
1) The contract situation

Although probably all histories of the Vietnam War will agree that the Tet Offensive of January 68 meant the turning point of the entire war, the big change for Air America’s operation in South Vietnam, at least on the contractual side, came only in July 1969, when there was no real follow-on contract to AF49(604)-4395 with the USAF’s Logistical Support Group – so as to have Air America’s contract situation be in accordance with President Nixon’s new political concept of “Vietnamization”. Nixon had campaigned in the 1968 presidential election under the slogan that he would end the war in Vietnam and bring “peace with honor”. In the spring of 1969, President Nixon initiated his policy of “Vietnamization”, which had two distinct elements: first, the unilateral withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam; and second, the assumption of greater military responsibilities by the South Vietnamese armed forces to make up for that loss. On 5 March 69, Melvin R. Laird, Nixon’s new Secretary of Defense, visited Saigon and instructed General Creighton W. Abrams, then Commander in Chief of the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, to accelerate all programs turning over the war to the Government of South Vietnam. The plan was to cover all aspects of U.S. military, paramilitary, and civilian involvement in Vietnam, including combat and combat support forces, advisory personnel, and all forms of equipment. Troop withdrawals were to begin on 1 July 69 and were to be completed not later than December 1972.1

Even before officially initiating this policy of “Vietnamization”, the number of aircraft assigned to contract no. AF49(604)-4395, that is to the contract that Air America had with the USAF’s Logistical Support Group, had slightly gone down. In November 65, a total of 21 aircraft had been assigned to that contract (1 C-46, 1 C-47, 2 DHC-4s, 9 Beech 18s, 2 Helios, and 6 PC-6s), with 6 more aircraft (1 Apache and 5 Bell 204Bs) assigned to supplemental contract no. AF49(604)-4242.2 In April and May 66, the situation is more or less the same, except that all aircraft formerly assigned to USAF contract no. AF49(604)-4242 had by then been transferred to the AF49(604)-4395 contract.3 On 1 May 68, a total of 23 aircraft were assigned to Contract AF49(604)-4395, that is 1 C-46, 1 Caribou, 3 Volpars, 3 Ten-Two, 8 Porters, 2 Helios, and 5 Bell 204Bs.4 By 15 June 69, the number of aircraft assigned to contract AF49(604)-4395 had been reduced to 14 (3 Volpars, 7 Porters, and 4 Bell 204B),5 and on 15 August 69, contract AF49(604)-4395 does no longer exist, and no Air America aircraft was any longer assigned to any contract between Air America and the USAF’s Logistical Support Group. Nearly all aircraft formerly assigned to contract 4395 were kept

2 All details taken from “Revised Status of Aircraft” as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.
5 F.O.C. no. OF-C-69-24 dated 15 June 69 in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.
unassigned at Saigon, with the exception of Bell 204B N8513F that went to Udorn.\(^6\) Contract no. AF49(604)-4395 had expired on 30 June 69, and its end seemed to confirm the policy of Vietnamization. Yet, in spite of all appearances, a follow-on contract did exist: Contract no. F49604-70-C-0023 between Air America and the USAF’s LSG ran at least 1 July 69 to 30 June 73, and the amount of funds on that contract was $3,600,000.00.\(^7\) But the new contract was signed by Air America’s Vice-President Var Green only on 21 November 69, and by USAF’s Robert L. Tilbury only on 16 December 69.\(^8\) The main difference between the old and the new contract was that contract no. F49604-70-C-0023 covered Air America, that is “contractor” aircraft as call aircraft only, while all basic aircraft were to be furnished by the “subcontractor”, that is by China Airlines.

Contract no. F49604-70-C-0023 with the Logistical Support Group, effective 1 July 69 (UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 21)

Yet, in spite of these appearances, the US military could still count on Air America, because the other main contract the Company had in South Vietnam was with CORDS, and CORDS did include the US military. And as if to underline that the Company still worked for the US military, Air America was added as a member of the JAOG (Joint Air Operations Group) of MACV (US Military Assistance Command in Vietnam) in July 1969. The purpose of JAOG was to serve as a joint agency for the effective identification and resolution of mutual problems in air operations in South Vietnam. Other representatives on JAOG were General and Flag Officers of the US Military.\(^9\) This ever growing ubiquity of Air America in South Vietnam explains why, in early 1969, Air America’s official motto, which had been “No problem” for many years, was changed to “Anything, anytime, anywhere – professionally”\(^10\)

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\(^7\) Summary of revenue contracts, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F4, where the contract is quoted as F49604-69-C-0023.
\(^8\) Contract no. F49604-70-C-0023 effective 1 July 69, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel no. 21.
\(^9\) See the Minutes of Meetings of the Executive Committees of Air America Inc. and Air Asia Co Ltd of 22 July 69, in: UTD/CIA/B8F3.
\(^10\) For the first time, this new motto appeared in Air America Log, vol. III, no. 1 of 1969.
There were, indeed, still two small contracts that Air America South Vietnam had with the US military: First no. F62-531-68-C0005 with the US Army Composite Service Group to support defoliant and communications research for the Department of Defense’s Advanced Research Projects Agency; probably in 69 or 70, this contract was replaced by contract no. F62-531-70-D-0030; in February 70, the “30 customer” replaced his basic Ten-Two N7950C with Volpar N9577Z, and this Saigon-based Volpar was still assigned to contract no. F62-531-70-D-0030 on 1 July 70. But the “0030 contract” was terminated on 31 January 71: Volpar N9838Z was placed into inactive storage at Tainan and Volpar N9577Z was added to the VN-91 contract. The other small contract that Air America South Vietnam still had with the US military in the early seventies was contract no. DAJB11-69-C-0069 with the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), US Army Saigon, which had been added on 1 May 69 and which covered Nha Trang-based Volpar N9664C plus several aircraft types (C-46, C-47, Caribou, Volpar, Porter, and Bell 204B) on a call-basis. But the “0069” contract (Volpar N9664C) was terminated on 2 March 1971. In 1968 and 1969, Air America had offered the US Army a contract for flying services to be utilized in the movement of personnel, PX supplies, APO mail and other cargo within South Vietnam, but nothing came out of it. There was, however, a small contract that the Saigon Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany had with Air America effective 13 July 68 for “one (1) C-46 type aircraft on a standby basis, for use at the call of the Customer on six hours notice, except for necessary maintenance.”

The biggest contract that Air America had in the early seventies for operations in South Vietnam was the one it had with CORDS. As will be remembered, contract AID/VN-23 was effective 1 December 67, and in May 68, it covered no less than 45 aircraft: 5 C-46s, 9 C-47s, 1 Caribou, 1 Do-28, 3 Volpars, 6 Ten-Twos, 4 C-45s, 5 Porters, 6 Helios, and 5 Bell 204Bs. On 16 August 68, contract AID/VN-23 was replaced by contract AID/VN-41, to which still no less than 43 aircraft were assigned, i.e. 5 C-46s, 8 C-47s, 1 Caribou, 3 Volpars, 6 Ten-Twos, 4 C-45s, 5 Porters, 6 Helios, and 5 Bell 204Bs. The Do-28 N2001F had been transferred to Bangkok, and C-47 “607” had been lost at Gia Nghia (V-202) on 22 March 68. On 13 February 69, John L. Williams (Chief Air Operations Branch / CORDS) requested some changes: to replace C-46 N67984 by C-46 N67985, to replace C-47 B-829 by C-47 B-817, to drop Ten Twos N51259 and N21412 and to replace them by Ten Two N137L and Volpar N7770B, which has been call-aircraft previously, to drop Caribou N539Y and to

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11 Memorandum no. OMSGN-70-067, that is Saigon Base monthly report for February 70, in: UTD/CIA/B42F3.
12 F.O.C. no OF-C-70-023 of 1 July 70, in: UTD/Leary/B41F4.
13 F.O.C. no OF-C-70-023 of 1 July 70, in: UTD/Leary/B41F4.
15 Contract no. DAJB11-69-C-0069, signed on 26 April 69 and effective 1 May 69, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25.
16 Inventories of assigned aircraft, Air America Inc. Saigon, for April 69 (no. AOP 0401 dated 7 April 69) and for May 69 (AOP 0501 dated 28 April 69), both in: UTD/CIA/B42F4.
17 Memo. no. OMSGN-71-046, that is Saigon Base monthly report for February 71, in: UTD/CIA/B40F2.
18 Letter dated 28 June 68 to the Commander, Vietnam Regional Exchange (PACEX), and letter dated 26 March 69 to the Assistant Chief PACEX Procurement Office, both in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25.
19 Letter contract of 13 July 68 between Air America and the Federal Republic of Germany, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 28.
21 The Saigon Base flight time report for August 68 (located within Memorandum no. GM-SGN-68-243 dated 7 October 68, that is within Air America’s Saigon Base monthly report for September 68, in: UTD/CIA/B42F5) lists aircraft assigned to 4 different contracts, that is to contract no. 4395, to “contract VN-23 (from 1 thru 15 August 1968)”; to “contract VN-41 (from 16 thru 31 August 1968)”; and to contract F62-531-68-C0007.

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store 5 C-45s “out of country to alleviate the over-crowded parking conditions”. 23 Air America’s reaction regarding their C-45s and Ten Twos was even more radical than requested by CORDS, as by the end of the year, no less than 7 C-45s and 6 Ten Twos had been flown to Tainan and inactivated there. 24 On 15 June 69, only 32 aircraft were still being assigned to contract AID/VN-41, that is four C-46s (N67985, B-138, B-910, and B-928), four C-47s (“084”, “147”, “559”, and “994”), five Volpars (N6154U, N7770B, N9518Z, N9577Z, and N9956Z), five Ten-Twos (N777Y, N5269V, N7950C, N9521Z, and N9573Z), nine Porters (N153L, N180K, N198X, N285L, N358F, N391R, N394R, N9444, and N12450), and five Bell 204Bs (N1303X, N1304X, N1305X, N1306X, and N1307X). 25 Not from the beginning, but at least since August 69, the Saigon Base Flight Time Reports do list individual customers within contract no. AID/VN-41, that is “4101” or CORDS, “4102” or Embassy, and “4103” or RDC, that is Revolutionary Development Cadre, the South Vietnamese cadre trained by the CIA at Vung Tau (V-05) to persuade the citizens of South Vietnam to support the central government. 26 On 27 August 69, Caribou N539Y received one round of ground fire, while landing at Vinh Long (V-20) on a flight for customer “4103”; the aircraft was repaired at Can Tho (V-17) later that day. 27

(CORDS memo of 13 February 69, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25)

Contract no. AID/VN-41 expired on 30 October 69; 28 it was followed on 1 November 69 by contract no. AID/VN-70, which had been signed on 30 October 69. This new contract

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23 Memo dated 13 February 69 sent by John Williams/CORDS to Merrill Hulse, Air America’s Base Manager Saigon, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25).
28 See the Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc. of 12 August 69, in: UTD/CIA/B8F3.
provided for 66,000 hours of flying for the period from 31 October 69 to 30 June 70.\textsuperscript{29} Contract no. AID/VN-70 is known to have had 3 customers, usually called “7001”, “7002”, and “7003”, that is CORDS, the U.S. Embassy, and the RDC at Vung Tau (V-05).\textsuperscript{30} Effective 1 October 69, Air America assigned 45 aircraft to contract AID/VN-70, i.e. 5 C-46s, 6 C-47s, 1 Caribou, 9 Volpars, 2 C-45/Ten Two, 14 PC-6 Porters, and 8 Bell 204Bs. There were some

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\textsuperscript{29} See the Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc. of 28 October 69 and 4 November 69 in UTD/CIA/B8F3.

changes in the number of aircraft assigned to the customers, some of them coming from MACV as part of CORDS: Effective 1 March 70, the “7001 customer” released C-47s B-829 and “083”;

31 effective 13 March 70, C-46 B-912 was substituted to C-46 B-146; effective 1 April 70, the “7001” customer added Volpar N7695C;


Although contract no. AID/VN-70 officially expired on 30 June 70, the follow-on contract, that is no. AID/VN-91 was signed only on 6 November 1970, because only that late, an agreement on the pricing was reached. That explains why after 1 July 70, there were still some more fleet changes that refer to this old contract – effective 28 July 70, the “7001” customer added Volpar N9838Z, and in late September, the “7002 customer” arranged for security of N1303X that had to spend the night in a small outpost – while the new contract no. AID/VN-91 then retroactively covered the period of Fiscal Year

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31 Memorandum no. OMSGN-70-067, that is Saigon Base monthly report for February 70, in: UTD/CIA/B42F3.
32 Air America, letter dated 6 March 70 to CORDS, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25.
33 Memorandum no. OMSGN-70-087, that is Saigon Base monthly report for March 70, in: UTD/CIA/B42F3.
34 Memorandum no. OMSGN-70-131, that is Saigon Base monthly report for May 70, in: UTD/CIA/B42F3.
35 Air America, letter dated 8 June 70 to CORDS, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25.
36 Flight Operations Circular no. OF-C-70-023 of 1 July 70, in: UTD/Leary/B41F4.
37 Contract no. AID/VN-91 dated 6 Nov. 70, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25.
38 Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc. of 13 October 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4.
39 Memorandum no. OMSGN-70-166, that is Saigon Base monthly report for July 70, in: UTD/CIA/B42F2.
40 Saigon Base monthly report for September 70, in: UTD/CIA/B40F1.
1971 beginning on 1 July 70.\textsuperscript{41} Again, this contract had three customers, that is “9101” or CORDS, “9102” or U.S. Embassy, and “9103” or RDC.\textsuperscript{42} On 27 October 70, Air America assigned 38 aircraft to contract no. AID/VN-91. They were: 3 C-46s, 3 C-47s, 3 Caribous, 8 Volpars, 14 PC-6 Porters, and 7 Bell 204Bs, with an additional 6 aircraft (2 C-46s, 2 C-47s, 1 Volpar and 1 PC-6) “to be considered as spare aircraft pursuant to the call provisions of the Contract” as of 1 July 1970.\textsuperscript{43}

Letter of 27 Oct. 70, Air America to USAID re aircraft assigned to contract no. AID/VN-91 (in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25)

The following changes to the fleet are known: In October 70, C-46 N67984 was added to the contract for customer “9101”.\textsuperscript{44} On 2 November 70, Bell 204B N8535F was depositioned to Udorn; on 9 November 70, C-47 “994” was placed into storage; and on 15 November 70, PC-6 N152L was depositioned to Vientiane.\textsuperscript{45} On 24 November 70, the Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc decided that 2-3 Twin Beech aircraft were to be used for aerial photography in Vietnam, about 100 hours per aircraft per month,

\textsuperscript{41} Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc. of 13 October 70 and 27 October 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4.
\textsuperscript{42} Danang Station Monthly Report for March 71, that is CIA document no. 0000174628, online published by the CIA at \url{http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000174628.pdf}, which distinguished 3 customers within contract no. VN-91: 1) VN-91/AID, 2) VN-91/Embassy, and 3) VN-91/RDC. When Oren B. Harnage became Deputy Chief of the Embassy’s Air Branch in 1971, one of the first things he had to do was to make clear that, although security implications and congressional questions necessitated USAID be designated as the prime contractor, the US Embassy, that is the CIA remained the prime user of the contract (Harnage, \textit{A thousand faces}, pp. 81/2).
\textsuperscript{43} Letter dated 27 October 70, Air America to USAID re aircraft assigned to contract no. AID/VN-91, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25.
\textsuperscript{44} Saigon Base Monthly Report for October 70, in: UTD/CIA/B40F1.
\textsuperscript{45} Saigon Base Monthly Report for October 70, that is document no. 0000174575, published by the CIA at \url{http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000174575.pdf}.
with the project commencing on 1 January 71 and extending over a six month period. These aircraft are believed to have been the 3 Saigon-based Volpars that mostly flew at the Customer’s direction or Special Flights during the first half of 1971. During the same period, there were some more changes to the fleet assigned to contract no. AID/VN-91. Effective 18 February 71, the “9101” customer released C-47 “147”, and effective 28 February 71, he released PC-6 N198X. On 3 March 71, Volpar N7695C was dropped from the VN-91 contract and replaced by Volpar N9664C. Finally, for 1 April 71, we have some numbers, for at that date, there were a total of 32 Air America aircraft – 4 C-46s, 3 Caribous, 8 Volpars, 11 PC-6s, and 6 Bell 204Bs – on contract in South Vietnam, that is assigned to contract AID/VN-91.

Beginning on 1 July 71, a new contract covered Air America’s operations in South Vietnam: contract no. AID/VN-100. It ran from 1 July 71 to 30 June 73 and had an amount of funds on contract that totalled at US $ 23,959,713.00. Already on 16 June 71, Air America’s Vice President Var M. Green sent a letter to Robert L. Carroll, Contracting Officer USAID, Bureau for Vietnam, Washington DC that listed the identity numbers of the aircraft that were assigned to the new contract AID/VN-100. This contract had new customer designations, that is “A20A” (believed to have been CORDS), “A20B” (believed to have been the U.S. Embassy), and “A20C” (possibly the RDC), but also customers “A20D” and “A20E” that have not yet been identified. On 1 July 71, Air America’s Saigon based fleet comprised 41 aircraft, of which 32 were assigned to contract no. AID/VN-100, 5 were unassigned, and 4 were stored. The fleet assigned to contract no. AID/VN-100 comprised four C-46s (B-912, B-928, N67984, and N67985), three C-47s (“147”, “559”, and “994”), eight Volpars (N3674G, N6154U, N7770B, N9518Z, N9577Z, N9664C, N9956Z, and N91295), eleven Porters (N153L, N185K, N192X, N194X, N198X, N285L, N391R, N394R, N748N, N9444, and N12450), and six Bell 204Bs (N1303X, N1304X, N1305X, N1306X, N1307X, and N8514F). Two weeks later, on 15 July 71, Porter N184L had been added, making a total of 33 aircraft assigned to contract no. AID/VN-100. But then, a number of reductions commenced: On 10 September 71, the customer dropped C-46 B-912 from the contract, and on 28 September 71, C-46s B-910 and B-912 were placed in temporary storage at Saigon. On 31 October 71, Porters N153L and N12450 were released from the contract. January 72 saw an even greater reduction: “The PC-6’s flew approximately 170 hours less than forecasted. This difference was primarily due to the customer releasing 1 PC-6 at V-17 [= Can Tho]. Also the V-02 [= Bien Hoa] customer reduced his PC-6 requirements by approximately 10 hours a week. As a result of this reduction the customer released PC-6 N366F from contract COB 15 January 72 and this aircraft was depositioned to VTE [= Vientiane] on 21 January 72. PC-6’s N184L and N391R were released from 0087 contract and were

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46 Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc. of 24 November 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4.
48 Mem. no. OMSGN-71-046, that is Saigon Base monthly report for February 71, in: UTD/CIA/B40F2.
49 Mem. no. OMSGN-71-046, that is Saigon Base monthly report for February 71, in: UTD/CIA/B40F2.
52 Letter dated 16 June 71, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 29.
53 Memorandum no. OMSGN-72-070, that is Saigon Base monthly report for March 72, in: UTD/CIA/B42F1.
54 F.O.C. no. DFOD-C-71-014 dated 1 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.
55 F.O.C. no. DFOD-C-71-015 dated 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.
56 Mem. no. OMSGN-71-343, that is Saigon Base monthly report for September 71, in: UTD/CIA/B42F1.
57 Mem. no. OMSGN-71-365, that is Saigon Base monthly report for October 71, in: UTD/CIA/B42F1.
depositioned to VTE on 5 February and 27 January 72. Spare VTB N91295 was depositioned to TNN [= Tainan] on 13 January 72 and spare VTB N9664C was depositioned to VTE on 18 January 72. DHC-4’s N539Y & N544Y will be added to the VN-100 contract and they are expected to TNN/SGN 10 February and 13 February 1972. The customer indicates both of the DHC-4’s will be assigned to the Nha Trang station.  

C-46 B-928 was depositioned to Tainan for storage on 8 February 72, but C-47 “083” was added to the VN-100 contract effective 16 March 72.  

Air America C-46A B-910 at Saigon on 18 May 70  
(UTD/Misc.Mat./B4F4)

Additional aircraft arrived in May 1972: “Two C-123Ks, under VTE 342 contract were positioned to SGN from VTE on 9 May to work under the VN-100 contract. The C-123Ks flew 340+43 revenue block hours during May. They were used primarily to airlift cargo from SGN to DAD.” They were assigned to “A270 contract”; 2 couples are known, the first 2 C-123Ks being “545” (that is 55-4545) and “616” (that is 54-616), which were then followed by C-123K “374” taken over Laos by Dan Gamelin, probably in the early seventies (with kind permission from Dan Gamelin)

C-123K “374” taken over Laos by Dan Gamelin, probably in the early seventies (with kind permission from Dan Gamelin)

Vietnamese Air Force. Not sure what year that was - it could have been when I was still stationed in Saigon (that would have been up till April 69), or, it's possible that I was recalled from Laos to head up the program - in 1972 - or there abouts” (e-mail dated 9 September 2008, kindly sent to the author by Jake Wehrell).

59 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-035, that is Saigon Base monthly report for January 72, in: UTD/CIA/B42F1.
60 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-049, that is Saigon Base monthly report for February 72, in: UTD/CIA/B42F1.
61 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-070, that is Saigon Base monthly report for March 72, in: UTD/CIA/B42F1.
by “555” (that is 55-4555) and “556” (that is 55-4556). Another three C-123Ks arrived from Vientiane’s AID-439-342 contract in June 1972: “The two C-123Ks, under VTE 342 contract, completed their SGN assignment for the VN-100 contract. C-123K 636 was positioned SGN/VTE on 23 June and C-123K 374 returned to VTE on 29 June.” They were assigned to “A270 contract”. Two couples are known, first “555” (that is 55-4555) and “556” (that is 55-4556), which had already arrived in May 72, then “576” (that is 55-4576) and “636” (that is 54-636), finally “374” (that is 56-4374).

In July 72, new customer designations were used, as the July 72 Saigon Base Monthly Report now distinguishes between the “A30A contract” (believed to be CORDS), the “A30B contract” (believed to be the U.S. Embassy), the “A30C contract” (possibly the RDC), as well as the “A30D contract” and the “A30F contract”, whose customers have not yet been identified. Yet, it was still the VN-100 contract, and, as “an agreement for AID/VN-100 (USG FY73) has not yet been reached, the Contracting Officer has exercised his option and extended to current contract for up to 92 days in order to permit performance while negotiate-

Telex dated 29 June 72, Air America’s Vice-President Flying Contract Affairs to Air America’s Acting Base Manager and Senior Operations Manager Saigon, p.1

(in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25)

62 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-084, that is Saigon Base monthly report for May 72, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.
63 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-093, that is Saigon Base monthly report for June 72, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.
64 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-109, that is Saigon Base monthly report for July 72, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.
ions for USG FY73 continue."

On 1 July 72, 3 C-46s, 3 C-47s, 3 Caribous, 8 Volpars, 8 PC-6 Porters plus an unknown number of Bell 204Bs were assigned to the provisory extension of contract no. AID/VN-100.

Some more changes took place in 1972: “VTB N7695C was released from VN-100 contract 20 August 72 and placed in inactive storage. VTB was also released from contract and placed in inactive storage midnight of 31 August 1972. To compensate the reduction in the VTB fleet the customer released a RON VTB at Can Tho and implemented a new DHC-4 schedule, i.e. Flight 14/Region 4 schedule/Flight 34. This new schedule, of course, reduced our scheduled flights to Can Tho to one.”

The month of September 1972 was not only characterized by a rice airlift to Phnom Penh – see the file Air America in Cambodia for details –, but also by a new role for Air America’s Volpars: “Our revenue forecast for VTB’s was not quite as accurate. VTB’s flew 787+40 revenue hours with 531 forecasted. This difference was due to the customer falling behind in guaranteed minimums the first two months of the quarter. Rather than pay unflown minimums the customer chose to schedule VTB’s for cargo flights. The VTB’s flew 13 hours over the guaranteed minimums for the first quarter.”

And there was an emergency evacuation at Danang: “On 3 September DAD aircraft were evacuated to NHA [= Nha Trang] due to typhoon ELSIE and did not return until the morning of 5 September. This typhoon cost us 61+20 revenue hours.”

In October 72, there was a noticeable drop in C-46 and C-47 flying after mid month due to a decreased requirement for cargo airlift, and the A30A customer replaced the Can Tho Volpar with a PC-6 on 23 October 72, because PC-6 flying was falling below guaranteed minimums.

On 30 November 72, PC-6 N285L replaced N198X on VN-100 contract, as N198X was due a 4B maintenance service. On 22 November 72, 1+00 revenue hours were lost, when the tail boom of Bell 204B N1306X struck the edge of the U.S. Embassy roof top.

“On 15 December 1972 we commenced C-123K ferry flights (under 002 contract) from Phan Rang to Clark and Saigon to Clark. […] During December 8 Phan Rang/Clark ferries were flown and 11 Saigon/Clark flights.”

In January 73, 13 C-123K Saigon/Clark ferry flights were performed, and during that month, Air America also operated for two more unknown customers: “A30E” and “A30G”.

As the official cease-fire agreement for Vietnam was signed on 24 January 1973, all Air America operations that were performed in South Vietnam from February 73 onwards will be dealt with in section V of this file.

2) Flying conditions during the last years of the war: more aircraft were destroyed by enemy action

The “Tet Offensive” was not only a short-term occurrence; it really meant a change in strategy. Whereas before that date, the inhabitants of South Vietnamese cities might perhaps have believed that the war was far away, interesting only people living outside the cities, from now on, mortar and rocket attacks onto South Vietnamese cities became quite familiar, and so many airports were attacked as well. In 1970 and 1971, the airport of Can Tho (V-17), which had been the target of the most disastrous nightly mortar attack in December 67, was again

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65 Telex dated 29 June 72, Air America’s Vice-President Flying Contract Affairs to Air America’s Acting Base Manager and Senior Operations Manager Saigon, p.1, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25.

66 Telex dated 29 June 72, Air America’s Vice-President Flying Contract Affairs to Air America’s Acting Base Manager and Senior Operations Manager Saigon, p.1, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25 – p. 2 of the Telex, which probably indicated the Bell 204Bs – is not available.

67 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-121, that is Saigon Base monthly report for August 72, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.

68 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-127, that is Saigon Base monthly report for September 72, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.

69 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-127, that is Saigon Base monthly report for September 72, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.

70 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-137, that is Saigon Base monthly report for October 72, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.

71 Mem. no. OMSGN-72-143, that is Saigon Base monthly report for November 72, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.

72 Mem. no. OMSGN-73-003, that is Saigon Base monthly report for December 72, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.

73 Mem. no. OMSGN-73-007, that is Saigon Base monthly report for January 73, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.
under Viet Cong fire many times, severely damaging Air America Porters N9444, N153L, and N393R on 15 May 70, Air America Bell 204B N1306X on 31 July 70, Air America Bell 204B N1307X on 17 September 70, Air America Porters N394R, N748N, and N285L on 31 March 71, and Air America Bell 204B N8514F on 26 April 71, to mention only a few examples. But now, Can Tho was not the only place where Air America aircraft were hit while parked on the ground: Danang airport (V-03) suffered heavy rocket attacks on 28 March 71, 9 April 71, 8 February 72, or 7 May 72, to mention only a few of them, severely damaging Air America Volpars N7770B and N9577Z on 28 March 71, and Volpar N9518Z and Bell 204B N1306X on 8 February 72, and Saigon airport suffered from rocket attacks quite often, one of the most disastrous for Air America being the one of 5 December 72, when their Bell 204B N1304X, their C-47 “559”, and their Porter N198X were severely damaged. The most dramatic situation, however, occurred after the Cease-fire agreement of January 73, i.e. in March and April 75, immediately before the Communist take-over. But not only nightly mortar or rocket attacks made the situation more and more dangerous for Air America’s operations in South Vietnam. Although still by far not comparable to flying in Laos, where between 3 December 71 and 9 April 72 no less than 193 Air America flights reported ground fire – compared to 12 in South Vietnam at the same period –, in South Vietnam as well, more and more Air America aircraft were hit by ground fire, and here, two areas were especially dangerous: the Danang area and the Mekong Delta. As to the Danang area, PC-6C N394R received battle damage on 11 January 70, while enroute Ba Ta (V-84) to Quang Ngai (V-23), and Bell 204B N1307X on 14 May 70, while enroute Tam Ky Alt (V-246) to Hiep Duc (VH-576). In the Mekong-Delta, PC-6C N185K received ground fire near Can Tho (V-17) on 15 July 70, and Bell 204B N1307X near Tra Vinh (V-52) on 15 August 70. In 1971 and 1972, the situation got worse in the Danang area: Bell 204B N1307X was again hit on 8 February 71, while enroute from Danang (V-03) to Tam Ky (V-40), and Bell 204B N1306X was hit on 28 April 72, while enroute Danang (V-03) to Quang Tri (V-78), and again on 25 August 72, while enroute Danang (V-03) to Tam Ky (V-40). Finally, Air America’s subcontractor China Airlines lost two aircraft in 1972 which were shot down in the Pleiku (V-04) area, while operating for Air America: C-46 “EM-2” on 5 June 72 and C-123K “ST-2” on 26 August 72.

3) Scheduled flights 1969-73:

In the early seventies, Air America’s network of scheduled flights had been considerably expanded. As can be seen in the daily flight schedules of Saigon for the months of April to July 71, contained in the Hickler papers of the Air America Archives, the daily C-46 flight to Danang (V-03) had by now been replaced by several non scheduled flights. But now there was a daily C-46 return flight to Nha Trang (V-23), i.e. flight nos. 2N and 2S, leaving Saigon at 7.15 a.m., two daily Caribou return flights to Can Tho (V-17), i.e. flight nos. 13 and 23, leaving Saigon at 8.00 a.m. and 4.45 p.m., later carried out by C-47s, an Air America PC-6 commuter service between Saigon and Bien Hoa (V-02), leaving Saigon at least 10 times a day from 7.00 a.m. onwards on return flights (flight nos. 131-2-3-4-5-6, 231-2, 236, 431-2-3, and so on), then there were two daily PC-6 return flights to Vung Tau (V-05), i.e. flight nos. 74

75 List “Groundfire reports Dec.71 to 9 April 72”, in: UTD/CIA/B51F12.
76 XOXOs of 11 January 70, 14 May 70, 15 July 70, 15 August 70 (all in: UTD/Hickler/B25F10), 8 February 71 (in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11), 28 April 72, and 25 August 72 (both in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2).
77 See the C-46 and C-123 files of “The aircraft of Air America”.
53 and 54, leaving Saigon at 8.25 a.m. and 4.00 p.m., and a daily PC-6 return flight to Ham Tan (V-132), i.e. flight no.235, to which a scheduled Volpar flight to Xuan Loc (V-226) via Bien Hoa (V-02) has to be added that was run several times a week.\textsuperscript{78} There was also the “Southern Courier” passenger and cargo flight for MAC/CORDS Region II out of Nha Trang (V-07), which departed Nha Trang (V-07) in the morning and then ran to Phan Rang (V-28), Phan Thiet (V-11), Bao Loc (V-260), Gia Nghia (V-202), Ban Me Thuot (V-12), and Phan Thiet (V-11). From there it returned to Nha Trang (V-07), where it arrived by 1300 hours. On 11 May 69, C-47 “147” had a landing accident at Bao Loc during this trip.\textsuperscript{79}

4) Contract flying 1969-73:

During the period of Vietnamization, that is between 1969 and 1973, the missions flown by Air America aircraft were very much the same as between 1965 and 1968: A good picture of the fixed-wing missions flown in South Vietnam is given by the report of Captain V. E. Ball called “A day with an AAM C-47 pilot in SVN” and published in the \textit{Air America Log} of 1969: “Gia Nghia, South Vietnam, was the first stop. (Gia Nghia is approximately 110 statute miles northeast of Saigon and is located in Tuyen Duc Province.) It’s a laterite landing strip, 2,000 ft. long and 2,000 feet high, with a steep drop off on both ends and on both sides. Laterite is a combination of Georgia red clay and North Dakota gumbo, slick as a greased ski run when wet. Gia Nghia is known as a “tough” strip among the “Gooney Bird” drivers. Everything has to be just right or a pilot could be in big trouble.”\textsuperscript{80} Indeed, it was here at V-202 that, on 22 March 68, Air America C-47A “607” veered off the runway and rolled down the steep embarkment to the right of the extreme end of the runway; there were only minor injuries among the people on board, but the aircraft was a total loss.\textsuperscript{81} But the flight recorded by Captain Ball was more fortunate: “The load”, he continues, “was several thousand pounds of ‘miracle’ rice seeds for this central highlands province. The ‘miracle’ rice was developed as a joint effort of the U.S. and Philippine governments, and will produce up to three crops a year in this area. Obviously something like this is exceedingly important to the food-short country of South Vietnam. Today’s flight was just one of many CORDS missions (Civilian Operation for Revolutionary Development Support) in support of the Pacification Program under the Agency for International Development (USAID).”\textsuperscript{82} It will be remembered that, in order to reduce the political attraction of the Viet Cong, the South Vietnamese Prime Minister Ky and US President Johnson had established a program of economical and social assistance in early 1966, which, in great part, was run thru the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and included many services flown by Air America. As to the flight described by Captain Ball, he continues: “After delivering the rice seeds we returned to Saigon to pick up a load of Public Health supplies, hospital materials, and agricultural ‘resettlement kits’ destined for Quang Tri province, just south of the DMZ in ‘I’ Corps. The strip at Quang Tri is aluminium matting and is under control of the U.S. Marines. It is used primarily as a helicopter base. The CORDS representative met us on arrival, and the unloading was accomplished without delay. Since we had to return to Da Nang for refuelling, with no scheduled load from Quang Tri, CORDS turned the available passenger space over to the military passenger terminal in order to give the G.I.s headed for Da Nang a ride. At Da Nang, we picked up several passengers for the return trip to Saigon. In addition, we on-loaded two thousand plus pounds of rolled oats destined for Tam Ky (forty miles southeast of Da Nang), and several hundred pounds of hospital supplies for Quang Ngai City, another forty

\textsuperscript{78} Saigon Daily Flight Schedules of 20 and 28 April 71, 11 May 71, 23 June 71 as well as 6, 19, 20 and 24 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1.
\textsuperscript{79} Accident report for 11 January 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F2.
\textsuperscript{80} V. E. Ball called “A day with an AAM C-47 pilot in SVN”, in: \textit{Air America Log}, vol. III no.4, 1969, p.3.
\textsuperscript{81} XOXO of 22 March 68, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16; Accident report, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F2.
\textsuperscript{82} V. E. Ball called “A day with an AAM C-47 pilot in SVN”, in: \textit{Air America Log}, vol. III no.4, 1969, p.3.
miles south of Tam Ky. Their hospital warehouse had been hit by enemy mortar a few days before and many of their supplies had been destroyed. We made delivery of some of the more critical items; then on to Saigon. There you have a rather typical day for that old work horse, the C-47 ‘Gooney Bird’”.  

A couple of years later, some of the C-47s earlier assigned to the USAID contract were no longer active: B-817 had gone into inactive storage at Tainan on 18 November 69; B-829 had still been used as a spare aircraft out of Saigon in August 69, but was sold to Xieng Khouang Air Transport in October 1970, and delivered Saigon-Vientiane on 7 October 70; C-47 “083” was already in inactive storage at Saigon in July 71 and remained in inactive storage at least until 1974; and C-47 “084” was in inactive storage at Saigon since 20 June 70 until at least 1974. Others had crashed: Already on 14 January 66, C-47 B-929 had been shot down by Viet Cong north of Vi Thanh (V-175), resulting in several victims. The next C-47 to be destroyed was B-827, which had been shot down by small arms on final approach to Quang Ngai (V-23) on 11 June 67, but this time, there were no injuries. The following year, on 22 March 68, C-47 “607” veered off the runway and rolled down a steep embankment to the right of the extreme end of the runway at Gia Nghia (V-202). And C-47 “949” crashed into a mountain side near Danang (V-03) on 16 January 69 during bad weather, killing the crew and all passengers. Only three of Air America’s Saigon-based C-47s were

![C-47 “607” at Gia Nghia in 1972, abandoned](UTD/McCauley/B1F3)

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83 V. E. Ball, “A day with an AAM C-47 pilot in SVN”, in: *Air America Log*, vol. III, no.4, 1969, p.3.
86 *Flight Operation Circular* of 1 July 71, 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B; *Flight Operation Circular* of 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C.
87 *Flight Operation Circulars* of 1 July 71, 15 July 71, 1 November 73, 1 December 73, 1 April 74, and 1 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B+C.
89 XOXO of 11 June 67, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16.
still active in 1972: C-47 “147”, which was to be returned to the USAF on 30 June 75, and C-47s “559” and “994” that were still assigned to a USAID contract for operations out of Saigon in 1974. But they only flew for some hours per day. The log book of Air America’s Leslie W. Bays illustrates the period between March and June 72: Most C-47 flights were short and had only a few legs: On 20 March, Bays flew “559” on a 1.40 hours return flight out of Saigon; on 26 March 72, he made a similar return flight to Nha Trang (V-07) in “559”, and this time, it lasted 1.50 hours. The longer return flights went up to Danang (V-03), where Bays flew C-47 “147” on 24 March spending 5.55 hours, and on 28 March 72, he flew “559” for even 8.34 hours, going from Saigon (V-01) first down to Can Tho (V-17), then via Saigon and Nha Trang (V-07) up to Danang (V-03) and back to Saigon. Sometimes, smaller fields were also served by Air America C-47s in those days, like Bao Loc (V-260) on 4, 20, 21, 26, 29 April, 2 May (all in “559” or “994”), Binh Duc (V-183) on 10 April, and Gia Nghia (V-202) on 20, 21, 26, and 29 April in “559” or “994”, and a similar picture can be found for May and June 72.

In the 1970/71 period, no less than 11 PC-6 Porters were assigned to contract VN-91, 5 of which operated out of Bien Hoa, although the aircraft originated at Saigon. They flew scheduled flights Monday through Saturday and one PC-6 flew scheduled flights every other Sunday. This situation is well illustrated by the log book of Leslie W. Bays: On 2 December 70, he flew Porter N285L on the 18 leg route Saigon (V-01)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Hon Quan (V-133)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Long An (V-247)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Ba Ria (V-216)-Saigon (V-01)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Hon Quan (V-133)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Hau Nghia (V-182)-Long An (V-247)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Hon Quan (V-133)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Ham Tan (V-132)-Bien Hoa (V-02), before returning to Saigon (V-01) after more than 10 hours. On 5 December 70, Bays flew another one of those Bien Hoa-based Porters, N180K, again on an 18 leg flight, this time Saigon (V-01)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Ham Tan (V-132)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Duc Hoa (V-200)-Hau Nghia (V-182)-Tay Ninh City (V-151)-Hon Quan (V-133)-Song Be City (V-243)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Xuan Loc (V-226)-Long Thanh (V-136)-Xuan Loc (V-226)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Long An (V-247)-Lam Son (V-214)-Lai Khe (V-135)-Bien Hoa (V-02) and back to Saigon (V-01). On 16 December 70, Bays flew Porter N180K on another 18 leg route, that is Saigon (V-01)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Ham Tan (V-132)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Cu Chi AAF (V-207)-Hau Nghia (V-182)-Tay Ninh City (V-151)-Hon Quan (V-133)-Song Be City (V-243)-Bien Hoa (V-02)-Xuan Loc (V-226)-Ham Tan (V-132)-Ba Ria (V-216)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Long An (V-247)-Lam Son (V-214)-Lai Khe (V-135)-Bien Hoa (V-02) and back to Saigon (V-01). This was exactly the same route that Bays flew in Porter N184L on 5 January 71, in Porter N180K on 7 January, and in Porter N194X on 15 January 71, while on other days he flew an abbreviated pattern that omitted some of these stations. So most of these places were served at a regular bases, but the flight pattern itself was not always the same.

In accordance with the contracts the Company had, Air America aircraft carried all sorts of cargo and equipment, food, mail, cement, roofing material, sedated animals, and gasoline; sometimes, drums of gas were carried in a sling, and it was on 8 September 70 that Bell 204B N1303X, while enroute from Hoi An (V-206) to coordinates BT1554 in the Danang (V-03) area with a sling load of two 55 gal. drums of gas and one diesel fuel, lost the sling load at coordinates BT1457; the fuel drums fell onto houses causing a large fire. But often fuel...
drums were delivered by Air America C-47s.\textsuperscript{98} Other Air America flights carried US or South Vietnamese soldiers or representatives of USAID, CORDS or the CIA. And there were, of course, VIP flights. Among the VIPs flown around by 2 Air America Volpars in 1970, was Miss America and her entourage who put on U.S.O.-sponsored shows for the troops in several U.S. military bases in the Central Highlands like Nha Trang. On another one of these occasions, while operating for the “9101” customer, Air America Volpar N9518Z was damaged by shrapnel in a rocket attack at the airport of Dalat (V-08) on 14 February 71, while loading 4 US VIP passengers. Nobody was hurt, and another Air America Volpar (N7695C) came in later to bring in the team of mechanics and to pick up the VIPs. The same day, N9518Z was repaired and returned to Nha Trang (V-07).\textsuperscript{99} But later, the same aircraft, i.e. Volpar N9518Z, was damaged at least two more times by rocket attacks, while on the ground at Danang (V-03), that is on 8 February 72 and on 19 July 74, each time being repaired for further missions.\textsuperscript{100}

Miss America arriving at Nha Trang aboard Air America Volpar N9664C in 1970

\textit{(Air America Log, vol. V, no.7, 1971, p.7)}

As before the “Tet Offensive”, among the most dangerous missions was to transport weapons and ammunition to South Vietnamese forces. Apart from transporting arms and ammunition for CIA programs, Air America aircraft were regularly used to transport Viet Cong and North Vietnamese prisoners to Con Son (V-32), the notorious prison island some 120 miles south of Saigon. Although these small cells known as “tiger cages” had already been used at colonial times to keep anti-colonialists and leaders of rebellious movements as prisoners, they became especially known during the later years of the war in Vietnam because it was here that the prisoners of the Phoenix program were kept. For these flights, Air America used either Volpars (e.g. N9518Z, which flew there on 6 July 71) or C-46s (e.g. B-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{98} On the tape \textit{A Day in the life of an Air America pilot in Vietnam}, by Alex Goodkin, at 52 minutes, Air America C-47 “559” can be seen unloading fuel drums somewhere in South Vietnam. The tape is preserved at UTD/Goodkin/B1.
  \item \textsuperscript{99} XOXO of 14 February 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11.
  \item \textsuperscript{100} XOXOs of 8 February 72 (in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2), and 19 July 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B50F5.
\end{itemize}
910, which flew there on 24 July 71).\textsuperscript{101} Flights for customer “9103”, that is for the Revolutionary Development Cadre (RDC), were mostly 2 daily PC-6 flights Saigon (V-01) - Vung Tau (V-05) - Saigon, the first one (flight # 53) leaving at 8.25 hours, the second one (flight # 54) at 16.00 hours: On 20 April 71, N192X and N153L did the job, on 28 April 71 it was only N153L, on 11 May 71, it was N394R, and on 23 June 71 N185K.\textsuperscript{102} This schedule was changed in July 71: On 6 July 71, the 2 daily Saigon departures to Vung Tau were anticipated to 7.00 and 15.15 hours, using PC-6 N394R, and C-46 B-910 flew for the RDC on the Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Danang (V-03)-Hue (V-06)-Quang Tri (V-78)-Danang (V-03)-Saigon (V-01) route. On 19 July 71, only one flight for customer “9103” left Saigon, that is Volpar N6154U on a return trip to Vung Tau, on 20 July there was none, and on 24 July 71 it was only one return flight to Vung Tau using PC-6 N194X in the morning.\textsuperscript{103}

While most of those flights were operated out of Saigon, some Danang Station Monthly Reports have survived to illustrate the situation in northern South Vietnam: In March 70, revenue flight time returned to normal compared to a depression in February 70. “After two passenger flight schedule changes by CORDS, a morning departure, direct Saigon, was re-established utilizing C-46 equipment, which requires this aircraft to RON daily. It is not utilized on Sundays, since an alternate flight schedule with a C-47 out of Saigon is substituted that day of the week.”\textsuperscript{104} Passenger statistics for March 70 were: 2,613 in and 2,479 out for customer VN-70/AID, 534 in and 613 out for customer VN-70/Embassy, 6 out for contract “0069”, and 8 in and 5 out for contract “0030”.\textsuperscript{105} The passenger statistics for April 70 were a little bit lower, with 2,525 in and 2,289 out for customer VN-70/AID, 362 in and 673 out for customer VN-70/Embassy, 6 in for contract “0069”, and 8 in and 13 out for contract “0030”.\textsuperscript{106} For May 70, the passenger statistics are a little bit higher, that is 2,783 in and 2,631 out for customer VN-70/AID, 364 in and 695 out for customer VN-70/Embassy, 5 in and 4 out for contract “0069”, and 19 in and 25 out for contract “0030”.\textsuperscript{107} And for June and July 70, statistics are quite similar.\textsuperscript{108}

In January 71, statistics were quite low again, with 2,356 in and 2,216 out for customer VN-9101/AID, 317 in and 503 out for customer VN-9102/Embassy, 7 in and 5 out for contract “0069”, and 2 in and 4 out for contract “0030”.\textsuperscript{109} On 13 February 71, both main landing gears of Volpar N3674G collapsed on landing at Danang, but the passenger statistics were up again, with 2,735 in and 2,581 out for customer VN-9101/AID, 298 in and 645 out for customer VN-9102/Embassy, and 5 in and 1 out for contract “0069”; at the same time, the cargo transported for customer VN-9101/AID was 249,948 Lbs. in and 36,423 Lbs. out, compared to 400 Lbs. in and 8,641 Lbs. out for customer VN-9102/Embassy.\textsuperscript{110} The situation was even better in March 71: “Revenue flight time increased 143+05 hours as compared to

\textsuperscript{101} Saigon Daily Flight Schedules of 6 and 24 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1.

\textsuperscript{102} Saigon Daily Flight Schedules of 20 and 28 April, 11 May, and 23 June 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1.

\textsuperscript{103} Saigon Daily Flight Schedules of 6, 19, 20, and 24 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1.


February. Special flights on the part of AID and increased PC-6 and 204B utilization by the Embassy combined with very few cancellations were the main contributing factors for this increase. [...] The following is a breakdown of flight time generated by this station in March: VN-91/AID: 734+22; VN-91/Embassy: 230+17; VN-91/RDC: 1+41.

And this time the statistics went up to 2,872 passengers in and 2,908 passengers out as well as 310,324 Lbs. of cargo in and 36,232 Lbs. of cargo out for customer VN-91/AID and 433 passengers in and 717 passengers out as well as 1,700 Lbs. of cargo in and 8,723 Lbs. of cargo out for customer VN-91/Embassy. For April and May 71, the statistics show a small decrease again. The picture at Nha Trang is similar: In April 71, the number of departing passengers went down to 2970 from 3614 in March 71, the number of arriving passengers went down to 2603 from 3241 in March 71, the departing cargo went down to 175,851 Lbs. in April 71 from 300,314 Lbs. in March 71, and the arriving cargo went down to 151,130 Lbs. in April 71 from 175,465 Lbs. in March 71. Back in 1970, J. C. Clemente had given the following portrait of Air America’s Nha Trang Station in 1970

(Air America Log, vol. IV, no.1, 1970, pp.4-5)

Air America’s Nha Trang Station: “Air America’s Nha Trang Station is located at Long Van Air Base, adjacent to the South Vietnamese coastal city of Nha Trang, some 160 air miles northeast of Saigon. The station was opened in mid-1966 and has made tremendous progress ever since. Like other Vietnam Stations, AAM/NHA helps fulfill the Company’s contracts with the U.S. Government by handling passengers and cargo – primarily for CORDS/USAID and CSD [Combined Studies Division]/MACV. AAM personnel at Nha Trang perform all routine maintenance on the fixed wing aircraft assigned to the station. Operations extend throughout the central Vietnamese highlands, covering some thirteen provinces. Although operations and maintenance have been slightly reduced lately, AAM/NHA still handles a monthly average of 6,500 passengers and a million pounds of cargo; transit aircraft average 300 and RONs 280. Total personnel in Maintenance, Traffic, Operations, Communications and other departments number 106, which includes Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipinos, and Americans. Present Station manager is Dan Lawson; Traffic Manager – Russ Desmond; and Chief of Maintenance – Jerry Griffis.” During the second half of 1971, Air America’s Nha Trang Station generated a new use of Company aircraft, that is as “static displays and/or actual classrooms for ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) airborne rangers. The idea

19
ARVN airborne rangers practicing with and in Air America aircraft at Nha Trang in 1971
(Air America Log, vol. V, no.7, p. 5)

germinated in the searching mind of United States Army Captain Lonnie Welch [...] who was
Air Operations Officer for the 5th Special Forces.” Among his many duties, Captain Welch
was an instructor to ARVN airborne troops. So he conceived the idea of using certain Air
America aircraft at Nha Trang – when they were transiting or remaining overnight – as static
displays or as actual classrooms for his students, coordinating his requirements with the
Station Manager of Nha Trang. The 3 types of Air America aircraft he used for static display
and schoolroom purposes were C-46s, Caribous and PC-68s.

Air America’s Can Tho Station (V-17) celebrated its first anniversary on 10 January 1970.
To commemorate that anniversary, Boyd D. Mesecher wrote in the Air America Log of 1970:

The celebration party at Can Tho on 10 Jan. 70
(Air America Log, vol. IV, no.5, 1970, p.6)

“Early in 1969, John Carter, Supervisor Regional Maintenance Department, Saigon, and a
crew of maintenance and supply personnel from Saigon arrived at Can Tho with a minimum
of supplies and equipment to set up an aircraft maintenance operation there. The objective in
establishing this facility at Can Tho was to provide our customers – U.S. Embassy and
CORDS [...] – with improved service at lower cost by keeping AAM aircraft in Can Tho for
longer periods of time and by having the facilities and manpower to keep them airworthy
while at Can Tho. Through the efforts of Mr. Carter and his maintenance and supply people,

116 Dan Lawson, “ARVN airborne troops use Air America planes as schoolrooms”, in: Air America Log, vol. V,
no.7, p. 5 (including quotation).
and with the exceptional cooperation and assistance of the Chief, Air Operations/CORDS and his personnel, the original objectives set for Air America’s operation at Can Tho were successfully met for the entire first year. Through the efforts and teamwork of all personnel involved, the Can Tho operation has been developed and expanded to provide these facilities: a supply room equipped with adequate storage space and parts racks in lieu of the original Conex box; provisions for storing and protecting Company tools and employee tool boxes and aircraft handling and maintenance equipment to meet the requirements of overnight service checks.”

A more detailed picture can be found in Air America’s Saigon Daily Flight Schedules, which also note which aircraft were temporarily based at outside stations in South Vietnam. On 20 April 71, 5 aircraft were based at Danang (V-03): Volpars N9956Z and N3674G as well as Bell 204B N1307X to be operated for customer “9101” or CORDS, and PC-6 N391R and Bell 204B N1304X to be operated for customer “9102” or the U.S. Embassy. On 11 May 71, the fleet assigned to Danang was still the same, although the individual aircraft had been exchanged, now being Volpars N6154U and N9664C as well as Bell 204B N1306X for CORDS and PC-6 N9444 and Bell 204B N1307X for the Embassy. The same can be said for 23 June 71, the fleet for CORDS now comprising Volpars N91295 and N9664C as well as Bell 204B N1307X flying for CORDS and PC-6 N391R and Bell 204B N1303X flying for the Embassy. There were no big changes on 19 July 71, with Volpars N9956Z and N3674G as well as Bell 204B N1307X flying for CORDS and PC-6 N748N and Bell 204B N1303X flying for the Embassy. The picture is still the same on 20 July. And on 24 July 71, only Volpar N9664C and Bell 204B N1307X were still flying for CORDS, while the Embassy fleet was still the same.

On 20 April 71, Nha Trang (V-07) station housed C-47 “559” as well as Volpars N6154U and N9577Z to be operated for CORDS and Volpar N7770B as well as PC-6 N748N for use on flights for the Embassy. On 11 May 71, the Nha Trang fleet had been slightly modernized, as C-47 “559” had been replaced by Caribou N544Y, but there were still 2 Volpars (N9956Z and N9577Z) for CORDS and Volpar N7770B and PC-6 N192X for operations for the Embassy. Nearly the same can be said for 23 June 71, the fleet for CORDS now comprising Caribou N539Y as well as Volpars N9956Z and N9577Z, but only PC-6 N192X was left for Embassy flights. On 6 July 71, Caribou B-851 left Nha Trang for Saigon, but Volpars N6154U and N9577Z still flew for CORDS, while Volpar N7770B and PC-6 N748N flew for the Embassy. On 19 July 71, only Volpars N91295 and N9577Z flew for CORDS, and Volpar N7770B as well as PC-6 N198X flew for the Embassy. On 20 July, the Embassy Volpar N7770B left for Saigon, but CORDS received C-47 “147”. And on 24 July 71, Volpars N91295 and N9577Z flew for CORDS again, while Volpar N6154U and PC-6 N198X were used for Embassy flights. In January 75, Nha Trang Station still had 15 Air America employees.

At Can Tho (V-17) station, 5 of the 6 aircraft based there on 20 April 71 were for use by customer “9101” or CORDS, that is Volpar N91295, Porters N185K, N285L, and N12450, as well as Bell 204B N1305X; only PC-6 N192X was to be operated for customer “9102” or the Embassy. On 11 May 71, the fleet assigned to Can Tho was still the same, although some of

the aircraft had been exchanged, now comprising Volpar N91295, PC-6s N285L, N194X, and N198X as well as Bell 204B N8514F for CORDS and only PC-6 N185K for the Embassy. The same can be said for 23 June 71, the fleet for CORDS then comprising Volpar N91295, PC-6s N285L, N153L, and N184L as well as Bell 204B N1305X and only PC-6 N185K to be used on Embassy flights. On 6 July 71, PC-6 N285L left Can Tho for Saigon, but Volpar N9956Z, PC-6s N192X and N12450 as well as Bell 204B N1303X still flew for CORDS, while Bell 204B N1305X and PC-6 N9444 flew for the Embassy. On 19 July 71, only Volpar N9518Z, PC-6s N285L and N394R and Bell 204B N1305X flew for CORDS, and PC-6 N192X for the Embassy. On 20 July, PC-6 N391R had replaced N285L in the CORDS fleet, while PC-6 N9444 had been added to the Embassy fleet. But on 24 July 71, we have again the old situation, with Volpar N9518Z, PC-6s N185K, N391R, and N394R as well as Bell 204B N1304X operating for CORDS and only PC-6 N9444 working on Embassy flights.121

There was also a center of Air America operations at Pleiku (V-04 and PXU),122 but this got the status of an official Air America Station only very late, possibly only in 1973. As could be seen above, a lot of flights coming from Saigon ended there before returning to Saigon or went on to Danang. There was also a maintenance facility.123 As to the Technical Services Department as of 31 December 74, they had 6 people working at Pleiku, compared to 29 people working at Danang, 25 people working at Nha Trang, and 13 people working at Can Tho.124 Pleiku was the smallest of all Air America stations in South Vietnam. In November 74, there were 146 aircraft departures at Pleiku, compared to 446 at Saigon, 281 at Danang, 204 at Nha Trang, and 325 at Can Tho. In December 74, the numbers were 143 at Pleiku, compared to 446 at Saigon, 256 at Danang, 212 at Nha Trang, and 275 at Can Tho.125

Air America aircraft transiting Pleiku in December 74 included C-47s “559” on 6 December and C-47 “147” on 20 December, while UH-1Hs “20081” and “15916” were operating in the Pleiku area during the same period of time.126 At the end, probably since 1973, there were also small “sub-bases” at Bien Hoa (V-02), Phan Thiet (V-11), My Tho (V-183), and Hue (V-06),127 regional headquarters of ICCS Air Services.

Effective 1 July 70, USAID contract no. AID-VN-91 replaced contract no. AID-VN-70 for Fiscal Year 71, although it was only in October 70 that an agreement on the pricing was reached.128 In February 71, six Bell 204Bs129 were assigned to contract AID-VN-91, two operating out of Saigon (V-01), two out of Danang (V-03), and two out of Can Tho (V-17); that was the normal set up, but it could vary somewhat according to the circumstances. There were two customers, that is CORDS (no. 9101) and the Embassy (no. 9102). Hazardous cargo

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123 “As the MTS/SVN, I was responsible for fixed and rotary wing maintenance, supply, support shops, facility maintenance, avionics (air and ground) plus technical training [at Saigon]. I oversaw these same functions at Can Tho, Nha Trang, Danang, and Pleiku” (Boyd D. Mesecher, Candidate, in: Air America Log, vol. XVIII, no. 4, December 2001, p. 16).
127 In January 75, there were 5 Air America people working at Bien Hoa, 3 at Phan Thiet, 3 at My Tho, and 10 at Hue, all of them Ground personnel (Var M. Green, South Vietnam Monthly Report to CEO for January 75, p. 5, online readable at http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/1818029/197529.pdf).
128 Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc. of 13 October 70 and 27 October 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4.
for the 204B program included fuel drums, Butane bottles, insecticides, hard rice, tear gas, and troops carrying loaded weapons and grenades. Grenades were usually carried hung from the uniform by the detonation lever.\(^\text{130}\) But the utilization of the 6 Bell 204Bs is different at the 3 bases: For the helicopters based at Saigon, the “Evaluation of Project Operations 204-B program” of 20 February 71 gives the following picture: “The CORDS aircraft in Saigon has a pre-set schedule 8+00 hrs each day seven days a week. This aircraft usually flies more than the scheduled 8+00 hrs. It is utilized in both cargo and passenger operations. Two days each week missions originate at Saigon. Other missions originate at An-Loc, Song-Be, Ham-Tan, Tan-An, Xuan-Loc, Phu-Loi, and Bien-Hoa. Missions also include low level recons, and command and control operations for Province Chiefs in ARVN Military Operations. The second aircraft at Saigon flies some (very few) Embassy missions, extra CORDS missions, training missions, and is used as a maintenance ‘swap’ aircraft. Total time out of Saigon averages 360 hrs of which 95% is CORDS. […] The Saigon 204B operation is primarily a passenger, recon. operation and secondarily a cargo operation. However, most of the passengers are some type of VN Military and carry ammunition with them. The hazardous cargo operation out of Saigon averages 20%. The overall cargo operation averages 24% hazardous cargo.”\(^\text{131}\)

For Air America’s Danang-based Bell 204Bs, the “Evaluation of Project Operations 204-B program” of 20 February 71 notes: “One aircraft stationed in Da-Nang works for Customer 9101 or CORDS. The second aircraft is assigned to Customer 9102 or Embassy. The 9101 aircraft is scheduled to fly 8 hrs each day at some location in I CORDS and usually flies more than the 8+00 scheduled hours. All normal daily schedules for CORDS are at the direction of FU/PSD Advisor at the various locations. The main work locations are Tam-Ky, Hoi-An, Quang-Ngai, Hue, and Quang-Tri. Working for the PSD Advisor at these locations involves both passenger and cargo operations. The passengers are normally VN troops of some description, National Police, ARVN, PF etc. The Embassy aircraft does not work a set schedule. Missions are scheduled as needed. It is interesting to note that there is a large increase in flight time for the Embassy aircraft during the rainy season. This is due to the fact that many Embassy fixed-wing flights are aborted during the rainy season for weather reasons. When this happens the mission is re-scheduled for the 204B aircraft. Other Embassy missions are both cargo and passenger with a large percentage of VIPs. The total 204B time out of Da-Nang averages approximately 300 hrs. Of this approximately 90% is CORDS or 9101. The overall cargo operation averages 28% hazardous cargo. […] Most of our sling cargo work is done out of Danang. Approximately 30% of cargo out of Danang is by cargo sling. Hazardous cargo averages 85% overall in Dananig Operations.”\(^\text{132}\) And the Can-Tho operation is described as follows: “Can-Tho 204B aircraft are also assigned one to each customer. The CORDS aircraft is utilized in the same manner as the Da-Nang, CORDS aircraft with the exception that several missions are flown for Phoenix each month. The Phoenix missions are usually flying inspection teams to various locations. The normal CORDS missions are out of Ca-Mau, Rach-Gla, Ben-Tre, Tra-Vinh, Ha-Tien, Chau-Doc, and Phuoc-Hoa Island. Can-Tho CORDS aircraft are scheduled daily rather than a set schedule.

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\(^{130}\) Evaluation of Project Operations 204-B program, that is Memo no. CP-V-71-099 of 20 Feb. 71, CIA doc. no. 0000174090 at \url{http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000174090.pdf}.

\(^{131}\) Evaluation of Project Operations 204-B program, that is Memo no. CP-V-71-099 of 20 Feb. 71, CIA doc. no. 0000174090 at \url{http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000174090.pdf}.

\(^{132}\) Evaluation of Project Operations 204-B program, that is Memo no. CP-V-71-099 of 20 Feb. 71, CIA doc. no. 0000174090 at \url{http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000174090.pdf}.
An Air America flight into Can Tho
(photo by Ed McCain)

The Embassy aircraft in Can-Tho does very little work. It is normally used for missions with the VN National Police. The total flight time out of Can-Tho is approximately 175 hours per month. Again approximately 90% of this time is for CORDS. […] Can-Tho missions are usually either inspection teams or VN National Police missions. All cargo on National Police missions is hazardous. CORDS missions are both cargo and passenger and of the cargo 25% is hazardous.\textsuperscript{133} There were also some other dangers that Air America’s helicopters crews had to face in South Vietnam: unimproved, unlisted, and remote landing areas. “Over 20% of 204B program landings were made without the benefit of any FIC briefing or any written information regarding security, obstacles, condition of surface etc. […], [but with] uneven touchdown areas, debris in landing area or some other hazard making the area marginal for landing […]. My conservative estimate is that 90% of our landing zones are marginal. The 204B program I CORDS operations averages 50% remote area operation. […] Saigon and Can-Tho operations average 70% remote area operation. The overall remote area operation averages 60%. This is based on a 15 minute reaction time and a 30 minute flight from SAR centers.”\textsuperscript{134}

But helicopter operations were only one aspect of Air America’s project operations in South Vietnam. In his memorandum no. A/VPA-71-28 of 22 May 1971, Air America’s A/VPA [Assistant to Vice President Administration] C. H. Green studies the development of Air America’s Project Operations in South Vietnam during the first quarter of 1971 compared to the situation in 1970. His conclusion is that “the overall evaluation and study did not reveal any large significant or substantial changes in the hazardous flying conditions in South Vietnam” – the aircraft just received some more ground fire, that is a total of 9 hits during that


period compared to 3 hits during the 4th quarter of 1970. On 1 April 71, there were a total of 32 Air America aircraft – 4 C-46s, 3 Caribous, 8 Volpars, 11 PC-6s, and 6 Bell 204Bs – on contract in South Vietnam, whose operations are then described as follows: “C-46 Type Aircraft. The overall flying schedule of the C-46’s remains the same. One C-46 is temporarily assigned to Danang flying daily scheduled flight Monday through Saturday, from Danang/Saigon/Danang. A second C-46 is assigned to Saigon and flies a daily schedule Monday through Saturday Saigon/Nha Trang/Saigon. The remaining two C-46’s plus 1 spare C-46 are unscheduled and are used for cargo, for back up aircraft for others in service at maintenance. The C-46 fleet carries approximately 50% of the total passengers and total pounds of cargo carried in South Vietnam each month. The C-46 fleet flies 56% over hostile or suspected hostile territory, approximately 5% of the cargo is considered hazardous, 45.5% of their landings are made into marginal airstrips and no flying is considered extreme remote area flying. During the first quarter of 1971 the C-46’s fleet logged 1,752 block hours and the C-46’s fleet received no hits from ground fire and no ground firings were reported for this period. DHC-4’s Type Aircraft. The 9101 Customer has 3 DHC-4’s on contract. One DHC-4

DHC-4 N544Y, taken at Tan Son Nhut in January 1970 by Bob Livingstone (with kind permission from Bob Livingstone)

is assigned at Nha Trang and flies the following schedule: (1) A South Courier Flight on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (Nha Trang, Phan Rang, Phan Thiet, Bao Loc, Nha Trang, Dalat, Gia Nyhia, Ban Me Tho, Nha Trang). (2) A North Courier Flight on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays (Nha Trang, Tuy Hoa, Phu Bon, Pleiku, Kontun, Aui Nhon, Nha Trang). It is also scheduled for cargo flights in Military Region II before and after the scheduled courier flights. The second DHC-4 flight out of Saigon is scheduled for a daily morning and afternoon round trip flight Saigon/Can Tho/Saigon on Monday through Saturday and with only one round trip on Sunday. In addition to the above scheduled flights, the DHC-4 is used for cargo flights when the requirement exists in Military Regions II, III, and IV. The third DHC-4 is used for cargo flights or for student moves in the three southern corps areas on a as required basis. Of the DHC-4 fleet 62% of the DHC-4’s flying is over hostile or suspected hostile territory. Approximately 5% of the cargo carried is considered hazardous. 82.5% of their landings are into marginal airstrips and no flying is considered extreme remote area flying. During the 1st quarter of 1971 the DHC-4 fleet logged 1247 block hours and the DHC-4 fleet received no hits from ground fire and no ground firings were reported for this

period. **VTB Type Aircraft.** There are 8 VTB’s assigned to 9101 Customer. Two VTB’s at Danang, 3 VTB’s at Nha Trang and 3 VTB’s at Saigon. The 2 VTB’s at Danang are used for passenger and light cargo flights. At Nha Trang the VTB’s are also scheduled for passenger and light cargo flights with balance of the operation at Customer direction. The 3 VTB’s that fly out of Saigon are not scheduled and all fly at the Customers direction or Special Flights with the exception of a scheduled courier flight on Tuesday and Friday (Saigon/Can Tho/Bien Hoa/Danang/Nha Trang/Saigon).

Normally VTB’s are not assigned to Can Tho, however, on occasion one will replace a Porter, when a Porter is not otherwise available. 67% of the VTB’s fleet flying is over hostile territory, approximately 3% of its cargo is considered hazardous. 79% of their landings are made into marginal airstrips and no flying is considered extreme remote area flying. During the 1st quarter of 1971 the VTB fleet logged 2,802 block hours and the VTB fleet received four (4) hits from ground fire and no ground firings were reported for the period. The VTB fleet, for this quarter, received more hits than the other type aircraft Air America has in South Vietnam. **PC-6 Type Aircraft.** There are 11 PC-6’s assigned to Contract VN-91. One is assigned to Danang, one to Nha Trang, 5 to Bien Hoa and 4 are assigned to Can Tho. Danang. At Danang the one PC-6 flies both on a schedule and at customer direction. Nha Trang. At Nha Trang the PC-6 is assigned to the 9102 Customer and flies customer directed by both customers and averages a daily block time of 2+15 hours. Bien Hoa. There are 5 PC-6’s that work for the Bien Hoa customer and the aircraft originate out of Saigon. They fly scheduled flights Monday through Saturday and one PC-6 flies scheduled flights every other Sunday – Also there is a frequent ‘loan’ of aircraft between customers. The 9101 Customer schedules the 100, 200 and 400 hundred series flights as listed on the Saigon Flight Schedule. 9102 Customer flies Flight 58 which is Saigon/Bien Hoa and as customer directs. Can Tho. Normally four (4) PC-6’s are assigned to Can Tho with 3 being assigned to 9101 Customer and one to 9102 Customer. The 3 PC-6’s for 9101 Customer fly daily scheduled flights as reflected on the Saigon Flight Schedule. The one PC-6 assigned to the 9102 Customer does not fly a fixed schedule, but flies at customers direction. 76% of the
PC-6 fleet flying is over hostile or suspected hostile territory, 1.9% of its cargo is considered hazardous, 84.2% of their landings are into marginal areas and 60% of their flying is considered extreme remote area flying. In the 1st quarter of 1971 the PC-6 fleet logged 4904 block hours and received 3 hits from ground fire plus reporting 2 ground firings for this period. The PC-6 fleet for this quarter is second for having received the most hits. 204B Type Aircraft. There are 6 204B’s assigned to VN-91 Customer. Danang. At Danang two 204B’s are normally assigned, one to 9101 and one to 9102 Customer. Both fly at customers direction. Can Tho. The Can Tho assigned 204B’s are utilized in the same manner as the Danang aircraft – at customer direction. Bien Hoa. Bien Hoa aircraft originate out of Saigon and fly a pre-set scheduled 8+00 hours each day seven days a week. They are utilized for both cargo and passenger operation. A second aircraft at Saigon flies Embassy missions, extra CORDS missions, training missions, and is used as a maintenance ‘swap’ aircraft. The Saigon 204B operation is primarily for passengers, recon operations and secondarily a cargo operation. 93% of the 204B fleet [flying] is considered over hostile or suspected hostile territory, approximately 21% of the cargo is considered hazardous, 90% of the landings are made into marginal areas and 60% of their flying is considered extreme remote area flying. During the 1st quarter of 1971 the 204B fleet logged 2,413 block hours, the fleet received 2 hits from ground fire plus one ground firing was reported for the period. The 204B fleet is third for having received the most hits for this period. Nevertheless, one of Air America’s Bell 204Bs, that is N1303X, accumulated 10,000 hours of airframe time on 1 September 71. When 03X touched down on Air America’s helipad at Saigon’s Tan Son Nhut airport that day and achieved the enviable 10,000 mark, the crew (Captain Larry G. Stadulis, Senior Instructor

Air America’s PC-6 flight line at Saigon in the early seventies  
(with kind permission from Tony Coalson)

Pilot-Rotary Wing; First Officer D. R. Riley; and Chief Flight Mechanic Vernon F. Durham) was met by three CORDS Representatives (Mr. Jim Jackson, CORDS Deputy Chief Air Operations; Mr. E. D. Boyce, CORDS Air Operations Officer Saigon; and Mr. Tom Lily, CORDS Chief Air Operations Nha Trang), by Air America’s Base Manager Saigon Jack Barnhisel, and by Air America’s Manager Technical Services-South Vietnam Boyd D. Mesecher. A second Saigon-based Bell 204B (N1305X) reached 10,000 flying hours on 8 November 71 and a third (N1304X) on 27 December 1971.137

Flying under the provisions of contracts AID/VN-91 and later AID/VN-100 could also mean intelligence work. First Lieutenant Edgar R. McCain, US Army was assigned to the Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam in January 1971. In this role, he was responsible for tracking Viet Cong activities, strength, and recruitment throughout South Viet Nam by means of a program known as “Big MAC”, and would perform other project work as necessary. Without discussing the details of the “Big MAC” program, it involved MACV and Phoenix advisors reporting on Viet Cong activities in their areas of responsibility. LT Ed McCain would go to the areas whose reports indicated increases in VC activity, strength, and/or recruitment in order to verify the accuracy of the reports and gather additional intelligence on the enemy. To get to the areas of interest, LT McCain very often flew in various Air America aircraft. Due to its ability to take off and land in very tight spaces, it was soon learned that the Pilatus PC-6 Porter was his favorite! Whatever the source of the aircraft, they were only used to transport personnel to or near the required locations.

The Pilatus Porter suited the needs of the “Big MAC” program very well, since there were very few passengers and only basic gear (light weapons, courier bag or briefcase, etc.) being transported. Often, LT McCoin traveled alone, and there were never more than four people. On occasion, the GOB Branch Operations Officer, Major Dwight T. DeVoss, would travel along, especially for various project work missions not necessarily related to “Big MAC”. Ed McCoin states that “The first time I rode in the Pilatus Porter, I was sitting just behind the pilot, and two other passengers, whom I did not know, were in the aircraft as well. When the pilot started working the hand crank just above his right shoulder in order to adjust the flaps, I could see what appeared to be a bicycle chain on the sprocket being turned by the crank. I wondered what kind of plane I had been stuck with! It made me very nervous, but it only took a couple of trips in the Porter to learn to appreciate the capabilities of the little plane! […] I recall the first time landing on a small strip made of Marston Matting as a passenger on the Porter. Marston Matting is interlocked steel sections used to quickly build a temporary landing strip. It was great! The pilot stopped the aircraft so quickly that I couldn’t believe it! There were only the two of us, and I was riding up front. When we took off, I was even more amazed! It seemed that we only rolled a few feet before the wheels left the matting of the runway! The pilot revved the engine with the brake on until I thought the plane would jump into the air, and when he released the brake, it almost did!”

Other Air America aircraft used by Ed McCoin were a “4 seat, single engine” aircraft – apparently a Helio Courier – and a “6 or 8 passenger aircraft” that had two engines and two pilots, apparently a Volpar, and between January and October 71, his missions included several flights to Vung Tau (V-05) for observing or conducting Advisor training as well as flights to Can Tho (V-17), Danang (V-03), Hoi An (V-206), Duc Duc, Dai Loc, Nha Trang (V-07), Pleiku (V-04), Cao Lahn (V-53), Quan Long (Ca Mau, V-10), Truc Giang (Ben Tre, V-14), Phuoc Vinh (V-50), Bac Lieu (V-58), Khang Hung (Soc Trang, V-16), Chi Lang, Chau Tau, Moc Hoa (V-51), Qui Nhon (V-13), Tuy Hoa (V-113), and Cam Ranh (V-54) in order to collect intelligence about the Viet Cong.
Air America flight into Vung Tau delivering Ed McCoin to the MACV and Phoenix Advisors’ school to make a presentation

The MACV and Phoenix Advisors’ school at Vung Tau (V-05) in the early seventies (photo by Ed McCoin)

With North Vietnamese troops more and more pressing their invasion of the South in the early seventies, Air America was ever more called upon to help evacuate refugees. As the South Vietnamese Minister of Labor said in his Citation dated 12 June 72: “In addition, during the past two years, Air America has participated in major refugee movements. A total of 14,717 Vietnamese refugees who were in Cambodia during the year 1970, and subsequently arrived in Vung Tau, were transported from Vung Tau by Air America to Bao Loc and Ham Tan, South Vietnam for relocation. Later, in 1972, Air America again participated in refugee movements. A total of 1,317 refugees were flown by Air America from Quang Tri to Phuoc Tuy, and 4,324 refugees were transported from Hue to Ban Me Thuot and the Vung Tau City. Since that time additional relocations have been possible through the support rendered by Air America.”141

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Air America’s C-46s were ordered to have 69 high density seats installed on certain flights that passed thru Vung Tau (V-05); those flights, or at least some legs of those flights, are believed to have been refugee airlifts. One such refugee airlift was probably operated by C-46 B-910 that on 20 April 71 flew for customer “9101”, that is for CORDS the route Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Phan Rang (V-28)-Nha Trang (V-07)-Tuy Hoa (V-15)-Song Be (V-30)- and back to Saigon (V-01) with 65 seats installed; the same day, C-46 N67984 flew Saigon-Vung Tau-Saigon for customer “9101”. On 23 June 71, C-46s B-910 and B-928 were ordered to have 69 seats each installed for “9101” flights Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Danang (V-03)-Quang Tri (V-78)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Saigon (V-01) for B-910 and Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Pleiku (V-04)-Kontum (V-15)-Quang Tri (V-78)-Danang (V-03)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Saigon (V-01) for B-928, and both Caribous were ordered to carry “full”, that is 47 seats on their “9101” flights Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Phan Rang (V-28)-Dong Ba Thin (V-198)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Saigon (V-01) for N539Y and Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Moc Hoa (V-51)-Quan Long (V-10)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Quan Long (V-10)-Can Tho (V-17)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Saigon (V-01) for N544Y – evidently, all of these flights were refugee movements. On 6 July 71, China Airlines C-46 “CA-1” was ordered to have 50 seats installed on a “9101” flight Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Quang Ngai (V-23)-Tam Ky (V-40)-Danang (V-03)-Qui Nhon (V-13)-Saigon (V-01) – apparently another refugee airlift. On 19 July 71, C-46s B-912 and B-928 were again ordered to install 69 seats on a flight for customer “9101”: B-912 flew Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Cheo Reo (V-27)-Pleiku (V-04)-Nha Trang (V-07)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Phan Thiet (V-11)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Saigon (V-01), and B-928 flew Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Quang Ngai (V-23)-Pleiku (V-04)-Nha Trang (V-07)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Saigon (V-01). And the following day, on 20 July 71, C-46s B-912 and B-928 evidently flew another refugee airlift for customer “9101” with 69 seats installed in both aircraft, that is B-912 flew Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Ban Me Thuot City (V-12)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Saigon (V-01), and B-928 flew Saigon (V-01)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Danang (V-03)-Vung Tau (V-05)-Saigon (V-01). Among other movements, in the spring of 1972, Air America C-46s and C-47s were used to transport Vietnamese refugees from Hue (V-06), just south of the Demilitarized Zone, to Ban Me Thuot East (V-12), some 200 nautical miles south and slightly west of Hue.

In May 72, two Air America C-123Ks from Vientiane were been put to work under the

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147 See the pictures in Air America Log, vol. VII, no.2, 1973, pp.4-5.
VN-100 contract from 9 May 72 to 29 June 72, the first two being “545” and “616”, which were replaced by “555” and “556” by the end of May and later by “576” and “374”. Their main job was to carry cargo from Saigon to Danang. At the same time, the withdrawal of US troops continued all the time, and it is within this context that Air America crews also ferried USAF C-123Ks from South Vietnam back to Clark AFB in the Philippines under the 002 contract. These ferry flights commenced on 15 December 72, with 8 flights from Phan Rang (V-28) and 11 from Saigon (V-01) in December 72, 13 flights from Saigon in January 73, and 1 more ferry flight in February 73. But immediately before signing the Paris cease-fire agreement, some dignitaries from the US Senate came to South Vietnam to look at the political and military situation: So three Air America Bell 204Bs were used on 17, 18, and 19 January 1973 to fly them to several locations in Region III.

5) Covert operations, 1969-1973:

Little is known about covert operations supported by Air America in South Vietnam in that period. Although USAID and then CORDS was officially the main contractor to Air America in South Vietnam, all CIA missions in South Vietnam were flown as part of the USAID/CORDS contracts. Within those contracts, all CIA requirements were handled with priority. This work included intelligence and communication flights, especially to small mountain villages and islands, including the transportation of Montagnard soldiers as part of special missions, and it then probably also included the evacuation of wounded or dead soldiers. Sometimes, Air America’s Bell 204Bs supported US Navy SEALs in underwater demolition work, inserted agents into enemy-held territory or were used by MACV Military Advisors – but this work has been described above in chapter 4 (“Contract flying 1969-73”), because, of course, covert operations were also part of contract work.

6) Help from China Airlines 1969-73:

As has been seen above, according to the contract that Air America had with the Logistical Support Group effective 1 July 69, that is according to contract no. F49604-70-C-0023, the Company itself had to furnish only call aircraft, while the basic services were to be flown by “subcontractor” aircraft, that is by China Airlines. That means that this contract also included the sub-contract that Air America had with China Airlines, which in 1969 was still contract no. 67-63 of 27 September 67 that covered 2 basic C-123s and 1 basic C-46 plus one additional C-46 upon request. On 7 July 70, contract no. 70-34 replaced the old one that Air America had with China Airlines, and so, effective 1 July 70, China Airlines’ contract fleet was further reduced to 2 basic C-123s and 1 call C-46, and for the first time, the contract does not only contain a price for flying hours below the minimum, that is from 0 to 330:00 hours per calendar quarter, but also a special agreement for hazardous flight time. For the C-123s, this agreement states that the normal crew complement would consist of “a Pilot, Co-Pilot, Flight Engineer and Parachute Dropping Officer” for C-123s. The aircraft operated

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149 Saigon Base monthly reports for these months, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.
151 Harnage, A thousand faces, pp. 14/5, 67/8, and 81/2.
152 E-mail dated 4 February 2005, kindly sent by Les Flammer to Dr. Erik Carlson who forwarded it to the author.
153 UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 21.
154 “Company contracts”, that is Memorandum no. VP-L/72-33 dated 2 February 72, in: UTD/CIA/B1F10.
156 Contract no. 70-34 of 7 July 70, preserved in: UTD/CIA/B40F3.
Contract no. 70-34 of 7 July 70 (pp.1 and Annex, p.1) that China Airlines had with Air America (in: UTD/CIA/B40F3)

by China Airlines during that period were the same two C-123Bs as before, but they were reserialled as “ST-1” (ex “625”) and ST-2” (ex “675”) in August 68 and converted to C-123K models in 1969. After “ST-2” had been destroyed in a crash near Pleiku (V-04) on 26 August 72, killing the crew of 4 and 4 passengers,157 it was replaced by C-123K “ST-3” (ex USAF 55-4531) in December 72,158 and this aircraft is mentioned in the surviving Saigon Base Monthly Reports of Air America between 9 December 72 and December 73.159 On 20 April 71, C-123K “ST-1” flew Saigon (V-01) - Dalat/Cam Ly (V-08) - Danang (V-03) and then back to Saigon for CORDS (customer “9101”), while C-123K “ST-2” proceeded from Saigon to Nha Trang (V-07), from where it flew “C/D”, that is at customer’s direction, before returning to Saigon: The customer was “9102”, that is the US Embassy. The Saigon Daily Flight Schedules that have survived show that “ST-2” flew a similar mission on 20 July 71, that is first to Nha Trang and then “C/D”, that is at customer’s direction, before returning to Saigon. On 23 June 71, “ST-1” flew Saigon - Ban Me Thuot (V-12) - Saigon for the Embassy on a “DCA flight”, believed to stand for the “Defense Communications Agency”. But most of the time, both China Airlines C-123Ks flew for CORDS: It was “ST-02” that flew Saigon (V-01) - Qui Nhon (V-13) - Tuy Hoa (V-113) - Nha Trang (V-07) - Phan Rang (V-28) - Phan Thiet (V-11) - and back to Saigon on 28 April 71 for customer “9101”. On 6 July 71, “ST-2” flew Saigon-Nha Trang-Saigon on scheduled flight # 2N/2S with “C/L seats” (centerline seats) installed for customer “9101”, and on 19 July 71, “ST-2” flew Saigon (V-01) - Dalat/Cam Ly (V-08) - Vung Tau (V-05) - Saigon and in the afternoon Saigon (V-01) - Truc Giang (V-14) - Con Son (V-32) - Can Tho (V-17) and back to Saigon.160

157 XOXO of 26 August 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2; Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc. of 12 September 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7; Memorandum of 17 February 75, in: UTD/CIA/B18F2.
158 A letter dated 22 December 72, sent by China Airlines to Air America (in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel 21) mentions that the insurance covered this aircraft (ST-3 / 531) from 6 December 72 onwards.
159 In: UTD/CIA/B41F7+B42F2.
At the beginning of our period, China Airlines C-46 “CA-1” was still the old one (no.2, that is msn 30205, ex B-1549) that had entered service for Air America in 1966. On 29 April 69, it was damaged by gunfire one mile southwest of Quang Ngai (V-23), slightly injuring the pilot and the co-pilot, but was temporarily repaired at V-23 and then ferried back to Saigon with the same crew the same day,\(^{161}\) so that on 11 May 69, it was used on an Air America flight from Danang (V-03) to Saigon (V-01).\(^{162}\) This “CA-1” had been gray and white and was apparently replaced by another, aluminum C-46 also serialled “CA-1” in October 70,\(^{163}\) that is by the third C-46 to bear this tail number. This C-46 “CA-1” (no.3) was operated for Air America on flights from Saigon (V-01) to Danang (V-3), Vung Tau (V-05), Nha Trang (V-07), Dalat/Cam Ly (V-08), Quy Nhon (V-11), Quang Ngai (V-23), Tam Ky (V-40), and Chu Lai (V-194) at least between 28 April 71 and 6 July 71 for customer “9101", that is for CORDS.\(^{164}\) On 19 May 72, C-46 “CA-1” (no.3) suffered from an in-flight fire of the right engine 13 miles northeast of Saigon on 19 May 72, but landed safely at Tan Son Nhu with the landing gear up. The aircraft was towed to the Air America west ramp\(^{165}\) and apparently repaired, as the Saigon Base Monthly Reports continue to mention this aluminum CA-1 until September 72. Between 11 and 18 September 72, it ferried rice from Saigon to Phnom Penh as “EM-2” (no.2), but then it reverted to “CA-1", and due to lesser capacity needs, “CA-1” was cancelled from the list of aircraft operating for Air America Saigon in late September 72.\(^{166}\) In spite of the restrictions of contract no. 70-34, some more China Airlines C-46s were operated for Air America in 1972, but only for short periods. Between April and September 72,\(^{167}\) a white and aluminum C-46 with tail number “CA-2", the second aircraft to bear this serial (msn 97, ex B-1507),\(^{168}\) was operated for Air America and also ferried rice to Cambodia.\(^{169}\) Apparently only for a couple of days,\(^{170}\) China Airlines C-46A B-1551 (msn 30460)\(^{171}\) flew for Air America as “EM-2", before it crashed on approach to Pleiku (V-04) on 5 June 72, killing 32 people, i.e. 3 CAL crew, 11 US military, 14 South Vietnamese military, 1 South Vietnamese civilian woman and 3 CAL deadhead mechanics. The aircraft had been en route Saigon (V-01) - Ban Me Thuot (V-12) - Pleiku (V-04) - Hue Phu Bai (V-06) - Ban Me Thuot (V-12) and was to fly back to Saigon (V-01).\(^{172}\)

The China Airlines C-123s and C-46s operating in South Vietnam were under operational and contractual control of the CIA.\(^{173}\) In part, they were used on USAID missions like rice drops to Cambodia, and those support missions to Cambodia were even an essential part of their tasks. But their camouflage and their strange serials make believe that they were also operated for military purposes. It is known, for example, that those China Airlines C-123s also carried weapons like hand grenades to be used by the Province Reconnaissance Units.\(^{174}\)

\(^{161}\) XOXO of 29 April 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F18.
\(^{162}\) Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6.
\(^{165}\) XOXO of 19 May 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2.
\(^{168}\) The identity of C-46 “CA-2” as B-1507 is given in a US Embassy letter to China Airlines dated 17 July 72 (in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel 21); the identity of B-1507 as ex 43-47026 (hence msn 97) is given in an e-mail of 5 May 2004, kindly sent to the author by Billy K.C. Chang, Director General, CAA, Republic of China.
\(^{170}\) It is not mentioned in Air America’s Saigon Base Monthly Reports of 1972.
\(^{171}\) Identity confirmed by the e-mail dated 6 January 2003, kindly sent to the author by Mr. Chang Kuo-Cheng, Director General, CAA, Republic of China.
\(^{172}\) XOXO of 5 June 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2; Harnage, A thousand faces, pp. 107/8, gives the serial as CA-2.
\(^{173}\) Harnage, A thousand faces, pp. 81/2.
\(^{174}\) Harnage, A thousand faces, pp. 91 and 33.
and photographic evidence proves that these aircraft were also used on secret missions for the Studies and Observations Group,\(^ {175}\) apparently also for paratroop dropping.

7) Training activities 1969-73:

In early 1970, nine Vietnamese Air America employees were up-graded to Mechanic III after successfully completing Air America’s Aircraft Base Sheet Metal course given by the Company’s Technical training Department at Saigon. “The first portion of the course consisted of formal classroom training which introduced the students to basic materials, sheet metal tools, layout methods, blueprint reading, and methods of bending, cutting and repairing a wide variety of sheet metal parts and structures. When the classroom portion of the course was completed, with 142 hours of classroom instruction, the students were moved into the Technical training Shop area to complete the On-the-Job Training phase of the course. During this phase, the students worked on sheet metal projects ranging from making a simple nameplate for their tool boxes to complicated sheet metal repairs of aircraft structures. The class was under the direction of Harvey J. Kohler, STT/SGN, and the success of the course can be attributed to the skills and enthusiasm of the Sheet Metal Instructors, Mr. T. V. Trung and Mr. D. H. Chung. After graduation exercises, during which the new graduates were presented with Air America Certificates of Satisfactory Course Completion, the nine trainees were assigned to AAM’s Sheet metal Department, where they are actively engaged in the repair and maintenance of Company aircraft.”\(^ {176}\) In 1971, 25 Vietnamese aviation trainees – all Air America employees – successfully completed a one-year International Line Service Mechanic Course given by Air Asia’s Technical Training Division at Tainan. The group’s next stage of training was arranged by Air America’s Technical Training Unit at Saigon.\(^ {177}\)

Because of these training programs, which meant promoting better relations between the employer and the employees, but also for the refugee airlifts that Air America was engaged in, on 12 June 1972, Air America Inc was awarded the Republic of Vietnam Labor Medal, which, the same day, was also awarded to one of Air America’s employees, Mr. Nguyen Van Be who had also promoted better relations between the employer and the employees.\(^ {178}\)

![Image: Air America’s Saigon Base Manager Jack Barnhisel receiving the Labor Medal in 1972](AirAmericaLog_volVII_no1_1973_p5.jpg)

\(^{175}\) See the photo in: Plaster, SOG, p. 72.


The Labor Medal awarded on 12 June 72 to Air America Inc and to Mr. Nguyen Van Be

The following is the English Version of the Citation that was also published in Air America Log, vol. VII, no.1, 1973, pp.4/5:
August 11, 1972

Mr. Jack R. Barnhisel
Base Manager, Air America, Inc.
Tan Son Nhut Airbase, Saigon

Subject: Presentation of the Citation and “Labor Medals” Class II to Air America, Inc. and Mr. Nguyen Van BE, an Air America employee

Air America, Inc. has performed in the past years as a Chartered Air Transport operations for the United States Mission in Vietnam. In addition, Air America has accomplished an outstanding training program for its South Vietnamese personnel. Training has been conducted in the fields of: Air Freight Dispatchers, Radio Operators, Supply Storekeepers, Sheet Metal Mechanics, Electronics Mechanics, and Air Conditioning repair. Hundreds of South Vietnamese personnel have been trained over the years by Air America, Inc. at its Saigon Base and in its affiliated installation at Tainan.

The most specific long-term training program accomplished has been for 25 Vietnamese employees who attended the twelve-month Basic Aircraft Maintenance Course in Taiwan, in 1970. These personnel are now undergoing a four-year on-the-job training program within the Air America facilities in Saigon and developing their skills to an even higher degree of proficiency.

In addition, during the past two years, Air America has participated in major refugee movements. A total of 14,717 Vietnamese refugees who were in Cambodia during the year 1970, and subsequently arrived in Vung Tau, were transported from Vung Tau by Air America to Bao Loc and Ham Tan, South Vietnam for relocation. Later, in 1972, Air America again participated in refugee movements. A total of 1,317 refugees were flown by Air America from Quang Tri to Phuoc Tuy, and 4,324 refugees were transported from Hue to Ban Me Thuot and the Vung Tau City. Since that time additional relocations have been possible through the support rendered by Air America.

Mr. Nguyen Van BE was born at Sadec, South Vietnam. He joined Air America, Inc. in 1966 and is presently employed as an Air Conditioner Mechanic. He was elected as an Employee Representative for skilled workers and has served in this capacity at Saigon for the past six years.

During May and June of 1971, Mr. Nguyen Van BE attended the Labor Union Leadership Seminar at Quezon City, Philippines. He has gained a high praiseworthy level of representation and is well trusted by the personnel whom he represents. During the past six years he has fulfilled his responsibilities to his fellow workers and has assisted in promoting better relations between the employer and the employees. This is a constructive influence toward the success of the Company, the national industry, and the economy in general.

In recognition of the cited performances, and on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, I hereby award the “Labor Medals” Class II to Air America, Inc., and to Mr. Nguyen Van BE.

Mr. DAM SY HIEN
Minister of Labor
Republic of Vietnam
II) After the Cease-fire: The 1973-75 period

1) Flying conditions

While living conditions for Air America’s crews improved – a new hostel was rented at Saigon on 1 May 73\(^\text{179}\) – flying conditions did not. The degree of airport security that existed in South Vietnam after signing the official Cease-fire agreement of 24 January 73 is best documented by the sand bags that were to protect Air America’s Saigon Base. As to the flying conditions themselves, even the aircraft that Air America flew for the ICCS and that were

clearly marked by yellow stripes were sometimes shot at by ground fire or even shot down by
enemy missiles, as will be seen below. On 21 January 75, Air America’s CEO Paul Velte
reported to the Members of the Executive Committee “that the pilots in South Vietnam are
becoming very uneasy over the continually deteriorating operating conditions and stated that
the Company will probably be faced with having to increase hazard pay again in the very near
future.”

On 31 January 75, Air America’s Vice-President South Vietnam Division Var M. Green
explained the necessity of increased prices for contract no. AID-SA-C-1029 as follows: “The
proposed increase in Appendix N and N1 prices is necessary to cover equitable increases in
Flight Crew Supplemental Pay due to further deterioration of operating circumstances and
related risks in performing flight services under Contract AID-SA-C-1029. Operating
circumstances in both South Vietnam and Cambodia have progressively deteriorated since the
beginning of the cited Contract prompting the first Flight Crew Supplemental Pay under this
contract effective 1 October 1974. The needed adjustment was more pressing for South
Vietnam than for Cambodia and considering established pay rates and the relatively low
flying hours involved, no change in Flight Crew Supplemental Pay for Cambodia was then
made. In South Vietnam, where the declared truce pursuant to the ‘Paris Protocol’ failed to
produce cited objectives, adjustment was unavoidable. Since last September, operating
circumstances have further deteriorated with unfriendly forces expanding their control of
territory and controlling same with more and improved weaponry – a serious threat to flight
safety. So close to locations into which operations are conducted does the unfriendly threat
prevail at many sites that risk free flight paths do not exist. Throughout the country identified
units equipped with Mobile SA-7 missiles are a serious threat on most routings. Networks of
roads now enable unfriendly forces to move anti aircraft weapons into threatening positions
and armored tanks and artillery into positions threatening airfields utilized. To the extent
possible re-routing has been accomplished to minimize operating risks but firmly GVN
controlled areas free from possible threat of the cited weapons has diminished so that risks on
much of the flying accomplished can no longer be avoided.”

2) Scheduled flights

Compared to the situation of April to July 1971, the Saigon Daily Flight Schedules give a
slightly different picture for December 1973: Once again, there was a daily C-46 return flight
to Danang (V-03), flight nos. 501 and 105, leaving Saigon at 9.00 a.m. and returning to the
capital at 3.15 p.m., while the daily scheduled flights to Nha Trang (V-07), i.e. flight nos. 2N
and 2S, and to Can Tho (V-17), i.e. flight nos. 14 and 34, were now operated by C-47s. But
since early 1973, Air America also ran some scheduled flights for ICCS, using Pilatus PC-6s
and Bell UH-1Hs, including ICCS flight no. 807 A/B to Can Tho (V-17). In January and
February 1975, business had slowed down even for contract no. AID-C-1029, and there were
some days – like Sunday 19 January 75 –, for which not a single Air America aircraft had
been scheduled in the Advance Schedules. Then, normally some test, training or ferry flight
would be arranged for that day. But for most days, the schedules would list a C-46 for flight
nos. 501/105 Saigon-Danang-Saigon, leaving Saigon at 9.00 and returning to 15.30, a C-46 or
a C-47 for flight nos. 2N/2S Saigon-Nha Trang-Saigon, leaving Saigon at 8.00 and returning
at 17.30, and a C-47 or a Caribou for flight nos. 14/34 Saigon-Can Tho-Saigon, leaving
Saigon at 7.30 and returning at 9.30. Sometimes, the flight to Can Tho would include a con-

180 Minutes of Meetings of the Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc of 21 January 75,
in: UTD/CIA/B10F3.
182 Saigon Daily Flight Schedules of 26 and 31 December 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1. Other ICCS flights included
nos. 804 (PC-6), 805A/B (PC-6), 806A/B (UH-1H), 312 (Volpar Danang-Nha Trang-Saigon), 321 (Caribou or
C-46 Saigon-Pleiku-Danang), and 358 (Caribou or C-46 Danang-Saigon).
Air America’s Saigon Daily Flight Schedules for 20 January and 22 February 75
(in: UTD/Walker/B31F6)

contract flight for the DAO, and then the Estimated Time of Arrival at Saigon would be at 14.00. Some scheduled flights were operated only once in a week or so: On some days, there was a scheduled Porter flight to Bien Hoa like no. 131 on 7 January 75. Other examples: For 22 January 75, we have a C-46 on flight no. 90 and a Caribou on flight no. 91, for 28 January, we have a Caribou on flight no. 90, for 9 February, we have a Caribou on flight no. 90 and a C-47 on flight no. 92, for 15 February, we have a C-46 on flight no. 91, and for 22 February 75, we have a Caribou on flight no. 90 – but the destinations of flight nos. 90, 91, and 92 are unknown.183

3) The contract situation 1973-75:

When the official cease-fire agreement was signed by the members of the Paris cease-fire conference in January 73, the contracts that Air America held for operations in South Vietnam – contract AID/VN-100 with USAID, contract F49604-69-C-0023 with the USAF’s Logistical Support Group, and sub-contract 70-34 with China Airlines – had not yet expired, but continued to run until the end of the fiscal year, that is until 30 June 73. A major change took place on 21 March 73, when, by Implementation Order, 10 UH-1Hs bailed from the US Army were added to the contract fleet.184 On 27 February 73, Air America signed contract no. 73-008 with the International Commission for Control and Supervision to operate as ICCS Air Services.185 On 16 April 73, it covered 22 UH-1Hs bailed from the US Army,186 – one of the

184 Implementation Order no. I/O-73-001 (R-1) dated 21 March 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25.
original 23 UH-1Hs had already been shot down on 7 April 73\textsuperscript{187} – C-46 N67984, Caribou N539Y, 4 Volpars (N7695C, N9157Z, N91295, and N9838Z), and 2 Porters (N153L and N9444), of which the 2 Porters, the Caribou and Volpar N9157Z had only been added on 1 April 73\textsuperscript{188} Three more Porters – N184L, 194X, and N392R – followed later in April 73\textsuperscript{189} Contract no. 73-008 expired on 28 February 74\textsuperscript{190} when it was replaced by contract no. 74-008.\textsuperscript{191} The new contract expired on 28 February 75, but is believed to have been extended to 30 June 75\textsuperscript{192} as some aircraft were operated for ICCS to the very end in April 75.\textsuperscript{193} As to the contract that Air America had with USAID, it was only on 1 January 74 that a new one succeeded to contract AID/VN-100, that is contract no. AID-SA-C-1029.\textsuperscript{194} The new contract meant another reduction of the number of Air America aircraft to be operated for USAID –

Air America’s UH-1Hs – Letter dated 28 March 73 written by James Cheng, Air America’s Insurance Manager, to Mollers’ Ltd. (in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel no. 26)

\textsuperscript{187} On 7 April 73, UH-1H “17006” was engaged in a customer movement and departed Hue/Citadel (V-70) via Quang Tri / La Vang (V-263) en route to Lao Bao (V-71); while on approach to its destination, “17006” was struck by a SA-7 missile at coordinates XD856388 near Huong Hoa, South Vietnam, west of Khe Sanh (XOXO of 7 April 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12).

\textsuperscript{188} Flight Operations Circular no. DFOD-C-73-011 of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14; Call order no. ICCS/73-008/002 dated 19 March 73, in: UTD/Bisson/5, microfilm reel no. 28.

\textsuperscript{189} Porters N184L, 194X, and N392R are given as “VTE/SGN reassignment pending” in F.O.C. no. DFOD-C-73-011 of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14. All three of them had been requested for assignment by Call order no. ICCS/73-008/003 dated 26 March 73 (in: UTD/Bisson/5, microfilm reel no. 28), but were promised only for “o/a”, i.e. “on or around” 1 April 73 in Air America’s response to that Call Order (ib.).


\textsuperscript{191} When ICCS UH-1H “71-20081” was damaged upon landing at Pleiku on 8 March 74, it was operated under the provisions of contract no. 74-008 (XOXO of 8 March 74, in: UTD/CIA/B50F5).

\textsuperscript{192} On 10 December 74, Air America’s CEO noted that “there is nothing firm on the ICCS Contract beyond 28 February 1975, but it appears that this may also be extended to 30 June 1975” (Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc of 10 December 74, in: UTD/CIA/B10F2).

\textsuperscript{193} “Supply Support for Air America Inc”, a report of June 75 (in: UTD/CIA/B17F5) sent by US Army officers Alfred J. Budris Jr. (Ilmo) and Paul N. Simon (Col.) to the Commanders of the US Army Japan and the US Army Garrison of Okinawa, describes the status of 11 UH-1Hs “on lease DAAJ-OI-74-L-0013 (ICCS)”.

Air America’s Contract no. 73-008 with the ICCS: contract; Call Order of 19 March 73; and Call Order of 26 March 73 (all in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 28)

from 33 on 1 December 73 to 27 on 1 May 74195 and to 20 on 1 January 75196 –, and it meant that the contract that Air America had with China Airlines was now a subcontract to contract no. AID-SA-C-1029. Contract no. AID-SA-C-1029 remained valid to the very end of Air America’s operations in South Vietnam, and like its predecessor, contract AID/VN-100, it had several customers: C-1029/A40A is believed to have been USAID, C-1029/A40B the US Embassy, but there were also a A40E customer and a A40H customer (possibly standing for the US Navy),198 and when China Airlines C-123K “ST-1” was lost between Dalat and Nha Trang on 3 January 75, it was operated under the provisions of “contract AID-SA-C-1029/70-34 subcontract (B-40B),”199 which probably means an Embassy flight. There was also some contract maintenance that was carried out at Saigon. For example contract no. F33660-73-C-0282 – Operation of a manual Air Force Supply account in support of C-123K aircraft at Tan Son Nhut200 – originally ran from 1 September 72 to 31 August 73, then was extended and was still active in December 74.201 Contract no. F04606-74-A-0058 apparently was a maintenance contract covering USAF Helio U-10B aircraft from Thailand202 and was still active in December 74, when U-10B 63-13095 was being worked on at Tan Son Nhut.203

195 Flight Operations Circulars of 1 December 1973 (no. DOC-C-73-016) and 1 May 74 (no. DOC-C-74-005), both in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C.
196 Telex dated 30 January 75, VP SVND to AAM’s Insurance Manager, Hong Kong, in: UTD/CIA/18F2.
197 A ground accident occurred at Battambang, Cambodia, on 21 July 74, when a heavy wheel mounted pump was offloaded from C-46 N1383N; this flight was operated for the A40E customer (XOXO of 21 July 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F14).
198 When a window dropped out of Bell 204B N8513F east of Saigon on 3 May 74, it was operated for the A40H customer, and among the passengers was US Navy personnel (XOXO of 3 May 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F14).
199 XOXO of 3 January 75, in: UTD/CIA/B50F5.
4) Contract flying for CORDS, 1973-1975:

Immediately after signing the official cease-fire agreement on 24 January 73, flight time on Air America’s South Vietnam contracts was considerably lower than forecasted, because as a result of the increased US military troop withdrawal, the Customer was forced to reduce or cancel some of the scheduled flights: So, in February 73, two Bien Hoa PC-6s which previously logged more than 10 flying hours daily were reduced to one PC-6 with a daily schedule of 3 hours. The Bell 204B operating in Region III, which had flown 10 hours per day previously, sometimes logged as little as 2 hours. So practically all of the programs experienced reduced flying in the regions directly proportional to troop withdrawal. Even the USAID contract fell behind in quarterly minimums so that C-46 N67984 and PC-6 N9444 were released from contract VN-100 on 28 February 73. But Air America’s management was optimistic as to an “increase in VN-100 flying activity the latter part of March when we assume more of the airlift currently flown by the US Military”.

And this really happened: While in February 73, the total revenue flight time for Air America aircraft operating out of Saigon was at 2099 hours, 55 minutes, it went up to 3305 hours, 47 minutes in March, to 3884 hours, 52 minutes in April, to 4199 hours, 31 minutes in May and to 4911 hours, 36 minutes in August 73. And indeed, from 1972 to 1973, defense contracts for Air America more than doubled to $ 41.4 million against $ 17.7 million in 1972, as, while the US war apparatus was phased out, the role of maintaining a significant American influence reverted largely to the CIA which relied on the services of Air America. In December 1973, contract USAID/VN-100 called for 33 aircraft – 1 C-46 (N67985), 2 C-47s (“559” and “994”), 7 Volpars (N3674G, N6154U, N7770B, N9518Z, N9577Z, N9956Z, and N9157Z), 7 PC-6Cs (N392R, N185K, N198X, N394R, N748N, N12450, and N9444), 10 UH-1Hs (“15713”, “15871”, “20088”, “20117” in South Vietnam in 1973

(Air America Log, vol. VII, no.9, 1973, p.6)
“20103”, “20104”, “20105”, “20110”, “20112”, “20117”, and “20156”), and 6 Bell 204Bs (N1303X, N1304X, N1305X, N1306X, N1307X, and N8514F), while 8 more aircraft were also based at Saigon as spare aircraft without being assigned to a special contract (C-46s N1383N and N9458Z, C-47 “147”, Caribous N544Y and N11014, PC-6Cs N184L and N192X plus Bell 204B N8513F), making a total of 41 active Air America aircraft operating out of Saigon on non-ICCS flights, with an additional 9 aircraft that were stored there.  

By mid-1974, the fighting between the South Vietnamese troops on one side and the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops on the other regained the same intensity as before the cease-fire agreement – but now, the war was led without the assistance of US troops, so that the North was able to conquer one province after another. To make the situation still more dramatic, the amount of aid to be received by South Vietnam was constantly reduced in 1974 so that over 200 aircraft of the South Vietnamese Air Force had to be put to flyable storage, including many transport aircraft (C-7s, C-47s, C-119s). This may explain why in May 74, the number of active Air America aircraft operating out of Saigon on non-ICCS flights had grown to 36, to which have to be added 24 aircraft that were stored at Saigon – among them 16 UH-1Hs, Contract USAID/SA-C-1029 then called for 27 aircraft: C-46 N67985, C-47s “559” and “994”, 6 Volpars (N3674G, N6154U, N7770B, N9518Z, N9577Z, and N9956Z), 5 PC-6Cs (N192X, N185K, N198X, N748N, and N9444), 4 UH-1Hs (“20103”, “20104”, “20105”, and “20110”), and 9 Bell 204Bs (N1303X, N1304X, N1305X, N1306X, N1307X, N8512F, N8513F, N8514F and N8535F), and 8 aircraft were used on spare for calls on the AID/C-1029 contract: C-47 “147”, Caribou N11014, Volpars N9157Z and N91295, and PC-6Cs N184L, N394R, and N194X as well as Bell 205 XW-PFG. On 1 January 75, the number of Air America aircraft operating under the AID-SA-C-1029 contract was down to 20 – 1 C-46, 3 C-47, 5 Volpars, 2 PC-6s, and 9 Bell 204Bs. In March 75, Air America was asked to add

Air America pilot Tony Coalson at Saigon in front of Porter N185K
(with kind permission from Tony Coalson)

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207 *Flight Operations Circular* of 1 December 1973, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C.

208 Bell UH-1Hs “69-15713”, “70-15871”, “71-20088”, “71-20112”, “71-20117”, and “71-20156” had been returned to the US Army in February 74 (Letter dated 26 February 74, sent by Air America’s Senior Vice President Clyde Carter to the US Army Aviation Systems Command, in: UTD/CIA/B17F3).

209 *Flight Operations Circular* of 1 May 1974, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C.

210 Telex dated 30 January 75, VP SVND to AAM’s Insurance Manager, Hong Kong, in: UTD/CIA/18F2.
1 C-46 and 3 UH-1Hs to the USAID contract as basically assigned aircraft, but the Company had to decline this due to manning problems, “although we continue to make available and operate one C-46 and three UH-1Hs when we can crew them. […] Requests for airlift continue that we cannot now meet. […] This past week we lost four first class Filipino mechs (rotor wing) and 6/7 more have committed to go as soon as Arizona Helicopters confirms their employment in writing.”

As to the nature of non-ICCS flights operated by Air America in South Vietnam since the cease-fire agreement of January 1973, it did not differ very much from previous flights: Air America aircraft still received ground fire when operating in the Mekong-Delta, as did UH-1H “20105” near Ben Tre (V-14) on 12 July 73, while operating from Can Tho (V-17) under USAID contract VN-100/A30A. Other Air America aircraft were damaged by rocket attacks, while parked on the ramp – as were UH-1Hs “20187”, “15843” and “20103”, plus Volpar N9518Z at Danang Air Base (V-03) on 18 July 74 – or were lost on flights across the highlands northeast of Saigon, as was China Airlines C-123K “ST-1”, which went missing between Dalat (V-08) and Nha Trang (V-07) on 3 January 75, when it operated on an Air America flight under contract C-1029/70-34/B40B. Air America aircraft still carried around VIPs, as did C-47 “994” on 20 September 73, when, in compliance with contract VN-100/A40A, it ferried the Chinese and Korean Ambassadors to South Vietnam plus some other officials back from Phan Rang (V-28) to Saigon (V-01), after Volpar N9157Z, which had been assigned to this flight, had had engine problems. Still other Air America flights were operated for the US Military – as was Air America Bell 204B N8513F on 3 May 74, which among other people was to carry a US Navy Captain to the East in compliance with contract C-1029/A40H, when the emergency exit window popped out shortly after leaving Saigon, or the ferry flights operated for the USAF in August 73, when Air America Vientiane Captain Schneider and Air America Saigon Co-Captain Halstead ferried six USAF C-123Ks from Saigon to Taipei under the 002 contract.

![Air America C-47 “994” at Saigon with Sharon Coalson in front](with kind permission from Tony Coalson)

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211 Telex dated 24 March 75, VP-SVND to CEO, in: UTD/CIA/B18F2.
As the Saigon Daily Flight Schedules for the 1 January 75 to 23 February 75 period have survived\(^{214}\) – at least the Advance Schedules and the 1\(^{st}\) Press versions –, they can tell us something about the utilization of the part of Air America’s fleet that was assigned to contract no. AID-C-1029. In addition to the scheduled flights mentioned above, to training flights (some of them as night training), and in addition to Functional Check Flights of Air America helicopters that according to those Flight Schedules were often made by Chauncey Collard – on 13 February 75, he had even 7 UH-1Hs to test between 8.00 and 10.30 a.m. –, Air America’s Saigon Daily Flight Schedules for January and February 1975 often list a C-46 cargo flight for the DAO, a C-47 or a Caribou flight for customer A40B (US Embassy), an occasional C-47 flight for customer A40F (still unidentified), one Volpar flight for customer A40E (also unidentified), some VIP and “special” Volpar flights, one Bell 204B operating in Military Region III, plus some VIP and “special” helicopter flights. Up to 2 Air America helicopters were also temporarily positioned at Phnom Penh (C-01), and sometimes, the surviving Saigon Daily Flight Schedules show the dates when the helicopters were ferried there and when they returned to Saigon: For example, on 5 January 75, Messrs. Fonburg, Tuoi and Thanh as well as Hitchman, Lieu and Toan departed Saigon at 6.50 a.m. to fly 2 Bell 204Bs to Phnom Penh (C-01), where the crews were to remain for 3 nights. But then they had to return to Saigon as deadheads on 6 January, and on 7 January, 2 other crews were sent to Phnom Penh (C-01) to ferry the 2 Bell 204Bs back to Saigon. On 9 January 75, 2 more crews were sent to Phnom Penh to ferry 2 other aircraft back to Saigon. And on 22 February 75, Messrs. Greenway, Ritchie, and Thong were flown to Phnom Penh (C-01) as deadheads – probably in a customer-directed UH-1H piloted by Messrs. Wood, Riley, and Phi – and then ferried another aircraft from Phnom Penh back to Saigon. It seems that sometimes, Air America’s helicopter flights to Phnom Penh (C-01) appeared in those Saigon Flight Schedules just as “special” or “customer-directed” (“C”) flights\(^{215}\) in order to keep them more secret – probably because already in January 1971, the Cooper-Church Amendment had prohibited the assignment of US advisors to the Khmer armed forces.\(^{216}\)

There were also periodical crew reliefs and helicopter exchanges between Saigon base and Nha Trang (V-07), Danang (V-03), and Can Tho (V-17) stations: For example, on 5 January 75, a helicopter crew consisting of Messrs. Gram, Freedman, and Cam flew to Nha Trang (V-07), where they remained several days. Other helicopter crews were sent to Nha Trang on 11, 13, and 16 January 75 – and so on. On 12 January 75, Messrs. Genz and Toan were sent up to Danang with a Bell 204B, followed on 13 January by Messrs. Lieu and Tho and on 15 January by Messrs. Fraser and Gartz – all of them as deadheads, and other reliefs of Danang crews followed, for example on 19 January. The same periodical crew reliefs and aircraft (helicopter or PC-6) exchanges were also made between Saigon base and Can Tho station – for example on 16 and 17 January 75.\(^{217}\)

But more and more Air America flights were used for medevac missions. On 16 August 73, Air America UH-1H “15450” departed Saigon at 8.45 a.m. local time and picked up an Indonesian Major at Bien Hoa (V-02); on 29 August 73, Air America was to provide emergency medevac for an ICCS delegate at Long An (V-247), but before the helicopter arrived, a South Vietnamese Air Force helicopter had performed the airlift. In September 73, Air America aircraft performed even seven medevac flights (contracts C-1029/A40A and A40B), including one – Volpar N9577Z on 11 September 73 – operating from Saigon to Phnom Penh and on to Bangkok. In October 73, there were only three medevac flights, but

\(^{214}\) In: UTD/Walker/B31F6.

\(^{215}\) For all these details see: Saigon Daily Flight Schedules for the 1 January 75 to 23 February 75 period, in: UTD/Walker/B31F6.

\(^{216}\) Sutsakhan, *The Khmer Republic at war*, p.53.

\(^{217}\) For all these details see: Saigon Daily Flight Schedules for the 1 January 75 to 23 February 75 period, in: UTD/Walker/B31F6.
one of them – Volpar N9577Z on 22 October 73 – carried its Indonesian patient from Saigon even to Djakarta. A problem that occurred in South Vietnam since October 73 was a deterioration of Navaids, including unreliable radar maintenance at Nha Trang and Danang, which was reflected in continued weather problems.\textsuperscript{218} And not only weather, but also ground fire meant a continued problem for medevac flights: When, piloted by Captain E. S. Spencer and co-Captain D. B. Riley, Air America UH-1H “20110” approached the refugee resettlement area 3 kms north of Quang Tri (V-263) on 16 September 74 with two doctors as passengers (in compliance with contract C-1029/A-40A), it came under intense small arms fire at 50 feet altitude so that it had to break off the approach and return to Danang.\textsuperscript{219}

The “1029 Contract was scheduled to expire COB 31 December 1974, but in early December the Contracting Officer exercised the Government’s option and extended the 1029 Contract for six months, through 30 June 75.\textsuperscript{220} By the end of 1974, it was clear to Air America people that the Company had to leave the country by 1 July 75, but probably many of them hoped that a follow on contractor – possibly CASI – would take over some former Air America employees: “We can only hope that the follow on contractor is soon identified and able to start some overlap phase-in by May 1975, so as to enable a smooth operational turn over on 1 July 1975. As most of our employees will probably be hired in-place, the new contractor also needs time to make employment package offers to the AAM employees.”\textsuperscript{221} However, business went further down in December 74, and so “the 1029 Customer dropped the last two UH-1H aircraft from contract and now his contract assigned fleet amounts to 1 C-46, 3 C-47 (GFE), 2 PC-6C, 4 VTB-18 and 9 204B aircraft. Although not on contract, we are normally called upon to provide the following additional aircraft, on a daily call order basis; 2 C-46, 1 DHC-4A, 1 PC-6C, 3 VTB-18 and 2 UH-1H aircraft.”\textsuperscript{222} For January 75, Danang Station mentioned detours that had to be flown: “Flight 501/105 has yet to make the scheduled departure time since flights north have been routed via Vung Tau and Phan Thiet. It is strongly recommended that the scheduled departure from this station be changed to 1300 hours.”\textsuperscript{223} At that time, 84 Air America people were working at Danang, and among the aircraft stationed there were UH-1H “20115” and Bell 204Bs N1304X, N1306X, and N1307X.\textsuperscript{224} In February 75, 1 Volpar and 3 Bell 204Bs were assigned to Danang Station for contract C-1029.\textsuperscript{225} In late April 75, Air America still had 5 Bell UH-1Hs ready for operations by the American Embassy and USAID: “66-16162”, “71-20103”, “71-20104”, “71-20105”, and “71-20110”,\textsuperscript{226}

\textsuperscript{218} Saigon Base monthly reports for August, September, and October 73, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7 + B42F2.
\textsuperscript{219} XOXO of 16 September 74, in: UTD/CIA/B50F5.
\textsuperscript{226} “Supply Support for Air America Inc”, a report of June 75 (in: UTD/CIA/B17F5) sent by US Army officers Alfred J. Budris Jr. (Ilmo) and Paul N. Simon (Col.) to the Commanders of the US Army Japan and the US Army Garrison of Okinawa, describes the status of 5 UH-1Hs “on lease DAAJ-OI-74-L-0012 (AMEMB USAID)”.

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5) ICCS:

On 24 January 1973, the official cease-fire agreement was signed by the members of the Paris cease-fire conference, led by the US National Security Advisor Henry A. Kissinger and the North Vietnamese Politburo Member Le Duc Tho, to be effective on 28 January 1973. The first group of American prisoners – 116 POWs – was freed by Hanoi on 12 February 1973, and POWs continued to be flown out of Hanoi to the Philippines by USAF C-141As until March. On 29 March 1973, the Military Assistance Command Vietnam was disestablished. Henceforth, the only Americans in uniform based in South Vietnam could be those assigned to the US Embassy in Saigon. All warnings about the weakness of the South and the growing strength of North Vietnam remained unheard in the US, where most politicians had very strong anti-war feelings and were happy to have finally withdrawn from Vietnam, although in South Vietnam, the fighting actually went on.\(^{227}\)

Air America was one of the few US Government organizations to remain in the country, and this mainly because on 27 February 1973, Air America had signed a contract with ICCS, i.e. the International Commission for Control and Supervision, to operate and maintain their aircraft in South Vietnam effective 1 March 73.\(^{228}\) ICCS was a four-nation organization with its main headquarters at Saigon. Vietnam was divided into seven regions, each with its own Headquarters as follows, going from north to south: Region 1: Hue; 2: Danang; 3: Pleiku; 4: Phan Thiet; 5: Bien Hoa; 6: My Tho; and 7: Can Tho. In each region, there was a variety of team sites; basically these sites were of two kinds: Observer Team Sites and Point-of-Entry Team Sites. In all, there were a total of some 50 sites of one kind or another.\(^{229}\)

Canadian Colonel J. A. Mitchell, who was in charge of all ICCS air operations in Vietnam, standing by an ICCS Air Services UH-1H

\textit{(Air America Log, vol. VII, no.8, 1973, p.1)}

\(^{227}\) Dorr / Bishop, Vietnam air war debrief, pp.210-15.


According to contract ICCS-73-008, these sites were to be served by 26 Air America aircraft – 1 C-46 (N67984), 3 Volpars (N7695C, N91295, and N9838Z) and 22 Bell UH-1Hs – with 5 more Air America aircraft on call: 1 Caribou (N539Y), 1 Volpar (N9157Z), and 3 PC-6s (N194X, N153L, and N285L). But due to a lack of crews, only 4 Bell UH-1Hs (‘20187’, ‘15450’, ‘17006’, and ‘20186’)) could be made available to ICCS in March 73, the first three of these helicopters being based at Danang (V-03), Nha Trang (V-07) and Can Tho (V-17) on 27 March, followed by the forth on 31 March.\footnote{Saigon Base monthly report for March 73, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.} To improve the situation, in March 73, Air America hired several former South Vietnamese Air Force helicopter pilots as first officers who were sent to Southland Helicopters, Long Beach, CA, to obtain a US FAA Commercial Pilot’s License with Rotorcraft Rating, a course of instruction of about 8-10 weeks.\footnote{See \textit{Air America Log}, vol. VII, no.7, 1973, p.1.} Due to manning problems with qualified flights mechanics, the ICCS helicopter availability could be increased to only 10 UH-1Hs in April 73, then to 15 on 15 May, and to 22 on 1 June.\footnote{Saigon Base monthly reports for April and May 73, in: UTD/CIA/B41F7.}
But already in June 73, the utilization of ICCS aircraft was less than forecast due to a very limited use of their investigative functions, and in July 73, there were almost no investigative operations by the ICCS so that the ICCS UH-1H and Volpar utilization was less than contractual minimums; as a consequence, 6 UH-1Hs (“16162”, “15322”, “15016”, “15450”, “15709”, and “20186”) were released from the ICCS contract on 31 August 73 and put into temporary storage at Saigon. Later, the number of aircraft actually used by ICCS was reduced even more: In December 73, Caribou N539Y and PC-6Cs N194X, N285L and N153L were dropped from the 73-008 contract, in February 74, 10 Bell UH-1Hs were selected for being returned to the US Army, and in June 74, only C-46 N67984, Volpars N7695C and N9838Z and 12 UH-1Hs were still operated for the ICCS. All of these aircraft had three large yellow stripes around the back of the fuselage and around the wing tips, with the inscription “ICCS” painted on and below the wings as well as either on the side or on the dorsal fin, while the whole organization appeared as “ICCS Air Services” on their buildings, like a subsidiary of Air America.

Air America pilot Tony Coalson at Saigon in front of an ICCS UH-1H (with kind permission from Tony Coalson)

Instead of flying around professional soldiers, as Air America had done for ten years, the passengers of ICCS Air Services were young diplomats of the International Commission of Control and Supervision formed to police the cease-fire. But flying in these specially marked aircraft was by no means safe: On 7 April 73, ICCS Air Services Bell UH-1Hs “20115” and “17006” were engaged in a customer movement and departed Hue/Citadel (V-70) via Quang Tri / La Vang (V-263) en route to Lao Bao (V-71); but while on approach to its destination, “17006” was struck by a SA-7 missile at XD856388 near Huong Hoa, South Vietnam, west of Khe Sanh, although “17006” had carried distinctive ICCS markings and had been on a pre-

233 Saigon Base monthly reports for June, July, August (all in: UTD/CIA/B41F7), and December 73 (in: UTD/CIA/B42F2).
234 “66-16162” (however, this aircraft was actually sent back only in April 75), “68-15322”, “68-15570”, “69-15016”, “69-15450”, “69-15951”, “70-15714”, “70-15769”, “70-15797”, and “70-15836” (Letter dated 28 February 74, sent by Air America’s Senior Vice President Clyde Carter to the US Army Aviation Systems Command, in: UTD/CIA/B17F3).
arranged schedule and flight path; the crew (Pilot in Command Charles L. Osterman, Flight Officer Terry D. Clark and Flight Mechanic Valeriano P. Rosales) as well as five passengers aboard (one Canadian, two Hungarians, and two Vietnamese of the PRG) were killed.\textsuperscript{235} However these flights were not only more dangerous than they should have been, but soon, the ICCS also revealed itself as being a farce, as the Poles and Hungarians refused to check it out when the North Vietnamese violated the agreement, so that Air America pilots were disgusted at the undisguised partisanship of the Communist members. Some of these flights seem to have been made just for the fun of some passengers – like the trip flown to an offshore island to collect seashells. At the same time, Air America also ran some scheduled flights for ICCS including ICCS flight no. 807 A/B operating daily to Can Tho (V-17) and back to Saigon. But this was considered to be completely superfluous, as in many cases, these flights had rather private aims like a swap of girl friends, or the delivery of a case of beer.\textsuperscript{236}

And finally, there was a big financial problem: According to the cease-fire agreement, the four signatories – the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Viet Cong’s PRG (Provisional Revolutionary Government) were to pay for the Commission’s budget, but many bills remained unpaid. Already in April 74, ICCS arreared in its payment for South Vietnam flying services, and Air America threatened the Commission to cut off all its air services, unless $ 500,000 in back bills were paid. As the Commission responded that it did not have the money, the United States stepped in.\textsuperscript{237} On 13 August 74, the unpaid commitments of ICCS to Air America totalled about $ 1,545,000, and the last payment had been received from ICCS on 31 July 74 in the amount of $ 448,903. At that time, ICCS was reported to have debts totalling approximately 5 million dollars, with funds available amounting to less than 1 million. Yet, “the U. S. State Department confirmed on 13 August 1974 that they expect early appropriation of $ 16,000,000 for USGFY75 ICCS purposes, the contributions to be made in four quarterly increments. Earlier, State also advised that, if FY75 appropriations are not forthcoming in sufficient time or amounts, additional funds would be accumulated through withdrawal from other commitments to meet the vital ‘keep-alive’ needs of ICCS.”\textsuperscript{238} By early September 74, the money had not yet arrived, so that on 10 September 74, the Executive Committees of Air America and Air Asia decided “that if a satisfactory response to communications now outstanding with the State Department was not forthcoming soon, notice to State and ICCS of Air America’s intention to terminate services, probably commencing 1 October 1974, would have to be given.”\textsuperscript{239} Things then improved, and on 12 November 74, Air America’s President Hugh Grundy “reported that though ICCS currently owes Air America approximately $450,000, this amount is not yet delinquent and their account is otherwise up-to-date.”\textsuperscript{240} All these negative aspects of the ICCS make it fully understandable that Air America pilots soon referred to the commission as the “I Can’t Control Shit”.\textsuperscript{241} In December 74, it was noted that “the 008 Contract is due to expire on 28 February 75, but a contract amendment has been submitted to extend this contract through 30 June 75 also. We welcome this move so as to avoid problems with a new contractor starting on 1 March his operation of the ICCS Flying Services and trying to share the limited facilities. The 008 Customer will implement his new flying schedules on 10 January and at the same

\textsuperscript{235} XOXOs of 7 April 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12.
\textsuperscript{236} Robbins, \emph{Air America}, pp.168/9.
\textsuperscript{237} Robbins, \emph{Air America}, p.170.
\textsuperscript{238} Minutes of Meetings of the Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc of 30 April 74 and of 13 August 74, in: UTD/CIA/B10F2.
\textsuperscript{239} Minutes of Meetings of the Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc of 10 September 74, in: UTD/CIA/B10F2.
\textsuperscript{240} Minutes of Meetings of the Executive Committees of Air Asia Co Ltd and Air America Inc of 12 November 74, in: UTD/CIA/B10F2.
\textsuperscript{241} Robbins, \emph{Air America}, p.168; Dorr / Bishop, \emph{Vietnam air war debrief}, p.214.
time drop four (4) UH-1H aircraft from the contract. This will leave 2 UH-1H at Danang and 2 at Pleiku, with 3 UH-1H, 1 C-46 and 2 Volpars based at Saigon."242 For January 75, Danang Station reported that “ICCS flight 321/358 has resumed service to Hue/Phu Bai (V-06) when weather permits. [...] The ICCS back-up UH-1H was utilized 17 times during the current month. Special flights were required primarily at the request of various delegations, secondary use was for site support, and one flight was dispatched for maintenance recovery.”243 In some cases, the ICCS contract was not called 74-008 in 1975, but “C-482”.244 In February 75, 2 UH-1Hs, apparently including “20115”, were assigned to Danang Station for operations under the ICCS contract.245 Anyway, in April 75, Air America still had all 11 Bell UH-1Hs ready for operations by ICCS Air Services: “69-16715”, “70-15738”, “70-15843”, “70-15856”, “70-15866”, “70-15916”, “71-20081”, “71-20093”, “71-20115”, “71-20139”, and “71-20186”.246

Air America’s Saigon Daily Flight Schedules of 24, 27, and 31 January 75 (1st Press version) (in: UTD/Walker/B31F6)

As the Saigon Daily Flights Schedules have survived for the period between 1 January 75 and 22 February 75247 – at least the Advance Schedules published a couple of days before, and the 1st Press versions that were always published at 1600L or 1800L the day before –, we do know how the ICCS aircraft were scheduled during the last months of their operation. The most frequent ICCS fixed wing flight operated by aircraft assigned to ICCS contract no. 74-008 was flight no. 321, the Saigon-Pleiku-Danang run: On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, it was operated by a C-46; on Tuesdays and Saturdays, it was operated by a Volpar, and on Thursdays it was sometimes operated by a Volpar, but sometimes, it wasn’t operated at all. While no flights were operated for ICCS on Sundays, for the rest of the week, there was

246 “Supply Support for Air America Inc”, a report of June 75 (in: UTD/CIA/B17F5) sent by US Army officers Alfred J. Budris Jr. (Ilmo) and Paul N. Simon (Col.) to the Commanders of the US Army Japan and the US Army Garrison of Okinawa, describes the status of 11 UH-1Hs “on lease DAAJ-OI-74-L-0013 (ICCS)”.
247 All preserved at: UTD/Walker/B31F6.
also a scheduled Volpar flight that included Can Tho (V-17): On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, it was flight no. 807, on Saturdays, it was flight no. 804, probably serving a different route pattern. From Monday to Saturday, there was also at least one scheduled UH-1H flight for ICCS: On Mondays and Fridays, it would mostly be flight no. 805 (Saigon-Bien Hoa, and then to another final destination) or flight no. 806, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, it would mostly be flight no. 807 to Can Tho. One PC-6 was usually based at Can Tho, and one ICCS UH-1H up at Danang; both aircraft periodically returned to Saigon for maintenance, and their crews remained at Can Tho and Danang for up to 7 nights each time. And of course there were also some VIP or other special flights operated for ICCS in the January/February 75 period. In February 75, “ICCS helicopter flights were limited to three local courier flights a week which are actually the continuation of the 807 flights originating V-01. Aside from these regular, three special VIP flights arrived for region 7 teamsites inspection, with one RON only during the month.”\(^{248}\) On 3 February 75, ICCS UH-1H “20186” made the VIP special flight, but due to technical problems, it was replaced by ICCS UH-1H “20093” also operating in the area at that time.\(^{249}\) But it cannot be denied that business slowed down during these final months of operation.

### 6) Help from China Airlines

At the beginning of our period, Contract no. 70-34 was still valid until 30 June 73, covering C-123 and C-46 flying services in South Vietnam for USAF at approximately $5,000.00 per month.\(^ {250}\) And as the Cease-fire agreement of January 73 did not mean any security for Air America and ICCS Air Services aircraft, it did not mean any security either for the aircraft of China Airlines, whose contract no. 70-34 with Air America became a subcontract to contract no. AID-SA-C-1029 early 74.\(^ {251}\) In April 73, China Airlines’ fleet operating for Air America was increased by two piston-engine aircraft: But while the fate of camouflaged C-46 “EM-2” (no.3) is unknown,\(^ {252}\) C-53D “EM-3” crashed on landing at Dalat / Cam-Ly (V-08) on 29 December 1973: As the pilot was unable to safely stop the aircraft prior to reaching the end of the runway, he decided to ground loop the aircraft to the left and departed the runway on a heading of 250 degrees; the aircraft came to rest on a very steep slope after traveling 180 feet off the end of the runway, pivoting into a final heading of 223 degrees; the 3 CAL crew member and the 6 US passengers on board remained uninjured; the aircraft was substantially damaged and was abandoned due to reported land mines at the crash site.\(^ {253}\) The wreckage was released by the DCA on 4 January 74: Parts and components were salvaged, and the remains were removed in January 74.\(^ {254}\)

The next victim was China Airlines’ second C-123K. Since 6 December 72,\(^ {255}\) this second C-123K was “ST-3”. But on 13 May 74, the aircraft crashed 4 miles south of Tay Ninh (V-151): It had been struck by hostile fire, probably a SA-7 missile, at coordinate XT 182425 while en route from an outstation to Saigon, and in the course of landing in a hostile area, the aircraft was severely damaged and abandoned. Of the crew of four only one received injuries

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\(^ {251}\) See XOXO of 27 July 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B10F12.

\(^ {252}\) It continued to be in service until at least January 74 (Saigon Base Monthly Reports, April 73 to January 74, in: UTD/CIA/B41).

\(^ {253}\) XOXO of 29 December 73, in: UTD/CIA/B50F5.

\(^ {254}\) XOXO of 10 January 74, in: UTD/CIA/B50F5.

\(^ {255}\) According to a letter that China Airlines sent Air America on 22 December 72 (in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel 21) the insurance covered this aircraft (ST-3 / 55-4531) from 6 December 72 onwards.
from shrapnel wounds to his chest, and his condition was satisfactory. Soon, C-123K “ST-3” was replaced by C-123K “ST-4”, but the replacement itself survived only for a couple of weeks. For on 27 July 74, it was shot down by a “Strella” heat seeking ground to air missile in the Mekong Delta, about 5 nautical miles south of Moc Hoa (V-51), west of Saigon and exploded in flight. Four Chinese members of the flight crew and the passenger, Air America employee V. L. Lee Jr., were killed; the aircraft had delivered rice from Saigon to Phnom Penh according to contract AID-SA-C-1029/70-34 subcontract, and was on the return flight from Phnom Penh (C-01) to Saigon (V-01); the wreckage was blown up and completely destroyed by South Vietnamese forces on late 2 August 74. The final victim was China Airlines’ first C-123, which flew as “ST-1” since 1968 and whose passenger seats had been increased to 60 from 1 December 72 onwards: Already in November or December 74, it was hit by ground fire, while en route Saigon - Nha Trang, causing one engine to be shut, but made a successful one-engine landing at Nha Trang. On 3 January 75, “ST-1” went missing between Dalat/Cam Ly (V-08) and Nha Trang (V-07) with 9 on board, that is with 3 CAL crew and 6 passengers; it probably crashed after being shot down by a SA-7 missile. On 7 January 75, the wreckage was found in the vicinity of BP9745, approximately 5 nautical miles southwest of Nha Trang (V-07), by Air America Bell 204B N1305X. Apparently, in March 75, China Airlines attempted “to place Air America ‘in the middle’ with respect to any liability or financial responsibility sustained by CAL as a result of their operations within/to Cambodia”, but this was declined by Air America. But China Airlines continued services
into Cambodia until early April 75: For example, on 6 and on 9 April 75, they operated C-47 EM-4 from Saigon (V-01) to Phnom Penh (C-01) and then at the direction of customer B40B, believed to be the US Embassy.²⁶³

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²⁶³ Saigon Daily Flight Schedules of 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 28, and 29 April 75, all in: UTD/Walker/B31F6+9.