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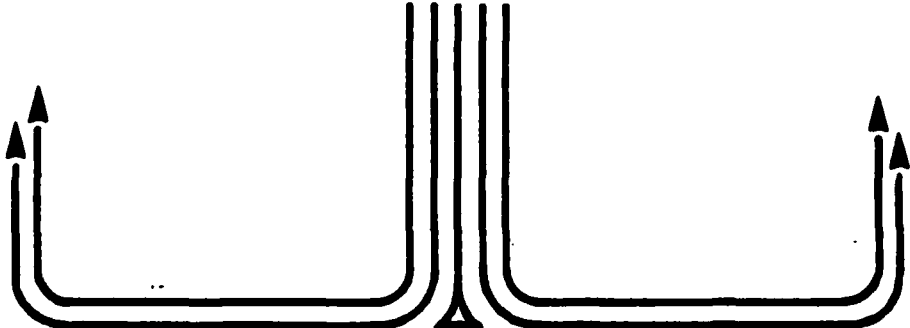
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STUDENT REPORT

THE 834th AIR DIVISION IN VIETNAM
1966 - 1971
MAJOR RALPH F. HOOKER 86-1155
"insights into tomorrow"

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
requirements for graduation.

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PREFACE

The following is a brief operational history of the 834th Air Division spanning the Vietnam years from 1966 through 1971. Chapter one describes the mission of the division and the organization to include geographic locations of division assets. Chapter two follows with the roles and accomplishments of the division through the intense fighting of 1967 through the enemy Tet Offensive of 1968. Next, chapter three describes the wind down of American airlift operations in Southeast Asia, the interruption of the wind down by the Lam Son 719 campaign, and continues with the training of the Vietnamese so the airlift mission can be turned over to them. Chapter three closes with the inactivation of the 834th Air Division. Chapter four closes this history by discussing the lessons learned from the use of tactical airlift in the Vietnam conflict to include the innovative actions of the 834th. The chapter also outlines the needs of tactical airlift in the future. The reader will find the 834th played an enormous role in the conflict and served its country in an exceptional manner.

I want to thank the staff of the USAF Historical Research Center, Maxwell AFB, Alabama, for their superb assistance throughout my research. I also appreciate the outstanding support and advice from my ACSC faculty advisor.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Ralph F. Hooker was born in Corsicana, Texas, on February 20, 1951. He received a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Baylor University and also hold a Master of Arts degree in business, and also in Human Relations, both from Webster College. He received his commission through Air Force ROTC in 1973 and enrolled in pilot training the same year. He has flown the T-37, T-38, and C-141A and B models. Most recently, he served as a Pacific Airlift Control Center duty officer where he managed all tactical, strategic, and commercial contract airlift in the Pacific Theater. Major Hooker is presently attending Air Command and Staff College, class of 1986.

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Introduction

BACKGROUND

American involvement in tactical airlift in Vietnam started in the mid-1950s when American airlift specialists advised the French and South Vietnamese in airlift techniques (1:v). The first American airlift unit of C-47 aircraft arrived in 1961 and was replaced by C-123 aircraft in 1962 (1:47,86). As American involvement increased in 1965, C-130 aircraft began in-country tactical airlift operations (1:169). This expansion of airlift activity in Vietnam strained the present airlift system requiring reform (1:169). This reform resulted in the creation of the 834th Airlift Division, the agency for future airlift management in the Republic of Vietnam (1:169).

THE BEGINNING

To record the history of the 834th Air Division, it is important to first discuss the reason for activating the division. The reason for creating the division was to provide centralized command and control of all American airlift forces supporting Free World Military Assistance (FWMA) forces within the Republic of Vietnam (RV) (2:1). The following chain of events describes the decision evolution resulting in the activation of the 834th Air Division.

Because of growing commitments by "Free World" forces, a special USAF team evaluated airlift procedures in the Pacific Command (PACOM). The team felt central control of in-country airlift assets was essential to meet the growing commitments of the conflict (2:1). This 1965 report coincided with a letter from Seventh Air Force (7AF) commander, Lt. General Joseph H. Moore to Commander-in-Chief Pacific Air Forces (CINCPACAF), General Hunter Harris proposing the same idea (2:2). The idea of centralized control was approved by both USAF and PACAF in May 1966 (2:2).

During this same time period, the Army and Air Force chiefs of staff agreed to transfer Army (CV-2) Caribou aircraft to the Air Force thus consolidating all tactical airlift support under Air Force control (1:353). This increase in Air Force jurisdiction strengthened the need for an in-country airlift control agency.

As a result of these decisions, the 834th Air Division, Tactical Air Command (TAC) transferred from a "paper status" at England Air Force Base, Louisiana to an active status at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam on October 15, 1966 (7:8).

Chapter One will begin in October 1966 upon activation of the division. It will delve into the division's first year of existence and discuss the formulation of its mission objectives and explain the organization of airlift assets in Vietnam.

Chapter One

THE NEW DIVISION

MISSION

The overall mission of the newly formed 834th Air Division was described in 7th Air Force directives published in November 1966 (2:10). It charged the air division commander to accomplish airlift duties for "7th Air Force" in support of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) (2:10). These duties were to be monitored by two offices in 7th Air Force, the Combat Operations Center (COC) and the Traffic Management Agency (TMA) (2:10).

More specifically, the 7th Air Force directive stated, the 834th would perform airlift support of MACV including the following (2:10):

1. Intratheater airlift of Free World Forces/Cargo supporting the Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV).
2. Airland/airdrop missions in support of combat units.
3. Establishment of an Air Line of Communications (ALOC) resupply system for combat units.
4. Airborne defoliation operations.
5. Special airlift operations in support of

the Military Assistance Programs.

6. Collect and disseminate intelligence information.

The 834th commander was also tasked to establish and operate air terminals throughout Vietnam and maintain an Airlift Control Center (ALCC) for the purpose of directing and monitoring the operation of the Southeast Asia Airlift System (2:10).

ORGANIZATION

To carry out these tasks, the commander of the 834th Air Division gained 7th Air Force assets to organize. The operational assets were TDY C-130 aircraft from the 315th Air Division from Japan, C-123 aircraft already assigned in Vietnam, and the Caribou aircraft transitioning from Army to Air Force control. The task of organizing the 834th Air Division belonged to its first commander Brigadier General William G. Moore.

The first act of organization was the assignment of theater owned C-123 aircraft operations to 834th Air Division (AD) control (2:11). C-123 operations of the 315th Air Commando Wing at Tan Son Nhut was unaffected except for unit assignment to the division (2:11). The wing was made up of five Air Commando Squadrons consisting of 64 C-123B and 18 UC-123 Provider aircraft assigned throughout the Republic of Vietnam (2:37).

The 64 general purpose airlift C-123's were spread between four Air Commando Squadrons (ACS); the 19th and 309th ACS at Tan Son Nhut, the 310th ACS at Nha Trang, and the 311th ACS at Da

Nang. This assignment scheme allowed rapid response airlift for the Republic of Vietnam from Tan Son Nhut in the far south and from Da Nang in the far north. (2:12)

The four general cargo squadrons were accompanied by one squadron of 18 UC-123 special purpose aircraft configured for delivery of herbicides to accomplish defoliation missions. This squadron, designated as the 12th ACS, was located at Bien Hoa Air Base near Saigon (2:12). Along with the C-123 force, the 834th Air Division assumed command of the TDY C-130 forces performing tactical airlift within the Republic of Vietnam (2:33). In October 1966, the C-130 force consisted of 44 aircraft on a 15 day rotation to the Republic of Vietnam. The TDY aircraft provided by the 315th Air Division, Japan, were located at three operational locations; Cam Ranh Bay, Tan Son Nhut, and Nha Trang (2:18).

The 834th organization included approximately 975 personnel, of which all but sixty were in TDY status (2:19). The personnel rotated at intervals depending on tactical necessity and Tactical Air Command requirements (2:19). The C-130's and crews were bedded down at different locations based on aircraft model (2:19). This beddown plan resulted in 13 C-130A models from Naha, Okinawa stationed at Cam Ranh Bay, 23 C-130B's from Clark/Mactan, Republic of the Philippines stationed at Tan Son Nhut, and eight C-130E models from Ching Chaun Kang, Taiwan stationed at Nha Trang (2:19).

The joint contingent of C-123 and C-130 aircraft was to

supply Air Force airlift support for friendly forces until the C-7A Caribou entered the force on 1 January 1967. In the meantime, 7th Air Force already had the organizational plan to integrate the Caribou force into the 834th AD and Air Force airlift system (2:12). This plan was titled PACAF Programmed Action Directive (PAD) 67-5 (2:12).

PACAF Programmed Action Directive (PAD) 67-5, dated 1 October 1966 governed the organization of and activation of the 483d Troop Carrier Wing (TCW) along with six Troop Carrier Squadrons (TCS) to carry out the Air Force C-7A operations in Vietnam (2:12). The 483d Troop Carrier Wing was activated under the control of the 834th Air Division on 15 October 1966 at Cam Ranh Bay, RVN (1:355). PAD 67-5 also directed the six squadrons to move from Army locations to Air Force installations which caused controversy between the Army and Air Force (1:355). The Army felt this relocation of the Caribous would reduce Army airlift support (1:355). The Air Force, on the other hand, felt the C-7 operation would be more efficient logistically by reducing the number of operating locations (1:355). The issue was resolved with Secretary of Defense, McNamara's decision to base the C-7's at Air Force, not Army locations (1:355).

In a compromising move, the 834th assigned the squadrons to Air Force bases close enough to Army locations to offer the responsiveness needed (1:355). The resulting basing plan placed two squadrons each at Cam Ranh Bay, Uung Tau, and Phu Cat (2:13). Each squadron was assigned 16 aircraft and 24 crews to

carry out the mission (1:355). Of the 96 total aircraft, 15 were designated to operate out of three forward operating locations at Da Nang, Pleiku, and Can Tho (2:13). These three locations possessed five, six, and four aircraft respectively (2:13).

This organization of the 834th Air Division was in place in May of 1967 and remained virtually unchanged for the remainder of 834th's role in the war (1:--,3:--). Much of the great success discussed in the following chapters can be contributed to the efficient organization and central command and control of tactical airlift provided by the 834th Air Division.

Chapter Two

THE WAR, 1967 - 1968

TACTICAL AIRLIFT. "THE NEW ROLE

The units of the 834th Air Division were quite successful in delivering cargo and passengers since entering the war in the early 60's, but this role of general airlift was to be expanded. The most drastic change in the role of tactical airlift would be the use of airlift aircraft as an "offensive weapon" (3:3). The test of this concept began on April 7, 1967 when the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) directed missions for the purpose of "area denial", known as "Inferno" missions (3:3).

The purpose of "Inferno" was to deny enemy forces, areas of terrain in which to hide (3:3). The plan called for C-130 aircraft to drop 55 gallon drums of diesel and jet fuel, which, after rupturing on impact, were ignited by a fighter initiated napalm airstrike (3:3-4). This MACV directed operation became known as "Banish Beach", and received praise from senior ground forces commanders such as the Commanding General (CG), 9th Infantry Division. Likewise, the operation generated requests from others, such as the 1st Marine Division at Danang (3:4).

The concept was later modified to include dropping smoke

grenades along with the drums, negating the need for a separate napalm airstrike to ignite the fuel (3:4). "Banish Beach" lasted from 7 April to 14 August 1968 involving 17 missions and 227 sorties (of which one mission contained 207 sorties), and dropped 770,390 gallons of fuel (1:393,3:5). Because the missions never produced significant military advantage, the 834th Air Division and 7th Air Force commanders fought to end the program (1:393). The Air Force, also felt the use of airlift for "Banish Beach" consumed needed aircraft for daily operations creating a large backlog of cargo (1:393). As a result, the program was formally terminated in January 1969 (1:393).

Along with the area denial missions, tactical airlift played a large role in chemical warfare (1:389). UC-123 aircraft had been active in defoliation operations since 1961 under the operational name "Ranch Hand" (1:45). "Ranch Hand" consisted of specially modified C-123 aircraft dispensing herbicide over areas of enemy operations to kill the foliage thus denying the enemy operationally necessary shelter (1:389). This operation received great emphasis throughout most of the the war as demonstrated by 834th Air Division statistics of 31 May 1968 (3:--). During the month of May 1968 alone, the 12th Air Commando Squadron set a seven year defoliation record by dispensing 575,105 gallons of herbicide (3:--). This record was achieved by 672 defoliation sorties, which was also an all time record (3:--). Although "Ranch Hand" was the most prominent

chemical warfare mission, tactical airlift was tested on several other chemical missions.

Under "Project Commando Lava" in 1967, C-130 aircraft dropped 120 tons of soil destabilization chemicals on roads used by the enemy in an attempt to cause heavy mud when it rained (1:389). However, reconnaissance observed the enemy still using the roads by spreading gravel or covering the roads with bamboo (1:389). Another chemical warfare project in 1968, had C-123 and C-130 aircraft drop tear gas to stop enemy infiltration (1:389). The chemicals were dropped in 55 gallon drums set to detonate at ground level to disperse the gas (1:389). The resulting dispersal proved uneven and noneffective (1:389). Besides chemical warfare, tactical airlift moved into the bombing role on several occasions (1:389).

The 834th Air Division undertook this new role in October 1968 under "Project Commando Vault" which was a program to create an instant helicopter landing zone (HLZ) or fire support base (1:393,4:25). The plan called for a C-130 to drop a five-ton, M-121 bomb by parachute extraction with planned detonation above ground (1:393). The above ground blast maximized lateral blast force while minimizing cratering and instantly cleared an area sixty meters in diameter (4:25). The program expanded in March 1969 with introduction of a 15,000-pound weapon, the BLU-82 (1:394). The increased power of the BLU-82, when detonated four feet above the ground, created a clearing of 260 feet in diameter (1:394). Overall, 834th

C-130's dropped over two hundred M-121 and 250 BLU-82 bombs from 1968 through 1971 within Vietnam and Cambodia (1:394). Along with the new tactical weapon delivery role, the 834th Air Division remained heavily involved with its primary mission of airlifting cargo and passengers.

PERFORMING THE AIRLIFT ROLE

Along with the normal cargo resupply mission, the 834th maintained a high rate of medical evacuation missions transporting the sick and wounded in Vietnam. 834th aircraft transported patients between hospitals in Vietnam and to pickup points for overseas evacuation (1:397). All American hospitals, except for a few around Saigon, were located at C-130 airstrips making them readily available to 834th airlift support (1:397). In June 1967 alone, the 834th Air Division moved over 7,000 patients between points in Vietnam, 3,000 by C-130 and 2,000 by C-123 and C-7 aircraft (1:397-398).

The expansion of roles assumed by the 834th Air Division and the already heavy general airlift requirements were at times difficult to support with limited resources. This situation became even more challenging to manage because of an increased enemy offensive posture in 1968. The most striking example of this challenge came during the Khe Sanh Campaign during the early stages of the enemy Tet Offensive of 1968.

The Khe Sanh offensive was one of the best examples of the flexibility and responsiveness of the 834th Air Division forces which made possible an allied victory (3:5,1:295). Khe Sanh

presented two major obstacles to the 834th mission: first, poor weather conditions such as low visibility made landing and airdrop difficult to impossible to perform; and second, the enemy applied intense firepower to both the airfield and aircraft, in order to halt airlift resupply (1:295). The 834th Air Division responded by using its old techniques and assets in new and inventive ways (1:295). This initiative was later responsible for the development and actual use of six new airdrop or air delivery systems (3:5). These new systems included; ground controlled radar (GCA), airborne radar approach (ARA), adverse weather aerial delivery system (AWADS), ground radar aerial delivery system (GRADS), low altitude parachute extraction system (LAPES), and ground proximity extraction system (GPES) (3:5).

At the beginning of the campaign, the North Vietnamese had an estimated strength of 20,000 men (two divisions) while the allied Army and Marine contingent numbered 6,000 (3:6). On 20 January 1968, the President directed the Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV) to hold Khe Sanh at all costs (3:6). The airlift to Khe Sanh had begun in early January and would last for seventy-eight days (1:297,3:6). Under heavy enemy fire and with limited F-4 airstrike protection, the 834th supplied Khe Sanh with 3600 tons of supplies in the month of January (1:299). This rate was accomplished by landing both C-130 and C-123 aircraft at Khe Sahn; but landing at Khe Sahn would soon become impossible.

Because of enemy fire and deterioration of the runway from enemy mortar attacks, the 834th C-130's stopped landing operations at Khe Sanh on 12 February and began resupplying by use of airdrop operations beginning on 13 February (1:302-303). With C-130's having only airdrop capability, the weather played an important factor (1:303). The division invented new airdrop techniques in order to operate within the weather constraints. Because of the innovative airdrop methods listed earlier, the 834th resupplied Khe Sanh throughout the remainder of the campaign which ended on April 15, 1968 (1:311-314).

Overall, 834th units delivered 12,430 tons of supplies on 1,128 missions with relatively few losses (1:315). During the operation, three C-123 aircraft were destroyed, 11 C-130's and four C-123's damaged, and 49 men from 834th units were killed in action (1:315,3:7). General G. C. Westmoreland, COMUSMACV, summed up the 834th's efforts when he said: "Never have the requirements for tactical airlift been made more challenging or the responses more gratifying" (3:7). The dramatic lessons learned at Khe Sanh were only a glimpse of the airlift buildup needed to face the demands of the Tet Offensive of 1968.

Because of the heavy commitment of airlift in 1968, CINCPAC requested more aircraft to support Vietnam (1:329). The fleet was increased in-country with the deployment of an additional sixteen C-130 aircraft from Tachikawa, Japan to Cam Ranh Bay in the second week of February (1:329). This influx of airlift put an additional burden on an already strained airlift system

(1:329). Even with a total C-130 force of ninety-six, the backlogs of routine cargo mounted and only emergency airlift requests had a chance of being delivered (1:328). The 834th Air Division converted the UC-123 from defoliation operations to transport duties in an attempt to increase airlift capability (1:329).

The C-123 force already in the airlift role did their part by increasing daily missions to 49 rather than the normal 38 (1:329). Another attempt to manage airlift efficiently came when the 834th increased night cargo missions for the C-130 fleet to move additional cargo and reduce daylight traffic (1:329). These and other innovative ideas by the 834th Air Division to react to the Tet Offensive surge led to impressive tonnage totals and overall customer support (1:330). The tonnage hauled figure went from 3,740 tons-per-day in January to 4,470 tons-per-day in March (1:330). This was all done with modest losses on the part of the 834th.

During February, 84 aircraft were hit by enemy ground fire (1:330). This was more than double the January figures (1:330). Of the incidents, 42 were C-130's, 33 were C-123's and nine were C-7 Caribous (1:330). Only one C-130 was shot down during February (1:330). These figures become even more impressive when compared to the extremely high workload of airlift forces. In March 1968, 834th Air Division C-130's flew a record high 14,300 sorties while the C-123's flew a record 9,500 sorties in the same month (1:330).

General Westmoreland again praised the tactical airlift force for their success during Tet (1:330). His comments specifically cited the movement of combat units, praising the ability of airlift to operate when surface lines of communication were disrupted (1:330). In speaking of airlift professionalism he stated: "The classical role of tactical airlift has been admirably performed in its truest sense" (1:330).

Tet, and operations immediately following Tet, were the most costly for airlift during the war (1:351). Eleven C-130's and five C-123's were lost which amounted to ten percent of the in-country airlift capacity (1:351). This brought the war loss totals to 38 C-130's and the same number of C-123's in actions throughout Vietnam and Thailand (1:351). A total of 134 airlift crewmembers were killed or missing in action (1:351). With the end of Tet, American leaders reconsidered our national strategy in Vietnam and began moves to de-Americanize the war and move for peace (1:347).

With this change in strategy, tactical airlift in Vietnam changed. The 834th Air Division began winding down their airlift duties. Other than one additional large airlift operation, this wind down continued for the remainder of the war in Southeast Asia.

Chapter Three

THE FINAL YEAR

THE WIND DOWN

The wind down of cargo requirements after the Tet Offensive along with the changing strategy of American involvement led to reorganization within the 834th Air Division. The first reorganization effort was within the C-7 Caribou force (S:5).

In January 1970, the 459th Tactical Airlift Squadron at Phu Cat became the first C-7 squadron cited for inactivation with a target date of 30 June 1970 (S:5). This squadron was selected because of attrition of its assets throughout the war (S:5). Its remaining assets were to be assigned to the remaining five Caribou squadrons (S:5). Two other squadrons, the 535th and 536th, were relocated by the 834th upon direction of PACAF to Cam Ranh Bay. The squadron move was directed politically because the Army wind down called for movement of the Army unit from Uung Tau, forcing 7th Air Force to assume base support responsibility because of C-7 presence (S:6). This relocation placed four of the five active Caribou squadrons at Cam Ranh Bay (S:6). The wind down of airlift not only affected the C-7 force, but involved all airlift belonging to the 834th.

The next reorganizational move affected C-123 units. In

April 1970, the 309th Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS) was given a target date of FY71 for inactivation (5:7). This announcement was accompanied with the actual inactivation of the 12th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) with its aircraft being moved to the 310th Tactical Airlift Squadron at Phang Rang (5:7). The 12th Special Operations Squadron was earmarked for inactivation for several reasons (5:7). The major reason stemmed from its mission. The defoliation operations of the 12th SOS had become politically unpopular with the American public (5:7). This was accompanied by procurement funds being reduced from twenty-seven million to three million dollars as a result of total funding cuts in support of the war (5:7). The Joint Chiefs of Staff decision to halt the use of primary "orange" herbicide also reduced the need for the squadron (5:7). The increased use of substitute "white" herbicide quickly reduced the stock to reserve levels, thus ending the mission of the 12th SOS (5:7).

The C-130 reduction within the Pacific area reduced the Vietnam contingent by two squadrons, but only temporarily. The reduction of C-130 assets proved too severe to cover the passenger and cargo requirements in Vietnam. PACAF, therefore sent additional aircraft to Vietnam to replace the two squadrons which were sent home.

Even though the tonnage airlifted in the six months after Tet increased, the following eighteen month totals decreased by 26.3%, which showed the wind down in Vietnam as reality (5:19). This trend showed itself in both tonnage and passengers

airlifted (5:19-20). Although there was a downward trend, the 834th still had a heavy workload. In fact, the statistics for airdrop sorties increased from July 1969 through June 1970 and emergency sorties increased from January through June 1970 (5:20). This was a result of three major campaigns in the Republic of Vietnam and the Cambodian campaign in the spring of 1970 (5:28-33).

The first major engagement after Tet came in March 1969 (5:28). A Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) camp came under attack at Dak Seang on the night of the 31st (5:29). The seige lasted two months in which the 834th Air Division flew 119 airdrop sorties in seven days supplying over 229 tons of ammunition, rations, mines, water, medical supplies, and general cargo (5:29). This was followed by another attack on a CIDG camp at Ben Het, RVN (5:28). This seige was as intense as Khe Sahn and lasted two months. 834th crews flew 120 sorties, delivering approximately 294 tons of supplies with no loss of aircraft and with only minor injuries to three crewmembers (5:28). The 834th was not as lucky, however, at the seige of Dak Pek during the same period. In this resupply operation, 167 sorties flew in approximately 409 tons of supplies, but had 21 aircraft damaged by enemy fire and lost three aircraft with nine crewmembers killed (5:29-30).

The Dak Pek operation took place at the same as the Cambodian Operation of 30 April - 30 June 1970 in which the 834th tested all major areas of airlift activities ranging from rapid

resupply, to personnel evacuation of wounded and refugees, to Commando Vault missions in support of Army helicopter operations (5:30).

This operation increased the sortie rate for the 834th five times the normal rate (5:31). To handle the operation, the 834th requested and received 13 additional C-130 aircraft from off shore locations (5:31). The operation encompassed 24 forward operating locations in Vietnam and Cambodia and accounted for a two month delivery of 75,000 passengers and 49,600 tons of cargo, and the evacuation of 3,300 Cambodian refugees (1:502,5:32).

After the initial operation ending 30 June 1970, the 834th handed the operation over to the Vietnamese Air Force while the division settled back into the routine airlift operations in the Republic of Vietnam (1:507). This would remain in effect throughout the remainder of 1970 and into 1971. This lull in the action only lasted eight months, at which time the 834th embarked on the last large US Air Force tactical airlift operation of the war. In January 1971, allied troops began the Lam Son 719 campaign, with the objective of cutting off the flow of enemy troops, arms and supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This trail was the primary route from North Vietnam into southern Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam (6:41).

The deployment phase ran from 26 January through 6 February in which time the 834th airlifted the Vietnamese Contingency Force from Tan Son Nhut to the Laotian border (6:44). In this

seven days period, the division flew 240 sorties, moving 9,281 Vietnamese troops and 68.1 tons of cargo (6:44). Once the troops were deployed on 6 February, the division began resupply operations for the employment phase which lasted until 27 March (6:54). During this phase, 2,047 sorties delivered 21,219 tons and 13,717 passengers to combat (6:54). The division then transitioned to the withdrawal phase.

The withdrawal of troops began on 28 March and continued through 8 April with the 834th flying 195 sorties moving 1,170.9 tons of cargo and 9,659 passengers (6:58). The overall mission figures were the highest since the Tet Offensive of 1968 and added another great success to the credit of the 834th (6:ix). After Lam Son, the division undertook its final mission, that of Vietnamizing the tactical airlift mission in Southeast Asia.

The division tasked the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing, Tan Son Nhut to train Vietnamese crewmembers in the C-123 aircraft as part of Vietnamese Air Force Improvement and Modernization Program (6:26). The wing set up the training program for an initial cadre of two Vietnamese C-123 squadrons (6:26). The training program was setup in two areas, one for training aircrew members and another area for training maintenance crews. The initial class consisted of 238 aircrew trainees and 143 maintenance trainees (6:26). In conjunction with the training of Vietnamese personnel, the division was busy phasing out the airlift force under its command. This phase of the division operation would last from April to December 1971 (6:--).

THE END

On April 15, 1971, the 19th Tactical Airlift Squadron began flying fewer missions and began transferring its C-123's to the Vietnamese Air Force's 421st Transport Squadron (6:74). Final transfer of assets and inactivation of the squadron was completed on May 8, 1971. The division, in turn, began decreasing its personnel after Lam Son 719 and by June 1971 had achieved a 20% reduction in force (6:75). During the same time, the C-130 airlift force was reduced from 58 to 39 aircraft (6:75). Most of the C-7 force was transferred to the CONUS while some were given to the Vietnamese Air Force (7:10).

By the time these actions were taking place, cargo movements had decreased to the point that 7th Air Force felt there was no further need for a separate airlift manager in Vietnam (7:10). As a result, the last few months of the divisions tenure in Vietnam was spent in transitioning combat airlift control to the "Directorate of Airlift" in 7th Air Force's Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations office (7:10). After accomplishing this transfer on December 1, 1971, the 834th Air Division was inactivated thus ending a brilliant tour in Vietnam (7:10).

The story of the 834th Air Division cannot end with inactivation. The 834th taught us many lessons about tactical airlift, and through their many contributions, changed many concepts for the future. These lessons learned deserve noting.

Chapter Four

LESSONS LEARNED

We learned many lessons about Tactical Airlift during Vietnam which changed the airlift concepts for the future. The 834th Air Division taught us many of these lessons. Probably the most important of these was the proper way to manage airlift by centralizing the command and control under one manager.

Prior to 1967, there existed two airlift systems within Vietnam. The Army had their own C-7 airlift system which only served them, and the Air Force had their system of C-123 and C-130 aircraft which served all allied forces. This often resulted in dual mission accomplishment and little cohesiveness of airlift operations. This lack of flexibility became inappropriate as the war escalated. With the activation of the 834th Air Division and development of a single airlift agency, this problem was solved. The 834th created the common user airlift force and served all forces more efficiently and with better service for all. This system gave birth to the system which is in effect today.

The operation in Vietnam also established the necessity for all airlift forces to be under one command to unite all the functions of airlift, both strategic and tactical. Thus, all airlift resources were assigned to the Military Airlift Command

following the war. Technology developed by the 834th, also changed tactical airlift for the future.

The operation at Khe Sanh exposed problems to tactical resupply which made way for development of "blind" airdrop procedures such as ground radar guided airdrop and adverse weather delivery systems. These procedures revolutionized the flexibility of tactical airlift and are used today. Another aspect of flexibility was the use of tactical airlift in the tactical assault role.

The use of airlift for area denial and to deliver ordnances was used with great success in Vietnam. Airlift successfully assumed roles which before were solely in the realm of tactical fighter aircraft such as bomb delivery and napalm delivery. With greater range and payload capability, airlift aircraft proved, in many cases, a good substitute for fighters.

Another valuable lesson learned from Vietnam was the need for improved airlift capability. The war of attrition and limited involvement put tremendous strain on our airlift system. Because of the mobility required in this type of war, we learned our forties and fifties technology needed updating. The vast number of troop movements and the constant flying into austere field conditions caused many maintenance problems on our old fleet. The advances in surface-to-air defenses used by the enemy in Vietnam, caused airlift planners to begin careful modernization planning. As a result, new prototype tactical airlift aircraft are being considered. The new airlift aircraft

must be large enough to handle any transportable user equipment and large troop loads. The aircraft must be maintainable and able to fly into unimproved fields under the most hazardous conditions of weather. Thus, the C-17 aircraft is being developed based on lessons learned in Vietnam.

The 834th Air Division also saw a problem with the priority system of cargo movement. It constantly tried to prioritize cargo by importance, ignoring service rivalries. It learned quickly that airlift shortages could be overcome by providing efficient airlift rather than volume airlift. The airlift users complained of the priority system at first, but later felt the airlift contribution to the war was very effective. The 834th Air Division created a system of priorities which worked well in Vietnam and was the basis for the present airlift priority system.

The really eye-opening lesson to come out of Vietnam in the field of airlift was the importance of airlift in modern warfare. The mobility required cannot always be accomplished over the road because of time and vulnerability of ground lines of communication. Vietnam showed the importance of air lines of communication which are less vulnerable and provide the flexibility required to move large concentrations of force efficiently, quickly, and over long distances.

In summary, the people of the 834th Air Division accomplished one of the most massive tactical airlift efforts in history under difficult and often dangerous conditions. They modernized tactical airlift with many innovative concepts and

new techniques never tried before. They accomplished their mission through imagination, dedication, and bravery in the highest tradition of the United States Air Force. The men and women who served in the 834th Air Division in Vietnam should be proud of their accomplishments as we Americans of today should be grateful to them for a job well done.

NO PRINT

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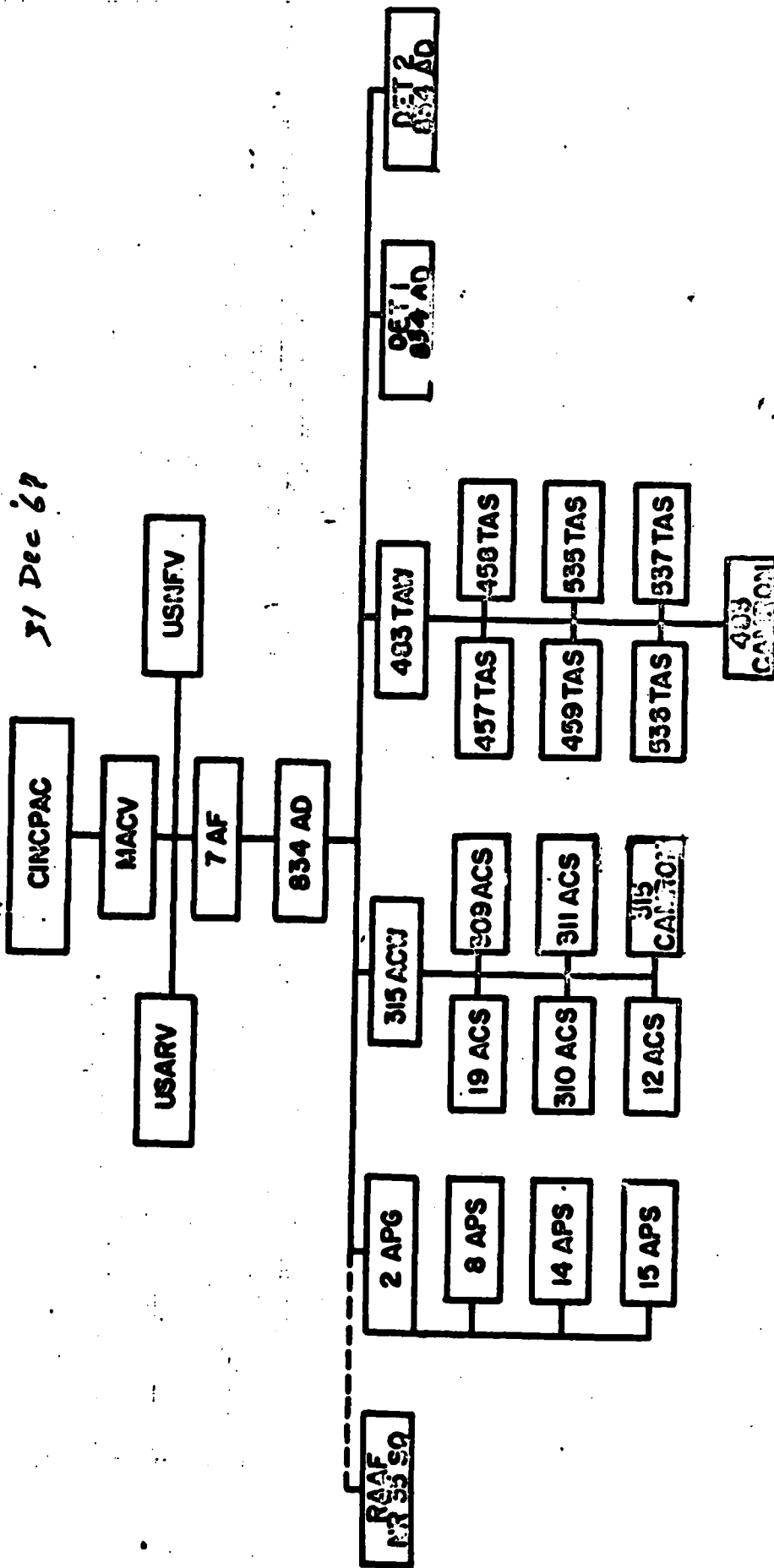
APPENDIX A

COMMANDERS OF THE 834TH IN VIETNAM

Col Robert T. Simpson-----	15 Oct 66 - 29 Oct 66
Brig Gen William G. Moore, Jr.-----	30 Oct 66 - 30 Oct 67
Brig Gen Hugh E. Wild-----	1 Sep 67 - 25 Sep 67
Brig Gen William G. Moore, Jr.-----	26 Sep 67 - 11 Nov 67
Brig Gen Hugh E. Wild-----	12 Nov 67 - 28 Nov 67
Brig Gen Burl W. McLaughlin-----	29 Nov 67 - 22 Jun 69
Brig Gen John H. Herring, Jr.-----	23 Jun 69 - 8 Jun 71
Brig Gen John H. Germeraad-----	9 Jun 71 - 1 Dec 71

834th AIR DIVISION ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

31 Dec 67

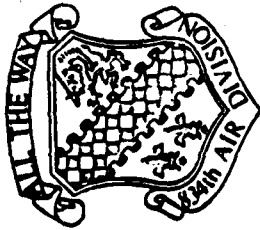


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834th UNITS IN SEA

30 June '68



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