[One US/AAM wounded by hostile fire in 1963: H.S. Estes, July 9]

[Udorn report: UH-34s flew 7,657 hours in 1963, averaging 68 hours per aircraft per month. One helicopter lost (H-16, in October).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

January 2, 1963

January 5-7, 1963
Chicago Daily Tribune: Second American plane on "mercy mission" shot down over Laos on January 5. With permission of coalition government, aircraft had been dropping rice to refugees in northwestern Laos. Pilot James W. Fore, Jr., copilot Eddie Yip, and two Lao cargo handlers. Fore and one of Lactians suffered burns and other injuries but not serious. Lockheed Ventura owned by Bird & Sons. Aircraft hit by ground fire on rice drop to Hmong refugees living on mountain tops in area between Ban Houei Sai and Muong Sing, about 250 miles north of VTE. Pathet Lao troops have occupied area since May.

[Jordan: Fore had a fairly bad cut on his leg when he bailed out and hit the aircraft antenna while exiting.]

LaDue: Bird & Son Lockheed Ventura shot down late in day, east of Ban Houei Sai. Pilot James Fore (known as Black Bart because he always wore black flying uniform - see Lampard), copilot Eddie Yip, and two Thai kickers. As Bird & Son had no SAR capability, Air America was alerted for the operation. The search began the next day, with a Caribou (piloted by Ed Eckholdt) and two UH-34s from Ban Houei Sai. LaDue and Janke boarded one of the helicopters as designated
SAR team. The Lockheed was found within an hour, but in
terrain that would not permit a helicopter landing.
Preparing to go down, they discovered, to their dismay, that
the UH-34 was not equipped with a sling for the hoist, so
LaDue made a loop in a length of rope, which he secured with
a double square knot. LaDue and Janke were then winched
down to the aircraft, where they found pilot Fore. He said
that after the aircraft had been hit and the rest of the
crew bailed out, he got stuck in the door above his seat and
had to deploy his parachute to pull him away from the
falling Lockheed. After landing, he moved back toward the
crash site so he could be more easily seen. He had spent an
uncomfortable night, fending off attacks by an especially
vicious wild pig. Fore was winched up to the aircraft. When
LaDue and Janke were winched up, they learned that the other
helicopter had been able to land and pickup one of the Thai
kickers. They then went looking for the other two crew
members. [Sam Jordan believes that the H-34 pilot was Billy
Pearson.]

They found Eddie Yip at a nearby village, waving to the
helicopter. He had spent a fairly pleasant night with the
local people. They then found the remaining kicker’s chute,
hanging from a tree on the edge of a steep hill. LaDue and
Janke winched down to an area about 500 meters away, into
tall elephant grass. Using his Randall knife, LaDue cut a
path toward the chute. They found the kicker, a teenager,
laying down the hill from the chute, obviously in bad shape.
He probably landed in the tree in the dark. Fooled by the
height of the elephant grass, he thought that he was close
to the ground so he cut his harness. The result was a 50
foot fall down the hill. LaDue reported to situation to Ed
Eckholdt, circling above, then he and Janke began to cut a
chopper pad nearby. Eckholdt reported that he could see
enemy troops moving in their direction of their location, so
they had better hurry. Periodically, they would stop
chopping and check on the condition of the kicker. On about
the fifth visit to him, LaDue found that he had died. He
then called for the chopper to winch them up. LaDue went
first. As he began to go up the hoist, the helicopter pilot
saw small arms flashes and took prompt evasive action. “I
found myself suddenly several hundred feet in the air,
spinning around, as the rope bit into my back. The
sensation was so painful and so frightening, I was strick
with the though that the best thing to do was to raise my
arms and slip out of the rope, and just get it over with.
I have never been so scared in my life.” LaDue fought off
this thought and held on as he was slowly winched into the
aircraft at an altitude of about 1,000 feet. “I promptly
threw up.”

Not observing any more small arms fire, the helicopter
went back and winched up the body of the Thai, then Janke.
“When his face came up above the floor of the chopper, it
was dead white - a reaction I could well understand." The group returned to Vietiane in the Caribou. LaDue, who knew the dead kicker, escorted his body to Udorn in a Helio.

Janke: This was his most memorable rescue mission in Laos. The Bird & Son aircraft had been hit by gunfire just a few miles from the border with China. Eric Shilling, Brongersma's assistant, sought help from Air America. Jack Leister (operations manager) ran the SAR operation. After finding Fore and Yip, they located the paracut of the Thai kicker in a tree about 100 feet high. After going down, they had to hack their way through tall elephant grass; it took the better part of an hour. They found the harness, empty, dangling 50 feet in the air. They finally located the kicker under some bushes. He was badly hurt, with injuries to the back or neck. He was unconscious, with his eyes open, and he moaned if his finger was moved. They were located on a steep embankment; it was necessary to stake the injured Thai to the side of the hill so that he would not slip down. At this point, they began to pick up ground fire from the other side of the hill. The problem was how to move the Thai without killing him. They tried to chop out a helicopter pad for more than an hour; all the while, Janke was praying that God would solve the problem of the injured Thai for them. Checking on the Thai, they found that he had died. "It truly was a blessing." The H-34 came down as the fire became heavy. The Thai's body was hoisted up, then LaDue. As LaDue was going up, the fire became heavy and the H-34 left. LaDue was sailing off into space with the winch slipping. The helicopter finally came back and picked up Janke. Both he and LaDue had glazed, glassy looks on their faces, and it took a half hour before the could talk to one another.

January 24, 1963

Casterlin writes to parents that he is discouraged over his prospects with Air America. He is still a first officer. Seven U.S. crew chiefs recently have been let go. "It's obvious that the belt tightening program is underway. The company has advised us that we are not to be made captains yet and I expect to be separated at any time. There are 37 of us over here and not enough work. . . . We are doing virtually no flying in Laos anymore." There is a rumor that the company would like to eliminate some of the older pilots who are considered troublemakers, but it is more likely that the last men hired will be the first to go. "Personally I feel that there will be trouble in Laos again."

February 6, 1963

Casterlin writes to parents that helicopters are not going into Laos anymore although fixed wing aircraft are
operating there. Casterlin is working extensively with the Thai Border Police. There is no project pay for this type of flying.

March 10, 1963
Casterlin to parents: Four pilot have been recently fired for various reasons. The flying contract is due for renewal in June and more heads are likely to roll.

March 31, 1963
Fighting breaks out between Deuanist and Kong Le Neutralists on PDJ.

March/April 1963
Blaufarb: The first "clear and unmistakable" violation of cease-fire took place in late March 1963, when a pro-PL dissident element in the Neutralists broke with the majority under Kong Le. The dissident, backed by PL units, attacked Kong Le's position in towns ringing the PDJ and drove them westward. US mission in VTE took several actions in response, including activation of Vang Pao's forces. "The Mission decided, with the Prime Minister's knowledge, to deploy the Meo irregulars in support of the Kong Le. The sudden appearance of the tribesmen on hillsides overlooking some of the major positions forced the 'dissident Neutralists' and the NLHS forces threatening Kong Le to take defensive measures." "From this point onward, the situation moved steadily toward open hostilities." Arrangement put together at Geneva began to disintegrate.

During early post-Geneva period, Air America was "a political issue, having been labeled a paramilitary instrument of the U.S. Government as a result of its close association with the irregulars. Souvanna Phouma actually requested that it leave Laos as soon as an alternative could be found. While the United States was attempting to identify another air transport firm with equivalent capabilities, Souvanna Phouma became disabused of his earlier expectations of cooperation from the NLHS and dropped his objections to Air America."

[Souvanna request US military assistance in face of NVA/PL aggression. Kennedy decides to resume assistance to Houa. CIA given responsibility to equip, train, and advise irregular forces. Substantial increase in CIA personnel in Laos.]

[Dommen: Air America helicopters used to ferry centerist troops in PDJ during spring of 1963.]

Jenny: Jenny transferred from SAT to Laos in 1963. Andresevic was chief pilot. Although he had a reputation of being a hard ass, Jenny got along well with him. He
enjoyed flying the Helio, and eventually accumulated 2400 hours in the airplane. He worked mainly for Pop Buell and Tony Po, dropping and landing rice and ammo, and carrying people. The pilots were kept busy - Po got high utilization out of the aircraft - but the work was satisfying. He never had an engine failure. Jim Pearsall had a good relationship with the Filipino mechanics at VTE, and the aircraft were in excellent shape. The same was not true for the Helios at Udorn.

April 1963
Hickler arrives in VTE

April 9, 1963
CIA SITREP: "The problem of having the Meo support Kong Le but at the same time trying to keep them from going too far has been in our minds constantly since fighting broke out in earnest last week." [DDR 1976/225H]

April 14, 1963
Casterlin to parents: "The news is not good for the Company. The Corps is taking all of their helicopters back but seven and this leaves us with quite an excess of pilots. About seven have been fired or have left and we are looking for further cutbacks." He is still working mostly with the Border Police.

April 20, 1963
Kong Le loses Xieng Khouang airfield to Deuanist-Pathet Lao forces, beginning gradual elimination of Kong Le forces from PDJ; North Vietnamese also engage in attack on Kong Le.

April 29, 1963
Casterlin to parents: "I am happy to announce that yesterday I made captain." This means $400 a month extra. Pilots are still leaving. Air America now has 27 helicopter pilots and no more copilots. Estes was nicked by shrapnel last week. He checked out as captain the next day. He was about ready to quit like a couple of other copilots did.

Interview: Pay went up to $1050, with project pay increased from $5 to $10 an hour. He began to do a good deal of flying in Laos, mainly carrying Neutralist refugees. Sites in Laos at this time were designated Victor Sites, while sites in Thailand were Sierra Sites. Later, they began Lima and Tango.

May 1963
UH-34 assignment at Udorn dropped from the usual 17-18 aircraft down 6-8, where it remained through November 1964.
May 28, 1963

Hickler to Grundy, enclosing copy of letter from Mann to Frank Daly ("We pilfered this copy."): "There is a real and serious problem here regarding ATOG. It is something that must be solved and solved quickly. We are receiving too many justified complaints and it seems to be picking up momentum." We need a competent ATOG manager. Janke is "willing and aggressive but lacks in basic traffic management experience." There is a lack of procedures to tally cargo in and out. We need records for a clear picture of cargo movement. Controls are required to schedule aircraft most efficiently.

June 3, 1963


June 18, 1963


"General Communists policy in Laos has been confident, prudent, and persistent." - Communists continue to display considerable confidence "that they have a good thing going in Laos." Communists have great capability to support Pathet Lao while military and political inhibitions prevent effective US countermeasures. Communist absorption of Laos and undercutting of US position in area "only a matter of time." USSR, China, North Vietnam, and PL not really interested in any settlement which would preclude ultimate victory in Laos. Communists have had "a keen sense of what the traffic would bear" and have backed off when major US military action was a possibility.

Subversion of Laos is largely the product of Hanoi's direction, "under the probably conflicting guidance of Moscow and Peiping." Major US military intervention in Laos would likely provoke a Chinese response.

June 25, 1963

Hickler memo: Jack Leister, ATOG Ops Mgr "while quite young, impresses me as being an exceptional man. I think that this boy will go far with additional training and maturity."

Frank Janke, Traffic mgr, ATOG: "quite young" - "aggressive and capable"

Dave Rogers, chief mechanic, "an excellent boss, a leader, and a trainer of his people in technical skills."

Mike LaDue, ATOG manager in charge of AFSs is "quite competent and intelligent" - "despite falling out of two different airplanes during airdrops"
Pilots "generally Outstanding." Walker "an excellent selection" as chief pilot.
Andresvic "one of the most competent and dedicated men I have ever had the pleasure to work with." Respected by
Customer personnel.
Approx. 4,000 pounds of cargo loaded in May.

Summer 1963
Dommen: By summer 1963, Air America dropping forty
tons of supply a day in flights all over the country.

Interview with Terrence M. Burke, March 13, 1992:
An ex-USMC sergeant, Burke initially worked for the
security side of the CIA. In 1963 he joined the Special
Operations Division and took paramilitary training. Shortly
after completing his training in mid-1963 he was assigned to
Laos. He was the first officer assigned PCS to Laos. He
went in "black," telling his family that he was working for
the Thai Border Police. His first assignment was to set up
a trail watching program out of NKP. He sed 3/4-man Hmong
teams that travelled overland across from Thakhet. Although
he was not supposed to accompany the teams, Burke did so on
occasion. There was not a great deal of movement along the
trail - a few trucks and some elephants.

July 5-7, 1963
Romes: Romes departed Sam Thong with Phil DeCaro, a
customer, in the right seat. The weather was lousy, with
heavy rain. He went down in a small valley about 5 miles
WSW of Sam Thong (he later learned that the drive shaft of
the fuel pump had sheered off). The wing was ripped off in
the crash and fuel began to spill out. The Helio quickly
caught fire. He went around to the right side and pulled
DeCaro out. DeCaro was burned pretty badlyly on the face and
arms. Romes also was burned on his right side. The rain
stopped in the afternoon, and he could see helicopters
overhead but they could not see the airplane in the high
foliage. The same thing happened on July 6: although the
weather was improving, they still could not be spotted from
the air. That night, Dutch Brongersma of Continental went
out to see if he could spot a camp fire. Romes could hear
the airplane but everything was too wet to try and get a
fire going. On the morning of July 7, with the weather
continued to improve, he decided to walk out for help
(DeCaro could not be moved due to injuries). He found an
animal trail in dense underbrush and began to follow it.
After a couple of hours, he saw a cornfield. There was a
small Meo village nearby, with 4-5 huts. The village was
nearly deserted, with only an old man and old woman there.
He gave a note to the old man, together with DeCaro's
sterling silver cigarette lighter and gestured to take it
for help. As it turned out, the man went to Sam Thong. He
managed to attract Thongsar’s attention, who took the note to Pop Buell. A little while later, Elmer Munsell arrived and landed in a cornpatch. Romes then directed the helicopter to the crash site, where they were able to land and pick up DeCaro.

Elmer E. Munsell, "Statement," n.d., AAM Archives: On 7 July 1963, at 1430L, Munsell was at Sam Thong, PIC of H-15. A note was delivered from Don Romes, who had been missing since 0920L on July 5, giving his position at approx. 5 miles WSW of LS-20. Munsell boarded a Medical Rescue Team and one local native medic as a guide. He landed at the site indicated on the note in about 15 minutes and picked up Romes. "I returned to San Thong, and after about 10 minutes took off to search for the wreckage with Capt. Romes as a guide. After searching for about fifteen minutes, the wreckage was sighted about 4 miles WSW (TG7522) of San Thong. After making several approaches to the wreckage, I determined that I would not be able to establish a hover and use the rescue winch due to the terrain and jungle growth (which appeared to be 150 to 200 feet high) and lack of sufficient power to hover at this altitude (3,500 feet). I selected a clearing about 1/4 mile from the site, landed, and accompanied the Medical Team and Capt. Romes to the crash site. We reached the crash site and the injured passenger at 1615L. After first aid was administered by the team, we returned to the aircraft, which took approximately one hour due to the weakened condition of the injured passenger, and returned to VS-20 at 1815, from where the pilot and passenger were evacuated to V-09."

Casterlin: Romes crashed in the Sam Thong area and was missing for 2-3 days. The weather was bad. Finally, Pop Buell brought a shaman to the warehouse. He rolled some bones, then pointed to the west and indicated that the missing pilot was "near." The next day, they found Romes in the area that he had pointed to. Romes had managed to walk to a village. Casterlin could not land, but he let down a can of water on a hoist. His window came loose and nearly popped out during this operation, and he nearly lost control of the aircraft.

Casterlin is sure that this took place within the time frame July 4-8, as his log book shows a five-day RON at Sam Thong with Mike Marshall, Elmer Munsell, and Bill Cook. "The weather was terrible the first three days with the clouds lifting later in the day to enable a couple of us to 'sneak' out [to the SW or west]. It was hairy flying up blind canyons and making '0' airspeed turns when unable to fly any further. I was pretty sure Don had done the same and I would find him in one of these areas on the SW side of the Sam Thong complex of mountains. On the 7th the weather improved and I flew 8+20. I would think that the incident
took place in the 5-7th time frame. . . . I took him a 5-gallon jerry can of requested H2O and during the hover hoist exchange my right window frame vibrated out of its mounting and I had to try to hover and keep the window from dropping to the ground (not a lot of fun). We were all happy that Don had been found as we had almost given up on ever locating him."

"During these bad weather days Joe Hazen would appear, punching through the clouds IFR, to break out and land downslope in his Helio. I was really impressed, even more so when he told me he had made $100,000 the previous year."

July 9, 1963

H. S. Estes wounded by hostile fire.

Estes: He was checking reports of gunfire from "friendly" villages and had two customers onboard. Near Ban Na (LS-13) he took a round through the windshield. The road split his helmet and lodged in the overhead map case.

[Estes to WMJ, 23 June 1990]

Elder to WMJ, 15 Sep 91: "A small village north of LS-15 was shooting their homemade flintlock rifles loaded with birdshot at the helicopters. Estes was hit flying over. Ed Reid heard about it and went up to the village and shot at the houses and the villagers stopped shooting at us. It was a Meo village. I suspect we were scaring the chickens or the children. That's the reason for the 'friendly' notation."

July 16, 1963


July 17, 1963

Hickler to Rousselot: ATOG supposed to be "a sort of focal point, control point, planning body, and central matrix designed to handle the great majority of routine as well as unusual operation functions of traffic, cargo, planning and scheduling, and special problems as they occur." Dale Means thoroughly conversant with requirement that some into Air Support Branch as well as "special" requirements. He is especially familiar with the "special" aspects of the job and recently "his level od knowledgeability in this classified area" has been expanded.

August 6, 1963
Minutes of ATOG Meeting, Taipei, with Grundy and others: It is important that ATOG be conducted efficiently. Improvements must be made or we will lose contracts. Brigida appointed ATOG Manager VTE "to correct past errors or omissions and to get things moving." Mann extremely upset over ATOG performance.

September 1963
Rousselot leaves Air America.

Rousselot: Although Doole may have wanted him out, Rousselot had too much support at CIA headquarters to be fired. He had given a year's notice, but nothing was done until the last minutes, when Boyd was brought in. Then, Doole wanted Rousselot out immediately, and Grundy wrote a nasty letter to that effect. Letting loose of the job "was the toughest thing I've ever done in my life."

September 5, 1963
C-46 B-150 flew over hostile territory and shot down. This produced much soul searching and led to the establishment of the FIC. [SEE WALKER'S HISTORY OF THE FIC, Oct. 12, 1964]

Air America C-46 shot down 2 kms west of Tchepone - 5 survivors, including Eugene DeBruin. B-150. Unable to locate BZ, aircraft was following road when hit by ground fire. Killed: Joseph C. Cheney and Charles G. Herrick. Eugene H. DeBruin (APS), To Yick Chiu (R/O), and three Thai AFSS (Pisidhi Indradat, Pradit Pramswam, Prasit Thanee) survived and were taken prisoner. (Last report on DeBruin was received on January 1968; he remains missing in action.)

LaDue: B-150 out of Savannakhet to haul freshly killed meat to soldiers located to the east. VTE received radio message from Cheney that aircraft had been hit by gunfire and was in its way down. An extensive search was mounted with three C-123s. LaDue, Janke and other kickers spent two days laying on the edge of the open ramp, looking for the downed aircraft. The crash site was located on the third day. LaDue and Janke led a team that landed by helicopter (flown by Jack Connor) about one kilometer from the crash site. Aircraft had hit ground nose first and the structure had collapsed on itself. Without metal saws and jacks, the search was difficult. After about 30 minutes, small arms fire broke out around them. They went back to the chopper pad and were lifted out. They returned to VTE and spoke to Ambassador Unger. He decided that there would be no further
rescue attempts. Donny Campbell, tears running down his face, tried to persuade him otherwise, but he was not successful. In retrospect, it was probably the best decision.

September 10, 1963
Casterlin to parents: AAM C-46 shot down a few days ago. "The situation seems to be fast approaching a climax." A pilot was fired recently and several have gone on home leave. There are now 17 helicopter pilots. We are getting 3 more helicopters.

September 23, 1963
President Kennedy and Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma meet at the White House. "The President emphasized that we would not accept communist control of Laos and are determined to support the Prime Minister’s government. We want the PL and the other communists to continue to know this. The Prime Minister’s efforts were essential to the preservation of the Geneva settlement and we would continue to do what we could to help him." The Prime Minister does not believe that the PL want a complete breakdown of the coalition framework. (Kennedy also inquires about the crew of the downed Air America transport; Souvanna says that representations have been made to the PL about the fate of the crew members.)

September 28, 1963
Casterlin to parents: "Things here are still slow." Three antiquated helicopters arrived from states. They are Coast Guard "G" models.

October 2, 1963
Casterlin to parents: "Very good month up north." He flew 50+ hours and received a pay check of $1700. He has been hauling a lot of refugees.

October 27, 1963
Zeltier: Billy Pearson was operating out of Vang Vieng. Heavily loaded, he failed to clear trees on takeoff and the belly of the aircraft broke open. Pearson tried to put the fire out but was unable to contain it. No one was hurt, but the aircraft was destroyed.

Late October 1963
Rick Byrne transfers from SAT as flight engineer to VTE as Helic pilot. He remembers arriving on a commissary flight at dusk. It soon turned dark. A rainy, warm, nasty tropical night. The lighting in the ramp area was poor.
There was only a little tarmac and he walked around in the mud. He had a brief interview with Don Campbell, acting chief pilot, then had to wait around for Andreesovic, head of STOL program. The pilots coming off trips looked like a rough, wild bunch in their bush hats, and Bryne began to wonder what he had gotten himself into. Andreesovic finally showed up. A taciturn individual, he only said to come out the next day to start Helio training.

Byrne had an extensive checkout during November and December, flying 130 hours with other pilots as he became familiar with the plane and the landing areas. He finally was checked out on Christmas Eve.

Andreesovic (whom he liked) proved to be "a very unusual man." You could sit next to him in a Helio all day and he would only say a few necessary words. This could get "spooky" at times; he was different from the other pilots. He obviously did not care if you liked him or not. Although he had a few accidents with the Helio, he could get in and out of landing sites when no one else could. All in all, he was a truly remarkable person.


The military situation was pretty stable at this time, with the friendlies holding the terrain on the periphery of the PDJ. About half the time, he flew for Bob Buell out of San Thong, dropping rice to outlying villages and carrying sick people. The other half was spent working for the Customer out of Long Tieng. Tony Po and Vint Lawrence were there. Tony was warm, gregarious, enthusiastic about everything; Vint was professional and reserved. Neither ever pushed the pilots, although the pilots generated their own pressure to perform. Byrne spent a lot of time supporting Hmong mountain teams, dropping rice and ammo. Van Pao often came along. He knew the military situation and terrain like the back of his hand and would navigate to the drop zones with confidence. Byrne used his high school French to talk to VP, who was a fearless leader.

Byrne enjoyed flying the Helio. He never had an accident or an engine failure in four years. The maintenance at VTE was terrific; Jack Pearsall was in charge most of the time.

November 11, 1963
Casterlin to parents: "The war is going great guns now. Don't be misled that I am only carrying rice on my missions as wars aren't won with rice."
November 22, 1963
Kennedy assassinated. Diems overthrown in early November.

November 27, 1963
Unger to the Secretary of State [DDRS 1982/2544]:
Souvanna continues to press for the removal of Air America. In recent conversations, "Souvanna made clear that it is AA label above all that bothers him, due past associations; he would not object to continuation of air support activity by a new American commercial enterprise. Clear that he finds AA continued presence a recurring political burden which PL continually exploit to their advantage." Unger pointed to the need to feed 100,000 people in remote locations. "It is not practical to expect organizations or individuals without extensive background to take over these operations."

The Country Team has concluded "that Air America should be withdrawn from Laos in name as an operating entity. Nevertheless a replacement organization will be required to maintain essential services." Impossible to transfer operation to a Lao air company due to lack of managerial and technical competence. He recommends that Air America be replaced "by a new U.S. commercial aviation company unsullied by pre-Geneva connections with Laos." The new company would acquire Air America's in-country aircraft and equipment; also, it would take over the contracts of "some key personnel." Bird & Son would be retained and possibly given greater responsibility for light plane operations while the new company would be primarily a heavy cargo carrier.

December 21, 1963
McNamara report to President Johnson: Operation Hardnose "remarkably effective" and urges expansion.

December 30, 1963
Casterlin to parents: We are building a swimming pool at Udorn with material left by departing Seabees. Flying has slowed down again.