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The Deployment and Development of a Tactical Signal Intelligence Capability in Southeast Asia 1962-64, Headquarters United States Air Force Security Service, 15 July 1969 (Volume II)

A Special Historical Study, Development of USAFSS Capability In Southeast Asia, Volume III, 1963 - A Year Of Difficulty, United States Air Force Security Service, 26 June 1964

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON DC 20330-1000

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

April 8, 2013

SAF/AAII (MDR)  
1000 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington DC 20330-1000

This is in response to your 27 December 2007, Mandatory Declassification Review of: Special Historical Study: Development of USAFSS Capability in Southeast Asia by Thomas Thompson San Antonio, TX: HQ USAFSS, 1963.

The Air Force reviewed the requested documents and has no objection to the release of this information.

However, the National Security Agency have determined that the information covered with overlays meets the criteria for classification as set forth in Section I ,4 subparagraphs (c), (d) and. (g) and remains classified SECRET and CONFIDENTIAL as provided in Section 1.2 of E.O. 13526. In addition, the names of NSA employees and information related to NSA/CSS functions and activities are exempt from release in accordance with the provisions of Section 6, Public Law 86-36 (U.S. Code 402 note), as provided for in Section 3.5 (f) of E.O, 13526. The withheld information is exempt from automatic declassification in accordance with Section 3.3(b) (3) and (6) of the Executive Order. Once the overlay-marked information has been removed from the enclosures, the NSA classification markings/handling instructions should be lined through.

Should this decision be appealed write to the address listed below within 60 days of this denial, file an appeal in writing to the NSA/CSS MDR Appeal Authority (DJ5), National Security Agency, 9800 Savage Road, STE 6881, Fort George G. Meade, MD 20755-6881. The appeal must be postmarked no later than 60 calendar days after the date of the denial letter. The appeal shall reference the initial denial of access and shall contain, in sufficient detail and particularity, the grounds *upon which the* requester believes the release of information is required.

The undersigned is the action officer and can be reached at (703) 693-2560.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PJ', is positioned above the printed name.

PENNY JENKINS  
Mandatory Declassification Review Manager

Attachment:  
Requested document

28 MAR 1963

DECLASSIFIED

A Special Historical Study

DEVELOPMENT OF USAFSS CAPABILITY  
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

VOLUME I

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS - 1955-1961

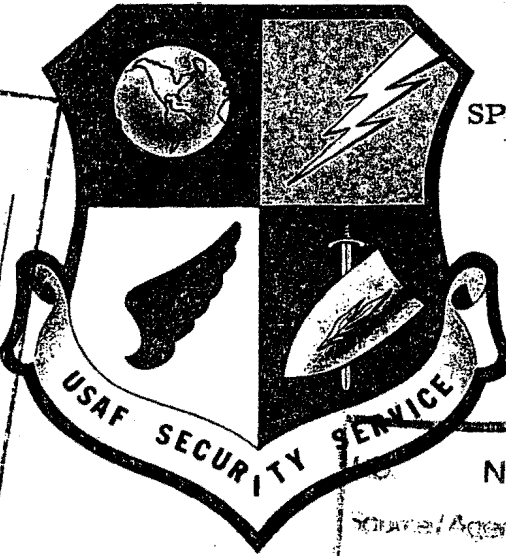
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HQ USAFSS TSC NO 63-1212

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DECLASSIFIED

A Special Historical Study

DEVELOPMENT OF USAFSS CAPABILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Volume I

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS - 1955-1961

This material contains information affecting the national defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws (Title 18, U.S.C., Sections 793, 794, and 798) the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

Prepared By:

MSGT THOMAS N. THOMPSON

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Chief, Historical Division  
Office of Information

United States Air Force Security Service

HQ USAFSS TSC 63-1212

FRONTISPIECE

"The next few years will be critical for the future of Southeast Asia. Members of the Armed Forces of the United States who serve there could have no more important or more challenging mission than that of helping to strengthen the forces of peace and freedom in that area, and thus contributing to the security of our own country and that of the rest of the free world."

\*\*\*\*\*DOD Pamphlet for Commanders,  
This Changing World, Vol 2, No.  
4, 10 August 1962.

F O R E W O R D

Since the Korean War, the United States and the rest of the Free World have become involved in numerous conflicts around the globe requiring the use of military forces. These conflicts have been identified by such terms as crises, limited wars, contingencies, situations, brush fire wars, emergencies, guerrilla wars, insurgencies, and other such terms aimed at describing the type of conflict as well as distinguishing it from general war. But regardless of the type of conflict or the term used to describe it, the forces involved in such military engagements must rely upon intelligence information the same as in "normal" wars.

Although the provision of intelligence to military commanders is as old as war itself, this new type of war has created many unique problems for military commanders, military planners, and military intelligence organizations. Perhaps a study of these problems, their causes and effects, and methods used to solve them could be passed over lightly if this new era of warfare were soon to end, or if the United States and other free nations of the world could divorce themselves from involvement in the conflicts. But the era will not end in the near future nor can the free world stand idly by while the Communists, directed from Moscow and Peiping, continually strive to eliminate Western influence in the recently

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emerging independent nations while at the same time exerting political, military, and economic pressure to win them to the Communist way of life. As President Kennedy warned in 1961: ". . . the adversaries of freedom plan to consolidate their territory -- to exploit, to control, and finally to destroy the hopes of the world's newest nations. . . . It is a contest of will and purpose as well as force and violence -- a battle for minds and souls as well as lives and territory. And in that contest we cannot stand aside."

Since it is obvious that the Communists will continue these tactics, and since the U.S. is committed morally, as well as politically via treaties and agreements, to help these new nations resist Communist aggression and subversion, the study of these conflicts, crises, and emergencies cannot be passed over lightly. The lessons that can be learned from current and past situations might well spell the difference between success and failure in future conflicts of a similar nature. It is from that premise that the USAFSS Historical Division embarked upon this series of historical studies concerned with the collection, production, and dissemination of communications intelligence for use by the military forces opposing the Communist threat during limited wars. A special effort has been devoted to this study because Southeast Asia is perhaps



the area of strongest Communist pressure, and therefore of the most serious threat to freedom -- a threat that, if not countered, would imperil all of Asia and, ultimately, our own freedom.

Other studies already completed or programmed in this series include USAFSS Actions in Korea, USAFSS Performance in the Cuban Crisis, a Summary of USAFSS Activities During the Middle East, Taiwan Straits, and Berlin Crises, and An Historical Analysis of USAFSS Emergency Reaction Capabilities and Performances.

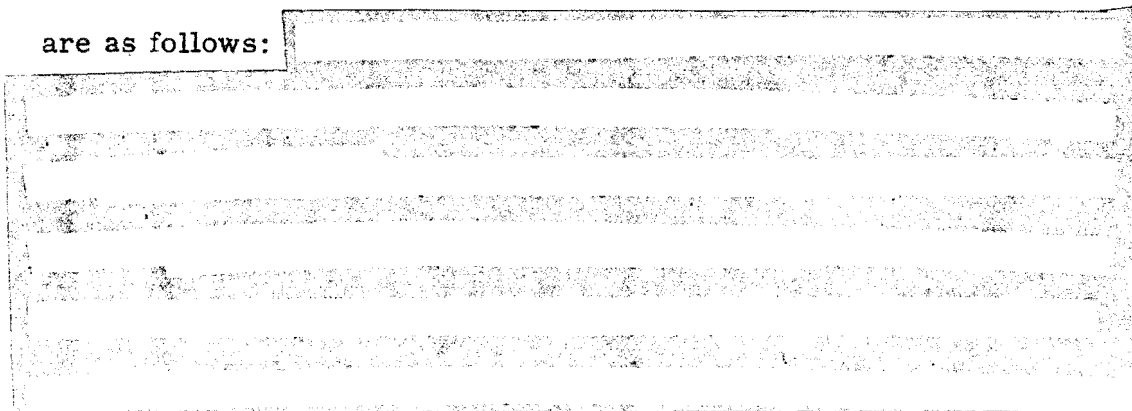
Although the problems encountered by USAFSS, PACAF, subordinate commands, Hq USAF, the Defense Department, the State Department, NSA, and other military and government agencies are covered in detail in this study, only a minimal effort has been devoted to historical analysis and the drawing of conclusions. Nonetheless, a great deal of effort was devoted to the accurate and comprehensive assemblage and presentation of all the facts pertinent to the command's activities directly and indirectly related to the conflict in Southeast Asia. The study will be presented in two volumes. This, the first one, is concerned primarily with the initial requirements for COMINT support of U.S. forces in that area plus the problems of planning, programming, and deploying a COMINT capability sufficient to meet the requirements. The second volume will cover the USAFSS build-up in Southeast Asia and the actual

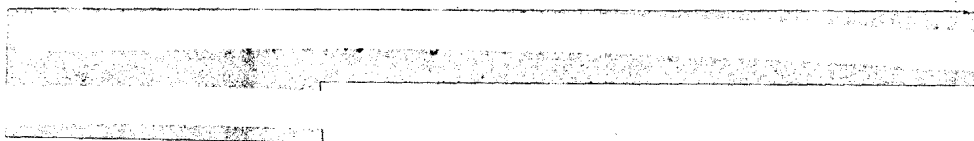
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operations of USAFSS COMINT organizations.

The USAFSS capability originally established to meet such crises as the one in Southeast Asia was embodied in small organizations known as COMINT Contingency Units. These units consisted of personnel and equipment normally over and above that required to perform the regular mission of the organization to which they were assigned. They were designed for quick and easy deployment to areas where COMINT support was needed. Although the term "Contingency" has given way to "Emergency" to identify the conflicts and situations about which these studies are concerned, and although the USAFSS COMINT Contingency Units (CCU's) currently are referred to as Emergency Reaction Units (ERU's), the former terms are used in this study since they were used in the source material from which the study was compiled.

This volume contains no supporting documents because the data contained herein was obtained almost exclusively from histories on file in the USAFSS Historical Archives. These sources are as follows:



EO 3.30(3)  
P.L. 86-36

The second volume of this study is being prepared from source material gathered from Hq USAFSS files, which include messages, correspondence, plans, trip reports, policies, etc., unit histories, and interviews; plus a vast quantity of data and material gathered by the author, MSgt Thompson, during a TDY trip to the Far East (including USAFSS sites in Southeast Asia) specifically for that purpose.

The distribution of this and all other USAFSS histories covering COMINT activities is severely limited. They are not seen by personnel directing the Air Force Historical Program. Nonetheless, all USAFSS histories and historical studies are based on USAF guidance and aimed at the objectives established by the USAF Historical Division, foremost of which is "providing data and special historical studies as a guide for Air Force actions."

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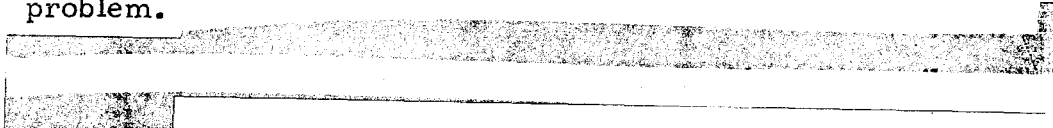
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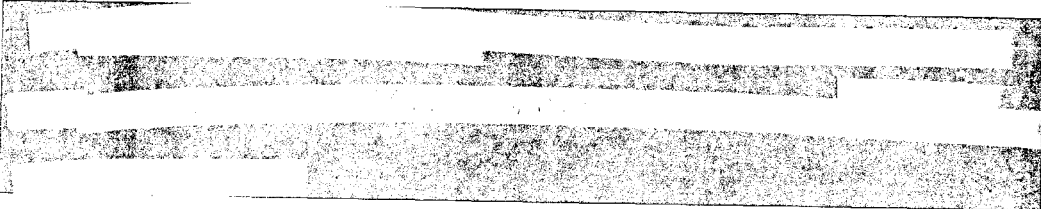
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INTRODUCTIONP.L. 96-36  
EO 3.36(3)The CHICOM's Grow

) The gathering of communications intelligence (COMINT) in Asia in the early days had been comparatively simple as compared with the operation of the Soviet intelligence problem.



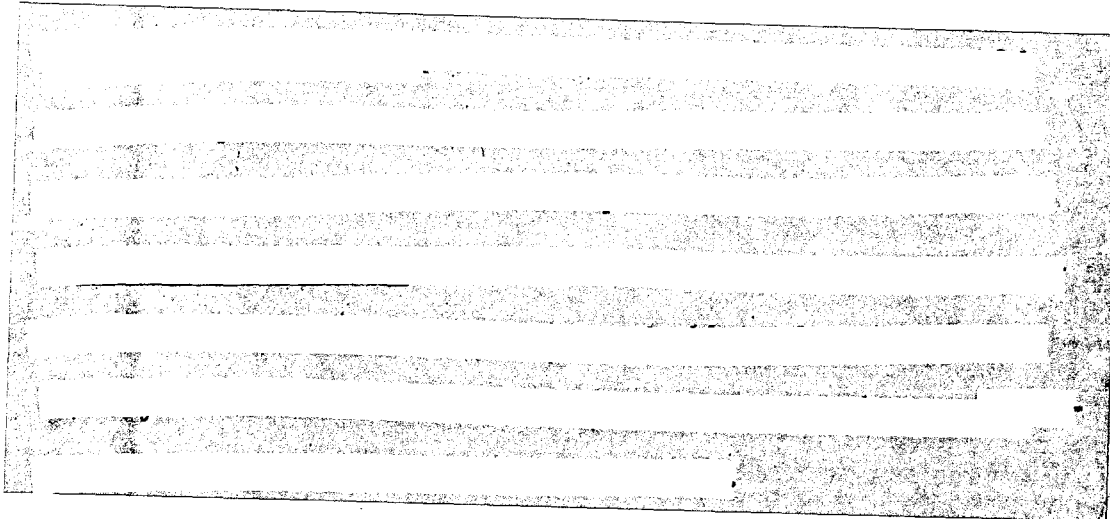
As a consequence, the USAF Security Service operations in that area held a low priority as compared to the Soviet side of the problem. Since the mid-fifties however, there were indications that the Red Chinese were introducing better methods of communications as the vintage of their equipment improved.

P.L. 96-36  
NSA 3.36(3)

) In this respect, the area of operation itself imposed a barrier that became more insurmountable as time passed. There were all sorts of possibilities as the Chinese Communists certainly would take advantage of the geographic protection offered by their vast territorial mass. As the years passed, this fact became quite apparent and it was not difficult to deduce that the possibilities were becoming realities. In 1961,

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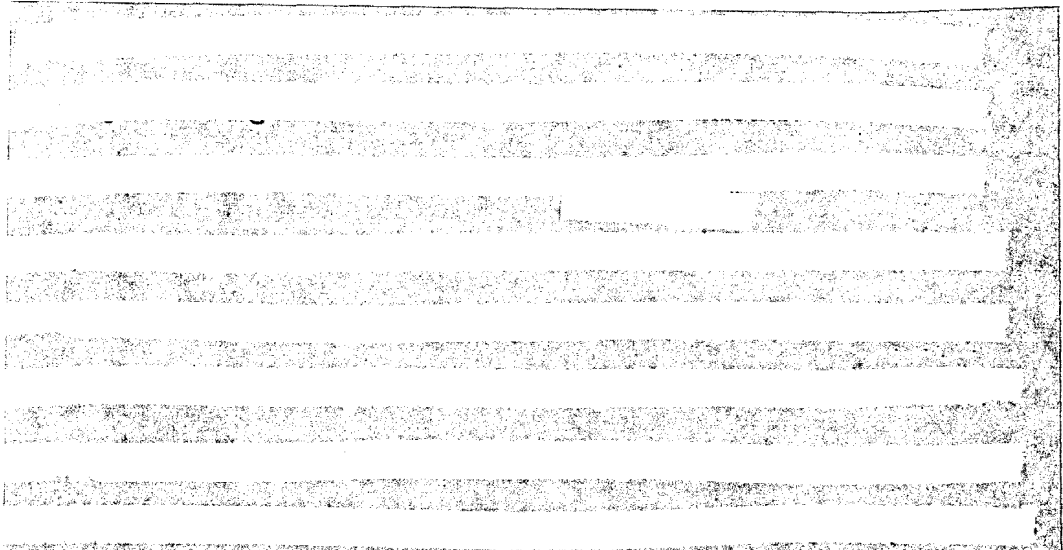
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P.L. 86-36

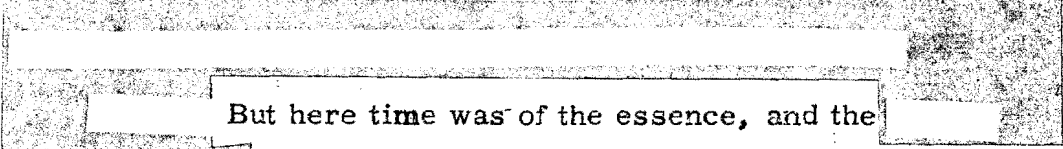
) From a military intelligence point of view, the second had to be assumed to be true. What was the answer then? For actual fact, there was none! By that time, the CHICOM's had introduced multi-channel communications nets and had apparently added other communications security features, because the command air type communications, which had always been transmitted in standard codes, were no longer available. This made it possible, as the "sixties" opened, for the CHICOM's to move entire air armies without it being reflected in intercepted military communications. The effect of such a development on the establishment of an Air Order of Battle for Chinese air forces needs no explaining here -- continuity could not be maintained with facilities used heretofore.

#### Many Special Projects

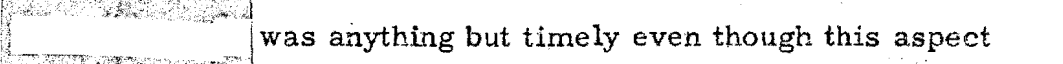
This [redacted] led to a large number of special projects and experiments [redacted]



EO 3.36(3)  
E.O. 3.36(5)  
D.L. 86-36



But here time was of the essence, and the



was anything but timely even though this aspect

was improving. The command needed its own VHF facilities, but, unfortunately, the distance to target areas eliminated the capability to a great extent. This brought on the increased use of airborne intercept platforms -- called Airborne Communications Reconnaissance Platforms (ACRP) -- from Korea to the Philippines. The use of this technique had been limited until 1961 because of the range of B-50 type aircraft used up to that point. Two developments increased the geographical coverage of ACRP, however, when C-130's were brought in to replace the old fleet and two extra staging bases were set up. It was a

EO 3.36(3)  
E.L. 86-36

for the squadron

so in 1961 alternate

staging bases were established

and in the Philippines



to cover southern orbits.

But this was an extremely expensive method of operation -- both from the standpoint of the special equipment needed in the aircraft and from basic aircraft operating costs. So the search had to continue for other possibilities, although many operational observers felt that the only answer was in the form of a communications technological breakthrough -- possibly a communications satellite hovering over China.

#### Southeast Asia Offers Prospect

An answer to improvement, if not solution to the entire problem, lay in the nations making up Southeast Asia. The command earlier had established the fact that heretofore "unheard" communications could be intercepted from Thailand, and there was a great need to establish COMINT facilities there. But these were highly individualistic little nations with inborn suspicions and distrust of neighbors which had been centuries abuilding. But part of the answer lay there; and the U.S. government began working as early as 1955 to get a COMINT production organization established in that area. This was much easier said than done, however, and it took an actual military crisis in Southeast Asia in general to put these nations into a position where it was imperative that they accept U.S. help -- and with it the admission of U.S. troops to their territories. The crisis started in Laos and

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spread to Vietnam between 1960 and the beginning of 1963.

) During this period of crisis, USAFSS units in the Far East operated under great tension as one alert situation followed another. Currently, the effort continues, but some progress was made. The basic problems in the gathering and processing of communications intelligence, in regard to Red China as a whole, remained. This study is devoted to the emergency measures taken to cope with the Soviet and CHICOM activities connected with the continuing internal strife generated by Communist factions in Laos and Vietnam during this two-year period. Along with the support, however, came the opportunity at last to establish some intercept siting in these nations. There was some success, some failure, and a great deal of frustration. Following is a detailed account of these activities.

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Need For S.E.A. Sites Seen Early

By the end of the "frantic fifties," the United States and its free world allies had to accept the fact that the Far East Communist world was at least as dangerous to world freedom as was the Soviet Russian variety. Since the end of World War II, the contention had remained that the Soviets were the ones to watch. The outlook hadn't changed greatly following the Korean War, although the Red Chinese were most active there. Behind the entire philosophy was the doctrine that the Soviets were the driving power, and the Chinese Communists (CHICOM's) were the puppets.

To a great extent this was true, but the picture changed over this decade of tumult, and the regime of Mao Tse Tung was becoming louder and louder in international power politics as it bred controversy in Communist doctrine with Russia. The child was growing -- too much for Soviet Russia, many thought -- and at long last this fact had to be recognized. The Nationalist Chinese under militant Generalissimo Chaing Kai Shek were established on their island bastion, Taiwan. They were continually applying political pressure, and there was an ever-present tension in the Orient; a tension that was always ready to break out into open warfare. The United States was

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solidly committed in the area militarily, with large concentrations in Hawaii, Okinawa, and the Philippines; plus lesser forces in Japan and Korea.

) Great strides had been made toward stable government and economy in Japan. Though political stability in Korea was virtually nonexistent, the development of the Republic of South Korea's armed forces was cause for considerable optimism among most military observers. These were some things the West held in its favor, but there was a single cause for a great deal of concern -- operational military intelligence in respect to the CHICOM ground and air forces on the mainland. Through the early fifties, Red China had made great strides in building its military potential; although arms and equipment from Soviet Russia made up the basic equipment of the CHICOM's. But as the decade drew to a close, word was received that the Red Chinese were advancing in their own development of a nuclear capability. No one knew just how far this had progressed; but the significant fact was that it had started at all.

#### Operational Intelligence Needed

Gleaning of political intelligence went on as it did everywhere in the world. But this type of intelligence was of little value to military planners. They needed more specific knowledge of the capability and the current deployment of military

and air units; and past experience proved that the most reliable sources of information were photo reconnaissance and communications intercept and analysis. But in this respect, Red China offered a challenge difficult to describe or even imagine.

Two blocks of astronomic proportions were these: (a) territorial mass, and (b) the language. There was a physical limit in connection with the first. The interior of China was simply too far away for consistent intercept of communications transmissions and electronic emissions. To develop any problem from an analytical standpoint required material bulk, which simply was not available. The only parts of China on which the USAF Security Service had been able to maintain any real continuity were the northeast, east and southeast portions of the coastal territories. The United Kingdom's Defense Signals Bureau (DSB), operating from Hong Kong, maintained the south portion. This left the entire interior, the southwest, west, northwest, and northern portions of the country still to be exploited.

No USAFSS Sites in S.E.A.

A look at a map of the area clearly showed that if any advance was to be made, some provisions would have to be made for intercept stations in the group of independent states bordering south and southwest China. Possibilities were Pakistan,

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India, Burma, Laos, South Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia. It must be remembered that each of these states was fiercely independent in its own way; and there was a very great danger in lining up with the West because Red China glared down upon them from the north. Actually, only one appeared as a firm possibility -- Thailand (called Siam until 1948). This nation, a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) had maintained its independence for some 700 years. Although Thailand was considered strongly anti-Communist, it had also maintained a very large degree of neutrality.

As early as 1955, the National Security Agency (NSA) had started negotiations to arrange for a USAFSS contingent to be based in Thailand. An intercept station was urgently needed, but the road was anything but smooth. The USAFSS actually conducted a site survey, and felt that the possibilities were there. Due to numerous Thai demands, however, the proceedings were shelved for the next three years. There were many intra-command plans and preparations during that period, but there was no progress made toward establishment of the site.

#### Laos Triggers Opening In Thailand

Thailand, with 21 million people, was under the taut leadership of Prime Minister Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat, who controlled nearly every aspect of the country's operation.

He had assumed this control in 1958 when, during his confinement to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington D.C., the Communists made several successful probes into Thai politics. He was probably the most vigilant anti-Communist leader in Asia.

) That was the picture, then, in mid 1959. The intelligence community of the U.S. needed an intercept post in Southeast Asia, but means of establishing this position had not developed up to that point. In July of that year, however, the break came. Capt. Donald A. Dickinson, ASA historian, said:

. . . Unconfirmed reports reaching the Laotian government told of an armed band of 40 men, whose aim was to creep into Laos from Thailand to assassinate prominent government officials. These and earlier reports indicated the Vietnamese Communists in Thailand might be planning to sabotage strategic points in Laos' capital city of Vientiane.

Although these reports could not be confirmed at the time, the Communist clandestine organization was known to be well developed among the 50,000 Vietnamese refugees occupying the five Thai provinces along the Lao border, and was believed capable of carrying out such a plan. United States intelligence estimates held that the Communists were not likely to risk such a plan, unless the Lao Communist leader, Prince Souphanouvong, had given up trying to maintain his Communist Lao Lak Zat (NLHX) Party as a legal entity.

In a parallel event, police in Thailand arrested 16 Communists and confiscated their weapons, documents, radios, and printing equipment. Thailand's action appeared to be a solid, effective blow at Communist underground operations.

Prime Minister Sarit personally spearheaded that move, being dissatisfied with his government's anti-Communist program and its failure to unearth real proof against

persons detailed as suspected Communists. Following the arrests, the government announced that a preliminary study of confiscated material had resulted in significant evidence on Communist activities.

) By 17 August, however, the Royal Laotian Army had succeeded in reconquering most of the villages lost to the rebels in Sam Neua Province. Press reports quoted the Vientiane government as saying, ". . . the bulk of Communist forces have apparently withdrawn leaving behind 1000 men to conduct political activity and prepare for the next action by Communist troops." But just as the situation appeared to be quieting down, Communist China, whose propaganda had been restrained up to that point (all their top leaders had been away from Peking at a secret meeting in the northwestern Chinese city of Sian) stepped into the picture. Press releases, sounding strangely like those proceeding Red China's entry into the Korean War, said:

. . . Sole responsibility for the present situation rests with the United States and the (Royal Lao) government; this naturally poses a threat to China and North Vietnam. To eliminate the tension in Laos, all American military bases must be abolished."

#### Initial Capability Nil

) On 22 August, DIRNSA turned to USAFSS and asked for "extraordinary action" to gather data on North Vietnam or rebel Lao movements along the Laotian border. The stark fact was, however, that neither USAFSS nor the Army Security Agency



had the wherewithall to supply such information; neither intercept nor processing. NSA Pacific, in the Hawaii area, then asked the commander-in-chief of U.S. Pacific Forces for entry rights into Thailand for operation of an intercept site. So, while it was unfortunate that the Laotians were suffering from the development, the intelligence community at last had its foot in the door in Southeast Asia. But it would be some time before USAFSS became involved. Captain Dickinson continued in his report that:

. . . 3 September (1959) was a pivotal point in the history of United States intelligence efforts on Laos and North Vietnam. Final clearance was received from the State Department for entrance of USASAPAC's contingency force into Thailand. The DIRNSA contingency plan went into effect, naming [redacted] as the location.

EO 3.32(3)  
P.L. 86-36

The choice of ASA for the job in Thailand represented a major turnaround in DIRNSA policy. For some time, DIRNSA had felt that the AFSS was the logical choice for any intercept effort in Thailand; such thinking dated from an Air Force site survey conducted some years earlier. They had not wholly abandoned their choice of the AFSS for any long-range tasks in that country, however, but believed that the Laos and Vietnam situations were fluid, could develop in any of several directions, and could be handled best by the Army Security Agency . . . .

#### ASA Starts; USAFSS Site Survey Follows

) Through 1959 and into 1960, ASA and the Army Corps of Engineers waded through the mound of preparations and construction for the early operations. This proved to be an enormous

task. The site facilities had to be built up from flooded rice paddies which had been designated by the Thai government as the operating location. There were no immediate plans for USAFSS units, but in May 1960, the [REDACTED]

EO 1.3c(3)  
E.O. 12812-2

[REDACTED] was told to send

a site survey team into the Army's installation in support of a highly sensitive intelligence mission [REDACTED]

The intercept-analysis team was [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The team was assigned two manual Morse positions with a third available if it was needed.\*

This small unit hadn't been working long before it realized that it was intercepting communications that were not being intercepted anywhere else. Assuming that the survey would be discontinued in November, the team kept at the job, hoping that the military and political actions in Laos would trigger some activity in connection with air defense operations in West China -- if such an air defense network did in fact exist. Manual Morse communications intercept increased over the first three months of the survey's life, though comparable growth in voice traffic was absent. As a matter of fact, the project officer felt that the amount of time devoted to the attempt to intercept voice

\* A comprehensive account of this development is included in the ASA History.

communications was in great variance with the success up to then.

Prompts Continuation

) That was a moot point, however, because the

prompted NSA, on 30 September 1960, to call for continuation of the operation

much valuable and unique communications intelligence on Southwest China air targets and it had a ". . . strong requirement" for continued operation. The small contingent had discovered and developed the Southwest China Air Defense District communications -- most of which could be exploited. The intercepted traffic, when combined with civil air material, showed that the Southwest China Air Defense District was operating a full complex of communications, including command air, flight service, fighter operations, and air defense. These were all normal to other air defense districts and showed that the regional operation was complete. NSA felt that ". . . it is probable that SIGINT (evidence) of Chinese military action in Southeast Asia will be developed most rapidly from analysis of communications of this district."

At the 6925th RSM, Clark AB, Philippines, the

problem had been on assignment for a long time, but attempts to develop these same communications at that station had not been successful; even with technical information coming from

[REDACTED]

So the new station, its minute force notwithstanding, remained the primary source of intelligence on the Southwest China operations. And the area was becoming more and more important.

Survey Extended; Permanency Expected

) The decision to continue the operations didn't come as a complete surprise [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] By 5 October 1960, he had selected personnel to replace those already operating the USAFSS Thailand station.

But here the same difficulty that had plagued the command -- and would continue to do so in the years to come -- came up.

As long as the operation continued as a site survey, the parent unit could not permanently transfer personnel to man the station.

This meant that those assigned could stay only temporarily and the problem of experience on the job came in view. Despite this, Maj. Gen. Millard Lewis, Commander of USAFSS, gave

[REDACTED] the responsibility for personnel assignment, adding ". . . nothing which the present team has learned will be

lost to (the) replacement team." This was essential, he felt, to keep the operation at the "highly efficient level . . . established."

) By 22 October, all of the top-level arrangements had been made to extend the operation as a site survey. The name was changed to Special Project [redacted] and one significant change was made in the distribution policies. Connected with [redacted] the distribution of the material was limited. But when it was divorced from the sensitive project, the intelligence and technical information could be released to all COMINT consumers without restriction.

[redacted] Gets Development Job

There were many details to straighten out, among them the development of reliable communications to get the material to users. All of these developments were placed in the hands of the [redacted] commander, and they produced no unsolvable problems. Over the next two months the operations continued -- and apparently grew more indispensable as they went on. The growing importance led NSA, late in December, to add two more manual Morse positions and also establish the capability of the site to issue Spot and CRITIC reports - a capability lacking up to that time. To help the 6925th RSM manage

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its processing mission in connection with the Vietnamese and Laos operations, NSA agreed to reduce some of the RSM's normal mission requirements. At that time, NSA gave its first indication that the site might eventually be a permanent installation.

#### Political Vaguarities Dim Picture

) Brigadier General Arthur W. Kellond, commander of the 6920th Security Wing, Wheeler A.B., Hawaii, told [redacted]

[redacted] that he would have to proceed with extreme caution in the buildup of the station and expansion of its facilities. He emphasized that ". . .no additional demands should be made at this time, and . . .to do otherwise might well jeopardize our position at that location [redacted]". On 29 December, NSA called a halt to all efforts toward early expansion, but said it would open talks with the State Department. So, for the time being, the future of the command's most promising location in that part of the world was in doubt.

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#### Operations Grow Anyway

During this period, however, two significant developments took place in connection with Southeast Asia Operations:

(a) [redacted] the authority to report in the Spot and CRITIC series, and (b) the 6920th SW Contingency Unit was placed on Defense Condition (DEFCON) II, in support of Pacific

Air Forces (PACAF) Laos operations. As to the first development, the site now had the responsibility to handle these reports; but the personnel buildup was stalemated, so it would have to issue them with the assigned personnel (who were manning what was supposed to be a purely intercept station). The DEFCON was to last for some six months and will be discussed in detail later in this study.

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Sarit Objects To Big Buildup But.....

) Many of these plans and proposals had been going on amid the undertone of objections from Thailand Ambassador Johnson, who continued to argue that Sarit would oppose a large buildup of American personnel in his country. Presumably, these had led to NSA's decision in December to hold up on plans to enlarge the site. But the command had to continue on its own with many specialized preparations, looking forward to the day when augmentation would come. Very candidly speaking, the small operation

[redacted] -- or not attempt to enlarge

it. In March 1961, the [redacted] told the 6920th SW that:

. . . [redacted] intercept of Southwest China Communications still unique and extremely valuable. . . . remains best source intercept on low echelon air warning communications, and in some instances is only source. . . . On February 17 assigned Southwest China fighter operations . . . communications on positions [redacted] These communications originally intercepted and developed exclusively at

[redacted] Due USA-57 (6925th RSM) capability to copy without interruption their intercept superior in quantity . . . However, if available intercept positions at [redacted] allowed full cover (Southwest China fighter operations) communications their intercept would be superior in quantity and quality to that of USA-57. . . . During recent extremely sensitive project [redacted] intercept of concerned communications vastly superior to that of USA-57. The commitments of this headquarters with respect this particular project would have been poorly met without [redacted] intercept. . . . Dollar for dollar far more has been derived from [redacted] intercept than from that of any other field station during last nine months. Almost impossible to speculate on what might be accomplished by [redacted] if their presently limited intercept resources were increased to allow coverage of Far West (and) Northwest China communications, as well as cover of other Southwest China communications such as Command Air and Flight Service.

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Such testimonial could not be ignored. The [redacted]

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[redacted] striving to improve its COMINT posture in every way,

urged 24-hour-per-day operation of each of the two manual Morse positions. Local negotiations with ASA's [redacted]

[redacted] showed no objection to some extra people. This picture

led General Lewis, on a trip to the area in April 1961, to say

". . . now is the time to augment. . . ."

Communist Action Spreads; DEFCON Called

Over the period of a year, during which time the unit had been in action, the military-political situation in Southeast Asia in general, and Laos in particular, deteriorated

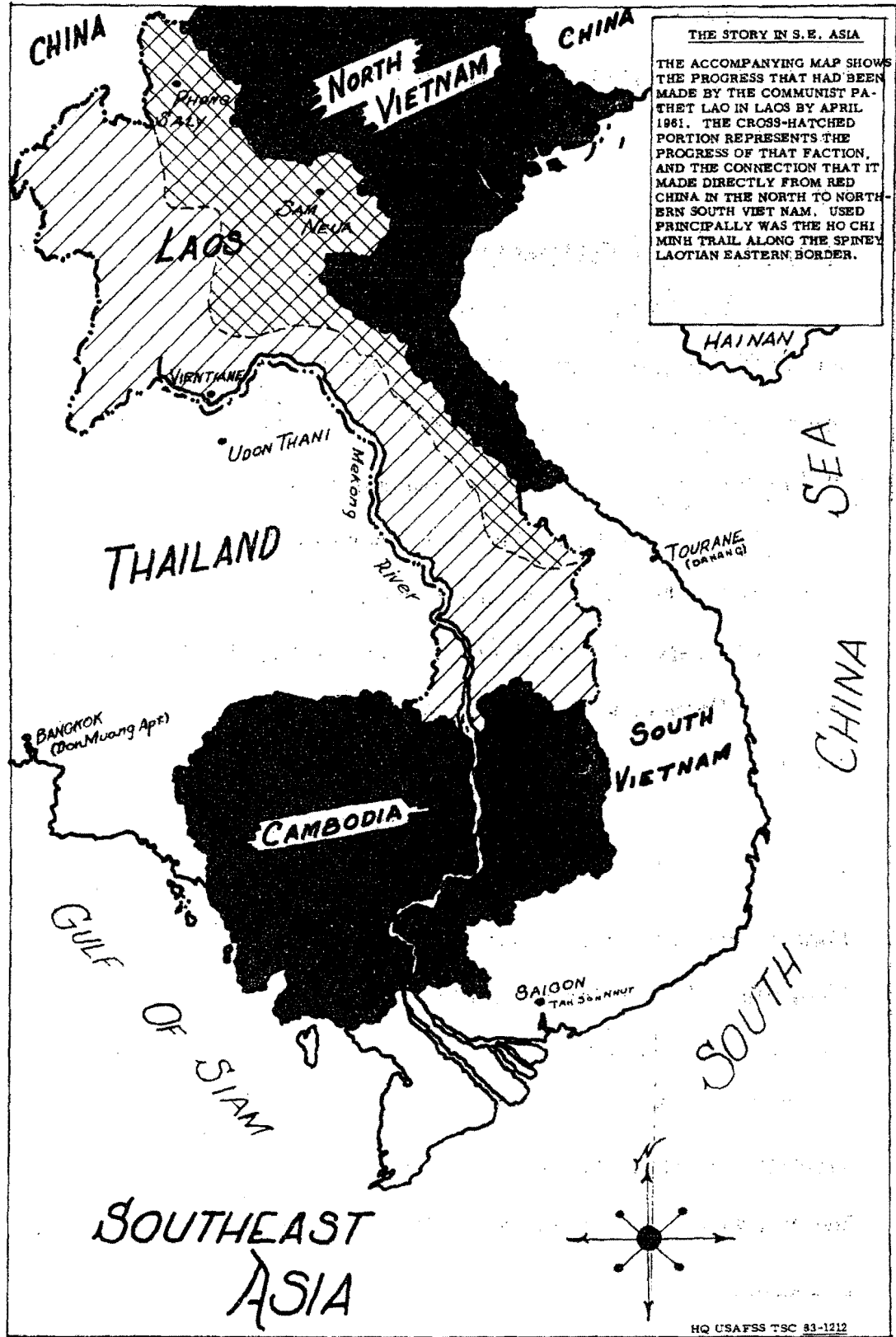
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steadily. Since August 1960, when a paratroop captain named Kong Le had led a successful coup against the Lao government, the Communists had steadily improved their position in Laos until they had secured enough Laotian territory to open a logistic connection all the way from Red China and North Vietnam to South Vietnam.\* Furthermore, such aid as had been put into the area by the U.S. appeared to have no significant effect against the Communist effort.

) Since December 1960, however, two actions in the Pacific theater had a definite effect on the operations in USAFSS units in the area. First, Joint Task Force 116 declared DEFCON III condition at the time; and this automatically alerted the 6920th SW Contingency Unit which was manned by personnel from units subordinate to the [REDACTED] Personnel from Korea to the Philippines went on immediate standby status awaiting orders from PACAF to deploy to the trouble area. Since this was the first actual deployment of the unit under joint plans, a number of weaknesses showed up in the advance preparations. As it turned out, these had no significant bearing on a deployment because

\* The Ho Chi Minn Trail along the east border of Laos was the only established line of communication between northern North Vietnam and South Vietnam. Pathet Lao control of the trail opened it to use by the Communist Viet Cong for supporting their guerrilla operations in the south. (See map next page).



the DEFCON was reduced before a move was ordered. Things could have been very difficult, however. The "contingency deployment" of an ACRP aircraft from Korea will be discussed later in this study.

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All Not Well With Contingency Unit

Early in January, Maj. Elmer D. Richardson,



was

named contingency unit commander. He immediately went to the Philippines to be sure that all arrangements had been, or would be, made to move the unit to its Southeast Asia destination. The following day he and Lt. Col. George P. Ward, commander of the 6925th RSM, went to the commander of the JTF 116 air component -- a Colonel LaClare -- to discuss the contingency unit's support to the task force. Unfortunately, the joint commander was not COMINT cleared and indoctrinated, so Maj. Richardson could not give him the full story. This was always a difficulty in joint operations and the contingency unit commander spent considerable effort trying to get him cleared. All of these were unsuccessful, however.

The 6925th RSM, which was responsible for the maintenance and readiness of the unit vans and equipment, said the unit was ready to go. So all that remained was being sure the

means were available to get it to its destination. From the beginning, however, there were some drawbacks. The unit needed heavier hauling equipment for the vans, particularly if rough terrain was met (as it was sure to be). Colonel LaClare said this would not be available.

During the next two days, Maj. Richardson set up his priority for airlift requirements as follows:

1. Radio telephone van.
2. Manual Morse van.
3. VHF/Direction Finder van.
4. Analysis van.
5. Maintenance van.
6. Both communications vans.
7. HF/Direction Finder facility.

Airlift Unsettled. (TSCW) When he gave the priority listing to the air component commander shortly afterward, Col. LaClare viewed them with alarm. He told Maj. Richardson that the initial air deployment figures should be cut to the absolute minimum; with the rest of the unit to follow by surface transportation. The unit commander's attempts to explain the importance of high priority airlift for the unit were again frustrated by the fact that Col. LaClare was not cleared for COMINT information.

Under any circumstances, the air component commander said he wasn't sure just how much airlift he would initially have. So Maj. Richardson had no choice but to go to the other involved commands and find out just where he stood. All he found was more confusion -- an example of which was the message he sent to the \_\_\_\_\_ on 9 January 1961. He said:

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. . . Had lengthy discussion with Thirteenth Air Force director of war plans . . . and learned that no support, as listed in 6920th SW OPLAN 1-60 has been pre-positioned and/or marked for the contingency unit. The Thirteenth Air Force DWP has no clear cut tasking for this support. A review of the JTF 116 OPLAN, change one, Phase II (General Weller), and Phase III and IV (Laos) Published by JTF commander of Phase II and IV (Army commander) does not indicate any provisions for the employment of the 6920th SW contingency unit in either of those phases of combat activity in Laos . . .

Priorities Cause Much Discussion. (TSCW) Major Richardson said that in many of the plans involved in the operation, there were references to the contingency unit which might apply, but he said ". . . in each of these instances, the only materials prepositioned by the 13th Air Force are those which are definitely spelled out in the deployment schedules in each of the . . . plans. Again I repeat, 6920th SW contingency unit requirements are not spelled out." It was several months before the 6920th SW was able to work out a split shipment schedule of the unit equipment -- part by air and part by surface. This did, however, call for about two-thirds of the unit to be airlifted as compared to 20 percent initially

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proposed by the joint task force air component commander, so there was an improvement.

DEFCON Reduced; Also COMINT Requirement. (TSCW) In the meantime, perhaps very fortunately, the defense alert condition had been reduced to "four," and more or less routine operations were resumed at all units. Although this was to be a temporary lull, the lapse enabled the USAFSS units to make more preparations. In March 1961, PACAF brought out a new requirement that would affect the contingency operations when they finally did come about at the end of the year. The theater command said that due to high level negotiations, the total USAFSS force would have to be limited to the 6920th SW's Air Force Special Security Office (AFSSO) capability, supported on site by a single communications van. This meant that the only connection the air component commander would have with a source of COMINT would be through the AFSSO, and further, that secure communications would have to be established between the AFSSO at [redacted] and the 9th ASA Field Station in the Philippines. This would be a very cumbersome and inadequate arrangement and would in no way guarantee TACOMINT to the tactical air commander.

#### Activity Breaks Out In Vietnam

During this three-month period of feverish activity, a critical development was taking place in North Vietnam.

Since the end of 1960, COMINT stations from Korea south had been tracking (via manual Morse intercept) Soviet transport aircraft through Mongolia and Communist China. The aircraft were there -- there was no doubt of it -- but there was no very high frequency (VHF) voice communications being intercepted to keep track of their activities. [redacted] had never had very much success with VHF but it was still the closest of all USAFSS intercept locations. As the operations became more noteworthy and of more interest to tactical commanders, the necessity for VHF became even more critical. Further, though there had been no indications up to that point, the command had to know if CHICOM fighters entered the area. It was not necessary for fighters to fly into North Vietnam -- they could be shipped. So, to have access to air-ground and air-to-air communications was imperative. But such access was not available.

Special ACRP Project Ordered

Attempts to overcome this shortcoming had started in the middle of January 1961 when the [redacted]

[redacted] At the same time, the [redacted] got its first indication that it was going to get involved in its second contingency operation: the deployment of an [redacted]

EO 3.3b(1)  
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airborne collection platform -- a C-47 ROSE BOWL ACRP

[redacted] This intercept configuration was the simplest in the USAFSS inventory, and the [redacted] planned to transcribe the intercept tapes and handle initial analysis and reporting at the 6925th RSM. This was the first such deployment in the Far East, and there were many things to be straightened out locally: (a) would arms be allowed at the operating site (South Vietnam or Thailand)?, (b) passport and visa arrangements, (c) physical security of the aircraft and materials at the operating site, (d) where would support equipment that could not be supplied [redacted] come from?, etc.

All Plans "Off The Cuff." (TSCW NOFORN) There also was the very touchy problem of finding secure operating space for the ACRP personnel. The limitations already imposed [redacted] eliminated that site for all intents and purposes,\* so it would have to be some place else. This problem was shuffled around during the six-month life of the project and was never really satisfactorily solved.

As to the operational concept to be used, there was no precedent and there were no written plans. The [redacted] in its recommendation to process the intercepted traffic at Clark

\* There were two reasons why [redacted] could not be used, although the ROSE BOWL aircraft actually flew [redacted]

officials

second,

NAFSS TSC 63-1212

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EO 3.36(1)  
EO 3.36(3)  
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EO 3.36(1)  
E.O. 3.36(3)  
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A.B., suggested using the transcribe equipment in the 6920th SW's contingency unit which was available there. The wing vetoed this, however, saying ". . . the deployment of the contingency unit (which appeared imminent at the time\*) would cause disruption of the processing which (was being done with) the contingency unit equipment. If conditions were to warrant deployment (of) contingency unit, these same conditions would make it most desirable to avoid any disruption of the existing processing effort." The wing had a further idea which was at variance with the \_\_\_\_\_ initial recommendation. It said:

. . . Recognize (that the \_\_\_\_\_) has little or no capability for processing Vietnamese traffic and that this function has been handled almost exclusively at (the 6925th RSM). Consider it most desirable that (the \_\_\_\_\_) attain second echelon capability of Vietnamese problem as soon as possible in view (of) increasing scope and importance of this problem. Coordinated nature CHICOM and Soviet Air Support in North Vietnam and Laos makes it mandatory that analysis and reporting of COMINT reflections this activity be performed on a centralized, coordinated basis. For this reason, have directed \_\_\_\_\_ to provide personnel and technical support to give you capability for processing the Russian traffic. . . .

So the coverage of Southeast Asian nations, which had heretofore been considered less than of major scope or importance, was beginning to get high priority treatment.

C-47 Leaves Korea Amid Dim Diplomatic Picture. (TSCW)

In the meantime, high level political and diplomatic negotiations

\* Author's note  
+ The

\_\_\_\_\_ was the second echelon processing center for Far East Soviet operations and had the only available Russian linguistic capability.

were continuing -- particularly between PACAF and the embassies of Thailand, South Vietnam, and Laos. The early plans were made assuming that the ACRP would fly from Vientiane, Capital of Laos. They also were assuming that several agreements would be made, among them:

1. That it would be diplomatically acceptable to use the Lao-tian Capital.
2. That all necessary clearances for overflight of Thailand, Laos, and South Vietnam would be granted.
3. That all security restrictions regarding USAFSS COMINT personnel could be worked out.

As this was going on, the flying crew and COMINT crew of the ROSE BOWL aircraft gathered in the icy winter of Korea and prepared for their trip. All possible support equipment was loaded aboard and it arrived at Clark AB on 20 January. It was to have one day's crew rest and then proceed to its operating location. Unfortunately, however, there was no operating location to proceed to. Major Richardson, who had been assigned as project officer for ROSE BOWL SOUTHEAST ASIA because he was already at Clark with the contingency unit, was working desperately to get all of the arrangements made. These arrangements included acquisition of passports for the crews. Channels for procurement of passports still had not been established, so

the project officer's frustration was quite understandable. He had been battling officialdom since his arrival early in the month and he finally declared flatly that, if the ROSE BOWL aircraft was ordered from Clark AB, he would leave ". . .with or without passports."

Laos Out, Thailand In. . . . There also were vaguaries in instruction concerning clearance for overflight to South Vietnam and Laos -- caused principally by the interpretations of security regulations. This led Maj. Richardson to say ". . . I need go or no go statement and not interpretations." Over the next 24 hours, Maj. Richardson succeeded in making temporary (though somewhat unorthodox) passport arrangements, and he said he was ready to leave within 24 hours after clearance was received to go into Vientiane for operations. This was expected the next day, but instead of the confirmation, Laos Ambassador Brown advised against using Vientiane for ROSE BOWL, saying:

. . . (there are) several cogent reasons. Too much suspicion aroused among press and other embassies, not to mention Commie propaganda, with third U.S. military aircraft in Vientiane (one air attache and one Army attache plane here now), especially one with any unusual visible equipment. ACAN\* net here now for backup of Embassy communications. This already explained to public. Housing, messing, maintenance, and transportation very difficult. Suggest aircraft and crew be assigned air attache \_\_\_\_\_ with operation out of any Thai airfield.

\* Army Administrative Network.

Two Thai airfields were available for the operation [redacted] (also the location of USA- [redacted] and Tahkli, about 40 miles from Vientiane. PACAF was assuming that [redacted] was not being considered, although the site, from a support standpoint, was the best of the two. At Tahkli, PACAF had a small detachment, but this was to leave on 1 February.

The air attache in [redacted] said he could issue temporary clearance immediately, but it was 1 February before PACAF was able to get definite authority to use [redacted]. On 2 February, diplomatic clearance was received at Clark AB, and the next day ROSE BOWL flew its first mission from Thailand. Its targets were:

1. Intercept Russian voice very high frequency emanating from Soviet transports active in the North Vietnam/Laotian airlift, or active in either North Vietnam or Laos.
2. Intercept CHICOM voice communications emanating from North Vietnam and Laos, or connected with Laotian situation.
3. Intercept Vietnamese/Laotian Language voice communications related to Laotian airlift activities.

Extensions Start. ) By this time, however, two-thirds of the first 30-day test period had been used up, and

arrangements had to be made for the first of several extensions; which lasted into June. Though the first week's operations were not exorbitantly successful from an intelligence standpoint (nor were they throughout the operation) it was vitally necessary to give the test a chance because it was the command's ". . . only real hope of resolving (the) problem as to whether fighter type aircraft have been introduced into North Vietnam and Laos. . . ." So the mission continued, flying one and two missions a day, with the participants facing any number of difficulties and encumbrances.

By late February, the very high Thailand humidity, which was constantly present, began to cause deterioration in VHF effectiveness. This had been expected because the command's 1954 site survey had indicated the same thing. The early recommendation that the power system in the aircraft be left running all the time could not be followed in the C-47. There were also operational limitations imposed by the aircraft itself. Flying time to and from the orbit areas limited intercept time to less than two hours each mission; and there was limited altitude attainable by the gooney bird. This was a limitation in fact, not theory. Intercept revealed that aircraft were flying below clouds and flying along the valley. Throughout the operational life of ROSE BOWL SOUTHEAST ASIA, the project officer experimented with flight orbits trying to break

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the natural barriers confronting the operation. There was a basic difficulty, however. By the time the Russian activity came within range of the ACRP equipment, it had already reached a low level and had fallen out of the line of sight.\*

Project Beset With Troubles. . . . . . Actually, the project was beset with troubles from the start. Before the end of the first extension, the project was afraid of being evicted

Though nobody wound up in the streets, there was considerable scrambling necessary because of this event. There also was the temporary aircraft maintenance contract to consider.\*\* Getting the intercept tapes transported to the Philippines for transcription also generated considerable effort as the transport schedules fluctuated continually throughout the mission. This was solved,

\* Author's Note: Perhaps a significant point here is found in a later report of the ACRP effectiveness (or lack of effectiveness as it turned out). The best and most usable transport intercept gained was at the beginning of ROSE BOWL operations. This could indicate that, with information that they were being observed by the orbiting C-47, Soviet pilots took more and more advantage of the topographical features to hide their air-ground communications.

\*\* The air attache, \_\_\_\_\_ had arranged, through the Air Materiel Force Pacific (AMFPA), for maintenance to be conducted on the ROSE BOWL C-47 by the Thai Airways Company. This had to be renewed before the mission could continue.

at least in part, later in the project when the [redacted] sent a qualified Russian linguist to fly as an aircrew member on the C-47. The operation improved significantly, though the matter of secure working space was a very touchy affair. The electrical current supplied to the American Embassy was 50-cycle, so [redacted] and the linguist ended up working in the shower room in the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group facility at [redacted]

Soviets Flying, But Little VHF.

Through March and into April the project continued, with the small crew doing everything it could to make it a success. And although all consumers and top intelligence agencies maintained a high degree of interest in the project, it was falling far short of its intended mark. For instance, on 2, 3, and 4 April, pre-flight and post-flight communications showed that Russian Transports were flying into Phong Saly, Dien Bien Phu, and probably Xieng Khouang; but there was no intercept at all by the ACRP aircraft. But the [redacted] still felt that by considering the terrain features and distances from the target areas, ". . .missions with marginal Russian voice intercept results must be expected." When Maj. Richardson [redacted] early in April,\* he sat down with

\* Maj. Richardson was replaced by Capt. Charles Stiles, [redacted]

operations chiefs and tried to work out the best orbit areas, using only the terrain features as a guide. They reported:

. . . Study of map indicated an orbit area southwest of Vientiane and remaining south of Mekong River which might provide better VHF intercept from Xieng Khouang area. This orbit area . . . although admittedly "tight" would give ROSE BOWL aircraft much better "shot" at Xieng Khouang area as highest mountain, at southeastern end of orbit area, is 5,463 feet and next highest, at northeastern end of orbit area is 2,290 feet with no other peaks between orbit area and Xieng Khouang of significance. Thus, when in orbit pattern, aircraft would have clear "valley" running all the way to Xieng Khouang down which to attempt intercept . . .

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But these and other experiments were flown with little improvement in the results of the mission. As the end of April approached, Capt. Charles Stiles, the new project officer, made preparations to close down the site. On the 28th of the month, however, PACAF told the 6920th SW that it ". . . considered (it) likely that ROSE BOWL would be extended beyond 30 April . . .". The 6920th SW confirmed this the next day, saying the project would continue ". . . until further notice."

In the meantime, after three months of intense flying, the front end crew of the aircraft was tired. They had averaged more than 30 hours a week in the air since the project started, and Stiles told the \_\_\_\_\_ that they were getting jumpy. Said Stiles:

. . . Believe it would be wise to take action to replace front end crew. Aircraft commander asked (me) today to reduce missions to four per week, as front end officers are getting



jumpy. (I) sympathize with their situation, as thirty hours flying time per week is a tough schedule to hold for the length of time they have been assigned to the project. They have been very cooperative and deserve your consideration of reduction of work or replacement.

PACAF ordered this change the next day, and none too soon. General Lewis, on his world-wide trip, stopped

[redacted]

He indicated general satisfaction with the project under the circumstances, but he felt that the orbit time had to be lengthened. To do this, however, Capt. Stiles said the schedule would have to be reduced to four missions a week although if another pilot, navigator, and transcriber-analyst could be added to the group, they could fly five. So General Lewis said he wanted the front and back end crews built up so the extra intercept time could be increased; along with a guarantee that the project would not become inoperative when certain people could not fly.

ACRP Project Not Totally Unproductive. (SCW) None of these modifications and innovations, however, resulted in any significant improvement in ROSE BOWL intercept. Nonetheless, it could not be considered totally unsuccessful. It did produce several contributions on its own; and did have significant value.

These contributions were listed by the [redacted] as follows:

1. ROSE BOWL intercept [redacted]

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2. Early in the project, intercept indicated that transport aircraft were probably landing at Xieng Khouang.

3. Some information about the use of airfield beacons was brought out early in the project.

4. A new CHICOM airfield was identified in Southwest China. This, however, was little contribution from a standpoint of bulk, so on 5 June 1961, DIRNSA said ". . . consumer requirements presently being satisfied from analysis of intercept from other sources. . . ." Consequently, to the surprise of no one, the national agency cancelled the project.

On the theory that we learn from mistakes, however, there was much benefit derived from ROSE BOWL SOUTH-EAST ASIA. From the mass of correspondence produced prior to and during the project's operation, it was obviously a first in USAFSS annals. There were myriad details concerned with travelling in, through, and around separate countries, and in operating out of a foreign base, that had to be pre-planned. The results of this lack of preparedness was evident, particularly to those who actively participated in the mission. There were delays in procurement of visas; personnel arrived at the staging

area without pay records or sufficient advance cash payment; communications channels had not been arranged; there was need for secure operating space and aircraft storage areas; and a host of other personal difficulties arose in addition to those directly associated with the mission.

On the operational side, most of the troubles have already been discussed. Captain Stiles, following his return  added another recommendation: that all orbit assignments should be made from the second echelon station, based on all available intelligence. This was laid out in written plans following the project: but while it was operating, the orbits were laid on by the project officer who had little current material upon which to base his decisions. The need for explicit planning of schedules was brought out on the few occasions when the orbit assignments coincidentally matched the area of scheduled Soviet transport activity. So, based on the experience of the project, the  immediately wrote an ACRP contingency plan with other than a theoretical background. This was finished and completed shortly after the project was closed.

#### Reduction Of CCU Causes Concern

Meanwhile, in Hawaii, the PACAF decision to limit USAFSS Southeast Asia buildup participation to an AFSSO contingency unit had the 6920th SW and the Pacific NSA

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representative in a muddle. Two considerations confronted them: (a) extra men were needed in the AFSSO contingency unit to man the required communications, and (b) there was still no answer to the lack of VHF from the area. The NSAPAC representative in Hawaii pressed the fact that [redacted] could not satisfy the VHF requirements. For a general COMINT buildup, however, he recommended that it would be most reasonable and economical to fully man all of the available Army positions at the [redacted] site. He recommended a 150-man force at the station, and further suggested that NSA send a team of highly trained linguists to handle the many foreign language assignments that were showing up from different sources. To this he added recommendations for full first echelon processing capabilities at the [redacted]. He cautioned that this would still not satisfy the VHF intercept capability that would be necessary for close TACOMINT support and insisted that ". . . deployment of all or part of AFSS contingency operation may still be required to meet VHF requirements."

VHF Still Prime Worry.

VHF intercept was

still the crowning consideration. Late in March, [redacted]

[redacted], who would shortly assume command of the

from [redacted] suggested to General Kellond that a ROSE

BOWL C-47 ACRP be used as a static intercept platform for VHF communications. He felt that by considering the distance from the nearest airfield to the target area, the ACRP platform could be used in place of a ground intercept van. He said that the only major needs would be for a ground power source, portable antenna masts, and 15 technicians. This would support three VHF positions and supply necessary maintenance on the ACRP back-end equipment. [REDACTED] said that the method of operation would depend on local circumstances, with the distance of the GCI controller from the static ROSE BOWL intercept site being the principal factor. This would, he felt, ". . . embrace principles learned during AFSS provisions of TACOMINT during (the) Korean War, Tachen Island, and Taiwan Straits Crises." All of these things became less critical in mid-May, however, when the DEFCON status of JTF-116 was lowered to condition three and the contingency unit to condition four, as the Southeast Asia tensions lessened appreciably. This lull lasted until late in 1961 when the requirement was established for full augmentation of forces in Southeast Asia.

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#### Viet Cong Gains; SEATO Prepares

Meanwhile, the West's position in Laos was tottering, and strategists were looking to the next line of defense. This was

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centered along the Ho Chi Minh Trail running down Laos' spiny eastern border connecting North Vietnam with southern South Vietnam. By early April 1961, there was almost as much activity along the trail\* as there was in Laos itself as Communist North Vietnam pushed supplies and reinforcements to the Viet Cong jungle fighters who were battling to take over South Vietnam -- considered by most as a far bigger prize than Laos.

Although South Vietnam's strong man, President Ngo Dinh Diem, felt that he had no particular fear of being overrun by the Viet Cong, † the phantom tactics of the jungle fighters were definitely effective and were becoming more effective as time passed. Over a year's time, in thousands of little quick strikes, they destroyed 284 bridges, killed 4000 officials, village elders, soldiers, and farmers, and were generally active. This included a terrorist attack in Saigon on the residence of a U.S. aid official, seriously wounding him. At the same time, another grenade was tossed in front of the U.S. Military Advisory Group Headquarters.

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\* This was the same trail that North Vietnam's ex-guerrilla president used in his fight against the French.

† President Diem's troops outnumbered the Viet Cong by 150,000 to 9,000, but the guerrilla tactics of the latter were proving very effective against the South Vietnamese Army.

By early April, the Viet Cong force had nearly doubled its original size (to about 9000 men) and had effective control of almost half of the fertile southern delta of the Mekong River, where half of South Vietnam's 14 million people lived. Though the Geneva International Control Commission protested the attacks, North Vietnam replied bluntly that ". . . this struggle will not only be carried on but will score greater victories until the final defeat of Ngo Dinh Diem."

In the Philippines, the buildup of JTF-116, part of the mobilizing SEATO force, was continuing preparations for possible action against the Southeast Asia Communist factions. Plans called for the commanding general, 3rd Marine Division, Okinawa, to command multilateral forces of the U.S. and four other nations committed to defend key buildup areas. This would release the Royal Laotian Army Forces for combat in forward areas against Pathet Lao forces. The command's contingency unit had been on alert in support of this action for months.

#### Site Gets Increase; Permanent Designator

In August, the USAFSS detachment received some guarantee of permanence when the station designator [redacted] was assigned [redacted]. It was not until October,

EO 3.35(3)  
P.L. 85-36

however, that the first results of the international talks were felt by the command and, subsequently, the [redacted] This came during the first half of the month when the command told the 6920th SW that the [redacted] force would be increased to two officers and 27 airmen in place of the nine-man force that had been there since the beginning of operations. This was not as much as was wanted or needed, but it was an increase. The crew was to man one HF radio-telephone position and four manual Morse positions.

#### Manning Calls For Intercept Improvement.

Early

in November, [redacted] several engineering representatives to the [redacted] site to see if,

[redacted] could be gotten into the intercept capability. Along with their recommendations, they said ". . . important that full utilization be made of impending personnel augmentation. Excellent signal environment and location . . . Personnel here anxious to get on with program." The command and its operational group [redacted] appreciated all the help it could get in bringing the site up to its peak potential, but the group had another problem that was going to be considerably more difficult to solve.

#### Frantic Operations Cause Personnel Problems

The foregoing discussions show clearly that the



[redacted] was in the midst of a frantic attempt to man many projects at the same time. Contingency alerts, the ACRP effort, and the buildup under discussion were just a portion. There were other projects not specifically connected with Southeast Asia operations that have not been mentioned but had to be manned nevertheless. When General Kellond initially alerted the group to the fact that augmentation of [redacted] was imminent, he said that "...records this headquarters (6920th SW) indicate sufficient personnel are assigned to the [redacted]

[redacted] indicated to satisfy needs of build-up without adversely affecting group mission capability."

But there were several reasons why this assumption was not entirely fact.

All TDY -- No Replacement.

In the first place, a number of special projects -- launched by other agencies -- had taken up a number of highly qualified personnel over the months past. These were not reflected in the manning documents available at the 6920th SW. Secondly, the continual drain on the group's personnel, as they took on one local project after another, in an attempt to perform their mission, had taken a drastic toll -- particularly of the most experienced men. The third difficulty was even more significant. This concerned the personnel actually available for the assignment.

EO 3.3c(3)  
P.L. 86-36

EO 3.3c(3)  
EO 3.3b(6)  
P.L. 86-36

7) Many highly experienced men were assigned to contingency duty -- and the unit was still on alert. This left operators and analysts in two groups: (a) personnel with little actual experience, in lower ranks, and (b) personnel who were accompanied by their dependents.

It was in this second group that [redacted] hoped to get his replacements; but he was thwarted there by Public Law No. 20, which restricted the conditions and frequency of permanent changes of station particularly in overseas areas. The [redacted] commander knew he would have to get waivers of this law before he could send anyone with the required experience to Thailand. In this same vein was the type of individual necessary to fill the posts. The airmen had to be not only professionally competent but had to have maturity not normally found in the younger personnel. Here, again, these were found mostly in the married personnel. On 2 November, the [redacted] told the 6920th SW that:

. . . This headquarters feels to adequately man [redacted] and to secure our best qualified personnel that a waiver of Public Law-20 will be required because to get the man from the unit to this headquarters, and to his destination, requires two permanent changes of station. Now restricted to single airmen and our potential for selection is limited. Request guidance and authority to select some married and accompanied people.

No Waivers Possible.

) The wing was never able to

obtain the authority to waive the provisions of the law, however,

so the [redacted] had to proceed as best it could. [redacted]

[redacted] admonished all squadron commanders that the men

they selected for the [redacted] assignment were to be ". . .

of the highest calibre, eligible, and (would) voluntarily extend

their (date of return of the U.S.) to have one year retainability

as of February 1962." The obvious dearth of experience was not

the most desirable condition under which to operate, as the final

selections showed. Where the group commander had asked for

several master and technical sergeants, his highest ranking

NCO was a staff sergeant - and there was only one of these.

On the other side of the roster, where he had asked for five air-

men second class, he had to send eleven. So that was the per-

sonnel picture. The augmentation was set to begin on 1 December

and was to be conducted in three contingents. These were all in

place at the end of December 1961, and since the Army Security

Agency had previously completed the installation of all authori-

zed positions, the augmented station was operating at that time.

#### Situation in Laos Becomes Stalemate

In the meantime, full-scale fighting had stopped in

Laos and political talking had started. The cease-fire, how-

ever, brought on memories of the peace talks in Korea, as the

Pathet Lao, supported by the Soviet Union and North Vietnam,

continued to probe to improve its negotiating position. Hardly anywhere in the region could the outlook be called good from Washington's point of view. Communist interests and forces were making steady gains in Laos and Vietnam, and distrust among the small Southeast Asia nations was growing at almost every turn. Cambodia and Thailand became involved in a diplomatic dispute and Prince Nordon Sihanouk, Cambodian Chief of State, became so incensed at what he considered U.S. backing of Thailand that he threatened to call for help from the Communist bloc.

In Laos, the West could either look to a neutralist regime that leaned to the left, or a resumption of fighting that would lead to outright Communist victory. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was under constant fire, and the Asian partners -- Thailand and the Philippines -- were beginning to doubt its value. The Viet Cong force in South Vietnam, on the other hand, was passing out of the guerrilla phase into something more serious. By the end of November 1961, the U.S. buildup of forces became noticeable in Saigon and other headquarters areas. But the opinion in Washington was that Ngo Dinh Diem's government had to be made more popular among the Vietnamese before the Communist infiltration could be stopped.

Vietnam Draws Kennedy's Attention

Early in October 1961, Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, President Kennedy's special military advisor, went to South Vietnam to find out why the Dinh government was losing its two-year-old war against the Viet Cong guerrillas and what the U.S. could do to reverse the trend. In November, he told the President that ". . .the South Vietnamese government was capable of turning back the Communist threat provided its army was given better training, more mobility, and a reliable intelligence system." Several weeks later, Secretary of State Dean Rusk said there would be an "acceleration" of U.S. military equipment deliveries to South Vietnam and ". . .some changes . . . in the nature of our training (of South Vietnamese Troops)."

Intelligence Part of Need. Washington called for stepped-up training in guerrilla warfare, logistics, communications, engineering, and intelligence. At that time, the buildup did not include the dispatch of U.S. troops into Southeast Asia, although an American air buildup was already in progress. U.S. planes had started flying air reconnaissance missions to help locate Viet Cong bases and supply routes. On 19 November, the New York Times reported that ". . .there was an

---

immediate outcry in Peoping and Hanoi, capital of North Vietnam, and warning of resolute action by the Communist bloc to counter the U.S. initiative." In connection with this, the influential publication was of the opinion that ". . .if the threat of South Vietnam's independence -- and with it, the Western position in Southeast Asia -- becomes increasingly critical, President Kennedy may have to consider anew whether sending U.S. combat troops is the answer."

) This prediction was alarmingly accurate, and within the next month, the commander of the [redacted] was told that there was a possibility that the COMINT contingency unit in the Philippines would be deployed because of the rising tension in South Vietnam. The [redacted] commander immediately told all of his units\* that the ". . .possibility exists that you will be called upon to provide (a) proportionate share of resources to contingency effort in the near future. . . ." Early indications were that the force would be larger than that which was to be associated with JTF-116 earlier in the year as there was nothing said about it being limited to an AFSSO contingency capability.

PACAF Calls For C.U.

On 20 December 1961,

\*

[redacted]  
6925th RSM, Clark AB, P.I.;

HQ USAFSS TSC 63-1212

EO 3.36(3)  
P.L. 86-36

PACAF announced that it would deploy a Tactical Air Control System (TACS) of almost 350 men to South Vietnam. This included the 6920th SW contingency unit (manned and operated by the [redacted] which would be limited to 50 men. The following day the wing said it would deploy one intercept van, one crypto van, one analysis van, one maintenance van, one TRD-4 high frequency direction finder, two PE-95 power units, two five-ton tractors, and miscellaneous equipment. Forty-two men were scheduled to go with the unit to operate two radio-telephone positions and one continuous wave position during daylight hours. At the same time, the 6920th SW asked USAF if it could send one communications van to Tan Son Nhut Airfield as an AFSSO unit for the 2d Advanced Squadron (ADVON). The wing explained that the remaining intercept and analysis vans would be deployed to Tan Son Nhut in readiness for expansion. It also told the [redacted] that it was ". . . unable to recommend lower priority tasks which should be curtailed to meet continuing direct support requirements. . . ." So, deciding how the contingency requirement would be met was left up to the [redacted]

Earlier Preparations Help. . . . ) Since the contingency tension had loosened in mid-1961, the 6925th RSM in the Philippines, which was responsible for maintaining the vans and

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equipment, had been "staying on top" of this responsibility. So, equipment-wise, at least, it was ready to move at any time. Each squadron had a responsibility to keep a certain number of operations and maintenance men pinpointed for possible contingency unit duty, so the group was sure this was ready within the limits of personnel resources.\*

Tactical COMINT Prime Mission. ) With the many intercept assignments already established in connection with the area, the primary mission of the unit would be timely intercept and reporting for the tactical aircraft commander in South Vietnam. But this led to the old buggaboo of VHF intercept, so the group commander asked the 6920th SW to change one of the HF voice positions for this intercept. He said:

(one VHF radio telephone position) required to identify and intercept possible VHF voice communications employed in the area by Communist Air Forces. Present lack of VHF intercept

EO 3.3b(3)  
P.L. 86-36

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\* Over the two years prior to this deployment, the [redacted] which had the responsibility for the entire CHICOM, North Korean, and Southeast Asian COMINT mission, had been called on to supply personnel for a great number of special projects - some of which were still under way. Consequently, the level of experience of those available, especially for a deployment of this size, was continuing to diminish. The problem had arisen when the unit [redacted] became a permanent installation and many of the supervisory positions had to be filled by personnel of less than the desired experience. From this standpoint, the group always considered it would have to man, partially at least, with lower-grade airmen.



capability precludes detection of any Soviet, Chinese Communist, or Vietminh air activity employing VHF communications in the area now or in the future. Communist introduction of fighter aircraft into Southeast Asia quite possibly would not be reflected by flights from (or transiting) China; from experience in the CHICOM problem, fighter aircraft might be shipped in crates and subsequently assembled in North Vietnam. In that event, the presence and national subordination of tactical air in this area might depend solely on identification of the activity and the language employed in intercepted VHF communications.

The \_\_\_\_\_ felt that the scope of coverage should go somewhat wider than that initially laid out by the 6920th SW, as indicated by the following message:

. . . Communist air-ground position reporting and flight control communications reflect Sino-Soviet-Vietnamese air supply operations in Laos and Vietnam; intercept of these communications is essential to provide the commander 2d ADVON direct and timely details of Communist aerial supply activity, and also to reflect tactical aircraft that might logically utilize navigation facilities. Since these navigation facilities are comprised of both HF voice and manual Morse communications, a minimum of one HF/RT and one manual Morse position is required for intercept . . . Soviet, Chinese, and Anamese language capabilities will be available to CCU for voice positions.

. . . Effectiveness of the manual Morse position . . . would depend largely upon assistance from (the 6925th RSM). Pre-flights for Communist air supply aircraft are routinely intercepted by (the 6925th). . . . (The 6925th) could, therefore, provide pre-flight tip-offs to the CCU to promote adequate cover and timely reporting with the one manual Morse position. . . .

. . . Ideally, the CCU should be capable of providing direct and timely support to the commander, 2d ADVON, on all Communist air movement within Vietnam and in peripheral areas. This is not possible under present concept, calling for two RT and one manual Morse position, since it precludes cover of air warning

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facilities . . . However, with (6925th RSM) support described . . . believe adherence your present concept of three positions advisable and adequate unless CHICOM, Soviet, or (volunteer) tactical units intervene in Southeast Asia. In that event, it would be necessary to place air warning cover at the CCU for full and timely support of 2d ADVON. That would require minimum of four additional manual Morse positions for cover of (air warning) nets. To prepare for that possible requirement, believe additional intercept van should accompany the CCU to Tourane.

AFSSO Also Needed.

) The wing agreed with the

in these matters and passed on the established concept of operations to Hq USAFSS. At the same time, however, the 6920th SW passed on a recommendation that was to result in an additional task for the . Said the wing:

. . . With the establishment of 2d ADVON headquarters and the establishment of the Joint Operations Center/Tactical Air Operations Center (JOC/TACC) at Tan Son Nhut Airfield, an AFSSO becomes a necessity unless the present Army SSO located in Saigon is acceptable. It is primarily involved in supporting the U.S. Army JUSMAAG commander. An AFSSO, current and familiar with USAF and AFSS operations in the Far East, would insure the 2d ADVON commander receiving COMINT concerning Communist air forces in a timely manner. Second ADVON would then have immediately available the complete services of all AFSS sites.

Site Needs Status

) Unfortunately, the command had a more immediate concern as to the site. The site survey, under which the unit had been operating all along from an organization standpoint, was coming to a close. The six-month period ended early in May, and if it was to operate at all there would have to

EO 3.3b(3)  
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be some sort of unit structure established. The first develop-  
ment came on 3 May when the Pentagon told the command that  
the nine men at the [redacted] site were to be assigned to the air  
attache in Thailand. The attache said this could be done easily;  
but he doubted that he could handle assignment of the number of  
personnel requested under the proposed augmentation plan.\*

Although there was still no government-to-government agree-  
ment between the U.S. and Thailand permitting the USAFSS  
contingent to remain, Prime Minister Sarit had agreed infor-  
mally with Ambassador Johnson that it would be all right; so  
this portion at least was established. There was a series of  
shifts concerning personnel assignment procedures and station  
designators over the next two months, but by the middle of June  
1961, all personnel were attached, for administration and logis-  
tical support, to the [redacted]

EO 3.3b(3)  
P.L. 86-36

[redacted]  
The command policy was to ". . ."  
[redacted]

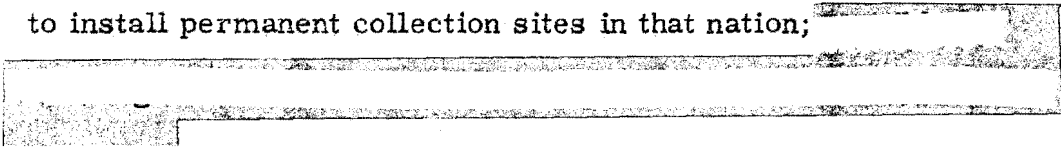
etc."

Just A Start; Plans Big

So the command's first firm position in this area  
was established, but it was far from that which was needed --

\* The Army had done this with its personnel at the [redacted] e  
[redacted] The operating contingent of the [redacted] had been  
assigned to the [redacted] for some time.

and far from that which had been the goal of Washington from the beginning. Almost as soon as the site was established in 1960 the U.S. Intelligence Board (USIB) had started work in Washington and Thailand negotiating with the Thai government to install permanent collection sites in that nation;



The board had its sights set for the ultimate assignment of some 600 persons there, permanently involved in the collection and processing of communications and signal intelligence. Through the first six months of 1961, however, foreign policy considerations prohibited USIB from approaching the Thai government with its proposals. There was little likelihood that such a consideration would be possible in the near future; particularly on such a scale as originally hoped for. After hesitating to press intently for a large increase during the first half of 1961, the State Department said in August:

EO 3.3b(3)  
EO 3.3b(6)  
E.O. 12812-2

...In view of extreme importance of intelligence objectives of USIB's plan, however, we need go as far as politically feasible to advance our COMINT position in Thailand. Department (state) has, therefore, given considerable thought to alternative steps, short of approach for major base which might be undertaken in near future to further our COMINT position and enhance chances of attaining USIB's long range COMINT objectives . . .

State Department Optimistic. ) The State Department stressed that the good will already generated among the Thais at

[redacted] had helped considerably, and the site was already being accepted as a permanent installation. The department urged that these efforts continue so the atmosphere could improve even more for negotiations of future increases in COMINT operations, as well as the beginning of a gradual and systematic development of [redacted]

[redacted] The State Department also said that [redacted]

[redacted] authority to establish a 600-man base, but that the eventual buildup should be brought about through [redacted]

[redacted] In January and April 1961, USIB had submitted its proposals to the State Department, and in August the department went on record as favoring (a) immediate approach to the Thai government. [redacted]

[redacted], the Thais should be approached soon thereafter with a request for augmentation of both ASA and USAFSS portions of the station. The department also proposed a [redacted] survey of possible intercept locations.

DOD. Makes Preparations. The Department of Defense, assuming that there would be favorable results from [redacted]

EO 3.3b(3)  
EO 3.3b(6)  
P.L. 86-36

these negotiations and proposals, prepared a detailed concept of operation as follows:

1. The Army Security Agency would provide COMINT training and maintenance in establishment and operation of effective COMINT support to Thai ground forces of divisions and lower echelons, assistance to include all aspects of training normally employed in the U.S. effort in intercept and direction finding, and in processing plain text voice communications through secret, non-codeword material. The training corps would consist of about 13 personnel under the operational control of the Military Advisory Group, Thailand, and 170 Thai Army personnel would be provided training as quickly as their capability would permit. The program would allow operation, by the Thai forces, of 24 intercept positions. The equipment for the entire operation would be provided through U.S. assistance under the military assistance program (MAP) for Thailand at a cost of approximately \$1.3 million. The Army would coordinate plans with the Central Intelligence Agency before implementation.

2. As soon as politically feasible after the assistance program was under way, a request would be made to the Thai government to permit expansion of the existing U.S. COMINT

58

site [redacted] to accommodate 66 additional personnel, the need for which was previously agreed upon by USIB. This augmentation would permit the U.S. to operate eight manual Morse positions and two more direction finding positions. Coverage would be assigned primarily to North Vietnamese targets which had not been adequately covered in the past, and the CHICOM military and air targets, especially those in South and Southwest China which had not previously been covered at all. These targets would provide valuable information on the movement of CHICOM forces. Easement rights for 125 acres of land would be required and temporary buildings would be constructed to accommodate additional operational intercept positions.

3. At the same time, arrangements would be made with the Thais for a site survey to be conducted to determine the most effective location for a permanent intercept base. The survey would be conducted with the full cooperation and participation of the Thai armed forces personnel. About 50 U.S. personnel would be involved and the survey would probably require from 30 to 60 days of operation in the field.

Original Aim Shelved. On the basis of these plans, the State Department said that the question of a 600-man base would be shelved for the time being until the effects of the interim measures could be assessed. It requested that diplomatic

agencies [redacted] approach Prime Minister Sarit as soon as possible for [redacted]

EO 3.3b(3)  
EO 3.3b(6)  
P.L. 86-36

The developing political and military situation

made it imperative that [redacted], COMINT-wise, as possible because it [redacted]

EO 3.3b(3)  
EO 3.3b(6)  
P.L. 86-36

[Large redacted block]

EO 3.3b(3)  
EO 3.3b(6)  
P.L. 86-36

Consequently, General Kellond said:

. . . (This) convinces me even more strongly that [redacted] should be augmented soonest. The needed positions are installed. Local ASA commander and our OIC feel that additional billeting and transportation requirements could be met quickly whenever authority is received to assign additional personnel. . .

EO 3.3b(3)  
EO 3.3b(6)  
P.L. 86-36

Most important in the wing commander's mind, however, was the fact that with an increased capability at [redacted]

" . . . it is possible (it) . . . [redacted]



forces into area."

) The wing felt that this was the best solution; i.e., the immediate augmentation of [redacted] and the establishment of the unit as a permanent facility [redacted]. But apparently there were many dealings going on that were outside the area of influence of the command. For example, during his visit to Southeast Asia in April 1961, General Lewis received the impression from the charge d' affairs [redacted] that there would be no objection to increasing the number of people at the site by 75 or 80. But, at the same time, USAF said that ". . . no immediate attempt should be made to expand [redacted]." The Air Force said that measures had already been taken by NSA to provide cover of the Laotian situation.\* Further, the Pentagon said that no possible hinderances should be made to the negotiations with Thailand which were under way at the time.

There were other changes that would take place even before the unit deployed in January 1962. The basic reason was that there was little knowledge of just what would be encountered

\* These measures presumably referred to a special collection effort mounted in January by the [redacted] out of Vientiane, Laos, and ROSE BOWL Southeast Asia. While a direct evaluation of the [redacted] was not available, the continuing disappointment of ROSE BOWL Southeast Asia was evident. This effort was not, at the time, nor did it eventually develop into, an effective intercept effort. And up to this point [redacted] remained the prime source of this unique intelligence.

EO 3.3b(3)  
P.L. 86-36

P.L. 86-36  
NSA 3.3b(3)

EO 3.3b(1)  
EO 3.3b(3)  
P.L. 86-36

EO 3.3b(3)  
P.L. 86-36

and just what would be needed. It was a first in every respect in that part of the world, and there were many developments that could not have been anticipated. Although the command finally got a foothold in Southeast Asia, the operations could not be considered a resounding success, particularly during the first year. What lay even further in the future was difficult to predict.

EO 3.3b(3)  
P.L. 86-36

These contingency operations, which eventually led to the organization of a new squadron in mid-1962, were over and above the routine collection and processing responsibilities of the 6920th SW and [REDACTED]. But during the first year, more than 125 men were involved on temporary duty from all squadrons for up to 179 days each for contingency operations alone. And at the end of 1962, only 12 replacements had been sent from the United States. Further, the capability to handle the Vietnamese language was centered exclusively in the 6925th RSM, which had held this responsibility for several years. This capability was first split, and then dwindled through normal attrition.

Despite this, the command continued its excellent mission performance in the Far East in support primarily of the 13th Air Force in the Philippines and the 13th Air Task Force

(Provisional) on Taiwan. Both of these commands continued to laud the intelligence products provided them by the [redacted]

[redacted] and the [redacted]

which was manned entirely by USAFSS personnel. Maintenance of this reputation, however, was anything but easy as the continuing confusion in Southeast Asia, along with the desperate attempts to solve the intelligence problems, brought frustration after frustration. The complete story of that development -- the command's first physical representation in South Vietnam -- and the continuing solidification of the established site at [redacted] will be presented in Volume II of this study entitled "The USAFSS Buildup In Southeast Asia -- A Period Of Experimentation."

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D I S T R I B U T I O N

Hq USAF (AFNICAC)	1
AFSSOP	1
AFSS/FM	1
AFSCC	1
PacSctyRgn	1
EurSctvRgn	1
[Redacted]	1
[Redacted]	1
[Redacted]	1
6923 RSM	1
6925 RGM	1
[Redacted]	1
[Redacted]	1
6940 SW	1
[Redacted]	1
Hq USAFSS:	
ODC	1
OOD	1
OOP	1
OPD	1
OPP	1
MDC	1
EDC	1
PDC	1
COI	2

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USAF Security Service Capability  
in Southeast Asia

1962-64

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Project CORONA HARVEST

The Deployment and Development  
of a  
Tactical Signal Intelligence Capability  
in Southeast Asia  
1962-64

WARNING

This material contains information affecting the national defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws (Title 18, U.S.C., Sections 793 and 794), the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

Prepared by:

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Headquarters United States Air Force Security Service  
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~~TOP SECRET~~

## FOREWORD

This is the first in a series of special historical reports to be prepared by the Hq USAFSS Historical Office (CHO) as inputs to Project CORONA HARVEST. This input is concerned with the task of deploying a USAF tactical signal intelligence capability in SEA. It covers the period 1962-64.

USAFSS has been tasked to provide CORONA HARVEST inputs in three major categories: Signal Intelligence (SIGINT), Communications Security (COMSEC), and Electronic Warfare (EW). There are several tasks, or inputs, in each category. Each input in each category covers a specific time frame--viz., 1954-61, 1962-64, 1965-March 1968, and April 1968-Termination of the War. In addition to the Command Historical Office, other staff offices of Hq USAFSS and the Air Force Special Communications Center (AFSCC) are preparing inputs.

The major sources of information used to prepare this input include special historical studies and monographs previously prepared by the Command Historical Office plus unit histories prepared by USAFSS subordinate organizations in the Pacific area. Other information was obtained from case files and historical documents on file in the Command Historical Office. Thomas N. Thompson, Special Projects Historian in the Command Historical Office, prepared this report. Mrs. Mary E. Toddes typed the multilith masters and prepared the glossary.

We gratefully acknowledge the support provided by Capt. Newman Richard, Command CORONA HARVEST Project Officer. Our special appreciation also goes to the numerous individuals throughout DCS/Plans & Programs and DCS/Systems & Technology at Hq USAFSS who critically reviewed the draft manuscript and provided valuable contributions to the final product. We especially want to recognize Mr. Gordon W. Sommers, Technical Advisor to the DCS/Plans & Programs; Col. G. M. Adkins, Director of Plans and Policy; and Mr. B. D. Collins of the Directorate of Ground Systems Management, DCS/Systems & Technology.

NOTE: This is not an official Project CORONA HARVEST publication. Official reports are issued only by ASI (AU).

BOB W. RUSH  
Command Historian

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The Task: To Deploy and Develop a  
USAF Tactical Signal Intelligence Capability in SEA  
1962 - 1964

) In December 1961, USAF Security Service (USAFSS), through its 6920th Security Wing (Scty Wg), Wheeler AFB, Hawaii, was tasked by Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) to deploy what was then known as its COMINT Contingency Unit (CCU)\* to Da Nang Airfield on the east coast of South Viet Nam, to provide Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) support to a 340-man Tactical Air Control System (TACS) that was to be moved from the Philippines to the war zone. The initial task had definite limitations; i. e., only 50 people could accompany the mobile H-1 vans which housed the unit, and this in turn limited the amount of intercept effort that could take place. To establish contact between the USAFSS unit and the commander of the 2nd Advanced Echelon (ADVON), it was also necessary to deploy an Air Force Special Security Office (AFSSO) with accompanying secure communications between the intercept unit and the tactical commander being supported. So, the first deployment was to be limited to one intercept van with two voice positions, one continuous wave (CW) position, and a TRD-4 High Frequency Direction Finding set; one communications van; one maintenance van; and one administrative van, plus

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\* This designator for all mobile equipment was changed later to "Emergency Reaction Unit" (ERU). This designation will be used throughout this study for clarity.

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the associated power and transportation gear to support them. However, subsequent events and conditions changed this considerably. For the AFSSO, one communications van would go to Tan Son Nhut Airport near Saigon.<sup>1</sup>

The second task basic to the deployment proved more difficult than the actual move of the Emergency Reaction Unit (ERU); i. e., finding an acceptable place to locate it. Viet Nam, not being a part of the field organizational territory of USAFSS units in the Far East, was practically devoid of foundation information on operability and communications hearability, which was vital to USAFSS intercept operations. The Army Security Agency (ASA) had been in the area for several years, but its work was not really compatible with that of USAFSS--having different targets and a different operational posture. Those hearability studies that ASA had conducted were not encouraging. So, although this was not an officially assigned task as such, it was the biggest immediate job the command had to complete; and it caused all sorts of difficulties, as we shall see.<sup>2</sup>

) The third task of general prominence was recognized very early, but the answer to it was slow in coming. Basically, this task was to find the best way to perform regular intercept and provide full coverage of very high frequency (VHF) communications, which would certainly be the predominant mode of communications if and when high performance aircraft

entered the fray. Only one location lent itself to this task immediately; viz., Monkey Mountain, about six miles from Da Nang. With line-of-sight the most important consideration in VHF intercept, this location had potential, but only in one direction if the operator was to hear both ends of air-ground-air communications. This proved to be a significant contribution to the SIGINT operation generally, but not particularly to the tactical commander operating from day to day. Intercept on Monkey Mountain was limited to the general area of Hainan Island, which was a major Chinese Communist (CHICOM) fighter training base, but otherwise the success was sporadic. The answer came in the Spring of 1964, when the National Security Agency (NSA) directed the deployment of a USAFSS C-130 airborne communications reconnaissance platform (ACRP) from Yokota, Japan, to Bangkok, Thailand, to cover communications traffic resulting from a high-level Communist conference at Mengtzu, China. This special 30-day ACRP mission so successfully collected these and other communications in the VHF range that it was held over and became a regular and critical part of SIGINT coverage over North Viet Nam.

Finally, there was the very general task of developing SIGINT coverage of the entire area; a development that had to start from scratch with the first three positions deployed with the ERU. The main job that USAFSS had in this development, over the three years

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involved here, was keeping the posture of its South Viet Nam operation sensitive to the needs of the tactical commanders in the 7th Air Force (which was the outgrowth of the original 2nd ADVON, and intermediate 2nd Air Division). This came in the form of the never-ending struggle to keep lines of responsibility separated between the command's need to directly support 7th Air Force and its responsibility to NSA and the top echelon in national cryptologic operations. It finally boiled down to an outright struggle to keep the USAFSS unit operating in the war zone in the face of the incontrovertible fact that during this period, at least until just at the end of 1964, the unit had little of an enemy air communications problem against which to operate. Most of the intercept was duplicative of that being collected in peripheral locations, but USAFSS and 7th Air Force were adamant in their insistence that the ERU be kept there for the day when enemy air operations would begin.

#### Task as Related to Current Concepts

The task at that point was nebulous indeed, and in no way approached the organization that developed over the next six years. A

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\* NOTE: The foregoing tasks are not of the type that are laid out to be followed. When USAFSS entered South Viet Nam it had no real idea how successful it would be, nor exactly how it would operate, except in very general terms. Communist air communications were sparse; none were purely tactical until the U.S. began its expanded air operations early in February 1965. Therefore, they cannot be specifically documented. They were, however, tasks that needed to be done at any time a new SIGINT operation was put into being and are listed here for that reason.



prewritten concept of operations was rather useless, other than the very general conceptual requirement that the ERU be ". . .capable of providing direct and timely support to the Commander, 2nd ADVON, on all Communist air movement within Viet Nam and in peripheral areas. . . ."

Little emphasis had been placed on North Vietnamese communications by the SIGINT community up to that point; direct tasking being limited to less than a half-dozen high frequency (HF) positions at the 6925th Security Squadron (Scty Sq), Clark AB, P.I., covering flight service (civil and military) traffic into and out of North Vietnamese points.

These were simply general SIGINT tasks as directed by NSA. So a general concept had to be developed almost simultaneously with the deployment. And there was precious little information on which to base it, especially since the tactical commander did not know exactly what his mission was going to be. Nonetheless, the 6920th Scty Wg (later designated the Pacific Security Region), which controlled Air Force SIGINT operations throughout the Pacific,

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[redacted] which covered Communist China and the entire Southeast Asia (SEA) area, to develop a concept based on whatever valid assumptions it could make.<sup>3</sup>

#### ERU Semi-Independent in Early Plans

Since timeliness was the primary aim of the ERU, it

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had to operate as a semi-independent entity of the general SIGINT structure covering Southeast Asian targets. With only three positions operating, and limited space available for analytic functions, its capability was restricted in scope. The [ ] felt, however, that under the existing circumstances, the operation could be established and could perform against enemy air operations as they were pictured at the time. Communist airlift had been operating into and out of Hanoi, Vinh, Dong Hoi, and Tchepone, so there appeared to be some possibilities in monitoring air-ground-air traffic in these operations, provided, of course, a VHF capability could be developed at Da Nang. In this light,

[ ] recommended that one of the two voice positions be VHF, the other HF, and the third be manual Morse to cover the Point-to-Point CW nets. The VHF position, the [ ] said, was:

. . . required to identify and intercept possible VHF voice communications employed in the area by Communist air forces. Present lack of VHF intercept capability precludes detection of any Soviet, Chinese Communist or . . . (North Vietnamese) air activity employing VHF communications in the area now or in the future. Communist introduction of fighter aircraft into Southeast Asia quite possibly would not be reflected by flights from (or transiting) China; from experience in the CHICOM problem, fighter aircraft might be shipped in crates and subsequently assembled in North Viet Nam. In that event, the presence and national subordination of tactical air in this area might depend solely upon identification of the activity and the language employed in intercepted VHF communications.

Actually, it was logical to assume that the bulk of intelligence would come from HF communications--both voice and manual Morse. The [ ]

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proposal continued:

. . . Communist air-ground position reporting and flight control communications reflect Sino-Soviet-Vietnamese air supply operations in Laos and Viet Nam; intercept of these communications is essential to provide the commander 2nd ADVON direct and timely details of communist aerial supply activity and, also, to reflect tactical aircraft that might logically utilize navigation facilities. Since these navigation facilities are composed of both HF voice and manual Morse communications, a minimum of one HF radio telephone and one manual Morse position is required for intercept. . . . Soviet, Chinese and Annamese language capabilities will be available to ERU for voice positions.

It was in the area of manual Morse intercept that the ERU would probably need most of its help. Pre-flight information was routinely intercepted at the 6925th Scty Sq at Clark AB, so an interaction had to be developed to get maximum tactical utilization out of the single position scheduled for Da Nang. This meant that the 6925th Scty Sq had to " . . . provide pre-flight tip-offs to the ERU to promote adequate cover and timely reporting with the one manual Morse position. . . . "4

No Significant North Vietnamese Air Problem to Work

) The extent of this concept was based on one fact that would not necessarily remain; viz., there was no air defense requirement simply because the enemy had no air strike potential. But this could certainly change; and if it did, more positions would be required if the ERU was to cover such operations. At least four more manual Morse positions would be needed to cover North Vietnamese air defense communications networks. Since that was not possible in the initial

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deployment because it was limited to 50 men, the [redacted] recommended that an unmanned second intercept van be deployed with the initial unit.<sup>5</sup>

Communications, Reporting Concepts Emerge Slowly:

The 6920th Scty Wg passed the [redacted] recommendations on to PACAF as the approved concept of SIGINT operations, adding that the 2nd ADVON and the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC), which were to be collocated at Tan Son Nhut, would definitely need the AFSSO and associated secure communications circuits if the commander was to be successfully served.<sup>6</sup>

By the end of December, all pre-arrangements for secure communications at both the ERU and AFSSO terminals had been completed, although this required considerable negotiating with the Air Force Communications Service (AFCS) for KW-26 cryptographic equipment. It also required the straightening out of some kinks in the coordination among USAFSS units, AFCS, and GEELA.<sup>7</sup>

Other communications arrangements had to be made, but these were primarily in support of wider SIGINT reporting requirements and incoming support to the ERU. They involved other circuits which were operated by other people (some by the Army). They took quite some time to get squared away, but these events did not affect the concept of operation of the ERU--it remained basically in support of the 2nd

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ADVON, with contributions to the SIGINT community in general via by-products, if indeed any did develop.<sup>8</sup>

Although there were many refinements and sophistications added to SIGINT support over the next six years--refinements which saw the original ERU develop into a full-sized security squadron with some 30 positions working 24 hours a day and from two to four C-130 ACRP aircraft flying daily--the basic concept remained the same: to intercept enemy communications and provide as quickly as possible the intelligence gleaned to the tactical commander being supported. Basically, that concept remained the same as late as mid-1968. But it was by no means a cut and dried effort to fulfill the operational aim. USAFSS started with three positions and a very tenuous hold on its operation in the war zone. The basic aim of direct support to the commander of 2nd ADVON was adulterated several times as the usefulness of the ERU capability was questioned (questioned not on its ability to cover enemy communications, but on the fact that until the U.S. opened air operations early in 1965 there was little to cover).

#### Tactical SIGINT Cell Concept Fades

The later addition of an airborne resource, which gave full coverage to VHF tactical communications, led to an intricate alert and warning program to pilots flying over enemy territory--particularly as they approached the South China border. The restrictions were firm

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there, and much of the border was out of radar range of ground warning sites as they later developed. This called for a complex arrangement of warnings to aircraft either of approaching enemy fighters or the fact that they were approaching dangerously close to the Chinese border. The warnings were not always successful, for undetermined reasons. So, as warning and control procedures expanded and facilities increased, the concept of support became a far cry from that originally envisioned.

This continuing effort to upgrade the SIGINT product ultimately brought another shift from the direct tactical support originally envisioned for the ERU in support of the TACS which PACAF first called for. The unit at Da Nang, which finally became known as the 6924th Scty Sq, was more a full producer of SIGINT for the benefit of NSA and the national intelligence picture, although USAFSS always managed to keep the needs of the tactical commanders paramount in the minds of operators and reporters. This change, however, did not take place until air operations began in earnest well into 1965.<sup>9</sup>

#### National/Military Objectives of Task

#### Intelligence a Primary Deficiency

In October 1961, Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, President Kennedy's special military advisor, went to South Viet Nam to try to find out why the government of Ngo Dinh Diem was losing its war against the Viet Cong guerrillas and to see what could be done to reverse the trend. His reported

comment to the President that ". . .the South Vietnamese government was capable of turning back the Communist threat provided its army was given better training, more mobility and a reliable intelligence system," was perhaps suspect, but the citation of intelligence as a deficiency was undeniably true. Aerial reconnaissance, although stepped up during this period as far as the Air Force was concerned, didn't solve the problem. PACAF's decision to deploy the TACS underscored the need for tactical intelligence in any and all forms. SIGINT had capabilities in this respect that no other intelligence source had in following enemy air movements and even minute-to-minute tactics. Paradoxically, close SIGINT tactical support was not an item that was routinely provided to tactical pilots in normal peacetime operational training or field problems.<sup>10</sup>

Military Need, Primarily Tactical, Not Available:

Not since the days of the Korean War, when tactical signal intelligence (known then as TACOMINT) first was developed as a supporting tool, had such a service been available to tactical commanders. SIGINT service, as such, was through the normal intelligence channels which involved, predominantly, NSA and the three service cryptologic agencies (the Naval Security Group (NSG), the ASA, and USAFSS for their respective services). Tactical SIGINT, on the other hand, was a direct line of reporting service from the field SIGINT unit (in this case the ERU) to the tactical consumer. With limited resources with which

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to work, and these principally under NSA control, all that USAFSS could salvage from the very early direct support concept was the ERU which could be demanded for deployment by the major Air Force headquarters involved. Since U.S. aircraft were going into operation, and the distinct possibility existed that they would be countered by the enemy, PACAF wanted as much protection as it could garner, particularly forewarning of enemy air attack if it came. This was the objective from a purely military standpoint.

Viet Nam Minor in National Signal Intelligence Priority:

Nationally, at the time at least, NSA was not particularly interested in Viet Nam, and the only positions on assignment were, as noted previously, five for copying manual Morse communications. With the knowledge that North Viet Nam had no significant air capability, NSA felt that any increased activity in this respect had to come from Communist China. But the predominant objective was to have a SIGINT capability in place if enemy opposition developed. In Korea there was a parallel to the state of Viet Nam operations at this point. There, as in Viet Nam, were few if any air-related communications in connection with operations of the immediate enemy. The difference was, in Korea when air-related communications finally appeared, there were no intercept facilities in place to monitor them. This, at least, USAFSS could improve on by having the ERU in place even if the capability was very limited. <sup>11</sup>



The 6925th Scty Sq was what was known as the "first echelon processing point" for the North Viet Nam intercept problem. Generally, this involved the intercept and basic, immediate processing and reporting of the intelligence product to consumers. But over the months prior to deployment of the ERU, the job had developed into something more and the squadron was at that time actually operating as the "second echelon" point. This activity would normally have gone to the

but more and more the 6925th Scty Sq had taken the responsibility and was reporting directly to NSA rather than going through the intermediate point. All available Vietnamese linguists were assigned there, so if the operation was going to expand with the ERU, the squadron was, at least nominally, the technical direction agency for the Vietnamese problem. But there was little to operate on at the time. There was no military air problem, and the 6925th Scty Sq knew that there would be none unless and until the Soviets or Chinese Communists intervened with aid.<sup>12</sup>

#### Early Mission That of Preparation

So the mission, at the outset at least, was to:

. . . Break into Viet Nam communications, gain familiarity and continuity, and provide the local commander with assurance of local air superiority in the early stage of a U.S. entry into this area. In addition to this, search out and exploit existing voice weather communications.

Although there was no tactical air action on the part of the North

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Vietnamese, the impending increase in American effort did offer some possibilities if the Soviets or Chinese Communists decided to react to it. Action could come from China, North Viet Nam, Laos, or Cambodia, although only China had the theoretical potential to launch quick, extensive operations. In covering communications from South China, the 6925th Scty Sq had the help of the

and other units listening to CHICOM activities as a routine operation. So, the objective at the time the ERU deployed was to begin laying the foundation for a tactical intelligence effort against the day when the enemy might decide to enter the air war.<sup>13</sup>

Was Assignment of Task Timely

Timeliness of Task a Moot Point

Whether or not an act is timely must depend on results of its either being or not being ready to do a job. In the instance of the USAFSS ERU moving into SEA operations, the continuing lack of an air problem against which to operate made it a moot point. It didn't keep people from shuddering at the possible impact of a sudden and extensive enemy air operation, however, and this was another thing. Brig. Gen. Arthur W. Kellond, commander of the USAFSS Pacific Security Region (the outgrowth of the 6920th Scty Wg), opined later that the initial deployment had been made too late; if there had been any kind of reaction to the U. S. moves, ERU deployment would not have been in time to offer any kind of

service. He was convinced that ". . . service must be in the first wave, and if possible, ahead of that." <sup>14</sup>

Deployment, Operational Concepts Change Early:

As far as meeting its responsibilities in the deployment, the ERU deployment was not in any way impeded by its inability to deploy in the strictest sense. The 6925th Scty Sq received its first official word on 20 December 1961, and had all of the vans and equipment ready to leave the Philippines by the end of the month. This was not a small task because under the ERU concept which the command operated, the personnel to deploy with the vans had to come from other units (it could not afford the luxury of having people assigned solely to an ERU at all times). It was not actually in place until late January 1962, but this delay was due to transportation difficulties rather than deficiencies in the unit's ability to deploy. <sup>15</sup>

The fact that the unit arrived in South Viet Nam on time (as far as the schedules were concerned) was due more to the alacrity and resourcefulness of the people concerned than to any other factor. In fact, the deployment ended up split into two parts rather than in the single move as initially envisioned. \* A hasty survey of the Da Nang area and

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\* This development is discussed in detail later under "Constraints on Accomplishment of the Task" and "Additional Considerations."

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facilities available there necessitated this change, which called for all VHF intercept to go to the northern station and all HF intercept to Tan Son Nhut. Extra vans had to be added and equipped, and extra personnel had to be acquired and assigned. Nonetheless, both were in place by the end of January 1962, and generally were ready to operate. Again, the lack of reaction by enemy forces of any kind was a Godsend in this case since the capability was virtually untested. However, the unit was deployed on schedule, albeit under operational circumstances not optimum by any means. The response was timely, but whether or not the assignment of the task was timely can be conjectured forevermore. 16

First Tactical Requirement Met Quickly:

1) Late in 1964, however, following the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the USAFSS SIGINT organization had ample opportunity to show that it was ready to do the job it had to do. By that time, Team 1A at Da Nang, which had developed into a regular, although small scale, SIGINT producer, was called upon to develop immediately for the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) an alert procedure for forewarning of potential enemy air attack from the north. It was apparent at that time that U.S. air actions would certainly be picking up, and possibly ground actions as well. What the enemy reaction would be was debatable. Nevertheless, 2nd Air Division wanted all the advance warning it could get, and the Da Nang SIGINT unit had pretty well developed the North Vietnamese air defense and flight

service communications so that it was certain that any large scale air movement would become evident in intercepted communications. Further, the ACRP was, by this time, working steadily and had become a prolific producer of tactical air voice communications intercept concerning such air activity as there was. The enemy did not respond but from that time the services of SIGINT to the 2nd Air Division began to pick up and diversify. In each instance, the SIGINT unit was able to provide critical and unique intelligence. So, in the end, although different actions by the enemy could quite conceivably alter the situation drastically, the deployment and the assignment was indeed timely.<sup>17</sup>

#### Constraints on the Accomplishment of the Task

Constraining factors entered the picture almost immediately, resulting from three primary shortcomings in the entire structural system of ERU support: (a) the way the command had to maintain the ERU equipment during the periods it was not in use, (b) the lack of coordination between USAFSS and tactical commands as to the status and immediate capability of the ERU, and (c) the inevitable difficulty that came from the high classification of USAFSS's operational plans, plus its intertwined subservience to the desires of NSA. Almost as soon as PACAF published its Operations Order 226-1 (Advance), which called for SIGINT support, all three of these factors came into play. First of all, the command was responsible for maintaining an ERU in each major theater and

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in the United States to meet contingencies, but unlike an alert unit of the classic structure, it was not able to simply set aside the equipment and people and let them wait for a deployment. The ERU vans and equipment were kept and maintained by the 6925th Scty Sq, in the Philippines, but the personnel had to come from various units within the 6920th Scty Wg. The [redacted] which had operational jurisdiction over the ERU, kept people earmarked for ERU operations, but what with other temporary duty requirements, regular overseas rotations, and other extenuating circumstances, this was a difficult task. These needs had no debilitating results in the case of this deployment, but they kept a certain amount of confusion present at all times.<sup>18</sup>

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#### Deployment Shagged in Priorities

As soon as PACAF published its order establishing the 2nd ADVON, which would include a Joint Operations Center (JOC) and a Tactical Air Control Center (TACC), it created another point which it apparently didn't consider, namely, the beginning of considerable lack of understanding between PACAF and USAFSS SIGINT units in the dealings. To develop the liaison between SIGINT producers and the TACC and JOC at Tan Son Nhut, an AFSSO would be necessary to handle the material. The only thing in the Saigon area was an Army SSO which primarily supported the Joint U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group (JUSMAAG) commander. The 6920th Scty Wg felt that ". . .an

AFSSO, current and familiar with USAF and USAFSS operations in the Far East, would insure the 2nd ADVON commander receiving SIGINT concerning Communist air forces in a timely manner."<sup>19</sup>

Best Intercept Location Unknown

The problem, however, was not in getting the equipment together; nor the people, for that matter. They were available and would be ready on time. The problem was where it should be located to produce the best possible intercept. In the deployment plans, the unit was to accompany the TACS to Da Nang to be located as closely as possible to the control system. Ideally, however, the ERU should be located as closely as possible to the headquarters being supported, which was at Tan Son Nhut near Saigon. At the bottom of the whole thing, however, was the site where the intercept was best. Nothing was known about the hearability at either Da Nang or Tan Son Nhut, nor was anything known about what real estate would be available to the ERU. So, armed with only some old maps obtained at Clark AB, and backed by a highly sensitive document to explain the support he would be able to give (which he could not produce when necessary), Maj. Lawrence L. Leon, who had been named ERU commander, and communications-electronics expert Capt. John P. Joyce, prepared to leave the Philippines.<sup>20</sup>

Knowing generally where the TACS would be located on the base, but little else, Leon and Joyce left Clark on 3 January 1962 to find

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a place to locate. As they circled above the city of Tourane it was immediately obvious that VHF would be very limited, if possible at all, from the main base. Only the Bay of Tourane was open to any extent at all; the rest was closed in by mountains from three to 12 miles away--with peaks up to 5,000 feet. When they landed and met with 2nd ADVON officials, things were equally discouraging. Three sites were technically available to the ERU; but two of them needed extensive engineering work done to make them usable. The third site would fill the minimum requirements, but unfortunately this would not be available after the middle of February because of a planned radar site (which nobody seemed to know anything about). An even more dampening effect came from a meeting with Army Lieutenant Colonel Cochran, Command of ASA's 3rd Radio Research Unit (RRU), who had been in the SIGINT business in the area for some time. If there was any hope left for VHF (a doubtful point), he definitely quashed it, and added that they had found a great deal of interference in HF communications also (this perhaps from the nature of ASA targets.) All of his sites, he said, were on the highest available points.<sup>21</sup>

#### Real Estate Becomes Determining Factor

They settled on a tentative piece of ground and continued on to Saigon, only to find out that the site they'd selected was very near a proposed ammunition storage area which needed considerable surrounding clearance. This threw still another kink in the plans, and Leon finally



decided that the entire effort should be put at Tan Son Nhut since there should be little difference in HF intercept quality, and VHF wasn't available anyhow. The 6920th Scty Wg agreed, adding that Da Nang was well into northern South Viet Nam and there was a distinct possibility of its being overrun. Since there were definite restrictions on the areas that could be traveled and inhabited by those holding SIGINT clearances, this might have another awkward effect. Rather than move the entire operation, however, the 6920th Scty Wg said the unit should be split between the two points.<sup>22</sup>

Location Split Between Two Sites:

The effects of this decision were immediate. On the assumption that HF intercept would be as good at Tan Son Nhut as at Da Nang (an assumption that was vastly more theoretical than actual as it turned out), all HF was to be located at Tan Son Nhut, and all VHF at Da Nang. Since the ERU vans were designed to contain a full-spectrum capability, this meant that they would have to be reconfigured before they left the Philippines. The airlift reservations were no longer valid and the reworking of the two units caused any delay that took place in the movement. That the unit would have been deployed sooner was problematical anyway because of the confusion and magnitude of the transportation job that 13th Air Force had to accomplish. On 12 January 1962, Major Leon, told the 6920th Scty Wg:<sup>23</sup>

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. . . Even if definitive instructions were provided by this headquarters to the 6925th Scty Gp immediately and appropriate liaison made with 13th Air Force materiel for submission of new airlift manifests to accommodate change in plans, we doubt deployment readiness could be assured prior to 25 January 1962. . . .

Unpack, Repack for Split:

By 24 January 1962, when the alert came to move to Viet Nam, ERU people had uncrated, dismantled, and recreated 30 large boxes of equipment and provisions and had reconfigured the intercept vans so that all VHF positions would go to Da Nang and all HF positions to Tan Son Nhut. They left on the 26th of the month. But they were by no means out of the woods. Opposition to the split began to look valid (both NSA and several members of the 6925th Scty Gp had argued against taking any part of the operation out of Da Nang, while the USAFSS favored the flexibility of two-site operation with all of the intangibles involved). Opposition began almost immediately at Tan Son Nhut when the unit set up for operation. Since the antennas had been installed there first, Team 1 was the first in operation. Initial estimates of HF hearability there notwithstanding, efforts were anything but good; a "fair" rating at best. Mostly at fault was the location itself, which had been forced on the ERU commander as the only thing available. The area was flooded with communications. The basic double doublet antenna was replaced by a "stacked Vee" which did improve reception somewhat, but it was an impossible situation. A South Vietnamese transmitter just south of the USAFSS site was the primary

cause of interference, but there were others. Two radar sites were on station; the Saigon control tower was working on HF, VHF, and UHF, and these spilled over the spectrum frequently. Finally, a helicopter unit was located just southwest of the site and its landing pattern was right over the intercept unit's antenna field.<sup>24</sup>

Hearability At Operational Sites Unknown

All other site possibilities, however, had been ruled out by land priorities or security, or both, and it wasn't long before this was realized. The situation put considerable pressure on USAFSS, however, because it still was charged with providing support to 2nd ADVON, and at the moment, it had no idea whether or not it could do it. Fundamentally, of course, was the question of whether or not there was a danger of the Viet Cong, as the southern and immediate enemy, developing an air potential of any kind. There was no evidence of this, but there was and had been evidence of Soviet air supply support of guerrilla troops, and this had not turned up anywhere in SIGINT at that point. USAFSS veterans of the Korean War, however, and many tactical officials on hand, remembered the service of SIGINT during that conflict, and the memory was not about to fade. By March 1962, everyone had given up on Tan Son Nhut. The final assumption followed shortly after Soviet air resupply operations had been visually confirmed, and SIGINT had produced not a murmur of advance information. There were several possible explanations, but PACAF was adamant that

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SIGINT service be improved. The 6920th Scty Wg Commander, Brig. Gen. Arthur W. Kellond, agreed. He told the [redacted] ". . . we must do all we can to serve PACAF by proving that we are doing all we possibly can to support 2nd ADVON."<sup>25</sup>

Tan Son Nhut Found Unacceptable:

By the first of April 1962, most of the high frequency Morse positions and all of the voice positions had been moved from Tan Son Nhut to Da Nang and tests had begun. There were misgivings, since ASA had declared that hearability was not good at Da Nang, but USAFSS operators turned up from good to excellent HF intercept. Both Morse and HF voice reception was clearly audible with little interference, so it proved to be by far the best location available. The location of the intercept site was not ideal but just alongside the active runway with large metal-roofed hangars directly to the north. But it did appear to have significant possibilities. So, for the moment at least, the first real need in establishing a SIGINT capability appeared to be solved; i. e., finding an acceptable location from which to operate.<sup>26</sup>

Da Nang Settled As Operational Site:

) By moving the entire operation to Da Nang, two things happened: (a) most of the intercept potential was located at the best site from a hearability standpoint, and (b) the manning was now consolidated so that most effort could go on a 24-hour-per-day basis. Fewer main-

tenance men were needed, fewer communications men were needed, and consequently more operators could be put on the job to stay within the personnel ceiling imposed. And at the same time, the 6920th Scty Wg was seriously considering making the sites permanent establishments so that the temporary duty (TDY) manning could be replaced by permanently assigned personnel.<sup>27</sup> But there were still many problems to solve, even though better intercept was possible from Da Nang. There was also the problem of processing the intelligence into usable products. The Vietnamese problem, as far as second echelon processing was concerned, had always been divorced from the Chinese Communist problem because of the limited interest in it at NSA and its Pacific processing site at the [redacted] and later at the [redacted]

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The determining operational factor through 1964 was that there were few North Vietnamese air communications targets to be copied. The bulk of usable intelligence came from Chinese Communist communications related to Vietnamese activities, and these were intercepted in

\* In July 1962, the entire 2nd echelon processing function was moved from [redacted] to [redacted], which put all-service processing at the same location. None of this, however, included Vietnamese processing which was handled in the Philippines--at Clark AB by the Air Force and at San Miguel by the Army. (Dev. of USAFSS Capability in SEA, Vol II, p 61, a USAFSS Historical Study, USAFSS Historical Office Archives.)

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large numbers. As time passed the bulk of intercept at Da Nang increased significantly, but to a great extent it was HF communications which could be intercepted from points outside of Viet Nam. Nevertheless the pressure stayed on the command to move the work to these peripheral intercept sites. The USAFSS dual responsibility in its role as a tactical SIGINT producer on one hand and a national SIGINT contributor on the other continually muddied the water and made its position less secure than would normally have been the case. From the beginning, the deployment and establishment of the South Viet Nam SIGINT unit had been unilaterally USAF; NSA was not involved. But even then, semantics proved to be the determining factor. Two phrases were in being: viz., "direct service" and "direct support." In direct service, NSA, as the primary intelligence agency involved, provided all required support to tactical commanders requesting it. In direct support, a tactical SIGINT unit, such as that deployed by USAFSS, would reply directly to the SIGINT needs of the tactical commander without his having to go through the cryptologic procedural channels.<sup>28</sup>

#### Complexion of USAFSS Operation Changes

More importantly, as a direct support unit, the SIGINT effort was deployed as an integral part of the tactical unit it supported, eliminating the cryptologic controls on movement, personnel ceilings, mission control, etc. The Cryptologic Community was predominantly under the

operational management of NSA and if a conflict of interest developed, the national agency would surely win. The conflict began to develop in the Spring of 1962, when NSA began expansion plans for the entire SIGINT organization in Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, NSA's plans called for general integration of all services' cryptologic functions into joint SIGINT ventures, and this more or less eliminated the command's needs. But NSA had always considered the ERU deployment as extension intercept sites for a direct intelligence to tactical commanders through cryptologic channels; joining ASA in the general effort. In March 1962, NSA launched a significant cryptologic organizational expansion in South Viet Nam; an expansion programmed to become a part of the general NSA growth in the area. The increase would raise the USAFSS force in Viet Nam and Thailand (where USAFSS operated a detachment collocated with ASA EO 3.3E(3)  
P.L. 86-36 from four officers and 69 airmen to an eventual 13 officers and 279 airmen. <sup>29</sup>

The move brought the status of USAFSS units in SEA to a head; although General Kellond insisted it was not the concept under which he wished (or understood that he would have) to operate. Since the unit had originally deployed at the request of PACAF, he felt it should be under the control of PACAF, and subject to PACAF manning procedures and limits. In a later summation, he put himself in NSA's place and speculated the agency's reasoning:

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. . . USAFSS has deployed an ERU to South Viet Nam and we are obtaining copy of all traffic and reports generated by that unit. The unit is taking care of the specific requirements of General Harkins and his air commander who has operational control of the unit. We (NSA) are additionally supporting U.S. forces in South Viet Nam through direct service from the permanent SIGINT stations under our control. . . .

) He could see many advantages to NSA; e. g., there was no concern about manpower as far as the agency was concerned, unless it reached a point where the rest of the SIGINT product was suffering because of personnel pulled out for Viet Nam duties. As part of the tactical force, SIGINT personnel would not be part of the personnel ceiling imposed on such people in the war zone. NSA would also be spared concern over housing, technical facilities, and communications (except associated security for them). Left to its own resources, Kellond felt, ". . . with this limited control and implied confidence, USAFSS would be able to perform a mission without the unreasonable amount of review over minor details at Secretary of Defense level, which we have had and continue to experience."<sup>30</sup>

Unit Justified By National Requirements:

) But it was virtually impossible to justify retention of the USAFSS unit in the posture initially envisioned directly and primarily supporting tactical air operations against the enemy. There was little or no North Vietnamese air activity except the routine movements of aircraft within the northern half of the beleaguered nation; and what there was could



be just as well followed by NSA with resources available to it outside of South Viet Nam and Thailand. Further, there were other profitable targets, both in North Viet Nam and South China; targets of specific interest to NSA in maintaining general SIGINT continuity (navigational, commercial, liaison, etc.) And with the absence of targets of purely military interest to the tactical commander, it was this intercept which continued to justify the existence of the USAFSS units until the Gulf of Tonkin incident late in 1964. Whether or not the arrangement was later detrimental or not is difficult to establish since, without NSA's interest and influence

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there would perhaps not have been a significant SIGINT force in being at Da Nang, as there was, when air action started. On the other hand, when it did start, and a clear tactical air support requirement emerged, NSA was unwilling to delegate operational control to 2nd Air Division.

So, when the 6923rd Saty Sq was organized at Tan Son Nhut in July 1962, with detachments at Da Nang and [redacted] and a third proposed for Ubon, Thailand, they were assigned SIGINT station designators: USA 29 and USA 32, respectively, for the Viet Nam units. Thus, they came fully under NSA control, and Kellond had to be resigned to the fact that the units were no longer to be considered in "direct support" of 2nd ADVON, and would become involved in administrative and negotiative efforts way out of proportion to the unit's size, producing what he considered ". . . an embarrassing, drawnout procedure involving minutia

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which seems inappropriate for consideration at national level. "31

For all intents and purposes, however, by October 1962 the organizing had been done. Over the two and a half years following, there were changes in status among the detachments, the squadron was discontinued in late 1963 and the units again placed under the jurisdiction of the 6925th Scty Gp. There was little changing in the equipment assigned to the intercept sites during that time, although mission assignments were constantly shifted back and forth. The continued duplication in production from the Viet Nam sites, vis-a-vis that collected in the peripheral units, continually dictated these changes as emphasis shifted from one location to another. Altogether, it was an unsettled atmosphere in which to operate, particularly since the main job was to build up an intercept capability; a task that was difficult at best but much more so when the units were not able to proceed in an orderly way. These, in essence, were the initial constraining factors that affected the orderly establishment and growth of the SIGINT units in South Viet Nam. But the units were to battle for their existence from that time on.

#### Expected Results of Tactical SIGINT Support

Just what the ERU was expected to do when it deployed to South Viet Nam was an interesting point to consider. Judging from the reaction of PACAF to an early failure of SIGINT to solve all intelligence problems related to enemy air operations, the tactical command expected

great things immediately. Apparently the results expected by PACAF were to effect that as soon as the ERU became established. SIGINT would immediately begin to forecast intentions of the enemy as intercept operators began "reading their mail." The reasons for this expectation were perhaps two-fold: (a) USAFSS representatives, limited by their ability to explain in detail just how the job was done, may have oversold the immediate potential of tactical SIGINT, and (b) recollections, dimmed by time, of the sudden improvement in success of USAF air operations against North Korean pilots after SIGINT support was added to radar defenses during that conflict. An indication of what PACAF expected came early in the operation, in March 1962. The sun was just beginning to set on the Viet Nam-Cambodian border when a South Vietnamese observer, squinting against the evening light, watched a transport aircraft approach about 3,000 feet over the jungle top. As it approached, he could make out the open cargo door, indicating an impending air-drop resupply operation to guerrilla forces. The observer immediately cranked up his small radio transmitter and tried to make contact with the transport. He got nothing. He tried again and again without success; then finally watched it disappear into the eastern gloom. Later that night, a South Vietnamese radar station at Pleiku tracked seven aircraft into the area, watched them turn, and then return toward Cambodia.

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Three Days, No SIGINT Reflection:

This activity continued over the next three days with still no reflection in SIGINT, and PACAF was somewhat incensed. There were possible explanations, such as complete radio silence and the like, but these apparently were not very convincing. In fact, PACAF, in a long wire to the 6920th Scty Wg, said:

. . .PACAF requested the deployment of the AFSS contingency unit to South Viet Nam in support of 2nd ADVON for the basic purpose of providing intelligence on any Communist preparations for air operations and the actual conduct of air operations in South Viet Nam. To date, however, this intelligence has not been provided and neither after, before nor during the (discussed) activities . . . was there. . .SIGINT intercepted by the contingency unit or other AFSS intercept facilities in Southeast Asia which related to the Communist air supply operations into (and out of) South Viet Nam. This lack of intercept capability is a serious deficiency in the present situation where SIGINT should be available to 2nd ADVON for use in USAF air actions against the Communist supply operations. . . .

The PACAF commander was concerned with the future, feeling that air operations would surely expand. Understandably, he wanted to be ready for it. He pushed for more intercept positions and full 24-hour per day coverage (which USAFSS couldn't provide under the personnel ceilings imposed on it), conjecturing that Communist air operations would reach the combat stage. He believed ". . .the number one problem to counter these enemy activities is obtaining accurate and timely intelligence. . . ." The capability obviously was not there at the moment, but he added: ". . .I feel strongly that AFSS, through timely

action, can to a large extent fill the intelligence void. To this end I will support your efforts and requirements to the fullest as called on to do so

..... "33

### What Were the Actual Results

#### Early Results Not Encouraging

At that point, for anyone familiar with the SIGINT analytic techniques, the above consequences were a rather foregone conclusion. The ERU had been in place for about a month. There never had been a comprehensive hearability test even in the high frequency range (and by this time it was becoming clearer that Tan Son Nhut would never be an acceptable intercept site). Very high frequency (VHF) communications (assuming the transports in question were Soviet) would have been necessary in most such air-ground communications. And VHF communications simply were not interceptable in that geographic location with the facilities at hand. Rarely could a SIGINT operation simply sit down and begin producing intelligence. Further, the ERU was, by necessity, woefully lacking in even the limited data base available to the entire SIGINT community. So, from the standpoint of the basic concept of direct support to tactical commanders, the USAFSS unit did not at that time--nor did it ever--produce along the lines initially imagined by its consumers.

) Then, of course, came the encroachment of NSA on the deployed units. When these field units became a part of the full SIGINT

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community, the initial vision of an integral SIGINT cell in the tactical control system disappeared. The unit then became primarily a contributor to the national intelligence picture in SEA and, theoretically at least, came under the direct control of cryptologic authorities. This showed up from time to time over the next two and a half years as efforts were made to pull practically all active intercept operations out of Da Nang when it became evident that the site was producing little or no unique intercept. Through most of 1963, NSA pressed to make all SIGINT operations in SEA joint sites. In fact, the ASA moved from Da Nang to Phu Bai, where NSA had plans for a fully integrated center of some 800 men.<sup>34</sup>

No Need Seen for NSA Centralization Plan; Insistence Pays:

USAFSS felt, however, that even with the change in outlook in the SIGINT organization, it was imperative that its unit stay at Da Nang where it would be collocated with a proposed combat reporting post (CRP) on Monkey Mountain and the tactical flying commander at Da Nang. Also, NSA could not prove any improvement in intercept at Phu Bai since moving the ASA operations there. Further, there was still the VHF intercept capability from Monkey Mountain, even as sparse as it was, and it was still better than anything turned up at the ASA site. So, since there could be no benefit (in fact, a possible detriment in VHF intercept), and since USAFSS insisted it be located close to the tactical commanders it would

be supporting at Da Nang, the unit stayed there.

Although the pressure to pull everything except the intercept equipment out of Da Nang continued through 1964, USAFSS managed to hold onto a certain amount of its capability to support 2nd ADVON; an insistence that paid off when U.S. air operations began over the north early in 1965. Considering the change in direction and the emergence of the ERU as a part of the general SIGINT organization in SEA rather than a unit directly supporting 2nd ADVON, the only concrete result of the deployment was the command's success in having the unit ready when it was needed. Its direct contribution to tactical commanders was simply included in the general SIGINT service provided to 2nd ADVON by the 6925th Scty Gp as the SIGINT reporting cell for Vietnamese intelligence. And this support was nebulous at best because there was still very little North Viet Nam - related communications to be monitored and followed.<sup>35</sup>

CHICOM, Soviet Communications Emphasized

Midst all of these conflicting actions and intents, the small site at Da Nang continued to search out enemy communications--primarily CHICOM and Soviet, with the most productive being the Sino-Soviet links carrying flight schedules on air resupply activities in SEA. Atop Monkey Mountain there was sporadic success against VHF communications in the vicinity of southern Hainan Island. This was still the only proven VHF site since ASA had experienced little VHF success at Phu Bai. Manual

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Morse intercept was good and productive at Da Nang, and HF voice was better than fair. By mid-1963 plans were well on the way with PACAF to collocate the intercept site with the CRP on the mountain top, but since other support arrangements were already established at Da Nang, and since the ASA site at Phu Bai later became more and more crowded, USAFSS was allowed to continue to operate at Da Nang.<sup>36</sup>

CHICOM Activity Causes Concern:

( ) That issue was by no means settled as far as NSA was concerned, but in the meantime, things were happening that caused considerable concern at the agency's headquarters at Fort Meade, Md. The CHICOMs were shuffling their aircraft--and had been since early February 1963--and had moved a contingent into Lingshui Airfield on southern Hainan Island. On 10 March, 10 jet fighters moved in, indicating two possibilities: (a) imminent occupation of the field by the 8th Chinese Communist Naval Air Force Air Division (CCNAF), which at that time was based at Hai How, or (b) creation of a new naval jet fighter division at Lingshui. Meanwhile, on 5 March, the USAFSS Liaison Office at NSA had pointed out that:<sup>37</sup>

. . . In light of the proximity of (the) field to South Viet Nam and Laos, the activation (of the) field at this time is of possible great significance. It can be expected that Far East consumers, especially CINCPAC will be most anxious to have (the) best possible SIGINT coverage and reporting of all activity in South Hainan Island, specifically at Lingshui.

These events proved timely from USAFSS's point of view



because Monkey Mountain was still the only really potential VHF site, despite NSA's continued claims that Phu Bai would be the better site. On 22 April 1963, a test team on the mountain top copied the first CHICOM VHF voice from Hainan Island. Also, two days later, the team copied the first Vietnamese voice. It was not copied anywhere else, including the

[REDACTED] For a month the operators concentrated on VHF operations and continued to copy both CHICOM and North Vietnamese transmissions--with CHICOM predominating.

EO 3.3c(6)

Monkey Mountain Partial VHF Answer:

By early June 1963, most of the Hainan Island activity was from Lingshui Airfield and concerned practice formation flying, airfield exercises, and aerial gunnery, plus some ground controlled intercept (GCI) target exercises. The test team NCO in charge on the mountain later said ". . .with improved site conditions and more refined equipment, both the quality and quantity of intercept of both entities (CHICOM and North Vietnamese) could be greatly enhanced."<sup>38</sup>

Admittedly, Monkey Mountain was by no means a complete answer to the VHF problem, and the main site at Da Nang really didn't offer enough to make its operation economically worth-while. But both contributed to the overall SIGINT effort. Much of the intercept of Vietnamese communications

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] . . . But PacSctyRgn reminded USAFSS that  
" . . . [REDACTED] full copy from  
Da Nang. Loss of Da Nang would result in some second echelon analysis  
deterioration on a timely basis."

Pressure For Consolidation Continues, But Fails:

EO 3.3b(6)

NSA, by this time, had accepted the fact that Monkey Mountain would contribute to the SIGINT effort, but the pulling and tugging for the ultimate arrangement and shape of the SIGINT organization continued. USAFSS was still caught in the middle. For example, despite the fact that the USAFSS unit was still in place to support 2nd ADVON should an air problem develop, NSA continued to push for Da Nang's integration into the agency's big SIGINT site at Phu Bai. It was willing to leave the VHF site on the mountain, but felt it should be supported from the Army site at Phu Bai. This would create many problems for the Army, which by mid-1963 admitted that Phu Bai would have trouble accepting any USAFSS positions at all. This objection did not seem to bother NSA. It continued to press for the consolidation anyway.<sup>39</sup>

The unique relationship of a service cryptologic agency as responsible to both NSA and its parent military department, came into play over the last half of 1963. This encounter was frustrating indeed, both from the standpoint of the practicality of operation and the ultimate aim to support 2nd ADVON when and if a North Vietnamese air problem did in fact

develop. Late in July 1963, USAFSS told PacSctyRgn that Da Nang would in fact stay open, for the time being at least, although it continued to kick around the alternative of temporary rotational manning versus permanent assignment of personnel. The command also considered other things to ease the strain produced by what was still an operation of limited productivity. Part of the chaff was cut away when the 6923rd Scty Sq at Tan Son Nhut was discontinued and the Da Nang operation was made a detachment of the 6925th Scty Gp. Monkey Mountain was still the prime justification, since much of the Da Nang operation continued to be duplicated to one extent or another. PacSctyRgn argued that:<sup>40</sup>

. . . Da Nang's Monkey Mountain offers the only suitable USAFSS site for an expanded VHF effort in (the North Viet Nam-Hainan) area. (Although the USAFSS mission, since its inception in South Viet Nam, had been relatively lackluster, the potential is certainly there and every degree of separation from the problem is a degree of alienation).

#### PACAF Requirements Continue Direct Support Need

) For all intents and purposes, USAFSS's operation in SEA reverted to a very austere one. In fact, plans published in September 1963, indicated that they would remain austere, as far as permanent SIGINT operations were concerned. Any additional effort brought on by tactical requirements could be provided by deployment of another ERU to the nearest tactical site.<sup>41</sup> In the meantime, USAFSS's efforts to keep its tactical support capability in place got a boost in justification as the Sino-Soviet involvement appeared to be getting more general and discernible. A

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CHICOM jet fighter regiment had recently moved into Southwest China (this activity was covered by a USAFSS detachment at \_\_\_\_\_). Also, other unsettled situations in India and the Korean DMZ further agitated the situation in the minds of tactical commanders. PacSctyRgn summarized:<sup>42</sup>

. . . Of particular significance is the deployment of the 24 jet fighters to Mengtzu, SSu-Mao or Kunming, which in addition to the 30 presently at Kunming will significantly increase the CHICOM air capabilities in Southwest China and pose an increased threat to friendly forces in Laos. Mengtzu, a new and as yet unoccupied airfield, is within MIG 15-17 operating radius in northern Laos including the Plaine de Jarres area. With external fuel, the MIG 15-17s have a high-low-high profile in mission radius of over 300 nautical miles which would make these aircraft effective in a ground attack or strafing role in support of the Pathet Lao. In addition, other CHICOM aircraft (TU-2s and jet fighters), apparently scheduled ferry flights, possibly are programmed for transfer to south or southwest China. . . .

Monkey Mountain VHF Primary Justification:

PACAF agreed that it had ". . . urgent and continued requirement for immediate information concerning the arrival and subsequent activities of CHICOM air elements in the vicinity of North Viet Nam and Laos." Since VHF had been copied at Monkey Mountain up to 600 miles away, it had at least some potential. No other site had any at all, so an extra position was moved up the mountain and the site was back in business in the middle of August. The increased activity brought on more thoughts of an ACRP mission, but the basic shortcoming of this medium remained, viz., the inability, with resources at hand, to launch a long-term,

concentrated ACRP effort. PACAF really didn't want such a thing at the time because it was responsible for the aircraft themselves and had to support and maintain them.

There were all kinds of difficulties involved; all of them associated with the expense of flying special interest missions of this kind, plus the limited technical background which took a long time to develop. Within its capabilities, in the meantime, Monkey Mountain was proving its worth. By September 1963, it was copying VHF regularly from Hainan Island's tactical training communications, including a fair amount of ground station traffic as well as that issuing from the aircraft. Much was unique and almost all was better than anything else available.<sup>43</sup>

#### NSA Collocation Efforts Again Emerge

While this was going on, NSA, unbeknownst to USAFSS, was still trying unilaterally to consolidate SIGINT collection activities. Although it had agreed to keep Monkey Mountain, and also allowed USAFSS to think that Da Nang would continue as a permanent site, NSA plugged along with its efforts to make the mountain-top site a part of the consolidated station at Phu Bai. Early in October, however, USAFSS discovered that the agency was also pulling strings to hold up on planned construction of a permanent facility at Da Nang--a plan that was already funded. USAFSS Deputy Commander Brig. Gen. Louis E. Coira told Col. James Macia, DCS/Operations, who was visiting NSA at the time, to impress

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on the agency that: ". . .any attempt to stop Da Nang construction and re-program at Phu Bai will delay provisioning of adequate facilities for four years. . .desire that you take a firm position regarding retention of the Da Nang--Monkey Mountain Complex."

USAFSS Commander Maj. Gen. Richard P. Klocko, travelling through the Far East during the first two weeks in October, talked to MACV and gathered a few pertinent facts. To begin with, MACV apparently realized the potential of Phu Bai, but in discussing the lines of defense that had been established in South Viet Nam for a possible northern invasion, General Klocko found that while Phu Bai was north of the line and would have to be evacuated in case of attack, Da Nang was south of it and would be in the defended zone. Consequently, General Klocko told Lt. Gen. Gordon A. Blake, Director of NSA (DIRNSA) who had been pushing the consolidation:<sup>44</sup>

. . .With respect to collocation of Army Phu Bai and USAFSS at Da Nang, my initial reaction is that virtually no economy would be achieved. . .and there are many disadvantages. Am concerned over Viet Cong activities in vicinity of Phu Bai and U.S. forces committed to hold line north of Da Nang, but south of Phu Bai. Consider it especially desirable to remain in vicinity of Monkey Mountain. . . .

USAFSS Agrees to Austere Da Nang Operation:

After considerable thinking and weighing of consequences, General Klocko told NSA that he was willing to make Da Nang as austere an operation as possible, leaving only enough there for the unit to be in

place should an air problem develop. He also wanted to keep the VHF effort as it was on Monkey Mountain. All of the HF effort would be moved back to the Philippines. NSA agreed with the approach. General Blake said that the Da Nang site could remain for the "foreseeable future." PACAF had no objection to such a move since it was \$40,000 short of the funds needed to complete the permanent Da Nang facility anyway. But, again, NSA's words were conditioned, and the background fact remained that:

. . . (as far as NSA was concerned) the need for USAFSS SIGINT units in Southeast Asia is dictated solely by intelligence requirements and operational considerations.<sup>\*</sup> Inasmuch as the preponderance of SIGINT activity on the Southeast Asia mainland is ground-related, the bulk of resources have been provided by ASA. If and when it is determined that additional air-related activity is available, the NSA will take necessary steps to expand SIGINT resources.

Note that there was no mention made of direct support to tactical air commanders--the reason the USAFSS unit was in South Viet Nam in the first place. Also, the term "foreseeable future" was open to a great deal of interpretation. For example, in November, NSA raised the Phu Bai collocation point again in a message to the ASA, telling the Army how to handle funds programming so that facilities for USAFSS operations could be included in the big building program that was planned over the next couple of years.<sup>43</sup>

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\* Author's emphasis.

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NSA Presses, USAFSS/ASA Confused, Change Cancelled:

Apparently the order came as somewhat of a surprise to ASA, but USAFSS was completely in the dark. More specifically, USAFSS told NSA it ". . . could not understand the reasoning behind these instructions." USAFSS's objections had apparently been justified in everybody's mind, but the time was coming when command operations people were beginning to wonder at the wisdom of continuing the fight to keep a tactical support unit at Da Nang at all. After all, exaggerated efforts had already been expended to keep the unit there, and they were not sure it was worth all the trouble that continued to plague them.

(TSCW) The agency justified its action by saying its endorsement of Da Nang was merely to support a "hot war" effort, but it also had to look to the future for its permanent SIGINT structure in SEA. However, if the plans went through, USAFSS would be forced out of Da Nang, which was the home of the air commanders it would support in tactical operations.

In the meantime, PACAF had already moved on the command's recommendation to cancel the \$80,000 permanent facility in favor of a \$25,000 nucleus augmented by H-1 ERU vans. The upshot of the entire development was that USAFSS directed that those positions scheduled to go to the Philippines be retained in SEA, so it was back where it started.<sup>46</sup>

SIGINT Development Continues:

The situation remained static at Da Nang for the first half of



1964, with all manual Morse intercept (eight positions) at the main site and all voice intercept (three positions) on Monkey Mountain. Early in the year a secure teletype circuit was activated between the two points for tip-off purposes--a system that was tactically inadequate but would have to do until KY-8 ciphony equipment became available. This didn't happen until the end of the year.

) The Morse positions covered both North Vietnamese and CHICOM civil military, air defense, and tactical fighter activities. Nearly all tactical communications at the time were on CHICOM circuits, but related closely to the North Vietnamese situation. The direction remained primarily in support of national intelligence requirements because there were still no military air operations being conducted by the North Vietnamese.

In April 1964, a test was conducted against Cambodia VHF communications following a confrontation between two photo reconnaissance F-101s and a MIG 15 or MIG 17, along the Viet Nam-Cambodian border. The trial was basically successful, except for a weakness in the French linguistic capability available to the test unit. The Phnom Penh control tower was successfully copied, however, and the test was dropped after little real intelligence was gathered. <sup>47</sup>

) The time was well spent in the most comprehensive coverage of the area that had been possible up to that point by USAFSS efforts,

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but the lull was broken again from two directions in July 1964. On the 21st of the month, NSA announced plans to increase its effort throughout SEA, including USAFSS sites. The Da Nang operation would be increased to 22 positions, and the USAFSS portion of the combined operation a

would be boosted to 10 positions. There were many things that had to happen before the latter was possible, but as always NSA seemed to assume much when making plans and proposals. This would not have been particularly difficult, but PACAF, before any effect of the first move was discernible, told PacSctyRgn that 13th AF was going to deploy a control and reporting post (CRP) and an air support operations center (ASOC) to Udorn, Thailand. Considering PACAF's insistence on keeping the direct support capability at Da Nang, it became logical to USAFSS that the air command would want the same thing for its Thailand operations. <sup>48</sup>

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Gulf of Tonkin Naval Action is Prelude to Air Operations

) In August, the Gulf of Tonkin incident caused a change in direction. General Klocko met with Maj. Gen. Joseph H. Moore, Commander of the 2nd Air Division (formerly 2nd ADVON), and they talked about what was needed to support a build-up of U.S. air capability throughout the war area. A hasty support arrangement was put together as follows:

SIGINT reflecting enemy air movement or significant operation would be passed as near simultaneously as possible to the CRP on Monkey Mountain, the control and reporting center (CRC) at Tan Son Nhut, and the 2nd Air Division command post nearby. The USAFSS Monkey Mountain site was just next door to the CRP on the mountain, so all that was necessary was a telephone line from

the van to the control point. As for the actual SIGINT information, it would be passed by secure teletype to the Monkey Mountain van, then by plot style to the CRP. From that point it was handled as regular air defense information to defensive aircraft units and to the CRC.

The unsecured telephone line was the only weak link in the system, but the risk was considered acceptable. Communications between the Da Nang SIGINT site and the Tan Son Nhut locations was a little more complex since it had to be handled within the exclusive SIGINT CRITICOMM (Critical Communications) net, and this terminated at the ASA 3rd Radio Research Unit (RRU) at Tan Son Nhut. Information passed on this net was relayed by whatever method was possible to the AFSSO 2nd Air Division. This proved too lengthy, so it wasn't long before a new KW-26 secured circuit was established between Da Nang and the air division.<sup>49</sup>

General Moore Halts Ubon Plans, [redacted] Objects:

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The 2nd Air Division was more concerned than ever since the MIG threat was growing and missiles were being spotted in the North. The concern was topped off by an intercepted North Vietnamese naval communication which said that "air defense is 100 percent in position." Considering this, General Moore told USAFSS to hold in abeyance any plans for an Ubon deployment, at least for the moment, and concentrate on what was available and on hand. Then the conflict within the conflict erupted again. The [redacted]

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the NSA intermediate processing center in the Pacific, told the Agency:

. . . While we appreciate requirements for immediate support to 2nd Air Division, we believe institution of TACOMINT operation at (Da Nang) and (the Philippines) will reduce almost completely (Da Nang's) ability, and reduce (the 6925th Scty Gp, Philippines) ability significantly, to produce invaluable reporting to entire intelligence community.

General Klocko disagreed, however, and told USAFSS units that both jobs could be done. In a wire to General Coira on 11 August, he said:<sup>50</sup>

USAFSS has in being the capability to contribute directly to the offensive and defensive mission of 2nd Air Division. Initially all that is required is the installation of a few communications links to make this reporting more timely, and a slight beef up of personnel. . . . I have instructed our people that this is an Air Force requirement and is part of our mission.

Tactical Fear is North Vietnamese Air Attack:

Initially, the 2nd Air Division was primarily concerned with an enemy air offensive against U.S. positions and the SIGINT support effort was geared in this direction. Principally, it was an extension of the existing radar capabilities which were set up in three warning areas extending through southern North Viet Nam and northern South Viet Nam. The range of the arc stretched out about 350 miles and it was divided into three alert areas. The operators at Da Nang and Monkey Mountain soon found that differences in the HF capability between the two sites was hindering the tip-off system significantly because HF, both Morse and voice, could be heard better from the main site because of the superiority

of the antennas there. So, beginning in late November 1964, the Da Nang detachment began moving all of the HF voice positions off the mountain top and relocating them with the Morse positions at Da Nang. Once again, this left only VHF operations on Monkey Mountain.<sup>51</sup>

Support of SAC Reconnaissance Missions Ordered

The Strategic Air Command's (SAC) U-2 and unmanned drone reconnaissance flights caused a further pressure on USAFSS's limited operation. And, again, the conflict of local operational and national intelligence requirements came to the surface. SAC's operations were in a unique position since they were not technically a part of the 2nd Air Division operation. They were, instead, a part of the world-wide aerial reconnaissance program under the direct supervision and control of the JCS Joint Reconnaissance Committee (JRC). Within this controlling structure was a warning pattern which kept the aircraft from overflying certain borders during peripheral reconnaissance flights. A very distinct part of this program was warnings based on SIGINT because the SIGINT unit covered the flights and copied enemy air defense communications reacting to the aircraft. From these intercepts came a very precise location of the reconnaissance aircraft throughout the flight. To service the SAC Operating Location (OL) 20 at Bien Hoa, USAFSS deployed an AFSSO to that base and established communications with Da Nang.<sup>52</sup>

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SAC U-2 missions, known as LUCKY DRAGON, flew regularly over North Viet Nam. On 16 August 1964, following a re-evaluation of the advisory warning support that was needed, Det 2 of the 6925th Scty Gp, received a request for warning these flights of fighter reaction or any other adverse action; viz., surface to air missiles (SAM). A single side band (SSB) circuit was already in service, so all that had to be added was the alert and coding procedure for passing the information from the SAC radio station to Bien Hoa. This was done immediately. Between that time (August) and the end of the year, three tip-offs were given to SAC. In each case, the mission was recalled. On 11 December the mission code name was changed from LUCKY DRAGON to TROJAN HORSE.<sup>53</sup>

EO 3.3b(3)  
P.L. 86-36SIGINT Mission Control Not Understood

No problem developed in providing alert information from intercept taken at Da Nang and Monkey Mountain, but a third factor had entered the picture. Since late Spring, C-130 ACRP aircraft had been flying \_\_\_\_\_ By Fall, these missions were becoming more and more successful, particularly in collecting communications intelligence (COMINT) from frequencies in the top end of the spectrum (VHF/UHF).<sup>\*</sup> Much of this was enemy tactical voice communications which was

\* The ACRP Program, which became a SIGINT mainstay, will be discussed in full in the follow-on input on this subject covering the 1965-68 period.

of infinite value to an operation such as the warning program--particularly in air defense alert operations. SAC, in mid-August 1964, asked for ACRP advisory warning support for its drone missions. PACAF passed the requirement to the 6988th Scty Sq at Yokota, Japan, which operated the ACRP program in the Southwest Pacific. SAC wanted the warning support to start by the end of the month, but it never was possible to give SAC the first priority support it was seeking.

The conflict of interest was further confused by PACAF's decision to go directly to the 6988th Scty Sq with the job. The squadron had to put on the brakes to get things back in line so the proper chain of tasking and control could be established. The ACRP aircraft at that time were under the direct tasking control of NSA, which had deployed the mission originally. So, the squadron told PacSctyRgn, which knew nothing of the task that had been assigned, that ". . . it is not possible to support BLUE SPRINGS (the drone missions) and simultaneously fly NSA-directed Thailand orbits. Clearly stated precedence of desired effort needed before any effective support can be directed."<sup>54</sup>

After a rather hectic exchange of messages among PacSctyRgn, USAFSS, and NSA, the agency finally went directly to the JCS and said ". . . would appreciate knowing precise nature of requirement for ACRP support to this project." The JCS didn't appear particularly concerned, indicating it was not aware of SAC's urgency in the matter.

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Said the JCS:

As long as NSA has adequate ground intercept facilities to cover CHICOM/North Viet Nam radar tracking and fighter reactions to all Blue Springs routes and to provide adequate advisory warning support to the launch aircraft, no requirement for ACRP exists for ACRP SIGINT support.

This put the burden on NSA. The agency's first proclamation was that "we do not. . . associate ACRP with requirement for passing warning to Blue Springs launch aircraft." The agency later modified this stand as ACRP proved the most complete, rapid and reliable source of tactical communications--imperative to successful warning. For example, NSA said ACRP support could only be added when Blue Springs missions were outside the normal range of VHF voice collection of fixed SIGINT sites and within the hearability range of a regular ACRP orbit. Since there was no VHF except from the general area of South Hainan Island, the final NSA decision simply added the job to the ACRP flights, with the proviso that they could not leave the orbit they were scheduled to fly. The agency also made no move to relieve the ACRP crews of any of the tasks assigned at the time. This was important because it was the existence of these tasks which initially prompted the squadron to object to the support requirement. 55

Reconnaissance Alerts Planned; "Situation Q":

) The end of 1964 brought a portent of things to come when



the 2nd Air Div asked for half-hourly reports of all reflections connected with the two combat-type USAF missions in effect at the time: Yankee Team low and medium level reconnaissance flights, which were supported by fighter escorts, and the Barrel Roll armed reconnaissance flights over Laos. These were the only operations conducted by the 2nd Air Div at that time over territory not in friendly hands. The type of warning the air division had in mind was closely related to that provided in Korean War operations. The requirement was a little different, however, since the 2nd Air Div wanted only a short warning to the aircraft when SIGINT revealed a dangerous reaction by CHICOM or North Vietnamese aircraft. Called simply "Situation Q," the intercept station at Da Nang would pass that short alert to General Moore, who planned to be at the Monkey Mountain CRP--called "Panama"--during operations. The warning would denote "unfriendly fighter airborne and headed in direction of USAF operations." The 2nd Air Div could then take whatever action it thought necessary.

PACAF and Pac Scty Rgn met late in December 1964, and PACAF's intelligence representative was eager to implement the service. However, it never was put into effect because of the rapid expansion of air operations that began in February 1965, which caused the entire service to be expanded. That move was destined to change many things. For example, a complete advisory warning type service had to be

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developed (in addition to the service provided SAC reconnaissance flights); surface to air missile warnings had to be developed; MIG fighter alerts had to be developed for a much larger operation; and USAFSS had to continue with its normal SIGINT operations in support of NSA.<sup>56</sup>

Cycle Returns to Direct Tactical Support

So, the result of the task, as it was levied initially by PACAF on the 6920th Scty Wg (Pac Scty Rgn), was approaching the service originally envisioned, although it had taken almost three years for the transformation to take place. The basic aim--to have in place the capability to provide signal intelligence to the commander of the 2nd Air Div when an air problem developed in North Viet Nam--had in fact been met. The fact that it had not happened in the way it was planned was actually the result of circumstances, viz., USAFSS's position as a servant of both tactical requirements and national intelligence needs. As we have seen, it was not in any way an easy road, and only the eventual development of an air problem justified USAFSS's and PACAF's insistence that the USAFSS cell remain in being at Da Nang. Based in no small measure upon experience gained in Korea, PACAF wanted direct SIGINT support for its 2nd Air Div in this comparable situation. When the call came, USAFSS was able to provide it, at least in an infant form. All that remained was to develop it and refine it; but the task was valid, and it was met.

What Were the Alternatives to the Task or Its Implementation?

) There were two alternatives to direct SIGINT support as it was initially levied by PACAF: (a) direct service as provided by NSA through normal intelligence request and service channels, and (b) reliance on the much better known methods of forewarning of enemy air intentions, specifically radar. Even if massive and comparatively speedy communications facilities had been available (which they were not for some time), NSA or its [redacted] was not able to provide the immediate service required by 2nd Air Div in combat operations. There was proof of this fact even in the normal, less hectic operations than could be expected, and in fact did occur, in Viet Nam.

As to the second alternative, Korea had proved that SIGINT made a valuable contribution--a contribution that, in fact, had no substitute. During that conflict, U.S. pilots suddenly discovered that radar ranges seemed to have increased instantly. They found that intelligence was much more detailed. And, perhaps more surprising, they discovered that radar had suddenly developed an ability to see behind hills and other geographical obstructions. The illusion was created, of course, by SIGINT being hidden within intelligence from other sources (notably radar plots) so that the security of the signal intelligence could be maintained.

) At the end of 1964, the potential advantages of SIGINT had

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not yet become apparent to the casual observer. Those familiar with SIGINT security knew this would be the case until an air war actually developed. But much experience had been gained. USAFSS had received the opportunity to get a number of people ready, particularly Vietnamese linguists (although the continued acute shortage of such people consistently plagued the command). Those who served in any intercept or reporting capacity had the opportunity to get a more gradual "feel" for the operation. Fortunately, a backlog of personnel with experience was being built up. Familiarity with the enemy and his operations was vitally necessary and with the lack of prior development there was no way other than the hit-and-miss efforts to get such experience. No doubt all would wish for a smoother and less complicated development than that which took place, but under the circumstances, difficult and frustrating as it was, it was probably the only way it could have been accomplished.

#### Additional Considerations

The foregoing discussions present the feeling that a conflict of interest was interjected into nearly every move that USAFSS made during the three years in question. In most respects this was true, but there is no intent here to lay blame on NSA as an ogre which opposed the Air Force at every turn. The agency's problem was a very real one, and it had authorities and responsibilities in managing the national SIGINT mission. Where conflicts arose, it was simply a matter of trying to

exercise these authorities. NSA was charged by the National Security Council (NSC) to manage this program, and the National Security Council Intelligence Directives (NSCIDS) were the guiding lights. These directives gave NSA clear-cut and complete authority in most SIGINT matters.

Such was the case when USAFSS deployed its ERU in support of 2nd ADVON. PACAF had the right to receive direct SIGINT support from USAFSS on delegated authority; but the ultimate authority remained with NSA. And the agency had problems in this respect that were even older than the war. To adequately cover CHICOM and related communications, NSA had started well back in the 'fifties trying to build an effective organization. Since the beginning of the internal crisis in Laos in mid-1959, the SIGINT community had been laboring to get a foothold in covering the diverse opposing organization. This had not been easy. ASA moved in first with a contingency unit located in [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] to build up intelligence on insurgency and counterinsurgency operations in the beleaguered nation. Consisting of almost 100 men, the Army unit improved, by a marked degree, the intercept of North Vietnamese communications, as well as Laotian and Thai communications. However, there were no significant southeast Asian air operations at that time, or even much later in North Viet Nam. Still, there were air targets in West and Southwest China not successfully monitored at the eastern sites, so SEA intercept locations were

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EO 3.3b(3)

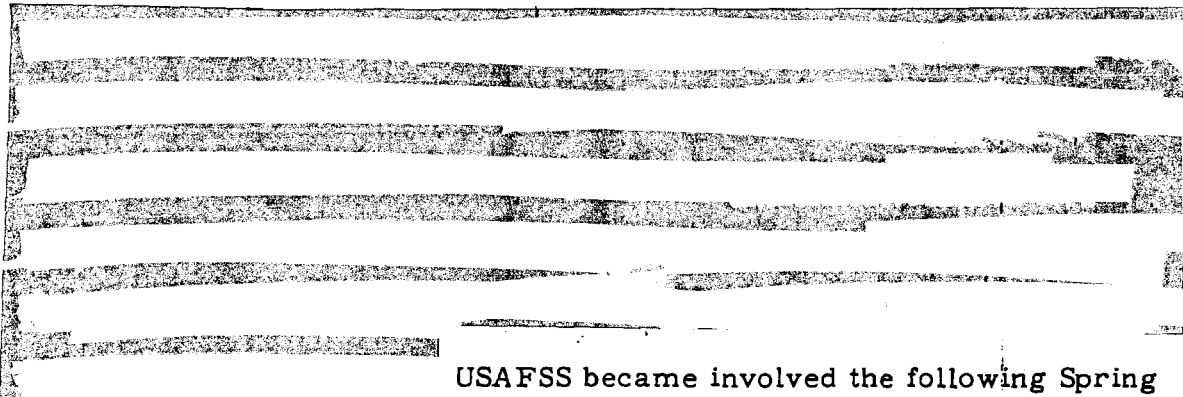
EO 3.3b(1)  
EO 3.3b(3)  
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vital to the national intelligence program. <sup>57</sup>

USAFSS Joins ASA Operation in Thailand

Late in August 1959, NSA asked USAFSS for a maximum effort to provide data relating to North Vietnamese or Laotian rebel movements, but there was none the command could supply. So, NSA

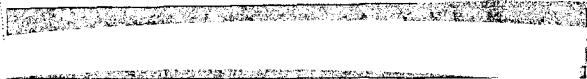


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EO 3.3b(6)  
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USAFSS became involved the following Spring

when it sent in a site survey team to work with a special NSA project called [redacted] operating two manual Morse positions. So successful was the effort against South and Southwest China targets that NSA, in September 1960, called for its continuation in the form of a site survey by the 6925th RSM. NSA

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Technically speaking, the HF

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Morse communications being copied so successfully at the [redacted] site should have been accessible to the 6925th Scty Gp in the Philippines with the interworking of the two operations. But this was not so. Consequently, by the end of 1960, NSA was talking about augmenting the USAFSS operation [redacted] to something like 30 men with three

positions to operate. 58

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Politics Critical in Site Operation

However, there was an awful lot of politics involved here. Therefore, everybody had to move slowly since the dealings had to go through State Department and ambassadorial levels, as well as military channels. The Thais were showing no inclination to just turn things loose for a full-grown development without knowing what was going on inside. They wanted in on the entire operation (hence the Thai insistence that the ASA site be located adjacent to the Thai AFSC school rather than at either of the other two available sites). But this could not be completely allowed. NSA's plans for immediate expansion late in 1960 had to be delayed because of these pressures. Also, the USAFSS effort had to continue as a "site survey" rather than a full blown Air Force operation. This meant that the personnel could not be assigned permanently--all had to be there on temporary duty (TDY)--and all of this had to be provided by one USAFSS unit, the \_\_\_\_\_ One way or the other, however, it was going to stay. To back the decision, NSA had this to say: 59

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... Project \_\_\_\_\_ has demonstrated capability to intercept unique CHICOM air material. The station has discovered and developed the Southwest China Air Defense District communications, a large part of which is exploitable. The \_\_\_\_\_ traffic when studied with Civil Air material, gives strong indications that the Southwest Air Defense District has the full complex of communications (command air, flight service, fighter operations and air defense) normal to other CHICOM air defense districts. It is probable that SIGINT indicates of Chinese military action in Southeast Asia will be developed most rapidly from analysis of communications of this district. . . . Attempts to develop

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these same communications at (6925th RSM, Philippines).

Over the last two months of 1960 considerable diplomatic pressure, plus a number of high level objections, caused NSA to decide not to push for a big augmentation at that time. ASA was already building its permanent structure, however, and for all intents and purposes the operation was in. Also, the small USAFSS segment was given full reporting responsibilities to selected consumers. Operationally, it was still supported by the main body ASA unit. A few people would have to be added to handle the two extra positions which were to go into the new complex if all plans made up to that point took place. It was well into 1961 before the USAFSS unit was given the full status of a detachment of the [redacted]. By that time there was nothing to change as far as the operation was concerned. <sup>60</sup>

#### ERU Alerted for Deployment

Through 1961 the steady deterioration in Laos brought on a number of special efforts by USAFSS units in the Pacific area. These efforts bred few if any positive results, but many negative ones. First was the declaration of Defense Condition (DEFCON) III by Joint Task Force 116 in December 1960. The declaration automatically put earmarked personnel at all [redacted] units on alert for immediate deployment when and if ordered. This would have been the first attempt at a



deployment in support of a joint effort, and it was perhaps fortunate that it never came about, at least the deployment of the full ERU. But this didn't keep it from being a rather frustrating experience, and one that was indicative of the confusion that surrounded USAFSS becoming involved in equally important tasks from two different directions. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff kicked off 1961 by saying ". . . identification of elements attacking Plaines Des Jarres area of Laos considered. . . primary factor for planning and policy considerations. Difficulties in obtaining firm identification are realized but all resources short of over-flight by U. S. aircraft must be utilized. . . ."61

Enemy troop identification was one of the primary jobs of SIGINT. So, since there were not enough facilities or a sufficient capability to cover the Laotian-North Vietnamese-CHICOM problem in and around Laos, it seemed that there would be an increased emphasis on getting SIGINT capabilities in place to do the job. Two things were launched almost immediately: the aforementioned deployment alert of JTF-116, and a miniscule attempt at an emergency reaction ACRP from the C-47 fleet in South Korea. Preparations for the two began almost simultaneously; and each was equally confused. 62

The first actually was the preparation to deploy USAFSS's ERU from Clark AB to wherever the JTF-116 Air Component settled. The effort was simply a part of a maze of activities at Clark to put

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together the pieces of the air component, and the confusion was evident. When ERU Commander Maj. Elmer D. Richardson arrived at Clark early in January 1961, he found that he was, in effect, a salesman for SIGINT. The air component commander, identified here only as a Colonel LaClare, did not hold the special intelligence clearance. Consequently, he knew little about SIGINT support or that it would be to his advantage to have it. Richardson could tell him only enough to convince him that he needed the support. Finally, they agreed that during the formation period at Clark the unit should be located near LaClare's air operations center. With the assistance of the commander of the 6925th RSM, Richardson began setting up the unit for a week or so of tests. But the next day problems began to arise. Colonel LaClare said there would not be transportation heavy enough to pull the vans and flatbed trailer, particularly if the terrain was mountainous or rough --which it most certainly figured to be. Two-and-a-half ton tractors were all that Clark AB had to offer, and these had already proved too small in earlier ERU maneuvers at the Philippine base. Efforts to get something bigger had been to no avail. <sup>63</sup>

A week later, Major Richardson put in his transportation priority for six H-1 vans and a TRD-4 HF radio direction finding set. What Colonel LaClare had in mind for the SIGINT ERU is not known, but this certainly wasn't it. He told Richardson that at least 70 percent of the unit would have to go by ship and train. The ERU commander feared for

the safety and well-being of some of the sensitive equipment during such travel, but Colonel LaClare wasn't exactly sure just how much airlift he would have and what all of the other priorities would be.

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Richardson urged the [redacted] to see what it could do about having a quick background investigation run so the air component commander could receive his clearance. But this would have to go all the way to Hq USAF, so it was never received. In the meantime, 13th Air Force, which was handling all of the support details for the entire air component, had said it foresaw no problems in regard to the ERU. Again, however, somebody misjudged the situation. As evidence of the jumbled situation, the ERU commander reported:

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. . . Had lengthy discussion with 13th Air Force director of war plans. . . and learned that no support, as listed in 6920th Scty Wg OPLAN 1-60, has been pre-positioned and/or earmarked for the contingency unit. The 13th Air Force director of war plans has no clear cut tasking for this support. A review of the JTF-116 operations plan, change one, Phase II (Gen. Weller), and Phase III and IV (Laos) published by JTF commander of Phase II and IV (Army commander) does not indicate any provisions for the employment of the 6920th Scty Wg ERU in either of those phases of combat activity in Laos. . . .

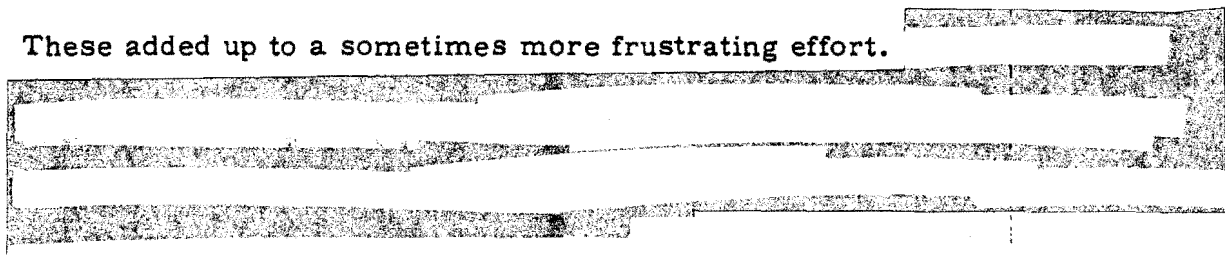
#### ERU Deployment Delayed

Such was the situation at the beginning of 1961. Fortunately, the ERU didn't have to deploy. But many things had to be done--and done quickly. The support details had to be worked out from the ground up. A SIGINT-cleared contact in a position of authority in the air component had to be provided to handle the details as they came up. Plans for joint

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operations (this presumably included all plans, not just those in connection with the ERU deployment) had to be simplified. There were simply too many of them not related to one another. In the existing plans, Richardson said, the ERU was perhaps mentioned, but he emphasized that the ". . . 6920th Scty Wg contingency unit (support) requirements are not spelled out." During the preparations for deployment, the only requirements the 13th Air Force commander was interested in meeting were those specifically delineated.<sup>65</sup>

When the requirement for the ERU to deploy was eliminated early in February 1961 (the deployment was limited to an AFSSO to support the JTF-116 commander), other things had already started to pop. These added up to a sometimes more frustrating effort.



EO 3.3c(1)  
EO 3.3b(3)  
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#### Need for Airborne Intercept Recognized

Voice communications, VHF in particular, were the heart of the tactical SIGINT challenge. For some time, SIGINT stations from Korea southward had been copying Morse communications and tracking Soviet transport flights out of Mongolia south through China. These flights almost certainly were in support of SEA insurgent operations. But where they were and what they were doing would show up predominantly in air-ground-air

communications, which were principally in the VHF range. Again, the only consistent source of line-of-sight communications intercept was the ACRP platforms, but these were expensive to operate and in very short supply.

USAFSS was mostly interested in CHICOM fighter aircraft entering North Viet Nam. None of these had shown up in point-to-point communications; nor was there any particular reason why they should. It was not impossible that the aircraft themselves could be crated up and ground-shipped into the warring nation. If so, there would be no pre-flight, flight service, or navigational point-to-point communications at all.<sup>67</sup>

To try to fill the VHF void, USAFSS sent a C-47 ACRP (part of the Rose Bowl fleet that operated out of [redacted] - a simple and limited intercept configuration) first to the Philippines and eventually to Ubon, Thailand, where it operated for some three months. From an intercept point of view, it was not phenomenally successful, but still it gathered as much VHF as could be expected under the circumstances. With a mission covering Soviet, CHICOM, Vietnamese, and Laotian communications, it was widely diversified. Initially the C-47 effort was directed at airlift activities. The terrain hindered line-of-sight monitoring to a great extent. The C-47 was prohibited from over-flying Laos itself. Also, because of the mountainous terrain the Soviet pilots apparently were intentionally flying low altitudes and taking advantage of the land

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barriers. Nonetheless, there was enough top-level interest in the mission to extend it twice. In fact, the participants were pressed to the point where fatigue among the flying crews became dangerous. But when it finally ended in May 1961, the success was quite limited, even though a considerable amount of voice traffic had been intercepted in the aggregate.<sup>68</sup>

) Perhaps the most note-worthy series of events was in the maze of confusion that arose in trying to get the C-47 ACRP into Laos in the first place. The Ambassador was worried about the appearance of another U.S. airplane at Vientiane, particularly one with any peculiar external features. (Two U.S. planes were already there). There were problems with visas, passports, diplomatic clearances, security, arms, etc. All of the initial plans for the deployment had to be made on the assumption that it would be acceptable diplomatically; that all clearances for over-flight of Thailand, Laos, and South Viet Nam would be granted; and that all of the security details peculiar to a SIGINT operation could be worked out. The problems of passports spread over such a long time that when the deployment date came close, Major Richardson (who had been given the project because he was in the Philippines at the time) said he was going to leave whether he got them or not. The dilemma was compounded by the fact that there were no secure communications in Vientiane. Therefore, briefings would have to be conducted by the AFSSO Saigon, who carried his own off-line cryptographic equipment with him and destroyed paperwork as soon as he finished with it.

) Finally, the Ambassador in Saigon suggested using the airfield at Ubon, Thailand, about 40 miles south of Vientiane. Since the clearance route was much better oiled with the Thai government than with the Laos government, the necessary arrangements were worked out quickly. However, there were drawbacks there, too. Again, communications were not the best, so bulk material would have to be flown from Ubon to [redacted] to get it into SIGINT channels. Thus, in the end, at PACAF's suggestion, the ACRP was deployed to and flew out [redacted] beginning 3 February 1961 --more than a month after the [redacted] first got the word that the airplane was needed.<sup>69</sup>

Establishment [redacted] Affects SEA Operations

In the meantime, there were several other SIGINT developments taking place in connection with SEA operations. Although they did not directly relate to direct SIGINT support of the tactical commanders there, these developments had a significant impact on USAFSS operations in the area, particularly those of the [redacted] which had mission control of Viet Nam operations. The most pressure at this point came in manning the various "temporary" operations: namely, the ERUs and the detached activity [redacted]. All of these were manned by TDY personnel, a situation which caused a good deal of consternation to the [redacted] since it had the responsibility for keeping all of the posts manned. Secondly, plans were in the mill in early 1961 to organize and prepare

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for operating the [redacted]  
which was a tri-service/NSA full second echelon location for the entire  
Far East SIGINT problem. Since th [redacted] had begun operations in  
[redacted] it had been the second echelon center for the Chinese  
Communist SIGINT operation (the Army and Navy had their second echelon  
centers in the Philippines) and the plans to [redacted] had  
caused several problems already.<sup>70</sup>

The result of the 1957 Robertson Committee probe of intelli-  
gence operations organizations, the [redacted] ostensibly would pool all avail-  
able analytic talent in the Far East under the direction of NSA. The agency  
promised that ". . . efficient technical management and the application of  
the best linguistic and analytic talent from the services, will expand the  
capability far beyond that of the present time (November 1960)."<sup>71</sup>

(TSCW) However, where the [redacted] had maintained a consider-  
able amount of control over its intercept and tasking operations as the  
second echelon center, this would mean that  
[redacted]

[redacted]  
[redacted] in that area. The group and the 6920th Scty Wg fought the arrange-  
ment within their prerogatives, but to no appreciable avail. The Wing  
finally threw up its hands, saying ". . . (it is) fruitless to expound against  
specious logic and obvious fallacies in basic concept. . . ." Consequently,  
the Wing resigned itself to the fact that the group would be left with the



responsibility to support and man the center with its own second echelon operation [redacted] and little else.<sup>72</sup>

[redacted] in mid-1961, but a continuing battle to arrive at an operational concept agreeable to all concerned prohibited this. Other shortcomings, such as acceptable communications, also had to be worked out, so the activation date was slipped to January 1962. Even then there were vagaries and differences as to the way the operation would go. This was evidenced by two statements that came out of the many meetings and negotiations that took place. In one case, for example, it was reported that ". . . complete intercept control authority over Category C (positions in direct support of tactical commanders) resources of the [redacted] is vested in the [redacted]

[redacted] . . . ."; but in another case it was stated ". . . [redacted]

[redacted] is given supervisory authority over 'related field activities'. " In the end, however, all would actually be under the control of the [redacted] since he was given the authority to ". . . plan, organize, direct, and control [redacted] "73

USAFSS Operations at [redacted] Become Permanent

[redacted] didn't actually come about until April 1962, still amid considerable questioning of just how it would operate in connection with service mission control and tactical consumer relations. As it worked out in SEA, it didn't serve all of the purposes NSA

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had in mind initially; and as time went on, more and more processing and analytical functions were placed at the USAFSS unit at Da Nang where the needs of the 7th Air Force were concerned. Nonetheless, all operations had to continue within the framework of the center as an NSA arm, and those functions which were replaced at the lower levels had to be done with the center's blessing as a delegated authority. In the meantime, plans for a massive build-up of the SIGINT capability in SEA were coming to the fore; plans which would continue to pressure USAFSS to hold its limited capability at Da Nang to support air operations. First, after a full year of negotiations, the USAFSS operation [redacted] Thailand, was made a permanent activity, and the personnel strength raised from eight to 29. Although it remained collocated with ASA there, at least the personnel could be assigned permanently, taking some of the TDY pressure off the

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[redacted] 74

) Since the initial ASA and USAFSS successes at the Thailand site, the U.S. Intelligence Board (USIB) had been negotiating with the Thai Government to build a big SIGINT operation in that country--something on the order of 600 people. Thai opposition to such a move was such that the State Department urged caution at the time, but emphasized: 75

. . . In view of extreme importance of intelligence objectives of USIB's plan, however, we need go as far as politically feasible to advance our SIGINT position in Thailand. Department (State) has, therefore, given considerable thought to alternative steps, short of approach for major base, which might be undertaken in near future to further our SIGINT position and enhance chances of

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attaining USIB's long range SIGINT objectives. . . .

.....) So,

[REDACTED] the United States continued to pressure the Thai government to allow personnel increases. In October 1961, USAFSS learned that its ceiling had been raised to 29 men to operate one radio telephone and four manual Morse positions. Under normal manning criteria, this didn't quite fill the bill for 24-hour a day operation, but it was all that could be planned for at the time. In December 1961, the additional personnel were assigned to the job. This was a considerable task in itself since the personnel in several fields were in short supply in the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Tours had to be pro-rated, some extended tours had to be negotiated and some of the potential personnel were accompanied by their families on their home stations and dependents were not authorized at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 76

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) Actually, the group was rather hard-pressed to get, not necessarily the numbers, but the right calibre of people assigned; always remembering the other pressures that were being exerted at this particular time. The group admonished its squadron commanders (who had to actually provide the personnel) to select nobody but top qualified people; but, alas, the bottom of the barrel was being reached, so this could not always be done, particularly with respect to fully qualified and experienced noncommissioned officers.

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Plans for Expansion Continue

) Over the next three years, until the end of 1964, NSA was constantly in the midst of trying to build up the SIGINT capability in SEA. It had in mind something on the order of 1,000 men at several locations. The plans were directed more toward the Army than toward the Air Force, since the operations during that period were almost entirely ground problems to one extent or another. Korat, Thailand; Phu Bai, South Viet Nam; and others, were proposed as major intercept and reporting sites. USAFSS was not principally concerned, except for the fact that NSA's major point in all of this was the consolidation of effort at whatever point was selected. Since consolidation was always popular with the Department of Defense, USAFSS and 2nd Air Division were hard pressed to keep the command's diminutive effort at Da Nang in operation during this period of time. It was not until the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964--with its promise of increased air action over the north--that it could relax somewhat and get on to the job that needed to be done.

A Summary of Lessons Learned

) From an historical rather than an operational standpoint, there were two lessons that could perhaps be better termed "re-learned" rather than learned. These were: (a) a firm foundation of information must be available to the tactical commander who is to be supported by a tactical SIGINT resource, particularly information on just what this support entails

and what provisions must be made to make it available to him; and (b) That the SIGINT resource must be under the operational control of the tactical commander rather than as a semi-integrated component in the national intelligence structure. Both of these hinderances came out graphically in the effort to have in place a viable tactical SIGINT element in SEA. General Kellond's expression that the intelligence gathering facility should be in place before a tactical deployment might be the ideal, but would be rather difficult under the circumstance that the tactical commander himself would not know necessarily where he was to be deployed.

When Maj Elmer D. Richardson (and later Maj Lawrence Leon) went to air component commanders to arrange for providing the SIGINT support when the tactical element deployed, both found that the special intelligence restrictions placed them in a very disadvantageous position when it came to dealing with that commander. Technical tasking documents are, of necessity, written in very precise language; therefore, they must be protected within the special intelligence restriction confines. It is difficult to explain in detail that support which will become available without this restriction, so one of two courses becomes available; viz., the tasking and technical documents must be kept outside the special classifications, or there must at all times be preparations made so the air component commander can have access to the material. Either of the two dictate that some rather delicate steps be taken.

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Whatever road is taken, however, there must be operational rapport between the SIGINT supporting cell and the commander who will receive the support.

In the second case, a rather large change in operational concept must be delineated at the top levels of both the USAF and the SIGINT community. Technically, NSA has complete control of all SIGINT resources within the military structure. But, as we have seen, SEA brought on a conflict of interest which caused quite a large amount of consternation when the conflict arose, so something had to give on one side or the other. Economy of operation, along with the inherent desirability of the national agency to maintain complete control of all SIGINT resources to adequately cover its national intelligence mission, made it physically and operationally impossible for the SIGINT unit at Da Nang to concentrate fully, without constraint, on the job of developing a full technical support function for the commander of the 2nd Air Division. It appears that a measure of duplication must be accepted, not only after the unit is operational in the war zone, but as a permanent and workable resource of a major air commander. The SIGINT unit, since it would have to maintain its integrity as a part of the SIGINT community, should be able to begin immediately to receive that technical support from other SIGINT and collateral intelligence agencies so it could begin to provide and produce intelligence almost immediately after its deployment.

To go along with both of these assumptions, the necessary unique support must be arranged so that the unit will have its security, its communications, and other specialized needs beforehand. And, from an operational standpoint, the coverage of the air activities in SEA pointed rather graphically to the fact that a great deal more money and resources will have to be applied to such operations (along, again, with the day-to-day SIGINT operations) to adequately cover communications in the upper frequency ranges. It has long been known in USAFSS that the only intercept site that can consistently copy such communications (line-of-sight) are those carried on an airborne platform. From the moment the C-130 ACRP aircraft began flying in the spring of 1964, the VHF intercept climbed dramatically. There was nothing mysterious about this; but the possibility of flying expensive aircraft for long and continuous periods had never set well with planners and budgeters. Like it or not, it was a lesson that was learned quickly--and proved time and again over the ensuing years.

So, the most general lesson appears to be that if air commanders are to be provided with SIGINT support (and few have denied its value over the years in SEA) a major top level decision will have to be made to make it an integral part of their support. The difficulty here, of course, is the conflict which appears in control of SIGINT; but the lesson is there nonetheless.

G L O S S A R Y

A

AB	Air Base
ACRP	Airborne Communications Reconnaissance Platform
ADVON	Advanced Echelon
AF	Air Force
AFB	Air Force Base
AFCS	Air Force Communications Service



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AFSS	Air Force Security Service
AFSSO	Air Force Special Security Office
ARDF	Airborne Radio Direction Finding
AS	Air Station
ASA	Army Security Agency
ASOC	Air Support Operations Center

B

Brig Gen	Brigadier General
----------	-------------------

C

Capt	Captain
------	---------



CCNAF	Chinese Communist Naval Air Force Air Division
CCU	COMINT Contingency Unit
CHICOM	Chinese Communist
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CINCPAC	Commander-in-Chief, Pacific
Col	Colonel
COMINT	Communications Intelligence
COMSEC	Communications Security
CRC	Control and Reporting Center
CRP	Combat Reporting Post
CSAF	USAF Chief of Staff
CW	Continuous Wave
	<u>D</u>
DEFCON	Defense Condition
Det	Detachment
DF	Direction Finding
DIRNSA	Director, National Security Agency
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
	<u>E</u>
ERU	Emergency Reaction Unit

78 G  
 GCI Ground Controlled Intercept  
 Gen General

H  
 HF High Frequency

J  
 JCS Joint Chiefs of Staff  
 JOC Joint Operations Center  
 JRC Joint Reconnaissance Center  
 Joint Reconnaissance Committee

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JUSMAAG Joint U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group

L  
 LVHF Low Very High Frequency

M  
 MACV Military Assistance Command - Viet Nam

Maj Major

N  
 NCO Noncommissioned Officer

NSA National Security Agency

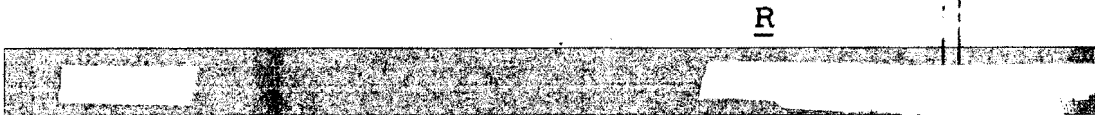
NSC National Security Council

NSCIDS National Security Council Intelligence Directives

NSG Naval Security Group

O  
OL Operating Location

P  
PACAF Pacific Air Forces  
Pac Scty Rgn Pacific Security Region



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R  
RSM Radio Squadron Mobile

RRU Radio Research Unit

S  
SAC Strategic Air Command

SAM Surface-to-air-missile

SCA Service Cryptologic Agency

Scty Gp Security Group

Scty Sq Security Squadron

Scty Wg Security Wing

SEA Southeast Asia

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SI	Special Intelligence
SIGINT	Signal Intelligence
Spt Gp	Support Group
SSB	Single Side Band
	<u>T</u>
TAC	Tactical Air Command
TACC	Tactical Air Control Center
TACOMINT	Tactical Signal Intelligence
TACS	Tactical Air Control System
TDY	Temporary Duty
	<u>U</u>
UHF	Ultra-high Frequency
U.S.	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
USAFSS	United States Air Force Security Service
USIB	U.S. Intelligence Board
	<u>V</u>
VHF	Very High Frequency

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76. Msg, [redacted] 6920SW to [redacted] (TSCW); Msg, [redacted] 6920SW to [redacted] 8 Nov 61 (TSCW); and Msg, [redacted] to 6920SW, 10 Nov 61 (TSHVCCO).

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A Special Historical Study

DEVELOPMENT OF USAFSS CAPABILITY  
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

VOLUME III

1963 - A YEAR OF DIFFICULTY

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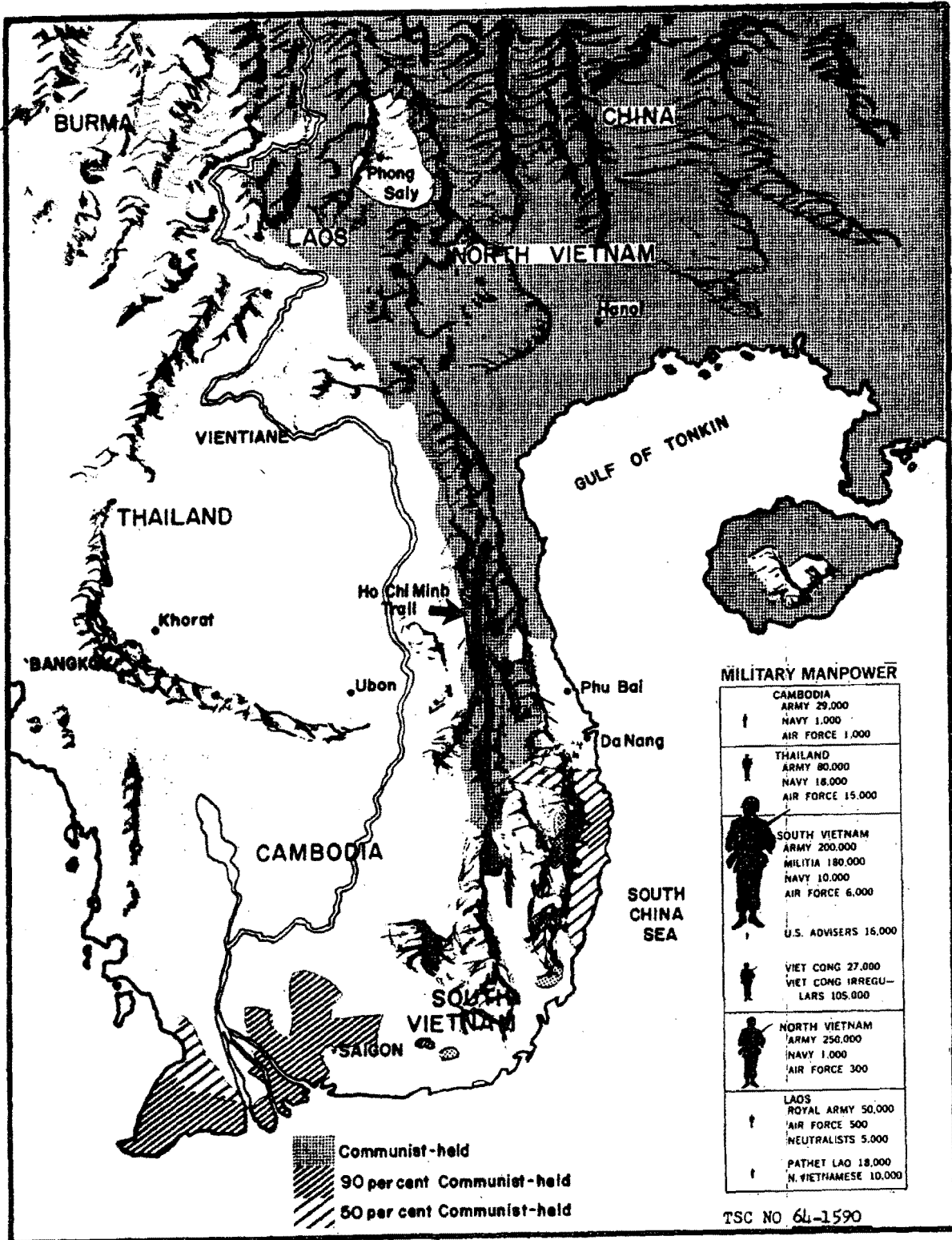
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A Special Historical Study

DEVELOPMENT OF USAFSS CAPABILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Volume III

1963 - A YEAR OF DIFFICULTY

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United States Air Force Security Service

TSC NO 64-1590

## FOREWORD

This series of historical studies on USAFSS activities in Southeast Asia (SEA) originally began as a two-volume report conceived, planned, organized, and produced by the USAFSS Historical Division. Experience had told us that near-current historical reports of major developments affecting USAFSS were valuable, useful, and appreciated by operating and policy-making officials directly concerned with the problem at hand. This "historical philosophy" had already proved itself in the case of the Cuban Crisis, the development and utilization of sophisticated "L" systems, ACRP operations, and others. So, even though the SEA histories were produced under our "special study" program, the program itself had already become a "regular" and "normal" part of the USAFSS Historical Division's modus operandi.

However, after publishing the first two volumes of SEA historical studies, USAFSS was tasked by the Department of Defense, through NSA, to produce "a reliable historical account of DOD activities pertaining to Viet Nam." By agreement with the DOD historian, the history of cryptologic activities was to be prepared separately but on a parallel schedule with all other agencies, forces, services, organizations, etc. involved in the SEA problem. That schedule, arranged by representatives of OSD, JCS, and the three military departments, called for completion by 30 June 1964 of a history covering the period from

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January 1961 (or earlier) through December 1963. The first two volumes in this series had already been published and covered the period 1955 through 1962. They were submitted as the first installment toward satisfaction of the DOD/NSA requirement. This volume, which covers the entire year of 1963, completes the task as directed and outlined by NSA. However, since the situation in SEA by the end of 1963 was far from resolved and since by mid-1964 the USAFSS position there was still quite fluid, a fourth volume (plus as many others as necessary) will be produced by the USAFSS Historical Division.

Because of the nature of the situation in general in SEA, because of the impact that political developments had (has) on military developments, because of the nature of the historical tasking for these volumes, and because of the modern trend in historical narration, perhaps a brief explanation is in order relative to the scope of coverage and the narrative style found in this volume.

Never before have political developments had so many implications and so direct a bearing and influence on USAFSS operations. In addition to the top-level, government-to-government negotiations which had a bearing on the status of all U.S. military forces in SEA, there were numerous discussions, agreements, and "understandings" at the lower levels among both military and political officials which affected the mission, status, and tenure of USAFSS organizations in that area. It

was impossible, therefore, to research and write about USAFSS activities in SEA without continually running head on with these developments. So, where it may appear to the reader that the historian has gone too far afield in some discussions, it's because he was driven by the basic concepts of professional historiography, such as accuracy, completeness, factuality, comprehensiveness, analysis, interpretation, utility, and interest. Anything less would not have been acceptable to him, to the USAFSS Historical Division, or to those using this document.

In regard to the narrative style of this volume, one noted historian has said that "Narrative is the life-blood of history; it is the vehicle that carries it, the medium through which the historian communicates what he has to tell. . . . Primarily I think of the historian as a storyteller." This being a history, as distinguished from a report, narration--in the full extent of its meaning and purpose--has been employed. So what may appear as excessive informality is really a matter of narrative style, with no purpose other than to tell the story as completely, accurately, and interestingly as possible.

The USAFSS historians exercised their responsibility of analyzing factual data in order to present an objective historical evaluation of USAFSS activities in SEA. Some of the results of these analyses are interspersed throughout the history. However, most of the conclusions, "lessons learned," and prognostications arising from our

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historical evaluation have been consolidated in the last chapter of this volume.

The vast majority of source material used to compile this study was obtained from staff offices within Hq USAFSS, particularly the Operational Planning Division of the Directorate of Plans.

Grateful appreciation is extended to all personnel who so willingly gave of their time, experience, and knowledge in helping make the publication of this volume possible. We are indebted also to SSgt Philip Monroe for the map used as the frontispiece to this volume.

Comments, criticisms, and suggestions pertinent to this volume, the two previous volumes in this series, and those planned for the future should be directed to the Historical Division (COI-3), Office of Information, Hq USAFSS.

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## INTRODUCTION

The year 1963 was a critical one for the United States in Southeast Asia. The war in Viet Nam, while seemingly encouraging at the beginning of the year, reversed again in favor of the Communist Viet Cong, North Viet Nam, and more remotely Red China. The trend in operation of the Viet Cong toward involvement of larger, less guerrilla-like tactics, supported more and more by arms from the north, was unmistakable. This may have been a direct result of the early gains of the forces of Ngo Dinh Diem. The war got steadily worse as the months passed, and by the summer of 1963 word began to spread around Saigon and Washington that Diem would have to go.

Pressure from President Kennedy to increase his action against the enemy elicited little or no reaction from the totalitarian ruler of the South Vietnamese. Even cutting aid for non-combat troops failed to get any results. However, there were others who also were discontented with the way the elected monarch was running his country, and on 1 November, Diem and his security chief and brother-in-law, Ngo Dinh Nhu, were driven from the presidential palace in Saigon and slain. The ruling junta of South Vietnamese military heads were quick to take command of the nation and by the end of the year at least appeared to be fulfilling their promise of more aggressive action against the Viet Cong.

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Many observers wondered if it was too late. Viet Cong control of the population was estimated to be as high as 80 percent of the rural population. Diem's strategic hamlet program, which had appeared so successful from the beginning, backfired because their use, in the words of junta leaders, became personal rather than national in intent. As it developed, conditions became so bad in the hamlets that the occupants many times escaped to the Viet Cong simply to obtain food for their families.

In Thailand, another potential crisis developed. By the end of the year, however, there seemed to be no disrupting result. This was the death of Prime Minister Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat, who many times frustrated U.S. efforts to gain a military foothold in his nation but was, nonetheless, a fierce and able anti-Communist. He was undoubtedly America's staunchest ally in Southeast Asia.

Altogether, 1963 was considered a bad year for U.S. interests in Southeast Asia. Aside from these political disruptions, the results of which still lay in the future, the war was being lost. The Viet Cong were in the Mekong Delta, rice bowl of Viet Nam and less than 100 miles from Saigon. They were there in strength and were firmly entrenched. Though the South Vietnamese had occasional "good days" in the field, these were outnumbered by the bad days. After initial successes, the airborne assault operations developed by the Army suffered setback after setback as the Viet Cong suddenly fell heir to

new, automatic, high calibre weapons either captured from South Viet Nam troops or made in and delivered from Red China.

To further compound the vaguarity of the Southeast Asia situation, France's General Charles De Gaulle openly advocated the establishment of a neutral Viet Nam. This, in part, was reportedly a basic reason for Diem's overthrow and murder as he was suspected of dealing with North Viet Nam's Ho Chi Minh on the possibility. The logical confusions after the coup d' etat left world observers hanging in the air. By the end of the year, however, the junta appeared still in control of the political ship in Saigon.

Midst this political confusion the USAF Security Service, along with the other service cryptologic agencies, struggled to establish what they felt was needed in the region to fulfill the responsibilities that were theirs. The command contended not only with the inherent political dangers in the explosive situation, but engaged in a constant shuffling of doctrines and policies within its own assigned mission.

USAFSS was battling a dilemma. It was fighting to accomplish what it had to accomplish from day to day to fulfill national intelligence requirements and at the same time trying to establish its identity with a mission which was at the time non-existent.

There was no air war in South Viet Nam. There was no enemy (target) against which to operate. Yet, the command and the 2nd Air Division knew that the instant an air war did develop, a COMINT



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capability in support of tactical air operations would be needed -- immediately. It was not a position without precedent in military annals. But there were two things which worked behind the scenes as a thorn in its side throughout the year. First was the continuing stress in Washington on economy of operations, which meant nobody wanted to support an activity that wasn't producing at the moment. Second was the conflict of interest between the National Security Agency (NSA) as the processor of national intelligence, and Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) as the protector of South Viet Nam airways if the day came when such protection would be needed.

From the standpoint of communications intercept, Red China was still the big enemy in the Orient, though the hot war was being fought in Viet Nam. Up to this point the least vulnerable of all Red Chinese communications were in West and Southwest China. Only Southeast Asia was a potential base for successful intercept of these communications and the U.S. had just one small site, \_\_\_\_\_ to cover it all. Obviously, then, NSA wanted and desperately needed intercept sites to gather the bulk of communications needed to maintain continuity on Chinese Communist activities. The \_\_\_\_\_ site had been invaluable since its beginning in the late 1950's, but more - much more - was needed.

But Sarit Thanarat had maintained a steadfast opposition to a large buildup of U.S. troops in Thailand regardless of the pressure

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and persuasion put forth by the U.S. As the potential danger of Red Chinese entry into the Southeast Asia conflict increased, this became even more important. With the advent of availability of South Viet Nam for intercept sites, NSA was desperately eager to become settled there. But the South Vietnamese also placed a ceiling on the number of U.S. people who could be stationed on their soil. So, NSA was brought to a point of choosing which would be the predominant factor; national intelligence or potential tactical intelligence.

The Army Security Agency had its mission against Viet Cong guerrilla communications and did an admirable job. But when it came to making a choice between tactical air intelligence, which at best lay in the future, and a potentially productive general COMINT site, the national agency had little to choose from. At the same time, USAFSS was faced with the knowledge that should the day come when it would have to support the 2nd Air Division, it would have to be there or be open to ridicule.

The high-level negotiations and developments that transpired through the year are uncountable. NSA continued to try to get authority to build up its force and potential in Thailand and was stymied at every turn because of the adamant position taken by that small but very independent nation. When it wanted to close down the command's site and pool all personnel in a single joint effort in

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Viet Nam, the command was forced to object or possibly be held derelict in its responsibility at some future date. The stalemate produced a great abundance of seemingly opposed actions and just what the eventual outcome would be was not yet in the picture at the end of 1963.

At the beginning of 1963 the command, more specifically the Pacific Security Region, could look back on a year of operation that, while not alarmingly successful from the standpoint of COMINT collection or operation, (except for some success in VHF intercept), had some things in its favor. To begin with, the command had accomplished that which it was charged to accomplish -- deploy an emergency reaction unit (ERU) to South Viet Nam and establish operations. It had not been a smooth operation, nor had it been completely successful, but General Arthur W. Kellond, Commander, PacSctyRgn said:<sup>1</sup>

. . . The main lesson learned by some, and relearned by others, was that in an emergency anything can happen and unbelievable achievements can be realized in spite of problems. The success which our ERU has achieved can be credited entirely to the industry and ingenuity of our personnel rather than to fine preliminary planning and brilliant execution of the written plan.

General Kellond made note of one of the most difficult of problems involving the command's deployment to Southeast Asia, that of the proper authority to deploy the unit. The unit originally deployed in support of the 2nd Advance Echelon (ADVON), but as developments changed it became involved in ceilings placed on the numbers of

cryptologic people who could be operating in the Southeast Asia nations. Just how this shift in concept had changed, or just when it happened, was still not clear at the end of 1963, but it had changed and command personnel fell under the purview of international negotiational approval.

The PacSctyRgn felt that the initial deployment to Southeast Asia had been made too late. As it happened, it made no difference. But if air operations had begun immediately, it felt it would not have been there in time. General Kellond felt that ". . . service must be in the first wave, and if possible, ahead of that." Further, he said:<sup>2</sup>

. . . It has been apparent that the failure of our hosts and consumers to include us in their plans has aggravated the problems which we have experienced. We must, therefore, take the initiative to maintain the closest working relationships possible with the planners at all levels. Poor planning will almost surely result in poor execution. Finally, and not necessarily as criticism of any headquarters, I think it is important that we remember that a plan, which has been written and critically reviewed by those responsible, will almost surely not be implemented exactly as written. However, it is extremely important that the headquarters responsible for ordering the implementation of the plan limit itself to the statement of what will be done, where, and by what time, and resist the tendency to order how the work will be accomplished.

Progress was made in this respect because later in 1963 the PacSctyRgn found itself more specifically identified in PACAF's plans. Also, at the command headquarters, the concept for emergency reaction operations was completely reworked. Planners moved away from the precisely engineered contingency plans, which

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had formed the basis for ERU's, and moved toward a much more flexible, nearly primitive, operation which was designed to be effective in just such places as South Viet Nam.

Throughout 1963 the command was in the midst of a giant whirl of negotiations and developments concerning just how it would operate in Southeast Asia. There was a complete cycle of development in respect to the organization of the operational unit -- from ERU to the organization of the 6923rd Security Squadron, back to the operation of an austere unit at Da Nang. There were several reasons for this, most notably the desire in the Pentagon for economy of operations in the area. Unfortunately, it appeared that regardless of which agency or headquarters made any decisions or took any action, the command was caught in the middle. Most of the controversy remained at the end of the year, and there was really no clear-cut end in sight. In short, USAFSS could look forward to more of the same uncertainty relative to its position in Southeast Asia.

At many times, the reasons behind recommendations and actions were not at all clear to USAFSS operating officials, yet each had to be treated independently because of the command's dual responsibility to both NSA and PACAF. If some of the following discussions appear confused, it's simply because the developments themselves were confusing. The future may hold completely logical answers, but

until then it is possible to relate events only as they happened.

This the historian has attempted to do within the limits of the material available.

## CHAPTER I

## THE THAI TURMOIL

Since the Pacific Security Region emergency reaction unit (ERU) was deployed to South Viet Nam early in 1962, the history of the USAFSS operation in that troubled spot in Southeast Asia was fraught with troubles, inconsistencies, misunderstandings and many times indecipherable cross-currents. A number of the inherent difficulties tied up with an operation serving at least three major interests have been discussed in previous volumes in this series and these were still very much in evidence at the beginning of 1963 (most were still with the command a year later).

The year 1963 could possibly be best described as 12 months of great effort on the part of many people, considerable turmoil, and for the USAF Security Service, precious little progress. The same barrier to COMINT development existed that plagued USAFSS and the Air Force in Southeast Asia -- there was simply no operational problem against which to operate from the standpoint of COMINT. Nevertheless, the flying commanders never let up on their insistence that COMINT be available when and if it was needed. And during 1963 the Communist Chinese did show signs of moving air materiel into a position closer to the battle area.

) Other signs pointed to the Viet Cong guerrillas developing a more standard military organization and during the year there

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were several examples of this taking place in the field. But the difficulties in getting something done to put the men and material in the proper places continued despite the efforts of those in charge. There was little doubt that somewhere along the line there were things going on that - while they had an eventual bearing on one another - were generally discoordinated efforts.

Concept Differences Noted

As time went on, the fact that the National Security Agency (NSA) and USAFSS were proceeding along different paths became more and more obvious. To be sure there were different needs in the two headquarters; the command had a direct responsibility to support tactical commanders, and the national agency was principally concerned with the world-wide intelligence picture. In Southeast Asia, Thailand more specifically, the command had the sole successful capability

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To lose this would be a serious blow indeed, and the Thais were not being generous at all in their negotiations relative to the U.S. putting more men and material into the nation. They never had been and through 1963 showed no signs of changing their outlook on the influx of U.S. personnel into their country. NSA, therefore, had to consider possibilities in South Viet Nam as a possible substitute for the Thailand operations. In doing this some cross-currents developed.



NSA was principally interested in the development of the international intelligence picture, and from the standpoint of authority and influence, it held all advantages. The command, on the other hand, had to keep tactical commanders informed of the tactical air intelligence picture as it developed. These were not always compatible and the conceptual differences provided what was really a basic difficulty to all developments. Brig. Gen. Arthur W. Kellond, Commander, PacSctyRgn, was apparently set straight at a meeting at NSA in September 1962. He told Maj. Gen. Richard P. Klocko, USAFSS Commander, that this difference had been the foundation for most of his problems in operating and manning the USAFSS sites in Southeast Asia. Said General Kellond:<sup>1</sup>

. . . From the outset, my concept of the deployment of the emergency reaction unit in South Viet Nam in support of 2nd Advance Echelon (ADVON, later redesignated 2nd Air Division) was that it is a "direct support" operation. In my conversation with \_\_\_\_\_ of the NSA staff, I learned that NSA has always considered the deployment in South Viet Nam to be a "direct service" operation.

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#### TACOMINT First Need

The justification for entry into Southeast Asia had been predicated on the fact that tactical flying commanders needed direct COMINT support. Such was the dilemma. The differences in these two phrases was not just a matter of words. As a direct support operation, the ERU could travel as part of the personnel and equipment needs of the tactical commander and that would have ended the problem.

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But as a direct service unit, all personnel augmentations had to be justified and approved through government-to-government negotiations.

General Kellond felt that all ERU deployments should be in direct support of a tactical unit. He continued:<sup>2</sup>

. . . If we deployed as a direct support unit, it seems to me that a typical NSA attitude would be -- "USAFSS has deployed an emergency reaction to South Viet Nam and we are obtaining copy of all traffic and reports generated by that unit. The unit is taking care of the specific requirements of General Harkins and his air commander who has operational control of the unit. We (NSA) are additionally supporting U.S. forces in South Viet Nam through direct service from the permanent COMINT stations under our control." . . . .

) If this was fact, General Kellond said "I believe it implies no concern over the manpower - unless there is a degradation in performance at the permanent stations from which it was drawn." He saw other advantages to such an arrangement as far as NSA was concerned because it omitted ". . . concern over the matters of housing, technical facilities, and communications (except for the maintenance of proper security.)" This also appeared somewhat advantageous to the national agency as well as USAFSS and, though perhaps oversimplified, this was the concept initially envisioned by those operating the contingency move. Continuing, General Kellond said ". . . with this limited control and implied confidence, the Security Service would be able to perform a mission without the unreasonable amount of review over minor details at Secretary of Defense level, which we have had and continue to experience."<sup>3</sup>

Difficulties Assumed

As a direct service unit, the ERU was saddled with all of the intricacies of provisioning, manning, etc., that permanent units were involved in; e.g., the Consolidated Cryptologic Program and OPINS-30.\* These brought on negotiative and administrative effort way out of proportion to the operating size of the sites. General Kellond felt that all actions up to this point had displayed all of the characteristics of a direct service operation. He also was convinced that, as far as Southeast Asia was concerned, it was too late to change. He did, however, go on record for future ERU's emphasizing they should be deployed in direct support of the theater commander so the ". . . theater commander or his air commander can be authorized to order its deployment and control its operation. The alternative is an embarrassing, drawn-out procedure involving minutia which seems inappropriate for consideration at national level."<sup>4</sup>

The difficulty was that General Kellond, since the beginning, had dealt with PACAF on the grounds that this was indeed a direct support operation, and this had possibly been at variance with the concepts of the command and NSA. Nonetheless, the initial

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\* The Consolidated Cryptologic Program (CCP) was a Department of Defense requirement to bring all like procurement needs under the same heading annually for funding, feeling that duplication was costly. While perhaps logical, it was planned for five (cont'd)

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deployment orders had said the unit was in support of the commander, 2nd ADVON. <sup>5</sup>

NSA Has Larger Plans

) But NSA's plans were much bigger than a few scattered sites in Southeast Asia. As previously mentioned, Southwest and West China were the prime considerations. Without the site at [redacted] there simply was not, and had never been, any air cover other than from the small USAFSS site there. In short, [redacted] was necessary, but NSA apparently felt that much more was needed. It was also well aware of all of the past trouble with the Thai government. In late 1962 Dr. Louis Tordella, Deputy Director of NSA, toured the area and came out with a number of recommendations. None of them, however, greatly considered just how and if the where-withall could be obtained. <sup>6</sup>

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There were two basic points in the Thais' refusal to allow the U.S. to have its own way in the country: (a) They wanted at least outward appearance of Thai-U.S. cooperation,

[redacted]

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Dr. Tordella felt that the [redacted] site could not be eliminated

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(cont'd) years in the future, and emergency operations could hardly be planned in this way. OPINS-30 was the basic operating instruction from NSA which set [redacted] operations requirements.

altogether. The agency assumed that eventually the State Department could secure Thai agreement for [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and Chiang Mai, but even at that knew that the road would be rough. Said Dr. Tordella:<sup>7</sup>

. . . Discussions with the NSA staff group, office of the assistant Secretary of Defense, . . . lead us to conclude that it would be difficult to obtain Defense (Department) approval for a major base of large proportions in Thailand at this time, especially if such a base involves an overall increase in the total SIGINT resources now directed against Southeast Asian targets.

Still, NSA felt it had to expand. Over the years, since the beginning of operations [REDACTED] the agency ran a continuing evaluation of the world-wide collection and processing and there had always been a dearth of information from North and South Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and Southwest China. There was also the general lack of cover of targets extending along the southern border of China from Hong Kong and the Philippines, off the east coast of China, through Thailand, Burma, India, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Jammu-Kashmir, and [REDACTED]. Granted, the surface had been scratched but more more was needed.<sup>8</sup>

#### Must Take Opportunity

But only since the U.S. became actively involved in operations against North Viet Nam had there been an opportunity to get anything at all into the area. This, it seems, gets toward the crux of the situation. NSA had its foot in the Southeast Asian door

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and felt it had to do everything possible to make it stick. Unfortunately, some of the moves following this incision were at odds with the stated needs and concepts of tactical support such as the command was responsible for. Rather than the small tactical units in the command's support concepts, NSA felt that a larger and more complex operation was necessary. It wanted to put this into Thailand and, if necessary, close down smaller units at the same time. In short, it was ready to enter Phase II of its plan for Southeast Asia SIGINT.<sup>9</sup>

This was scheduled for Fiscal 1966 or 1967 and preparations were already late so there was apparently need for haste. Before anything could happen, though, the Thais had to agree to it. This wouldn't be easy. First the agency wanted to move the USAFSS operation out of the ASA site [redacted] and open a 44-man unit at Ubon. Again, this was NSA's decision and the command had already found that the chances of getting into this site as part of an existing radar installation were not good at all. There was also the technicality that this USAFSS force was to be in support of Joint Task Force 116, which in reality had a limited COMINT requirement. At the same time, NSA was in the process of setting up a Southeast Asia processing center (Southeast Asia Processing and Integration Center SEAPIC) at the 9th ASA Field Station in the Philippines to handle full second echelon processing of Southeast Asia COMINT.

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This, along with the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], would give a full second echelon capability in the Far

East. NSA also wanted both USAFSS and ASA to have initial reporting capabilities at the Southeast Asia sites. This they didn't have.<sup>10</sup>

Thailand Best, But Hard to Get

Thailand was favored as the only site with full potential because of the requirement for being [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]<sup>11</sup> But as 1963 opened, the possibilities looked anything but good. On 4 January, General Thomas at Hq USAF told General Klocko that at the moment it would be most difficult to ask Thailand to approve a new intercept site in Ubon.

USAF wanted the command to operate [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and the State Department had agreed with this approach. Just how this would be worked out, however, nobody seemed to know at the time.<sup>12</sup> U.S. Ambassador

Young had said ". . . formal government approach might fall on sterile ground. . ." if made at the time and he also agreed that the command could possibly [REDACTED]<sup>13</sup> So

NSA mulled the situation over for several days and felt this was the best approach. USAFSS field operators didn't like [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], but this was apparently to be the solution.<sup>14</sup>

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Still, with all of these intra-U.S. decisions, nobody had asked the Thais if it would be all right to make the move into Ubon. On 8 January, after getting the final NSA decision, USAFSS Deputy Commander Brig. Gen. Louis Coira told General Kellond:<sup>15</sup>

. . . To avoid involvement in possible internal bickering between [redacted] General Anthis (Commander 2nd ADVON) should await contact by the ambassador, leaving proper approach to Thais to (his) discretion. Also suggest our unit be discussed more along lines of bringing USAF effort at existing base up to planned strength as opposed to solicitation of special attention for separate unit.

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At the same time, the command asked the PacSctyRgn to find out what the authorized strength of the PACAF AC&W unit at Ubon was so NSA could have the proper information at hand for the augmentation.<sup>16</sup>

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#### Plans, Negotiations Continue

i) Since Doctor Tordella's return from the Far East, NSA had been working on recommendations for the Defense Department and on 28 January the report was ready for Assistant Secretary of Defense J. H. Rubel. Generally, the points have already been discussed: Proposed Thailand sites, the preference for a large permanent site rather than several scattered sites, etc. He stressed one thing that the command was not enthusiastic about at all --

Ambassador Young had seemed impressed with the possibility of operating [redacted]

\* World-wide administrative Army communications, comparable to Air Force AIRCOM.



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which he felt could adequately [redacted] Dr. Tordella wrote that he agreed with this plan though it was still being discussed at Fort Meade and added that "... it appears that some modifications in antennas and layout . . . will be required to allow for a harmonious interface [redacted] 17

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The NSA Deputy Director added that there was the added advantage of the [redacted] Further, he said "... [redacted] of the SIGINT facility permits economics of [redacted] use of support facilities, and eliminates the need for negotiating a [redacted]." Finally, he said it could be expected to be in operation sooner because the [redacted] preparations were already under way. 18 [redacted] had always been opposed by USAFSS because of the many administrative troubles involved. Besides, the [redacted]

The Army Security Agency was already authorized to increase its [redacted] force by 15. The 44 people for the command at Ubon for intercept and processing of CHICOM air intelligence was in the mill. In what NSA called Phase II of its Southeast Asia program, this Ubon force was supposed to be augmented, again concentrated on the

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CHICOM problem, and the total intercept effort was to reach 35 to 41 positions. By Fiscal 1967 the entire Thailand effort was to be located at the big site (still to be selected, or rather, obtained) and

[Redacted]

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Thais Keep Close Tab

) However, if NSA was going to get all it wanted in Thailand, it would have to do some high-powered talking somewhere along the line (or at least get the State Department to do so). There was every indication that the

[Redacted]

There were several fluctuations during the discussions which led to confusion at times, but generally speaking, the Thais were holding the count close.<sup>21</sup>

At the end of the first week in February, however, Ambassador Young changed his position and said ". . . [Redacted] entry should be made to Ubon, and . . . time is now good for approaching Thais." Just what brought this on was not known but the PacSctyRgn, which had

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gotten the word first, said ". . . perhaps it would be appropriate to budge Washington officials to remind the ambassador of his authority and responsibility." All of these discussions and negotiations had to be made at State Department level.<sup>22</sup> Word of this change in

outlook apparently didn't get back to Washington immediately because on 12 February Major Kietzer, AFSSOP, told Colonel Macia at

USAFSS that the ambassador still thought in terms [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] into Ubon. But he had apparently implied at least

that this [REDACTED] couldn't last too long as the Thais [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Consequently, NSA

was hesitant to continue along this line for fear it would wreck those plans already in progress. So it wanted, along with the command, to push for [REDACTED] entry into Ubon.<sup>23</sup>

The national agency, in the meantime, was right in the middle of attempts to raise the [REDACTED] force by some 85 people. It asked the command if it wanted 44 of these spaces, presumably so they would be in place for the anticipated Ubon move. But the command saw no good reason to do this as it wouldn't enhance its position at the [REDACTED] site. Just how this approval was to be gotten, the command knew, was NSA's problem and felt that the possibilities for immediate approval were not good at all.<sup>24</sup> But the national agency was continuing along assuming the Thais would eventually approve all of these increases - an assumption that was somewhat difficult to

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understand with all of the setbacks it had suffered up to this point.<sup>25</sup>

Laos Considered "Lever"

Meanwhile, Laos was deteriorating quickly from a military-political point of view, and opinion from a number of quarters was that this might be a lever to get the Thais to agree to augment the SIGINT force. This did not come about. Another difficulty was coming up that could have had some significant effect on the operation, though at the end of the year this hadn't appeared. This was the hazy picture as to just where Laos fit into the treaty situation, considering her status under the Geneva Accords. The signatories of the accords were bound to "respect the wish of the Kingdom of Laos not to recognize the protection of any military coalition or alliance including SEATO." SEATO was the action agency in the entire Southeast Asia hassle, so it appeared, for the time being at least, that Laos had to be kept separate from SEATO actions.<sup>26</sup>

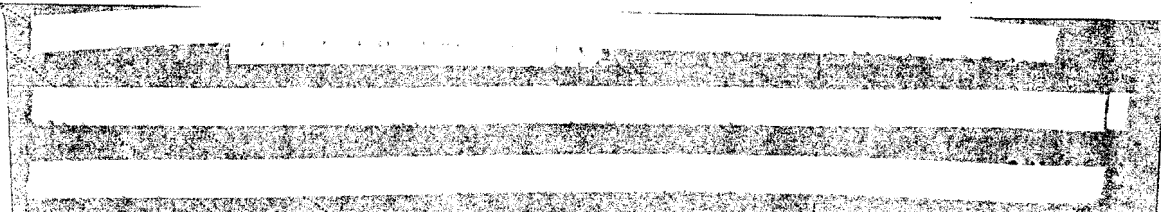
Again, several plans pertained to the same area, but they had different connotations. Under certain circumstances, for instance, U.S. forces would be committed unilaterally (CINCPAC Plan 32-63) and it would therefore be a "noform" action. This could be enforced if a Communist nation tried to overthrow a neutral government. Laos could fit into this picture only if there was a definitive action against it by the Communist bloc.<sup>27</sup> But NSA was

going along with its plans and in mid-April told NSAPAC what it had in mind for Thailand. At the same time, however, the Thais were steadfastly refusing to allow any increase in the SIGINT force.<sup>28</sup> Then the U.S. whittled away part of the Thai aid package and things began to get quite tense.

Thais Apply Squeeze

The national agency was still thinking in terms of more than 800 SIGINT personnel in Thailand for reasons that were not clear because the Thais had never, since the beginning of operations there, given any indication that they would eventually raise the SIGINT personnel ceiling - quite the contrary as a matter of fact.

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at there not only would be no increase, but the SIGINT force would be shaved over the following three months.<sup>29</sup>



had approved the maximum strength of the [redacted] (which included the USAFSS contingent) at 238 men. [redacted] this was the limit and, further, the actual strength should eventually be brought below that mark. [redacted] request for 300 people (this included the increase of 85 that NSA had mentioned earlier) was flatly turned down and



that the ceiling included the 29 USAFSS men of

[redacted] as well as the ASA [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]

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The fear for personnel agreements was not limited to SIGINT personnel. Ambassador Young was worried that the rest of the U.S. Thai force, as well as their dependents, would come under the ruling. Unfortunately, some of the verbal agreements [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] but like so many things in this part of the world, there was nothing on paper. [redacted]

[redacted]

This also included fluctuations in

the ceiling with replacements, TDY people, etc. [redacted]

[redacted]

"...alternate personnel put together with existing personnel should not exceed the approved strength." He also eliminated any subordinate shenanigans by adding "... [redacted]

[redacted]

There was no doubt that the Thais meant business and

[redacted]

[redacted] y that time NSA was apparently getting the hint, because the agency began talking about shuffling Southeast Asia

[redacted]

intercept operations somewhat. As far as the Vietnamese problem was concerned, this was supposed to be the reason for the five extra positions the agency planned [redacted] It was the reason for the latest increase in personnel. But this was out, so NSA planned to move them to Phu Bai - or Hue, as it was called earlier. Some others were to be moved back to the Philippines, but Phu Bai was the focal point. This had brought, and continued to bring, general disagreement between the command and NSA.<sup>32</sup>

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## CHAPTER II

## THE SHIFT TO VIET NAM

Since the beginning of Southeast Asia operations, one point had been evident as one development led to another. This was the almost invariable difference of opinion as to the basic provisions and limitations of agreements. Evidence of this has already been discussed to one degree or another. Also, in late 1962, Ambassador Young gave a classic example in his talks with Dr. Tordella. When discussing the military ceilings, the ambassador told the Deputy Director of NSA that ". . .there was no military ceiling, and that no special accounting of SIGINT personnel is or ever has been in being."<sup>1</sup>

Somewhere, some time along the line, someone had been misinformed or had misinterpreted the meaning of the facts at hand. The ambassador was of the understanding that the Thais had laid other ground rules which, again, were either misunderstood or were being ignored in other quarters. He said the Thai government would never negotiate for a permanent SIGINT site (which NSA wanted and was in fact negotiating for at the time), would not favor a large SIGINT package (which was the basic plan for the 800-man unit at Khorat or some other location), and would not allow USAFSS to establish SIGINT units at new locations (under consideration was Ubon).<sup>2</sup>



Ubon Prime Consideration

The command had been counting on moving a detachment into Ubon, Thailand. This was one of two locations that were of primary concern and one of them was getting less and less possible to get. There had been much talk about Ubon but very little done about getting in. An initial real estate survey had shown that land was at a premium and ordinary negotiations would not be enough. However, nothing more than routine actions were started, so there was little progress. The second location was Da Nang, in South Viet Nam, which NSA wanted to close and move the entire operation to a joint effort at Phu Bai. The command didn't want this for several reasons which will be discussed later.

The need for Ubon had been based on the requirement to supply close support to JTF-116. As planning went on (at least some felt that possession of the site eventually was inevitable), PACAF added essential elements of information (EEI's) and other theater commands added requirements. At the same time, the Ubon facility generated into one that was needed for long-term intelligence collection - theoretically at least. Behind the urgency was the fact that Thailand was still the only place for consistent, successful intercept of targets in Southwest and West China. The facility at [redacted] was saturated and the command, with its small, limited facility there, had barely scratched the surface. The command felt that Ubon would

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improve service to CINCPAC, COMUSMACV, and PACAF in the following ways:<sup>3</sup>

1. Increased intelligence on resupply operations or other air support to insurgent forces in Southeast Asia through more complete exploitation of related COMINT targets. This included potential ability to identify transport resupply activities within insurgent areas.

2. Better coverage of COMINT air targets would improve the command's ability to detect air buildup in North Viet Nam or South China, including the Hainan Island area.

3. Establish a secure, long-term collection base in Thailand to cover COMINT air targets in Cambodia, Laos, North and South Viet Nam, and South China, to provide intelligence on the overall Communist air capabilities which could affect military operations in Southeast Asia.

4. Establish a permanent squadron organization structure for all USAFSS COMINT activities in Thailand and provide necessary control and support for improved effectiveness of mission effort.

#### Command Prefers Own Site

Since the beginning of Thailand operations, the command had been a small tenant at the ASA's [REDACTED]. Although the relationship had been successful enough from a support and cooperative standpoint, the command felt that it should be able to manage its

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own mission for best results. This could not be done at  so it felt Ubon was the answer. It urged USAF to support this enlarged requirement fully at the Pentagon to fill a gap in the world-wide COMINT collection deployment.

On 8 April the command felt it might have the necessary support for Ubon operations. USAF announced that Pacific tactical units had been warned that action might be in the near future. PACAF told the 313th Air Division on Okinawa, 5th Air Force in Japan, and 13th Air Force in the Philippines, that ". . . in view of the deteriorating situation in Laos, commanders will be ready to respond to any demand for force deployments required to meet this contingency."<sup>4</sup> General Coira, when he heard this, felt it might be the time to push for immediate deployment to Ubon.<sup>5</sup> Sarit's foreign minister, at the Paris meetings early in April, had told U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk that "Thailand cheerfully and fully accepts her responsibilities as a major base of the United States in Southeast Asia," so USAFSS felt this might be exploited.<sup>6</sup>

#### USAF Scraps Ubon COMINT

But another event had come up. USAF, at the USIB SIGINT Committee Conference, said it didn't intend to go into Ubon with JTF-116, so this eliminated, officially at least, the original tactical requirement.<sup>7</sup> On 23 April Hq USAF told General Klocko why it had suddenly jumped off the Ubon bandwagon after riding for

so long. The decision was based on the following:<sup>8</sup>

1. The Office of the Secretary of Defense policy to reduce overseas units, where possible, was served.
2. The continuing objections of the Thais to expansion of U.S. military facilities in Thailand could be pacified by the reduction, where possible, in the number of SIGINT sites.
3. The original need for a unit at Ubon was based partly on the requirement for close support of JTF-116. Plans to deploy JTF-116 had been changed, eliminating this requirement.
4. The Ubon unit was also to cover air supply activities in Laos, Viet Nam, and Cambodia. But with the existing NSA plans to establish a large facility at Khorat, \* coverage originally planned for Ubon could be just as efficiently and more economically obtained from that site, USAF felt.
5. If the three USAFSS positions, programmed for Ubon, were located at Khorat, the number of personnel should be able to be reduced because of the consolidation of administrative and logistic support.

The U.S. Intelligence Board had approved NSA's recommendations for Southeast Asia except for the Ubon detachment.

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\* Here was a perfect example of basing a decision on plans that were still in the paper stage; plans which had little or no potential for being completed. Khorat had been a figure of speech (cont'd)

Just how this was to be worked out was left up to USAF intelligence people and NSA. And that just about finished the possibility for Ubon as far as USAFSS was concerned.<sup>9</sup> PACAF, on the other hand, was not at all convinced that the need wasn't still there. The situation in Laos was not getting any better. On 22 April, PACAF told PacSctyRgn that CINCPAC was to step up action and plans in connection with Laos. Admiral Felt was in Thailand at the time, and General Kellond told General Klocko that he thought it might be the "proper time" to introduce additional forces to Thailand and ". . . enable us to accomplish movement of our Ubon detachment."

He continued:<sup>10</sup>

. . . In light of the present Laos situation, it seems proper to assume that Communist airlift in that area will be reactivated. Ubon, of course, is most favorably situated for interception of radiotelephone activity and any flight activity south into Cambodia. The Monkey Mountain location similarly becomes of increasing value with increase of airlift activity. We are proceeding with actions to improve our capability in that location for reception of unfriendly voice activity. . . .

Commander Concerned

) General Klocko was considerably disturbed about being left out of this discontinuation of a USAFSS effort, so he went to the

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(cont'd) for some months, but this was the large, permanent facility NSA wanted in Thailand, and at this point as well as later, there was little upon which to base encouragement. In fact, as we have seen, the Thais showed absolutely no indication of backing down on their wishes, all of which definitely opposed the concept of the Khorat plans; i.e., permanency, size, personnel, etc.

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Pentagon to see just how these things were being worked. USAF intelligence people said that they had been under pressure to get things worked out following the return of Mr. Gallegos of the Defense Department from South Viet Nam a short time before. Mr. Gallegos had asked a lot of questions of General Harkins and his intelligence chief, Colonel Winterbottom. The result was that both had the highest praise for the ASA operation, but because there was no air problem against which to operate, felt the USAFSS COMINT operation was not contributing much. At that time General LeMay was pushing economy in operation and continuing his review of the Southeast Asia mission. General Klocko, in view of these facts, felt that this was no time to press for an expansion of effort in Southeast Asia.<sup>11</sup>

The main point in Washington appeared to be economy, so the command felt it should proceed in Southeast Asia with this in mind. So it recommended that:<sup>12</sup>

1. The Southeast Asia organization and strength should be leveled out as it was at the time. NSA agreement was needed as it was involved in the overall augmentation plans.
2. All planned construction should be closely examined to see if any of it could be cut away.
3. Develop more precisely the command ERU concept with the basic capability of immediately being able to augment lightly-manned

Southeast Asia sites if something broke.

Plans Conflict With Reality

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As had happened so many times before, however, there were two plans of action in being at the same time. Despite the never-changing objections of the Thais, NSA was proceeding on the assumption that the Thailand SIGINT effort would be augmented. Indeed, it was insisting that such an augmentation was absolutely imperative. It may well have been, but this didn't change the position of the Thailand Government. At any rate, on 8 May 1963, the USIB approved the beginning of Phase II of NSA's Southeast Asia plan. This called for increasing the personnel strength [redacted] and acquiring over 400 acres of real estate at Khorat for the permanent ASA center there. It also included the USAFSS site at Ubon which had already been dropped from the USAF program. 13

There were other recommendations in the NSA program that were sure to raise the ire of the Thais when they were approached for approval: (a) NSA wanted not only to build the Khorat installation with the accompanying raise in personnel to over 800, but wanted to keep the existing sites operating afterward, and (b) the following statement about the [redacted]

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On this point NSA urged extreme caution. USIB felt that the

[redacted] could be a foundation for such a development. Further, the board felt that if during local negotiations in Thailand, Thai-U.S. relationships seemed to be suffering, it was willing to maintain the status quo and augment as possible.<sup>17</sup>

#### Developments Affect USAFSS

(S) Although the developments in connection with Thailand were primarily among NSA, ASA, USIB, and [redacted], the command did figure to be ultimately affected by anything that happened. A factor upon which these far-future plans were based was the CCP. This had to be done far in advance, and NSA was still primarily concerned with establishing permanent SIGINT facilities in the nation. But the Thais, since the beginning of operations there, had always opposed a large U.S. operation; [redacted]

[redacted] NSA had always wanted the facility [redacted], and had proposed an installation costing [redacted]. But as time went on, and developments grew no closer to a conclusion, the agency had to shift its attention to Khorat as a potential site. This would cost more. The agency felt that one of three things could be done: (a) retain the [redacted] requirement with a view toward transferring the funds to whatever location in Thailand was eventually acceptable; (b) defer the requirement until a firm plan in Thailand could be established, or (c) delete

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the requirement altogether.<sup>18</sup>

The third could not be considered, voluntarily at least, for Thailand  The second was most logical on the surface but time was an important consideration in the preparation of the CCP. Some of the programs were as far as eight years in advance. The first, then, was the only acceptable answer, unless the Khorat plan was adopted.<sup>19</sup> The command was out on a limb, having little to say about its destiny. At the Khorat site, if it was ever built, the command would use standard Army equipment for intercept operations. Eight manual Morse and three radio telephone positions were in the program. All it had to do was supply the people.<sup>20</sup> As far as USAFSS was concerned, developments in Thailand remained exactly as they had been and there was little reason to believe they would change.

#### Aim Shifts to South Viet Nam

So, as far as Thailand was concerned, an impasse had been reached. Not that NSA was giving up hope of eventually securing what it needed there -- the location was much too important. On the other hand, with Southeast Asia being such a fluid and unpredictable operation, NSA wanted to become permanently established for operations. This called for a large, permanent site. It couldn't be had in Thailand, so South Viet Nam would have to do.

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The unfortunate part of the situation was that things of this magnitude couldn't be done with a snap of the fingers. Large plans required time, even for the basic facilities to be funded for, contracted, and built. In Thailand, nothing could happen until the Thais agreed. At that time, however, plans could be put into action.

The Army Security Agency had already moved from Da Nang, where it had its original contingency site, to Phu Bai, about 60 miles to the northwest. So it was established at the place where NSA planned for at least a semi-permanent, joint site. Also, the Marine Corps already had a security detachment collocated with ASA, and the national agency was proceeding with arrangements to move USAFSS out of Da Nang to join the other two services. The basic difficulty was that the USAFSS posture was going to suffer in several ways from such a move and the command had objected to it from the beginning. First, it would be separated from tactical air elements at Da Nang, which it would have to support directly should the non-existent air war develop. Secondly, the command felt that Da Nang was more easily defended from a northern attack; and third was the potential very high frequency intercept of any of the Southeast Asia sites. Again, NSA was insistent upon what it wanted to do, and the command was in a constant harrangue trying to defend its position in regard to the collocation.

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Missions Conflict

) In South Vietnam the command had a specific potential mission in support of the 2nd Air Division unit at Da Nang. It already had offered several reasons why it didn't want to move to Phu Bai; the primary one being that if it were to support 2nd Air Division it should be located near it. At the beginning of 1963, there had been a second indication of the possibility of VHF intercept on Monkey Mountain. USAFSS still was not sure if this was better or worse than that possible at Phu Bai, because there had been no successful VHF or  tests at the ASA station. Geographically, however, Phu Bai wasn't as ideally located as the mountain. At this juncture, therefore, the command did want to retain a measure of high frequency intercept at Da Nang.<sup>21</sup>

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P.L. 86-36Command's Position Established At Da Nang

Another consideration that the command thought noteworthy was that USAF was firmly entrenched at Da Nang, although it was planned that the Vietnamese would eventually control the CRP on Monkey Mountain. On the other hand, there was no guarantee whatsoever that the Viet Nam government would eventually permit a Noform operation at Phu Bai.<sup>22</sup> The Army Security Agency had always favored Phu Bai, however, and apparently NSA shared this preference. There was some reason for this, but here again, the reason was predicated principally on Phu Bai's

part in the international SIGINT structure. In mid-1962 NSA had conducted a hearability test and had a certain measure of success. Later, NSAPAC had been even more favorably impressed. But these tests were all conducted by handpicked experts in the intercept business -- such an optimum case would not be the general rule in regular operations. In the 3rd RRU report, the Army unit said ". . . there has been little change in the effectiveness of cover on military targets since moving to Phu Bai. Continuity has been lost on some, but overall success remains on a par with Da Nang."<sup>23</sup>

So, there seemed to be little to gain from a collocation except the collocation itself. Returning to the support situation (though the command never offered this as a specific objection to the idea), a comment from the PacSctyRgn director of materiel Col. John V. Gallagher in May 1963, could serve as a hint. Said Colonel Gallagher:<sup>24</sup>

. . . things looked real good in spite of the poor support (at the [redacted] Thailand). My personal opinion is that we will continue to support this operation for a long time to come. . . .

Potential Undetermined, But VHF Possible

As to the potential of Da Nang there were a number of pros and cons on how important it was to continue the operation since a good deal of the intercept was duplicated at other permanent sites. But there was one feature, as far as actual success was

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concerned, that Da Nang (more specifically Monkey Mountain) had in its favor. This was in VHF intercept. Granting that the success had not been phenomenal, there had been success which put it into a class by itself. For at no other site had this been successfully accomplished! Though the success was meager indeed, the [redacted], which had analyzed the tapes, said this should certainly be continued. In this respect it was difficult to figure why Dr. Tordella, after he returned at the end of 1962, said unequivocally that Monkey Mountain was " . . . a complete bust".<sup>25</sup>

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The command wanted Da Nang. It felt the site would satisfy all of its requirements in South Viet Nam for the time being. Tan Son Nhut which was the 6923rd RSM headquarters, had never been a contributor of significant intercept. Other than being the headquarters for the squadron, the command was not at all adverse to losing the site -- which it did shortly afterward. On the other hand, Da Nang had good mission productivity in manual Morse intercept and fair in HF radiotelephone. Principal coverage was on Sino-Soviet links passing flight schedules of Soviet transports engaged in air resupply activity in Southeast Asia. Da Nang's critical importance was Monkey Mountain.<sup>26</sup> Intercept of the higher frequency ranges (VHF/UHF) was possible there.

VHF Imperative Need

In short, if the command went along with NSA's wish to close up everything it (USAFSS) owned in South Vietnam, it would lose this entire capability should an air problem develop. This, of course, USAFSS did not want to do. With HF voice retained at Da Nang and with VHF voice on Monkey Mountain, the command could provide direct support to its consumers if the requirement arose. Plans already were underway with PACAF for the Monkey Mountain detachment to collocate with the AC&W CRP on the mountain top. The site was 2000 feet high with unrestricted line of sight toward primary target areas. There were still other reasons:<sup>27</sup>

1. Logistic support at Da Nang was satisfactory.
2. Evacuation of Phu Bai would be difficult, particularly in the rainy season because of the vulnerability of the rail tunnel and bridges. Naval surface units could defend Da Nang.
3. USAFSS requirements for physical facilities at Da Nang had already been submitted by PACAF to USAF.
4. The cost of moving and maintaining operations at Phu Bai would be significantly increased.

Unmanned Positions Offered

As a compromise, the command felt it could install two unmanned positions at the ASA site if NSA insisted on collocation. USAFSS added that ". . . further consideration may be given collocation

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. . .when more VHF targets are introduced in Southeast Asia, provided Phu Bai hearability test results prove satisfactory and show a better intercept capability than Da Nang." This had definitely not been true up to this point and USAFSS concluded at the time that ". . .the advantage of collocation of USAFSS VHF intercept site with PACAF CRP outweighs possible benefits of Phu Bai site."<sup>28</sup> As to closing Tan Son Nhut, there was nothing really magic about where the squadron headquarters was located. The command agreed to close the site and move the squadron headquarters to Da Nang; putting the two HF positions at the main base and the VHF position on Monkey Mountain.<sup>29</sup> PacSctyRgn agreed this was fine and said Da Nang could handle everything as long as part of the operation stayed on Monkey Mountain. Otherwise, some extra construction would be needed at Da Nang.<sup>30</sup>

#### CHICOM's Become Active

Meanwhile, the CHICOM's were shuffling their aircraft and this generated considerable concern at Fort Meade. In early February NSA learned that the Chinese Reds had moved a contingent into Lingshui Airfield on Southern Hainan Island, and on 10 March, 10 jet fighters were moved in. This suggested two possibilities: (a) Imminent occupation of the field by the 8th CCNAF Air Division, which was until that time at Hai How, or (b) creation of a new naval jet fighter division at Lingshui. On 5 March 1963, the USAFSS Office of Production



(AFSSOP) at Fort Meade said:<sup>31</sup>

. . . In light of the proximity of (the) field to South Viet Nam and Laos the activation (of the) field at this time is of possible great significance. It can be expected that Far East consumers, especially CINCPAC will be most anxious to have (the) best possible COMINT coverage and reporting of all activity in South Hainan Island, specifically at Lingshui.

( ) In a rather morbid sort of way this seemed a break for the command's position that Monkey Mountain should not be tampered with. For it was still the only possible site - at least the only one known - for VHF intercept.

[REDACTED]

While NSA had several times mentioned the VHF potential at Phu Bai, there had been none up to that point. There were, as a matter of fact, no tests being conducted. Since ASA had moved to Phu Bai on 3 February there had been no VHF or multi-channel intercept. Yet, Phu Bai was developing into a sizeable site.<sup>33</sup>

Again Monkey Mountain; Some Progress

Fortunately, Monkey Mountain's potential was known, so PacSctyRgn immediately began work on setting up another test. It told the [REDACTED], which would have to control the actions, that the test positions should be set up to be retained for an indefinite period. The region added that the search mission should be expanded. The [REDACTED] immediately told the 6925th RGM in the Philippines to put together a test team and send it into Da Nang.

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The group had one officer and ten airmen in South Viet Nam by the 15th of March and they immediately set up a temporary camp on the mountain top. As during the first test, the rainy season was on and rain and high winds slowed down the initial preparations by requiring a move to the adjoining peak. Over the next two weeks the group battled the elements, but by the end of the month they were ready to go to work. For two weeks they checked out the equipment. The antenna had to be rewired and one major part was a week late arriving, so it was 22 April before the VHF part of the test was under way and successful. On 18 April, the test team had started manual Morse intercept and it was of better quality than anything gained in Southeast Asia up to that point.<sup>34</sup>

On 22 April the first CHICOM VHF voice from South Hainan Island was intercepted, and on 26 April the first North Vietnamese voice was copied. All of it was either completely unique or of far better quality than anything from anywhere else. On the 29th of the month all other cases were closed down and the detachment concentrated on CHICOM and North Vietnamese VHF intercept. On 17 May a new team took over and the success continued. Working from 6 a. m. to 7 p. m., the quantity of CHICOM tactical air take grew while the North Vietnamese intercept diminished somewhat. But from 17 May until 3 June most of the CHICOM air traffic originated from Hainan Island's Lingshui Airfield. The traffic concerned routine and

practice formation flying and airfield exercises and aerial gunnery and ground controlled intercept (GCI) target exercises. The people conducting the test were optimistic. The NCOIC of the team later reported that:<sup>35</sup>

. . .with improved site conditions and more refined equipment, both the quality and quantity of intercept of both entities (CHICOM and North Vietnamese) could be greatly enhanced.

Potential is There

) An important point here was that the tests were made under anything but ideal conditions; and they were made with an operational team with normal service experience. Admittedly, transporting supplies and equipment from Da Nang was both difficult and time consuming. Proper transportation was not available when needed, making it necessary to ". . .store water and fuel supplies within the AC&W perimeter fence, requiring numerous trips with heavy loads up and down the steep rocky path from the site to the camp." The test was considered most successful and the officer in charge of the test recommended definite establishment of the site with four VHF positions installed.<sup>36</sup>

) But the Phu Bai consolidation continued despite the command's objections to the concept. In April 1963 General Kellond found that the initial objections were only part of the story - for the immediate future at least. The PacSctyRgn had the eventual job of handling Southeast Asia operations under any circumstances, so it

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was understandably concerned. In talks with ASAPAC, the region found out that Phu Bai (considering only the ASA mission and plans) was already overcrowded. The Marine security people, who had not been in the original plans, also set up shop. This added to the cramped condition. On 12 April the PacSctyRgn told the command ". . . any consideration of expansion of effort at Phu Bai must recognize that accommodations do not and will not exist under present plans and earliest date new construction for additional accommodations could begin under current Army funding limitations is Fiscal 1965." A USAFSS move would pose unexpected problems at Phu Bai and require new funding. The region added that ". . .time phasing for construction would extend at least six months after receipt of funds which are not now available."<sup>37</sup>

#### Viet Cong Reported Expanding

y this time, the point of defensibility also came into the picture. Intelligence showed the Viet Cong in the process of expanding their military organization, particularly in the northern part of the country. Three skeleton regiments were reported with further steps being taken toward establishment of fully structured regiments. Captured documents identified an understrength unit of artillery specialists, presumably infiltrated from North Viet Nam. Although the Viet Cong were not known to have artillery, the presence of the group, together with a reported embryonic transportation company

without motorized equipment, pointed to the Communists' determination to push their capability for more conventional combat. This trend to larger formations provided a valuable clue to the future of the Viet Cong war.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, the Viet Cong were propagandizing that 1963 would see a concentration of "major attacks in force against government positions in order to terminate the war with speed." In 1962 the Viet Cong concentrated on the maintenance of forces, while the counteroffensive, which would involve large-scale attacks, was promised for 1963. Also, the New China News Agency said that Red China was preparing to boost its support of revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia, and that the ". . . situation in the Republic of Viet Nam is particularly favorable for such action." There was no evidence that Red China was becoming actively involved in the Vietnamese war, although the presence of Red Chinese modern weapons became more and more commonplace in captured equipment. There was also no evidence at the time that the North Vietnamese were going to ask for it.<sup>39</sup>

#### Thai-Viet Operations Collide

It was at this time that the Thailand-Vietnamese situations merged and began to specifically affect one another. NSA had planned [redacted] extra positions [redacted] for the summer of 1963, but the Thais steadfastly refused to raise the ceiling. So these five positions

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caused a complete rearrangement of Southeast Asia intercept facilities on the continent. The proposal was to move the entire Viet Nam intercept problem from [redacted] to Phu Bai to make room for the new positions at [redacted]. These positions would remain under the control of ASA in the Philippines and, altogether, 11 positions would be assigned North Vietnamese and Laotian targets - all to be located at Phu Bai.<sup>40</sup> It was just a few days before that General Klocko heard from ASA on this development. The Army said that due to the expected mission expansion, ". . . it does not appear possible that AFSS collocation at Phu Bai can be accomplished in the immediate future."<sup>41</sup>

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## CHAPTER III

## THE SHUFFLE CONTINUES; MONKEY MOUNTAIN PROVED

The detachment at Da Nang, in the meantime, was going along doing what it could about satisfying requirements. These were not all completely routine; even those in addition to the Monkey Mountain tests which it had to support. One of the big efforts in South Viet Nam, and one that was primarily the task of ASA, was identifying Viet Cong transmitting stations - not an easy task because of the high mobility of the guerrillas and the low power communications equipment used. Normal COMINT intercept and analysis was not the answer because this depended on a certain amount of stability on the part of target transmitters - and this was not the case. So there had been a great number of direction finding or homing experiments conducted over the months. Again, these were primarily the job of ASA.<sup>1</sup>

The USAFSS detachment got involved in one of these tests when the 3rd RRU moved to Phu Bai in February 1963. NSAPAC Viet Nam was conducting the test, but since ASA was in no position to support it at the time, asked the detachment if it would do so. The detachment agreed. After the test stretched from ten days to three months, with the boosting of USMAC operations in the north, NSAPAC said:<sup>2</sup>

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. . . Commander 3rd RRU has asked this office to express his appreciation to you and your personnel for excellent support rendered his airborne DF detachment during the past three months. Your cooperation in solving communications problems and affording secure area for planning and analysis contributed much to success of these operations. . . . Without interim support measures, airborne DF effort from Da Nang would have been restricted due to lack of technical exchange and probably would not have been able to target as many Viet Cong radio stations as they did.

#### Permanency Considered For Mountain

( With things becoming somewhat hotter throughout Southeast Asia, particularly the advent of the CHICOM air activity in south China, PacSctyRgn was eager to get Monkey Mountain established as a permanent intercept site. As far as tactical COMINT was concerned, the VHF capability the site had shown made it imperative that it remain in operation. To do this most easily, it was important that Da Nang remain an operational base to one extent or another. Several things had to be considered in making the mountain top a permanent site. The command understood PACAF would provide logistical support (messing, billeting, transportation, etc.) but it needed to know when it would be available. There was also the point of communications between the mountain-top site and Da Nang proper; i. e., would it or would it not be required? Then there was the problem of personnel -- would more be necessary?<sup>3</sup> Discussions on these points cropped up from time to time for the rest of the year, but the continuing turmoil about what would be where and when barred any real



progress. Under any circumstances, PACAF continued to agree to the normal base support, including physical security. The only development that was of any consequence was that of point-to-point communications. And the fluctuation of ideas and plans kept this a moot point under the best of circumstances.

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In the meantime, the Da Nang-Phu Bai controversy continued. ASA told NSA that with the move of five positions from , it certainly could not accommodate USAFSS at the site.

NSA agreed, for the moment at least, but insisted the problem was not insurmountable. For the time being, therefore, Da Nang was still in the command's hands. NSA insisted, however, that there would be no effort to increase the command's ceiling of 79 people, adding that sites must prove themselves productive; performing tasks that couldn't be done elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

Tan Son Nhut Closed; Squadron Moved

On 29 May the command told PacSctyRgn to close Tan Son Nhut,<sup>5</sup> which the region was already in the process of doing. It had scheduled the final move anytime after 1 July and said it saw no reason to have to enlarge the Da Nang facility.<sup>6</sup> By 5 June all preliminary arrangements had been made. The deadline was officially set for 1 January 1964. The total personnel requirement had been reduced to 79. But rather than operating a split HF/VHF voice position at Da Nang from the Tan Son Nhut equipment, the command

suggested putting an HF position at Da Nang and the VHF position on Monkey Mountain; each operating 16 hours a day. This would give 32 hours a day coverage instead of 24 as originally planned. The command felt that with the split position half of the traffic was lost on complex working point-to-point communications. The HF position would stay at Da Nang proper with the VHF position located atop Monkey Mountain.<sup>7</sup>

On the whole, however, the command felt there wasn't a great deal of progress being made in the Southeast Asia COMINT organization. For, despite all of the plans, programs, etc., nothing was going to happen of a significant nature until two things happened: (a) An air problem developed and (b) the personnel ceilings in both Thailand and South Viet Nam were raised. As far as the command was concerned in its tactical support mission, there was no need for the second until the first happened. The command arrived at the point where it had to ignore the plans and possibilities of personnel increases, and concentrate on operating within the ceilings as they were established.<sup>8</sup>

#### Thai Operation Reduced

) So the command backed off from the NSA concept of continuing increases, and based its planning on what it knew would be available. In Thailand the ceiling was 29, and the April communications from the Thai government gave no indication that this would

be raised. So USAFSS decided to reduce the daily hours of coverage from 114 to 88. Said USAFSS:<sup>9</sup>

. . . Although this is still more hours of coverage than can normally be handled by the operators authorized, by overtime and internal station management this workload can be maintained for the present. Further, we do not envision any expansion to a larger number of people and positions in Thailand as depicted in your (NSA's) modified planning for Phase II when relocated to Khorat. We feel that the present Southeast Asia deployment of positions and personnel, with adjustments. . . should be maintained with emergency reaction (ERU) resources earmarked for augmentation of unforeseen requirements in Southeast Asia.

This appeared a comparatively simple solution for a great deal of the distress that had been experienced over the past months. Initially, as far as Viet Nam was concerned, the air problem was still not there. So it appeared that all plans had been made from Washington with an eye toward the possible contribution toward the national intelligence picture. On the other hand, however, if an air problem did develop in South Viet Nam, the USAFSS responsibility would be to the commander 2nd Air Division in Saigon. The command felt that with the advance warning that was possible through normal COMINT, an emergency unit could be deployed to the proper places for tactical support. Further, under this arrangement, they would go into Viet Nam in support of the tactical commander and as such would not be subject to ceilings put on SIGINT operations.<sup>10</sup>

Coverage Consolidated

) On 18 June all intercept activities at Tan Son Nhut

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ceased and this part of the reformation was finished. In the meantime the \_\_\_\_\_ had been studying how best to handle the mission in light of this closure and the subsequent availability of three intercept positions. Moving the positions to Da Nang was already decided. With the move, the Da Nang detachment assumed all intercept responsibility from Tan Son Nhut. Also, the North Vietnamese civil and military air cases on assignment at the 6925th RSM in the Philippines were to be consolidated at the detachment. So, as far as the Vietnamese air problem was concerned, it was concentrated at Da Nang. With the consolidation, all air defense targets from Hanoi to the 17th parallel were on assignment there. Also, operators felt that hearability would improve on targets that had been most difficult to intercept at the Philippines unit. PacScty-Rgn agreed with the proposal.<sup>11</sup>

The \_\_\_\_\_ added an item that pointed to a somewhat brighter outlook in late 1963 or early 1964 when it said PACAF was to install a base power source at Da Nang, eliminating the diesel generators in use up to that point. The detachment had two generator maintenance men, who were part of the personnel ceiling, to handle this item - without which nothing could operate. With base power these men could be sent to another Pacific unit, and the slots vacated could be filled with direly-needed manual Morse operators.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the 2nd Air Division agreed to

EO 3.3b(3)  
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supply security police for the USAFSS sites, further reducing the  
manning strain on the detachment and the parent . 13

6923rd Disbanded; 6925th Assumes Mission

) In another move to improve the manning situation, USAFSS told PacSctyRgn to look into the possibility of subordinating all Southeast Asia operations to the 6925th RGM organizationally, eliminating the 6923rd Scty Sq. This appeared a logical move because operational control was already in the group's hands. Also, the Philippines unit was supplying considerable routine support, although support provided by the 2nd Air Division was improving as time went on. The 6925th RGM was the regular supply post for COMINT equipment and had been since the operation began. 14

) At this point it appeared that the Southeast Asia situation had run the gamut. Plans, which originally called for an emergency reaction unit, had generated to fantastic heights in the minds of many. But by the middle of 1963 it was back to austere manning and austere operations. Great volumes of correspondence had passed back and forth between the interested agencies in the Pacific. With this exchange, misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the written word had caused a good deal of extra - and perhaps unneeded - effort on the part of many. By the time General Klocko was getting ready to make his annual world inspection of his units, the command was seriously considering moving everything out of Southeast Asia

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as far as permanent operations were concerned and leaving only unmanned positions to be manned in an emergency. So the commander decided that when he got to Hawaii he'd get together with everyone concerned and see what could be ironed out.<sup>15</sup>

#### PacSctyRgn Role Defined in Plans

On 9 July USAFSS told PacSctyRgn about a possible pullout. This caused the region some concern. It was scheduled to meet with NSA to discuss COMINT support to the commander-in-chief Pacific (CINCPAC) according to its new operations plan 32-64.<sup>16</sup> PacSctyRgn, which had gotten an earlier look at the new plan, said that overall it hadn't changed much from the year before. But PACAF's part of it was written much more in tasking detail than ever before. For the first time, PacSctyRgn was designated a "friendly force" in the plan, and thereby became an integral part of it. All responsibilities were set up to be taken care of by an emergency reaction unit.<sup>17</sup>

But both PACAF and PacSctyRgn had strong feelings against discontinuing Da Nang as an active producer of COMINT. Reports from time to time over past months had indicated some felt Clark AB (6925th Scty Gp) intercept was superior to that at Da Nang (Da Nang proper, not Monkey Mountain), but the region questioned the way the comparisons were made. Antenna configurations at Clark were far superior to those at Da Nang and the region felt this

EO 3.35(3)  
EO 3.35(6)  
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gave the Philippines station a marked advantage. Further, the region said Vietnamese civil air and air defense coverage was better at Da Nang than at Clark during the daytime.

[REDACTED] an all-Clark effort toward national and theater COMINT requirements, but the PacSctyRgn said ". . .

[REDACTED] full copy from Da Nang. Loss of Da Nang would result in some second echelon analysis deterioration on a timely basis."<sup>18</sup>

#### Da Nang Admittedly Short

) The region admitted that consumer requirements in South Viet Nam and 13th Air Force didn't support the expense of a unit at Da Nang by themselves but insisted that a ". . . permanently established unit in South Viet Nam was definitely superior in concept than the utilization of (an emergency reaction unit)." First it pointed out that when an ERU deployed to the site, time would be consumed in getting the crews thoroughly familiar with the operations. Further, it said ". . . retention of Da Nang must be measured in its value of keeping under constant surveillance the target environment in that country and adjacent areas from which escalation could develop, and its potential for direct COMINT support to tactical forces which may be needed."<sup>19</sup>

) A major worry of the region was Monkey Mountain and what would possibly happen to it if it had to be supported from

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someplace other than Da Nang. The effort at this point had been elementary and limited, but it showed more promise for VHF cover than any other location in the area. The region argued that:<sup>20</sup>

. . . Da Nang's Monkey Mountain offers the only suitable USAFSS site for an expanded VHF effort in (the North Viet Nam-Hainan) areas. (Although USAFSS mission had, since its inception in South Vietnam, been relatively lackluster, the potential is certainly there and every degree of separation from the problem is a degree of alienation).

#### PACAF Lends Support

Unquestionably, then, both PacSctyRgn and PACAF felt strongly that Da Nang should remain in at least semi-permanent status; PacSctyRgn because of the advantages of its general intercept potential, and PACAF at least partly because of its physical proximity to the prime operational unit at Da Nang. Admittedly, it had not been highly successful and there was no factual proof of just what the site could do with proper equipment, antennas, etc. But the region brought up another point for consideration. PACAF was proceeding with contingency planning to cope with the increasingly uneasy situation in Laos, and should it (PACAF) have to deploy to a location other than South Viet Nam, the ERU would have to be committed in its support. This would leave none to move into Da Nang if the need arose.<sup>21</sup>



## CHAPTER IV

## CHICOM ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS MOUNTAIN'S ROLE

So, though the command was relenting in its previous position that Da Nang was necessary as an active site, PacSctyRgn was still firm in its conviction that it was needed. The original handicap was still there, to be sure. That is, Da Nang was not, and had never been, a consistent contributor of COMINT that was not available elsewhere. But the reason for it being ordered to South Viet Nam in the first place remained - for potential direct support of Southeast Asia tactical commanders. In an effort to fill both bills, the command began thinking in terms of deleting the permanency of the site from the standpoint of personnel by manning it with a continuing rotation of personnel. This, it felt, solved the personnel problem by eliminating the short tour in effect at the time since the operators could shuttle between other Pacific units and the Southeast Asia site. In addition, a greater number of people would have benefit of the experience.<sup>1</sup>

On 24 July the command told PacSctyRgn that Da Nang would stay open, for the time being at least.<sup>2</sup> But at NSA other things were also in the mill that would affect the command and its operations. Ceilings and other diplomatic difficulties were still among the prime considerations. For example, when Maj. Thomas

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Callaghan went to Fort Meade late in July, he was asked for his opinion on moving all USAFSS personnel out of [redacted] and letting the Army take over all of its air assignments. In exchange for this service, ASA would move out of [redacted] where it was collocated with the [redacted], and let USAFSS take over its assignments there.<sup>3</sup>

The command did not object to the principle of the move but felt it had to be done slowly so complete continuity would be maintained all around. It cautioned that an extensive overlap of operators would be necessary to integrate Army personnel into USAFSS procedures -- particularly in the cases of Critic and Spot reports. Said USAFSS:<sup>4</sup>

. . . For example, in the event of another CHICOM aggression into Northeast India this spring, coverage could be diverted to follow this activity and might possibly require Spot or Critic reporting, and the Army should be prepared to do this.

Meanwhile, NSA had revised the mission assignments at Da Nang, and PacSctyRgn was in the process of implementing them. The region offered a few changes, suggesting that some shuffling take place between Da Nang and Clark. The region also reminded NSA that the [redacted] could handle all of the technical backup for the operation and that the [redacted] would monitor the program. The region added that ". . . in view of the possibility of fighter buildup in Southwest China, (PacSctyRgn was) studying feasibility of returning to Monkey Mountain with VHF intercept capabilities."<sup>5</sup>

Activity Concerns Tactical Forces

This activity sharpened the underlying fear among all USAFSS and tactical air units that they might get caught short COMINT-wise. PACAF and PacSctyRgn were deeply involved in Southeast Asia and PACAF particularly was vitally concerned with having the capability there when and if it was needed. So while the command was understandably concerned with expenditures in equipment and manpower (which was always in demand in the Pacific), PacSctyRgn was equally concerned with being able to support the 2nd Air Division if a Vietnamese air war developed. And there appeared good reason for concern as the Pacific headquarters pointed out early in August. For example, the Sino-Soviet bloc was getting increasingly restive. This was particularly true in the Pacific, and consumers of tactical COMINT were becoming more and more concerned. PacSctyRgn felt this called for "... . positive and immediate. . ." action.

CHICOM's Deploy

A new Red Chinese jet fighter regiment had recently moved into Southwest China - and this area could be covered only from Thai intercept stations (the potential had not been developed in Viet Nam). CHICOM intentions throughout Southeast Asia were uncertain and growing more so. As examples, there were the Sino-Indian border disputes, the DMZ difficulties in Korea, and the possible CHICOM-

Soviet buildup along the Sino-Soviet border to consider. These things could not be ignored by tactical commanders nor the commander of the PacSctyRgn. In this regard, PacSctyRgn said:<sup>6</sup>

. . . Of particular significance is the deployment of the 24 jet fighters to Mengtsu, Ssu-mao or Kunming, which in addition to the 30 presently at Kunming will significantly increase the CHICOM air capabilities in Southwest China and pose an increased threat to friendly forces in Laos. Mengtzu, a new and as yet unoccupied airfield, is within MIG 15/17 operating radius in northern Laos including the Plaine de Jarres area. With external fuel, the MIG 15/17's have a high-low-high profile mission radius of over 300 nautical miles which would make these aircraft effective in a ground attack or strafing role in support of the Pathet Lao. In addition, other CHICOM aircraft (TU-2's and jet fighters) apparently scheduled ferry flights possibly are programmed for transfer to south or southwest China. . . .

) PACAF agreed and had twice said, on 30 July and again on 7 August, that it had ". . . urgent and continued requirement for immediate information concerning the arrival and subsequent activities of CHICOM air elements in the vicinity of North Viet Nam and Laos." Twice during hearability tests, Monkey Mountain had intercepted VHF at the Kinming/Wuchiapa and the Nanning/Wuyu areas, some 300 to 600 miles away. PacSctyRgn felt it had to act on these requirements, so it moved one HF/VHF position from Da Nang's compound, put it into an unused intercept van, and moved it up to the top of Monkey Mountain inside the AC&W compound. It was not producing at Da Nang anyway and the region planned to support it with its entire effort if needed.<sup>7</sup>

EO 3.36(3)  
E.O. 86-36Monkey Mountain Again Manned

) [redacted] said intercept would probably be limited because of frequency selection problems and the distances involved in intercepting Southwest China VHF, but agreed Monkey Mountain was important for its potential benefit in the event Communist air forces moved into Southeast Asia. PacSctyRgn felt the importance was even greater, but that was neither here nor there. With the potential development came the inevitable personnel problem, so PacSctyRgn asked the command what it could do in this line if an ERU deployment became necessary.<sup>8</sup> In the Pacific, however, the personnel situation had become so unpredictable that the command and all field units would probably have to "play it by ear" if the occasion arose.

) By 11 August Monkey Mountain was operating again. Over the first few weeks there was no success against Mengtzu fighters. But PacSctyRgn felt this was due, at least partially, to the weather in the Mengtzu area. This contention was confirmed by the lack of ground-to-ground communications from the same area. Meanwhile, NSA felt Chiang-Mai had possibilities because it was closer to the target, but PacSctyRgn disagreed, saying:<sup>9</sup>

. . . Although Monkey Mountain is 140 miles farther from Mengtzu than Chiang Mai, the geographic profile along the Red River Valley to Mengtzu offers a definite advantage over the Chiang Mai-to-Mengtzu profile. 6,000 to 11,000 foot mountains between Chiang-Mai and Mengtzu render Chiang-Mai an unlikely prospect for VHF reception. . . .

ACRP Also Tried

But apparently the national agency was critically concerned with the need and was probing every possibility. [redacted] had suggested flying ACRP QUEEN BEE missions against these targets, but PacSctyRgn, which had some experience in this phase, \* offered a number of impending difficulties if the attempt were made:<sup>10</sup>

1. Diplomatic overflight clearances.
2. Lack of airframe maintenance facilities.
3. Limited processing equipment [redacted]
4. Low probability of intercept due to distance to the targets and mountainous terrain.
5. Acute lack of secondary targets if the Mengtzu Regiment was not active.
6. Major loss of coverage of other ACOM target areas (maintenance capability at [redacted] would be moved to [redacted])
7. Low aircraft utilization while deployed.
8. Airframe post-flight requirements.
9. Physical security.
10. Approaching Monsoon season.

Airborne missions had already been flown, but with little success. This could have been attributed to the weather.

\* PacSctyRgn and the [redacted] had been involved in experimental C-47 ACRP operations [redacted] in 1961. See Vols 1 and 2 of this study.

More ACRP missions were planned for the future. But these were in conjunction with existing orbits so that there would be no disruption in staging the aircraft or in maintenance. PACAF had already objected to flying specialized orbits against Mengtzu because of the difficulties in maintenance, the monsoon season, and the clearance factor mentioned by PacSctyRgn. PACAF also had experience in this line. As it was, Monkey Mountain didn't prove to be the answer either. However, during its trial, VHF from South Hainan Island was developed to a new degree.<sup>11</sup> This will be discussed later.

#### Collocation Hassle Continues

In the meantime, the Da Nang-Phu Bai controversy continued. Although NSA had given at least a temporary approval to keeping Da Nang operating, the national agency apparently still had collocation in mind. On 16 August PacSctyRgn said that Lt. Gen. Gordon Blake, Director, NSA, was coming to the Pacific for a conference and survey on Southeast Asia in general, and Da Nang-Phu Bai in particular. Representatives from the region planned to attend.<sup>12</sup> The command's views on the subject were well known to General Kellond, but USAFSS added:<sup>13</sup>

. . .insure that all areas of support, timely reporting and communications requirements are included in planning. Unless something new has been developed recently we still see no advantage to collocation at Phu Bai, since it affords less security, may get us involved with the Army of Viet Nam, and is farther

away from USAF support and customers. . . .

Although the command had its troubles, NSA had troubles also. For example, NSA was still working on getting the Thailand ceiling lifted, but the possibility was growing dimmer all the time. The only answer was to move to South Viet Nam. And to take full advantage of the ceilings offered in Viet Nam, the agency would have to concentrate as much effort there as possible. Phu Bai was its primary consideration as a consolidated site and it was going ahead with plans for it. One of the command's earlier objections to Phu Bai was discredited: the defense position of Da Nang as compared to Phu Bai. Initially, Da Nang was south of the CINCPAC line of defense in event of an attack from the north. This, with the new plan, was no longer the case - both sites were north of the line and in case of attack either would have to be evacuated.<sup>14</sup> In any event, ASA was on record that collocating Da Nang with Phu Bai was pretty much out of the question in the immediate future. NSA had already set target dates for the move and had made other plans, but ASA said simply that it could not support these requirements. For example, before the Da Nang operation could be brought in, more than \$100,000 would have to be supplied. The Army didn't have the money available, and it would take almost a year after congressional funding before new buildings could be occupied. ASA estimated that Fiscal 1966 would



be the earliest possible time that facilities could be available.<sup>15</sup>

NSA Slows Da Nang Construction

The new construction for the USAFSS Da Nang unit would be ready for occupancy by June 1964.<sup>16</sup> However, when General Blake got back to Fort Meade he asked for a status report on the building and made it known that he heavily favored collocation at Phu Bai. He considered the following:<sup>17</sup>

1. The facility would be used for a fairly long time.
2. Funds approved for Da Nang should be held until NSA finished its study of the South Viet Nam situation.
3. Factors such as gold flow should be considered in order that dollar and personnel savings could be effected commensurate with a sound Vietnamese operation.

) Two statements appeared to illustrate NSA's position on USAFSS operations in Southeast Asia. They were:<sup>18</sup>

. . . The need for USAFSS COMINT units in Southeast Asia is dictated solely by intelligence requirements and operational considerations. Inasmuch as the preponderance of SIGINT activity on the Southeast Asia mainland is ground-related, the bulk of resources have been provided by ASA. If and when it is determined that additional air-related activity is available, NSA will take necessary steps to expand COMINT resources accordingly.

The key to this statement came when NSA said ". . . a comprehensive plan for SIGINT expansion in South Viet Nam, with emphasis upon Phu Bai, is currently being developed. There is a distinct

possibility that the AFSS resources at Da Nang will be relocated at Phu Bai; the decision on this matter awaits conclusive evidence of VHF hearability at Phu Bai."<sup>19</sup>

Second, NSA said:<sup>20</sup>

... Monkey Mountain tests did prove that it is possible to intercept Hainan Island area VHF activity, but there is nothing to indicate that Monkey Mountain is less exposed to attack than Phu Bai or that logistic support to Phu Bai poses insurmountable problems. The existence of a radar site on Monkey Mountain introduces the possibility of interference problems. Current planning action will take into account all technical and administrative considerations.

Mountain Prime VHF Site

) But as time went on, Monkey Mountain-at least in the eyes of PacSctyRgn-assumed greater and greater importance to the potential value of USAFSS in Southeast Asia. This was particularly true when considering the ever present potential of an air war developing. As the weeks passed, it even became more important from the standpoint of COMINT service to NSA. By the middle of September, Monkey Mountain was becoming the primary VHF site for Southeast Asia targets. The general contention had been that

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[redacted] as well as the Vietnamese site. But during August, the 6922nd

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NSA 3.36(3)

[redacted] conducted a [redacted] and, generally

speaking, the quality of voice intercept

[redacted] Said the wing:<sup>21</sup>

EO 3.36(3)  
EO 3.36(6)  
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. . . Comparison of available intercept 19, 20, 26 and 28 August, indicates that both the quality and quantity of Monkey Mountain intercept were very satisfactory and [redacted]

EO 3.3b(3)  
EO 3.3b(6)  
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On 19 August, this somewhat primitive site intercepted 44 minutes of tactical voice traffic, all of it unique. Fourteen pilots, which analysts felt belonged to the CCNAF 8th Air Division at Lingshui Airfield, were involved in an aerial gunnery exercise. The quality of the traffic and the transcription were very satisfactory. The next day an hour and 55 minutes were recorded - all of it tactical voice traffic. [redacted]

EO 3.3b(3)  
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[redacted] Further, the quality and quantity of the Monkey Mountain take were [redacted] 22

A week later, on 26 August, [redacted]

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Despite interference from a broadcast station, Monkey Mountain intercept was [redacted]

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Finally, two days later, another hour and 52 minutes of tactical voice was intercepted. In this case, [redacted]

The [redacted] surmised that the activity took place on the east side of the island,

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putting it in poor position for line-of-sight intercept from Monkey Mountain. But despite this, the traffic was considered good.<sup>23</sup>

) The tests continued over the following weeks and on 19 September the PacSctyRgn told the command:<sup>24</sup>

. . . (On three assigned North Viet Nam cases). . . signals reflect very good readability, except in isolated incidents where blocking was noted. (On two CHICOM cases). . . signal propagation has improved. Signal strength is considered fairly good and several ground stations have been heard. Some of the traffic has been of poor readability, however, some of exceptionally high quality. (One CHICOM target) reflected the flight of one, probably two, newly acquired CHICOM Vickers Viscounts. . . . A Spot (report) supplement was issued based upon intercept from the Monkey Mountain site in connection with the flight of (one) aircraft. . . . (CHICOM air defense intercept) has been noted active primarily in aerial gunnery exercises and what appeared to be radio-compass let-down exercises. . . .

#### NSA Suggests ASA Subordination

By 7 October, NSA appeared to be at the point where it would accept the potential value of the Monkey Mountain VHF effort, saying that if it was warranted, the site could be kept on the mountain top as a detachment of the Army at Phu Bai.\* The command found out at the same time that the national agency was asking that Da Nang construction be held up and the funds held in abeyance until NSA decided just how the shift should be handled. The command's opinion hadn't been solicited, so USAFSS immediately asked that it

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\* While NSA passed this off as a comparatively simple support operation, PacSctyRgn knew it would not be so. If Phu Bai was to be the support base, all manner of transportation difficulties were envisioned to say nothing of the security difficulties that would come up.

be allowed to get in its arguments about the move and collocation at Phu Bai. The agency agreed, but gave the command only until the next day to get its case together.<sup>25</sup>

Brig. Gen. Lewis Coira, USAFSS Deputy Commander, immediately told Colonel Macia (who was at NSA at the time) that "any attempt to stop Da Nang construction and reprogram at Phu Bai will delay provisioning of adequate facilities for four years . . . . desire that you (Col. Macia) take a firm position regarding retention of the Da Nang - Monkey Mountain complex."<sup>26</sup> After Colonel Macia presented the objection to the national agency, he and the command felt that the next move was up to NSA. (Candidly, the command -- at least many people in it -- were getting somewhat discouraged at the chain of events connected with Phu Bai and Da Nang. They felt if second-class citizenship was to be USAFSS's forte while awaiting accommodations at Phu Bai, it just might decide to move out of Viet Nam altogether.)<sup>27</sup>

#### ASA Asks For Funds

ASA agreed with NSA's proposal, providing NSA would supply the funds for the extra facilities it had previously said it would need. At that time, General Maxwell D. Taylor had announced that U.S. troops in Viet Nam should be reduced by 1000 by the end of the year. The NSA representative in Viet Nam, in talks with the commander of MACV, General Adams, found that all the SCA's

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would be expected to present realistic strength figures for the entire nation. The plan was to look into each special activity separately, and the Southeast Asia representative felt the only solution would be to combine all SCA activities into an operation under the Department of Defense, not subject to reductions unless specifically directed by that department.<sup>28</sup>

1) General Klocko, in the meantime, landed in Saigon and had conferences with General Harkins on the SEA situation in general. During the talks he developed several conclusions which he relayed to General Blake at NSA on 11 October. Said General Klocko:<sup>29</sup>

. . . With respect to collocation of Army Phu Bai and USAFSS at Da Nang, my initial reaction is that virtually no economy would be achieved by collocation at Phu Bai and there are many disadvantages. Am concerned over Viet Cong activities in vicinity of Phu Bai and U.S. forces committed to hold line north of Da Nang, but south of Phu Bai. Consider it especially desirable to remain in vicinity of Monkey Mountain as this location is our only proven site for successful intercept of important VHF targets.

#### Viet Control Delayed at CRP

The commander also brought up a point NSA had used as an objection to operating on the mountain indefinitely -- the proposed Viet Nam Air Force radar on the mountain top. General Klocko found that this had been delayed for about a year. Also, Da Nang was a much better base for supporting the site than Phu Bai would be if the subordination was changed. Finally, the USAFSS

commander suggested ". . . (an) austere unit at Da Nang to insure that only coverage absolutely essential is done in South Viet Nam, and remain in good posture to provide direct support if and when required."<sup>30</sup>

When this got back to Fort Meade, Colonel Macia, who was still at NSA, talked over its contents with agency officials. General Blake said if this was what General Klocko wanted, NSA would go along with it and USAFSS could figure on being at Da Nang for the "foreseeable future." He said the operations facility, for which funds had been under discussion before, should be built if needed. When he returned to the command headquarters, Colonel Macia said:<sup>31</sup>

. . . To follow up on this plan we should determine the absolute minimum operation that should be retained at Da Nang and be prepared to make appropriate recommendations to General Klocko upon his return. In our review of the Da Nang requirements we must keep in mind the operations facility requirement. It may be possible to reduce the scope of this construction in view of a reduced operational capability. . . .

#### Da Nang Operations Changed

" Things appeared to be settling, even though ever so slightly. Reduced activity at Da Nang apparently would be welcome news to PACAF also because on 11 October PACAF told the command it was some \$40,000 short of that needed to complete the operational facilities scheduled for the site. USAFSS asked PacSctyRgn how the entire operation could be cut down, even if there was a delay

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involved to make adjustments.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, operations people at USAFSS convened to see just what could be moved out of Da Nang without hurting the mission. They decided all high frequency intercept could be moved back to Clark AB in the Philippines since Da Nang was supplying little unique HF in a close support category at the Viet Nam site.<sup>33</sup>

With General Blake's word that Da Nang would remain a command site for the "foreseeable future," PacSctyRgn could get rid of one chore it had been involved in with the NSAPAC representative in Viet Nam -- the Phu Bai-Da Nang hearability comparison. The command told the region it was free to withdraw unless there were other requirements, such as a Thailand survey.<sup>34</sup> Apparently there were none because the NSAPAC representative immediately cancelled the survey, and PacSctyRgn began working on the problem of what could be whittled away from the Da Nang operation.<sup>35</sup>

One point the region came up with shortly was secure communications between Da Nang and Monkey Mountain. The region felt that if KY-1 secure voice telephone equipment could be installed between the two sites, it could eliminate its communications van altogether. But there was no equipment available, and despite a worldwide search for equipments that could be released, none had been located at the end of December.<sup>36</sup> But with all HF moved back to Clark, the region felt that it would not need all it had planned for at



Da Nang. It recommended a central operations building used in consort with ERU vans. The location at Da Nang would not be changed. The region planned to tell PACAF to delete the programmed requirements.<sup>37</sup>

#### Da Nang Personnel Cut

By 13 November PacSctyRgn had finished its plan to cut South Viet Nam activities. Seventeen men had been cut from the unit manning document, assuming secure voice equipment would eventually be available. Otherwise, the reduction was for eleven people. Three vans were needed: one intercept van at Da Nang with five manual Morse intercept positions and one transcribe position; one intercept van on Monkey Mountain with two radio telephone intercept positions (both HF/VHF split) and one transcribe position; and one analysis van for Da Nang.<sup>38</sup>

PACAF had assumed security police requirements at Da Nang and had agreed to do likewise at all USAFSS operations in South Viet Nam. At that time, PacSctyRgn was supplying guard personnel for the Monkey Mountain site. It wanted to keep the responsibility because it felt this would better equip the detachment for possible moves as action took place. General Klocko felt this was a ". . . step in the right direction. . . shaping up nicely," so the region began to act along these lines.<sup>39</sup> Operations people at Hq USAFSS while going over the proposals agreed with everything except the air

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police portion, feeling that inasmuch as PACAF had agreed to support the command in this respect it should continue to do so. They also agreed on the KY-1 equipment, but here the command was somewhat cautious since it did not know where the equipment would come from. It told the region to canvass the Pacific and USAFSS would scout elsewhere.<sup>40</sup>

Force Withdrawal Alarms NSA

) The National Security Agency, in the meantime, was trying to save what it had in Southeast Asia. General Taylor's statements for reduction in the general U.S. force in Southeast Asia was at definite odds with NSA's two-year attempts to augment the SIGINT complement throughout the region. On 13 November the agency told the Joint Chiefs of Staff:<sup>41</sup>

. . . The director NSA advises that the number of cryptologic personnel in Viet Nam is inadequate to fulfill essential elements of information (EEI) contained in (COMUSMACV EEI 2 Jan 63) and also less than minimum necessary to meet Pacific Command and national interest; at any rate, technical aspects such as hearability and lack of suitable sites elsewhere dictate that Viet Nam be utilized for collection to the extent that it is unique and productive in these circumstances. Due to increases of SIGINT personnel in Viet Nam necessitated during past several years, actual strength exceeds totals carried on COMUSMACV troop lists by approximately eighty.

The agency offered two solutions which would not affect the SIGINT structure. COMUSMACV could assume SIGINT strength when the reduction took place, or the Secretary of Defense could reduce the figure of 1000 agreed upon by General Taylor. The agency

didn't know just how the JCS would go about maintaining the status quo, but it felt it imperative that a SIGINT reduction did not take place.<sup>42</sup> There were no details as to just how the problem was solved, but three days later the JCS told NSA that there would be no reduction in the cryptologic force.<sup>43</sup>

#### Collocation Again Becomes Point

) At the same time, other developments were underway at NSA which would cause USAFSS considerable consternation for the next couple of months. Again, Phu Bai was the focal point, specifically NSA's wish to have USAFSS collocated with ASA there. Supposedly this had been closed with General Blake's statement that General Klocko could determine what he wanted and needed in Viet Nam. But on 22 November NSA raised the Phu Bai point again in a message to the Army Security Agency. It told ASA how to handle the fund programming in connection with the Consolidated Cryptologic Program (CCP) so that facilities for USAFSS operations could be made available.<sup>44</sup> Granted, this was for Fiscal 1966 at the earliest, but the command had been operating under the assumption that it would be in Da Nang for the "foreseeable future."

PacSctyRgn learned of the plan unofficially on 3 December and immediately asked USAFSS what was going on.<sup>45</sup> The command was just as much in the dark. It had not altered its previous position at all. In a message the following day USAFSS said:<sup>46</sup>

. . . We are unaware of any final decision regarding AFSS collocation at Phu Bai. Our position remains as previously. . . and all actions have been directed toward maintaining an austere unit at Da Nang. However, it seems that NSA is still planning on collocation and has directed ASA to include construction requirements for AFSS at Phu Bai in their Fiscal 1966 military construction program. This appears to be a reversal of General Blake's decision in this matter or may possibly be only a "just in case" type planning action.

) Even ASA was somewhat in the dark. Although it was the agency primarily concerned, ASA asked NSA what the construction requirements would be for USAFSS operations there. ASA was somewhat bewildered that the national agency was going ahead with collocation in view of the fact it had said so shortly before that USAFSS would remain at Da Nang. In the CCP, Phu Bai would be rehabilitated with semi-permanent facilities in Fiscal 1966 or 1967, so ASA said that if USAFSS would in fact move, accommodations should be in this program beforehand so all would be ready. Therefore, ASA asked NSA just what type of time schedule it had in mind.<sup>47</sup>

#### USAFSS Concerned

) The command was surprised, confused, and not a little frustrated at this turn of events. Despite its objections and what it had felt was a firm position with DIRNSA, Da Nang's collocation hassle was right back where it started. The command ". . . could not understand the reasoning behind these instructions. . . ." It had continually objected to the possibility, backing up its objection with

substantial reasons.<sup>48</sup> All actions since General Blake's delay of the consolidation, and the subsequent cancellation of hearability tests by NSAPAC, had been based on the assumption that USAFSS would remain at Da Nang. Operations people at Hq USAFSS knew that exaggerated efforts had been expended in this matter and saw no advantage to expending further effort at Da Nang if USAFSS would inevitably have to move. So the deputy commander, not wanting to further aggravate the problem, suggested that AFSSOP make inquiries to find out if (a) there was a misunderstanding on the command's part regarding General Blake's October decision (b) if General Blake had reversed his decision, or (c) if the action was being taken "just in case."<sup>49</sup>

) The answer was obviously a misunderstanding on the meaning of "foreseeable future" because NSA was, and apparently had been for some time, intending to make the collocation sometime during the period through Fiscal 1969. The agency contended that continuation of the two sites (Phu Bai and Da Nang) had been acceptable only as a temporary arrangement until Fiscal 1966. The long range period through Fiscal 1969 included, and had always included, NSA said, collocation of ASA and USAFSS high frequency manual Morse collection facilities at Phu Bai. This had not been mentioned previously, however. Further, the command was about as confused as it considered NSA's remark that "due to the very unstable political

climate and military posture, long range plans may experience some setbacks and could possibly never come about, leaving the cryptologic effort with present established effort."<sup>50</sup>

Da Nang "Reprieve" Temporary

) The NSA October statement ". . .merely indorsed a temporary 'hot war' situation and did not in any way alter the long range program for the peacetime SIGINT posture in Southeast Asia."<sup>51</sup> But the command had already made moves to reconfigure the Da Nang site and had cancelled with PACAF the \$80,000 operations facility that had been planned. In its place, and in accordance with the configuration recommended by PacSctyRgn in November, a smaller nucleus center to be used with the ERU vans was being planned at a cost of less than \$25,000,<sup>52</sup>

All of this put USAFSS in somewhat of a quandry vis-a-vis NSA's requirements and plans as given to Washington officials. Earlier, at the agency's direction, USAFSS had outlined its requirements for space at Phu Bai, even though it disagreed with the philosophy of moving there. With its plans for austere manning at Da Nang, and the resultant reduction of some 14 personnel spaces, such a request to Washington to cut the capability would be definitely incompatible with NSA's plans. Consequently, the command revised its concept of moving all HF back to Clark and returned to the plan for having both HF and VHF at Da Nang and Monkey Mountain. This

still had to be considered an "austere" operation, but the concept was somewhat different.<sup>53</sup>

) This was the picture, then, at the end of 1963 - not a solid or complete picture by any means, and one which gave no clear image of the command's future in South Viet Nam. But it had to go ahead, regardless, and this created problems. PacSctyRgn was proceeding as best it could under the uncertain circumstances and planned to begin its shift in concept by the end of the year. Ciphony equipment was out of the question for the immediate future. CINCPAC told PACAF that the best it could do was install a KW-26 circuit path from Monkey Mountain to Da Nang by the middle of January. So the region shipped a communications van near the middle of December to handle the interim communications requirement. The original construction project for an operations facility had been cancelled and a new one for the van supported operation had been submitted to PACAF. The region wanted to go ahead with its plan to maintain Monkey Mountain security personnel for two reasons (a) it would put a strain on the PACAF ceiling, and (b) it wanted to maintain a completely mobile capability for the VHF intercept facility on Monkey Mountain.<sup>54</sup>

## CHAPTER V

## SUMMATION AND COMMENTS

NOTE: The following chapter is a general summary of events that took place in Southeast Asia in 1963. It also contains some comments by the historian on developments which he felt would have a significant bearing on the future of that war-torn part of the world. They are included here because the research for this study, by necessity, included developments which affected USAFSS operations both directly and indirectly. That is, it was obvious from the beginning that any development in that part of the world -- military or political -- would affect U.S. forces there, including USAFSS. Therefore, the main purpose of presenting these comments is to preserve all the results of the extensive research conducted in the course of this project. These comments will provide the USAFSS Historical Division with valuable background information, as well as set the stage for future historical studies in this series. These comments, of course, are unofficial and should be considered only in that capacity. Likewise, the prognostications contained in this chapter are in no way official feelings unless specifically cited as such. The discussion on plans to alter emergency reaction concepts are included here because at the end of 1963 the concept had not been accepted by those who would be dealing with it. Many of the suppositions concerning possible courses the war could take have been gleaned from the writings of authors intimately involved and acquainted with the activities in Southeast Asia, and are cited here simply as possibilities and to preserve for historical purposes the tenor of thought existing at that time. --BWR.

As 1963 ended, the military-political situation in Southeast Asia was, if possible, more precarious than it had been at the beginning of the year. This was true for the entire U.S. effort, and even for the efforts of other nations and agencies which had become involved. Where, at the beginning of the year, there had been inaction in the surrounding nations to Viet Nam -- Cambodia,



Laos and even India and Pakistan -- crises had come up in each, particularly over the last six months of the year. In regard to the United States and its Southeast Asia policy, there had been many emergency shufflings of actions and theories as to just how was the best way to handle the situation.

The U.S. 7th Fleet was roaming Indian Ocean waters, and though this was not specifically disagreeable to Prime Minister Jawaharal Nehru, it caused considerable unrest throughout the nation. The United States had sent F-100's into India to conduct "exercises" and this alienated Pakistan. Considering other U.S. - India aid acts, Pakistan felt it had to invite Red Chinese cooperation. Cambodia, following verbal hassles after the assassination of President Kennedy in November, broke off diplomatic relations with the U.S. and threatened complete accord with Red China.

In South Viet Nam, although since the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem the ruling junta had showed some signs of at least trying to win the war against the Viet Cong, the battle was going relentlessly against the non-Communist forces. So, all things considered, the embroilment in this part of the world seemed to be getting deeper and deeper as far as the U.S. was concerned.

In analyzing the events that took place within the COMINT community during the 12 months covered in this historical study,

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two things must be considered uppermost: (a) the National Security Agency simply felt it had to become stronger from the standpoint of communications collection and had to take the greatest advantage of those facilities it was being allowed, and (b) USAFSS, while it was obliged to contribute to the national intelligence picture as specified by the national agency, it still had an obligation to tactical forces to support them when necessary.

Many things were not available in written correspondence. But command representatives, particularly those operating in the Pacific and working closely with the Pacific Air Force, felt this obligation deeply and were doing all they could to keep the capability in hand.

An inkling of the modus operandi of the Red Chinese and North Vietnamese, while not specifically delineated in reports and analyses on the matter, was the gradual influx of automatic weapons to combat the highly mobile concept of Army operations over the months. With the beginning of these operations; i. e., the mobile strike regiments whereby troops were transported by troop carrying helicopters and escorted by armed helicopters, there had been considerable success. But as the successes became noted, the Viet Cong came up with higher calibre automatic anti-aircraft weapons, and the South Vietnamese-U.S. casualties began to mount until the tide once again shifted in favor of the Communists.

With the change in Viet Nam's high command following the November coup, all indications pointed toward at least the promise of more aggressive operations against the Reds and, to be sure, the aim of war must be victory.

Here a hypothetical point became apparent. Suppose the South Vietnamese began to carry the war to the North Vietnamese, which must be the inevitable aim, and were successful in doing so. Would Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi be satisfied to take such a loss? Hardly, as his entire life had been dedicated to making Viet Nam Communist. There was also the indication later in the year that his allegiance was shifting from the Soviet Union to Red China. Whether this was by personal preference or through political pressure was unimportant.

The movement of Red Chinese aircraft units to the south may have been a routine move, or it may have been significant. At any rate, these were things the command had to look at -- and PACAF had to look at -- when considering what was necessary to hold the COMINT line. While there was not, and had never been, an air war against which to operate, the Red Chinese were undoubtedly deeply committed to Southeast Asia victory, and were capable of throwing into the fray what they felt was necessary.

When this happened, there would be an air war, and USAFESS would have its work cut out for it. Da Nang, the command insisted, was its logical site when all points were considered. And the

capability must be there when the need arose. The VHF capability of Monkey Mountain was imperative, and thoroughly experienced operators were necessary for immediate operation. The command was doing all it could to uphold its responsibilities to both parties -- NSA and PACAF. Developing the means to do so was a very trying experience, as we have seen.

Again, a part of the confusion that permeated the air during 1963 had to come from the two terms cited by General Kellond early in the year "direct support" as opposed to "direct service". As a direct service unit, NSA had authority over the operations of USAFSS to a certain degree. As a direct support unit, USAFSS was in control of its operations since they served a tactical commander.

But here the technicality of the need for direct support was in NSA's favor as far as allocation of resources was concerned. In order to justify direct support operations, there must be air targets against which to operate. To be sure, there were none and, to this extent, NSA was justified in demanding units which were producing COMINT.

On the other hand, any military commander was equally responsible for maintaining an emergency posture to combat any likely operation by an enemy. And a potential air war was definitely within the realm of possibility. The unit had originally deployed to South Viet Nam as an ERU, and though there had been considerable alteration

of its organization over 12 months, at the end of 1963 it was little more than that - an ERU. PacSctyRgn felt it must keep a current capability to operate at Da Nang because of the difficulties involved in moving a completely new unit into place should flying begin. This was particularly true in the case of linguists, who must be acquainted with the current problem.

Maj. Gen. Theodore R. Milton, Commander, 13th AF, said, "In this part of the world intelligence is hard to come by. . . . We should stay flexible and certainly we should maintain an open mind as to the tactics and techniques needed to defeat the enemy of the moment."<sup>1</sup> As to the tactical portion of the command's mission, this had to be a paramount consideration when planning for the future of its operations.

All in all, while the deployment of the unit itself had to be considered successful as far as its basic move and capability was concerned, the command recognized that some change was necessary in its basic concept of emergency unit operation. The H-1 vans, which were the basic operating unit of USAFSS ERU's, while they eventually filled the bill, were not basically suited to operations such as were potentially to be found in such areas as South Viet Nam. They were difficult to airlift and they were difficult to transport under the best of circumstances in such a geographical location. During the monsoon seasons, movement would be virtually impossible

to all but a select few places.

So, during the year, USAFSS worked on a revised concept which added more potential to the basic unit. Where the existing ERU's were built around the van, the ultimate, command planners felt, was for even more basic, even primitive, movement and operation. As a matter of fact, the vision went down even to back-transported equipment. Flexibility was the keyword to the entire plan and an ERU must be capable of ". . . collection, processing, and communications . . . to meet the intelligence requirements of the supported commander (anywhere in the world)."<sup>2</sup>

Three basic ERU's were to be formed, one in the United States (Goodfellow AFB, Tex.), one in [redacted] and one at Clark AB in the Philippines. Each would be manned by a cadre of housekeeping personnel, permanently assigned, supported by select personnel to be rotated on temporary duty basis from the 6948th Scty Sqdn (Mobile) at Goodfellow AFB. The primary departure from the former ERU concept as to manning was the fact that the cadre personnel in the three units would have no other responsibilities except to the unit. Formerly, personnel keyed for unit assignment were utilized by the operating unit to which the ERU was assigned.<sup>3</sup>

Equipment was to be designed and geared so that extreme mobility and flexibility would be gained depending on the needs of the commander being supported. During the initial stages of ERU concept

development, the H-1 van would still be the basic unit. However, smaller packages were planned to supplement, and in some cases replace, the H-1 packages. Shelter mounted collection and communications packages configured to S-141 or similar type shelters were planned, with the basic requirement that they could be transported by 2 1/2 ton trucks and airlifted by assault-type aircraft or heavy helicopter.<sup>4</sup>

The planners envisioned an even further breakdown to ". . . components. . . of such size, weight, rugged construction and low power requirements as to permit physical removal from their shelters and man-transported to those areas not accessible by normal vehicle." There were also special personnel requirements as follows:<sup>5</sup>

. . . All operational personnel must be fully qualified in their specialty. Language training must be carefully analyzed, and a broad base established within the (linguistic) ERU manpower allocation. Language requirements shall continually be reviewed and updated. . . . Selected specialists within the ERU manpower pool will be additionally qualified for airborne operations.

The command had to plan for an eventual air war, fought under the most primitive of conditions. The South Viet Nam Air Force was fighting a war of interdiction, and certain successes had been noted over the year. That they had control of the air was indisputable -- there was no opposition. But tactical pilots and commanders, acting as advisors to the Viet Nam pilots and observers were skeptical that the war would continue as it was. Late in 1963, General Milton wrote on these operations. Said General Milton:<sup>6</sup>

. . . The Republic of Viet Nam, from the military standpoint, is essentially an artificial situation. The opposition, until now at any rate, has consisted of poorly armed although fiercely determined Communist-led guerrillas. So long as the opposition remains fairly primitive, without a genuine antiaircraft capability, to say nothing of any air capability, we can do pretty much as we please. In fact, it would not be hard to imagine the old observation balloon as being a likely counterinsurgency weapon.

But we must not get too bemused with a situation where the only hazard to our aircraft comes from small-arms fire. If we are not to suffer the same eventual fate that has overtaken other air forces that learned their lessons in artificial situations -- and here I refer for example to the Italians in Ethiopia, the Germans in Spain -- then we would be wise not to mistake success in this operation for proof that slow-flying, low-flying aircraft, either fixed or rotary wing, will survive against even moderately advanced opposition.

How true these statements were as, by the end of 1963, the assault operations of the Vietnamese army were taking their lumps as higher calibre automatic weapons appeared in the hands of the Viet Cong. Flying people in Viet Nam apparently were not taking the situation for granted because they continually called for the PacSctyRgn to maintain its tactical COMINT posture in the war-torn nation. This the region and the command continued to attempt to do. True, new concepts of counterinsurgency operations were being developed in Viet Nam and, as already pointed out, these met with considerable initial success. But most observers felt that any U.S. success would be met with improved defense on the part of the Communists. General Milton continued:<sup>7</sup>

. . . if one day, in response to our increasing success in the Republic of Viet Nam, we should find ourselves faced with "volunteer"



troops of the Pathet Lao, China or North Viet Nam, we should be prepared to operate once again as a tactical air force -- without any painful, unlearning period as we transition back to present-day aircraft. Insurgent troops are not by choice poorly armed. It is entirely within the area of the possible that they, in some future campaign, would include defected elements of well-equipped regular forces.

By the beginning of 1964, President Johnson had committed the U.S. to the end of the Viet Nam war by declining to mark 1965 as the year troops would be withdrawn from the fray. In Saigon there were differing opinions about increased American activity in the war -- some thought it would do the trick, others felt it was useless. A U.S. military official said:<sup>8</sup>

. . . With a couple of divisions of United States airborne (troops) or Marines, we could clean this place up fairly fast. . . . Americans are impatient people but this is not necessarily a negative factor. It's good to be impatient about winning a war.

. . . The Vietnamese have been fighting this thing for three decades, and naturally, they're sick and tired of it. I think Americans could bring to the war the necessary initiative, organization and will to win.

Such comments came with unofficial statements from various quarters that the U.S. should and might become more actively involved in leading and fighting the Viet Nam war. These were not confirmed in any way in Washington, but they nonetheless caused considerable interest and comment. An American diplomat in Saigon said:<sup>9</sup>

. . . I think there would be some important advantages. I think American combat troops coming here would have an important psychological effect in other parts of Southeast Asia -- Indonesia, for example; It would be clear indication that America intends to carry out what it says, regardless of the risk.

Furthermore, I think it would weaken Red China's position in its dispute with the Soviet Union. China contends that "wars of liberation" in the Viet Cong style pay off. A Viet Cong victory would support the Chinese view, and give powerful impetus to Communist guerrillas throughout Latin America, for instance.

The theories were not all accepted as fact in Saigon or elsewhere and there was in the words of a dissenter ". . .no reason to think American combat troops would do any better in Viet Nam than the French army did in their way, which ended in disaster in 1954."

He continued:<sup>10</sup>

. . .I'm not at all sure the American public or Congress are willing at this point to risk World War III -- and there would be such a risk if we started bringing in combat elements. All things taken together, I think the risk of South Viet Nam going Communist, ugly though that alternative is, is preferable to trying to take over the war ourselves.

President Johnson's inference that the U.S. was solidly committed to a conclusion in Viet Nam brought hearty approval from the Vietnamese themselves. But the notes of uncertainty were unmistakable. Said one:<sup>11</sup>

. . .We took it to mean that President Johnson intends to see the war through, for however long it may take. This was an encouraging thing. . . . But will America still be willing to spend half a billion dollars a year here, and continue losing American lives in our war? We Vietnamese don't know. I don't think the Americans know either.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Kenneth Young predicted that Southeast Asia would be even more volatile and combustible for President Johnson than it was for President Kennedy. Speaking before the World Affairs Forum in Washington on 8 January 1964, Young

asserted:<sup>12</sup>

. . . Looking at the fundamental misjudgments we have often made in Asia over the last 100 years, we are coming to the point where another major mistake there may be our last one.

. . . We must declare that the independence of Southern Asia is vital to the United States. We ought to devote substantial resources to help achieve its modernization. We should apply more revolutionary political ideas and social techniques than we have in the past to help eliminate its political rivalries, social poverties and psychic frustrations.

And at all times we must be willing and ready to use our forces in the joint defense of Asia under the United Nations Charter against any aggression . . . maintain this strategy of commitment for a very long time, even longer than the Chinese.

But these were all suppositions and theories. The Asian situation remained as fluid as before, and to attempt to predict even a trend, much less a specific incident, was foolhardy. Nonetheless, the United States was traditionally committed to victory at war (though there were various interpretations of the word) and if the trend in South Viet Nam was to be reversed, someone would have to do something. Red China, observing the third anniversary of the formation of the Viet Cong's political arm, the South Viet Nam National Liberation Front, in late December, made no bones about its support of the Red Vietnamese through North Viet Nam. The CHICOM's pledged all out support of the "patriotic struggle against United States Imperialism in South Viet Nam."<sup>13</sup>

Defense Secretary McNamara was not encouraged on his late 1963 trip through the area. He was greeted by exultant Communist

claims of victory which, probably heavily inflated, showed that the situation -- already depressing -- was getting worse from the West's point of view.<sup>14</sup> Two months after the disposition of Diem and Nhu, South Viet Nam was, for all intents and purposes, a leaderless nation. True, Gen. Duong Van Minh (Big Minh), the coup leader, still led the military government, but it was a government of committees -- and committeemen who had no experience running a government. The problems were still: (a) framing policies (b) winning support of the people, and (c) winning the war against the Viet Cong.<sup>15</sup>

The sincere and expectant hopes of the U.S. that Minh would become a popular, dominant figure in Vietnamese politics were dashed. Like many devoted soldiers (and precious few political figures) he didn't want to promote himself in a political sense. He expressed the sentiment that he disliked his position and couldn't wait to get back to being a military leader. He had the qualities for dynamic leadership but simply didn't want to use them. The Saigon Daily News said editorially:<sup>16</sup>

. . . In the last analysis the decisive factor -- which is still missing -- is leadership. Without it the Viet Cong will hold the upper hand because there is leadership on their side. . . .

Money is there (in South Viet Nam); arms and equipment are there; technical advice is there. All those can be had for the asking. Popular enthusiasm is also there and so is international sympathy.

But all those assets must be put to good use, that is, to defeat the Viet Cong. And this can be done only by someone and this

someone has to be a Vietnamese, and a Vietnamese who wields power wrested from the hands of President Diem, that is, a man from the ranks of the military revolutionary council.

A prime source of worry to U.S. officials was the report that the junta would continue to concentrate on pacifying regions outside the heavily populated Mekong Delta, leaving that region until last. This had been the Diem philosophy and one that was generally disagreed with. A Vietnamese officer, however, told American reporters that ". . . the delta would not be left alone for long."<sup>17</sup> But the strategic hamlet situation in the delta was not as tailor-made for success as were the central coastal regions, where villages were in clusters and the topography fit the hamlet idea more closely. In addition, one news analyst reported:<sup>18</sup>

. . . The delta region has a long history of dissidence, rebellion and weak government control. The Communist political roots are considered to be quite deep in some regions and have been more successful politically than has the government. In addition, the delta is so rich that a curtailment of the food supply is considered to be virtually impossible.

So there was just about as much of a stalemate in Viet Nam at the end of 1963 as there had been over the past two years since the command first became physically involved. Southeast Asia as a whole was becoming more and more turbulent and the big question remained -- when would it become necessary for the U.S. to become more definitely committed to the action? Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, even India and Pakistan, were situations ready to erupt. President Johnson and

Secretary of Defense McNamara continued to hold the line that the United States would not become militarily involved as a direct force against the North Vietnamese. But, on the other hand, there seemed to be no alternative -- at the beginning of 1964 at least -- if the West was not going to get pushed out of consideration altogether.

More and more it appeared that the U.S. was being drawn into the dispute. Only one development could halt either direct involvement or complete withdrawal. This was the sudden development of South Viet Nam into an adhesive political force. At the beginning of 1964, it seemed that only a miracle could bring this about. From a military standpoint, all of the military resources of North Viet Nam (which had what was considered the strongest military force in Southeast Asia) and Red China (to whatever degree Mao Tse-tung was willing to enter) were in reserve of the Viet Cong, and few felt that they would hesitate to use them if it became necessary for ultimate victory.

What lay in the future was impossible to predict because of the number of directions the action could take. Most, it seemed, depended on what the United States decided to do; i.e., how deeply she decided to become involved. For, most certainly, if she became involved, the opposition would stiffen, and if and when this happened, again almost certainly a larger scale war would develop. All this lay in the hands of those who directed the futures of the nations involved.

## NOTES

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