

ROYAL LAO AIR FORCE : CESSNA T-41Ds

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Roundel of the Royal Lao Air Force
(Wikimedia Commons)

The Cessna T-41D “Mescalero” was the military equivalent to the Cessna 172. In 1969, DEPCHIEF, that is “Deputy Chief, Joint United States Military Advisory Group, Thailand”, the US military unit responsible for Military Aid to be supplied to Laos, requested a decrease of the 32 O-1/U-6/U-17 aircraft flown by the Royal Lao Air Force and the *Ravens* “and their replacement by 31 U-17/T-41 aircraft” (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-1972*, p.72). But then, the Chief of Staff, USAF, advised that additional O-1s would be available for Laos, and so, “FY 69 programming of T-41 aircraft to alleviate the O-1 shortage was reprogrammed for FY 71 because of the projected O-1 availability” (Liebchen, p.74). A “significant aircraft program for CY (Calendar Year) 1970 was the funding under the MASF FY (Fiscal Year) 71 Program of six T-41D aircraft. These aircraft had to be produced in CONUS (Continental United States), and were slated for delivery in-country by the close of FY 71. This marked the introduction of this type of aircraft into the RLAf inventory” (Liebchen, p.95). “Rounding out DEPCH aircraft transactions in 1971 were the deliveries of the programmed T-41s. Two of these aircraft arrived at Udorn on 15 and 20 March 1971, respectively, with the final four arriving at Udorn on 26 June. These aircraft were to be used at Savannakhet for pilot training” (Liebchen, p.111). “The in-country training programs were strengthened and enhanced by an increased emphasis on English language training at the Vientiane and Savannakhet schools. Savannakhet also boasted the new T-41 preliminary pilot training program begun in April 1971. Within three months, six T-41 Instructor Pilots and twenty pilot trainees had successfully completed the course” (Liebchen, p.113). On 3 February 72, all 6 T-41s were still active, and so they were on 25 June 72 (Liebchen, pp.115 and 180). As they were maintained by Air America’s facilities at Udorn, they are given in the lists of “Assigned, maintained aircraft”, of which the 1 January 72 (PLNG-UTH-72-005) to 1 June 73 (PLNG-UTH-73-154) editions are preserved in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reels 23/4.

Cessna T-41D 71-1051 c/n R.172-0453 15 March 71 new ex Cessna
Service history: Cessna to TL MAP on 71048 (17 February 71); arrived at Udorn on 15 March 71 (Liebchen, p.111); current at least 1 January 72 to 1 January 73; not current 1 February 73.

Fate: taken over by the Air Force of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) in 1975; seen at Vientiane on 4 October 77 as "051" (Telex no. 01391 dated 5 October 77 sent by the US Embassy, Vientiane, to the Secretary of State, Washington, online at <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=231599&dt=2532&dl=1629> , kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson on 30 December 2014).

Cessna T-41D 71-1052 c/n R.172-0454 20 March 71 new ex Cessna
Service history: Cessna to TL MAP on 71092 (2 April 71); reportedly arrived at Udorn on 20 March 71 (Liebchen, p.111); current at least 1 January 72 to 1 January 73; not current 1 February 73.

Fate: reportedly to the Royal Thai Air Force.

Cessna T-41D 71-1053 c/n R.172-0480 26 June 71 new ex Cessna
Service history: Cessna to TL MAP on 71113 (23 April 71); arrived at Udorn on 26 June 71 (Liebchen, p.111); current at least 1 January 72 to 1 April 72; not current 1 June 72.

Fate: RLAF T-41D "053" was reportedly lost in Laos on 13 April 1972 ("Aircraft All Loss by Tail number", pages 135-287, no date, Folder 15, Box 10, Garnett Bell Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, details kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson on 30 May 2011).

Cessna T-41D 71-1056 c/n R.172-0487 26 June 71 new ex Cessna
Service history: Cessna to TL MAP on 71113 (23 April 71); arrived at Udorn on 26 June 71 (Liebchen, p.111); current at least 1 January 72 to 1 January 73; not current 1 February 73

Fate: taken over by the Air Force of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) in 1975; seen at Vientiane on 4 October 77 as "056" (Telex no. 01391 dated 5 October 77 sent by the US Embassy, Vientiane, to the Secretary of State, Washington, online at <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=231599&dt=2532&dl=1629> , kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson on 30 December 2014).

Cessna T-41D 71-1057 c/n R.172-0488 26 June 71 new ex Cessna
Service history: Cessna to TL MAP on 71113 (23 April 71); arrived at Udorn on 26 June 71 (Liebchen, p.111); current at least 1 January 72 to 1 April 72; not current 1 June 72.

Fate: RLAF T-41D "057" was reportedly lost in Laos on 11 May 1972 ("Aircraft All Loss by Tail number", pages 135-287, no date, Folder 15, Box 10, Garnett Bell Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, details kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson on 30 May 2011).

Cessna T-41D 71-1058 c/n R.172-0489 26 June 71 new ex Cessna
Service history: Cessna to TL MAP on 71113 (23 April 71); arrived at Udorn on 26 June 71 (Liebchen, p.111); current at least 1 January 72 to 1 January 73; not current 1 February 73.

Fate: reportedly to the Royal Thai Air Force.

Cessna T-41D 67-15066 c/n R.172-0067 July 72
Service history: current at least 1 July 72 to 1 January 73; not current 1 February 73.

Fate: ?

Cessna T-41D 67-15067 c/n R.172-0068 July 72
Service history: current at least 1 July 72; not current 1 August 72.

Fate: RLAF T-41D "15067" was reportedly lost in Laos on 20 July 1972 ("Aircraft All Loss by Tail number", pages 135-287, no date, Folder 15, Box 10, Garnett Bell Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, details kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson on

30 May 2011).

Cessna T-41D 67-15163 c/n R.172-0164 Nov.72

Service history: current 1 November 72 to 1 January 73; not current 1 February 73; taken over by the Air Force of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) in 1975; seen at Vientiane on 4 October 77 as "163" (Telex no. 01391 dated 5 October 77 sent by the US Embassy, Vientiane, to the Secretary of State, Washington, online at <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=231599&dt=2532&dl=1629> , kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson on 30 December 2014); noted at *Musée de l Armée Populaire*, Vientiane, Laos, in the summer of 2003 (see the photo at http://www.acig.info/UserFiles/File/Indochina/Laos_1948_1989_Part_3/laf_t-41b_6715163_i_toperczer.jpg). A more recent photo can be found at <http://www.abpic.co.uk/results.php?q=Laos+T-41&fields=all&sort=latest&limit=10> .

Cessna T-41D 67-15166 c/n R.172-0167 Nov.72

Service history: current 1 November 72 to 1 January 73; not current 1 February 73.

Fate: ?

Former RLAf T-41Ds "043" and "044" were seen at Vientiane on 4 October 77 in the colors of the Air Force of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) (Telex no. 01391 dated 5 October 77 sent by the US Embassy, Vientiane, to the Secretary of State, Washington, online at <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=231599&dt=2532&dl=1629> , kindly sent to the author by Sid Nanson on 30 December 2014), but their identities are unknown.