I) Kadena Air Base, Okinawa

In the 1950ies, CAT’s scheduled flights from Taipei to Japan had to stop on Okinawa. But the airport they used was not Kadena Air Base, but Naha. For example, on 31 July 52, “Doc” Johnson flew C-46 B-846 on the scheduled flight Taipei-Naha-Tokyo (Haneda), on 21 September 59, he flew DC-6B B-1006 on the scheduled flight from Naha to Taipei, and on 25 September 59, he flew B-1006 on the scheduled run Taipei-Naha-Tokyo. During the same period of time, he flew C-46 B-136 Taipei-Kadena-Taipei on 5 June 52, C-46 B-138 on the same route on 11 August 52 or C-46 B-136 Taipei-Kadena on 1 September 59 – apparently on flights for the US Government, as Kadena Air Base was off limits for ordinary people. In that way, Kadena could remain the port of call for flights for the US military and the CIA. So the 45 CAT “International Scheduled” flights that touched Kadena Station in January 54, probably were mostly scheduled flights for the USAF (under Booklift) and for the CIA (flights for “Advertisement” / “ADS” or under the “Air Force Special Contract”). Interestingly, CAT seems to have sometimes tried to hide that they served 2 airports on the Island of Okinawa, just using “OKI” as airport code for airline service.

As early as April 1952, CAT had received the right to operate to and from and within the Ryukyu Islands, but had limited itself to the route to Japan. As to domestic traffic within the islands, a group of Ryukyu businessmen organized a company known as “Ryukyu Airways” in 1956, and they chartered a C-46 from Civil Air Transport Co Ltd that performed the scheduled domestic flying until 1963. On 27 June 56, CAT pilot “Doc” Johnson flew CAT’s passenger C-46 B-848 on such a charter, running from Naha to Yamayam via Miyako and the same way back to Naha. On 29 July 56 and on 23 December 56, he flew similar missions.

“Ryukyu Airways” charters flown on 27 June 56, 29 July 56, and 23 December 56 by CAT pilot “Doc” Johnson

(Pages from Doc Johnson’s log book kindly supplied by his son James on 14 February 2013)

CAT’s Captain “Doc” Johnson made similar flights within the Ryukyu Islands also on 28 March 57, 3 June 57, 24 June 57, 25 July 57, 26 August 57, 18 November 57, 16 and 26 December 57, 13 January 58, 31 August and 22 September 58, always using a C-46:

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1 See, for example, CAT international schedule effective 19 September 1952 (in: CAT Bulletin, vol. V, no.10, p.7), where the airport code is given as NHA.
4 See, for example, the “Annual Report of the Board of Directors of Civil Air Transport Company Limited for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March 1965”, in: UTD/CIA/B11F4.
5 Page from “Doc” Johnson’s log book kindly supplied by his son James on 14 February 2013.
Sometimes, these flights are given as flights for OTA, i.e. the Okinawa Travel Agency Ltd.\(^6\)

In 1963, the U.S. High Commissioner, Gen. Paul Carroway, ordered new airports to be built on 3 islands – Kumejima, Yonaguni, and Minami Daito – to improve business on the islands. Quite early, Japan Air Lines stepped forward, proposing to operate the inter-island service to be opened in 1964, but because of the military and CIA installations on Okinawa, the U.S. High Commissioner preferred an American company to operate the service. As no US airline was interested and as CATCL was a Chinese company, at the end Air America was given the job, although opposition from the business companies working on the Ryukyu Islands was to be expected.\(^7\) For airline services that Air America operated on Okinawa in the sixties, see my file about Scheduled Air Services Ryukus within my The History of Air America.

1) Operations for the Composite Service Group, Camp Chinen, Okinawa:

From the very beginning, some of CAT’s flights to Okinawa were of a very special nature: In 1951, “Zebra” flights that were to carry “Third Force” agents to Saipan for training, often stopped at Naha, Okinawa, on their way from Hong Kong to Atsugi in Japan, as Taiwan had to be avoided.\(^8\) As it seems, as early as 1951, i.e. as a reaction to Chinese activities during the Korean War, the CIA made plans to establish a CIA logistical support base on Okinawa in order to support the efforts of the Taiwan-based Western Enterprises Inc and of CAT’s Japan-based “Third Force” project against Communist China.\(^9\) By mid-1952, this support base had been established.\(^10\) The former USAF B-17 that CAT would use for overflights over continental China in 1952 and 1953 was picked up at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa.\(^11\)

In their Monthly Report for January 1954, CAT’s Operations Division noted: “There were three C-46 Taipei/Kadena/Taipei weekly banana flights completed during the month in conjunction with the weekly Flight 500”\(^12\). For February 1954, the same type of reports notes: “There were three C-46 Taipei/Kadena/Taipei weekly banana flights completed during the month in conjunction with the weekly Flight 500. One banana charter flight was cancelled on February 3 upon charterer’s request.”\(^13\) Apparently, these were flights for the CIA.

Effective 1 February 56, CAT Inc had a contract – no. DA-92-321 FEC 323 – with the US Army’s First Composite Service Unit (FCSU).\(^14\) The FCSU was a CIA entity that fulfilled airlift requirements on a charter basis, connecting Atsugi, Okinawa, Saipan, Taipei, and Korea – the CIA’s main operational use of CAT at that time.\(^15\) This unit was based on Okinawa,\(^16\) it was even the official name of Camp Chinen.\(^17\) By 8 August 56, this contract had been

\(^6\) Pages from “Doc” Johnson’s log book kindly sent to the author on 14 and 18 February 2013 by James Johnson.

\(^7\) Leary, Manuscript, pp.492/3, in: UTD/Leary/B19F4.

\(^8\) See my file CAT and Air America in Japan.

\(^9\) Leary, Manuscript, p.41, in: UTD/Leary/B19F1; the CIA code was JBEDICT.


\(^12\) CAT Operations Division, Monthly Report, January 1954, pp.2+8, in: UTD/Leary/B21F1.


\(^15\) Leary, Manuscript, pp.324-31 + 376a, in: UTD/Leary/B19F2.

\(^16\) On 19 April 56, several servicemen of US Army’s First Composite Service Unit (FCSU) received the “Soldier’s Medal” because of their heroic action at Bucknerville, Okinawa when a USAF aircraft had crashed there on 28 April 1955 (See Department of the Army, General Order no.14, at: http://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/pdf/go5614.pdf).

\(^17\) “The name “Camp Chinen” was used only informally. From 1951 to 1957, the base’s official name was the First Composite Service Unit (FCSU). In 1957 it was re-designated the US Army Composite Service Group (USACSG or simply (CSG). It retained that designation until it closed in August 1972. […] Chinen was forced to close by July 31, 1972” (Info kindly supplied on 19 April 2014 by someone who lived at Camp Chinen in the sixties and early seventies).
replaced by a new one – contract no. DA-92-321 FEC 414, also with the US Army’s First Composite Service Unit (FCSU) –, and CAT Inc was requested “to establish scheduled flights.” Indeed, in July 56, CAT flew 207:14 hours, in August 170:31 hours. Since November 56, CAT’s Tachikawa Station Monthly Report was no longer sent to the Company’s President at Taipei, but to CAT’s official “Executive Field Office” at Kadena.

The reason for upgrading CAT’s station at Kadena to become the “Executive Field Office” in 1956 seems to have been double: After the reorganization of the CAT-complex in 1955, CAT Inc – the American company that flew the missions for the US Government – was to be based outside Taiwan; but while Tachikawa had been at the heart of the USAF’s Booklift operations during the Korean War, after the war the center of CIA activities in the Far East shifted from Atsugi NAS in Japan to Okinawa. This was also true for the activities of CAT Inc, so that when CAT Inc was to be renamed in 1958, one of the proposals was to call it the “Okinawa Corporation” as to show that the center of its activities was in Okinawa. The other reason also had to do with the reorganization of the CAT-complex: While the US company CAT Inc could fly to Okinawa under a section of the US Administrative Act, after the reorganization, the airline CAT had become a Chinese company and so had to file an application for a foreign air carrier permit under the US Civil Aeronautics Act in order to receive landing rights on Okinawa. This had to be done by an amendment to the Sino-American Bilateral Agreement. But Northwest Airlines’ President Donald Nyrop, who considered this to be an unfair competition as CAT was US Government-owned, threatened to reveal CAT’s real ownership. As the CIA did not want to lose its cover, CAT tried to make arrangements with Northwest, but without much success. So a CAT Inc “Executive Field Office” on Okinawa may also have had the purpose to help open certain doors for the airline. Anyway, CAT continued the application for flying rights into Okinawa, and – of course – continued to have its real “Executive Field Office” at Taipei, where Air Asia personnel, under the Services Contract, managed the airline CAT and CAT Incorporated.

In July 57, CAT’s new contract was no longer with the subordinate US Army’s First Composite Service Unit (FCSU), but with the higher US Army’s Composite Service Group (CSG). The US Army’s Composite Service Group (CSG) was based at Camp Chinen on Okinawa, and that was exactly the place, where the CIA had their main support base: As General Lansdale puts it:

“The CIA: 1. Okinawa-Support Base
Okinawa Station is in itself a paramilitary support asset and, in critical situations calling for extensive support of UW [= unconventional warfare] activity in the Far East, could be devoted in its entirety to this mission. Located at Camp Chinen, it comprises a self-contained base under Army cover with facilities of all types necessary to the storage, testing, packaging, procurement and delivery of supplies-ranging from weapons and explosives to medical and clothing. Because of its being a controlled area, it can accommodate admirably the holding of black bodies in singletons or small groups, as well as small groups of trainees....”

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21 Leary, Manuscript, p.331, in: UTD/Leary/B19F3.
22 See my files Company Management I and Company Management II within this e-book.
Indeed, CSG was nothing else but the cover for this CIA base. This was the CIA’s main logistics base in East Asia, code-named ZRBLUSH. Effective October 57, a new flight schedule was established for CAT’s flights for the CIA, and under the new schedule, the aircraft were not to come to Tachikawa any longer. So the flights operated by CAT Inc and later by Air America under this contract with the CSG, Okinawa, were no longer dealt with in the Company’s Tachikawa Station Monthly Reports. In the late fifties, CAT’s US-registered C-54 N2168 was assigned to the CSG and based at Okinawa. Under the CSG-contract, CAT’s C-54 N2168 performed logistical support and moved personnel from CIA units in Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Okinawa, the Philippines, Saipan, South Vietnam and other South East Asian countries on a scheduled and emergency basis. Also under this contract, a CAT C-46 provided parachute training on Saipan. On the Japan-Okinawa-Iwakuni-Guam route, CAT had to use a navigator.

Kadena, Okinawa, home of Detachment 2, 1045th Operational Evaluation & Training Group, reporting directly to CIA headquarters, was also the place where the surviving CIA B-26s that had returned from Indonesia to Tainan in May 58, were ferried in the summer months of 1958 and where they received new fake serials: On 31 July 58, Connie Seigrist ferried an unknown B-26 from Tainan to Kadena, on 12 August 58 he ferried B-26A “3522” (believed to be 44-35221), and on 23 August 58 it was B-26 “3524” (believed to be 44-35242). At least some of the first four B-26s to arrive at Tainan in 1959 – that is “8264”, “8765”, “8248”, and “8188” – were survivors from Indonesia that had received new serials at Kadena, Okinawa.

Probably as early as 1959, Kadena Station became the official “Air America Inc., Field Executive Office, Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, APO U.S. Forces 96239”. That is also the address, where, from November 1967 to the end of 1972, the Air America Log was officially published (later officially at Bangkok), although from the Flight Operations Circular of 1 April 73, we know that the Company’s DPRA (Director of Public Relations Advertising) had his office at Taipei. That is what the editor – George L. Christian III – admits himself in a later issue of the Air America Log. Probably for the same reason, Kadena Station never appeared in the lists “Distribution” of the Flight Operations Circulars. But this was only a fake for political reasons, as the President and his staff had their offices at Taipei all the time. To hide this, traditionally, only the locations of the Base Managers, Station Managers, and

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26 In a review to the book by Antonio J. Mendez: The Master of Disguise: My Secret Life in the CIA, a former CIA man who called himself “A customer” notes: “I probably would not have even bothered reading this book except for one minor issue: I know Mr. Mendez personally. As a teenager, he and his family lived on a small Army-type facility in Okinawa from 1968-1971 called the United States Army Composite Service Group. I assure you, there was nothing ‘Army’ about it. It was all CIA and they were conducting operations all over Southeast Asia” (http://www.amazon.ca/product-reviews/156740491X).

27 It seems that the families of CIA men who were on TDY somewhere else in the Far East, also stayed here: That is what CIA man Antonio J. Mendez (The Master of Disguise) reports about his family: “We would be living in military-style housing at a secret Agency base on Okinawa, supporting clandestine operations over a broad area” (p.76). “Back at the base, my family and I lived within the military cocoon: We shopped at the commissary and PX. Milk was pasteurized, and the children ate fast food at the base club. Karen and I played golf on weekends” (pp.78/9).

28 See Leary, “Secret mission to Tibet”, p.69. The first 2 letters indicate country, for example CY stands for Laos and MA for Thailand (James N. Glerum, Interview conducted on 30 October 95 at Watkinsville, GA by Prof. William Leary, in: UTD/Leary/B45F8).


31 Leary, Manuscript, p.290, in: UTD/Leary/B19F2.

32 Trest, Air Commando One, pp.81-83.

33 E-mail dated 25 January 2008, kindly sent to the author by Steve Seigrist.


Operations Managers were perceptible by their denomination as, for example BMBKK.\textsuperscript{36} The Flight Operations Circular of 1 April 73 is the first known Air America circular of that type that lists all addressees by location.\textsuperscript{37} There were probably at least 2 reasons for this fake: It may have been difficult for a Taiwan-based company to fly missions for the USAF, but it was not for an “airline” whose headquarters was on a USAF Air Base. It may also have been problematic for the Government of the Republic of China to lodge an “airline” that was called Air America, so was visibly not Chinese, and was – moreover – rumored to be owned by the CIA.

Between 1959 and 1962, Air America’s missions to support the Tibetans originated at Kadena, Okinawa.\textsuperscript{38} It was probably on the Pacific island of Saipan and at Yomitan on Okinawa rather than at Camp Chinen that the Tibetans received parachute training in the late fifties and early sixties. At Camp Chinen, there were “three ‘safe-houses’ where, on occasion, foreign nationals could be housed and receive specialized training.”\textsuperscript{39} But “no para-military training went on there. […] The base was simply not set up for that sort of thing. Certainly no parachute training took place, as it would have been much too dangerous (because of the terrain) and too conspicuous. […] Some [Tibetans] were indeed brought to Okinawa for jump training, but I believe that was done at Yomitan which always served as the primary jump-training area for 1st Special Forces. […] The same might be true for weapons training. We had a small, rather informal firing range (i.e., no butts or firing points), but it seems that it was used primarily for weapons- and ordinance-testing. […] Relating to the subject of training, it was an important part of TSD’s mandate to train agents (or their case officers) in basic trade-craft, especially photography, communications taps, secure communications, etc. But most of this was done on a TDY basis, with Chinen staff travelling to the location of need. Chinen TSD people traveled a lot.”\textsuperscript{40}

At that time, Air America continued to have a contract with the US Army CSG, i.e. the CIA, on Okinawa: For example, in a contract list dated 1 November 63 that Air America’s President Hugh Grundy sent to the FAA, we read: “Contractor: Headquarters U.S. Army Composite Service Group, Ryukyu Islands. Nature and Scope [of the contract]: Furnishing, within the capabilities of Air America, Inc., flying services, on a call basis, of up to five C-46 aircraft to be made available at Tainan Air Base, Tainan, Taiwan and DC-4, DC-6, De Havilland DHC-4A, Dornier Do-28A, C-45, and Helio Courier aircraft to be made available at the location of the aircraft when requested and additional flight crew personnel. Date: 31 Aug. 61. Duration: 1 July 61 – 30 June 64.”\textsuperscript{41} For many years, contracts with the CSG at Kadena were for flying services on a call basis. Two of these contracts are preserved at the Air America Archives at Dallas: Contract no. DAJB09-68-C-0077 between Air America Inc and Headquarters U.S. Army Composite Service Group, Ryukyu Islands, was effective 1 July 67 and expired on 30 June 1970. Contractor aircraft subject to call under this contract were nearly all types of aircraft in Air America’s fleet – DC-6, DC-4, C-46, C-47, DHC-4A, Volpar, C-45/Ten Two, Do-28, PA-23, PC-6, H-395, Bell 205, and Bell 204. Modifications, maintenance and support were delegated to Air Asia at Tainan, and the point of origin was to be Tainan. On 27 May 69, Air America asked for negotiating new prices for the period 1 July 69 to 30 June 70.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{36} See, for example, the “Distribution” in Flight Operations Circular of 15 July 71, p.1, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B.


\textsuperscript{38} See my file Missions to Tibet.

\textsuperscript{39} Info kindly supplied on 19 April 2014 by someone who lived at Camp Chinen in the sixties and early seventies.

\textsuperscript{40} Info kindly supplied on 4 June 2014 by someone who lived at Camp Chinen in the sixties and early seventies.

\textsuperscript{41} Letter dated 1 November 63 sent by Hugh Grundy to the FAA, in: UTD/Bisson/B5/microfilm reel no.2.

\textsuperscript{42} Contract no. DAJB09-68-C-0077 and related documents, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.25.
U.S. Army Composite Service Group, Ryukyu Islands, – contract no. DAJB09-70-C-9100 – was effective 1 July 70 and was extended for another year on 1 July 71. Again, modifications, maintenance and supply support were delegated to Air Asia at Tainan, and the point of origin was another time Tainan. However, this time a paragraph about Hazardous Flight Time was added, i.e. “flight time over areas in which active combat operations are in progress or over areas controlled or occupied by unfriendly forces”; and the list of aircraft types subject to call under this contract is smaller: DC-6, DC-4, C-46, C-47, DHC-4A, Volpar, PC-6, and Bell 204B, as Air America’s C-45s, Dorniers, Apache, and Helios had already been put out of service. While probably many of Air America’s flights operated under this contract were the traditional CIA resupply routes to Atsugi NAS, Kadena, Saipan, and Guam, the addition of the paragraph about Hazardous Flight Time indicates that this time, CIA flights to the war areas of Laos and South Vietnam were also included.

Indeed, there was a very important mission that these Air America flights out of Kadena had for many years: the delivery of special, i.e. sanitized equipment: “Special multi-year contracts with Civil Air Transport (CAT) and its post-1959 successor, Air America, […] enabled logistics officers to deliver many tons of equipment from Camp Chinen to locations anywhere in S.E. Asia.”

There were several warehouses at Camp Chinen, and “each warehouse contained a carefully-managed supply of equipment that might be needed for clandestine operations, including weapons of every sort and origin (including suppressed weapons), ammunition, clothing, rucksacks, specialized communications equipment, food,

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43 Contract no. DAJB09-70-C-9100 and related documents, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 25.
44 Info kindly supplied on 19 April 2014 by someone who lived at Camp Chinen in the sixties and early seventies.
Map of Camp Chinen’s Lower Base showing the warehouses in the east (kindly supplied on 4 June 2014 by a former resident of Camp Chinen)

and medicine. In addition, one could find a variety of rubber and solid-hull boats whose outboard engines had been specially modified to run silently. [...] All the gear packaged and delivered to the field via Camp Chinen was ‘sanitized’ so that its provenance could not be traced to the American government.”

“One warehouse (Number Nine) served as a paraloft, where the staff inspected, repaired, modified, and packed parachutes used in aerial drops. Given the magnitude of the Agency’s ‘Secret War’ in Laos alone, the paraloft staff faced a considerable workload. The riggers were Okinawans, trained and supervised by CIA specialists.”

Indeed, “After the US military took over covert paramilitary operations in Vietnam from the CIA in Operation Switchback (OP 34A) in 1964, Camp Chinen took on the responsibility of supplying the highly secret Studies and Observation Group (SOG) with sanitized clothing and gear, undetectable wiretapping devices, and untraceable weapons such as Swedish K machine guns, CAR-15s, and High Standard HD suppressed pistols.”

Probably in 1963 or 1964, a similar contract – contract no. AF49(604)-4194 – was signed between Southern Air Transport and the USAF’s Logistical Support Group (LSG), expiring

45 Toward this end, they worked closely with the US Army’s Counter Insurgency Support Office (CISO) which was located north of Naha at Machinato on the western side of the island. CISO procured all of the clothing, rations and personal gear needed for SOG operations in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

46 Toward this end, they worked closely with the US Army’s Counter Insurgency Support Office (CISO) which was located north of Naha at Machinato on the western side of the island. CISO procured all of the clothing, rations and personal gear needed for SOG operations in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

47 Info kindly supplied on 19 April 2014 by someone who lived at Camp Chinen in the sixties and early seventies.
on 30 June 65, and being replaced by contract no. AF49(604)-4379 probably on 1 July 65, probably expiring on 30 June 69. As to the aircraft flown under this contract, in 1965 we have the 4 Air America-owned DC-6As – N90771, N90781, N90782, and N90784 – operated out of Tachikawa, in 1966 we have these 4 Tachikawa-based DC-6As plus 2 Taipei-based C-54s – B-1012 and B-1014 –, but in May 68, only DC-6A N90782 is left under this Southern Air Transport contract with the LSG, and now this aircraft was based at Kadena in a cargo configuration. Apparently, this was the CIA’s contract for “black” long-range flights originating in the Far East, mostly at Kadena, as the aircraft that flew the Tibetan support missions to “Oak Tree”, i.e. Charbatia Air Base in Eastern India, were operated under this SAT-contract. And the supplies these aircraft delivered to India came from Camp Chinen via Kadena Air Base.

From November 1967 to the end of 1972, the *Air America Log* was published at Kadena, Okinawa, and most of the time, the publisher’s official address was given as “Air America Inc, Field Executive Office, Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, APO U.S. Forces 96239”. In the fall of 68, Air America was “erecting a new building at its Kadena, Okinawa base. The all-reinforced concrete structure is being built by Westpac, Incorporated, who use time-saving, demountable steel tube scaffolding to support the upper floor of the building as the concrete is poured. The building’s ground breaking ceremony, duly attended by a Shinto priest, took place last February; it will be completed shortly.” But “Chinen was forced to close by July 31, 1972 […] Although the CIA vacated Camp Chinen, the base itself did not dissolve immediately. Instead it came under the control of the US Army’s 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) who used it as a training base and as a language school. An additional function, however, was to continue providing logistical support for the CIA’s on-going operations in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Thus, the Okinawans who had worked in the Agency’s logistics unit were simply placed under the authority of the Special Forces Group. By 1974, however, the wars in Vietnam and Laos were ending, so the US Army left Camp Chinen.” And there was no longer any need for Air America flights to Kadena.

### 2) Flights over Mainland China apparently resumed in the late fifties

In the late fifties, overflights over Mainland China seem to have been resumed – apparently using the 2 USAF C-118As that had belonged to the 581st Reproduction Squadron in the early fifties, as “all C-118s and C-54s (two each) were reserved for ‘special’ missions, some of which supported an agency beyond the operational purview of the US Air Force – the CIA.” In 1959, the unit became Detachment 2, 1045th Operational Evaluation & Training Group (OE&TG) at the end, but, as Michael Haas puts it, “prior to 1959, Detachment 2’s largest aircraft, a four-engined C-118 transport, had been frequently used for flights conducted by Civil Air Transport, a CIA proprietary airline operating throughout Asia.

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48 “Aircraft Status” as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F7.
49 Contract no. AF49(604)-4379 is mentioned in Air America’s fleet lists of 1 November 65 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1), 4 May 66 (in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2), and 1 May 68 (in: UTD/Herd/B2), but not in the list of 15 August 69 (in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1).
50 Contract no. AF49(604)-4379 between SAT and the LSG is mentioned for the first time in Air America’s fleet list called “Revised Status of Aircraft” as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1.
51 For details, see my file: *Missions to Tibet*.
53 Info kindly supplied on 19 April 2014 by someone who lived at Camp Chinen in the sixties and early seventies.
54 Probably C-118As 51-3820 and 51-3822; see the DC-6 file within my *The Aircraft of Air America*.
55 That is of that unit.
56 Haas, *Apollo’s Warriors*, p.81.
57 See the file *Missions to Tibet* within my *History of Air America*. 8
And CAT had indeed been busy during the earlier stages of the cold war. According to the highest ranking USAF special operations officer at the time, Brig General Edward Lansdale, CAT had by 1959 completed numerous overflights over mainland China59 and Tibet.59

An unknown CAT / Air America-flown C-118A at Kurmitola, East Pakistan, in 1958/9 (with kind permission from Ken Conboy)

Although Haas’ text then only speaks of CAT’s and Air America’s missions to Tibet,60 the CAT crews themselves do mention flights they made into China in USAF DC-6 (C-118A) aircraft. In an interview with Prof. Leary, CAT pilot Thomas C. Sailer said that he made a number of flights from Clark AFB into Central China in B-17 and DC-6. He recalled one drop of people north of Chungking. At least one Chinese agent made several trips – because of the pistol he carried he was known as “P-38”. According to Sailer, Bob Aubrey and Charlie Davenport made many of these flights.61 James McElroy, who, in 1957 was in charge of the Agency parachute loft and storekeeper for the FE airborne equipment stored in Okinawa and who in 1959 was charged with supporting all FE airborne operations in technical, training and material and was directly responsible to Headquarters’ Air Branch for these activities, also recalls that “the C-118 was used on non-STBARNUM drops” around 1958-60, i.e. on drops that were not related to Tibet.62 Jim Keck, a former CAT/Air America navigator who took part in several of those overflights, states that they used the same C-118s out of Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, that were also used in the Tibetan support program. C-118A 51-3822 (msn 43569) was the favorite aircraft of CAT / Air America navigator Jim Keck,63 until it was forced down over Armenia on 27 June 58.64 The aircraft returned to Okinawa only in January 60,65 when Air America did no longer use USAF C-118As. “Some of the trips into Mainland China were rather long. [...] In a DC-6, if we lost an engine back there it would mean exiting

58 Emphasis added.
59 Haas, Apollo’s Warriors, p.140. General Lansdale’s words of July 1961 were that CAT had made “more than 200 overflights of Mainland China and Tibet” (Memorandum from Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, Pentagon expert on guerrilla warfare, to Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, President Kennedy’s military adviser, on Resources for Unconventional Warfare, SE. Asia, excerpts at: https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/doc100.htm). Evidently, this number includes overflights made during the Korean War and flights to Tibet, so the real number of overflights over Mainland China made after 1958 cannot be calculated from this quotation.
60 Haas, Apollo’s Warriors, pp.140-45.
61 Thomas C. Sailer, interview made with William M. Leary at San Francisco on 8 September 1985; professor Leary’s notes, preserved at UTD/Leary/B43F5.
65 Interview conducted by Prof. William Leary with Lawrence Ropka at Ft Walton Beach, FL, on 29-30 August 1990, transcript preserved at: UTD/Leary/B43F4.
via a route towards the lower land of South East China. That thought was always spooky!"66

As navigator Jim Keck said, these Mainland China trips were completely separate from the Tibet operation. The program had a different case officer and the only things in common with the Tibet missions were the airplanes and the CAT crews.67 These flights started about 1958 and mostly delivered some Chinese passengers as well as some requested supplies that were all parachuted at the designated drop zone in Mainland China. Often, they were flown once a month during full moon, but sometimes, they were several months apart.68 Before the tenth or eleventh flight, probably in late 1958 or early 1959, the briefing at Okinawa was different announcing that the people who were to be inserted were very important to a new program that was about to take place. A box full of gold coins and the photos and addresses of some one hundred Chinese locals were also to be dropped. CAT navigator Jim Keck recalls the words that the case officer pronounced on this occasion: “These cards and money will help our agents to establish a second front in Mainland China! The big picture is, this front will grow and move toward the coast line, changing all of China into a free nation!”69 The trip inbound was as smooth as could be expected, and the drop zone was hit about four minutes ahead of schedule. The drop altitude was near 1,200 to 800 feet,70 but the third Chinese to leave the plane jumped out some seconds too late. The flight back was uneventful, but two weeks later the CAT crew was told that none of the three passengers or the important box was ever found by the agents they were destined for. The overflights were stopped for three months, and in 1959, they were resumed with C-130As. Two years later, reports said that the money and the cards had been handed over to the Chinese government.71 A.L. Judkins “recalls numerous overflights of China and Tibet. He started out on the DC-6. He remembers one flight from Takhli with Bill Welk; they flew 17 hours in the unpressurized aircraft on a mission to the vicinity of Koka Nor.”72 Pete Peterson made one trip into Northern China with Welk and Johnson in the DC-6 – apparently around 1960.73 This may explain an oddity in “Doc” Johnson’s log book: On 18 April 59, “Doc” Johnson flew a C-130 from Kadena to Clark (3.4 hours), then apparently remained at Clark for several days, and took another or the same C-130 back from Clark to Kadena on 23 April 59. This makes believe that between 19 and 22 April 59, another Air America crew flew the C-130 into Tibet and was later released on the return flight from Clark by “Doc” Johnson.74 It can only be guessed what “Doc” Johnson did at Clark Air Base from 19 to 22 April 59, which is not exactly the ideal place for recreation – perhaps he was on a flight to China that he wasn’t allowed to log. For those flights into China apparently used the USAF’s special mission C-118As out of Clark Air Base.

67 E-mail dated 29 January 2002, sent by Jim Keck to the author.
68 E-mail dated 12 February 2002, sent by Jim Keck to the author.
69 Chapter 4 of Jim Keck’s forthcoming autobiography, pp.8-13, quoted from the manuscript kindly supplied to the author by Jim Keck and published here with his kind permission.
70 “What we did do was this: Using my radar altimeter (which would read out the exact absolute altitude in feet) I would find a fairly level terrain in-between the IP and the DZ that showed the ground elevation and add the absolute altitude to it. The pilots would then set this on their altimeters” (E-mail dated 13 June 2002, sent by Jim Keck to the author).
71 Chapter 4 of Jim Keck’s forthcoming autobiography, pp.13-25, quoted from the manuscript kindly supplied to the author by Jim Keck and published here with his kind permission.
72 Interview with A. L. Judkins conducted by Prof. William Leary on 9 September 85, written resume, at: UTD/Leary/B43F3.
74 Page from Doc Johnson’s log book kindly supplied by his son James on 18 February 2013.
PDO Miles L. Johnson recalls a flight in a C-130A: “On the trip with Andy and Pete we had one agent, I believe the mission was close to the Mongolian border. The DZ was on a very high plateau and the flight deck crew could see it from a long distance.” It is unknown, if these overflights were covered by any of the contract mentioned above – contract no. DAJB09-70-C-9100 with the CSG or contract no. AF49(604)-4379 (SAT’s contract no. with the Logistical Support Group) –, but probably this was not the case, because, as it seems, the aircraft involved were USAF C-118As from Okinawa. The flights probably stopped in the early 1960ies, together with the flights to Tibet.

Two pictures of Air America’s Kadena Base taken in 1972


3) US Army maintenance

Already in June 63, Air America felt that there was a possibility of a 30,000 man-hour contract from the U.S. Army for light plane maintenance at Hamby Army Air Field, Okinawa. On 10 September 63, it was reported that “although no contract has been signed, it appears that Air America will be awarded the maintenance contract at Hamby Air Base, Okinawa. The contract is for the provision of maintenance requiring the services of approximately fifteen persons for a one year term. Although the contract is small, it will put Air America in business on Okinawa servicing local requirements and is a desirable


76 Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air America, Inc of 11 June 63, p.3, in: UTD/CIA/B3F4.
expansion of its other operations at that location.”

And the contract arrived: For Fiscal Years 1964 and 1965, it was contract no. DA-92-321-FEC-2141, and for Fiscal Year 1966, it was contract no. DAJB09-66-C-0001.

4) Ground handling

Most contracts that Air America had with other airlines were ground handling contracts for certain airports in South East Asia. For many airlines, ground handling was done at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa or at Clark Air Base near Manila. Most of the airlines served in this way made charter flights for the US Military during the war in Vietnam, transporting military personnel or their dependents or military cargo to Southeast Asia or bringing servicemen home to the United States. Contracts of this type existed between Air America/CATCL and Airlift International, Alaska Airlines, Braniff International Airways, Capitol Airlines, The Flying Tiger Line, International Airlines, Northwest Orient Airlines, Overseas National Airlines, Pan American World Airways, Saturn Airlines, Slick Airways, Southern Air Transport, Southwest Airlines, Standard Airlines, Trans Caribbean Airlines, Trans World Airlines, Trans International Airlines, United Air Lines, World Airways, and Universal Airlines. Similar contracts also existed with Japan Air Lines at certain airports in Japan on a call basis.

In August 69, for example, Air America Kadena handled 4 Braniff flights, 23 Northwest flights, 3 Pan American flights, 32 Southern AT flights, 50 Flying Tiger flights, 1 Trans International flight, 60 Trans World flights, and 90 United Air Lines flights.

The Air America documentary *Flying Men, Flying Machines* shows very well what Air America ground handling meant: As Robert J. Aubry, Air America’s Station Manager at Kadena, Okinawa, points out, Air America ground handled some 225 commercial airliners per month at that time, that is in 1970/71, and these aircraft operated under contracts that airlines like The Flying Tiger Line, Seaboard World Airlines, Trans World Airlines or United Air Lines had with the Military Airlift Command. In the same documentary, Col. Hugh L. Baynes, Commanding Officer of the 603rd Military Support Squadron, Kadena at that time, adds that Air America ground handled the majority of commercial aircraft arriving and departing Kadena. This not only meant having all arriving passengers leave the aircraft and completely offloading all their baggage, ground handling the passengers and their baggage during the 1-2 hours ground time they had at Kadena, and helping them re-board their aircraft and loading all bags onto the aircraft. For in the meantime, Air America personnel also had to clean and straighten up the cabin, that is put new blankets in the overhead bins or prepare the seat belts.

Air America’s Kadena Base was officially closed on 31 December 1972. But already on 20 November 72, Air America’s Station Manager Robert J. Aubry could report: “An end to an era came on 15 November 1972 at 1600L hours when this station ground handled its last MAC flight, a Seaboard World DC-8 cargo mission from Kadena direct to Travis AFB. Contrary to some beliefs there were no shouts of joy but a completely dejected group of hard workers who could only shake their heads in disbelief that Air America after 22 years on Okinawa was now a non-existent organization on Kadena AFB. A really sad and heartbreak-

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77 Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committees of Air Asia Company Limited and Air America, Inc of 10 September 63, p.3, in: UTD/CIA/B7F2.
79 All of these contracts are available at UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.31.
80 Flight Operations Monthly Report for August 69, formerly in: UTD/Leary/Ser.I/B4F1, now UTD/Leary/B33F4?
81 R.J. Aubry, in: *Flying Men, Flying Machines*, at 70 minutes.
ing sight to behold. [...] Effective 15 November 1972 at 0900L hours direct Company communications between Yokota/Kadena was discontinued." On 29 December 1972, the Station Manager reported that “all Third Country Nationals and Indigenous employees at Kadena have requested that this office convey to the Management their sincere appreciation for the liberal termination benefits granted to all. [...] The 33rd Air Sea Rescue Squadron now occupies the entire facility with the exception of two (2) AAM offices on the second floor and a small area on the ground floor used for packing and crating of Company property items.”

On 26 January 73, Robert J. Aubry talked about problems he had had to sell the property on which the Company house sits. And in his last report dated 9 February 73, the former station Manager described the problems he had with Japanese Customs to have the Company’s Hi-Lift Van shipped to Vientiane. Air America’s Station at Kadena closed business on 15 February 1973.

Kadena Station Weekly Progress Reports of 20 November 72 and 29 December 72 (in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 6)

84 Kadena Station Weekly Progress Report of 20 November 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.6.
85 Kadena Station Weekly Progress Report of 29 December 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.6.
87 Kadena Station Weekly Progress Report of 9 February 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.5.
88 Memo “Close Out of Air America Kadena Station” dated 2 March 73, in: UTD/CIA/B31F2.
II) Clark Air Force Base

Shortly after CAT had opened scheduled airline services to Manila in December 1949, there were 2 airports in the Philippines that were served by CAT. The other one was Clark Air Base close to Manila, used for all sorts of covert missions. “Al Kindt, as Manager in Manila, looked after the Philippines. That included coordinating with Clark Air Force Base where the United States Air Force often prepared aircraft for operations to be performed by CAT.”

1) Special operations:

Since the early fifties, Clark Air Base served as starting point for a lot of special operations: “All Paper flights were considered ‘secure’ or ‘black’ and thus were routed through Clark Air Force Base and parked at the extreme southern end of the airstrip.” CAT’s Icebox missions to Indonesia in 1951-52 had Clark as the station where the PBY-5A retreated before returning to Taiwan. In April 53, the CAT pilots of Operation Squaw I were trained at Clark. In mid-April 1954, the 816th Troop Carrier Squadron of the 483rd Wing moved to Clark with fifteen C-119s, tasked to make six round trips daily to Indochina in support of operation Squaw II. Clark was also the staging point for CAT’s support to the Indonesian rebels in 1958. And in 1957 and 1958, CAT’s first missions to support the Tibetans originated also at Clark Air Base.

Although the CIA operated a counter-guerrilla school at Fort McKinley close to Manila – The Security Training Center (STC) –, there seems to have been no direct support by CAT. No CAT or Air America aircraft that could have supported such an operation was ever stationed at Manila – unless Air America’s flights to Clark AB also supported this school. One exception is known: On 14 and 15 June 51, CAT pilot “Doc” Johnson flew C-47s B-815 and B-817 on local flights out of Manila that lasted only about an hour. As CAT did not operate any local flights out of Manila, these flights may have been support flights for The Security Training Center (STC). Johnson then brought B-815 back to Taipei.

(Page from “Doc” Johnson’s log book kindly supplied by his son James on 14 February 2013)


90 Rosbert, The pictorial History of Civil Air Transport, p.177.


92 See my file Working in Remote Countries: CAT in New Zealand, Thailand-Burma, French Indochina, Guatemala, and Indonesia.

93 See my file Missions to Tibet.

94 “The Security Training Center (STC). This is a counter-subversion, counter-guerrilla and psychological warfare school overtly operated by the Philippine Government and covertly sponsored by the U.S. Government through CIA as the instrument of the Country Team. It is located at Fort McKinley on the outskirts of Manila. Its stated mission is: ‘To counter the forces of subversion in Southeast Asia through more adequate training of security personnel, greater cooperation, better understanding and maximum initiative among the countries of the area.’ The training capability of the STC includes a staff of approximately 12 instructors in the subjects of unconventional and counter-guerrilla warfare......” (Memorandum [July 1961] from Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, Pentagon expert on guerrilla warfare, to Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, on Resources for Unconventional Warfare, SE. Asia, excerpts at: https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/doc100.htm)
In 1967, Hal Harper, Air America’s Superintendent of Technical Training at Clark, conducted several training courses on aircraft powerplants, for both USAF and Air America personnel at Clark, helping qualified personnel prepare for the US FAA “A&P” (Airframe & Powerplant) written examination. The first powerplant class was completed in early June 67, others followed. In April 69, Charles Chambers, Air America’s Station Manager at Clark, received the following commendation from Saturn Airways, Inc:

![Commendation Image](image)

(Air America Log, vol. III, no.3, 1969, p.2)

2) Ground handling

The documentary *Flying Men, Flying Machines* also shows that Air America offered similar, if not greater ground handling services at Clark Air Base in the Philippines, as Bill Palmer, Air America’s Station Manager there, explains. Again, the customers were commercial airliners operating flights for the Military Airlift Command. “We act on their behalf in all areas”, Palmer explains, for at Clark AB, Air America’s services offered to various carriers not only included ground handling in the strict sense of the word, but also maintenance and managing traffic and operations on a scheduled basis – comparable to the services that a scheduled airliner would receive in the United States. During the second half of the sixties, Air America added to their ground handling contracts catering services offered at Kadena and Clark Air Bases, as can be seen in the letter to Capitol International Airways of

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96 Bill Palmer, in: *Flying Men, Flying Machines*, at 91/2 minutes.
3 August 1968. In August 69, for example, Air America at Clark handled a total of 150 flights, i.e. 93 Braniff flights, 5 Northwest flights, 14 Seaboard World flights, 33 Southern AT flights, and 5 Flying Tiger Line flights. But in the fall of 1972, when the Vietnamization program made commercial flights for the Military Airlift Command no longer necessary, all ground handling services at Kadena Air Base were stopped.

Letter of 3 Aug. 68 to Capitol Intl. Airways and Inter-Office Routing Slip of 17 Oct. 72 (both in: UTD/Bisson/B5 reel 31)

Already on 15 June 71, Charles B. Chambers, Air America’s Station Manager at Clark Air Base, reported to the President that “the past six months have given rise to many queries from

Memo dated 15 June 71 about the status of Air America on Clark Air Base (in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 6)

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98 Letter dated 3 August 68 to Capitol Intl. Airways, and Inter-Office Routing Slip dated 17 October 72, both in: UTD/Bisson/B5 reel 31.
several organizations on base as to the ‘status of Air America’. Upon ‘phase down’ the 15th of May, inquiries have intensified, coming from the 13th Air Force, 6200 AB Wing (Base Civil Engineering), 604th MAC Squadron, 69th MAC Group and the latest one having great impact from Lt. Bailey, 22nd AF Contract Administrator.***

The loss of status would involve the loss of things like APO privileges, Supply support, Duty and Tax-free import privileges, the office building at Clark that the Air Force wanted to have back and other things. Chambers then reports that at the end of several meetings, several points had been cleared, including that

“1. Air America has a MAC contract and even though the route is not through Clark, it could very well be directed to operate through here in the future which would be cause for the Company to maintain a facility.

2. Yes, Air America had been established in Clark for over 10 years and by the nature of the war and politics may have need for maintaining a status quo of benefits, privileges.”

Chambers concluded that the issue may be closed for that time, but might continue to arise with change of personnel. After the last American troops had left South Vietnam on 29 March 73, Air America’s Station at Clark was probably closed. On 18 June 75, the Company still had 1 employee at Clark.

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99 Clark Station to President, Memo of 15 June 71, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 6.
100 Clark Station to President, Memo of 15 June 71, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 6.
102 Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Air America Inc. of 18 June 75, in: UTD/CIA/B10F3.