

AIR AMERICA: BEECH BARONS

by Dr. Joe F. Leeker



CASI Baron N1313Z at Luang Prabang in spring 67 or in January-February 69
(with kind permission from the photographer, MacAlan Thompson)

Several times, it was reported that Air America also operated a Beech Baron, and the incomplete registration “681” was given as its identity. These reports seem to go back to a photo published in Conboy, *War in Laos*, p. 35, whose text says: “MGEN Phasouk S. Rasaphak (left), commander of MR 4, greets MGEN Vang Pao after he flew from Pakse to Long Tieng aboard an Air America Beech Baron in October of 1969.” Official fleet list of Air America dating from that period (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B; F.O.C. of 15 August 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1) show that Air America did not operate a Beech Baron at that time. The explanation is very simple, however: Continental Air Services had Beech 95-A55 Baron N4681 c/n TC-309 at least between June 68 (Memorandum “Competitive aircraft” of 18 June 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2) and May 72 (Company confidential dated 26 May 72, in: UTD/Hickler/F8F7C), and sometimes, even Air America crews used this aircraft as “dead heads”, that is were transported in it to the place where their own missions were to start – on 7 May 69, for example, N4681 was used to transport Air America pilot Duane Keele from Udorn (T-08) via Savannakhet (L-39) to Pakse (L-11) (Log book of Duane Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6).

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