

AIR AMERICA: CESSNA O-1s by Dr. Joe F. Leeker

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RLAF O-1F “2776”, taken by Tom Lum, probably at Udorn in the early seventies (photo no.VA024820, No Date, Allen Cates Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, with kind permission from Steve Maxner)

This file only lists the O-1s that are known to have been flown by Air America pilots. For all O-1s used in Laos, including those flown by pilots of the Royal Lao Air Force and by the *Ravens*, see my file *RLAF (and Ravens) O-1s* at http://www.utdallas.edu/library/specialcollections/hac/cataam/Leeker/aircraft/RLAF_%20O1s.pdf .

The types of missions flown by the O-1s:

Cessna O-1s “Bird Dog”, formerly Cessna L-19As (the military version of the single-engined Cessna 305As), were mentioned by Robbins, *Air America*, p. 108, as being a type of aircraft flown by Air America. But those aircraft were not owned by or bailed to Air America, as no official Air America inventory mentions them. Some of the O-1s were part of the Military Assistance Program to Laos, and in the mid-sixties one or two were occasionally flown by Air America pilots. Since 1966, however, those O-1s were flown by the *Ravens*, that is by sheep-dipped USAF personnel who used them as Forward Air Controllers from their bases at one of the five Lao Air Operations Centers at Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Long Tieng, Savannakhet, and Pakse (Castle, *At war*, pp. 86/7). Most of these O-1s were flown under the control of AIRA, that is of the U.S. Air Attaché, Laos. Since 1968, all *Raven* O-1s were periodically maintained by Air America’s Udorn facility (Robbins, *Ravens*, pp. 77/8), so that they appear on Air America’s “List of assigned / maintained aircraft at Udorn” (as in the list of 1 January 72, in: UTD/Bisson/B5, microfilm reel no.24). Those O-1s mostly – but not

always – used a four-digit abbreviation of their USAF serial. However, Air America’s “List of assigned / maintained aircraft at Udorn” always mentions the complete USAF serial, so that without photographic evidence it cannot be determined in which way the serial was really painted on the aircraft; this explains the entry “**serial as borne not documented**” which has been added in some cases. Log books often only mention the last three digits of a Raven aircraft, and when its identity cannot be confirmed from other documents, the entry “**complete serial not documented**” has been added.

Statistics according to official Air America documents:

As the O-1s were not part of Air America’s fleet, there are no statistics.

The individual aircraft histories of O-1s flown by Air America pilots:

Type	registration / serial	c/n (msn)	date acquired	origin
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Cessna O-1A	“677”	?	59?	USAF ?
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(complete serial not documented)

Service history: flown by Air America pilot Richard B. Crafts out of Udorn on 22 December 65 (Log book of Richard Crafts, in: UTD/Leary/B44F6); the aircraft could be 50-1677 or 51-12677, as 55-4677 and 56-2677 were O-1Ds and 51-4677 flew in Japan.

Fate: ?; not current on 1 April 72 (List of assigned / maintained aircraft as of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); possibly one of the 12 RLAF O-1E/Gs transferred to the Vietnamese Air Force in 1971 (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-1972*, p.107).

Cessna O-1A	“556”	?	59?	USAF ?
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(complete serial not documented)

Service history: flown by Air America pilot Richard B. Crafts out of Udorn on 24, 27, and 28 December 65 (Log book of Richard Crafts, in: UTD/Leary/B44F6); the aircraft could be 50-1556, 51-4556 or 51-12556.

Fate: ?; not current on 1 April 72 (List of assigned / maintained aircraft as of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); possibly one of the 12 RLAF O-1E/Gs transferred to the Vietnamese Air Force in 1971 (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-1972*, p.107).

Cessna O-1F	“1861”	?	59?	?
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Service history: flown by Air America pilot Lewis H. Maxwell on 20 February 66 (Log book of L. H. Maxwell, in: UTD/Maxwell/B1F6).

Fate: ?; not current on 1 April 72 (List of assigned / maintained aircraft as of 1 April 72, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2); possibly one of the 12 RLAF O-1E/Gs transferred to the Vietnamese Air Force in 1971 (Liebchen, *MAP Aid to Laos 1959-1972*, p.107).