

# **Khmer Air Force U-1A Otters**

by Dr. Joe F. Leeker

First published on 29 May 2006, last updated on 24 August 2015



The wrecks of Khmer Air Force U-1A Otters at Pochentong Airbase  
(with kind permission from Ward S. Reimer)

## **I) Statistics:**

### **1) According to Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly reports November 73 to June 74:**

- **Number of U-1As assigned to the Khmer Air Force**  
1 (Nov.73 > June 74)
- on 8 January 72, one U-1A crashed up country (Air America's Phnom Penh Station weekly report for 7-14 January 72, in: UTD/Leary/B50F11).
- in March 73, 5 U-1A aircraft were at Pochentong Air Base, whose repair was beyond the capability of Pochentong; only 2 out of 7 U-1As were operational (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for March 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1)
- 2 U-1As were operational in April 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for April 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1)
- the whole U-1A program was unoperational in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1)

- in August 73, only 2 U-1As were available for utilization. “The remaining U-1A aircraft should be dropped from the record as they are beyond any practical and economical repair” (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for August 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).
- in June 74, only one U-1A was in the inventory (MEDTC Report for 1 April to 30 June 74, kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 25 March 2015)

**2) According to the Archival Databases of the National Archives:**

According to the list of US MAP contracts published by the National Archives, the Khmer Air Force received the following quantities of aircraft (information kindly supplied by Sid Nanson – e-mail sent to the author on 23 October 2010):

<u>Contract</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Year acquired</u>	<u>Type of acquisition</u>	<u>Origin</u>
ZD19	18	U-1A	1971	Excess to US use (XS)	ARMY

**3) According to other sources:**

- in February 1971, MEDTC is interested in requesting 30+ U-1As from the US Army, Vietnam, for MAP Cambodia (“Meeting with Military Equipment Delivery Team – Cambodia [MEDTC], at MACV, 2 February 1971”, Texas Tech University, document no. 2920106007).
- by the end of 1971, the Khmer Air Force had 16 U-1As (Conboy / Bowra, *The war in Cambodia*, p. 20).
- in 1972, AVNK had 16 U-1As (Sutsakhan, *The Khmer Republic at war*, p.183).
- according to Grandolini/Cooper/Troung, *Cambodia*, part 2, the Khmer Air Force lost at least 3 U-1As, when the Khmer Rouge attacked Pochentong in March 1972.
- in 1973, AVNK had 7 U-1As (Sutsakhan, *The Khmer Republic at war*, p.183).
- in 1974, AVNK had 1 U-1A (Sutsakhan, *The Khmer Republic at war*, p.183).

## II) Individual aircraft histories:

### A) U-1As delivered during the first half of 1971:

U-1A “0-53299” 154 prior to 30 June 71 US Army 55-3299  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 55-3299 was probably one of the 4 U-1As that were gained by the Khmer Air Force prior to 30 June 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); was awaiting new engines in January 72 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for January 72, in: UTD/Leary/B50F11).

**Fate:** U-1A 55-3299 was probably one of the 4 U-1As that were damaged during the 21 March 1972 rocket attack (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 January to 31 March 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); not flyable in July 73 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A “0-53311” 173 prior to 30 June 71 US Army 55-3311  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 55-3311 was probably one of the 4 U-1As that were gained by the Khmer Air Force prior to 30 June 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014).

**Fate:** U-1A 55-3311 was lost during the 21 March 1972 rocket attack (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 January to 31 March 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); not flyable in July 73 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A “0-81709” 325 prior to 30 June 71 US Army 58-1709  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 58-1709 was probably one of the 4 U-1As that were gained by the Khmer Air Force prior to 30 June 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); had a hard landing in June 73, causing minor damage to the main landing gear and tail gear attachment area (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); was damaged during landing on 5 July 73, while operating outstation (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); released for check flight on 19 October 73, but not yet test flown on 5 November 73 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for October 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

**Fate:** U-1A 58-1709 was probably one of the 4 U-1As that were damaged during the 21 March 1972 rocket attack (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 January to 31 March 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014).

U-1A “0-81718” 337 prior to 30 June 71 US Army 58-1718  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 55-XXXX was probably one of the 4 U-1As that were gained by the Khmer Air Force prior to 30 June 71; active as of 30 September 71

(MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014).

**Fate:** U-1A 58-1718 was lost on 13 May 1972 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 April to 30 June 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

**B) U-1As delivered during the second half of 1971:**

U-1A "0-52978" 51 Sept.71 US Army 55-2978  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 55-2978 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014)

**Fate:** U-1A 55-2978 was lost on 15 March 72 (accident) (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 January to 31 March 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A "0-53253" 93 Sept.71 US Army 55-3253  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 55-3253 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); suffered a landing accident in June 73, causing damage to the belly of the aircraft (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); a 3 feet diameter damage due to the hard landing was repaired on 27 July 73, when this aircraft was the only flyable U-1A of the Khmer Air Force (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

**Fate:** probably captured by the Khmer Rouge (?)

U-1A "0-53277" 124 Aug. 71 US Army 55-3277  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 55-3277 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014).

**Fate:** U-1A 55-3277 was lost during the 21 March 1972 rocket attack (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 January to 31 March 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A "0-53279" 127 Sept. 71 US Army 55-3279  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 55-3279 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014).

**Fate:** U-1A 55-3279 was lost on 8 January 72 (accident) (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 January to 31 March 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A "0-53295" 149 July 71 US Army 55-3295

(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 55-3295 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); had a run-up accident requiring an engine change in February 72 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for February 72, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); damage repair of U-1A "55-3295" was started on 27 February 72 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station weekly report for 1-7 March 72, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

**Fate:** U-1A 55-3295 was probably one of the 4 U-1As that were damaged during the 21 March 1972 rocket attack (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 January to 31 March 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); languished at Pochentong beyond economical repair in June 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A "0-53300" 156 Sept. 71 US Army 55-3300

(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 55-3300 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); had a run-up accident requiring an engine change in February 72 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for February 72, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

**Fate:** U-1A 55-3300 was lost on 6 September 1972 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A "0-53313" 175 Aug. 71 US Army 55-3313

(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 55-3313 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014).

**Fate:** U-1A 55-3313 was lost on 13 November 71 (combat loss) (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 October to 31 December 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A "0-53323" 192 Sept. 71 US Army 55-3323

(real serial as borne unknown)





The wreck of Khmer Air Force U-1A “0-81717” in the scrap pile at Pochentong in 1971/2  
(with kind permission from Ward S. Reimer)

U-1A “0-81717” 335 Aug. 71 US Army 58-1717

**Service history:** U-1A 58-1717 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014).

**Fate:** U-1A 58-1717 was lost on 26 January 72 (accident) (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 January to 31 March 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); due to suspected engine vibrations, 58-1717 crashed a short distance from Pochentong airfield in January 72 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for January 72, in: UTD/Leary/B50 F11); not flyable in July 73 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A “0-92209” 346 Sept. 71 US Army 59-2209

**(real serial as borne unknown)**

**Service history:** U-1A 59-2209 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014).

**Fate:** U-1A 59-2209 was lost during the 21 March 1972 rocket attack (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 January to 31 March 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); not flyable in July 73 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A "0-92213" 351 Aug. 71 US Army 59-2213  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 59-2213 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); was awaiting new engines in January 72 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for January 72, in: UTD/Leary/B50F11).

**Fate:** U-1A 59-2213 was probably one of the 4 U-1As that were damaged during the 21 March 1972 rocket attack (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 January to 31 March 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); languished at Pochentong beyond economical repair in June 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1); not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39 F1).

U-1A "0-92227" 378 Sept. 71 US Army 59-2227  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** U-1A 59-2227 was gained by the Khmer Air Force in the period between 1 July and 30 September 71; active as of 30 September 71 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 July to 30 September 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014).

**Fate:** U-1A 59-2227 was lost on 13 May 1972 (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 April to 30 June 1972 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014); not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

#### **B) U-1As delivered in late 1971 for parts:**

By 31 December 71, six U-1A's were provided for salvage of parts remains a major source of parts (MAP/MEDTC Report for the 1 October to 31 December 1971 period, USAFHRA, Maxwell AFB, info kindly supplied by Sid Nanson on 14 November 2014).

U-1A "0-53244" 82 late 71 US Army 55-3244  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** ?

**Fate:** not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).

U-1A "0-53245" 83 late 71 US Army 55-3245  
(real serial as borne unknown)

**Service history:** ?

**Fate:** not flyable in July 73 (Air America's Phnom Penh Station monthly report for June 73, in: UTD/CIA/B39F1).





Unidentified victims of the sapper attack of 22 January 1971  
(photo no. 1-CA2-2-PB50 at UTD/Abadie/B2F1)



Ex-Khmer Air Force Otters derelict at Pochentong Airbase in 1972  
(with kind permission from Ward S. Reimer)

When Cambodia fell to the Khmer Rouge forces of Pol Pot on 18 April 1975, no U-1A escaped to Thailand (Carroll, *World Air Forces Directory 1998/9*, p. 187); but no U-1A was captured by the Khmer Rouge (Grandolini/Cooper/Troung, *Cambodia*, part 2).

According to MEDTC (Military Equipment Delivery Team – Cambodia) sources, the Khmer Air Force had received 18 U-1As by 31 March 75, of which 17 had been lost by that date. The remaining U-1A – “0-53253” – was still in Cambodia on 31 March 75. As it was not evacuated to Thailand, it was apparently captured by the Khmer Rouge, when Cambodia fell to the forces of Pol Pot on 18 April 1975 (MEDTC Statistics kindly submitted by Sid Nanson on 16 October 2014).