

Shadow Gunships in S.E.A.

Forgotten Warriors Vietnam Museum

Cape May Airport, NJ

September 2025

Goal

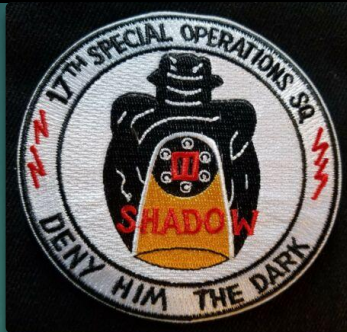
1. Present the concept of a “Gunship” especially the AC-119s – very special metamorphosis of a Cargo airplane into an Attack airplane.
2. Explain what a mission was like – what the eight-man crew did to make this a very effective weapons system
3. Show what life for an airman was like on a US Airbase in South Vietnam

THE UNITS OF OPERATION



71st SOS

- ❑ 13May68: 71st TAS, Bakalar ARB, Columbus, IN activated.
- ❑ 15June68: 71st TAS designated 71st ACS
- ❑ 8July68: 71st ACS designated 71st SOS
- ❑ 5Jan69: First combat mission flown- Nha Trang AB, RSVN
- ❑ 1June69: 17th SOS Replaces 71st SOS
- ❑ 18June69: 71st SOS reservists released from active duty



17th SOS

- ❑ 1June69: 17th SOS activated-18 AC-119G Shadow gunships "in country"
- ❑ 11Oct69: Shadow 76- 1st Shadow lost in crash due to engine failure on TO
- ❑ 28Apr70: Shadow 78- 2nd Shadow lost in crash due to engine failure on TO
- ❑ June70: A Flight: Phu Cat AB-(5 acft.)
B Flight: Phan Rang AB-(6 acft.)
C Flight: Tan Son Nhut AB- (5 acft.)
- ❑ 10Sep71: Last Shadow combat mission flown
- ❑ 24Sep71: 17th SOS de-activated



18th SOS

- ❑ 25Jan69: 18th SOS activated
- ❑ 3Nov69: First AC-119K arrives at Phan Rang AB, RSVN
- ❑ 13Nov69: First AC-119K combat mission flown
- ❑ 4Feb70: 18 AC-119K Stingers "in-country"
- ❑ 8May70: MacKay Trophy flight
- ❑ 2May72: Stinger 41 shot down during day light mission over An Loc, RVN. 3rd Stinger loss
- ❑ 31Dec72: 18th SOS de-activated

Common Situation ~1968

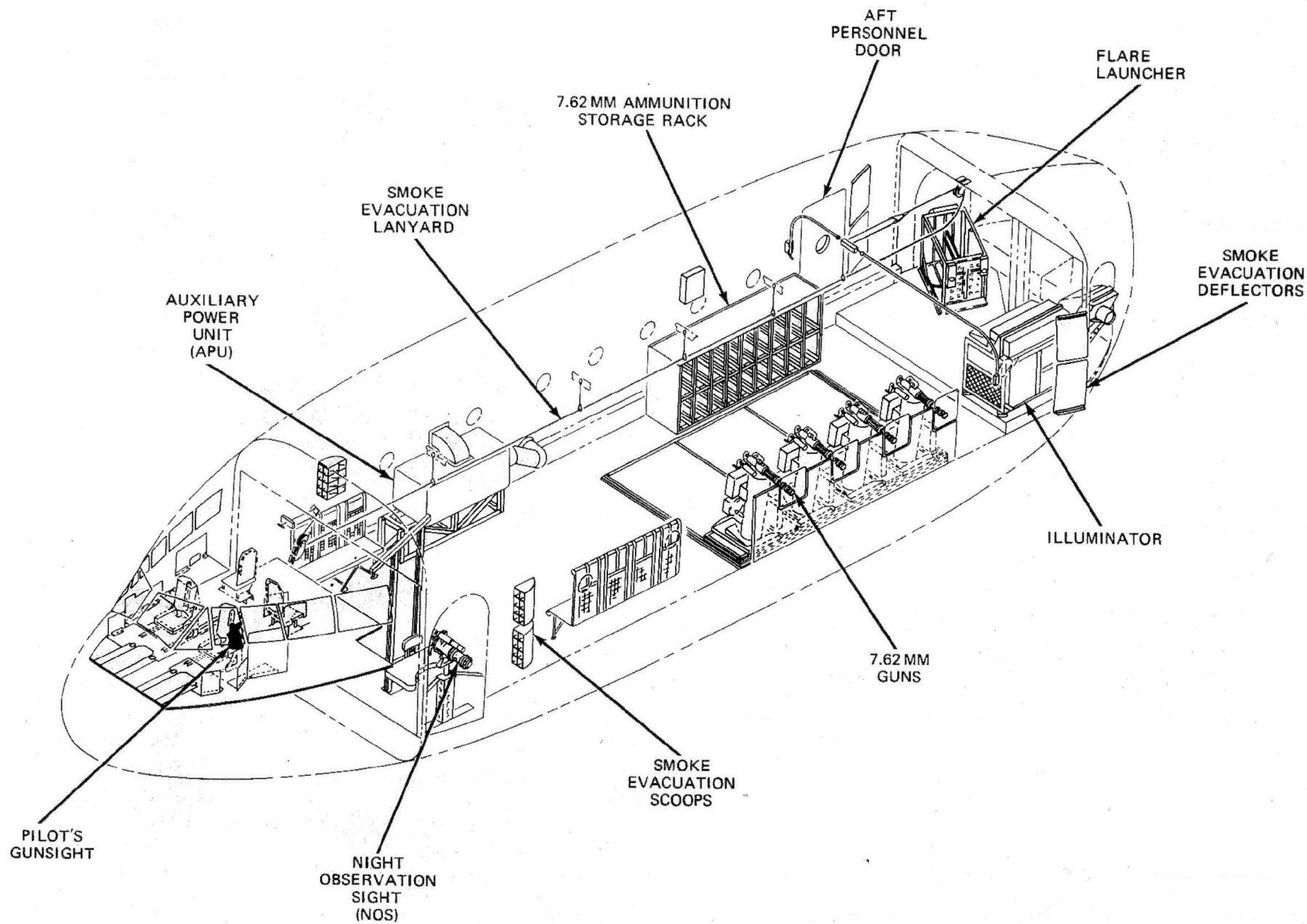
- 1967, Part-time college = 2S draft deferment
- 1968, LBJ needs more warriors = Lost deferment, become 1A
- Very Interested in airplanes = enlist in USAF (to avoid the draft). NO HOPE of flying – I was enlisted!
- Trained as a F-4 Phantom Fighter weapons mechanic (Denver) = then based in FL; I'd be staring up at the USAF war planes all the time
- Then ... I saw flying overhead orbiting in a weapons development situation, an old Korean War era cargo plane called the C-119 Flying Boxcar, but VERY different!

C-119G Flying Boxcar





**AC-119G was the successor to the AC-47 (DC-3)
“puff-the-magic-dragon”**



Combat Crew Training

- POW + General Survival, Fairchild AFB, Spokane, WA
- Jump / Physiological Training Eglin AFB, FL (Panhandle)
- Aircrew Flight School in Columbus, OH (Lockbourne AFB, Jan. 1970)
- Jungle Survival, Clark AFB, Philippines (June 1970)



“Snake School”





Phan Rang, AFB

Home away from home

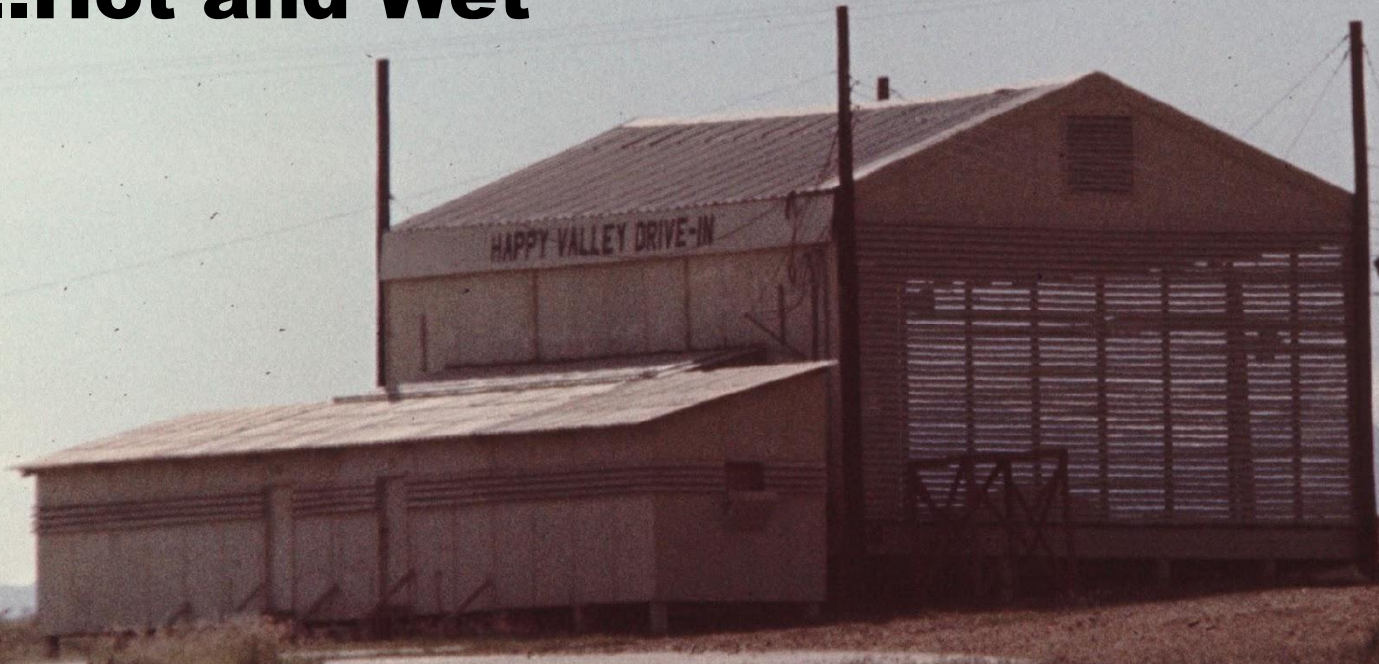




**Shadow Mission Crew:
4 officers (Pilot, CoPilot, Table NAV, NOS Ops),
NCOs (F.E, Two Gunners, Illum. Operator)**



**Two seasons: Hot and Dry... or
...Hot and Wet**



Remember the Vietnamese Geicko Lizards



70

MAJOR RIBINSKI R. S.

OPERATIONS
OFFICER

TSGT COLLARS

FIRST
SERGEANT

WHEN UNINVITED GUESTS DROP IN, CALL FOR THE SHADOW

WE PROVIDE:
LIGHTING FOR
ALL OCCASIONS
BEAUCOUP 7.62
MORTAR SUPPRESSION

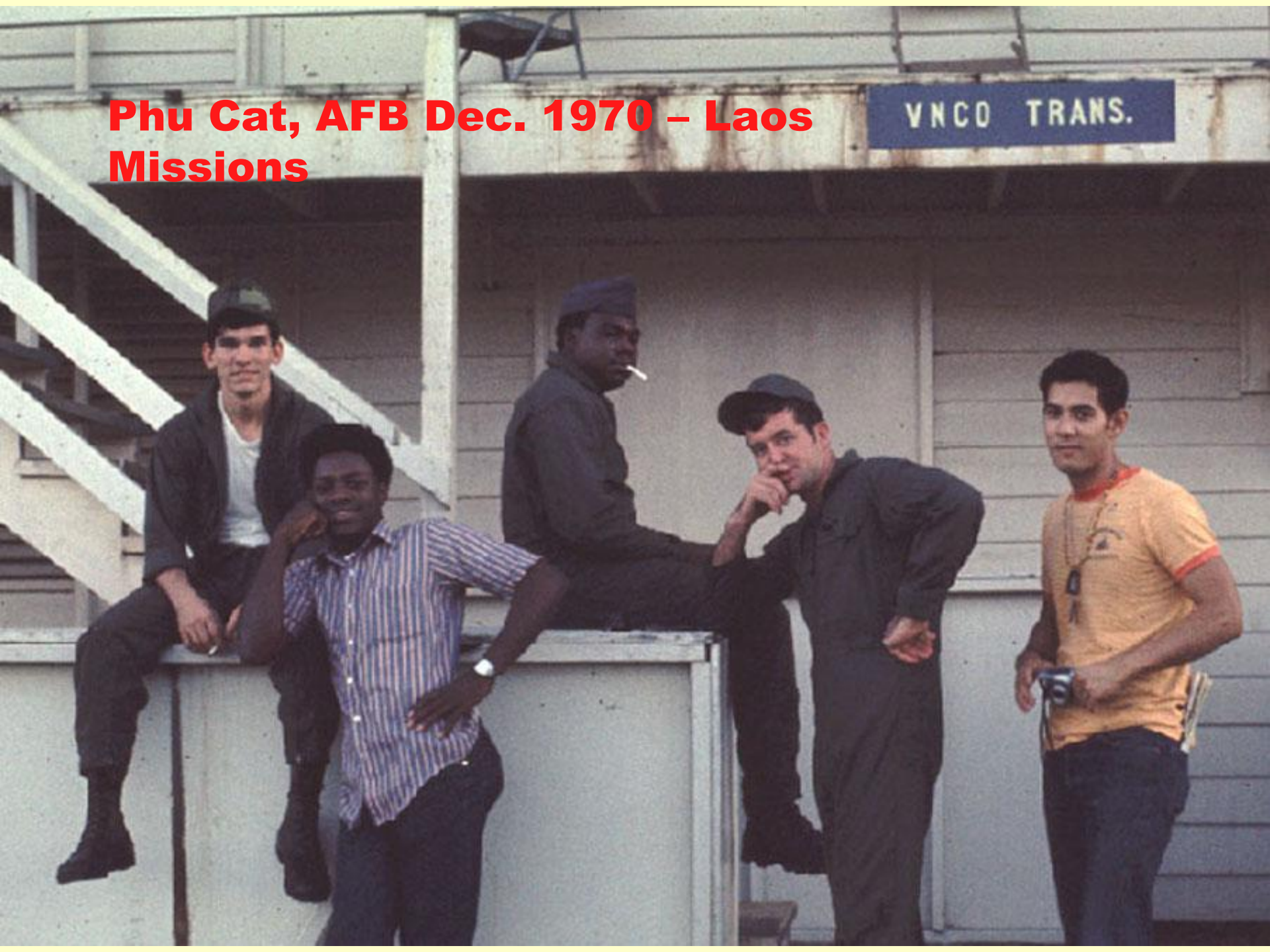


WE DEFEND:
SPECIAL FORCES CAMPS
AIR BASES
OUTPOSTS
TROOPS IN CONTACT

WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS
BELOW THE JUNGLE CANOPY
HIM THE DARK

THE SHADOW KNOWS

**Phu Cat, AFB Dec. 1970 – Laos
Missions**



Phu Cat AFB Dec. 1970 Bolevens Plateau, Laos



**Da Nang AFB, Northern S. Vietnam,
Operation "Lam Son 719", Feb. 1971**

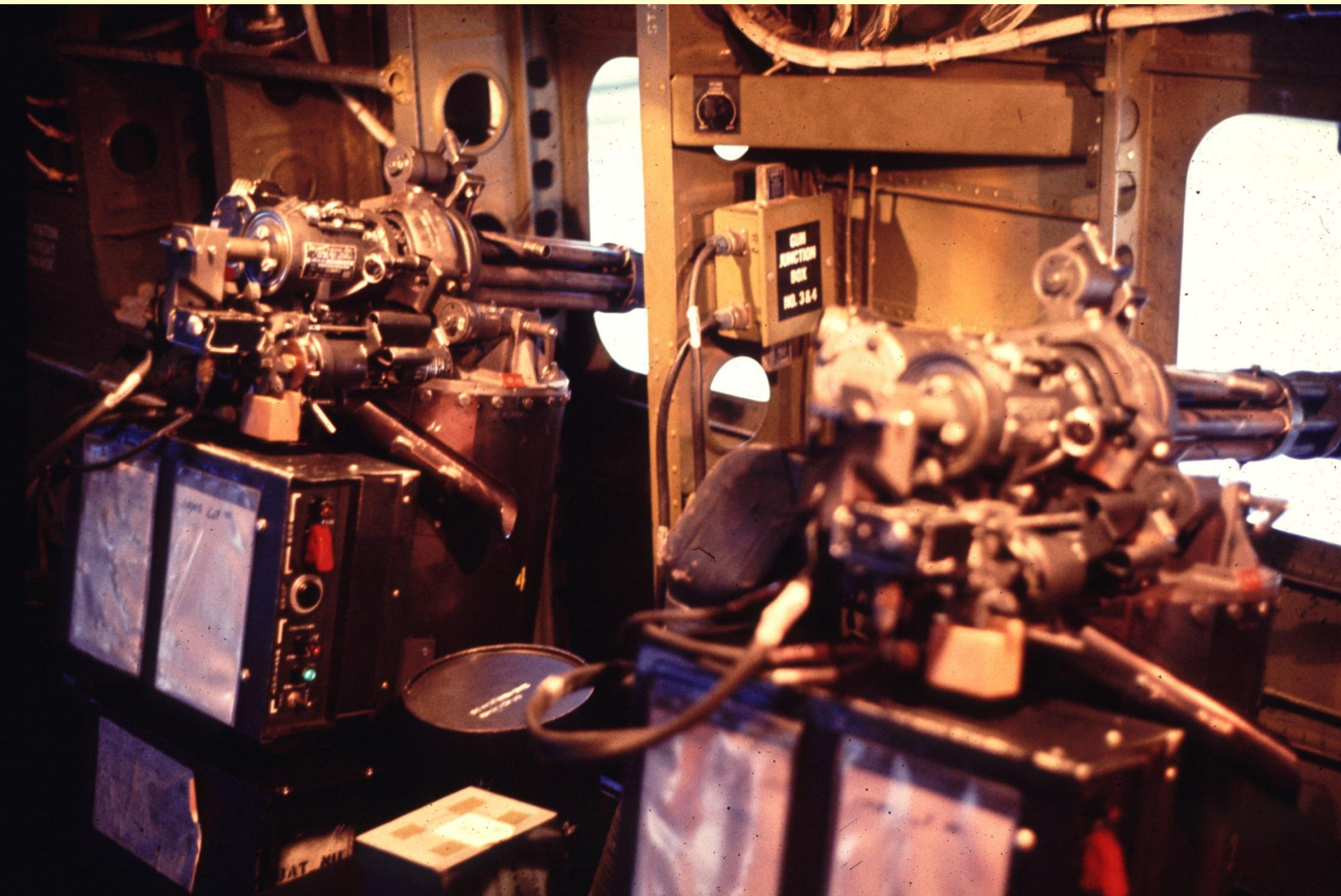














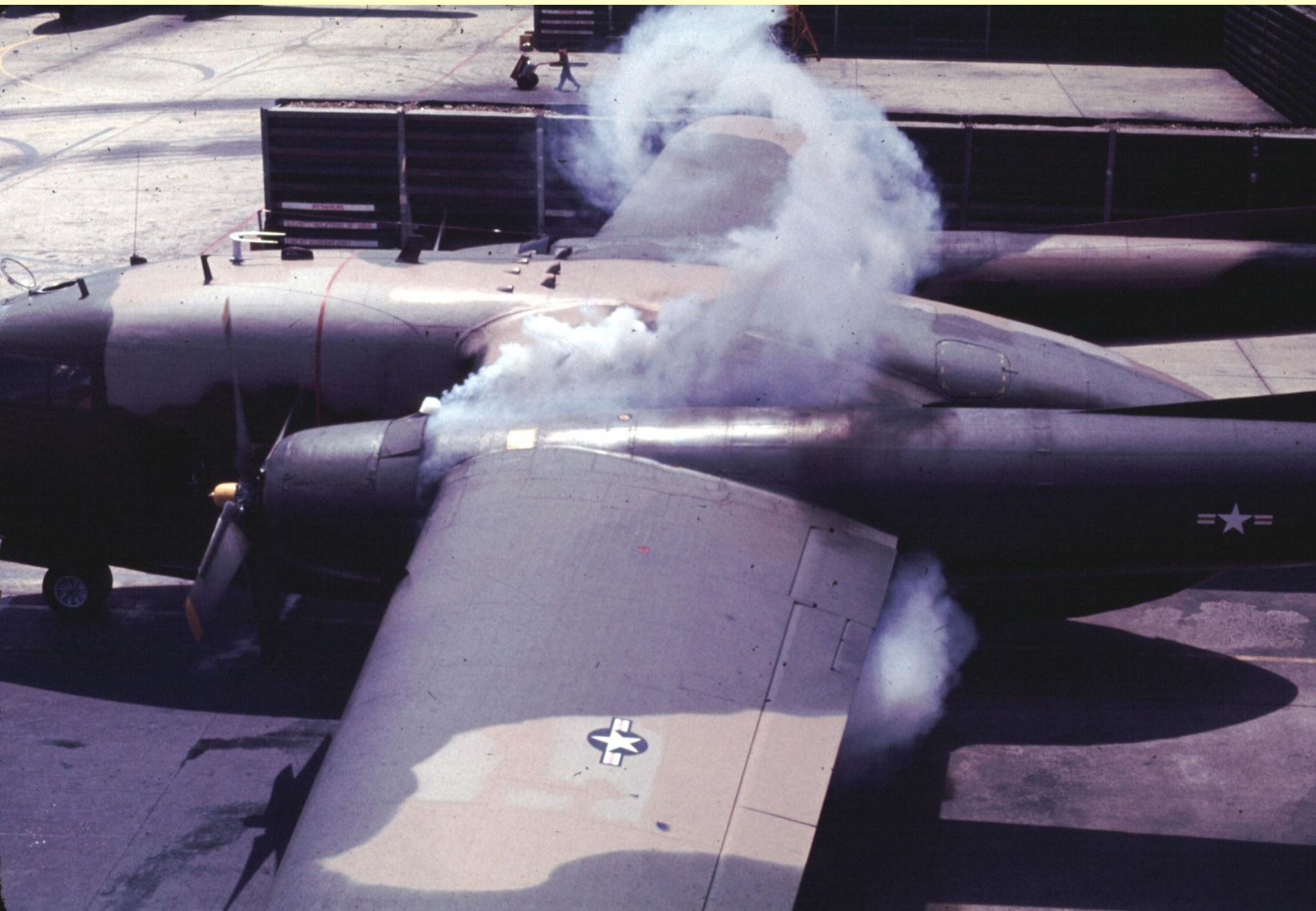
Ea Mini-Gun shoots up to 6000 rds /min (100 per sec)





**Xeon 20,000 watt
Variable-beam lamp
(1.5 Million Candle
power),
operates in visible
(White)
or IR (invisible to
human eye)**





Max T.O. Wt. 64,000 lb
Typical expended 27,000 rds per mission

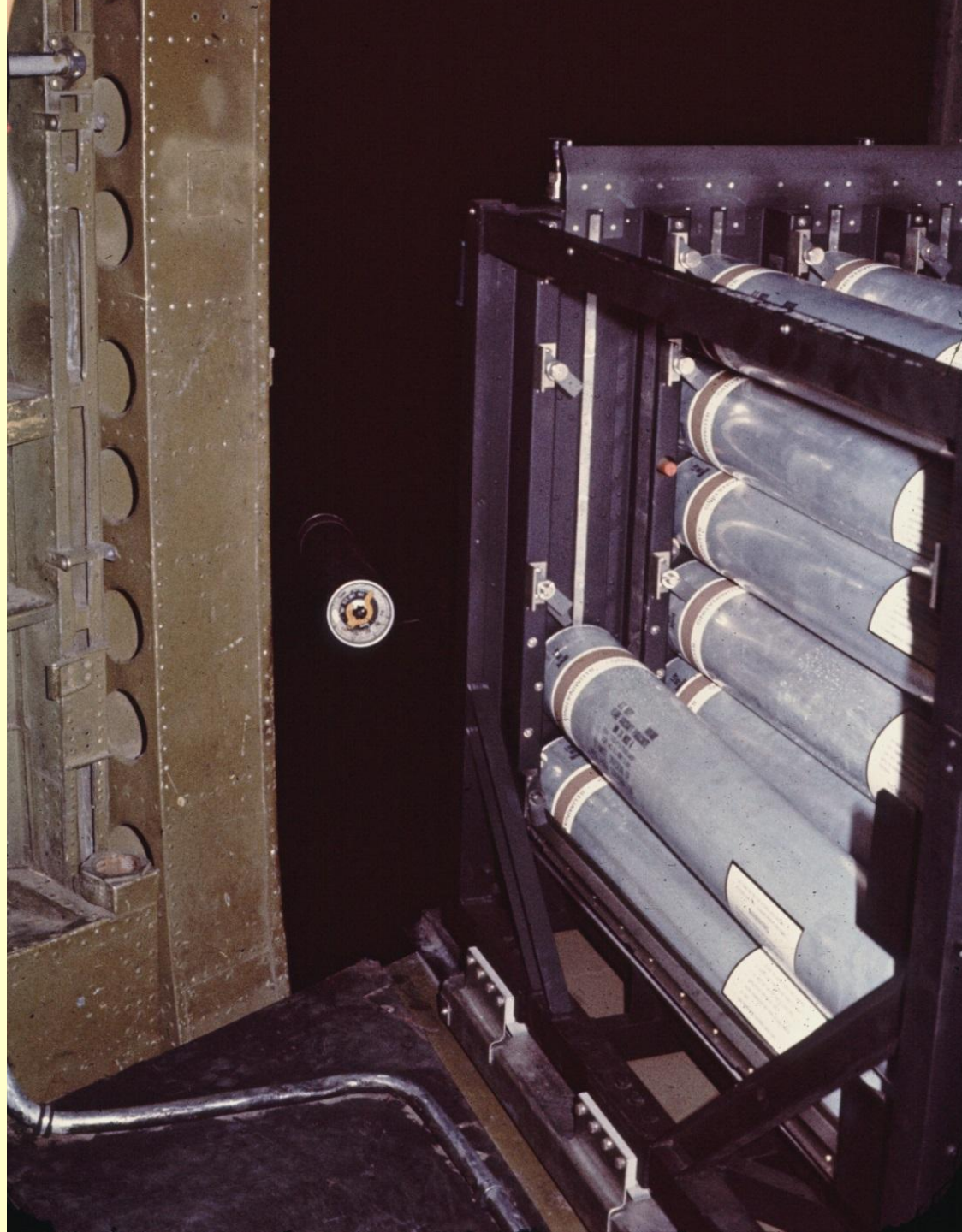




Flare Launcher



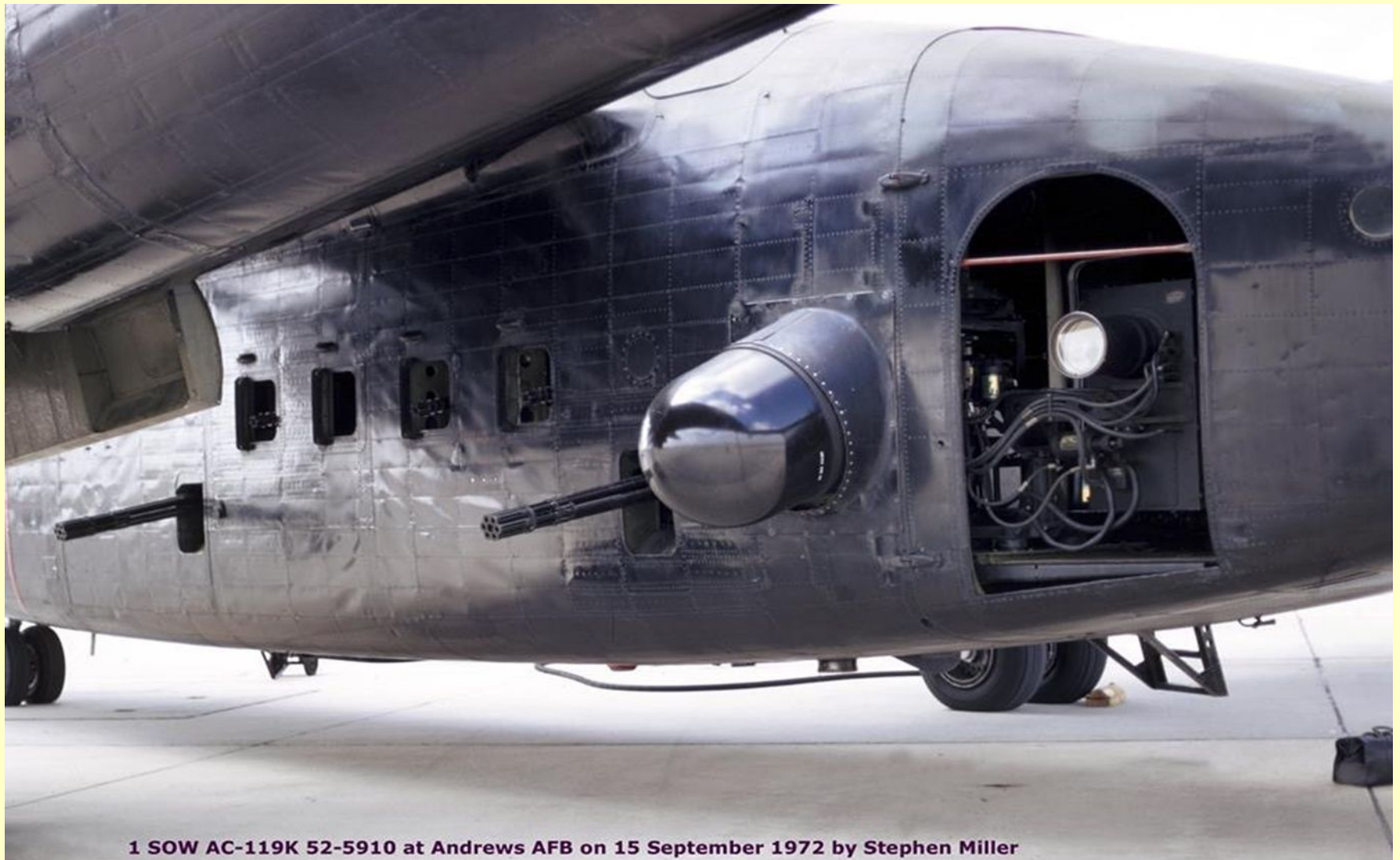
- LAU-74/A Flare Launcher
- Capacity: (24) Mk 24 Magnesium Flares
- Flare Rating: 2,000,000 Candlepower







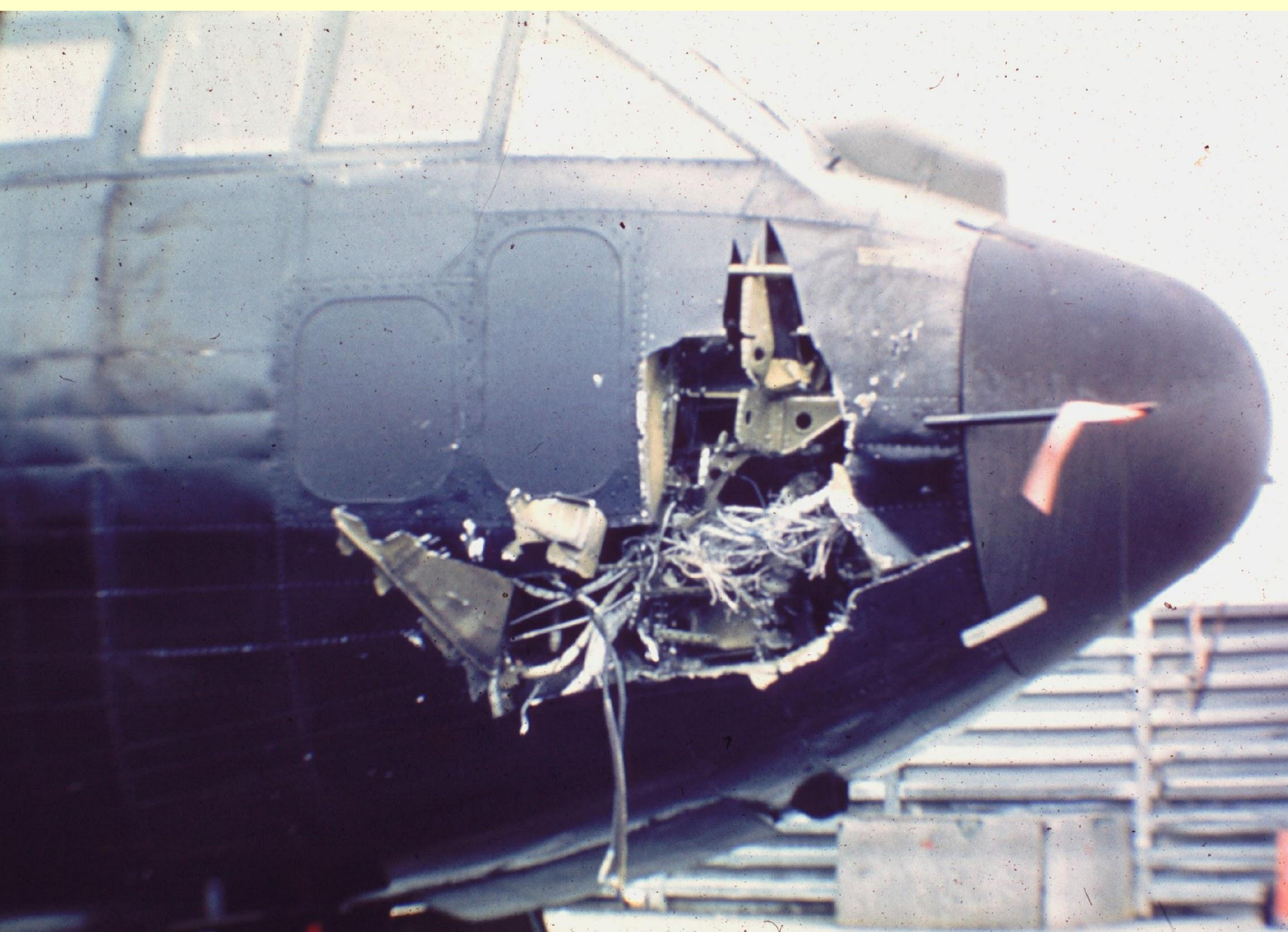
AC-119K Stinger



1 SOW AC-119K 52-5910 at Andrews AFB on 15 September 1972 by Stephen Miller



AC-119K Stinger Gunship (jet engines, FLIR, 2 ea 20 mm Vulcan Gatling Guns)



What is black and green, and full of crispy critters?





The Shadow

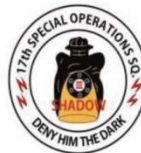
Dedicated to the members of the 71st Special Operations Squadron, a USAF reserve unit, and the 17th Special Operations Squadron, a regular USAF unit. The 71st ferried the AC 119Gs to Vietnam and established the aircraft as an effective defensive weapon in early 1969. The 17th continued with the Shadow until the end of the Vietnam conflict.

We especially dedicate the memorial to our comrades who have "slipped the surly bonds of earth" as they made the ultimate sacrifices.

DEDICATED 13 JULY 95

**www.ac-119gunships.com or
<http://airwarvietnam.com/17sos.htm>**

WE REMEMBER



May 2 1972

Captain Terrence F. Courtney

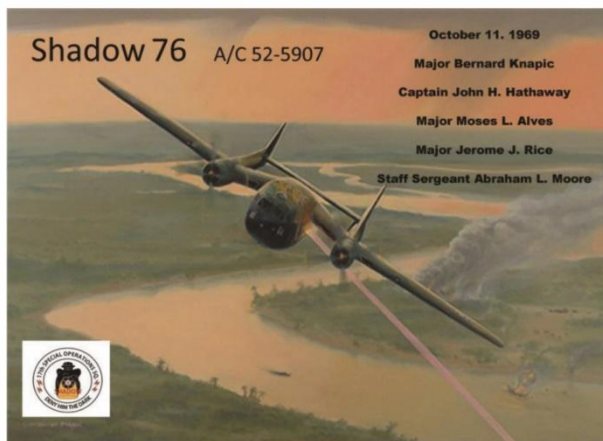
Captain David R. Slagle

Staff Sergeant Kenneth R. Brown



Stinger 41

A/C 53-7826



Shadow 76 A/C 52-5907

October 11, 1969

Major Bernard Knapic

Captain John H. Hathaway

Major Moses L. Alves

Major Jerome J. Rice

Staff Sergeant Abraham L. Moore



Shadow 78 A/C 53-8155

April 27, 1970

First Lieutenant Thomas L. Lubbers

First Lieutenant Charles M. Knowles

Major Meredith G. Anderson

Master Sergeant Joseph C. Jeszeck

Staff Sergeant Robert F. Fage Jr.

Sergeant Michael J. Vangelisti



Lemon 10 A/C 52-5935

June 7, 1970

Staff Sergeant Clyde Alloway

Lemon

June 13, 1972

Captain Thomas R. Hamman

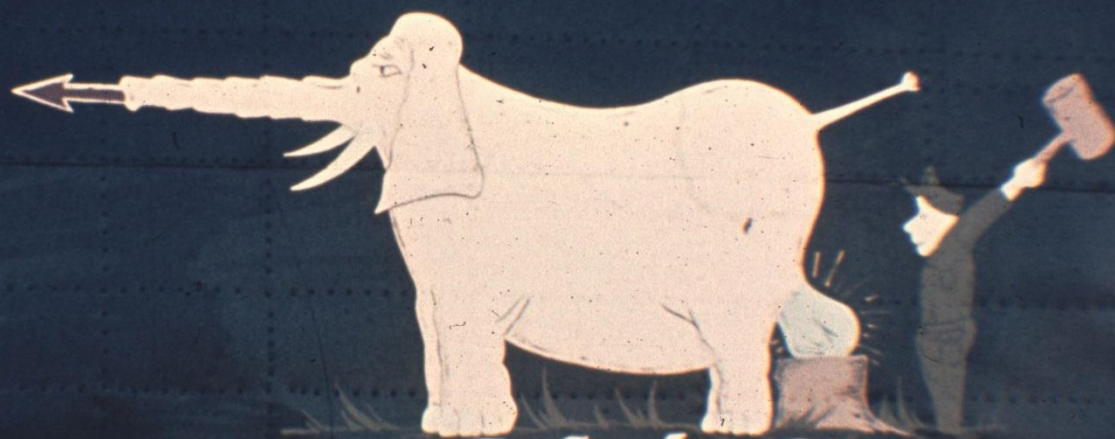
Ground Casualty

January 27, 1973

Sergeant John O'Neal Rucker

Ground Casualty





'The Polish Cannon'



SPECTRE

16 Special Operations Squadron



AC-130J “Ghostrider” – Dulles Airport, Wash’, DC
2023 AC-119 Association Reunion