AIR AMERICA: FAIRCHILD C-123 PROVIDERS
by Dr. Joe F. Leeker

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An Air America C-123K at Moung Soui in January 1970 during a refugee airlift
(Air America Log, vol. IV, no.1, 1970, p.1)

The types of missions flown by Air America’s C-123s:

The C-123 was another one of Air America’s work horses, but except for a short period in the early seventies, they were only used in Laos. They were essential because of their short take-off and landing capabilities. Before the arrival of the bailed Caribous in 1964, C-123s were also flown as “Victor Control”, that is the orbiting command used post during rescue missions, as they had VHF/UHF capability and could talk to military aircraft (e-mail dated 24 April 2005, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen). The first C-123s received in March 62 were B-models, which bore US civil aircraft registrations. But this method was not practicable for aircraft bailed from the USAF for a short period only like the 3 aircraft received in 1964, and since 1965, all bailed C-123s used the last three digits of their USAF serial as Air America serial. In mid-1966 even the remaining three of the original C-123s adopted those special Air America serials. At that time Company C-123Bs also received small Air America titles, which they did not have while under N-registry. In 1968/69 all of Air America’s C-123Bs were converted to C-123Ks receiving an auxiliary jet engine under each wing to improve their STOL capabilities. Officially most of Air America’s C-123s were always based at Vientiane and assigned to a USAID contract. And one of them was officially based at Udorn - at least until 1969 - and was used on missions for the Hmong guerilla army. But in reality, this distinction was not that clear: C-123s assigned to both contracts could fly all sorts of missions, and many of them out of Udorn. Since 1971 all of the C-123s were officially based at Vientiane and assigned to the same contract which was a USAID contract in 1971 and an Air Force contract in 1973. Most of the time, however, the C-123s picked up their
cargo at Udorn. Perhaps the most important missions flown by Air America’s C-123s were fuel runs: Fuel drums were put onto pallets and parachuted over the drop zone. But C-123s were also used to fly weapons and ammunition. Even the rockets and bombs used by the RLAF were mostly brought to the T-28s by Air America C-123s.

Former Air America kicker John Kirkley (Air America: a daily adventure on Friday, May 2, 1969) describes the role of Udorn as follows: “Here we worked out of AB-1 or Pepper Grinder. AB-1 was where we loaded humanitarian supplies, i.e. live pigs, chickens, water buffaloes, white rice and passengers. Pepper Grinder was where we loaded ‘hard rice’ e.g. ammunition, howitzer shells, rockets and bombs, as well as 55-gallon drums of aviation gas going to up country Laos. Today’s 10,000 pound load of 250 lb. bombs and 50 caliber ammunition would be re-supplying the T-28s flying out of Long Tieng, Laos, aka, Lima Site 20 Alternate (LS-20A).” Peppergrinder was the forward arms depot run by DepChief, that is the Deputy Chief, Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group, Thailand (Conboy / Morrison, Shadow war, pp. 440/442), and was located “at the west end of the runway on the south side” (e-mail dated 19 September 2004, kindly sent to the author by Joe Hazen). C-123s were also used as troop carriers (Parker, Covert ops, p. 2): While in their normal configuration, Air America C-123s could carry up to 20 or 21 passengers plus cargo, an additional 38 centerline seats could be installed when necessary (Aircraft and avionics information as of 1 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14). Those flights could involve troop movements within Laos as well as movements between location in Laos and training camps in Thailand. Those extra seats were also needed when Air America C-123s were used on evacuation flights. This happened for example in early 1970 when 3 Air America C-123s equipped with 50 seats each and 3 Caribous evacuated 5,627 refugees from Moun Soui to Ban Xon (Air America Log, vol. IV, no. 2, 1970, pp. 4-5).

And the last flight departing Long Tieng in the evening headed for Udorn always ferried back the dead bodies of Thai mercenaries that were killed during the day (Parker, Covert ops, p.6).

Finally, in 1973, all remaining C-123Ks were given to the Royal Laotian Air Force and painted in RLAF colors, but during the first half of that year, a number of them were used out of Udorn in a flight training program for Laotian pilots. Another category of C-123s flown for Air America should not be forgotten: Since 1965, China Air Lines operated certain flights for Air America in South Vietnam, using, among others, 2 C-123s at the same time. Initially, these aircraft, which were bailed from the USAF, bore Air America-style three digit serials, but in 1968, the system was changed to ST-serials of no obvious meaning. They were under operational and contractual control of the CIA (Harnage, A thousand faces, p. 82). 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 Air C-123s also carried weapons like hand grenades to be used by the Province Reconnaissance Units (Harnage, A thousand faces, pp. 91 and 33). Finally, between June 1963 and January 1964, Air America was also responsible for supporting 4 Republic of China Air Force C-123Bs that were used by VIAT or Biet Kích So Bac, the secret South Vietnamese unit commanded by Colonel Ngo The Linh and CIA Saigon Station Chief William Colby, for dropping agents into North Vietnam and for supplying them with food, weapons and so on.

Statistics according to official Air America documents:

1) 1962: 5

2) 1964: + 3 (Minutes BoD-AAM 21 July 64, in: UTD/CIA/B3F5) (= 525, 530, and 575)

3) 1966: Inventory of 1 Feb. 66, in: UTD/Herd/B2: 7 plus 3 planned

+ 2 were received by Udorn in March 66, bringing the fleet to 9 (UTD/Leary/B1 for 30 April 66; Minutes ExCom-AAACL/AAM of 23 February 66, in: UTD/CIA/B8F1)
4) **1972**: 4 more needed according to USAID (Minutes ExCom-AAACL/AAM of 13 June 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); 1 C-123 was requested under VN-100 to transport rice to Cambodia (Minutes ExCom-AAACL/AAM of 12 September 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); this was probably a China Air Lines C-123

5) **1972**: Inventories of 31 March 72 > 30 November 72 (UTD/CIA/B1F10): 12L > 11L

### The individual aircraft histories:

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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>registration / serial</th>
<th>c/n (msn)</th>
<th>date acquired</th>
<th>origin</th>
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<tr>
<td>I) C-123s bailed by the USAF to Air America (by year):</td>
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<tr>
<th>REGISTRATION NUMBER</th>
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<th>MANUFACTURER’S SERIAL NUMBER</th>
<th>AIRCRAFT MODEL</th>
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<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
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<td>64. N-5003X</td>
<td>55-4573</td>
<td>20234</td>
<td>C-123B</td>
<td>AAM(USA)</td>
<td>Fairchild - Leased 510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. N-5004X</td>
<td>55-4572</td>
<td>20233C crash 12-62</td>
<td>C-123B</td>
<td>AAM(USA)</td>
<td>Fairchild - Leased 520</td>
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<tr>
<td>66. N-5005X</td>
<td>55-4545</td>
<td>20206</td>
<td>C-123B</td>
<td>AAM(USA)</td>
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<td>67. N-5006X</td>
<td>55-4576</td>
<td>20237</td>
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<td>C-123B</td>
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The C-123Bs as given in the “Aircraft list” of June 62, corrected to Sept. 1963 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1)

1) **C-123s received in 1962:**

Fairchild C-123B  “510” 20234 16 March 62 leased from USAF 55-4573, formerly with the 347th Troop Carrier Squadron, Pope AFB, North Carolina, and coded “CA”

**Service history:** officially transferred from 347th TCS, Pope AFB, to outside the USAF on 62075, that is on 16 March 1962 (reel ACA-65); leased from the USAF as “510” pending FAA certification; identity given in the “Aircraft list” of June 62, corrected to Sept. 1963 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); flown by Ed Eckholdt on various drop missions out of Vientiane and Takhli between 6 May 62 and 30 July 62 (Log book of Ed Eckholdt in: UTD/Leary/B44F13).

**Fate:** rereg. as N5003X on 6 October 1962 (FAA records, e-mail dated 29 Oct.2012 kindly sent to the author by Martin Best).

N5003X  20234  6 Oct.62  “510” rereg.

**Service history:** assigned to USAID contract AID-439-342 for use out of Vientiane at least 7 October 62 to 1 October 64 (AAM Aircraft availability of 1 February 64, in the possession of Ward Reimer who kindly faxed it to the author on 17 February 2004; Availability list of 1 April 64, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F8; F.O.C. of 1 April 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4; Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); at Vientiane in 1963; used for training Richard B. Crafts on 18 and 19 December 63 (Log book of Richard B. Crafts, at: UTD/Leary/B44F6); identity in the Aircraft list of June 62, corrected to Sept. 1963, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; collided with ground obstacles while landing in Laos on 12 June 64 (Aircraft accidents 1964, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); repaired; several aircraft located behind N5003X were damaged at an airstrip in Laos
on 29 October 64, when N5003X ran up its engines to high RPM without ascertaining that the area to the rear of the aircraft was clear (Aircraft accidents 1964, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); flown by Ed Eckholdt out of Udorn between 12 and 15 March 65 (Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/B44F13); based at Vientiane in April 65 (Aircraft list of April 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F3), also between 3 May 65 and 27 October 65 (Planned Aircraft Assignments, Memos of 3 May 65, 22 May 65, and 27 October 65, all in: UTD/Walker/B12F3+4); made an aborting landing at coordinates TG4231 in Laos on 3 September 65, seriously injuring the crew (XOXO of 3 September 65, in: UTD/Walker/B24F1).

**Fate:** crashed in an unsuccessful attempt to go-around after reportedly sighting drums on the runway at Long Tieng (LS-20A), Laos, on 3 October 65, while under contract AID-439-342; the co-pilot, Frank Muscal, died on 3 October 65, the aircraft was destroyed (XOXOs of 3 October 65, in: UTD/Walker/B24F1; List “Aircraft destroyed or lost”, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; Accidents 1965, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; DD/S, Monthly Report for October/November 1965, p. 2, online at 1818029/196510); a photo of this accident can be found in the John Anthony collection at TTU; Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 6 October 65, in: UTD/CIA/ B7F4; Aircraft status as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; UTD/Leary/ B1 for 2 October 65; Memorial; Memorial file, in: UTD/LaShomb/B16F3; see also Davis, Across the Mekong, p. 198); a photo can be found on the video made by Ed Eckholdt (at 1.34.13 minutes); cancelled from the US Civil Aircraft Register on 12 October 65 (e-mail dated 4 April 2005, kindly sent to the author by John Davis); reg. N5003X was cancelled on 12 October 65 (FAA records, e-mail dated 29 Oct. 2012 kindly sent to the author by Martin Best).

**Fairchild C-123B “520” 20233 16 March 62**

leased from USAF 55-4572, formerly with the 347th Troop Carrier Squadron, Pope AFB, North Carolina, and coded “CA”

**Service history:** officially transferred from 347th TCS, Pope AFB, to outside the USAF on 62075, that is on 16 March 1962 (reel ACA-65); leased from the USAF as “520” pending FAA certification; identity given in the “Aircraft list” of June 62, corrected to Sept. 1963 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); flown by Ed Eckholdt on various drop missions out of Vientiane and Takhli between 15 May 62 and 1 August 62 (Log book of Ed Eckholdt in: UTD/Leary/B44F13).

**Fate:** probably rereg'd. as N5004X on 6 October 1962.

**N5004X 20233 6 Oct.62 “520” reregd.**

**Service history:** ?; identity given in the Aircraft list of June 62, corrected to Sept. 1963, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; flew under the provisions of contract no. AID-439-342., when it was shot down (List “Deceased employees”, in: UTD/Leary/B34F1).

**Fate:** crashed about 3.5 miles southwest of Xieng Khouang (L-22), airport, Laos, on 27 November 62; was en route Vientiane-Xieng Khouang when hit by heavy ground fire from “neutralist” anti-aircraft gun, while landing; the fire hit in the cockpit, the right engine and the right wing; pilot Frederick J. Riley and co-pilot Donald C. Heritage died, air freight specialist Charles N. Swain survived the crash and was flown to Vientiane in the late afternoon; as the wreckage was located in enemy territory, it was never recovered (photo of N5004X at the crash-site, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F1; Minutes ExCom-AAM of 11 November 62, in: UTD/CIA/B3F3; Aircraft accidents...
1962, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; Aircraft destroyed or lost, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; Board of Review report dated 7 December 62, in: UTD/CIA/B34F1); cancelled from the US Civil Aircraft Register on 17 January 63 (e-mail dated 4 April 2005, kindly sent to the author by John Davis).

Fairchild C-123B  “530”  20206  16 March 62 leased from USAF 55-4545 formerly belonging to the 347th Troop Carrier Squadron, Pope AFB, North Carolina, and coded “CA”

Service history: officially transferred from 347th TCS, Pope AFB, to outside the USAF on 62075, that is on 16 March 1962 (reel ACA-65); leased from the USAF as “530” pending FAA certification; identity given in the “Aircraft list” of June 62, corrected to Sept. 1963 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1);

Fate: rereg. as N5005X on 6 October 1962 (FAA records, e-mail dated 29 Oct.2012 kindly sent to the author by Martin Best).

C-123B N5005X landing at Thakhek West in Nov. 65, taken by Dr. Jonathan Pote (with kind permission from Dr. Jonathan Pote)

Service history: at Vientiane in 63; assigned to contract AID-439-342 for use out of Vientiane at least 1 July 63 to 10 December 63 (AAM Aircraft Availability for 1 July 63, 15 July 63, and 21 September 63, in: UTD/Walker/B25F8), still in February 64 and in April 64, called thru 8 June 64 (AAM Aircraft availability of 1 February 64, in the possession of Ward Reimer who kindly faxed it to the author on 17 February 2004; F.O.C. of 1 April 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4); still in July 64 (Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); landed short of runway in Laos on 2 June 64 (Aircraft accidents 1964, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); repaired; flown by Ed Eckholdt out of Udorn between 23 February and 11 March 65 (Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/B44F13); photo taken as C-123B at Vientiane in March 65, in: UTD/Hickler/B29; based at Vientiane in April 65 (Aircraft list of April 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F3), also between 3 May 65 and 27 October 65 (Planned Aircraft Assignments, Memos of 3 May 65, 22 May 65, and 27 October 65, all in: UTD/Walker/B12F3+4); on 5 May 65, N5005X suffered an in-flight power plant fire
near Ban Takhli (T-05), Thailand, for undetermined reasons (XOXO of 6 May 65, in: UTD/Walker/B25F2; Aircraft accidents 1965 in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); participated in the search for the ill-fated UH-34D H-32 in the Saravane (L-44) area on 13 October 65 as “Victor Control” (Chronological account, in: UTD/CIA/B58F6); used out of Vientiane on 1 November 65, 8 April 66, and 1 May 66 under contract AID-439-342 (Aircraft status as of 1 November 65, 8 April 66, and of 1 May 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1, and of 1 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2); on 25 August 65, a VNAF C-47 taxied into N5005X at Saigon, damaging the left wing tip; repaired (XOXO of 25 August 65, in: UTD/Walker/B24F1); in use out of Vientiane at least between 13 December 65 and 27 May 66, when still a C-123B; flown Vientiane-Danang-Hong Kong-Tainan on 25 December 65 and Tainan-Hong Kong-Vientiane-Usorn on 1 January 66 (Flight crew member monthly movement report of A. J. Zarkos, in: UTD/Zarkos/B1F8; Log book of R. L. Wofford, in: UTD/Wofford [Sm. C. 6]; Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); used under contract AID-439-342 out of Vientiane on 4 May 66 to 6 June 66 (Aircraft status as of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2); during that period it also flew for sub units of USAID like the agricultural program, for example from Savannakhet (L-39) to Pakse (L-11) and on to Vientiane (L-08) for AGR-047 on 20 May 66 (Vientiane daily flight schedule of 20 May 1966, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B; explanation by Jim Pearson in his e-mail dated 3 December 2004, kindly sent to the author).

Fate: cancelled from the US Civil Aircraft Register on 17 June 66 (FAA records, e-mail dated 29 Oct. 2012 kindly sent to the author by Martin Best); not listed on the 1 July 66 USCAR; reserialled as “545” in June 1966 to avoid confusion with the call-sign of Bell 204B N1305X.

“545” 20206 June 66 ex Air America N5005X

Service history: used out of Vientiane at least between 5 August 66 to 30 March 69, when still a C-123B (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2; Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6); damaged on 18 October 66, when the right main landing gear collapsed in a landing accident at Nam Bac (LS-203), Laos, when still a C-123B; the aircraft was piloted by Capt. Watson; there were no injured (XOXO of 18 October 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B26F16; a photo of this accident can be found in the John Anthony collection preserved at TTU; the Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 25 October 66, in: UTD/CIA/B8F1 state the accident was on 14 October 66; photo of the accident in UTD/Hickler/B28); released for test flights on 10 March 67 following extensive damage repairs begun in December (Leary notebook for 10 March 67 at http://www.utdallas.edu/library/specialcollections/hac/cataam/notebooks/aam67.pdf);
had IRAN at Tainan in April 67 (Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2); USAF records note: C-123B 54-4545 GI (= returned from outside USAF) CNA (= Air America) to LOG HQ, Wright Patterson, on 67120, GF / Reconciliation on 67151; that is: C-123B 55-4545 was administratively transferred to the Logistic Air Command Headquarters, Wright Patterson AFB, on 28 April 67, but administratively, the decision was made on 29 May 67 to let the aircraft with the same user; used out of Vientiane on 1 May 68 under contract AID-439-342 (Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2); USAF records note: transferred from ZHTV, that is Wright Patterson AFB, to Fairchild Aircraft Corp., Hagerstown, on 68296, that is on 22 October 68; converted to C-123K on 68304, that is on 30 October 68; USAF C-123K 55-4545 was administratively reserialled as 55004545 in 1969; based at Vientiane 16-30 June 69, when already a C-123K; ferried Vientiane-Taipei on 22 June 69 for maintenance (IRAN); returned to Vientiane on 24 July 69 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); used out of Vientiane by Air America on 15 August 69 under contract AID-439-342 (Aircraft status as of 15 Aug. 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1); at Udorn on 19 October 69 (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2) and on 26 November 69 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); a photo taken by Bob Livingstone at Phan Rang AFB, SVN (V-28), can be found in Love, Wings of Air America, p. 68; USAF records note: administratively transferred from XMTG, that is from Udorn, to 315TAW, Phan Rang, on 70162, that is on 9 June 70; current with Air America on 1 July 70 (Leary, The aircraft of Air America, p. 20); the nose gear dropped in a six inch hole and collapsed and pushed thru the cabin floor during roll out at Ban La Tee (LS-190), Laos, on 5 August 70, but none of the crew members (Pilot in Command B. Coleman, First Officer J. F. Kerch, kickers F. G. Derrington and P. Jarusak) was injured (XOXO of 5 August 70, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F10; Accident report, in: UTD/Dreifus/B1F11; a photo of this accident can be found in the John Anthony collection at TTU); repaired and returned to service on 11 September 70 (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 11 August 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4); based at Vientiane; photo in Air America Log, vol. V, no. 6, 1971, p. 6; used out of Udorn on 18 September 70 and 20 September 70 (Udorn daily flight schedules, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1); on 23 January 73, “545” had engine problems on the ground at Vientiane (Monthly Safety Reports - January 73, in: UTD/CIA/B31F2); ferried Vientiane-Taipei in May 71 for maintenance (IRAN); returned to Vientiane on 20 June 71; based at Vientiane 1-31 July 71, still assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C.s of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); on 11 July 71, fire broke out on “545” during a post maintenance brake test at Udorn, causing extensive
fire damage the right wheel and part of the fuselage, but the crew (Captain J. F. Voyles, crew chief S. Hill and two mechanics) remained uninjured (XOXO of 11 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11); at Vientiane on 11 November 71 (Log book of R. L. Wofford, in: UTD/Wofford [Sm. C. 6]); hit by ground fire at coordinates QB2086 northeast of Ban Xieng Lom (LS-69), Laos, on 28 December 71, damaging the windshield, the hydraulic lines, the right elevator, stabilizer, wing and cargo door; but the crew consisting of Pilot in Command H. H. Boyles, First Officer D. E. Morris, and kickers D. Stone and P. Sumanin, remained uninjured (XOXO of 28 December 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11); repaired and returned to service on 31 December 71 (XOXO of 28 December 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11; Accident list December 71 to April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B51F12; Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 11 January 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 January 72 and 31 May 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 January 72 to 1 May 73, in: UTD/Busson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); at Udorn on 16 October 72 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); at Vientiane in 73 in Royal Lao AF colors (photo in UTD/Anthony/F9); at Udorn on 18 April 73 for local training out of Vientiane (Udorn daily flight schedule of 18 April 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); still current with Air America on 1 March 73 (Assigned aircraft of 1 March 73, in: UTD/CIA/B32F1) and on 30 April 73 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); assigned to the Lao pilot training program; on 24 May 73, both engines of “545” began to burn after take off from Ban Houei Sai (L-25), so that the aircraft immediately returned. On short final, the right hand nose case and the remaining propeller assembly fell off the aircraft. After landing, the right broken propeller blade passed thru the fuselage, making large holes, damaging wiring and struck the left reciprocating engine and the left jet engine pod. The fuselage hole on the right was 18 to 23 inches long by ½ inch wide, while the exit holes on the left are in an area of 2 to 3 square feet (XOXO of 24 May 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12).

Fate: repaired and given to the Royal Laotian Air Force in June 73; at Long Tieng in RLAF colors in June 73 (photo in UTD/Jenkins); not current with Air America on 1 July 73 (Assigned aircraft of 1 July 73, in: UTD/CIA/B32F10); see also Carroll, World Air Forces Directory 1998-99, p. 275.

Fairchild C-123B “540” 20237 16 March 62 leased from USAF 55-4576, formerly belonging to the 347th Troop Carrier Squadron, Pope AFB, North Carolina, and coded “CA”

Service history: officially transferred from 347th TCS, Pope AFB, to outside the USAF on 62075, that is on 16 March 1962 (reel ACA-65); leased from the USAF as “540” pending FAA certification; identity given in the “Aircraft list” of June 62, corrected to Sept. 1963 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); flown by Ed Eckholdt on various drop missions out of Vientiane and Takhli between 3 May 62 and 8 September 62 (Log book of Ed Eckholdt in: UTD/Leary/B44F13).

Fate: rereg. as N5006X on 6 October 1962 (FAA records, e-mail dated 29 Oct.2012 kindly sent to the author by Martin Best).

N5006X 20237 6 Oct.62 “540” rereg.

Service history: used for training Richard B. Crafts on 12, 14, and 20 December 63 (Log book of Richard B. Crafts, at: UTD/Leary/B44F6); assigned to CEECO contract 59-069 in July and September 63, in February 64 and in April 64 (AAM Aircraft
Availability for 1 July 63, 15 July 63, and 21 September 63, in Walker/B25F8; AAM Aircraft Availability for 1 February 64, in the possession of Ward Reimer who kindly faxed it to the author on 17 February 2004; F.O.C. of 1 April 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4); still in July 64 (Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); during an air drop at Ban Na (LS-15), Laos, near Long Tieng (LS-20A), Air America employee Howland D. Baker fell out of N5006X with load on 12 September 64 and was killed (Memorial; Aircraft accidents 1964, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; Memorial file, in: UTD/LaShomb/B16F3); based at Udorn in April 65 (Aircraft list of April 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F3), also between 3 May 65 and 27 October 65 (Planned Aircraft Assignments, Memos of 3 May 65, 22 May 65, and 27 October 65, all in: UTD/Walker/B12F3±4); used out of Udorn on 1 November 65 under contract 59-069 (Aircraft status as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); sank into the muddy runway at Petchaburi (T-33), Thailand, or Ta Yang, Laos on 20 November 65 (XOXO of 20 November 65, in: UTD/Walker/B25F2; Accidents 1965, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; DD/S, Monthly Report for October/November 1965, p. 2, online at 1818029/196510); used out of Udorn on 1 January 66. 8 April 66 and 1 May 66 under contract AID-439-713 (Planned Aircraft Assignments, Memo of 1 January 66, in: UTD/Walker/B7F8; Aircraft status as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1 and of 1 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2); used out of Udorn at least between 11 February 66 and 14 February 66 (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2; the cockpit windows of N5006X were broken in a storm at Udorn on 27 April 66; repaired; returned to service by 10 May 66 (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 11 May 66, in: UTD/CIA/B8F1); used under contract AID-439-342 out of Vientiane on 4 May 66 (Aircraft status as of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2).

**Fate:** cancelled from the US Civil Aircraft Register on 17 June 66 (FAA records, e-mail dated 29 Oct. 2012 kindly sent to the author by Martin Best); not listed on the 1 July 66 USCAR; reserialled as “576” in June 1966 to avoid confusion with the call-sign of Bell 204B N1306X.

“576” 20237 June 66 ex Air America N5006X

**Service history:** used out of Udorn at least between 23 September 66 and 14 January 69 (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2, UTD/Shane Tang [S.C. 5]; Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6); USAF records note: C-123B 55-4576 GI (= returned from outside USAF) CNA (= Air America) to LOG HQ, Wright Patterson 67120, GF / Reconciliation 67151; that is: C-123B 55-4576 was administratively transferred to the Logistic Air Command Headquarters, Wright Patterson AFB, on 28 April 67, but administratively, the decision was made on 29 May 67 to let the aircraft with the same user; on 6 October 67, the prop blast from C-123 “576” hit Helio XW-PBZ, which was parked at Long Tieng (LS-20A), damaging the wing tip and aileron of the Helio (XOXO of 6 Oct. 67, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F1); repaired; used by Air America out of Udorn on 1 May 68, under contract AID-439-713; USAF records note: transferred from ZHTV, that is Wright Patterson, to CADTT (China Air Lines), Tainan, for maintenance on 68274, that is on 30 September 68; converted to C-123K by Fairchild Aircraft Corp., Hagerstown, in 1968; administratively transferred to the 315th Special Operations Wing, Phan Rang, on 68352, that is on 17 December 68; retroactively released from call order (contract AID-439-713) on 18 January 69 (Letter dated 20 February 69, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 reel 27); based at Vientiane at least between 15 June 69 and 31 July 71 (F.O.C.s of 15 June 69 and of 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B), when already a C-123K (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); had IRAN at Tainan in August 69 (Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2); used out of Vientiane at least between 21 and 31 October 69
(Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); flew Luang Prabang (L-54) - Udorn (T-08) on 16 November 69 (Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6); USAF records note: USAF C-123K 55-4576 was administratively reserialled as 55004576 in 1969; administratively transferred from XMTG, that is from Udorn, to 315TAW, Phan Rang, on 70119, that is on 27 April 70; current with Air America on 1 July 70 (Leary, *The aircraft of Air America*, p. 20); flew Udorn (T-08) - Long Tieng (LS-20A) - Udorn (T-08) on 31 November 70 (Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6); on landing rollout at Long Tieng (LS-20A), the main right landing gear failed on 18 January 71 (XOXO of 18 January 71, in: UTD/Leary/B3F3); based at Vientiane 1-31 July 71, still assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C.s of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); in use out of Vientiane in December 71 (Log book of R. L. Wofford, in: UTD/Wofford [Sm. C. 6]); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 January 72 and 31 May 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 January 72 to 1 May 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); current on 1 April 72 (Assigned aircraft of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); C-123Ks 55-4555, 55-4576, and 56-4374 were 3 “Special Project” aircraft that were to receive ACI already in FY-73 due to high airframe time (USAF/WRAMA Engineering Telex dated 15 August 72, at: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24); at Udorn on 24 January 73 on Air America flight schedule for use by “PPG”, i.e. *Peppergrinder*, possibly carrying arms (Udon daily flight schedule of 24 January 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); C-123K “576” was programmed for input for IRAN on 7 February 73 (AAM to USAF, letter dated 23 August 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24); received battle damage over Laos on 11 May 73; repaired (Accident note to the USAF, dated 12 Feb. 73, in: UTD/CIA/B32F1); used out of Vientiane 1-30 November 73 for Royal Lao Air Force training (F.O.C. of 1 November 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); in RLAF colors on the tape “Unveiling the memorial”; not current on 1 November 73 (F.O.C. of 1 November 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

**Fate:** probably given to the Royal Lao Air Force on 1 December 73; transferred to the Royal Thai AF as “B.L.4K-20/19”, code “54576”, on 6 February 76; then to code “576A” in 1976 (Martin Best/Steve Darke, e-mail kindly sent to the author on 13 February 2012); seen at Bangkok on 10 May 83 and in February 85 (see *Air-Britain News*, July 85, p. 272); struck off charge on 12 October 90 (Martin Best/Steve Darke, e-mail kindly sent to the author on 13 February 2012); seen at Bangkok disused in July 94; seen at Bangkok in October 95 (c/n confirmed; see *Air-Britain News*, January 96, p. 71); still stored there in May 97 (*Air-Britain News*, February 98, p. 251); part of the Jesada Technical Museum, Nakhon Chaisi (*Air-Britain News*, March 2011, p. 386).
C-123B N5007X somewhere in Laos in the early sixties
(UTD/Hickler/B29)

Fairchild C-123B “550” 20216 16 March 62 leased from USAF 55-4555, formerly belonging to the 347th Troop Carrier Squadron, Pope AFB, North Carolina, and coded “CA”

**Service history:** ferried from Clark AFB, Philippines, to Takhli, Thailand, by Air America pilots Al White and Ed Eckholdt on 2 February 62, still as “54555” (Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/B44F13); officially transferred from 347th TCS, Pope AFB, to outside the USAF on 62075, that is on 16 March 1962 (reel ACA-65); leased from the USAF as “550” pending FAA certification; identity given in the “Aircraft list” of June 62, corrected to Sept. 1963 (in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); flown by Ed Eckholdt on various drop missions out of Vientiane and Takhli between 4 May 62 and 29 July 62 (Log book of Ed Eckholdt in: UTD/Leary/B44F13).

**Fate:** rereg. as N5007X on 6 October 1962 (FAA records, e-mail dated 29 Oct.2012 kindly sent to the author by Martin Best).


**Service history:** used out of Vientiane on USAID contract AID-439-342 at least 7 October 62 to 1 October 64, but under repair in April 64 (Availability list, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F8; AAM Aircraft availability of 1 February 64, in the possession of Ward Reimer who kindly faxed it to the author on 17 February 2004; F.O.C. of 1 April 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B8F4; Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); photo taken at Udorn in August 62, in: UTD/Abadie/B2F8); at Vientiane in 63; slide in: UTD/Wiren/B2; asymmetrical reverse thrust resulted in a loss of control at Chiang Khong (T-516), Thailand, on 19 November 63 (Aircraft accidents 1963, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); repaired; based at Vientiane in April 65 (Aircraft list of April 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F3), also between 3 May 65 and 27 October 65 (Planned Aircraft Assignments, Memos of 3 May 65, 22 May 65, and 27 October 65, all in: UTD/Walker/B12F3+4); used out of Vientiane on 1 November 65, 8 April 66, and 1 May 66 under contract AID-439-342 (Aircraft status as of 1 November 65, 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1, and of 1 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2); kicker Rizal S. J. Alamares fell from the aircraft onto the runway
during taxi at Udorn (T-08), Thailand, on 13 November 65, and was killed (Memorial file, in: UTD/LaShomb/B16F3); photos of the aircraft can be found in UTD/Hickler/B29 + B32; in use out of Vientiane at least between 4 November 65 and 29 May 66, when still a C-123B; flew Vientiane-Saigon-Quï Nhon-Hong Kong-Taipei-Tainan on 10 / 11 April 66 and Tainan-Hong Kong-Vientiane on 20/21 April 66 (Flight crew member monthly movement report of A. J. Zarkos, in: UTD/Zarkos/B1F8; Log book of R. L. Wofford, in: UTD/Wofford [Sm. C. 6]; Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); used under contract AID-439-713 out of Udorn on 4 May 66 to 27 June 66 (Aircraft status as of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2).

Fate: cancelled from the US Civil Aircraft Register on 17 June 66 (FAA records, e-mail dated 29 Oct. 2012 kindly sent to the author by Martin Best); not listed on the 1 July 66 USCAR; reserialled as “555” in June 1966 to avoid confusion with the call-sign of Bell 204B N1307X.

“555” 20216 June 66 ex Air America N5007X

Service history: in use out of Vientiane at least between 11 July 66 and 12 January 68, when still a C-123B (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); a photo taken at Hong Kong on 21 March 67 by Peter Keating showing it still as a C-123B was published in Propliner, no. 59, p. 31; flew Taipei-Hong Kong-Danang-Vientiane on 22 / 23 April 67 (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); USAF records note: C-123B 55-4555 GI (= returned from outside USAF) CNA (= Air America) to LOG HQ, Wright Patterson, on 67120; GF / Reconciliation on 67151, that is: C-123B 55-4555 was administratively transferred to the Logistic Air Command Headquarters, Wright Patterson AFB, on 28 April 67, but administratively, the decision was made on 29 May 67 to let the aircraft with the same user; transferred from Wright Patterson (ZHTV) to Fairchild Aircraft Corp., Hagerstown, on 68029, that is on 29 January 68; converted to C-123K on 68043, that is on 11 February 68; responsibility transferred to 315ACW, Phan Rang, on 68102, that is on 11 April 68; first Air America C-123B to be converted by Fairchild to C-123K, returned from “K”-modification on 26 April 68 (Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herb/B2); used out of Vientiane on 1 May 68, and 15 August 69 under contract AID-439-342 (Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herb/B2, and of 15 Aug. 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1); as used a C-123K out of Vientiane at least between 23 June 68 and 8 November 69 (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); based at Vientiane 16-30 June 69 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); in use out of Udorn at least between 26 November 69 and 20 September 70 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); current on 1 July 70 (Leary, The aircraft of Air America, p. 20); on the flight-plan shown in the Air America documentary; based at Vientiane 1-31 July 71, still assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C.s of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); after a tire blew up, “555” slid off the runway at Pakse (L-11), Laos, on 20 September 71 (Accident report, in: UTD/Anthony/F4; photo in UTD/Anthony/F6); repaired; flew Luang Prabang (L-54) - Udorn (T-08) on 15 October 71 (Log book of D. Keene, in: UTD/Keene/B1F6); hit by ground fire in Laos on 8 November 71, damaging the wing spar and the right fuel cell; repaired and returned to service on 11 November 71 (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 11 January 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); at Vientiane on 11 November 71 (Log book of R. L. Wofford, in: UTD/Wofford [Sm. C. 6]); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 January 72 and 27 August 72 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 January 72 to 1 August 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reels 23/4); C-123Ks 55-4555, 55-4576, and 56-4374 were 3 “Special Project” aircraft that were to receive ACI already
in FY-73 due to high airframe time (USAF/WRAMA Engineering Telex dated 15 August 72, at: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24); C-123K “555” was programmed for input for IRAN on 4 October 72 (AAM to USAF, letter dated 23 August 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24).

**Fate:** destroyed near Vang Vieng (L-16), Laos, on 27 August 72, killing William E. Reeves, Joel M. Gudahl, and kickers J. Praves Satarakij, Thongkham Khammanephet and 5 indigenous passengers; the aircraft was en route out of Vang Vieng (L-16) to Long Tieng (LS-20A), Laos, under the provisions of Contract F04606-71-C-0002, carrying 5 passengers and 13,500 pounds of palletized ordnance, when it hit a hill, in the Nammeui valley at coordinates TG 524083, 20 feet below ridge line, at 4850 feet elevation, in bad weather (Accident report with photos of the crash, in: UTD/CIA/B61F8; Board of Review report dated 25 September 72, in: UTD/CIA/B34F5; UTD/Leary/B1 for 27 August 72; List “Aircraft destroyed or lost”, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 12 September 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7; Memorial; Memorial file, in: UTD/LaShomb/B16F3 gives: 4 NM north of LS-272).

2) **C-123s received in 1964:**

**Fairchild C-123B  “645”  20094  17 May 64  ex USAF 54-0645, AD HQ, Tan Son Nhut**

**Service history:** transferred to AAITTRVL 5, that is Air America, Vientiane, on 64138 (= 17 May 64)

**Fate:** returned to the USAF, AD HQ, Tan Son Nhut (VN-23), as 54-0645 on 64161 (9 June 64); later converted to C-123K and reserialled as 54000645 with 315TAW, Tan Son Nhut; to the South Vietnamese Air Force as “540645/QP” on 8 May 71 (TL MAP on 71128); assigned to the Khmer Air Force as 54-0645 in November 73; returned to the USAF as 54-0645 in December 73; sold to the Philippine Air Force as “54645” in June 79; scrapped at Mactan in December 80.

**Fairchild C-123B  “365”  20249  19 May 64  ex USAF 56-4365, AD HQ, Tan Son Nhut**

**Service history:** was to be transferred to AAITTRVL 5, that is Air America, Vientiane, on 64140 (19 May 64), but did not materialize (AFHRA reel ACA-74: AD HQ, Tan Son Nhut, to (GF) AAITTFVL 5 on 64140, that is 19 May 64; AFHRA reel AVH-2: AAI TTF VLC5 to 2 AD, Tan Son Nhut, on 64140, that is the same day).

**Fate:** remained with the USAF, 2AD; returned from maintenance at St. Augustine via Tainan to 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, on 65056; converted to C-123K and reserialled as 56004365 in 68/9; with the 315TAW, Phan Rang, in 71; transferred to the South Vietnamese Air Force (TL MAP) as “64365”(?) on 71257 (14 September 71); sold to the Philippine Air Force as “56-4365” on ?; scrapped at Mactan in December 80.

**Fairchild C-123B  “542”  20203  31 May 64  ex USAF 55-4542, 2AD, Danang**

**Service history:** was to be transferred to AAITTRVL 5, that is Air America, Vientiane, on 64152 (= 31 May 64), but probably did not materialize.

**Fate:** returned to the USAF, 2AD, Danang, before 7 July 64; not current with Air America on 7 July 64 (Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); to FAC SF, Tainan, on 64245; 2 AD, Tan Son Nhut, to maintenance at Air Asia, Tainan, on 65336; later to C-123K; transferred to the South Vietnamese Air Force as “554542/QS” in 71; transferred to the Royal Thai AF as “54542” in 1973 and given
the Thai serial “B.L4k/5-16”; later reserialled as “542”; at Bangkok 18 August 80 - 10 May 85 in camouflage colors; at Bangkok in February 85 being broken up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aircraft</th>
<th>Serial</th>
<th>Registration</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fairchild C-123B</td>
<td>“290”</td>
<td>20300</td>
<td>12 June 64</td>
<td>ex USAF 57-6290; in use with the Pacific Air Force, Headquarters Vietnam, Tan Son Nhat</td>
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<td>Service history: was to be transferred to AAITTRVL 5, that is Air America, Vientiane, on 64164 (= 12 June 64), but did not materialize.</td>
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<td>Fate: remained with the USAF as 57-6290; to Air Asia, Tainan, for maintenance, on 64174, that is 22 June 64 (ACA-79); returned from Tainan on 64285 (11 October 64); with 2 TSW, Tan Son Nhut, in 1965; to Air Asia, Tainan, for maintenance, on 65212 (31 July 65); back to 2AD, Nha Trang, on 65284 (11 October 65); reserialled as 57006290 and converted to UC-123K; with the 56th Special Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom, in 1971; transferred (TL MAP) to the South Vietnam AF as “RH:290” on 71192 (11 July 71); at Hong Kong on 10 April 72; to the Philippine AF as “57-6290” in ?; withdrawn from use in January 79.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairchild C-123B</td>
<td>“525”</td>
<td>20186</td>
<td>30 June 64</td>
<td>ex USAF 55-4525, Pacific Air Force, Danang; Bien Hoa (BY 16) to 2AD, Danang, on 63182 (1 July 63)</td>
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<td>Service history: received on 30 June 64; assigned to USAID contract AID-439-342 for use out of Vientiane (Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); not mentioned in USAF reels AVH-1 or 2, so no change in late 64.</td>
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<td>Fate: returned to the USAF as 55-4575 before 3 May 65 (Planned Aircraft Assignments, Memo of 3 May 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F3); USAF records note: with 2 TSW, Tan Son Nhut, in 65; to AAI TTF WQPC (Air Asia maintenance), Tainan, on 65096 (6 April 65); to 2AD, Da Nang, on 65125 (5 May 65), so maybe it returned from service with Air America on 5 May 65; to Det. 4 APRFE, Bien Hoa, on 65165 (14 June 65); later converted to C-123K; transferred to the South Vietnamese Air Force as “54525/XL” in 71; sold to the Philippine AF, Manila, as “54525” in June 79; scrapped at Mactan in December 80.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairchild C-123B</td>
<td>“530”</td>
<td>20191</td>
<td>30 June 64</td>
<td>ex USAF 55-4530; Bien Hoa (BY 16) to 2AD, Danang, on 63182 (1 July 63); still with the USAF in December 63</td>
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<td>Service history: received on 30 June 64; assigned to USAID contract AID-439-342 for use out of Vientiane (Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); not mentioned in USAF reel AVH-1, so no change in July-September 64.</td>
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<td>Fate: returned to the USAF as 55-4530, probably on 64244 (31 August 64), when, according to the USAF records, 55-4530 was transferred from 2 AD, Danang, to FAC, St. Augustine; returned to 2 AD, Danang, in 64/5; 2 AD, Danang, to TN on 65324, that is written off on 21 November 65, when it crashed in heavy rain short of the runway of Danang; not current with Air America on 1 November 65 (Aircraft status as of 1 November 65 in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1).</td>
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</table>
Fairchild C-123B  “575”  20236  30 June 64  ex USAF 55-4575, Pacific Air Force, Danang; Bien Hoa (BY 16) to 2 AD, Danang, on 63182 (1 July 63)

**Service history:** USAF records note: 2AD, Danang, to AAI TTRVL 5 on 64134 (13 May 64); received by Air America on 30 June 64; assigned to USAID contract AID-439-342 for use out of Vientiane (Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1).

**Fate:** returned to the USAF as 55-4575 before 3 May 65 (Planned Aircraft Assignments, Memo of 3 May 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F3); USAF records note: Det. 4 APRFEF, Bien Hoa, to 2 AD, Danang, on 64335 (30 November 64); 2 AD, Danang, to AAI TTF WQPC (Air Asia, Tainan, for maintenance), and back to 2 AD, Danang, 65087-65112 (28 March-22 April 65), which possibly means return from service with Air America on 22 April 65; later converted to C-123K; with 315ACW, Danang, in 1967; crash-landed in South Vietnam on 15 April 67 (Hobson, *Vietnam air losses*, p. 95); officially declared to T2 on 67146, that is written off on 26 May 67.

3) C-123s received in 1965:

C-123B  374 at Vientiane in the mid-sixties  (UTD/Hickler/B28)

C-123K  374 at Long Tieng on 10 Nov. 72, when RLAF T-28D 038249 ran into it  (UTD/Anthony/F6)

Fairchild C-123B  “374”  20258  April 65  ex USAF 56-4374; still with them on 30 June 64

**Service history:** not yet current on 1 February 65 (Aircraft manning plan VTE of 1 February 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F1); based at Vientiane in April 65 (Aircraft list of April 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F3), also between 3 May 65 and 27 October 65 (Planned Aircraft Assignments, Memos of 3 May 65, 22 May 65, and 27 October 65, all in: UTD/Walker/B12F3+4); officially transferred from 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, to TL (= Air America) on 65298 = 25 October 65; used out of Vientiane on 1 November 65, 8 April 66, 1 May 66, 1 May 68, and 1 September 69 under contract AID-439-342; had IRAN at Tainan in March 67 (Aircraft status as of 1 November 65, 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1, of 1 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2, of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2, and of 15 Aug. 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1); the USAF records note: GI (= returned from outside USAF) CNA (= Air America) to LOG HQ, Wright Patterson, on 67120, that is administratively transferred to Logistic Air Command HQ, Wright Patterson AFB, on 28 April 67; GF / Reconciliation on 67151 (= ? decision made to let
The aircraft with the same user on 29 May 67); in use out of Vientiane at least between 17 November 65 and 5 May 69, when still a C-123B; flew Vientiane-Danang-Hong Kong-Tainan on 7 March 66 and Tainan-Hong Kong-Vientiane on 16 March 66 (Log book of R. L. Wofford, in: UTD/Wofford [Sm. C. 6]; Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); photos taken at Udorn, when still a C-123B, can be found in: UTD/Hickler/B28 + B29; USAF records note: transferred from Wright Patterson to Fairchild Aircraft Corp., Hagerstown, on 68158, that is on 6 June 68; converted to C-123K by Fairchild on 68166, that is on 14 June 68; transferred to CADTT, Tainan, for maintenance on 68320, that is on 15 November 68; returned to Air America in early September 68 (F.O.C. of 15 Aug. 68, in: UTD/LaShomb/B14); based at Vientiane 16-30 June 69, when already a C-123K, assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); USAF records note: USAF C-123K 56-4374 was administratively reserialized as 56004374 in 1969; administratively transferred from Tainan to 31STAW, Phan Rang, on 70133, that is on 11 May 70; current with Air America on 1 July 70 (Leary, The aircraft of Air America, p. 20); in use out of Udorn at least between 1 May 70 and 7 June 71 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); on 5 April 71, “374” was forced off runway 13 at Vientiane (L-08), when during the landing rollout, a large wind gust lifted the right wing: there were no injuries to the crew or to the 18 passengers, but the left wing tip and the left propeller contacted the runway surface (XOXO of 5 April 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B10F12); based at Vientiane 1-31 July 71, still assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C.s of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); in the Air America documentary, as “374”; maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 January 72 and 9 February 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 January 72 to 1 February 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); a mechanic, Boonrang Samburan, walked into the prop in Laos on 17 February 72 and was killed (XOXO of 17 Feb. 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2; Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 22 February 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7; Memorial file, in: UTD/LaShomb/B16F3); C-123Ks 55-4555, 55-4576, and 56-4374 were 3 “Special Project” aircraft that were to receive ACI already in FY-73 due to high airframe time (USAF/WRAMA Engineering Telex dated 15 August 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24); C-123K “374” was programmed for input for IRAN on 3 June 73 (AAM to USAF, letter dated 23 August 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24); Royal Lao AF T-28D “0-38249” landed without flaps and rolled into “374”, which was parked at Long Tieng (LS-20A), Laos, on 16 November 72 (Accident report and photos, in: UTD/CIA/B61F13; other photos are preserved in: UTD/Anthony/F6; Yearbook 1984, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F3); repaired; at Udorn on 24 January 73 on the Air America flight schedule of for use by “PPG”, i.e. Peppergrinder, possibly carrying arms (Udorn daily flight schedule of 24 January 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1).

Fate: shot down by ground fire (a missile) near Thakhet East (L-40), Laos, 150 miles south east of Vientiane, on 9 February 73, at 7.32 hours local time, when en route from Vientiane (L-08) to Savannakhet (L-39) with 12,000 pounds of general cargo; pilot Howard H. Boyles Jr. and his co-pilot Jack W. Cavill are missing; kicker Prasit Chaichana was killed when he jumped without a parachute; the other kicker, Sourin, parachuted from the aircraft and survived (Accident report, in: UTD/CIA/B62F1; UTD/Leary/B1 for 9 February 73; Memorial file, in: UTD/LaShomb/B16F3; XOXO of 9 Feb. 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12; Accident note to the USAF, dated 10 Feb. 73, in: UTD/CIA/B32F1; Board of review report dated 5 March 73, in: UTD/CIA/B34F5; the aircraft was destroyed; this crash is erroneously mentioned as a C-7A crash in Robbins, Air America, pp. 227-29).
Fairchild C-123B “538” 20199 April 65 ex USAF 55-4538; still with them on 30 June 64

**Service history:** not yet current on 1 February 65 (Aircraft manning plan VTE of 1 February 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F1); according to Ed Eckholdt’s log book, he flew C-123B “538” on a 3.35 hour SAR mission into Laos on 30 April 65 (Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/B44F13); based at Vientiane in April 65 (Aircraft list of April 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F3), also between 3 May 65 and 27 October 65 (Planned Aircraft Assignments, Memos of 3 May 65, 22 May 65, and 27 October 65, all in: UTD/Walker/B12F3+4); according to microfilm reel AVH-5, C-123B 55-4538 was officially transferred from 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, to TL (= outside the USAF) only on 65298 = 25 October 65; used out of Vientiane on 1 November 65 under contract AID-439-342 (Aircraft status as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1); in use out of Vientiane at least between 5 November 65 and 13 November 65 (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2).

**Fate:** stalled on take-off from Sayaboury (L-23), Laos, on 18 November 65; destroyed (photos can be found in: UTD/Hickler/B28, and in the John Anthony collection preserved at TTU); 5 crew members and 56 passengers were injured (XOXO of 18 November 65, in: UTD/Walker/B25F2; Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 24 November 65, in: UTD/CIA/B7F4; List “Aircraft destroyed or lost”, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; Aircraft accidents 1965, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); salvage of crashed 538 completed in mid-April 66 (UTD/Leary/B1 for 30 April 66).
Service history: not yet current on 1 February 65 (Aircraft manning plan VTE of 1 February 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F1); according to Ed Eckholdt’s log book, he flew C-123B “655” on a 2.25 hour SAR mission into Laos on 1 May 65 and on a drop mission out of Udorn on 2 May 65 (Log book of Ed Eckholdt, in: UTD/Leary/B44F13); based at Vientiane in April 65 (Aircraft list of April 65, in: UTD/Walker/B12F3), also between 3 May 65 and 27 October 65 (Planned Aircraft Assignments, Memos of 3 May 65, 22 May 65, and 27 October 65, all in: UTD/Walker/B12F3+4); according to microfilm reels AVH-3 and AVH-5, C-123B 54-655 was with the USAF’s FAC, St. Augustine, FL, between 65007 (7 January 65) and 65298 (25 October 65), when it was officially transferred from the FAC to TL (= outside the USAF); used out of Vientiane on 1 November 65, 8 April 66, 1 May 66, and 1 May 68 under contract AID-439-342; 54-655 GI (= returned from outside USAF) CNA (= Air America) to LOG HQ, Wright Patterson, on 67120; GF / Reconciliation on 67151, that is: C-123B 54-655 was administratively transferred to the Logistic Air Command Headquarters, Wright Patterson AFB, on 28 April 67, but administratively, the decision was made on 29 May 67 to let the aircraft with the same user; had IRAN at Tainan in April 68 (Aircraft status as of 1 November 65, 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1, of 1 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2, and of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2); in use out of Vientiane at least between 28 November 65 and 23 May 68, when still a C-123B; flew Vientiane-Danang-Hong Kong-Tainan on 22 June 66; test flown at Tainan on 28 June 66; back in service out of Vientiane on 3 July 66; flown Udorn-Saigon-Hong Kong-Taipei-Tainan on 21-28 October 66; returned Tainan-Hong Kong-Danang-Vientiane on 30 October 66; the left nose tire blew up at Moung Hiem (LS-48A), Laos, on 18 February 67; in use again on 19 February 67 (Log book of R. L. Wofford, in: UTD/Wofford [Sm. C. 6]; Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2).
**Fate:** touched down 30 feet short of the first usable portion of the runway at Na Khang (LS-36), Laos, and struck a two foot high embankment at the end of the runway on 23 May 68, so that the main landing gear collapsed and “655” incurred substantial damage; the Pilot in Command received no injuries; the First Officer received minor cuts in the right hand; the aircraft received substantial damage; both main landing gears jammed into the wheel wells; extensive damage to the fuselage, which was broken and actually separated at the top aft of the wings (XOXO of 23 May 68, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F13; Accident report, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F7); the log book of Donald Wharton notes “crashed” for the flight Vientiane (L-08) - Na Khang (LS-36) in “655” on 23 May 68 (in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); the list “Company operated aircraft lost or destroyed” (UTD/CIA/B1F10) gives the total loss of a C-123 in Laos on 23 May 68; List “Aircraft destroyed or lost”, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); USAF records note: C-123K 54-655 of LOG HQ, Wright Patterson, ex ZHTV, to TA on 68144, that is written off on 23 May 68.

**RLAF C-123K “617” at Vientiane in 1973**

(UTD/Anthony/F9)

Fairchild C-123B “617” 20066 16 Dec. 65 ex USAF 54-0617

**Service history:** transferred from overhaul at FAC, Crestview, to TL (= Air America) on 65350 = 16 December 65; in use out of Vientiane at least between 29 November 65 and 19 May 69, when still a C-123B (Flight crew member monthly movement report of A. J. Zarkos, in: UTD/Zarkos/B1F8; Log book of R. L. Wofford, in: UTD/Wofford [Sm. C. 6], UTD/Wharton B1F2); used out of Vientiane on 8 April 66, 1 May 66, 1 May 68, and 15 August 69 under contract AID-439-342 (Aircraft status as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1, of 1 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2, of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2, and of 15 Aug. 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1); USAF records note: C-123B 54-617 GI (= returned from outside USAF) CNA (= Air America) to LOG HQ, Wright Patterson, on 67120; GF / Reconciliation on 67151, that is: C-123B 54-617 was administratively transferred to the Logistic Air Command Headquarters, Wright Patterson AFB, on 28 April 67, but administratively, the decision was made on 29 May 67 to let the aircraft with the same user; USAF records note: ZHTV (= Wright Patterson) to CADTT, Tainan on 68239, that is IRAN at Tainan on 26 August 68; this is confirmed by the Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2; a photo as the C-
123B can be found in: UTD/Hickler/B32; USAF records note: reserialled as 54000617 in 1969; transferred from Tainan (WQPC) to Fairchild Aircraft Corp., Hagerstown, on 69022, that is on 22 January 69; converted to C-123K; returned to the 315th Special Operations Wing, Phan Rang, on 69087, that is on 26 March 69; used out of Vientiane 16-30 June 69, when already a C-123K (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8 F7B); a forklift was driven into the right jet engine in Laos on 26 June 69, damaging that engine; repaired and returned to service the same day (Minutes ExCom-AAM/AACL of 8 July 69, in: UTD/CIA/B8F3); used out of Vientiane as a C-123K at least between 12 October 69 and 25 October 69 (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); USAF records note: responsibility transferred from XMTG (Udom) to 315TAW, Phan Rang, on 70139, that is on 17 May 70; maintenance at Phan Rang, 70139-146, that is between 17 and 24 May 70; back to 315TAW the same day; current with Air America on 1 July 70 (Leary, *The aircraft of Air America*, p. 20); departed for IRAN on 23 July 70 (C-123 time report of 3 August 70, in: UTD/CIA/B29F4); based at Vientiane 1-31 July 71, still assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C.s of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); in use out of Udorn at least between 3 November 69 and 12 March 73 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); the right engine nacelle, wing and wiring were damaged by ground fire over Laos on 16 March 72; repaired and returned to service on 24 March 72 (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 14 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); at Udorn on Air America flight schedule of 24 January 73 for use by “PPG”, i.e. Peppergrinder, possibly carrying arms (Udorn daily flight schedule of 24 January 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 January 72 and 31 May 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 January 72 to 1 May 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); on Air America flight out of Udorn on 18 April 73 (Udorn daily flight schedule of 18 April 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); used out of Vientiane 1-30 November 73 for Royal Lao Air Force training (F.O.C. of 1 November 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); at Vientiane in Royal Laotian Air Force colors in 73; a photo is preserved in: UTD/Anthony/F9.

**Fate:** given to the Royal Lao Air Force in 73; not current with Air America on 1 November 73 (F.O.C. of 1 November 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C); see also Carroll, *World Air Forces Directory 1998-99*, p. 275.

### Fairchild C-123B “671”

| 20120 | 14 Dec. 65 | ex USAF 54-0671; from 2 AD, Tan Son Nhut, to AAITT (Air Asia), Tainan for WK-maintenance on 65244, that is on 30 August 65 |

**Service history:** transferred from overhaul at Air Asia (AAITT) to TL (= Air America) on 65350 = 14 December 65; in use out of Vientiane at least between 31 November 65 and 23 November 68, when still a C-123B (Flight crew member monthly movement report of A. J. Zarkos, in: UTD/Zarkos/B1F8; Log book of R. L. Wofford, in: UTD/Wofford [Sm.C. 6]); used out of Vientiane on 8 April 66, 1 May 66, 1 May 68, and 15 August 69 under contract AID-439-342; USAF records note: C-123B 54-671 GI (= returned from outside USAF) CNA (= Air America) to LOG HQ, Wright Patterson, on 67120, GF / Reconciliation on 67151; that is: C-123B 55-4545 was administratively transferred to the Logistic Air Command Headquarters, Wright Patterson AFB, on 28 April 67, but administratively, the decision was made on 29 May 67 to let the aircraft with the same user; transferred from ZHTV, that is Wright
Patterson, to CADTT (China Air Lines), Tainan, on 68269, that is on 25 September 68; had IRAN at Tainan in October 68 (Aircraft status as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1, of 1 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2, of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2, and of 15 Aug. 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1); photo as a C-123B in UTD/Hickler/B32; the aileron push-pull rods were damaged by a storm at Udorn on 27 April 66; returned to service by 10 May 66 (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 11 May 66, in: UTD/CIA/B8F1); USAF records note: officially reserialized as 54000671 in 1969; transferred from Tainan (WQPC) to Fairchild Aircraft Corp., Hagerstown, on 69072, that is on 11 March 69; converted to C-123K; transferred to the 315th Special Operations Wing, Phan Rang, on 69147, that is on 25 May 69; returned from maintenance (IRAN) to Vientiane on 18 June 69 and used out of Vientiane 18-30 June 69, when already a C-123K (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); flew Luang Prabang (L-54) - Vientiane (L-08) on 30 July 69, Long Tieng (LS-20A) - Udorn (T-08) on 14 November 69, and Udorn (T-08) - Luang Prabang (L-54) on 29 June 70 (Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6); USAF records note: administratively transferred from XMTG, that is from Udorn, to 315TAW, Phan Rang, on 70154, that is on 1 June 70; to maintenance by 315TAW on 70162, that is on 9 June 70; landed at Pakse (L-11), Laos, on 5 May 70 with the landing gear retracted, damaging 85 % of the belly skin (Accident report, in: UTD/Dreifus/B1F11; a photo of this accident can be found in the John Anthony collection at TTU); repaired and returned to service on 21 May 70 (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 12 May 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4); current on 1 July 70 (Leary, The aircraft of Air America, p. 20); based at Vientiane 1-31 July 71, still assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C. of 1 July 71, 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); in use out of Vientiane at least between 6 November 71 and 13 November 71 (Log book of R. L. Wofford, in: UTD/Wofford [Sm. C. 6]); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 January 72 and 31 May 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 January 72 to 1 May 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); in use out of Udorn at least between 23 October 72 and 7 February 73 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); at Udorn on 24
January 73 (Udorn daily flight schedule of 24 January 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); at Udorn on 18 April 73 for local training out of Vientiane (Udorn daily flight schedule of 18 April 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); used out of Vientiane 1-30 November 73 for Royal Lao Air Force training (F.O.C. of 1 November 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

Fate: probably given to the R.Lao Air Force in 73; but possibly came to the R. Thai AF in 75 (?), as it was used 1990 in the movie “Air America” for the crash at “Tango 7”.

4) C-123s received in 1966:
Fairchild C-123B “293” 20303 24 March 66  ex USAF 57-6293; Bien Hoa (BY16) to 2AD, Da-nang, on 63182 (1 July 63); was to go to AAITTVL04 (Air Asia, Tainan) for maintenance on 63251, but did not; instead to Hong Kong for WK-maintenance the same day; back to 2AD, Bien Hoa, on 63278; AAI TTFWQPC (maintenance at Tainan) to 2AD, Tan Son Nhut on 64366; 2AD to AAI TTF WQPC on 65328

Service history: transferred from AAITT WQPC, that is from overhaul by Air Asia, Tainan, to TL (= Air America) on 66083 = 24 March 66; in use out of Vientiane at least between 9 May 66 and 3 March 68, when still a C-123B (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); used out of Vientiane on 8 April 66, 1 May 66, and 1 May 68 under contract AID-439-342 (Aircraft status as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1, of 1 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2, and of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2); made a gear-up touch-down at Nam Bac (LS-203), Laos, on 12 August 67, damaging the bottom of the fuselage, but subsequently landed correctly; repaired and returned to service on 6 September 67; still a C-123B at this time (Accident report, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F3; Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 22 August 67, in: UTD/CIA/B8F2); photo in Airliners, summer 93, p. 18; second Air America C-123B to be converted by Fairchild to C-123K, departed Vientiane to Clark AFB on 27 March 68 (Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2); returned to Air America in late August 68 (F.O.C. of 15 Aug. 68, in: UTD/LaShomb/B14); in use out of Vientiane at least between 6 September 68 and 20 April 69, when already a C-123K (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); placed on call under contract 439-713 on 1 February 69 (Letter dated 20 February 69, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, reel 27); in use out of Udorn at least between 3 May 69 to 27 February 71 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B; Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6, Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6); was already a C-123K on 15 June 69; used out of Udorn under contract AID-439-713 at least between 16 June and 31 August 69 (F.O.C.s of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B and of 15 Aug. 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1); transferred from contract AID-439-713 to contract AID-439-342 on 1 December 69 (Memo of 25 Nov.69, Air Support Branch to Air
America, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, reel 27); USAF C-123K 57-6293 was administratively reserialled as 57006293 in 1969; administratively transferred from Tainan to 315TAW, Phan Rang, on 70146, that is on 24 May 70; passed on to Air America (GD) on 70155, that is on 2 June 70; current with Air America on 1 July 70 (Leary, The aircraft of Air America, p. 20); flew high-ranking Lao Government officials, the Vientiane diplomatic corps and newsmen to Nam Tan (LS-268) near Sayaboury, Laos, in 71 to preside over the ceremonies attendant to the inauguration of a new irrigation dam (photos of the event can be found in: Air America Log, vol. V, no.5, 1971, p.1, and vol. V, no.6, 1971, pp.8-11, “293” is depicted on p.8); based at Vientiane at least between 1 July 71 and 31 July 71, still assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C. of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); hit by ground fire in Laos on 29 November 71, damaging the cylinder and sheet metal; repaired and returned to service on 30 November 71 (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 11 January 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7).

Fate: believed destroyed en route to Ban Xieng Lom (LS-69), Northern Laos, on 27 December 71, while on a “PPG”, i.e. Peppergrinder flight, carrying a full load of ammo and white phosphorus; believed shot down (by Chinese building a road in Laos?) and possibly disappeared in a midair explosion, as no wreckage was ever spotted; it is unknown what happened to pilot George L. Ritter, co-pilot Roy F. Townley and kickers Edward J. Weissinenback and Khamphanh Saysongkham (Accident report, in: UTD/CIA/B15F4; Board of Review report, in: UTD/CIA/B29F2; List “Aircraft destroyed or lost”, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; Memorial; Memorial file, in: UTD/LaShomb/B16F3; XOXO dated 25 April 72, in: UTD/Luckett/B1F3; see also Robbins, Air America, pp. 206-12).

Fairchild C-123B “613” 20062 24 March 66 ex USAF 54-0613

Service history: transferred from 2AD, Tan Son Nhat, to TL (= Air America) on 24 March 66; ferried to Tainan on 7 April 66; test flown at Tainan on 15 April 66; ferried Tainan-Hong Kong-Danang-Vientiane on 16 April 66; used out of Vientiane at least between 19 April 66 and 12 May 69 (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); based at Vientiane; used out of Vientiane on 8 April 66, 1 May 66, 1 May 68, and 15 August 69 under contract AID-439-342 (Aircraft status as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1, of 1 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2, of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2, and of 15 Aug. 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1); USAF records note: C-123B 54-613 GI (= returned from outside USAF) CNA (= Air America) to LOG HQ, Wright Patterson, on 67120; GF / Reconciliation on 67151; that is: C-123B 54-613 was administratively transferred to the Logistic Air Command Headquarters, Wright Patterson AFB, on 28 April 67, but administratively, the decision was made on 29 May 67 to let the aircraft with the same user; USAF records note: to CADTT, Tainan, on 67304, that is on 29 October 67; “613” had IRAN at Tainan in November 67 (Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2); made a nose gear up landing at Udorn (T-08), Thailand, on 21 September 68 (Accident report, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F7; a photo of this accident can be found in the John Anthony collection at TTU); repaired; converted to C-123K in 68/69; USAF records note: reserialled as 54000613 in 1969; used out of Vientiane on 4 April 69, when already a C-123K (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); touched down with the landing gear retracted, became airborne again and landed successfully at Vientiane (L-08), Laos, on 18 May 69 (Accident report, in: UTD/Dreifus/B1F10); repaired and returned to service on 27 May 69 (Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 27 May 69, in: UTD/CIA/B8F3); used out of Vientiane 16-30 June 69, when already a C-123K (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); used out of Vientiane as a C-123K at
least between 15 October 69 to 2 November 69 (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); flew Long Tieng (LS-20A) - Udorn (T-08) on 19 April 70, Udorn (T-08) - Pakse (L-11) on 4 May 70, and Udorn (T-08) - Savannakhet (L-39) - Pakse (L-11) on 11 June 70 (Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6); responsibility transferred to 315TAW, Phan Rang, on 70181, that is on 29 June 70; current with Air America on 1 July 70 (Leary, *The aircraft of Air America*, p. 20); flight plan shown in the *Air America* documentary; in use out of Udorn at least between 19 November 69 and 15 November 70 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); based at Vientiane 1-31 July 71, still assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C. of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B).

**Fate:** destroyed on 24 December 71, when PC-6 N197X taxied into a rubber fuel drum at Long Tieng (LS-20A), Laos; leaking fuel ignited and burnt down N197X and C-123K “613”, which was unloading the fuel; both aircraft were destroyed (XOXO of 24 December 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F11; photo in UTD/Anthony/F6; see also list “Company operated aircraft lost or destroyed”, in: UTD/CIA/B1F10; List “Aircraft destroyed or lost”, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2; USAF records note: C-123K 54000613 of 315TAW, Phan Rang, (service TA) to TB on 71358 (= 24 December 71); a photo of the accident can be found in Conboy, *War in Laos*, p. 48.

5) **C-123s received in 1968:**

![C-123B “556” in 1968, taken by Dan Gamelin (with kind permission from Dan Gamelin)](image)

Fairchild C-123B  “556”  20217  5 May 68  ex USAF 55-4556 of 315 ACW, Phan Rang

**Service history:** transferred from 315 ACW, Phan Rang, to AAITT, XMTG (= Air America, Udorn), on 68126 (5 May 68); officially transferred to LOG HQ, Wright Patterson, on 68207 (= 25 July 68); received by Air America on 6 May 68 and serialled “556”; put into service under contract AID-439-342 out of Vientiane on 7 May 68 (Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2); in use out of Vientiane at least between 18 July 68 and 11 March 69, when still a C-123B (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); current 15 June 69, but undergoing conversion to C-123K; returned to service out of Vientiane in July 69 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in:
UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); in use out of Vientiane as a C-123K on 6 November 69 (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); flew Luang-Prabang-Udorn on 7 June 70 (Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6); current 1 July 70 (Leary, The aircraft of Air America, p. 20); on the paper transferred from Udorn to 315TAW, Phan Rang, on 70128 (8 May 70), but continued to be used by Air America; current with Air America on 3 August 70 (Time report of 3 August 70, in: UTD/CIA/B29F4); at Vientiane in 71 (photo in UTD/Anthony/F9); in use out of Udorn at least between 13 November 69 and 18 June 71 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 January 72 and 31 May 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 January 72 to 1 May 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); current on 1 April 72 (Assigned aircraft of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); C-123K “556” was programmed for input for IRAN on 24 November 72 (AAM to USAF, letter dated 23 August 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24); at Udorn on 24 January 73 (Udorn daily flight schedule of 24 January 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); at Udorn on 18 April 73 for local training out of Vientiane (Udorn daily flight schedule of 18 April 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); photo in UTD/Abadie/B1; still current with Air America on 1 August 73 (Assigned aircraft, in: UTD/CIA/B31F10).

**Fate:** probably given to the R.Lao Air Force as “556”? in 73; not current with Air America on 1 November 73 (F.O.C. of 1 November 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7C).

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**Air America C-123K “568” at Takhli in 1968/69**
(USAF photo by Sgt. Jack Gurner; with the permission of the photographer submitted by Bob Vaughn)

**Fairchild C-123K “568”**
20229
Sept. 68 (?)
ex USAF 55-4568; transferred from GAMH (England AFB, Alexandria, LA) to 315 ACW, Phan Rang, on 68115 (= 24 April 68); to 315 Special Operations Wing, Phan Rang, on 68214 (= 1 August 68); maintenance

Fate: returned to the USAF. 315 SOW, Phan Rang, as 55-4568 on 29 June 69 (?); not current with Air America on 15 August 69; to CADTT (China Air Lines, Taipei) for maintenance on 69180 (29 June 69); back to 315 SOW, Phan Rang, on 69225 (= 13 August 69); transferred to TL MAP on 71259 (= 16 Sept. 71), that is to the Royal Thai Air Force as “40568”; at Bangkok on 8 November 72 (Aviation Letter, 75, Feb. 73, p.2); possibly this is the former Royal Thai Air Force C-123K that is preserved at Muek Lek between Bangkok and Korat (e-mail dated 27 Aug. 2003, sent by Steve Darke to Erik Carlson, who kindly forwarded it to the author).
Service history: flew Luang-Prabang-Udom on 13 November 68 (Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6); used out of Vientiane, at least between 29 November 68 and 29 October 69, when already a C-123K (Log book of D. D. Wharton, in: UTD/Wharton/B1F2); but not on the F.O.C. of 15 June 69, as it was to be returned to the USAF in June 69 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); instead it remained with Air America, as it was in use out of Udorn at least between 24 June 69 and 18 October 72 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6; Udorn daily flight schedules of 24 June 69, 25 June 69 and 18 September 70, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1); officially operated out of Vientiane under the provisions of contract AID-439-342 at least between 16 August 69 and 31 July 71 (F.O.C.s of 15 Aug. 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1 and of 15 July, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); both tires and the shock struts were damaged in Laos on 24 February 70, when “636” landed on a strip

Implementation Orders dated 26 Sept.69 and 30 Dec. 69 to contract AID-439-342, assigning C-123K “636” to Air America, first for a certain period, then thru duration of contract (both in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel no. 29)

with 7kt quartering tail wind; repaired and returned to service on 10 March 70 (Minutes ExCom-AAACL/AAM of 10 March 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4); current 1 July 70 (Leary, The aircraft of Air America, p. 20); on 5 April 71, “636” was damaged, when it was hit by a rocket attack, while the aircraft was parked at Long Tieng (LS-20A); but it could be ferried back to Vientiane and was repaired (XOXO of 5 April 71 in: UTD/Hickler/B10F12); based at Vientiane 1-31 July 71, still assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C. of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); crash-landed at Long Tieng (LS-20A) on 14 December 71, when the right main landing gear collapsed on roll out, causing substantial skin damage to the lower fuselage and to the structure; repaired and returned to service on 20 December 71 (Accident report, in: UTD/Anthony/F4; Minutes ExCom-AAACL/AAM of 11 January 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 January 72 and 31 May 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 January 72 to 1 May 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); current on 1 April 72 (Assigned aircraft of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); C-123K “636” was programmed for input for IRAN on 25 October 72 (AAM to USAF, letter dated 23 August 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no. 24); at Vientiane in 73 in R.Lao AF colors (photo in
UTD/Anthony/F9); at Udorn on 24 January 73 and 18 April 73 (Udorn daily flight schedules of 24 January 73 and 18 April 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); still current on 1 July 73 (Assigned aircraft of 1 July 73, in: UTD/CIA/B31F10).

**Fate:** probably given to the Royal Lao Air Force in July 73; not current with Air America on 1 August 73 (Assigned aircraft of 1 August 73, in: UTD/CIA/B31F10); to the Royal Thai Air Force as B.L.4K-19/19 on 6 February 76; struck off charge on 28 January 77 (Martin Best/Steve Darke, e-mail kindly sent to the author on 13 February 2012).

6) **C-123s received in 1970:**

**Fairchild C-123K**

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<td>1 May 70</td>
<td>ex USAF 54-0690 of 315 TAW, Phan Rang; was to return from maintenance at Phan Rang on 70093 (= 3 April 70)</td>
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**Service history:**
- Based at Udorn until 27 March 70 (Bowers, *Tactical airlift*, p. 451).
- **Fate:** not current 1 July 70 (Leary, *The aircraft of Air America*, p. 20); probably returned to the 315th USAF Wing, Phan Rang, South Vietnam.

**Fairchild C-123K**

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**Fairchild C-123K**

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**Service history:**
- Assigned to contract AID-439-342 for the period between 1 May 70 and 15 July 70 (Implementation Order dated 29 April 70, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 reel 29)
- **Fate:** returned to the USAF on 11 July 70 (C-123 time report of 3 August 70, in: UTD/CIA/B29F4); in the USAF Assignment records, this date is given as GD on 70192 (= 11 July 70); used by 315TAW, Phan Rang; transferred to TL MAP on 71264 (= 21 September 71), that is to the South Vietnamese Air Force as “54690/XG” (??); to the Royal Thai Air Force as “54-690”; assigned to the Khmer Air Force as 54-0690 on 20 November 73; returned to the R. Thai AF as “54-690”; at Bangkok on 4 March 74; reserialled as “40690”.
Implementation Orders dated 29 April 70 and 1 July 70 to contract AID-439-342 (both in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel no. 29)

Former Air America C-123K “386” in RLAF colors
(Air America Log, vol. VII, no.6, 1973, p.8)

Fairchild C-123K “386” 20270 1 July 70 ex USAF 56-4386 of 315 TAW, Phan Rang, to GF on 70181

Service history: 56-4386 of 315TAW, Phan Rang, to GF on 70181 (= 30 June 70); assigned to contract AID-439-342 on 1 July 70 (Implementation Order dated 1 July 70); arrived at Udorn on 2 July 70 (C-123 time report of 3 August 70, in: UTD/CIA/B29F4); flown as “386”; used out of Udorn at least between 25 February 71 and 27 May 71 (Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6; Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); based at Vientiane at least 1-31 July 71, assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C. of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); hit by ground fire in Laos on 26 November 71, damaging the fuselage and the right wing; repaired (Minutes ExCom-AAACL/AAM of 11 January 72,
in: UTD/CIA/B9F7); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 January 72 and 31 May 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 January 72 to 1 May 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); upon landing at Ban Xon (LS-272) on 22 July 72, the right main landing gear assembly collapsed, damaging the right wing; photos can be found with the Accident report (in: UTD/CIA/B61F6); repaired; a photo of “386”, probably taken at Udorn in 1972/3, can be found in the A. Cates collection at TTU; at Udorn in Royal Lao AF colors on 24 January 73; photos in UTD/Anthony/F9 and Air America Log, vol. VII, no. 6, 1973, p. 8; nevertheless on the Air America flight schedule of 24 January 73 for use by “PPG”, i.e. Peppergrinder, possibly carrying arms (Udorn daily flight schedule of 24 January 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); on 18 April 73 used at Udorn for ground training aid for Laotian students (Udorn daily flight schedule of 18 April 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); still current with Air America on 30 April 73, assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F1).

**Fate:** given to the R.Lao Air Force in May or June 73; not current with Air America on 1 July 73 (Assigned aircraft of 1 May 73, in: UTD/CIA/B31F10); see also Carroll, World Air Forces Directory 1998-99, p. 275.

Fairchild C-123K “524” 20185 1 July 70 ex USAF 55-4524

**Service history:** transferred from 315TAW, Phan Rang, on 70181 = 30 June 70; assigned to contract AID-439-342 on 1 July 70 (Implementation Order dated 1 July 70); arrived at Udorn on 2 July 70 (C-123 time report of 3 August 70, in: UTD/CIA/B29F4); in use out of Udorn at least between 24 August 70 and 11 October 72 (Log book of D. Keele, in: UTD/Keele/B1F6; Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); the nose gear collapsed at Ban Le Tee (LS-190), Laos, on 11 February 71 (Accident report, in: UTD/Anthony/F4; a photo of this accident can be found in the John Anthony collection at TTU); repaired; based at Vientiane at least 1-31 July 71, assigned to contract AID-439-342 (F.O.C. of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); nose gear collapsed at Pakse (L-11) on 4 November 71 (photo in UTD/Anthony/F6); repaired; seen at Taipei 15 April 72 all silver, no markings (Aviation Letter 67, June 72, p.7); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 January 72 and 1 March 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 January 72 to 1 March 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); at Udorn on 24 January 73 (Udorn daily flight schedule of 24 January 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1).

**Fate:** disappeared near Ban Hong Sa (LS-62), when en route from Luang Prabang (L-54) to Ban Houei Sai (L-25), Laos, on 7 March 73; Captain James H. Ackley, First Officer Clarence N. Driver, and AFDs Chudchai Chewcherngsuk and Kenekeo Narissak were missing; between 7 and 14 March 73, some 20 different aircraft flew Search and Rescue missions, including UH-34Ds H-53, H-80, H-87, PC-6Cs N365F, N367F, and Arizona Helicopters Bell 206B N14803 from L-25, and UH-34D H-89 from L-54; on 14 March 73, the wreckage was sighted by N354X and N366F at QB2398; no apparent survivors and no parachuted were sighted; the aircraft was destroyed by impact and fire; due to heavy ground fire, the rescue aircraft were unable to land (Accident report, in: UTD/CIA/B62F2; Accident note to the USAF, dated 8 March 73, in: UTD/CIA/B32F1; UTD/Leary/B1 for 7 March 73; Memorandum dated 22 March 73, in: UTD/CIA/B32F1; Board of review report dated 23 March 73, in: UTD/CIA/B34F5; Memorial file, in: UTD/LaShomb/B16F3; XOXOs of 7 to 14 March 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12). On 2 September 1994, the remains of James H. Ackley and Clarence N. Driver were recovered (Air America Log, vol. XXVII, no. 1, March 2010, p. 7).
7) C-123s received in 1972:

Implementation Order dated 23 February 72 to contract AID-439-342
(in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel no. 29)

C-123K 54-0616 at Tan Son Nhut in Feb. 70, when still with the USAF
(with kind permission from Bob Livingstone)

Fairchild C-123K  "616"  20065  23 Feb. 72  ex USAF 54000616 of 315
TAW, Phan Rang

Service history: 54000616 of 315 TAW, Phan Rang, to CADTT, Taipei, that is to
China Airlines, Taipei, for maintenance (WK) on 71354, that is on 19 December 71;
assigned to contract AID-439-342 on 23 February 72 (Implementation Order dated 23
February 72); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 March 72 and 31
May 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 March 72 to 1 May 73, in:
UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); current on 7 July 72 (Airframe time report of
7 July 72, in: UTD/CIA/B29F9), 1 January 73 (Assigned aircraft, in: UTD/CIA/B32F1), 1 March 73 (Assigned aircraft, in: UTD/CIA/B32F1); a photo
probably taken at Udorn in 1972/3 (no. VA024836 of the A. Cates collection at TTU)
shows “616” camouflaged; at Udorn on 8 October 72 (Crew member duty report of H.
F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6) and on 24 January 73 and 18 April 73 (Udorn daily
flight schedules of 24 January 73 and 18 April 73, in: UTD/Dexter/F1); current with
Air America on 30 April 73, assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 (F.O.C. of 16
April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14).
Fate: probably given to the R.Lao Air Force in May or June 73; not current with Air
America on 1 July 73 (Assigned aircraft of 1 July 73, in: UTD/CIA/B31F10).
Fairchild C-123K “648” 20097  23 Feb.72  ex USAF 54000648 of 315 TAW, Phan Rang

Service history: 54000648 left 315 TAW, Phan Rang, to ? on 71343, that is on 8 December 71; assigned to contract AID-439-342 on 23 February 72 (Implementation Order dated 23 February 72); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least between 1 March 72 and 6 November 72 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 March 72 to 1 November 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reels 23/4); current with Air America in June 72 (Airframe time, in: UTD/CIA/B29F9); flown camouflaged (see photo no. 1-WL1-28-8-PC89 preserved at UTD/Leary/series I, B28F8); on 22 May 72, F/O J. F. Kerch injured himself, while climbing onto C-123K “648” which was parked at Luang Prabang (L-54) (Employee accident report of 2 June 72, in: UTD/CIA/B29F2); on 24 May 72, “648” was operated out of Udorn as directed by Peppergrinder (Vientiane daily flight schedule of 24 May 72, in: UTD/Severson/B1F7).

Fate: shot down during the Saravane operation en route from Pakse, 3 kms south of Paksong (LS-449), in the New Paksong (LS-180) area, Laos, on 6 December 72; the pilot, Neil G. Hansen, copilot W. C. Crothers and 2 Thai kickers bailed out, when the rudder control was lost; the aircraft crashed and was destroyed by fire; it had been loaded with several pounds of cargo, a mixed load of fresh produce and ammunition, loaded onto 14 pallets destined for drop zones known as “I” pad, “A” pad, and “V” pad; UH-34D H-52 picked up one kicker and the First Officer on the ground and used the cable hoist for Captain Hansen. In picking up the Captain, the tail rotor of H-52 contacted nearby trees and the aircraft was forced to set down prematurely near Paksong (LS-449) in a mine field. UH-34D H-53 completed this rescue but, some twenty-five minutes out of the LS-449 area en route to Pakse (L-11), was forced to land with low fuel. S-58T XW-PHE returned these personnel to Pakse (L-11). In the meantime, UH-34D H-81 had picked up the other kicker and returned him to Pakse (Accident report, in: UTD/CIA/B61F15).
8) C-123s received in 1973:

Modification nos. P00071 (9 March 73), P00075 (22 March 73), and P00078 (29 March 73) to contract AID-439-342 (all in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel 23)

Fairchild C-123K “577” 20026 21 Feb. 73 ex USAF 54-0577

Service history: not current with Air America on 1 January 73 (Assigned aircraft, in: UTD/CIA/B32F1); current on 21 February 73 (List of unregistered aircraft, in: UTD/CIA/B49F1); assigned to contract AID-439-342 on 21 February 73 (Modification no. P00071 dated 9 March 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel 23); was at Tainan for IRAN between 25 February and 25 April 73; maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least in May 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 May 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel 24); assigned to contract F04606-71-C-0002 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73 in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); still current with Air America on 1 July 73 (Assigned aircraft of 1 July 73, in: UTD/CIA/B31F10).

Fate: probably given to the R.Lao Air Force as “577” in July 73; not current with Air America on 1 August 73 (Assigned aircraft of 1 August 73, in: UTD/CIA/B31F10); reportedly to the South Vietnamese Air Force in ?

Fairchild C-123K “687” 20136 22 March 73 ex USAF 54-0687

Service history: assigned to contract AID-439-342 on 22 March 73 (Modification no. P00075 to contract AID-439-342 dated 22 March 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel 23);

Fate: cancelled from contract AID-439-342 on 29 March 73 (Modification no. P00078 to contract AID-439-342 dated 29 March 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel 23); probably returned to the USAF

Fairchild C-123K “546” 20207 29 March 73 ex USAF 55-4546

Service history: assigned to contract AID-439-342 on 29 March 73 (Modification no. P00078 to contract AID-439-342 dated 29 March 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel 23); positioned at Saigon and Vientiane on 17 April 73 to work under the provisions of contract F04606-71-C-0002 (F.O.C. of 16 April 73, in: UTD/Kaufman/B1F14); maintained by Air America, Udorn, at least in May 73 (Assigned, maintained aircraft, as of 1 May 73, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel 24);
on 19 May 73, an indigenous male passenger exited the forward left crew door on the ramp at Vang Vieng (L-16) and was fatally struck by the still turning left hand propeller (XOXO of 19 May 73, in: UTD/Hickler/B25F12); current on 1 July 73 (Assigned aircraft of 1 July 73, in: UTD/CIA/B31F10).

**Fate:** given to the R.Lao Air Force as “546” in July 73; a drawing of RLAF C-123K “546” in camouflage can be seen in: Conboy, *War in Laos*, p. 37; not current with Air America on 1 August 73 (Assigned aircraft of 1 August 73, in: UTD/CIA/B31F10).
II) USAF C-123s bailed to China Air Lines, operating for Air America:

A China Air C-123K – possibly ST-1 – at the Air America ramp at Tan Son Nhut in February 1970
(with kind permission from Bob Livingstone)

Fairchild C-123B “625” 20074 May 65 ex USAF 54-0625

Service history: 54-0625 of 2 AD, Tan Son Nhut, to TL on 65090 (= 30 March 65); operated by China Air Lines under subcontract with Air America (contract no. 65-61 of 23 April 65, in: UTD/CIA/B40F3); USAF C-123B 54-625 GI (= returned from outside USAF) CNA (= China Air Lines) to LOG HQ, Wright Patterson, on 67120; GF / Reconciliation on 67151, that is: administratively transferred to the Logistic Air Command Headquarters, Wright Patterson AFB, on 28 April 67, but administratively, the decision was made on 29 May 67 to let the aircraft with the same user; administratively transferred from Logistic Air Command HQ, Wright Patterson AFB, to CADTT, that is to China Air Lines, Tainan, on 68131, that is on 10 May 68; this probably means IRAN at Tainan on that date.

Fate: rereg. ST-1 between 5 August 68 and 10 September 68 (Saigon Base monthly reports of August and September 68, in: UTD/CIA/B42F5).

“ST-1” 20074 August 68 ex “625” rereg.

Service history: operated by China Air Lines under subcontract with Air America (AID-SA-C-1029/70-34; see Memorandum of 2 February 72, in: UTD/CIA/B1F10); at Saigon 2 March 69, used on Air America flight from V-01 (Saigon) to V-03 (Danang) on 2 March 69 (Crew member duty report of H. F. Miller, in: UTD/Miller/B4F6); USAF C-123B 54-625 was administratively reserialled as 54000625 in 1969; transferred from Tainan to Fairchild Aircraft Corp., Hagerstown, on 69112, that is on 20 April 69; converted to C-123K; administratively transferred to the 315th Special Operations Wing, Phan Rang, on 69182, that is 1 July 69; administratively transferred to LOG HQ, that is the Logistic Air Command, Headquarters, Wright Patterson AFB, on 69183, that is on 2 July 69, and passed on (GD) to China Air Lines the same day; used by Air America on flights from Saigon (V-01) to Danang (V-03), Vung Tau (V-05), Nha Trang (V-07), Dalat/Cam Ly (V-08), Ban Me Thuot East (V-12), and Chu Lai (V-194) at least between 20 April 71 and 23 June 71 (Saigon daily flight schedules, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1); from 1 December 72 onwards, the passenger seats were increased to 60 (letter dated 22 December 72, sent by China Airlines to Air America, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel 21); hit by ground fire in November/December 74 en route Saigon - Nha Trang, causing one engine to be shut, and made a successful one-engine landing at Nha Trang (Harnage, A thousand faces, pp. 114 and 119).

Fate: went missing with 9 on board, 3 CAL crew and 6 passengers; probably it
crashed between Dalat/Cam Ly (V-08) and Nha Trang (V-07), South Vietnam, on 3 January 75, after being shot down by a SA-7 missile (XOXO of 3 January 75, in: UTD/CIA/B50F5; Harnage, A thousand faces, pp. 119-20); the wreckage was found by Air America Bell 204B N1305X in the vicinity of BP9745, approximately 5 nautical miles southwest of Nha Trang (V-07), on 7 January 75 (XOXO of 7 January 75, in: UTD/CIA/B50F5).

Two photos of China Air C-123K ST-2 at Saigon in 1970 (UTD/Misc.Mat./B4F4)

Fairchild C-123B  “675”  20124  May 65  ex USAF 54-0675

**Service history:** 54-0675 of 2 AD, Tan Son Nhat, to TL on 65090 (= 30 March 65); operated by China Air Lines under subcontract with Air America (contract no. 65-61 of 23 April 65, in: UTD/CIA/B40F3); USAF C-123B 54-0675 was administratively transferred from Logistic Air Command HQ, Wright Patterson AFB, to CADTT, that is to China Air Lines, Tainan, on 68032, that is on 1 February 68.

**Fate:** rereg. ST-2 between 5 August 68 and 10 September 68 (Saigon Base monthly reports of August and September 68, in: UTD/CIA/B42F5).

“ST-2”  20124  August 68  ex “675” rereg.

**Service history:** at Taipei on 27 March 69 (Aviation Letter, no. 38, p. 9, gives 27 March 68); operated by China Air Lines under subcontract with Air America (Contract no. 70-34; see Memorandum of 2 February 72, in: UTD/CIA/B1F10); USAF C-123B 54-0675 was administratively reserialled as 54000675 in 1969; transferred from Tainan to Fairchild Aircraft Corp., Hagerstown, on 69086, that is on 25 March 69; converted to C-123K; administratively transferred to the 315th Special Operations Wing, Phan Rang, on 69155, that is on 2 June 69; administratively transferred to LOG HQ, that is the Logistic Air Command, Headquarters, Wright Patterson AFB, on 69155, that is on 2 June 69; passed on (GD) to China Air Lines on 69156, that is on 3 June 69; two photos taken at Saigon in May 70 (in UTD/Misc.Mat./B4F4) show it in camouflage colors without any titles; officially not current on 1 July 70 (Leary, The aircraft of Air America, p. 20), as it was not part of the official Air America fleet; used by Air America on flights from Saigon (V-01) to Vung Tau (V-05), Nha Trang (V-07), Dalat/Cam Ly (V-08), Phan Thiet (V-11), Qui Nhon (V-13), Truc Giang (V-14), Can Tho (V-17), Phan Rang (V-28), Con Son (V-32), and Tuy Hoa (V-113) at least between 20 April 71 and 20 June 71 (Saigon daily flight schedules, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F1).

**Fate:** crashed en route Saigon - Pleiku near Pleiku (V-04), South Vietnam, on 26 August 72; the aircraft was destroyed, and the crew of 4 and 4 passengers were killed (XOXO of 26 August 72, in: UTD/Hickler/B27F2; Minutes of 12 September 72, in: UTD/CIA/B9F7; Memorandum of 17 February 75, in: UTD/CIA/B18F2).
Fairchild C-123K “ST-3” 20192 6 Dec. 72 ex USAF 55-4531

Service history: the insurance covered this aircraft (ST-3 / 531) from 6 December 72 onwards (Letter dated 22 December 72, sent by China Airlines to Air America, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 microfilm reel 21); operated by China Air Lines under subcontract with Air America (Contract no. 70-34; see Memorandum of 2 February 72, in: UTD/CIA/B1F10); in the Saigon Base monthly reports between 9 December 72 and December 73 (UTD/CIA/B41F7+B42F2).

Fate: struck by hostile fire, probably a SA-7 missile, at coordinate XT 182425 while en route from an outstation to Saigon; crashed 4 miles south of Tay Ninh (V-151), South Vietnam, on 13 May 74; 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 from shrapnel wounds to his chest, and his condition is satisfactory (XOXO of 14 May 74, in: UTD/CIA/B50F5; Minutes ExCom-AACL/AAM of 11 June 74, in: UTD/CIA/B10F1; Harnage, A thousand faces, pp. 97-102).

Fairchild C-123K “ST-4” 20304 May 74? ex USAF 57-6294

Service history: operated by China Air Lines under subcontract with Air America (Contract no. 70-34; see Memorandum of 2 February 72, in: UTD/CIA/B1F10); not yet mentioned in the Saigon Base monthly report of December 73 (UTD/CIA/B41F7).

Fate: 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, South Vietnam, on 27 July 74 and exploded in flight; four Chinese members of the flight crew and the passenger, Air America employee V. L. Lee Jr., a Filipino National, were killed; the aircraft had delivered rice from Saigon to Phnom Penh for refugees 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 (XOXO of 27 July 74, in: UTD/Hickler/B10F12; Letter of W. J. Marrigan dated 1 August 74, in: UTD/CIA/B17F3; Memorial).
III) REPUBLIC OF CHINA AIR FORCE C-123Bs OPERATED FOR SO BAC / VIAT

VIAT or Vietnamese Air Transport was a front for a top-secret South Vietnamese-CIA operation called Bureau 45B or Biet Kích So Bac (Northern Service). It had been set up in 1959 by Captain Ngo The Linh, reported to President Ngo Dinh Diem, and was responsible for spies and commando missions into North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In 1961, So Bac started air-dropping agents into North Vietnam using C-47s, C-46s and C-54s. In February 63 five gray, unmarked C-123s, which were owned by the CIA, were delivered to the Republic of China Air Force under the condition that two of them were flown by RoCAF crews on infiltration and resupply missions into North Vietnam. On 15 June 63, two of the four remaining C-123s – one C-123 had crashed in Taiwan in a training accident – departed for Saigon (Conboy / Andradé, Spies and commandos, pp.60/1). Here, the Chinese crews were trained in low level flying by Air America pilot Johnny Lee and Air America navigator Jim Keck. Manuscript of the memoirs of Jim Keck, p. 25, kindly supplied to the author by Jim Keck himself; e-mail written by Jim Keck to the author on 2 February 2002). In “July 63, an order came for me to transfer to the Navy Auxiliary Communication Center (NACC), Taipei, Taiwan, to head up a special C-123 project to train pilots in Taiwan and operating out of Saigon” (John E. Lee, interview given to William Leary on 11 February 1987, written version preserved at UTD/Leary/B46F10). “In August 1963, Lee received a cable from Rousselot to report to Taipei. Lee learned that he was to be assigned to the Nationalist Air Force C-123 program at Hsinchu that was being run by the NACC. The Chinese had just lost an airplane on a training flight and needed someone to supervise training. Lee had the necessary qualifications: he had trained Chinese pilots during World War II, spoke Chinese, and knew the C-123. NACC had been running a program to mainland China with a P2V. The C-123 program involved agent drops in North Vietnam (launching from Danang). There were two planes and eight pilots in the program. They had had minimal training at Pope AFB and were not really familiar with the C-123. Lee had to motivate and encourage, building confidence in the airplane. He had the backing of the chief of the Chinese Air Force and was given a free hand to get the job done (for example, normal procedures for flying around Taiwan were waived). Lee started from scratch: rank was not important – decisions on aircraft commanders would be based on proficiency. He practiced low level night airdrops: fly 200-300 feet off the water using radar altimeter, simulate penetration of the coast, fly terrain by moonlight, simulate drop. He also demonstrated the capabilities of the airplane: for example, he would come in at 1500 feet over the end of the runway, chop power, dump full flaps, come straight down, flare out, reverse, and land within 1000 feet. In addition, Lee taught rules and regulations for international flights (for ferrying), and practiced ILS approaches at Taipei.” (John E. Lee, interview given to William Leary on 27 May 1987, summary preserved at UTD/Leary/B46F10).

The C-123 operations were directed by USAF Colonel Bill Rose (http://ngothelinh.tripod.com/Tribute.htm). When a China Airlines C-54 operated for VIAT vanished over North Vietnam on 4 July 63, the RoCAF C-123s were the only way to airdrop agents into North Vietnam. During those missions, the C-123s were unmarked, but pull-off RoCAF and USAF insignia were also used while the aircraft were on Taiwan or later in South Vietnam (photos were published in: Plaster, SOG, pp.71-78). On 24 January 64, the four CIA/RoCAF C-123s came under the control of the Department of Defense (Conboy / Andradé, Spies and commandos, pp.91-94). As Air America had a contract with VIAT to support their operations and to maintain their aircraft as may be called by VIAT (contract no. 61-119; see: List of Air America’s contracts, Memorandum of 27 July 62, in: UTD/Fink/B2F16), it is believed that those aircraft were also maintained by Air America between June 63 and January 64. Their identities are unknown, but from the USAF Assignment Records preserved at Maxwell AFB it seems very likely that the following five C-123B were those RoCAF/CIA/VIAT aircraft. All of them have similar histories:
A painting of RoCAF C-123B “5661” on the wall of the dormitory of RoCAF’s 34th Squadron (with kind permission from RoCAF Capt. Sung Hung-sen via Clarence Fu)

55-4543 (c/n 20204): transferred from Logistic Air Command HQ to an unknown MAP on 10 April 63; became Republic of China Air Force “4010” (e-mail dated 29 July 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu); believed to have become RoCAF C-123B “5636”, “5652”, “5661” or “5644” later (e-mail dated 29 July 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu); on 2 December 64, “5636” and “5652” flew from Taiwan, to be used for training on Taiwan, while “5661” and “5644” remained in Vietnam (e-mail dated 5 August 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu); not listed in the USAF Assignment Records until 7 December 66 (66340), when it was transferred from AAI TT, Tainan, that is maintenance with Air Asia, to another organization (TL); 55-4543 then reappeared on 30 April 67 (67120) as GI (= returned from outside USAF) “gained from CNA”, to the 6200th Material Wing, Saigon, which it left again to a “Secret Project”, Saigon, on 1 June 67 (67152), returned to 6200th Material Wing, Saigon, on 2 June 67 (67153); to Fairchild, Hagerstown, on 27 January 69 (69027); converted to C-123K on 30 January 69 (69030); to 315th SOW, Phan Rang, on 11 April 69 (69101); to 14th SOW, Nha Trang, on 30 September 69 (69273) (AVH-11); to 14th SOW, Phan Rang, on 5 April 70 (70095); to 14th SOW, Taichung, on 25 November 70 (70329); to 14th SOW, Nha Trang, on 9 December 70 (70343); to 460th Training Wing, Tan Son Nhut, on 29 December 70 (70363) (AVH-14); to 483rd TAW, Nha Trang, on 24 December 71 (71358) (AVH-16); transferred at Nha Trang to TL (outside USAF) on 1 May 72 (72121) (e-mail dated 5 April 2004, kindly sent to the author by Arcangelo DiFante of AFHRA, Maxwell AFB); not in the USAF Assignment Records mentioned in 1973 (AVH-19); believed to be one of the C-123Ks that went to the Republic of China Air Force in 1972, probably as “0604”.

55-4551 (c/n 20212): transferred from Logistic Air Command HQ to an unknown MAP on 10 April 63; became Republic of China Air Force “4020” (e-mail dated 29 July 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu); not listed in the USAF Assignment Records until 7 December 66 (66340), when it was transferred to another organization (TL); but then, it was added that this had been listed in error and that the last date the aircraft had appeared in those records was 10 April 63. The reason is that “4020” alias 55-4551 was the RoCAF C-123B that had crashed into a mountain during a night training flight on Taiwan on 10 May 63, killing 12 people (e-mails dated 14 April 2004 and 29 July 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu).
54-0643 (c/n 20092): left 464TCW, Pope AFB, Fayetteville, NC, to an unknown operator on 6 May 63; believed to have become RoCAF C-123B “5636”, “5652”, “5661” or “5644” (e-mail dated 29 July 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu); on 2 December 64, “5636” and “5652” flew from Taiwan, to be used for training on Taiwan, while “5661” and “5644” remained in Vietnam (e-mail dated 5 August 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu); does not reappear on the USAF Assignment Records until 7 December 66 (66340), when it was listed as transferred from Pope AFB to another organization (TL); reappeared on 30 April 67 (67120), as gained from outside USAF (GI), that is from “CNA”; on 30 April 67, 54-0643 went to the 6200th Material Wing, Saigon, which it left (TL) to a “Secret Project”, Saigon, on 1 June 67 (67152); returned (GI) from Secret Project to 6200th Material Wing, Saigon, on 2 June 67 (67153); on 27 March 69 (69086), it was transferred to Fairchild Aircraft, Hagerstown, and converted to C-123K; to 315th SOW, Phan Rang, on 27 May 69 (69147); to 14th SOW, Nha Trang, on 30 September 69 (69273) (AVH-11); to 14th SOW, Phan Rang, on 11th January 70 (70011); back to 14th SOW, Nha Trang, on 13 October 70 (70286) (AVH-14); to 483rd TAW, Nha Trang, on 1 September 71 (71244) (AVH-15); to TL on 1 May 72 (72121) (AVH-17); not mentioned in the USAF Assignment Records in 1973 (AVH-19); this was probably one of the C-123Ks given to the Republic of China Air Force, probably “0601”.

54-0657 (c/n 20106): left 464TCW, Pope AFB, Fayetteville, NC, to an unknown operator on 6 May 63; believed to have become RoCAF C-123B “5636”, “5652”, “5661” or “5644” (e-mail dated 29 July 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu); on 2 December 64, “5636” and “5652” flew from Taiwan, to be used for training on Taiwan, while “5661” and “5644” remained in Vietnam (e-mail dated 5 August 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu); does not reappear on the USAF Assignment Records until 7 December 66 (66340), when it was listed as transferred from Pope AFB to another organization (TL); reappeared on 30 April 67 (67120), as GI (= returned from outside USAF) “gained from CNA”; on 30 April 67, 54-0657 went to Logistic Air Command HQ, which it also left (TL) to a “Secret Project”, Saigon, on 1 June 67 (67152); it did not reappear in the USAF Assignment Records in the 1968-73 period (AVH-9, 11, 14, 17, 18); possibly this was the Republic of China Air Force C-123B that was reported missing over the South China Sea on 22 August 67, with 6 people aboard missing.

54-0715 (c/n 20164): left 464TCW, Pope AFB, Fayetteville, NC, to an unknown operator on 6 May 63; believed to have become RoCAF C-123B “5636”, “5652”, “5661” or “5644” (e-mail dated 29 July 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu); on 2 December 64, “5636” and “5652” flew from Taiwan, to be used for training on Taiwan, while “5661” and “5644” remained in Vietnam (e-mail dated 5 August 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu); does not reappear on the USAF Assignment Records until 7 December 66 (66340), when it was listed as transferred from Pope AFB to another organization (TL); reappeared on 30 April 67 (67120), as GI (= returned from outside USAF) “gained from CNA”; 54-0715 (c/n 20164) went to Logistic Air Command HQ on 30 April 67; to GF / Reconciliation on 67151 (= 29 May 67), but on 6 June 67 (67157), it was reported to status TA (flying accident); after that accident, 54-715 is no longer mentioned in the USAF Assignment Records; checked for the 1968-73 period (AVH-9, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19); so the aircraft was probably destroyed; indeed, 10 May 67, a C-123B crashed shortly after taking off from Hsinchu AFB, Taiwan, in a single engine simulation training, killing 2 mechanics in the cargo bay; so this may have been “5636” or “5652” (e-mail dated 5 August 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu)
IV) MACV-SOG C-123Bs OPERATING INTO NORTH VIETNAM (Project “Duck Hook”)

The military unit that the original four C-123Bs had been transferred to in January 64 was MACV-SOG, that is Military Assistance Command Vietnam – Special Operations Group, renamed Studies and Observations Group in the second half of 1964 (Conboy / Andradé, Spies and Commandos, pp.92/3 and 296 note 9). Although there was probably no more link between those MACV-SOG C-123s and Air America in South Vietnam, there was one in Taiwan, because Air America had contract no. N-(713)55-169-12-64, provisionally terminated on 30 June 65, with the Naval Auxiliary Communication Center of Taipei, and that contract was for C-123 Instruction (Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1) – destined for the Chinese crews who were to fly those C-123s into North Vietnam. Also after January 64, that is after the program had been taken over by MACV-SOG, Air America’s John Lee remained chief instructor of the RoCAF pilots: “Lee flew to Saigon with aircraft in late November 1963. The first mission was launched from Danang on December 4. Other missions followed during the first six months of 1964, mostly into North Vietnam from Danang, and a few from Taiwan to Hainan. Most of the time, however, was spent in training and standby. […] In June 1964, Lee requested transfer to Tachikawa. Ben Coleman took over program. […] He was replaced by Gordon V. Smith. The project terminated shortly thereafter.” (John E. Lee, interview given to William Leary on 27 May 1987, summary preserved at UTD/Leary/B46F10). So the following has not only been added for completeness. During the second half of 1964, the original four C-123s inherited from the CIA were joined by six C-123s modified with improved electronics and advanced Doppler navigation, the first of which had arrived by August 64 together with new air crews who had been trained in Florida: seven Chinese and three Vietnamese crews. This second group of C-123Bs was called Project “Duck Hook”. The Chinese crews were just given a new project designation: While the China Airlines crews who had flown for VIAT had been assigned to project “Nan Hsing” (“Southern Star”), the crews who flew the originally CIA-owned C-123Bs were assigned to project “Nan Hsing No.2”, and the new “Duck Hook” crews were
assigned to project “Nan Hsing No.3” (e-mail dated 5 August 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu). But these new crews and their new C-123s were soon to be struck by misfortune, when on 22 December 64, one of them slammed into Monkey Mountain, 10 kilometers after take-off from Danang airport (Conboy / Andradé, Spies and commandos, pp.91-100). In 1968/9, the remaining C-123Bs were converted to C-123Ks and seem to have come under the 14th Special Operations Wing at Nha Trang (see: http://members.aol.com/SamBlu82/sof.html; Prados, Presidents’ secret wars, pp.255-60; a photo of a “Duck Hook” C-123 can be found at http://www.militaryphotos.net/forums/showthread.php?52378-MACV-SOG/page11). In May 1972, some survivors of both groups of C-123Ks went to the Republic of China Air Force as “0601”, “0602”, “0603”, and “0604”, of which “0602” and “0603” have been positively identified (e-mails dated 28 March 2004 and 4 June 2006, kindly sent to the author by Clarence P. Fu). No records or documents about these C-123Bs of Project “Duck Hook” are available, and the following list is only based on two points, that is on the fact that all of them had similar histories according to the USAF Assignment Records preserved at Maxwell AFB and on the fact that one of the survivors, which went to the Republic of China Air Force later, has been positively identified:

56-4377 (c/n 20261) Fairchild Industries, Hong Kong, to 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, with SF service (special activities aircraft), on 64088 (= 28 March 64); probably with MACV-SOG; believed to be the evaluation aircraft; not listed in late 64; to ZA (Embassy ?) service, Saigon, from SF on 1 February 65 (65032); after overhaul at St. Augustine to combat support (CA) service with 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, on 10 March 65 (65068); regular USAF service in 1966; to 315th SOW, Danang, on 15 June 69 (69166); to 315th TAW, Danang, on 1 January 70 (70001) (AVH-12); based at several bases in South Vietnam in 1970 and 1971, with 315th TAW all the time (AVH-14+16); to TL MAP on 71265 (AVH-16); that is to the South Vietnamese Air Force as “64377/XP” on 22 September 71; to the Khmer Air Force as “56-4377” (?) in September (?) 73; disappeared after taking off from Kompong-Thom, Khmer Republic, on 25 February 74 (Air America’s Phnom Penh Monthly Report for February 74, p.3, in: UTD/CIA/B38F8).

54-641 (c/n 20090) to flyable storage (PR) at Clark on 12 August 64 (64223); SF (special activities aircraft) to 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, on 9 November 64 (64314); to TL (code L) on 8 December 64 (64343), that is transferred to an organization outside USAF; probably with MACV-SOG; after that date, 54-641 was never again listed in the USAF Assignment Records; checked for the 1965-73 period (AVH-3, 5, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19); so the aircraft probably crashed on 27 June 65 (the C-123 that crashed on 31 August 65 is known to have been 56-4356).

54-704 (c/n 20153) to 2AD, SF service, Tan Son Nhut, on 18 June 64 (64168); SF (special activities aircraft) to 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, on 64314 (= 9 November 64); to TL (code L) on 64343 (= 8 December 64); probably with MACV-SOG; not listed in the USAF Assignment Records of 1965 (AVH-3); gained from outside USAF (GI) on 16 May 66 (66136) to the 6200th Material Wing, Saigon, ZA service; to Fairchild, Hagerstown, on 11 September 68 (68253) and converted to C-123K on 15 September 68 (68257); to 315th SOW, Phan Rang on 21 November 68 (68324) (AVH-9); to 14th SOW, Nha Trang, on 30 September 69 (69273) (AVH-11); to 14th SOW, Phan Rang, on 11 January 70 (70011), back to 14th SOW, Nha Trang, on 13 October 70 (70286) (AVH-14); to 483rd TAW, Nha Trang, on 1 September 71 (71244) (AVH-15); to TL, that is transferred to outside USAF, on 1 May 72 (72121) (AVH-17); not mentioned in 1973 (AVH-19); although this aircraft has been reported as having gone to the Royal Thai Air Force as “40704” (AMCAR, 84, December 2000, p.56), this is doubtful, as no
RThAF serial has been found (see http://www.thai-aviation.net); to the Republic of China Air Force in May 72, using call sign “WB”; this aircraft made a forced landing at Tongsha Island; probably it was the one serialled “0602” with the RoCAF (e-mail dated 4 June 2006, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu).

55-4522 (c/n 20183) to flyable storage (PR) at Clark on 64223 (= 12 August 64); SF (special activities aircraft) to 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, on 64314 (= 9 November 64); to code TA (flying accident) on 65044 (= 13 February 65); probably with MACV-SOG; this was probably the aircraft which crashed near Danang on 22 December 64; the same fictive accident date (65044) was also used for C-123B 55-4549, which had been shot down over Cambodia, equally forbidden territory, on 24 October 64, for C-123B 55-4528, which later reemerged as one of the MACV-SOG C-123Bs, and for 56-4383, which was destroyed on 23 July 64, when returning from a flare-drop mission, probably considered to be secret (Hobson, Vietnam air losses, pp.9+11). After that date in February 65, the USAF Assignment Records do no longer mention 55-4522; checked for the 1965-73 period (AVH-3, 5, 9, 11, 14, 16, 19).

56-4355 (c/n 20239) to flyable storage (PR) at Clark on 64223 (= 12 August 64); to 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, CA (combat support) service, in 64; possibly intended for MACV-SOG; but to TA (code A) on 64306 (= 1 November 64), that is flying accident; after that accident, 56-4355 is no longer listed in the USAF Assignment Records; checked for the 1965-71 period (AVH-3, 5, 9, 12, 14, 16); so probably written off due to that accident; indeed, on 1 November 64, a C-123 made an emergency landing on the water near Makung, a town of Penghu Island in the Taiwan Strait; it was flown by an American crew from Vietnam to Taiwan for maintenance; the crew was saved by fishing boats (e-mail dated 5 August 2007, kindly sent by the author by Clarence Fu).

56-4356 (c/n 20240) to flyable storage (PR) at Clark on 64223 (= 12 August 64); SF (special activities aircraft) to 2AD, Tan Son Nhut, on 64314 (= 9 November 64); to TL (code L) on 64343 (= 8 December 64); probably with MACV-SOG; after that 56-4356 does no longer appear in the USAF Assignment Records; checked for the 1965-71 period (AVH-3, 5, 9, 12, 14, 16); so the aircraft probably crashed, maybe on 27 June 65 or on 31 August 65. From rescue reports from the 3rd ARR Group, Sid Nanson adds the following details: ‘This C-123 serial given as ‘4356’ call sign ‘WF’ disappeared on a flight from Nha Trang to Taipei with 9 on board, 31/8/65. Last known position 245 miles East off Da Nang.” (E-mail dated 1 November 2014, kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson).

55-4528 (c/n 20189) to 78th Fighter Wing, Hamilton, on 19 January 63 (63019); not listed in July-December 64 (AVH-1+2); 78th Fighter Wing to code TA (flying accident) on 13 February 65 (65044) (AVH-3); evidently repaired; believed with MACV-SOG as a replacement aircraft for 56-4355; gained from outside USAF (GI) on 16 May 66 (66136) to the 6200th Material Wing, Saigon, ZA service; to Fairchild, Hagerstown, on 27 March 68 (68085), converted to C-123K on 3 April 68 (68092); to 315th ACW, Phan Rang, on 25 May 68 (68144) (AVH-9); not mentioned in 1969 (AVH-11); to 14th SOW, Phan Rang, on 11 January 70 (70011); to 14th SOW, Taichung, on 30 July 70 (70211); to 14th SOW, Phan Rang, on 12 August 70 (70224); to 14th SOW, Nha Trang, on 1 November 70 (70305) (AVH-14); to 483rd TAW, Nha Trang, on 1 September 71 (71244) (AVH-16); transferred at Nha Trang to TL (outside USAF) on 1 May 72 (72121) (e-mail dated 5 April 2004, kindly sent to the author by Arcangelo DiFante of AFHRA, Maxwell AFB); not mentioned in the USAF Assignment Records for 1973 (AVH-19); to “0603” of the Republic of China Air Force, using call sign “WC” (e-mails dated 28 March 2004 and 4 June 2006, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu) on 1 May 72.
Five C-123Bs of the Republic of China Air Force’s 34th Squadron, which was responsible for the secret missions, were reported to have been lost:

- one CIA/RoCAF C-123B crashed in the February 63 to 15 June 1963 period in a training accident on Taiwan (Conboy / Andradé, Spies and Commandos, p.60). This was “4020” alias 55-4551, which crashed into a mountain during a night training flight on Taiwan on 10 May 63, killing 12 people (e-mails dated 14 April 2004 and 29 July 2007, kindly sent to the author by Clarence Fu).

- one MACV-SOG C-123B crashed near Danang on 24 December 64 (Conboy / Andradé, Spies and Commandos, pp.99/100). This is believed to have been 55-4522.

- one C-123B was reported downed by Viet Cong over Saigon on 27 June 1965, killing 10 people aboard (see: “ROCAF Combat losses since 1950”, at: http://www.taiwanairpower.org/history/shootdowns.html); but according to Hobson, Vietnam air losses, p. 23, this aircraft, whose serial is unknown, was not a RoCAF aircraft, but belonged to the USAF’s 310 ACS, 315 ACG, detached to Nha Trang and was involved in some sort of Special Forces mission, killing among others Capt. Carl E. Jackson and SSgt Billie L. Roth; this was a MACV-SOG aircraft, and the place was suspected to be 48P YT 02830 04566, that is near the village of Xom Long Dinh; see also http://members.cox.net/mia/aajackson.htm. The aircraft may have been 54-641.

- one C-123B was reported missing over the South China Sea on 31 August 65, 9 people aboard were missing (see: “ROCAF Combat losses since 1950”, at: http://www.taiwanairpower.org/history/shootdowns.html). The aircraft was 56-4356.

- one C-123B was reported missing over the South China Sea on 22 August 67, 6 people aboard were missing (see: “ROCAF Combat losses since 1950”, at: http://www.taiwanairpower.org/history/shootdowns.html ); possibly this was C-123B 54-657.

IV) Problems:

C-123K Providers RDPL 3 4084 (was at Singapore-Seletar on 26 March 79 [Aviation Letter, no.172, p. 5]), RDPL 3 4088, and RDPL 3 4089 were reported to be with Lao Aviation at least between 1980 and 1987 (JP Airline-fleets international, 1980 to 1987/8 editions), probably former Air America aircraft (see also Air-Britain News, April 81, p. 115).

1 Air America C-123K incurred substantial fuselage/engine damage when it slid off the end of a rain slick runway, probably in 71 or 72, place and date unknown (Accident summary, in: UTD/Hickler/B24F2).