannot be discarded too easily. Whatever name you give it, it's alive in the ambiguities of our time.



# Thomas L Lubbers, Pilot

17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Tan Son Nhut, 1969-1970

First Lieutenant Thomas "Tom" Lubbers was the Aircraft Commander on Shadow 78 that crashed at Tan Son Nhut on April 28, 1970; he was 24 when he died. Others who we lost in that crash were Maj Meredith Anderson, 1st Lt Charles Knowles, MSgt Joseph Jeszeck, SSgt Robert Fage, and Sgt Michael Vangelisti.

Tom was born on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1945 in St Louis, Missouri. After graduating from St Louis Preparatory Seminary in 1963, he graduated from Kenrick Seminary in 1967 before volunteering for the Air Force. Tom joined because he wanted to be a pilot, even though flying to Officer Training School at Lackland was the first time he had ever flown.

In many of Tom's letters to his family, he talked about the hazards faced by the Shadow Company in flying all-night flights and the depression of dealing with the war and the losses he and others faced. Tom's sister Pam (Seiford) Lubbers shared a letter where he says that he was often sought out by fellow airmen, some of them much older and experienced, as a sounding board for their sadness and for their complaints against the hierarchy at the base. Tom surmised that his audacity in appearing before the Wing Commander to champion these causes would result in his receiving an unsatisfactory OER. Instead, he was shocked to learn he had been named "Junior Officer of the Year by the Commander" In other letters he describes his compassion for the Vietnamese people, particularly the children, that they had never in all their lifetimes experienced peace. He felt that, regardless of how the war was viewed at home, this was reason enough for being there.

Larry "Fletch" Fletcher shared his memories with Tom's sisters, *"When I arrived at Tan Son Nhut in early May 1970, C Flight was still reeling in shock from the crash of Shadow 78. My friend, Major Robert Bokern was a survivor of the crash along with Allen Chandler. Bob's story of the crash "The Last Flight of Shadow 78" is in the history book. Everyone in C Flight knew and respected Tom Lubbers and had nothing but praise for him. . even those of us Fighting C Flight Shadows of Saigon, who were not at TSN at the time of the crash, still feel the sadness and emptiness of that tragic loss of life."* Tom and Fletch both upgraded at Tan Son Nhut from copilot to aircraft commander, both as their first AF assignment after UPT.

Tom's sister JoAnn (Lorek) Lubbers remembers visiting him when he was in pilot training in Selma and hung out with him and some of his fellow pilots, *"Tom's and their energy and absolute love of flying was infectious; he, and they were clearly born to be AF pilots. Tom truly represented the best in all of us. Thanks again to Larry Fletcher for his kind words; it's been so long since I've allowed myself the luxury of grieving Tom's loss, and it feels good to do so and to remind myself of the incredible valor and service of you men who were willing to sacrifice everything for us."*

Major Earl Farney was Executive Officer for C Flight at TSN. Later, as a Lieutenant Colonel Farney, he wrote a book called "The Shadow in Southeast Asia" about the Shadows for the Air University's Southeast Asia Monograph Series and dedicated it to Tom. In Lt Col Earl's words, *"Tom Lubbers ran a good crew. He was young but mature, competent, and dedicated. Always thinking of others - a fine sense of humor.....even during his seminary years, he was characterized by most as the campus clown, wearing rolled up pajamas and sneakers under his cassock. He was one of those "natural" leaders - all 6' 4" of him."* After Tom's death, his parents, Lambert and Elvira Lubbers wrote a letter to the men of the 17<sup>th</sup> SOS with a poignancy Maj Farney has never forgotten, *".....Perhaps we can take our turn now to offer you the kind of consolation that is helping us live through these times. Tom loathed bitterness and sadness, and his exuberance and joy of living often helped us and others get over bad times. He had a supply of jokes and antics to get us all through. We are sure he, being the example of selflessness he was, must have offered you the same kind of assistance.....he made us proud. Many acquaintances have remarked about the necessity of you...Shadow operations in particular, and asked us to pass the thanks to Tom. We still receive those comments and now we pass them to you.....Although our memories are tender, they are all wonderful and remarkably lacking in regret for so much as one wasted minute of his life. Thank you for taking the time to remember those of us who wait for you all to return safely. You are all in our thoughts and prayers."*

Not everyone hated those of us fighting in Vietnam. Tom Lubbers exemplified the best in us. Fly high, brother.



MEMORIAL SERVICE

Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam

5 May 1970

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ORGAN PRELUDE

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

INVOCATION

OLD TESTAMENT

Wisdom 4: 7-14  
Psalm 23

"The Lord's Prayer"

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE

Romans 8: 31-35  
John 11: 17-27

MEMORIAL MEDITATION

HYMN

"Lord, Guard and Guide The Men Who Fly"  
No. 401

BENEDICTION

TAPS

REFIRE THE COLORS

POSTLUDE

Chaplain Horton

Chaplain Christiansen

Albert Hay Malotte

Chaplain Ward

Chaplain Bird

Chaplain Carroll

John Stava

IN MEMORIAM

Major Meredith G. Anderson  
1 November 1932 - 28 April 1970

First Lieutenant Thomas L. Lubbers  
20 September 1945 - 28 April 1970

First Lieutenant Charles M. Knowles  
17 July 1944 - 28 April 1970

Master Sergeant Joseph G. Jessock  
4 April 1923 - 28 April 1970

Staff Sergeant Robert F. Page, Jr.  
17 March 1936 - 28 April 1970

Sergeant Michael J. Vangelisti  
28 June 1947 - 28 April 1970