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SOUTHEAST ASIA

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In the Shadow of War (To the Gulf of Tonkin)

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CRYPTOLOGIC HISTORY SERIES

SOUTHEAST ASIA

In The Shadow Of War

(To The Gulf of Tonkin)

William D. Gerhard

June 1969

SECURITY NOTICE

Although the information contained in this journal ranges in security classification from *UNCLASSIFIED* to *TOP SECRET CODEWORD,* the overall security classification assigned to this issue is *TOP SECRET UMBRA.* The "No Foreign Nations" (NOFORN) caveat has been added to guard against inadvertent disclosure of portions of the text which discuss topics normally held to NOFORN channels.

While the TSCW NOFORN classification by itself requires careful handling, additional caution should be exercised with regard to the present journal and others in the series because of the comprehensive treatment and broad range of the subject matter.

Foreword

The publication of this volume marks the inauguration of a series that will tell the story of the cryptologic community in the Vietnam War. The series began as a result of a proposal, made to me in the spring of 1967 by Maj. Gen. Charles J. Denholm, CGUSASA, that a NSA-SCA team be formed to prepare a complete, historical documentation of SIGINT operations in support of U.S. military operations in Southeast Asia. After Rear Adm. Ralph E. Cook, COMNAVSECGRU, and Maj. Gen. Louis E. Coira, CUSAFSS, gave me their views on and concurrence in the proposed work, I asked the chief of my Reporting and Information Element, [redacted] to assume responsibility for the project.

To my mind, the NSA-SCA team's first offering, *In the Shadow of War*, well launches the project by documenting our joint involvement in Southeast Asia [redacted]

[redacted]

MARSHALL S. CARTER
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army
Director, NSA

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(b)(3)-18 USC 798
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

Preface

The Cryptologic Historical Series, of which this journal is the first publication, will ultimately consist of a number of volumes documenting SCA and NSA cryptologic operations in or pertaining to Southeast Asia. *In the Shadow of War* records SEA SIGINT operations up to August 1964. Other works now in preparation will treat such subjects as SIGINT support of U.S. military action at Khe Sanh and in the 1968 Tet Offensive; the Gulf of Tonkin incidents of August 1964; SIGINT support of U.S. air operations; and COMSEC support operations. At a later date it will be possible to combine the various individual works in the series into hardback volumes, each covering a broad subject area.

It is impossible to list all those in ASA, NAVSECGRU, and AFSS, as well as NSA, who contributed to the preparation of this first journal. Special mention should, however, be made of SCA Project Officers Hiram M. Wolfe, III, and Bud L. Sternbeck of ASA, Lt. Cmdr. C. P. Mckinney and Raymond P. Schmidt of NAVSECGRU, Thomas N. Thompson and Bob W. Rush of AFSS, and their coworkers who provided specific source materials.

Within NSA, my thanks go to Maj. Gen. John E. Morrison, who took the time from his busy schedule to read the manuscript in final draft form; to (b)(3)-P.L. 86-36 who is providing a major part of the staff for the history project; and to the Project Manager of the series, (b)(3)-P.L. 86-36 who in her wisdom is giving the members of the project latitude in the development of the series and support when they need it. I am also indebted to NSA Historian [redacted] for helpful advice and information, [redacted] of P2, [redacted] of K, IRA Intern [redacted] of D3, (b)(3)-P.L. 86-36 of B05, (b)(3)-P.L. 86-36 of B1, [redacted] of C, [redacted] of B, [redacted] of B6, [redacted] of T1, [redacted] of P04, [redacted] of B3 and many others gave assistance in one way or another. Finally, [redacted] typed many draft versions of the manuscript, and always with patience.

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A documented copy of *In the Shadow of War* is on file in P2, NSA. Requests for additional copies should be directed to P2, NSA.

The author assumes sole responsibility for the use made of the comments and criticism offered and for any errors of fact or interpretation of the sources available to him.

February, 1969 W. D. Gerhard

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SIKKIM
BHUTAN
Brahmaputra
Ledo
Gauhati
INDIA
Myitkyina
PAKISTAN
Imphal
Dacca
Ta-li
K'un-ming
Kuei-yang
CHINA
Chungking
Yangtze
Ch'ang-sha
Liu-chou
Wuchow
Canton
Nan-ning
Meng-tzu
Lao Cai
Lang Son
NORTH VIETNAM
HANOI
Mong Cai
Haiphong
Hai-K'ou
HAINAN
GULF OF TONKIN
Thanh Hoa
Vinh
Chan-chiang
MACAO (Port.)
HONG KONG (U.K.)
Lashio
Mandalay
BURMA
Irrawaddy
Mekong
Red River
Samneua
Luang Prabang
Chiengmai
VIENTIANE
Udon Thani
LAOS
Dong Hoi
Demarcation Line
Hue
Da Nang
Savannakhet
BAY OF BENGAL
BANGKOK
Moulmein
THAILAND
Nakhon Ratchasima
Ubon Ratchathani
Pakse
Pleiku
Qui Nhon
Stung Treng
BANGKOK
Battambang
CAMBODIA
Kratie
SOUTH VIETNAM
Da Lat
PHNOM PENH
SAIGON
ANDAMAN ISLANDS (India)
GULF OF SIAM
Sihanoukville
Quang Long
SOUTH CHINA SEA
Spratly Island
NICOBAR ISLANDS (India)
SOUTHEAST ASIA
Penang
MALAYSIA
STRAIT OF MALACCA
Medan
KUALA LUMPUR
NATUNA ISLANDS
Kuching
MALAYSIA
SUMATRA
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CHAPTER I

Political Events in Southeast Asia 1945–64

One definition of *intelligence* is information concerning one's enemies and possible enemies. During World War II the enemies were known, and the resources to obtain information on them were abundant. The intelligence organizations of the U.S. armed forces, in collaboration with those of our allies, fashioned well-organized, efficient units to gather material on Germany, Japan, and their associates. When the war ended, the intelligence community's resources were reduced in the general military retrenchment. The need for intelligence services, however, was as great as ever;

Vietnam

To the Geneva Conference

Political upheavals have been a factor in the history of Southeast Asia for centuries, and communism has been a factor in the political upheavals of Southeast Asia since the 1920's. In Vietnam during the

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early part of World War II the Communist Party broadened its prewar political base by adopting a policy of collaboration with noncommunist Vietnamese nationals. Soon thereafter a new organization, the Viet Minh—or League for the Independence of Vietnam—was formed to oppose both the Japanese occupation in Vietnam and the return of the French to control in Indochina after the war. In the process, Ho Chi Minh, a long-time communist, emerged as the foremost nationalist political leader of Vietnam and the head of the Viet Minh.

By March 1945 the Japanese were obviously losing the war, and Emperor Bao Dai, who had been the nominal ruler of Vietnam since 1925, proclaimed the independence of Vietnam under Japanese protection. He attempted to form a new nationalist government at Hue, but Ho and the Viet Minh, based in Hanoi, would not recognize Bao Dai's authority. That, together with other problems created by the war, led Bao Dai to abdicate in August 1945. Bao Dai at that time considered the Viet Minh a nationalist, rather than a purely communist organization, and he turned over to Ho Chi Minh the imperial seal and other evidences of office. On 2 September 1945, the day hostilities with Japan officially ended, Ho proclaimed Vietnam independent and established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, making Bao Dai a high counselor.

Meanwhile the Allies, meeting in international conference at Potsdam, Germany, in July 1945, had agreed that at the end of the war in the Pacific the British would accept the surrender of the Japanese stationed in Indochina south of the 16th Parallel and the Chinese would do the same north of the parallel. On 12 September, only ten days after Ho had proclaimed Vietnam's independence, British troops landed in Saigon to carry out their part of the Potsdam agreement. A few days later the French began to land their forces there. The Vietnamese south of the parallel attempted to resist the French forces, but were unsuccessful.

Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese carried out their commitment north of the 16th Parallel and at first supported Ho's government. The Viet Minh ostensibly dissolved the Communist Party in November 1945 and in January 1946 held elections and formed a coalition government under Ho. In February 1946, however, the Chinese concluded an agreement with the French under which the Chinese would recognize French rights

in Indochina in return for various concessions to the Chinese. Ho and the Viet Minh therefore lost the support of the Chinese and had to reassess their policy toward the French.

In March 1946 the French Government signed an agreement with Ho Chi Minh whereby his Democratic Republic of Vietnam would be recognized as a "free state" within an Indochinese Federation and the French Union. As a result of the agreement, French forces were allowed to land in the north, but relations between France and the "free state" did not improve. A conference held in June 1946 failed to solve differences between the French and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam over the definition of "free state." In September 1946, however, Ho Chi Minh signed another agreement with the French designed to bring about the resumption of French economic and cultural activities in northern Vietnam in return for French promises to introduce a more liberal regime. The agreement did not include recognition of Vietnamese unity or independence, and many within Ho Chi Minh's regime opposed it. When the French attempted to enforce customs control, Vietnamese hostility increased. In November 1946 shooting erupted in Haiphong and the French bombarded the city, killing some 6,000 Vietnamese. The ensuing French demands on Ho's government were unacceptable to him, and on 19 December 1946 the Vietnamese attacked the French. Thus began the Indochina War.

After three years of warfare, the Viet Minh, using guerrilla tactics, controlled extensive areas of the Vietnamese countryside, while the French retained firm control of most large cities. In June 1949 France finally approved limited independence within the French Union for the "State of Vietnam," and persuaded Bao Dai to become its chief of state. During the same year, various communist countries recognized Ho's Democratic Republic of Vietnam as the legitimate government for the whole country, and in February 1950 Great Britain and the United States recognized the State of Vietnam, headed by Bao Dai. About the same time, Ho Chi Minh began to receive aid from Communist China, and again took the offensive against the French Union forces. In May 1950 the United States announced that it would supply economic aid to Bao Dai through the French Government, and shortly thereafter a U.S. economic mission arrived in Saigon. In December 1950 the United States began sending military aid indirectly through France to Vietnam.

In September 1951, the United States and the Vietnamese Government signed an agreement whereby the United States would supply direct economic assistance to the Bao Dai regime. In 1951 the French, with the aid of the U.S. equipment, temporarily halted the communist advance, but in 1952 the communists again resumed their attacks.

The Geneva Conference

By 1954 France for many reasons was unable to continue the war, and Ho Chi Minh, probably under Sino-Soviet pressure, indicated that he was prepared to begin peace talks. In February of that year the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and France agreed to hold a conference to seek a solution to the problems of Indochina and Korea.

The communist victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu on 7 May 1954 focused the main attention of the conferees on Indochina. This phase of the conference was cochaired by Great Britain and the Soviet Union and included representatives from the United States, France, and Communist China, and delegates from the State of Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Final negotiations for an armistice were conducted directly between the French High Command and Ho Chi Minh's Peoples' Army High Command. On 20 July the two commands signed a truce agreement covering both North and South Vietnam; separate truce agreements were signed on Cambodia and Laos.

The truce agreement for Vietnam established a provisional military Demarcation Line along the 17th Parallel and provided for the withdrawal of French and State of Vietnam forces from north of the Demarcation Line and for the evacuation of the Viet Minh forces from the south. It also provided for a 300-day period during which individuals could move from one sector of the country to the other according to their political convictions. The agreement stated that no military reinforcements could be introduced into either Vietnamese state except for rotational purposes, and that the introduction of new weapons would be limited to replacements. Restrictions were imposed on the establishment of foreign military bases and on the entrance by either North or South Vietnam into foreign military alliances. The agreement

also provided for the establishment of an International Control Commission (ICC), composed of representatives from India, Canada, and Poland, to supervise the truce. A Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference, promulgated on 21 July, provided for general elections to be held throughout Vietnam in July 1956 to determine the future of the country. The elections would be supervised by the ICC.

The State of Vietnam and the United States opposed the truce terms and the Final Declaration. The U.S. representative stated, however, that the United States would not use force or the threat of force to disturb the provisions of either the cease-fire or the Final Declaration, and that it would look with grave concern upon any renewal of aggression in violation of the terms of the agreements.

To the Gulf of Tonkin Incident

Soon after the Geneva Conference, France began transferring administrative and military control to Bao Dai and the State of Vietnam. Nearly a million Vietnamese refugees left North Vietnam to settle in the south, and a lesser number moved north. Forces of the State of Vietnam withdrew from the north, but the Viet Minh left in the south a highly organized underground network that formed the base for future communist insurgency against the South Vietnam regime.

While the Geneva Conference was still in session, Bao Dai asked Ngo Dinh Diem, who had served under him in the 1930's, to form a new government, and, as premier, Diem did so on 7 July 1954. In the fall of 1954, Premier Diem requested U.S. assistance against communist subversion, and on 22 October President Dwight D. Eisenhower announced his intention to strengthen the Diem regime by giving South Vietnam direct military aid. The French began moving their forces out of Vietnam in February 1955. At this time, the first U.S. military assistance advisory group (MAAG), consisting of 481 men, assumed the task of training the South Vietnamese Army and advising on the use of the U.S. aid arriving in South Vietnam.

Contending with the many problems of a war-torn society, Diem extended his authority in South Vietnam by neutralizing various dissident groups. By the fall of 1955 he felt secure enough to call for a referendum to decide whether or not the country should become a republic. Diem won the referendum and on 26 October 1955 declared

the establishment of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) with himself as its first President.

By mid-1957 the North Vietnamese were forming border-crossing units and infiltrating them into South Vietnam across the Line of Demarcation and through Laos. Many of those coming south were South Vietnamese who by preference had gone north in 1954–55. The communists who had remained in the south after 1954 emerged as Viet Cong, and communist operations and terrorism in the south became continuous. In September 1960 the Vietnamese Communist Party made its position unmistakably clear when it adopted a resolution stating that one of its main objectives was to "liberate South Vietnam from the ruling yoke of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen." On 20 December 1960, Hanoi formed the National Liberation Front (NLF) as the political arm of the Viet Cong.

On 8 February 1962 the United States established the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), under Lt. Gen. Paul D. Harkins. The MAAG, Vietnam, commanded by Maj. Gen. Charles J. Timmes, continued to operate as a separate organization under General Harkins until May 1964, when the MAAG was phased out. At that time MACV assumed the MAAG's responsibilities.

Diem, during the period 1955–63, ruled South Vietnam with varying degrees of success, but dissent among his government officials, Viet Cong operations, and his gradual assumption of more and more dictatorial powers led to his overthrow in a military coup on 1 November 1963, and to his death on 2 November. The victors in the coup announced the formation of a civilian-military junta on 4 November, and on 7 November the United States recognized the new Vietnamese Government.

Though South Vietnam went through two more coups by August 1964, U.S. aid, and the methods under which it was administered by the U.S. advisors, remained substantially the same until the Gulf of Tonkin incident in early August 1964 completely changed the role of the United States in Vietnam.

Laos

In the long history of Laos, one factor has remained constant. All aspects of Laotian life, including the political, have been controlled by an

elite composed of a royal family, about twenty prominent Lao families, and a few men who rose through the military. Before World War II the French ruled indirectly through the elite, many of whom during the colonial period were educated in France and became Western oriented. With the exception of pro-French King Sisavang Vong, most of the elite did not want to see a return to the French colonial administration after the war. Before the French forces could re-establish their prewar role in Laos, the elite set up an independent constitutional monarchy, persuading Sisavang Vong to remain on the throne. In early 1946 French forces entered Laos from the south, defeated the small military forces of the elite, and occupied the capital and other principal cities. A major portion of the elite retreated to Thailand and set up a government-in-exile. In August 1946 the French and the King came to a compromise, the French agreeing to an independent Laos with a constitutional monarchy under French protection.

In May 1947 the King promulgated a constitution, which is still in force. Meanwhile in Thailand the Laotian exiles broke into three camps, headed by three half brothers of the royal family. Prince Phetsarath was anti-French; Prince Souvanna Phouma was willing to work with the French; Prince Souphanouvong advocated collaboration with the North Vietnamese Viet Minh. In late 1947 there was a change in the Thai Government and the exiles' welcome wore thin. Gradually the exiles returned to Laos and made their peace with the King and the French.

As events in Vietnam claimed more and more of France's energies and forces, the Laotians obtained more and more control of their own country. On 22 October 1953 the Laotians became fully sovereign under a Franco-Laotian treaty. In 1956 the Laotian constitution was revised to omit all reference to the French—Laos was finally independent.

Laotian political history from 1953 through 1964 was one of continual struggle among the three factions of the elite that began forming during the days of exile in Thailand. During the 11-year period the political bent of the factions was roughly constant—procommunist, neutralist, and rightist; the composition of the factions was fluid, members of the elite moving from one faction to another as their personal aims dictated. Each of the three factions had its foreign backers. The procommunist Pathet Lao received its aid most consistently from

North Vietnam, though both the Chinese Communists and the Russians sent in supplies. The neutralist accepted aid from both communist and noncommunist sources. The right wing depended upon Western countries, notably the United States and Thailand for its backing. In 1957 an attempt was made to rule the country through a coalition government; the attempt failed.

By 1961 the political situation in Laos was so chaotic that an international conference was convened in Geneva to try to provide a framework that would be acceptable to all three factions. The conference dragged on for over a year, in part because no one element in Laos could represent the whole country. In 1962 a second attempt was made to form a coalition government. In June a Government of National Union was formed and the portfolios were distributed among the three factions. The new government sent a delegation to Geneva in July, and an agreement was drawn up and duly signed whereby Laos would be recognized as an independent, neutral nation, renouncing all military alliances including membership in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). The thirteen countries taking part in the conference, led by the United States, Communist China, and the Soviet Union, in turn issued a declaration agreeing to recognize and respect Laotian neutrality. All foreign forces in Laos were to be withdrawn. The United States and the Philippines, both of which had military and civilian advisors in the country, complied; some of the North Vietnamese forces also withdrew.

After the Geneva Conference, Laos continued, on paper, to be governed by a coalition. Actually, the procommunist elements took little part in the coalition government and the coalition government had little power in the northern areas controlled by the procommunist Pathet Lao. This was the political reality of Laos at the time of the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

Thailand

A long-time absolute monarchy, Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932 and has remained so to the present. Since 1932 it has had seven constitutions, four "permanent" and three "provisional." The last, promulgated in January 1959, is an "interim" constitution under

which most of the real power resides with the Prime Minister, and in which there are no references to the rights and duties of the citizenry.

The numerous governments formed and reformed during this period were principally the result of power plays by various civilian officials and military groups. Although Thailand's constitutions have for the most part been patterned on Western ones, the actual power of the electorate has always been minimal and at times nonexistent.

Although Thailand had an alliance with Japan during World War II, the Thai Government stated after the war that the alliance was made under duress, and the United States accepted this view. For the first few years after World War II, the Thai Government tried to steer a neutralist course between the East and West, but after the communists won control of China in 1949 Thailand aligned itself firmly with the West. For the most part, Thailand has had amicable relations with the outside world, the exceptions being her immediate neighbors, Cambodia and Laos. In December 1946 Thailand joined the United Nations. When war broke out in Korea in 1950, Thailand sent a contingent to Korea to represent Thailand on the United Nations Command. In 1964 Thailand still had military representation in Korea. Thailand was an original signatory of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in 1954; it was the only mainland Southeast Asian country to sign, the other signatory countries being the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines. Bangkok was chosen as headquarters for SEATO. In July 1961 Thailand, Malaya, and the Philippines formed the Association of Southeast Asia for mutual collaboration in economic, social, cultural, scientific, and administrative fields.

In contrast to Thailand's favorable relations with non-SEA countries and international organizations in the 1946–64 period were its relations with Cambodia and Laos. Thailand's relations with these two countries have been influenced by the fact that at the beginning of the twentieth century Thailand lost to France areas that are now parts of Cambodia and Laos—Thailand has never really accepted that loss. Thailand's hostility toward Cambodia has also been compounded by the neutralist attitude of Cambodia, which the Thais consider procommunist.

In 1956 Thailand and Cambodia exchanged charges of border violations, one of the main points of contention being the boundary

between the Thai province of Siasket and the Cambodian province of Kompong Thom. The two countries broke off diplomatic relations in 1958 when negotiations to solve the dispute failed, but resumed them three months later. When in the early 1960's Cambodia brought the case before the International Court of Justice, Thailand claimed the court did not have jurisdiction, and in October 1961 again broke off diplomatic relations with Cambodia. In June 1962 the court ruled in favor of Cambodia, and Thailand at first refused to accept the ruling, charging that since the president of the court was Polish and some of the judges were from countries that had been colonial powers in Southeast Asia, the ruling was politically motivated. To emphasize its point, Thailand also withrew temporarily from SEATO and from the conference on Laos then in session in Geneva. Within a short time Thailand reversed its action to gain good will and accepted the ruling with reservations, but it did not renew diplomatic relations with Cambodia.

With Laos, Thailand's relations have been less quarrelsome, but the activities of the communists in Laos have caused the Thais to guard rigorously against communist infiltration over the border.

The communists did not have much success in influencing Thai events in the years 1946–64 because most of the issues normally exploited by the communists were absent in Thailand. Thailand, a country fiercely proud of its independence, has never been subjected to European colonialism. Compared with other Asian countries, it does not have extreme poverty and most Thai farmers own their own land. Since most Thais take little part in the affairs of government and are not active in party politics, moreover, communist infiltration of political parties there was not feasible, and the Communist Party had no legal status in the country for most of the period. What success the communists did have came through agitation among the minorities—the Chinese in the Central Region of the country, the Moslems in the Malaya border areas, and the approximately 40,000 Vietnamese refugees from the Indochina War who settled in the Northeast Region.

Thailand over the period 1946–64 received military and economic aid and technical assistance from many sources in the free world. In 1950 the United States signed economic and military agreements with Thailand and has been supplying aid to the Thais ever since. In 1962

the United States dispatched troops to northeast Thailand when the Pathet Lao threatened the Thai border. Also in 1962 the commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, General Harkins, began wearing a second hat as the commanding general of the Military Assistance Command, Thailand. In July 1965 MACTHAI received its own commanding general. Because most military aid and training were from the United States, the Thai armed forces developed along U.S. lines and were equipped with U.S. materiel.

Thailand has also accepted economic aid and technical assistance from such countries as West Germany, Denmark, Japan, and Australia as well as from numerous United Nations organizations and SEATO. It has studiously refused aid from communist and communist-oriented countries.

Cambodia

Cambodia, like Vietnam and Laos, entered the post-World War II period with a desire for independence from France. As in the case of Vietnam and Laos, Cambodia had been given its "independence" by the Japanese in March 1945, when the Japanese removed the French colonial administration in Indochina from office. When the French returned after the war, France recognized Cambodia, as it did Laos and Vietnam, as an autonomous kingdom within the French Union. To the Cambodians this was but a small step toward the complete independence they sought. Taking advantage of France's complicated involvement in Vietnam and Laos, Cambodia, under King Sihanouk, peacefully but firmly pressured the French for more and more independence until by late 1954 its only political tie with France was as a member of the French Union. That tie was broken in September 1955. In early 1955 King Sihanouk, in order to enter politics, abdicated the throne in favor of his father, Norodom Suramarit. Sihanouk became and has remained Chief of State. King Norodom Suramarit died in 1960 and since then the throne has remained vacant.

Cambodia, a constitutional monarchy, has developed more internal stability under Sihanouk than any of its Southeast Asian neighbors—its popular representation is broader, its internal dissension is less, its goals of universal education and development of industry are progressing.

In international affairs Prince Sihanouk has professed to pursue a course of neutralism and nonalignment. His relationships with the other SEA countries have been stormy, reflecting his constant fear of encroachment on Cambodia's sovereignty.* Cambodia became a member of the United Nations and the Colombo Plan, but not of SEATO, and has accepted aid from both the East and the West, insisting that neither side attach strings to the terms of the aid. Early aid came principally from the United States—an agreement on economic aid in 1951 and one on military aid in 1955. In 1956 Cambodia established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and signed an economic aid agreement with Communist China. In November 1963 Sihanouk terminated all aid agreements with the United States, and since then Cambodia's main sources of aid have been Communist China, the USSR, and France. Lesser amounts of foreign assistance have come from Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and West Germany.

Cambodia broke off diplomatic relations with Thailand in 1961, with South Vietnam in 1963, and with the United States in 1965. Soon after breaking with South Vietnam, Sihanouk began negotiations to recognize the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) in South Vietnam; negotiations were drawn out but Cambodia finally granted diplomatic status to the National Liberation Front in mid-1967. Thus during the first half of the 1960's Cambodia seemed to lean away from the West and toward the Communist bloc. However, as it became clear that the communists would not win a quick victory in Vietnam or gain control of the other SEA countries, Sihanouk in the later 1960's reopened contacts with some noncommunist nations, indicating a trend toward a more balanced form of neutrality.

*See, for example, Thai-Cambodia relations, pp. 9–10.

CHAPTER II

Establishing the Mainland Base

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During the spring and summer of 1964 the United States became concerned over the increasing seriousness of the internal political situation in Laos and over Cambodian involvement with the Viet Cong in South Vietnam.

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In 1962 Laos continued to be a focus of SIGINT activity in Southeast Asia.

The intermittent civil war in Laos would continue with no apparent end.

In February 1961 the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) reviewed for the Secretary of Defense the status of the U.S. SIGINT effort in Southeast Asia and concluded that, although much of the intelligence then available on the Laotian crisis was from SIGINT,

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Development of the Base in South Vietnam

Washington-Level Authorizations

In the early 1960's, Washington authorities also made certain decisions that set the stage for [redacted] operations in the Republic of Vietnam. The military assistance then being provided to the RVN Army did not include SIGINT, and the ARVN, which could not produce adequate SIGINT for itself, had immediate use for the sort of timely, tactical SIGINT that could support counterguerrilla operations. [redacted]

Through USIB and Department of Defense channels, the Army in 1960 and 1961 had pressed for increased SIGINT coverage of Southeast Asian nations and for the establishment of a program that would permit [redacted] South Vietnam, [redacted] to develop their own tactical SIGINT capability.

At the time of the changeover from the Eisenhower to the Kennedy administration in 1961 and for some months thereafter, Washington authorities continued to examine the cryptologic outlook for Southeast Asia with a view to supporting South Vietnam in its tactical operations against Vietnamese Communists in that country. The White House, National Security Council, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and USIB and its participating agencies all participated in this review.

[redacted] USIB concluded in April 1961 that improved coverage could be obtained by providing training assistance in traffic analysis and direction finding to the ARVN SIGINT organization. [redacted]

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With Presidential approval, the National Security Council on 29 April 1961 instructed USIB to authorize the establishment of a U.S. SIGINT effort in South Vietnam and the sharing of the SIGINT produced therefrom with the RVN in accordance with plans developed by the Army Security Agency.

In May 1961 USIB took up the matter of dissemination of SIGINT product to the South Vietnamese Army. USIB decided that the exceptional usage provisions of the Director of Central Intelligence Directive entitled "Communications Intelligence Regulations" (DCID 6/3) would permit dissemination to the South Vietnamese "to the extent needed to launch rapid attacks on Vietnamese Communists' communications [redacted] A plan for the dissemination of SIGINT to the South Vietnamese by the Chief MAAG, Vietnam, as a "proper authority" was then developed by the Army:

[redacted]

In accordance with Paragraph 30, DCID 6/3, [redacted] COMINT, [redacted] will be passed, [redacted] by the ASA teams directly to the MAAG advisor in the area designated by the Chief, MAAG, Vietnam. CONFIDENTIAL DF bearings will be passed through the same channels. The [redacted] teams will provide copies of the released information, any information not released, [redacted] to the ASA unit headquarters. [redacted] ASA unit headquarters will then pass the [redacted] material, [redacted] to Chief, MAAG, Vietnam, for further release to the SVN Army. An information copy of all [redacted] material, passed to Chief, MAAG, will be passed to the DA SSO Saigon. The ASA unit will also send all results including raw traffic, logs, etc. to [redacted]

5. [redacted] COMINT. The Chief, MAAG, is designated as a 'Proper Authority' empowered to authorize exceptional use of COMINT as necessary in support of SVN Army counter- insurgency operations. The DA SSO Saigon is designated as the Army COMINT advisor to the Chief, MAAG, on matters pertaining to the release of COMINT to the SVN under this plan. The Chief, MAAG, to the extent needed to launch rapid attacks on Vietnamese Communist communications [redacted] may pass information based upon [redacted] COMINT to the SVN Army, as follows:

(a) [redacted]

(b) Emergency Usage, Paragraph 33, DCID 6/3. In accordance with the decision of the National Security Council, the current situation in South Vietnam is considered to be an extreme emergency involving an imminent

threat to the vital interests of the United States. The Chief, MAAG, therefore is authorized upon his determination. . .to disseminate [redacted] COMINT to the SVN Army and act thereon [redacted] provided the precautions governing emergency dissemination. . .in Paragraph 33. . .are adhered to.

With the way cleared to conduct U.S. cryptologic operations in South Vietnam and to channel [redacted] SIGINT information to the ARVN, the cryptologic agencies began building a cryptologic base in South Vietnam that would satisfy a growing level of requirements for SIGINT. In time, the cryptologic community would not only reorient its [redacted] apparatus to better satisfy those requirements but also increase the level of the commitment manyfold [redacted]

South Vietnam was to become the main SIGINT base for Southeast Asia. Each of the SCA's—as well as NSA—developed major SIGINT facilities in South Vietnam. ASA was the first to deploy a unit there.

ASA and WHITE BIRCH

The first ASA unit to be deployed to South Vietnam had two missions derived from two plans. Its operational mission (embodied in USASA OPLAN 7-61, dated 10 April 1961, and called WHITE BIRCH) was to "increase U.S. COMINT/DF capability against guerrilla communications of Communist forces [redacted] Its training mission (contained in USASA OPLAN 8-61, dated 20 April 1961, and dubbed SABERTOOTH) was to help train the ARVN SIGINT organization in intercept, DF, and processing of plaintext voice communications in accordance with limitations prescribed by USIB on 21 February 1961. These were the ASA plans President Kennedy had approved in a National Security Council meeting on 29 April 1961.

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In accordance with earlier plans, Vice Adm. Laurence H. Frost, the director of NSA, delegated control of the new unit to Maj. Gen. William M. Breckinridge, the commanding general of ASA. Col. Robert T. Walker, the commander of ASAPAC, accordingly assumed command upon deployment, coordinating as necessary with in-country MAAG organizations. For implementation of WHITE BIRCH and SABERTOOTH during the last two months of FY 1962, the Department of Defense made [redacted] available but authorized no additional personnel; all men and most materiel had to come from SIGINT programs of lower priority. From FY 1963 on, funds for the two programs came to ASA from Operations and Maintenance, Army.

ASAPAC assembled the 400th USASA Special Operations Unit (Provisional), at Clark Air Base, Philippines. On 13 May 1961, following authorization by the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, those first 93 men entered South Vietnam as [redacted] 3d Radio Research Unit) at Saigon.

The 3d Radio Research Unit consisted of a headquarters, a supply and maintenance section, a communications center, an operations branch (WHITE BIRCH), and a special training detachment (SABERTOOTH). The unit remained under administrative and operational control [redacted] until September 1961, when it gained separate identity as the 82d Special Operations Unit, responsible to the Chief, ASAPAC. [redacted]

Authorizations to increase the number of SIGINT personnel came in July and December 1961. The July increase was insufficient but, after General Maxwell D. Taylor visited Saigon in October 1961, was authorized 236 men and 18 intercept positions.

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By February 1962, the ASA units were producing COMINT product.

At the end of 1962, the ASA unit at Da Nang moved to Phu Bai, about 450 miles north of Saigon and 10 miles southeast of Hue Not too far from the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the ASA unit at Phu Bai was in a favorable position to intercept North Vietnamese communications and Viet Cong communications

By the end of 1963, Tan Son Nhut with approximately 300 men was providing coverage, primarily on Viet Cong targets.

3d RRU Buildings at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. (1) Old Headquarters; (2) Operations Building; (3) Aviation Section

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Procedures similar to those described for August and September 1963 were in effect for those brief but recurrent times of turmoil for the Government of South Vietnam in the remainder of 1963 and thereafter.

[redacted] Phu Bai by the end of 1963 had enough manpower (about 200 men) and positions to provide [redacted] coverage on Viet Cong communications [redacted]

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WHITEBIRCH, SABERTOOTH, and 7th RRU Area in ARVN Joint General Staff Compound

By December 1962 plans had been made for [redacted] o become a processing center for these voice materials and for collection to be made nearer the sources than Tan Son Nhut. ASA men in the field were also considering the possibility of using indigenous South Vietnamese personnel to transcribe and translate the materials, but USIB authorization to employ the needed South Vietnamese did not come until later.

[redacted]

[redacted]

SABERTOOTH

Closely allied to ASA's collection and processing mission was the SABERTOOTH program under which the United States provided training for South Vietnamese Army personnel in interception, direction finding, and the processing of plaintext [redacted] communications. Before the 3d RRU went to South Vietnam, CAS Saigon, on a limited scale, had been training the ARVN in SIGINT subjects and supplying it with intercept and DF equipment. Specifically, SABERTOOTH would provide for an expansion of ARVN SIGINT activity, and for U.S. guidance, training, and equipment on a scale

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SABERTOOTH Intercept Training Positions

greater than that provided by CAS Saigon.

As a result of preliminary discussions on training facility requirements between members of the 3d RRU and representatives of MAAG Vietnam and ARVN, on 23 May 1961 the ARVN offered one complete building and three rooms in an adjoining one located within the ARVN Signal Compound in the Trai Tran Hung Dao area of Tan Son Nhut. ASA accepted the offer, and a renovation contract to make the buildings suitable for the school was awarded. Renovation began on 26 June. Within the completed building were the commandant's office, the instructor's office, and five classrooms [redacted]

Lt. Col. Nguyen Khoi, the ARVN Chief Signal Officer and officer in charge of the ARVN SIGINT effort, welcomed the unit. At Colonel

Khoi's request, a 1-week informal course of instruction was made ready for presentation at the end of June 1961. The course included an orientation on nomenclature, operation of various pieces of equipment, and basic U.S. Army maintenance systems, as well as practical work on equipment. Also at Colonel Khoi's request, a 39-hour informal special course of instruction on the operation of the [redacted] was presented for 16 ARVN students during August 1961.

Opening day ceremonies were held on 1 September for the beginning of formal courses in traffic analysis and intercept-DF. Dignitaries at the ceremonies included Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr, Chief MAAG, Vietnam; Brig. Gen. Nguyen Khanh, Chief of Staff, Joint General Staff, RVNAF; and other U.S. and South Vietnamese officials.

Regular courses of instruction began three days later. Thirty students enrolled in the intercept-DF course and 15 in the T/A course. On 10 November, 21 students of the first intercept-DF course and 10 of the first T/A course were graduated. General Breckinridge, the chief of USASA, who was visiting the 3d RRU at the time, presented the students with their diplomas.

In the intercept-DF courses, the ARVN students covered [redacted] typing, radio communications procedures, T/A, signal equipment maintenance, intercept techniques, and radio DF. [redacted]

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The major problem affecting SABERTOOTH enrollment was ARVN's difficulty in obtaining qualified students and then getting security clearances for them. Although ARVN had 120 students awaiting SABERTOOTH training as of June 1962, for example, no clearances for them had been received. From August 1962 through March 1963 the school was closed for lack of students. From July 1963 through December 1963, only 116 students were authorized for training.

All equipment delivered to SABERTOOTH was transferred to the ARVN in July 1962. On 1 April 1963, when the school reopened, administrative control of SABERTOOTH was also transferred to the ARVN; five Americans remained to advise the ARVN instructors. The Americans continued in an advisory capacity to the ARVN instructors in the SABERTOOTH program from that time forward.

Redefining the Level of USASA-ARVN Collaboration

In the first year of active collaboration with ARVN in cryptologic matters, close relationships developed between the ASA and ARVN SIGINT organizations as a result of the SABERTOOTH program, technical exchange, and joint operation of the WHITE BIRCH direction finding net that had begun operations in June 1961.

[redacted]

SABERTOOTH Training. U.S. and ARVN Operators [redacted]

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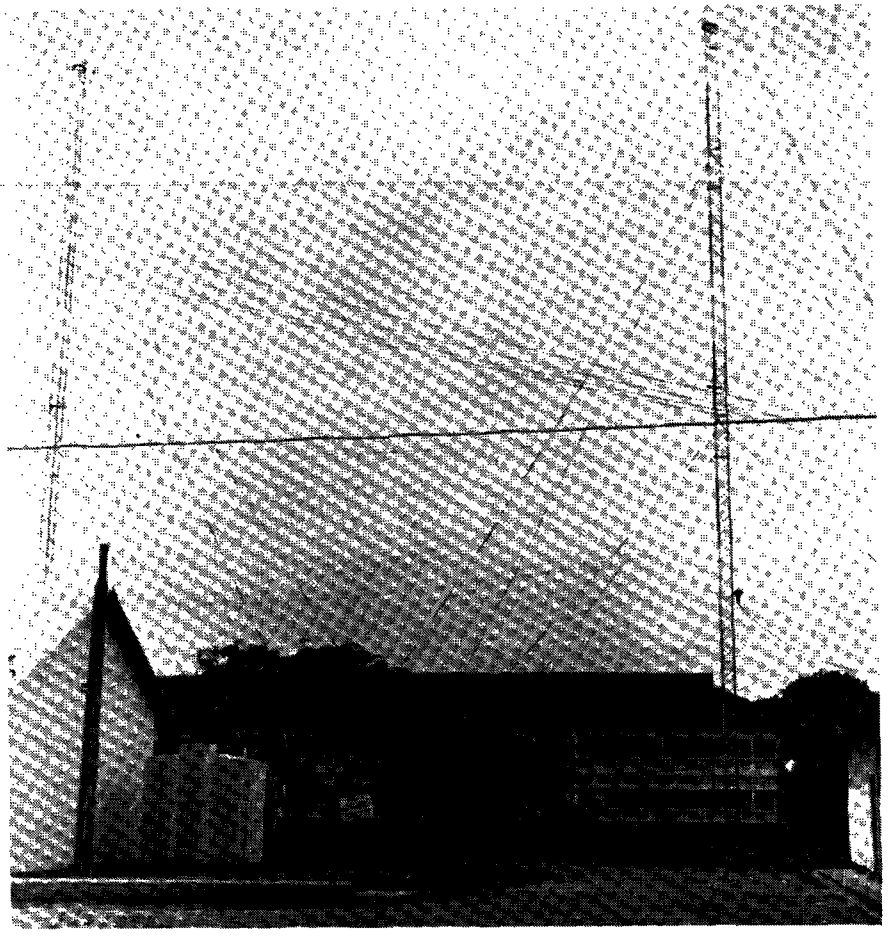

Portion of the WHITEBIRCH Antenna Field

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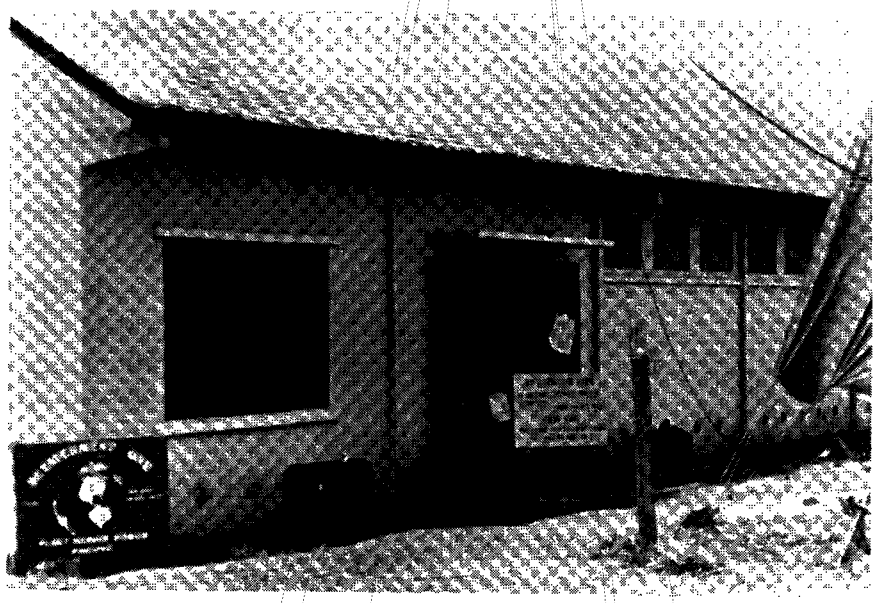

Operations Building of USMC [redacted] Detachment at Pleiku (1962–63)

NAVSECGRU SIGINT Operations

The U.S. Naval Security Group (NAVSECGRU) played its part in the collection of SIGINT in Southeast Asia during the early 1960's.

On the Mainland

In January 1962 a U.S. Marine Corps detachment from [redacted] the 1st Composite Radio Company, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, located in Hawaii, deployed to South Vietnam for SIGINT training operations. Designated [redacted] the detachment was sent to Pleiku where the Marine SIGINT personnel received training under field conditions. Consisting of three officers and forty enlisted men, the unit operated five [redacted] positions installed [redacted] and intercepted [redacted] Laotian, and North Vietnamese communications. The men of the unit were normally rotated after four months in the field, replacements coming from the parent unit in Hawaii. ASA units in the field provided the marines with technical collection materials and coordinated intercept assignments for maximum over-all yield from the combined ASA-NAVSECGRU collection.

Intercept Positions at [redacted] Detachment (1962–63)

After more than a year, [redacted] shifted its base from Pleiku to Phu Bai for operations in conjunction with [redacted] The host ASA unit at Phu Bai provided technical materials to the marine operators and analysts.

The Marine Corps training concept calling for SIGINT training in the field on live targets paid good dividends when Marine Corps units entered combat in 1965. A part of [redacted] and another [redacted] detachment at Da Nang, [redacted] then became the nucleus of [redacted] a Marine SIGINT unit with the mission of providing SIGINT support to tactical commanders in the I Corps Tactical Zone of northern South Vietnam.

Other Marine Corps SIGINT units activated by [redacted] were sent to South Vietnam from time to time for operations. In the spring and summer of 1964, [redacted] was stationed in the northwest corner of the Republic of Vietnam near Khe Sanh. The unit's mission was to search for North Vietnamese [redacted] communications and conduct hearability tests on Laotian [redacted] communications from that area.

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AFSS Operations in South Vietnam

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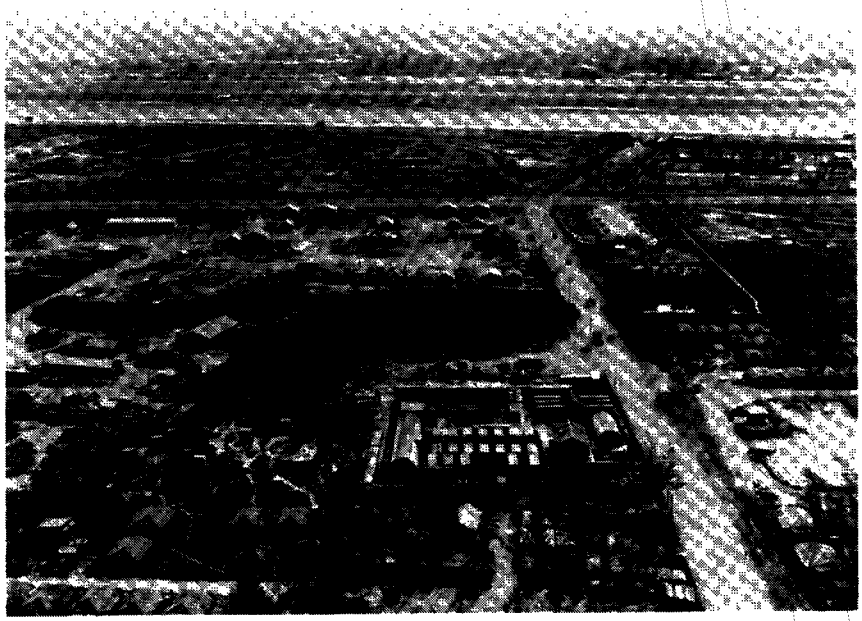

Aerial View of Da Nang

In July 1962, when AFSS revised its organization for Southeast Asia, the newly formed 6923d Radio Squadron at Tan Son Nhut became the principal AFSS headquarters for SEA, with Detachment 1 at Da Nang

[redacted] Initially the squadron headquarters would be manned by 3 officers and 30 airmen and Detachment 1 by 2 officers and 46 airmen.

[redacted]

By the end of 1963, most of the AFSS operations in South Vietnam were concentrated in the Da Nang area. The AFSS installation [redacted] had 11 positions working on North Vietnamese [redacted] communications.

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Soon after the arrival of the first ASA element in Vietnam in May 1961, the [redacted] net was established. On 14 June 1961 the ASA DF site [redacted] located near Nha Trang (on the coast about 25 miles north of Cam Ranh Bay) became operational as the first element of the [redacted] net. By the end of that month, the net, at the time manned by U.S. personnel only, had in operation three stations [redacted] and a control at Tan Son Nhut. In November 1961 a fourth [redacted] site, manned by the first group of ARVN personnel to be trained under SABERTOOTH, began operations in the net.

During 1962 the [redacted] net gradually expanded and employed increasing numbers of ARVN DF specialists. In January two additional fixed sites, manned by ARVN personnel and supervised by U.S. NCO's, as well as a U.S.-manned mobile detachment, began operations. At the end of that month, in addition to the mobile detachment, the [redacted] net consisted of six fixed sites: three, at Nha Trang, Can Tho, and Bien Hoa, manned by U.S. personnel; and three, at Pleiku, Da Nang, and Ban Me Thuot, manned by ARVN personnel. In June 1962, after an interchange of personnel between

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these sites, ARVN personnel under U.S. supervision were manning four of the six DF stations. The Bien Hoa unit [redacted] in June moved to Phu Bai, where it became part of the [redacted] DF net, [redacted] Both at Da Nang and after its move to Phu Bai at the end of 1962, [redacted] acted as alternate net control station for the [redacted] Net Control Station at Tan Son Nhut.

[redacted]

By the end of June 1964, and after the relocation of several of its units to more favorable locations, the net contained the net control station at Saigon an alternate NCS at Phu Bai and DF sites at Song Mao, Can Tho, Pleiku, Con Son, and Phu Bai

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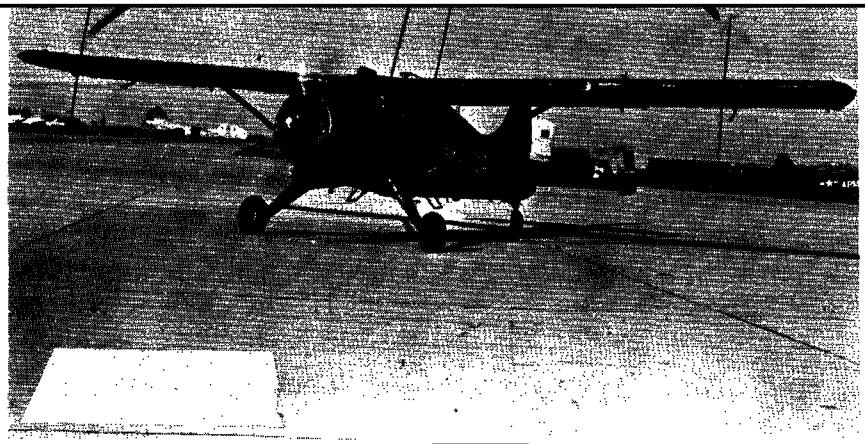

L–20A Beaver [redacted] Aircraft

[redacted] In the Saigon area on 22 December 1961, for example, SP4 James T. Davis—a 3d RRU enlisted man–and nine ARVN men were killed when a truck in which they were riding was ambushed. Davis was the first ASA man killed in action in Vietnam; [redacted]

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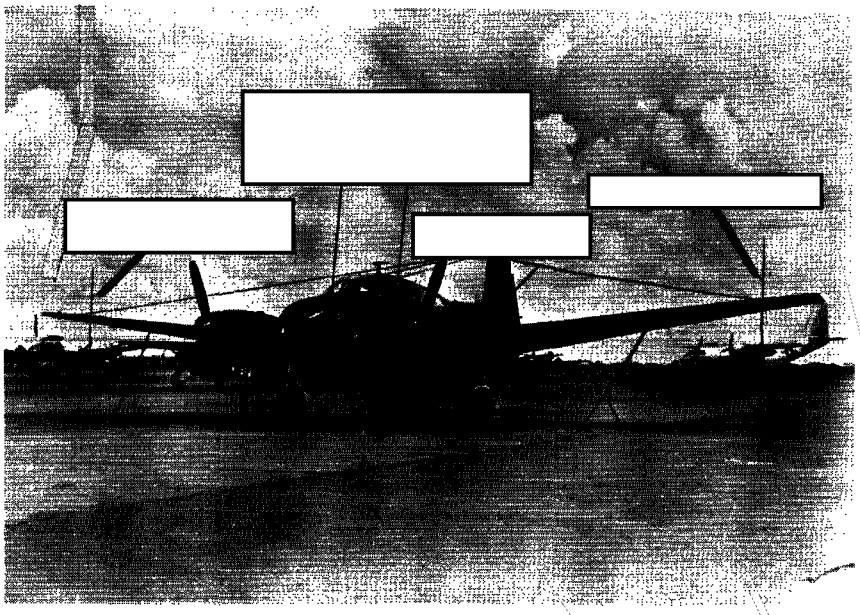

L-23D Seminole [redacted] Aircraft

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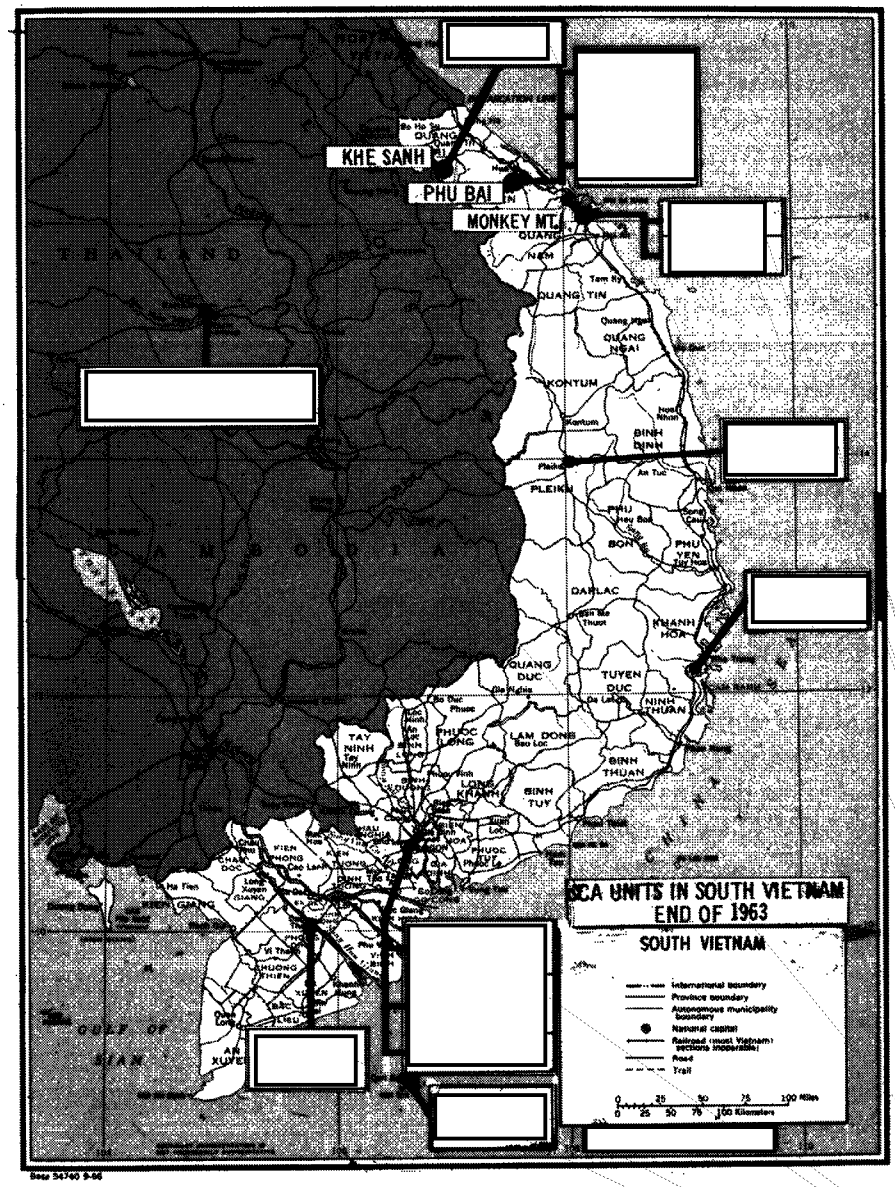
SIGINT Support of U.S. Officials in Saigon

After the 3d RRU arrived in South Vietnam, the Evaluation Center of J-2 MAAG was established in the U.S. Embassy in Saigon as the intelligence unit that would facilitate the use of SIGINT. The Special



Security Officer (SSO), Saigon, became responsible for the center's operation, coordinating input, product, security, and so forth. He also acted as the Army's SIGINT advisor to Chief MAAG concerning release of COMINT to the South Vietnamese.

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Personnel to staff the Evaluation Center came from the SSO Office, CAS Saigon, the Army attache office at the Embassy, the Evaluation and Research Division of MAAG, and the 3d RRU. NSAPAC provided one man on TDY who became in effect a SIGINT technical liaison officer between NSAPAC and the chief of the Evaluation Center. His function was to review information passing between [redacted] and the analysts in the Evaluation Center.

The Evaluation Center operated from November 1961 to 2 February 1962, when General Harkins assumed command as the senior U.S. officer in Vietnam in a position directly subordinate to CINCPAC. As COMUSMACV, General Harkins set up a new headquarters and revised the lines of staff action and command gradually, while the Chief MAAG continued to operate his own organization. In this gradual change, the Evaluation Center was reconstituted with new personnel as the Current Intelligence and Planning Branch, J-2, and was housed in the MACV headquarters building. The first series of SIGINT-based reports from the new J-2 branch began appearing on 20 April 1962.

Many of those in the new J-2 MACV unit were not only new to their jobs, but new to SIGINT and even to intelligence work, though they had some training at Fort Holabird before going overseas. The analysis of SIGINT information depended heavily on individuals loaned on TDY by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), by Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (ACSI), Department of the Army, and by U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC). NSAPAC at first furnished specialists, one at a time, to help interpret SIGINT, but in response to the interest shown by CINCPAC and by the Secretary of Defense, provided a man on PCS orders who became known as the NSAPAC Resident Intelligence Research Analyst, Vietnam (RIRAV). His affiliation with NSA was classified.

After the first deployments of SCA units to South Vietnam, NSA officials also recognized that an NSAPAC representative in Saigon could facilitate the SIGINT service [redacted] needed to perform the growing NSA technical support mission for those SCA units. The first NSAPAC Representative Vietnam

~~(C)~~ (NRV(C)), [redacted] and two members of his staff were in Saigon by April of 1962.* [redacted]

The newly established J-2 MACV employed SIGINT from the day of its activation, and it undertook actions that fostered the growth of the cryptologic service it was receiving. [redacted]

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CHAPTER III

Supporting the Mainland Base

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Processing and Reporting by NSA

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[redacted] The SCA Pacific chiefs at the time were Col. George A. Godding for ASAPAC, Capt. Frank B. Mason for NAVSECGRUPAC, and Col. James F. Berry for PACSCTYRGN.

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Language Problems

As field collection grew, it inevitably magnified manyfold the requirement for Vietnamese linguists to cope with [redacted] language materials. U.S. personnel with the ability to read Vietnamese texts were in short supply, and people competent to deal with spoken Vietnamese, with very few exceptions, were not to be found. [redacted] The linguist problem became worse, not better, in the ensuing months, despite a training program then underway at NSA.

SIGINT Reporting

NSA SIGINT reporting on Vietnamese Communist, Pathet Lao [redacted] counterbalanced and supplemented that of SCA personnel in the field. Generally, NSA product was of the wrap-up variety, incorporating SIGINT produced [redacted] by U.S. field stations, and by NSA itself.

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Communications Facilities in Southeast Asia

In the early 1960's the U.S. facilities for communications between Southeast Asia and the outside world were very limited. The MAAG Saigon network had fourteen terminals; the Navy had, for emergency purposes only, a 500-watt transmitter in Saigon for Fleet broadcast; the

Air Force had three point-to-point voice teletype channels. Between early 1960 and the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964, as the U.S. commitment in SEA grew, the communications facilities expanded slowly, principally because of limited funding. Often equipment had to be obtained by cannibalizing other Pacific installations.

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Once a basic CRITICOMM system is installed, additional circuits may be obtained by submitting requirements to the Defense Communications Agency (DCA) for Defense Communications System (DCS) service. Concurrently, requests are submitted to local commanders who validate or disapprove the requests in light of existing and programmed systems and communications plans. A normal lead-time for overseas circuits has been about 60 days for processing and implementation after DCA receives the request. Requirements for support of combat missions or emergency tasks can be processed in less time. Compared with the normal lead-time for the procurement of teletypewriter equipment—7 or 8 months—or for cryptographic equipment—12 to 18 months—DCS's service for CRITICOMM circuits has been excellent.

[redacted]

[redacted] The first CRITICOMM facility to be established in South Vietnam was at [redacted] Tan Son Nhut; it became operational in June 1961. The latter CRITICOMM facility had two temporary circuits [redacted]

In the early 1960's, ASA and AFSS were plagued with communications difficulties, quantitatively and qualitatively; NAVSECGRU was not greatly involved in SEA mainland problems until after the Gulf of Tonkin incident and therefore did not suffer from lack of communications as much as the other two agencies. Naval Security Group DSU's on board attack aircraft carriers and on special mission vessels operating in the Gulf of Tonkin area handled SIGINT communications. The DSU's usually used their own on-line and off-line encryption devices and communicated their intelligence by ship-to-shore communications [redacted] handled the material via regular channels.

In 1962 and 1963 AFSS had to develop circuits for SIGINT communications between its own units and the 2d Advanced Squadron at Tan Son Nhut. [redacted] For this connection, the Air Force Communications Service (AFCS) made a channel available in its single sideband system. Meanwhile, CINCPAC directed ASA to supply two circuits between Da Nang and Tan Son Nhut— one for ASA and one for AFSS. At the time, the Army was also installing its own administrative network—STARCOMM—which was to supply circuits among Saigon, Okinawa, and the Philippines, along with two circuits directly to the JSPC at Sobe, Okinawa.

Other arrangements were also evolving. The Secretary of Defense had approved funds for an 18,000-square-foot communications facility in Saigon for the Army STARCOMM center and offered 900 square feet to NSA for a CRITICOMM relay station. The Pacific Security Region began negotiations with NSA for a full duplex AFSSO circuit and two full duplex SIGINT circuits for its unit at Da Nang. The Secretary of Defense had also directed that a 24-channel troposcatter system be established between Saigon and Bangkok. A single sideband system between Bangkok and Clark was approved, but no funds were provided and space at Clark was not available—a situation that often existed up to Tonkin.

At Tan Son Nhut, secure terminal facilities were adequate, but the available circuits left much to be desired operationally. The circuit eventually opened between Tan Son Nhut and PCRS Clark, for example,

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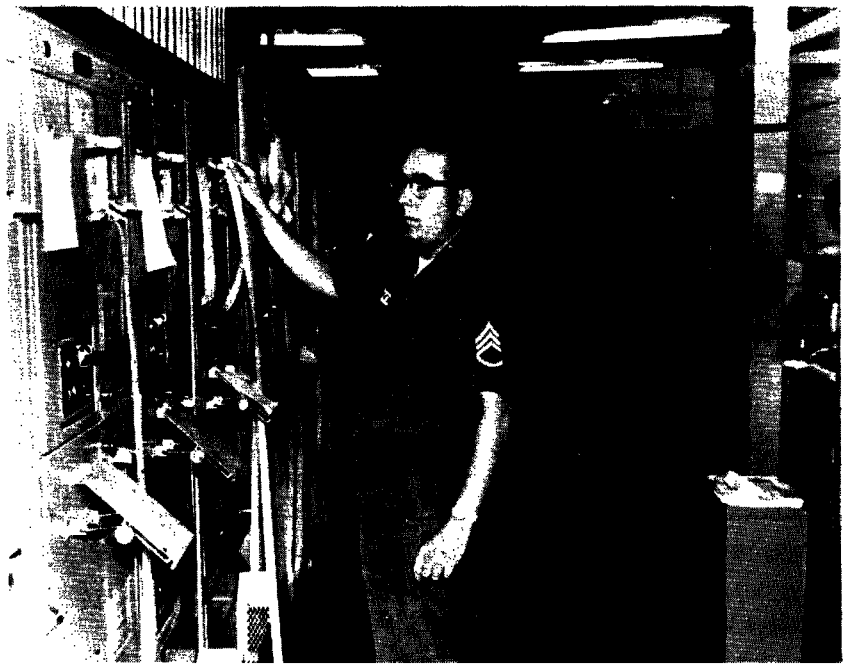

Receive Positions, Interim CRS Saigon (1963–64)

proved unreliable. Another circuit, which came into early use between Tan Son Nhut and Da Nang, one of special interest to the 2d Advance Squadron, also proved unreliable. In all, communications problems would not find relief until a CRITICOMM relay station (CRS) was installed in Saigon.

ASA early recognized the need for a permanent CRS Saigon and was ready to assume responsibility for it. In late 1961, anticipating a CRS Saigon, ASA earmarked personnel to operate the station. Next, it withdrew old Kleinschmidt teletype from Okinawa and Japan and other ASAPAC communications terminals and had the equipment overhauled in California. Thus, ASA needed only authority to proceed.

NSA informed JCS in late December 1961 that the then-growing SIGINT base in South Vietnam and the projected increase in related communications requirements established the need for a CRS in the Saigon area. DIRNSA recommended that concerned CRITICOMM project officers convene to determine the over-all CRITICOMM circuit requirements for such a CRS and the assignment of the responsibility for the provision and operation thereof. Specifically, DIRNSA

Transmit Positions, Interim CRS Saigon

recommended the immediate establishment of an interim CRITICOMM relay station, with assignment of responsibility to ASA.

Following the meeting, held in January 1962, JCS concurred in NSA's recommendations, and the commanding general of ASA was directed to prepare a plan for immediate expansion of the 3d RRU operation in Saigon to include an interim CRS utilizing resources currently available to the Army. Thus, the groundwork for the interim CRS was laid.

Plans for the interim CRS called for 14 full-duplex circuits, new equipment, new design, and procurement of new space, but ASA, in the absence of funding, had to use the old Kleinschmidt equipment, two circuits "acquired" [redacted] Communications Center, which was expanded and used as a relay. Enough equipment was installed by May 1962 for the communications facility, located in a Tan Son Nhut hangar, to be officially designated CRS Saigon. CRS Saigon began operating with six circuits. After a short phasing-in period, the interim CRS Saigon became fully operational in July 1962.

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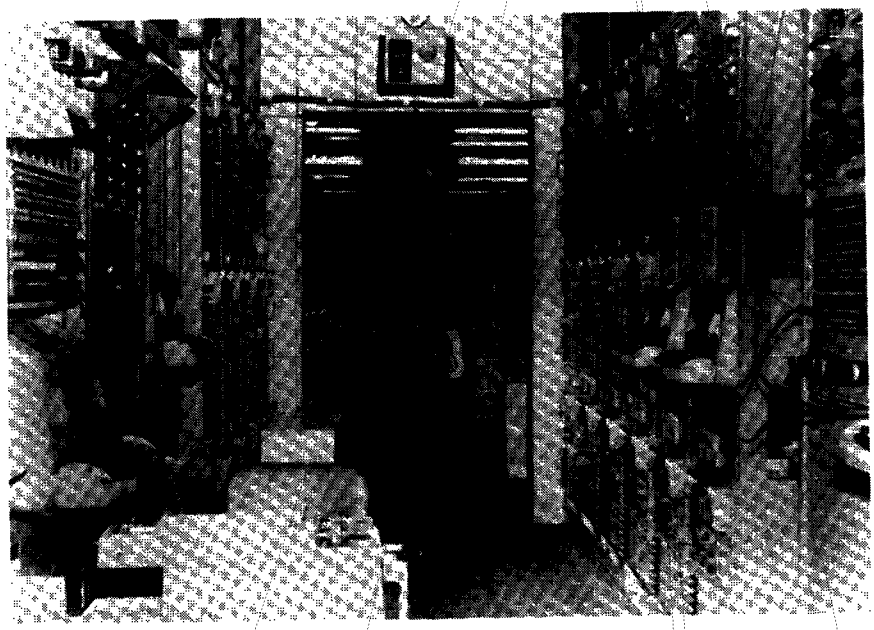
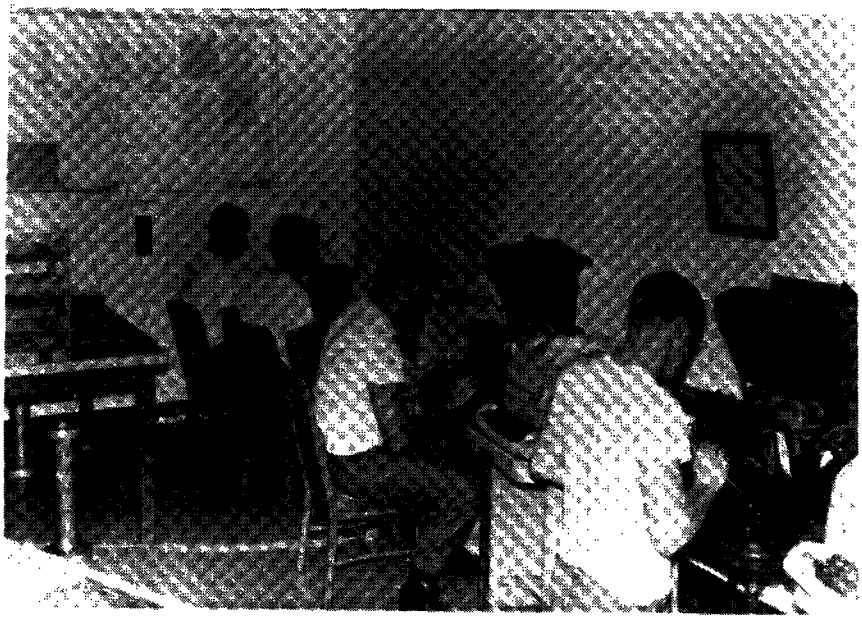


Control and Crypto Equipment, Interim CRS Saigon

Operationally, J-6 MACV handled local communications problems of the new facility, and the NSAPAC communications representative dealt with problems of performance and expansion of CRITICOMM. [redacted] Soon it added two circuits to [redacted] and one each to [redacted] (Da Nang), SSO MACV (Saigon), and AFSSO 2d Air Division (Saigon). By March 1963, it had a second circuit [redacted]

Operations began in the spring of 1963 to establish a communications center for [redacted] after that unit moved to Phu Bai from Da Nang. First, the Da Nang–Saigon circuit that served the ASA unit at Da Nang was installed at the Phu Bai site. In 1964, with engineering services under Bendix contract, a new communications facility, incorporating DCA Red/Black engineering installation criteria, was established to service the growing SIGINT base at Phu Bai. NSAPAC Representative, Japan, provided some equipment and ASAPAC provided other material such as patch panels, final line filter, and rectifiers from Korea, the Philippines, Saigon, and other locations plus $1,500.00 for the purchase of other necessary hardware in Bangkok.



Poking Positions, Interim CRS Saigon

The unreliability of the circuitry was a major problem confronting NSA, the SCA's, and the Bendix engineers, but improvement was made in rate of transmission, if not in circuit reliability. In 1962 the rate of transmission at several of the terminals was raised from 60 to 100 words per minute, and in 1963 similar improvements were made at other terminals.

By January 1964 there were eight CRITICOMM facilities in operation in Southeast Asia. (See chart.) Four served ASA activities; one, AFSS; two, Army Special Security Offices; and one, an Air Force Special Security Office. CRITICOMM circuits supporting these activities were carrying an impressive load—in January 1964 alone, the circuits handled over [redacted] transmitted groups.

[redacted]

routing entailed usage of aperiodically reliable HF circuits supplied by the Defense Communications System. During the early months of 1964, the reliability of the circuits ranged from a low of about 30 percent to a high of about 75 percent. In-country circuits from CRS Saigon to USM-626J at Phu Bai and USA-32 at Da Nang were routed over a

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more reliable tropospheric scatter system, the reliability of which ran about 85 to 90 percent.

Throughout the period of the interim CRS Saigon, the need to modernize the communications and security equipment was manifest in Vietnam and at NSA. When the interim CRS began operations in May 1962, it handled [redacted] groups per month. By summer 1964 it was handling [redacted] groups a month. The Kleinschmidt teletype equipment was still in operation but was requiring almost continuous repair. Through a revision of the CCP, NSA obtained funds for new, superior equipment for CRS Saigon. With the funds, the logistics staff of Headquarters, USASA, provided unitized trailer components for the new facility. The Bendix Corporation, under an ASA contract, installed standard M–28 TTY and associated signal equipment which was modified to meet CRITICOMM standards. The NRV(C) was also given office space in the new CRS installation and NSA provided him with some TTY equipment. As construction progressed, ASA, under its Bendix contract, increased his office's communications capability and provided supporting circuits and crypto equipment. The new interim CRITICOMM installation was completed in October 1964.

Apart from establishing the CRS Saigon for communications on the mainland, several other communications projects in the 1960–64 period are notable. In October 1963, a telephone ciphony complex secured by the KY–3 (speech security) became operational in Saigon.

Another special communications arrangement in 1964 called for the installation of OPSCOMM equipment for interchange between the Special Operations Group of MACV in downtown Saigon and a section of the NSAPAC Representative Vietnam's Office, the Special Support Group.

Still another communications project, WETWASH, began in this period. In 1963 improved long-line communications in the Pacific were desperately needed. [redacted] it was not known how much larger the SIGINT organization in SEA would become. Project WETWASH, looked upon as a solution to many of the problems encountered in SEA communications, called for a submarine cable between Vietnam and the Philippines. Work on the project progressed in 1963–64, and the cable became operational in February 1965.

[redacted]

The first CRITICOMM circuits rerouted over the WETWASH cable were the ones between CRS Saigon [redacted] Within a month of the cable's activation, five additional CRITICOMM circuits were being routed or rerouted over the system. These included a circuit from CRS Saigon to PCRS Fort Meade, which for the first time provided a direct CRITICOMM capability between DIRNSA and Saigon. [redacted] Rerouting these circuits over the cable system represented an immediate and significant improvement in the CRITICOMM capability in the SEA area.

A unique communications development of the early period was achieved by the Navy. This development—the Technical Research Ship Special Communications System (TRSSCOMM), commonly known as "moon-bounce transmission"—had its genesis in the long-standing requirement that the Navy technical research ships (TRS's) have a two-way ship-to-shore long-haul tactical communications capability that would also be secure, [redacted] The obstacles to effective

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communication via HF ship-to-shore radio were many: the remote locations of TRS operations and varying propagation characteristics of the areas made ship-to-shore communications unreliable; HF transmissions [redacted] HF transmissions were vulnerable to foreign direction finding and jamming.

TRSSCOMM as originally planned in the early 1960's was expected to overcome all these problems. TRSSCOMM was to be a two-way ship-to-shore tactical communications system wherein TRS's anywhere in the world would transmit by beaming microwave emissions toward the moon, which would act as a passive reflector of electromagnetic energy and bounce the emissions back to four receiving stations located around the world at 90 degree quadrants (Cheltenham, Maryland; Wahiawa, Hawaii; Sobe, Okinawa; Oakhanger, United Kingdom). [redacted]

By February 1964 the system had been researched, developed, tested, and evaluated to the point that it needed only operational activation. Therefore TRSSCOMM was installed on the USS *Oxford* and at Cheltenham, a link was activated between the two, and the ensuing successful communications proved the feasibility of the concept. The Navy then authorized full system implementation on all TRS's and at all four shore sites, and by a remarkable coincidence of timing had the *Oxford* and the *Jamestown* TRS's and the Cheltenham and Wahiawa shore sites operationally ready when the Gulf of Tonkin incident prompted the deployment of two TRS's to the Southeast Asian theater. [redacted]

*The TRSSCOMM will be treated in detail in a future volume in the series.

CHAPTER IV

Expanding the Mainland Base

In October 1963 U.S. officials were optimistic about the situation in Vietnam. RVN military operations conducted in 1962 had had a restraining effect on Viet Cong insurgency, and the strategic hamlet program was achieving its objectives. Officials were, in fact, considering withdrawal of some of the 10,000 U.S. advisory forces then in Vietnam. Goal of the reduction for COMUSMACV was 1,000 men. To forestall any decreases in the cryptologic ceiling in South Vietnam, DIRNSA notified the JCS that the SIGINT organization in Vietnam required more resources, not fewer, [redacted] The November 1963 overthrow of the Diem government and the January 1964 coup of General Nguyen Khanh brought a re-evaluation of the U.S. position. The previous reports of progress in the counterinsurgency field proved, upon re-examination, to have been too optimistic.

As 1964 began, NSA and SCA SIGINT planners were also examining their position in the light of developments and were considering what course of action to pursue in the months ahead. The SIGINT planners at the beginning of 1964 could look back with some satisfaction at what had been accomplished in the 1961–63 period. They had responded within the theater to the numerous requirements [redacted] Still there was much to be done. [redacted]

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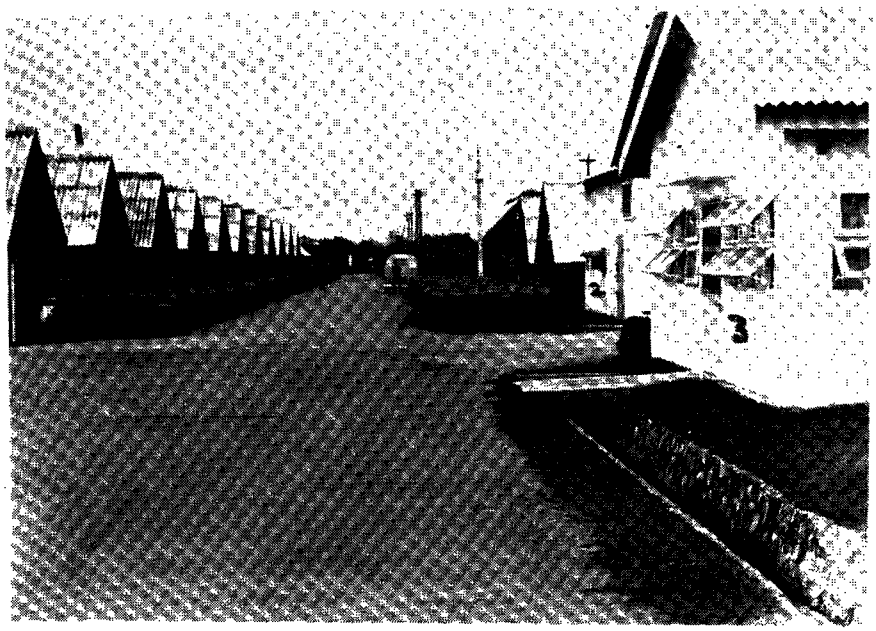
The NSA force was not geared, moreover, to a peak level of productivity, and this, too, was a matter of concern.

Other events in 1964 brought fresh concern over the adequacy of the SEA SIGINT organization.

Assessing the SIGINT requirements already in hand and others which were anticipated, the SIGINT planners revised upward their estimates of resources needed to do the job. For a while, they attempted to satisfy requirements one at a time, but eventually they decided that only a major SIGINT augmentation could guarantee a genuine SIGINT response. They then began planning for that major augmentation.

New Requirements



"Davis Station," 3d RRU Cantonment Area. (1) Billets; (2) Arms Storage Area; (3) Dayroom (1964)

[redacted] personnel ceilings to some extent barred a fast buildup of the SIGINT organization in South Vietnam. In November 1963 CINCPAC had directed COMUSMACV to control and coordinate in-country strengths in accordance with CINCPAC instructions. In the same month, CINCPAC notified the JCS that any expansion above a base of 660 for the 3d RRU units at Tan Son Nhut and Phu Bai would be considered only upon receipt of justification. The AFSS ceiling at this point was 79 men. COMUSMACV therefore had to accomodate any increases desired in the cryptologic strength in Vietnam within his military personnel ceilings. When this could not be done, NSA had to seek JCS concurrence and CINCPAC approval for the desired increases. [redacted] the need for SIGINT support of [redacted] operations brought some relaxation of personnel ceilings, and in February 1964, CINCPAC approved a 130-man increase [redacted]

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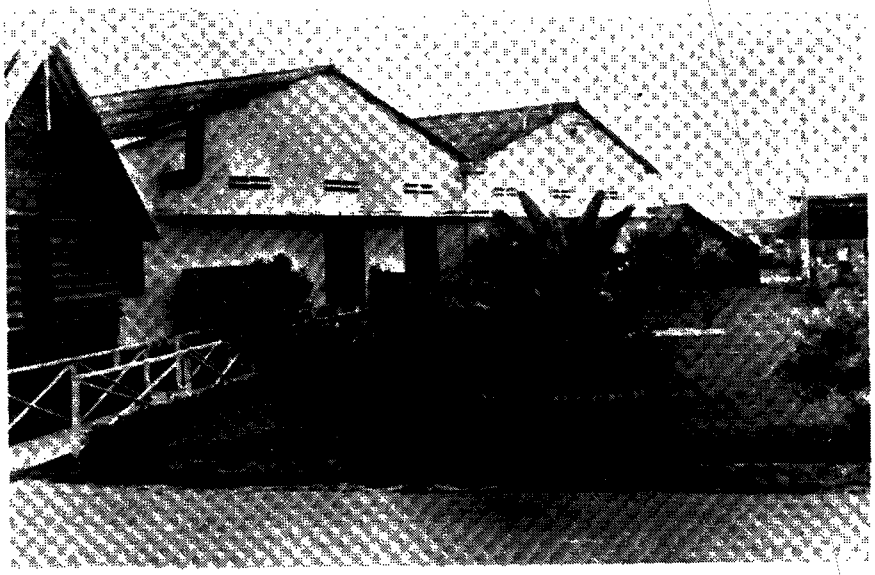

Entrance to Snack Bar at Davis Station

*Sometimes referred to as the SIGINT Support Group.
**Also referred to by the cover name, Studies and Observation Group.

In early 1964 the United States suspected that during ground operations Viet Cong troops were using the area just inside the Cambodian border as a sanctuary. At the time Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia was rather vociferous in his condemnation of the United States and in his praise of Red China and Ho Chi Minh.

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Communist China and North Vietnam

Indications of increased military collaboration between Communist China and North Vietnam had been accumulating for a long time. In 1962 the North Vietnamese had begun to construct the Phuc Yen airfield—obviously designing it as a combat air base. In May 1963 Liu Shao Chi, President of the Chinese People's Republic, visited Hanoi, and in June and July a high-level NVN military mission toured important military bases in south and southwest China (Kunming, Mengtzu, Nanning, Haikou, Canton, and Peking). In September 1963 and February 1964, two high-level NVN military conferences were held at Mengtzu—the last meeting being followed by unusual NVN-CHICOM Air Force transportation activity involving Hanoi, Dien Bien Phu, Mengtzu, and Ssumao. In June and July 1964, a series of high-level Sino-NVN conferences was held at Peking, Hanoi, and Kunming.

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[redacted] as early as 1962 the North Vietnamese and Chinese had reached a joint decision to challenge the increased U.S. support of the South Vietnamese in their war against the Viet Cong and to prepare for escalation of hostilities in SEA, specifically within South Vietnam and Laos. [redacted]

In June 1964 Colonel Morrison, Chief of NSAPAC, summed up for CINCPAC the reasons why the SIGINT personnel ceiling in South Vietnam should be raised. He noted the need for enlarging SIGINT operations against North Vietnam, Pathet Lao, [redacted] Colonel Morrison then conveyed to CINCPAC DIRNSA's request for authorization of an additional 275 persons in South Vietnam. CINCPAC approval at the end of June 1964 cleared the way for SVN expansion by an additional 39 positions.

Southeast Asia Expansion Program

While SIGINT planners undertook programs one at a time to keep pace with the requirements, in the first half of 1964 they were working on a major plan for building up the SIGINT base in South Vietnam [redacted] SCA chiefs, in particular, had expressed the need for a long-range plan for Southeast Asian augmentation that would permit orderly SCA planning, programming, and budgeting.

The SIGINT planners concluded early in 1964 that the Consolidated Cryptologic Program increases already scheduled for Southeast Asia would have to be revised upward in the categories of personnel, equipment, and physical plant. Therefore, after discussion and review at the Washington and theater levels, a major SIGINT augmentation plan for Southeast Asia was readied in early summer 1964. Approved by Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor in Saigon and accepted by USIB and the JCS, the plan specified development of Phu Bai as a major U.S. collection base, collocation of a NAVSECGRU element with the ASA unit at Phu Bai, [redacted] a

collection level of 110 positions in South Vietnam in contrast to the 39 that existed before 1964.

On 20 July 1964 General Blake, DIRNSA, reported to Dr. Eugene G. Fubini, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, on the plans to enlarge SIGINT operations in Southeast Asia and on other factors on which the success of the expansion program would depend. After noting steps already being taken to improve the SEA SIGINT production higher ceilings for cryptologic personnel—General Blake indicated that the immediate requirements for personnel and equipment would be met within the then approved level of resources by diverting men and equipment from other programs.

Also on 20 July 1964, DIRNSA forwarded to the SCA chiefs the detailed SEA plan. The plan called for an increase of 56 collection positions in excess of the then approved FY 1965 program at designated collection sites on the SEA mainland. The target date for achieving the revised FY 1965 collection objective and for transferring personnel to the mainland would be 1 January 1965 or as soon thereafter as feasible. Moreover, the detailed plan required the SCA's to relocate a total of approximately 20 positions and associated analytic and reporting personnel

To satisfy the more immediate need for resources on the SEA mainland, men and equipment had to be drawn from other areas and problems, and NSA provided the SCA's with compensatory reductions in other programs for FY 1965.

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At the time NSA forwarded the Southeast Asia Expansion Plan to the SCA's for execution, the total ceiling for cryptologic personnel in South Vietnam was approximately 1,200 men. In implementation of the initial phases of the plan, this ceiling would rise to 1,747 men in September 1964. Of this total ASA accounted for 1,322, AFSS for 246, NAVSECGRU and NSA for the remainder.

ASA in South Vietnam

Plans developed increases at Phu Bai. spurred augmentation at Tan Son Nhut, major buildup of the two ASA sites. transfer to the

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Phu Bai site. [redacted] By 11 February 1964, the additional personnel and equipment [redacted] were in place at Phu Bai and ready to operate. [redacted]

By 1 March 1964, the strength of [redacted] had risen to 176 personnel. Position productivity (total minutes of copy versus total minutes of assigned coverage) was daily increasing as operators became more familiar with their targets. [redacted]

In early summer of 1964, ASA had a number of expansion tasks on which it was working. [redacted] facilities for the 80–90 additional ASA and NAVSECGRU personnel at Phu Bai would be needed, and the accommodations at Phu Bai were already overtaxed, housing and storage being critical.

There was another, more serious problem for which there was no absolute remedy. The increased deployment concentrated a large number of military personnel and much sensitive equipment in an exposed area, compounding the risk that Phu Bai would become a prime Viet Cong target. Those steps that could be taken for the physical security were taken. At Phu Bai, the ASA unit established radio contact with the nearby ARVN National Training Center, which normally had at least one ARVN regiment in residence. In addition, the ARVN division and corps headquarters and a U.S. Marine detachment were on call to augment the Phu Bai security forces. The question of security at Phu Bai was examined by MACV, the 3d RRU, DIRNSA, and CGUSASA during the first half of 1964. [redacted] the risks involved and the discomforts from inadequate accommodations, but the problems were not any the less real.

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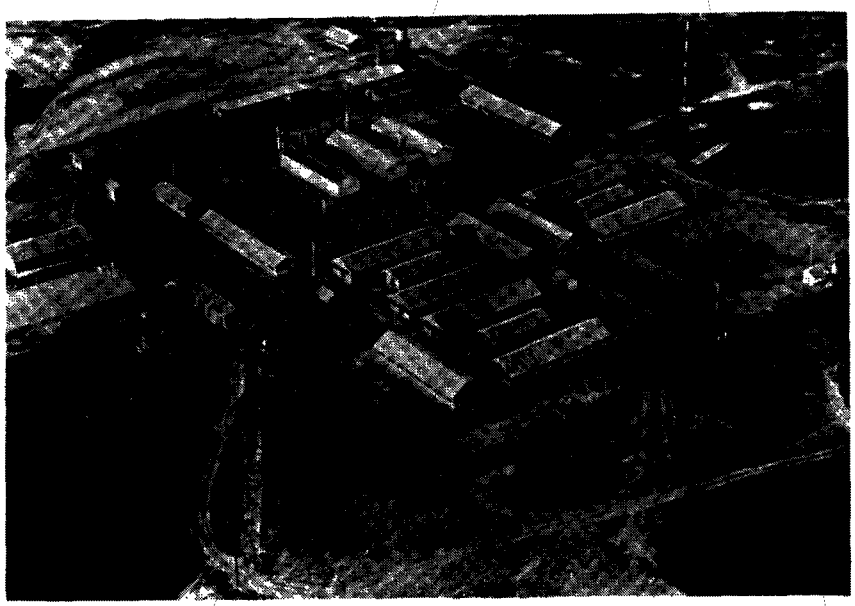
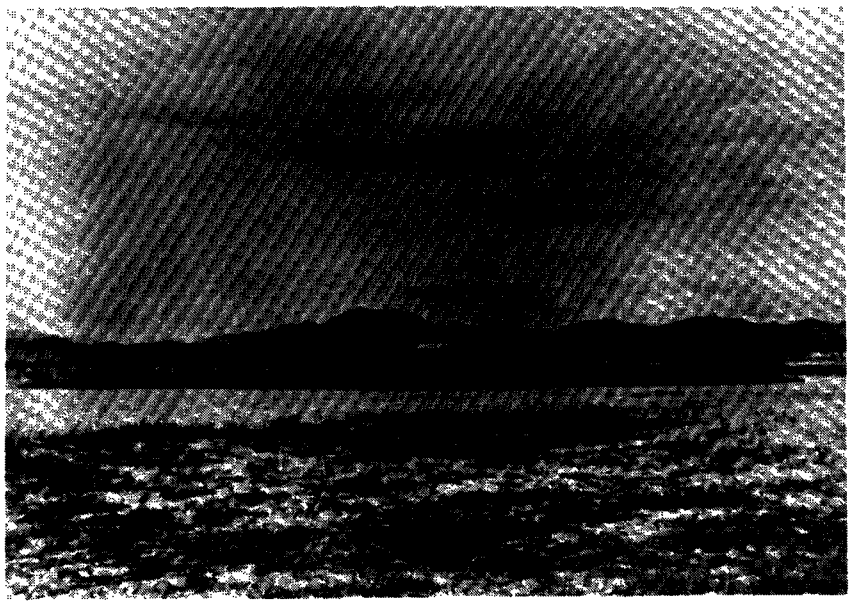


[redacted] Buildings at Phu Bai in 1964 Before the Major Expansion

[redacted]



DF Site at [redacted] Phu Bai, 1964

[redacted]

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[redacted]

Expansion Plan

In July 1964 DIRNSA formally notified ASA that its SIGINT organization in South Vietnam would be increased on a major scale as part of the Southeast Asia expansion plan. The planned augmentation included additional communications facilities at [redacted] and a raise in the ASA personnel ceiling in South Vietnam from 800 to approximately 1,350 men. The ASA base at Phu Bai was the cornerstone of the expansion plan. [redacted]

In the expansion plan, ASA not only had to more than double its collection and processing base, it also had to build a large SIGINT facility to carry out the expanded mission. General Craig noted in a July 1964 letter to General Blake that the "primary bottleneck" would be "construction of facilities and provision of services."

In response to the requirements, ASAPAC developed an increased TD for [redacted] augmentation, its major problem. The buildup provided for approximately 100 installed positions, with sustained operation of 66.16 and provision for a 1,000-man unit. The NAVSECGRU detachment was to man 11 of the 100 positions. ASA was to provide accommodations for the collocated NAVSECGRU men. The planned ASA organization at Phu Bai included a headquarters and headquarters company with security guards to man eleven posts 24 hours a day, a service company (strength, 221) for operational control, [redacted] radiotelephone collection, processing, and operations maintenance and logistic support, and an operations company (strength, 338) [redacted] the augmentation plans called for greatly increased coverage of North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao targets [redacted]

Since normal programming, budgeting, and construction procedures would not meet Phu Bai's needs in time, ASA used pre-engineered (unitized) trailer components, or combinations thereof, complete with ancillary generators and hardware, which were available in the United States. In this way on-site construction was limited to site preparation, roads, fencing, exterior utilities, and concrete slabs for the main buildings and power plant. In using prefabricated structures, design and

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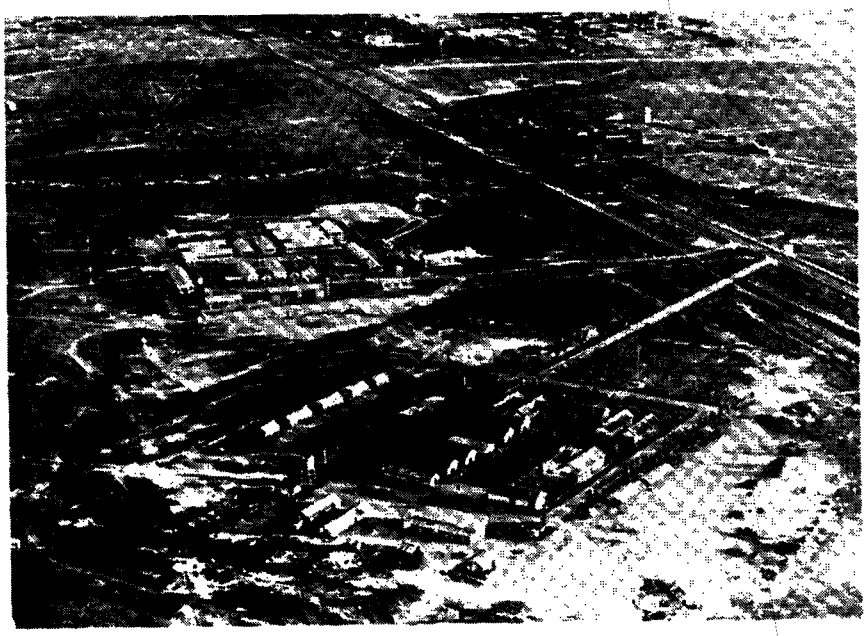

Phu Bai, September 1964. 34th ARVN Artillery Post in Foreground; Route 1 and Railroad at right

construction times were reduced, gold flow problems overcome, and construction problems simplified.

Phu Bai construction was scheduled to be completed by 1 January 1965. While the major construction project caused some slippage in the target date, it was not significant in view of the scale of the expansion. In June 1965, Lt. Gen. Marshall S. Carter, USA, who had become DIRNSA on 1 June, reported to Assistant Secretary of Defense Fubini and USIB that the planned expansion at Phu Bai was virtually complete as of 15 May 1965.*

AFSS in South Vietnam

*DIRNSA Memorandum to ASD and USIB, Serial: N 0708, 9 June 1965 (TSCW NOFORN).

AFSS Da Nang detachment USA-32 had gradually grown into an operational complex [redacted] The detachment acquired a small new building in March 1964 that had been built for Air Force Communications Service operations. [redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted] One of the major advantages of airborne platforms was that, despite their cost, they did not need a ground site—always difficult to establish in an area such as Southeast Asia. [redacted]

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The Southeast Asia Expansion Plan specified augmentation of the AFSS station at Da Nang.

NAVSECGRU in South Vietnam

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A new phase in the U.S. role in Southeast Asia was about to begin.

*The Gulf of Tokin incident will be treated in detail in a future volume in the series.

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Selected List of Abbreviations

[redacted]

AFCS	Air Force Communications Service
AFSSO	Air Force special security officer
APSF	Armed Public Security Forces
ARDF	airborne direction finding
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
CAS	Controlled American Source
CCU	COMINT contingency unit
COMUSMACV	Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
COSVN	Central Office for South Vietnam
CRC	combat reporting center
DCS	Defense Communications System
DSB	Defense Signals Branch
DSD	Defense Signals Division
DSU	direct support unit

[redacted]

GCI	ground controlled intercept
HFDF	high frequency direction finding

[redacted]

LNA	Liberation News Agency
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACTHAI	Military Assistance Command, Thailand
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MRDF	medium – range direction finding
NCS	net control station
NLF	National Liberation Front
NRV (C)	NSAPAC Representative, Vietnam
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NVN	North Vietnam
OPSCOMM	operational communications
PACSCTYRGN	Pacific Security Region

[redacted]

RDF	radio direction finding

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RFI	radio frequency interference
[redacted]	
RIRAV	Resident Intelligence Research Analyst, Vietnam
RLA	Royal Laotian Army
RRU	radio research unit
RSM	radio squadron, mobile
[redacted]	
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
RVNAF JGS	RVN Armed Forces Joint General Staff
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEAMATSUM	Southeast Asian Machine Technical Summary
[redacted]	
TRS	technical research ship
TRSSCOMM	Technical Research Ship Special Communications System

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