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W. Baumgardner #13
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HR70-14

31 March 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Monthly Report, ID/S , February and March 1966

1. OPERATIONS

a. A total of eighteen (18) gunfire incidents, occurring between 7 January and 4 March were reported by Air America Flight Information Centers at Saigon, Vientiane and Udorn. Analysis of the reports reflects that ten incidents occurred in South Vietnam and eight in Laos. The incidents all involved small arms ground fire, and on nine occasions aircraft were actually hit, five in Laos and four in South Vietnam.

Personal injury was suffered on only one occasion, on 17 February when Porter #KUPGR, piloted by Mr. E. B. Johnson, CASI, was fired upon while taking off from LS36 in northeastern Laos. On this occasion Mr. Johnson was carrying five wounded and two other passengers when the enemy opened fire with automatic weapons and rifle fire; one of the wounded was hit and the aircraft was hit in five places. The aircraft departed safely and landed at LS08.

The aircraft hit, by type and number, were: UE-34 (2), Porter (3), Beech (2), Helio (1) and 204B (1).

b. On 5 February, AAM Helio #839 had a power failure at Mek Lok, Laos (Site 131) causing minor injury to the Pilot, Mr. Frazer, and major damage to the aircraft. The aircraft was shipped to Taiwan for repair.

c. On 10 February, AAM Helio, #875 ground looped during a landing by pilot trainee at Na Khang, Laos (Site 36) causing major damage to the aircraft. The pilot and pilot trainee were not injured. The aircraft was shipped to Taiwan for repair.

d. On 23 February, AAM Helio #169 incurred major damage at Sen Thong, Laos (Site 20). The aircraft had been left with its engine running while the pilot was away from the aircraft. During the pilot's absence the throttle opened causing the aircraft to accelerate and go into motion. One indigenous passenger was sitting in the co-pilot seat when the throttle was activated, and he left the aircraft before the machine went over an embankment at the side of the runway.

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e. On 6 March, AAM Caribou #993 incurred major damage while landing at Ban Na, Laos (Site 15). One crew member, Mr. La Rose received minor injury. The preliminary report from Vientiane indicated that the aircraft encountered heavy turbulence while on final approach. The pilot reportedly stated that a severe updraft and downdraft caused him to inadvertently go into reverse pitch while the aircraft was approximately fifty feet in the air; the aircraft established an extreme sink rate and impacted the ground at the approach end of the runway.

f. On 6 March, AAM Halio #887 crashed and burned one mile southeast of Muong Hain, Laos (Site 48A). The crash was fatal to the AAM pilot, Mr. Wayne W. Hawinger, Jr., and two passengers, [redacted]

[redacted] A third passenger, Mr. George Raynor, USAID Air Support Branch, Vientiane, survived the crash.

The cause of the crash was reported to be engine failure shortly after take-off.

g. Air America support to Saigon Station continued at a high level during the reporting period. During February Air America aircraft flew 3,545 sorties for a total of 2,561 hours and hauled 19,614 passengers and 2,093,669 pounds of cargo in support of Agency programs in South Vietnam.

h. On 28 January policy approval was granted by Headquarters to arm Air America flight crews operating in Vietnam [redacted]. The approval was based primarily on the belief that downed aircrews will be enabled to hold unfriendly out of grenade range for a limited time permitting arrival of rescue forces.

On 11 February Headquarters requested Vientiane and Udon to review the current policy re arming Air America aircrews operating in Laos, and Vientiane replied as follows: "Believe present policy re arming AAM aircrews should remain in effect foreseeable future. Weapons are now issued only under special circumstances, i.e., to pilots flying T-28's on SAR missions and must have Station Manager approval. Political considerations Laos require that we still protect civilian image of AAM and reduce any evidence of paramilitary involvement. The same applies to CASI."

2. FLEET PLANNING

a. During February it was reported by Mr. [redacted] that Velper has received its FAA Supplemental Type Certificate of Airworthiness for its Airesearch turbine engine modification to the Twin Beech Model H18 aircraft and expects to obtain a revision to that Certificate covering the Model C45 in the next six to eight weeks. Mr. [redacted] is negotiating with Velper for the purchase of one to three Velper kits pursuant to the 12 January 1965 [redacted] ExCom approval.

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b. [REDACTED]

c. [REDACTED]

d. The large increase in the aircraft fleet, occasioned primarily by the additional aircraft for [REDACTED], has given cause for some concern as to whether aircraft already assigned to fixed bases, especially Saigon, are being fully utilized. Mr. [REDACTED] has mentioned this concern on several occasions, and the operating Divisions at Headquarters are currently reviewing the matter. The FE Air Officer plans to visit Southeast Asia during April at which time he will review the over-all air support program with field personnel at Agency Stations as well as with AAM and CASI personnel.

3. PERSONNEL

a. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] was transferred to Air America's Udorn Base, effective 1 March 1966. Headquarters directed that [REDACTED] be replaced at Taipei by [REDACTED] however employment of a replacement is being held in abeyance, at the request of [REDACTED] pending the outcome of a joint study by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to determine the feasibility of establishing [REDACTED] for [REDACTED] at the company's new quarters to be occupied in the near future.

b. During the reporting period Air America personnel received several letters of recognition for their professional efforts, including:

(1) Four letters of commendation to pilots, written by Mr. Merrill Halse, Base Manager, Saigon, commending their outstanding sense of responsibility in remaining with damaged aircraft in a relatively insecure area in order to insure recovery of their aircraft. Those so commended were Captains F. H. Smith, Jr. and G. E. Robertson and Messrs. J. J. Vescevi and J. M. Schulze.

(2) A letter from the U.S. Ambassador to Laos, William E. Sullivan to Mr. David H. Hickler, AAM, Base Manager, Vientiane

dated 5 February 1966 stating: "Dear Dave --- Thank you for your letter of February 4 enclosing a memorandum describing the search operations for the helicopter H-23. I am impressed with the thoroughness of the search which was made and with the difficulties which have been encountered. I understand and am sympathetic with the findings and conclusions of the report."

(3) A memorandum from Mr. G. J. Keen, Chief, Requirements Division, USAID/Laos to Mr. Ben Moore, AAM, Base Manager, Udorn, dated 12 February 1966, which described the evacuation of three seriously injured persons by an AAM helicopter crew on 27 January in the vicinity of Muong Soui, Laos. Mr. Keen concluded by saying: "The pilot and kicker of H-21 showed an extremely high degree of patience, disregard for personal safety, determination and flying skill, all under most trying conditions. I wish to commend these two individuals for their excellent performance in support of our mission here in Laos, and request you pass on to them our personal thanks for a job well done."

(4) A letter of Commendation from Colonel Paul A. Pettigrew, USAF, Air Attache, Vientiane to Captain J. E. Hunter, AAM, Udorn for "prompt and courageous actions of 5 February 1966 when you rescued a downed Royal Laotian Air Force pilot."

c. On 14 February Headquarters was advised by [] Taipei that a series of incidents had occurred at Vientiane, commencing in November 1965, involving friction between AAM and Continental Air Services Inc. pilots. Corrective measures have been taken by responsible Government and Contractor supervisors.

d. On 5 March, Mr. [] departed for the Far East to visit company facilities on Taiwan and also to visit the Southeast Asia Bases of Air America. Mr. [] was accompanied on his visits to SEA Bases by Mr. Robert G. Coelet, A Director of the Pacific Corp., AAM and AACL.

e. On 23 March the [] Executive Committee approved payment of personal income taxes by the Company on the portion of salaries paid by Air America to Americans resident on Taiwan. There are 194 persons involved, and the approximate cost to the Company is \$180,000.

4. MISCELLANEOUS

a. On 3 February the Deputy Director for Support wrote to Mr. Grundy at Taipei commending him for the splendid performance of [] during the past eight months. Mr. Bannerman expressed his specific acknowledgement of the "soldierly manner" in which Mr. Grundy is addressing himself to the CATUL phase-out.

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b. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Mr. [redacted] arrived in Taipei on 7 March to assist Mr. Grundy in preparation of a draft plan which will be submitted to Headquarters prior to negotiations [redacted]

c. During January Air America was interested in establishing a facility at Hong Kong. However, on 19 February [redacted] strongly recommended against doing so, because of concurrent [redacted] campaign against the U.S. Government accusing the U.S. of using Hong Kong as a base for support of the war in Vietnam.

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d. The Board of Directors of CATUL met at Taipei on 28 March 1966.

e. In early February the Corporate Counsel for the Hailo Aircraft Corporation, Mr. Walter A. Slowinski notified the OGC of serious concern by Hailo that Air Asia is manufacturing Hailo components in an improper manner, in the absence of either the original manufacturer's technical guidance or FAA conformity inspection.

When requested to comment on the Hailo accusation, Air Asia, Taiwan, replied that: "AACL work on Hailos is limited strictly to repairs necessary to keep operational. This has involved both fabricating and producing parts. The alternative of purchasing only (from the Manufacturer) would be economically prohibitive because of extended down time.-----All such work, including mandatory inspection procedures is performed in accordance with the Civil Aviation Regulations of the country of Registry."

AACL feels that Hailo does not have a real case, and the OGC intends to have Messrs. [redacted] and Slowinski discuss the matter directly.

f. On 30 March, the ADB/S afforded a briefing on the [redacted] Complex to [redacted]

[redacted]
ED/S [redacted]

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