

## **Khmer Air Force C-123Ks** by Dr. Joe F. Leeker

### **Number of C-123Ks assigned to the Khmer Air Force according to Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly reports November 73 to June 74:**

8 (Nov. 73) > 7 (March 74) > 10 (June 74)

Aeroflight (at <http://www.aeroflight.co.uk/waf/aa-eastasia/cambodia/cam-af1-aircraft.htm>)

- states: - 17 were delivered in 1973
- 1 was lost in Khmer Air Force due to bad weather
  - 2 were captured by Vietnamese forces in 1979

Other sources state:

- 8 ex USAF C-123Ks were given to Cambodia in 73 (Bowers, pp.616/7); the first 5 were delivered ex Taiwan in April 73;
- a total of about 20 were delivered 1970-75 (Carroll, *World Air Forces Directory 1998/9*, p.187); about 10 of them were saved to Thailand in 1975 (Carroll, *World Air Forces Directory 1998/9*, p.187)
- 6 C-123Ks were supplied to the KAF in January 75, with plans to increase the number of C-123Ks to 18 by July 1975 (Grandolini/Cooper/Troung, *Cambodia*, part 2).

### **Statistics according to Air America documents:**

- the first 3 C-123Ks were received in August 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for August 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1)
- C-123K no. 4 was added in September 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for September 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1)
- 3 more C-123Ks arrived in October 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for October 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1)
- 3 more C-123Ks were received in June 74, making a total of 10 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8)

### **Individual aircraft histories:**

54-0578                      UC-123K      20027                      Aug. 73

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-4-FA 54-0578 of the USAF; still with the USAF (based at Memphis, TN) in June 63; converted to UC-123K; reserialled 54000578 in 1968/9; USAF, 56th Special Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom, to TL MAP on 71186 (= 5 July 71); to "RD:54578" with the South Vietnamese Air Force on 5 July 71; seen at Taipei on 11 April 72

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 54-578 in August 73, probably as no. 3 on 14 August 73, and was grounded the same day for lack of parts (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for August 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); waited for inspection in October 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for October 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); departed 20 November 73 for inspection by Thai-Am, Bangkok (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for November 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); returned from Thai-Am in late December 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for December 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); lost its left main wheel during landing in January 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for January 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); returned from Thai-Am,

Bangkok, in March 74 after inspection (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for March 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); again at Thai-Am in April 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for April 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); had electrical problems in April 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for April 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8)

**Fate:** ?

54-0645                      C-123K                      20094                      October 73

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-7-FA 54-0645 of the USAF; still with the USAF on 30 June 64; in use with the Pacific Air Force, Headquarters Vietnam, Tan Son Nhut, Saigon, since 5 April 64; at VN-23 (Tan Son Nhut); to WK-maintenance at Hong Kong (JS 91) with FAC on 64058; to AD HQ, Tan Son Nhut (VN-23), on 64096; to "645" with Air America, Vientiane, on 64138 (= 17 May 64); returned to 54-0645 of USAF, AD HQ, Tan Son Nhut (VN-23) on 64161 (9 June 64); with 2 AD, Tan Son Nhut, in 65; to Air Asia, Tainan, for maintenance on 65081 (22 March 65); back to 2 AD, Tan Son Nhut, on 65104 (14 April 65); with 315AD, Nha Trang, in 1966; to Air Asia, Tainan, for maintenance between 66182 (1 July 66) and 66199 (18 July 66) and again between 66306 and 66338 (2 November and 4 December 66); ferried back by China Air crew (ex CAL TTF WQPC); converted to C-123K and reserialled as 54000645 with 315TAW, Tan Son Nhut; to TL MAP on 71128, that is to "540645/QP" of the South Vietnamese Air Force, on 8 May 71

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 54-0645 in October 73 (bailed), but with problems on the right jet engine (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for October 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); suffered accident damage at the fight hand fuselage in November 73; repaired (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for November 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1)

**Fate:** returned to 54-0645 with the USAF in December 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for December 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); apparently returned to the Khmer Air Force in June 74, as the aircraft had electrical problems that month (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); escaped to Thailand in 1975; to "54645" of the Philippine Air Force in June 79; scrapped at Mactan in December 80

54-0682                      C-123K                      20131                      December 73

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-9-FA 54-0682 of the USAF; still with the USAF (based at Chanute AFB, Rantoul, IL) in July 62; reserialled as 54000682 in 1968/9; converted to C-123K, at Saigon 18 March 71, coded "WE"; USAF, 315TAW, Tan Son Nhut, to TL MAP, on 71123 (= 3 May 71), that is to "54682/QJ" of the South Vietnamese Air Force; returned to the USAF, seen as USAF 54-0682 at Bangkok on 17 March 72

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 54-0682 in December 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for December 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); in January 74, the left side of the cargo ramp was damaged during off-loading cargo; repaired (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for January 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); returned from Thai-Am, Bangkok, in March 74 after inspection (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for March 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); down for an engine change in April 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for April 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); had electrical problems in May 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for May 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8)

and in June 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8)

**Fate:** escaped to Thailand in 1975; to the Royal Thai Air Force as "40682" in ?; then as "682" with the Royal Thai AF, at Bangkok at least between 30 July 79 and February 85; scrapped in April 88 (Carroll, *World Air Forces Directory 1998/9*, p.334)

54-0690                      C-123K                      20139                      20 November 73

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-10-FA 54-0690 of the USAF; still with the USAF (based at Dobbins AFB, Marietta, GA) in June 63; converted to C-123K; used by 315 TAW, Phang Rang, in 1970; was to return from maintenance at Phan Rang on 70093 (= 3 April 70); to "690" of Air America, Vientiane, on 3 April 70?; returned to the USAF on 11 July 70 (C-123 time report of 3 August 70 in UTD/CIA/B29 F4); in the USAF Assignment records, this date is given as GD (that is: go delayed to) on 70192 (= 11 July 70); 54-0690 of USAF, 315TAW, Phan Rang, was transferred to TL MAP on 71264 (= 21 September 71), that is to "54690/XG" of the South Vietnamese Air Force; reportedly to "54-690" of the Royal Thai AF

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 54-0690 on 20 November 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for November 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); had an engine change at Pochentong in January 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for January 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); bullet holes were repaired in February 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for February 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); returned from Thai-Am, Bangkok, in March 74 after inspection (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for March 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); again at Thai-Am in April 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for April 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); in May 74, the left main tire of "690" blew out on landing outstation, causing substantial damage; repaired (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for May 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8)

**Fate:** to "54-690" of the Royal Thai AF, seen at Bangkok on 4 March 74; to "40690" with the Royal Thai AF

55-4553                      C-123K                      20214                      December 73

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-14-FA 55-4553 of the USAF; still with the USAF (based at Saint Augustine, FL) on 30 June 64; converted to C-123K; reserialled as 55004553 in 1968/9; USAF, 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom, to TL MAP on 71189 (= 8 July 71), that is to "54553/RE" of the South Vietnamese Air Force

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 55-4553 in December 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for December 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); had nose gear problems in January 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for January 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); had electrical problems in April 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for April 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); parts were replaced at Pochentong in May 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for May 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); phase inspection at Pochentong in June 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8)

**Fate:** ?

55-4554                      C-123K                      20215                      late 73

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-14-FA 55-4554 of the USAF; still with the USAF (based at Eglin AFB, Valparaiso, FL) in June 63; converted to C-123K; reserialled as 55004554 in 1968/9; USAF, 315TAW, Phan Rang, to TL MAP on 71255 (= 12 September 71), that is to “54554/XA” of the South Vietnamese Air Force

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 55-4554 in late 73; returned from IRAN at Thai-Am, Bangkok, on 26 January 74 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for January 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); one jet engine and one propeller were changed in February 74 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for February 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); damaged by hostile ground fire in March 74; ferried to Thai-Am, Bangkok, in March 74 for inspection (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for March 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); had electrical problems in April 74, but was repaired (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for April 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); the ramp door was repaired at Pochentong in May 74 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for May 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); received battle damage in June 74; phase inspection was done at Pochentong in June 74 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8).

**Fate:** ?

55-4559                      C-123K                      20220                      October 73

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-15-FA 55-4559 of the USAF; was based at Hagerstown in 1957; transferred to an unknown MAP on 6 February 57 according to the last USAF card dated July 57; to 55-4559 GI (= returned from outside USAF) from MAP on 66339; to FAC, Crestview, that day; re-serialled as 55004559 in 1968/9; converted to C-123K and seen at Saigon on 18 March 71, coded “WM”; USAF, 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom, to TL MAP on 71189 (= 8 July 71), that is to “54559/RF” of the South Vietnamese Air Force.

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 55-4559 in October 73 (bailed); after a few days of operation, the aircraft was grounded due to damage to the cargo ramp door; repaired by 1 November 73 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for October 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

**Fate:** to 55-4559 of the USAF in December 73 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for December 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1)

“565”                      C-123K                      20226                      June 74

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-15-FA 55-4565 of the USAF; still with the USAF (based at Elmendorf AFB, Anchorage, AK) in July 62; converted to C-123K; reserialled as 55004565 in 1968/9; USAF, 315TAW, Tan Son Nhut, to TL MAP on 71118 (= 28 April 71), that is to 55-4565/QH of the South Vietnamese Air Force; a photo can be found in Mesko, p.48; to “40565” of the Royal Thai AF, seen at Bangkok on 11 November 72.

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as “565” in June 74; had electrical problems that month (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8).

**Fate:** escaped to Thailand in 1975; to “565” of the Royal Thai AF, seen at Bangkok at least between 26 December 81 and February 85; withdrawn from use by April 88, in open storage by October 93; still there disused in September 94; at Bangkok in October 95; still there in May 97 and January 98 (Carroll, *World Air Forces Directory 1998/9*, p.334), still there in January 99 (*Air-Britain News*, June 99/p.710).

55-4566                      C-123K                      20227                      September 73

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-15-FA 55-4566 of the USAF; still with the USAF (based at Carswell AFB, Fort Worth, TX) on 30 June 64; converted to C-123K; reserialled as 55004566 in 1968/9; USAF, 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom, to TL MAP on 71189 (= 8 July 71), that is to “54566/??” of the South Vietnamese Air Force.

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 55-4566 in September 73; had radio problems and departed to Thai-Am in Sept. 73 for inspection to return early October (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for September 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); ferried to Thai-Am in December 73 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for December 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); at Thai-Am, Bangkok, for inspection in April 74 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for April 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8).

**Fate:** ?

56-4377                      C-123K                      20261                      September (?) 73

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-18-FA 56-4377 of the USAF; still with the USAF on 30 June 64; Tan Son Nhut to Hong Kong for WK-maintenance on 64037; Fairchild Industries, Hong Kong, to 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, with SF service (special activities aircraft), on 64088 (= 30 March 64); probably with MACV-SOG, that is flying covert missions into North Vietnam; believed to be the evaluation aircraft; not listed in late 64; to ZA (Embassy ?), Saigon, service from SF on 65032; after overhaul at St. Augustine to combat support (CA) service with 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, on 65068; regular USAF service; in 1966 converted to C-123K; reserialled as 56004377 in 1968/9; USAF, 315TAW, Phan Rang, to TL MAP on 71265 (= 22 September 71), that is to “64377/XP” of the South Vietnamese Air Force.

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 56-4377 in September (?)73; waited for inspection in October 73 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for October 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); departed Pochentong on 21 November 73 for inspection by Thai-Am, Bangkok (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for November 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); returned from Thai-Am in mid-December 73 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for December 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); flown to Tai-Am, Bangkok, on 25 January 74 for inspection (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for January 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8).

**Fate:** disappeared after taking off from Kompong-Thom, Khmer Republic, on 25 February 74 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for February 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8).

56-4378                      C-123K                      20262                      1974

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-18-FA 56-4378 of the USAF; still with the USAF in December 63; in use with the Pacific Air Force, Headquarters Vietnam, Tan Son Nhut, Saigon, since 30 June 63; Bien Hoa (BY 16) to 2AD, Da Nang, on 63182 (1 July 63); to Hong Kong for WK-maintenance on 63315; back to 2 AD, Tan Son Nhut, on 63342; damaged (TA) on 66171, that is on 18 June 66, while operated by the 377CSG, Tan Son Nhut; converted to C-123K; reports say it was written off on 20 June 66; evidently repaired.

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 56-4378 in 1974; battle damage was repaired at Pochentong in May 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for May 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8).

**Fate:** ?

56-4387                      C-123K                      20271                      August 73

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Previous history:** was C-123B-19-FA 56-4387 of the USAF; still with the USAF on 30 June 64; maintenance at Hong Kong to AD HQ, Tan Son Nhut, on 64003; in use with the Pacific Air Force, Headquarters Vietnam, Tan Son Nhut, Saigon, since 3 January 64; converted to C-123K; reserialled as 56004387 in 1968/9; USAF, 315TAW, Phan Rang, to TL MAP on 71255 (= 12 September 71), that is to "64387/XI" of the South Vietnamese Air Force.

**Service History:** joined the Khmer Air Force as 56-4387 in August 73; one propeller was exchanged on 23 August 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for August 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); an antenna was repaired in September 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for September 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); waited for inspection in October 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for October 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); first C-123K inspected by KAF personnel at Pochentong on 10 November 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for November 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); still inspected in December 73 and used as a parts supply (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for December 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); released for operations on 19 January 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for January 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); ferried to Thai-Am, Bangkok, in March 74 for inspection (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for March 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); had electrical problems in April 74 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for April 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8); in May 74, "387" swerved during touch down at Pochentong so that the left main wheel almost came off the axle; repaired (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for May 74, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8).

**Fate:** ?

**Fates:**

- the first Khmer Air Force C-123K arrived at Pochentong on 8 August 73, no.2 on 10 August 73, and no. 3 on 14 August 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for August 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

- 3 C-123s were operated by the Air Force of Kampuchea (71-?; 71-?; 71-?); photo in *Military Transport Fleets*, p.70

When Cambodia fell to the Khmer Rouge forces of Pol Pot on 18 April 1975, 10 C-123Ks escaped to Thailand (Carroll, *World Air Forces Directory 1998/9*, p. 187); and 9 C-123Ks were captured by the Khmer Rouge (Grandolini/Cooper/Troung, *Cambodia*, part 2).