

**ROYAL LAO AIR FORCE: DE HAVILLAND CANADA DHC-2
(L-20 or U-6A) BEAVER
by Dr. Joe F. Leeker**

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RLAF DHC-2 “82053” at Thakhek West, November 1965, taken by Dr. Jonathan Pote
(with kind permission from Dr. Jonathan Pote)

For many years, Air America’s facility at Udorn maintained the MAP Beavers operating for the Royal Lao Air Force. For details about Air America’s own Beavers, see my DHC-2 file at <http://www.utdallas.edu/library/collections/speccoll/Leeker/index3.html> . In late 1962, the Lao Army Air Force (LAAF) was renamed Royal Lao Air Force or RLAF (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, p.20). As to the DHC-2 Beavers operated by the Laotian Air Force, they all came from a Military Assistance Program (MAP):

Statistics:

From National Archives sources, the following details of MAP Grant Aid deliveries to Laos were submitted to the author by Sid Nanson (e-mail dated 30 May 2013, kindly sent by Sid Nanson to Paul Oelkrug who forwarded it to me); it should be noted, however, that these are deliveries that were programmed – they may not necessarily have taken place that way:

U-6 (=L-20)

- 2 L-20's received 3rd quarter of FY 1958 (1 Jan 1958-31 Mar 1958).
- 3 L-20s received 1st quarter FY 60 (1 July 1959-30 Sep 1959)
- 2 L-20's received 3rd quarter FY 60 (1 Jan 1960-31 Mar 1960).

Also coming from National Archives sources, the following details of attrition for the RLAF were submitted to the author by Sid Nanson (e-mail dated 30 May 2013, kindly sent by Sid Nanson to Paul Oelkrug who forwarded it to me):

U-6 (= L-20)

U-6, 1 Operational attrition in FY 69 (1 July 68-30 June 69)

U-6A, 1 Operational attrition in FY 70 (1 July 69-30 June 70)

Other sources give the following picture:

By 30 June 1959, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1959, the Lao Army Air Force (LAAF) had received 2 L-20 Beavers via a MAP with 5 more to come, plus 2 L-20 Beavers under MAP “Redistributable Procedures”, of which 1 had been delivered by that date, making a total of 3 Beavers in the inventory by 30 June 59; they were flown by the Composite Squadron at Vientiane (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, pp.145/6).

By 30 June 1960, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1960, all 7 MAP L-20s had been delivered, but only 5 of them were in the inventory so that 2 of them seem to have been destroyed; together with 1 of the 2 ex FEF “Redis” L-20s recovered from Indochina, there are now 6 L-20s in the Lao Army Air Force (LAAF) inventory, all flying with the Composite Squadron at Vientiane (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, p.148).

By 30 June 1961, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1961, only 3 of the original 7 MAP L-20s are still in the inventory, and the 2 “Redis” L-20s have also gone, leaving a total of 3 L-20 Beavers with the Lao Army Air Force (LAAF), now based at Savannakhet with the Composite Squadron (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, p.150).

By 30 June 1962, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1962, the Lao Army Air Force (LAAF) still has a total of 3 Beavers, now designated U-6As, but still based at Savannakhet with the Composite Squadron (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, p.152).

By 30 June 1963, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1963, the number of U-6A Beavers flown by the Royal Lao Air Force had shrunk to 2 aircraft still based at Savannakhet with the Composite Squadron (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, p.154).

By 30 September 1964, the Royal Lao Air Force has 2 U-6A Beavers based at Savannakhet with the Composite Squadron, while a 3rd U-6A Beaver is flying with Neutralist Air Force at Vientiane (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, p.156).

By 30 June 1965, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1965, the Royal Lao Air Force has 3 U-6A Beavers based at Savannakhet with the Composite Squadron (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, p.158). Apparently, the Neutralist Air Force has been integrated into the Royal Lao Air Force. On 1 February 65, one RLAF Beaver from Wattay was used in a military coup, with a .50 caliber machine gun rigged in the side door (Conboy / Morrison, *Shadow war*, pp.124/5).

By 30 June 1966, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1966, the Royal Lao Air Force still has 3 U-6A Beavers (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, p.160).

By 30 June 1967, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1967, the Royal Lao Air Force still has 3 U-6A Beavers based at Savannakhet with the Composite Squadron (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, pp.162/3).

By 30 June 1968, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1968, the Royal Lao Air Force still has 3 U-6A Beavers, 1 of which is now based at Luang Prabang with the 1st Fighter Wing, and 2 of them are based at Vientiane with the 2nd Fighter Wing (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, pp.164/5).

By 30 June 1969, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1969, only 2 U-6A Beavers are left in the inventory of the Royal Lao Air Force, one of which is now based at Vientiane with the 102nd Composite Squadron and the other one at Savannakhet with the 103rd Composite Squadron (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, pp.166/7).

By 30 June 1970, i.e. at the end of Fiscal Year 1970, only the Vientiane-based U-6A Beaver flying with the 102nd Composite Squadron is left in the inventory of the Royal Lao Air Force (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, pp.168/9).

This is also the only U-6A still active with the Royal Lao Air Force on 30 December 1970 and on 3 February 72 (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-72*, pp.99 and 115).

Known aircraft are:



RLAF DHC-2 Beaver 828/J at Vientiane on 27 April 60
(UTD/Kirkpatrick, slide A 5244)

- DHC-2 (L-20) “828 / J” 369? 56? ex US Army 51-16828??
Service history: a slide taken at Vientiane on 27 April 60 is Kirkpatrick A 5244.
Fate: unknown; not current on 1 April 72 (Distribution List of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2).
- DHC-2 (L-20) “16782” 229 56? ex US Army 51-16782
Service history: a photo of RLAF DHC-2 “16782” taken in the early sixties was published in the *Indochina database, Laos 1*, at http://www.acig.org/artman/publish/article_412.shtml
Fate: unknown; not current on 1 April 72 (Distribution List of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2).
- DHC-2 (L-20) “82046” 1378 ? ex US Army 58-2046
Service history: seen at Savannakhet on 16 October 65 by Jon Pote; olive drab, messy (List of aircraft seen by Dr. Jonathan Pote in Laos, e-mail kindly sent to the author on 8 August 2008 by Dr. Pote).
Fate: unknown; not current on 1 April 72 (Distribution List of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2).



RLAF / MAP DHC-2 Beaver 82052, taken somewhere in Laos in the mid-sixties
(UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4)

DHC-2 (L-20) “82052” 1384 ? ex US Army 58-2052

Service history: a photo taken in the mid-sixties is preserved in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4; at Savannakhet as “2052” on 8 September 65, grey overall, based at Vientiane; seen at Thakhek West on 22 February 66 and at Savannakhet on 2 May 66, less rudder and elevator (List of aircraft seen by Dr. Jonathan Pote in Laos, e-mail kindly sent to the author on 8 August 2008 by Dr. Pote).

Fate: unknown; not current on 1 April 72 (Distribution List of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2).



RLAF U-6A “82053” plus other aircraft at Thakhek West in November 1965,
taken by Dr. Jonathan Pote
(with kind permission from Dr. Jonathan Pote)

DHC-2 (L-20) “82053” 1385 ? ex US Army 58-2053

Service history: based at Thakhek West in November 65, carried 0.5 machine gun in port cabin door plus 4 small bomb racks under wings (List of aircraft seen by Dr. Jonathan Pote in Laos, e-mail kindly sent to the author on 8 August 2008 by Dr. Pote); current on 1 April 72 (Distribution List of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/ B49F2); this is believed to be the U-6 that was assigned to contract USAID-439-342 for operation by Air America in the FY 72 Programs (in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F6); current at least from January 72 to June 73 (Lists of assigned / maintained aircraft as of 1 January 72 to 1 June 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 reel 23/4).

Fate: returned to the US Army; sold to A. J. Robinson, Campbell River, BC, as C-GUVJ in April 78; sold to Steven M. Brewer, Biglake, AK, as N577V in July 93; regd. to Thomas E. Ingstad, Fargo, ND, as on 26 August 2003; current in March 2004 (request submitted to the FAA on 13 March 2004 at <http://162.58.35.241/acdatabase/>) ; sold to Western Adventure Seaplane Inc, Missoula, MT, on 25 October 2007 (request submitted to the FAA on 23 Nov. 2008 at <http://162.58.35.241/acdatabase/>).

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