

THAI FORWARD AIR GUIDES IN LAOS
DURING THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR

Mr. Paul Turner Carter



จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

บทคัดย่อและแฟ้มข้อมูลฉบับเต็มของวิทยานิพนธ์ตั้งแต่ปีการศึกษา 2554 ที่ให้บริการในคลังปัญญาจุฬาฯ (CUIR)

เป็นแฟ้มข้อมูลของนิสิตเจ้าของวิทยานิพนธ์ ที่ส่งผ่านทางบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย

The abstract and full text of theses from the academic year 2011 in Chulalongkorn University Intellectual Repository (CUIR) are the thesis authors' files submitted through the University Graduate School.

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in Thai Studies

Faculty of Arts

Chulalongkorn University

Academic Year 2016

Copyright of Chulalongkorn University

หน่วยชี้เป้าทางอากาศของไทยที่ปฏิบัติการในลาวในสงครามอินโดจีนครั้งที่ 2



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
สาขาวิชาไทยศึกษา
คณะอักษรศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
ปีการศึกษา 2559
ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Thesis Title	THAI FORWARD AIR GUIDES IN LAOS DURING THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR
By	Mr. Paul Turner Carter
Field of Study	Thai Studies
Thesis Advisor	Assistant Professor Wasana Wongsurawat, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree

.....Dean of the Faculty of Arts
(Associate Professor Kingkarn Thepkanjana, Ph.D.)

THESIS COMMITTEE

.....Chairman
(Kanya Wattanakun, Ph.D.)

.....Thesis Advisor
(Assistant Professor Wasana Wongsurawat, Ph.D.)

.....External Examiner
(Peter Mark Haymond, Ph.D.)

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

พอล เทอร์เนอร์ คาร์เตอร์ : หน่วยผู้เข้าทางอากาศของไทยที่ปฏิบัติการในลาวในสงครามอินโดจีนครั้งที่ 2 (THAI FORWARD AIR GUIDES IN LAOS DURING THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR) อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: ผศ. ดร. วาสนา วงศ์สุรวัฒน์, หน้า.

งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งศึกษากลุ่มพลเรือนชาวไทยที่อาสาไปรบในลาวในตำแหน่งผู้เข้าทางอากาศเพื่อสนับสนุนกองกำลังฝ่ายไทย ลาว และสหรัฐอเมริกาในสงครามกลางเมืองลาว (พ.ศ. 2496 – 2518) ซึ่งเป็นสมรภูมิที่สำคัญยิ่งแห่งหนึ่งในสงครามอินโดจีนครั้งที่ 2 กลุ่มผู้เข้าทางอากาศได้รับการฝึกทหารและเป็นลูกจ้างของสำนักข่าวกรองกลาง (ซีไอเอ) ของสหรัฐอเมริกา และเป็นผู้ประสานงานปฏิบัติการทางทหารเพื่อสนับสนุนกองกำลังฝ่ายไทยและพันธมิตรในลาว ภารกิจเบื้องต้นของผู้เข้าทางอากาศคือการประสานข้อมูลเป้าหมายและการโจมตีกับอากาศยานของฝ่ายสหรัฐอเมริกา และเป็นผู้ประสานงานระหว่างกองทัพไทยกับสำนักข่าวกรองกลาง บทบาทของผู้เข้าทางอากาศในสงครามครั้งนี้เป็นบทบาทที่มีเอกลักษณ์เฉพาะ เป็นบทบาทพิเศษที่ไม่เคยมีมาก่อนและไม่เคยถูกนำมาใช้อีกหลังจากสงครามครั้งนี้ วัตถุประสงค์ของผู้วิจัยคือต้องการสร้างความเข้าใจในกิจกรรมต่างๆ ของฝ่ายไทยในการสนับสนุนการต่อสู้กับกองกำลังฝ่ายคอมมิวนิสต์ในคาบสมุทรมอินโดจีนผ่านการศึกษาและวิเคราะห์เอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้องกับปฏิบัติการของกลุ่มผู้เข้าทางอากาศ ผู้วิจัยเสนอว่ากลุ่มผู้เข้าทางอากาศชาวไทยมีบทบาทสำคัญในการสนับสนุนกองกำลังฝ่ายไทย ลาว และสหรัฐอเมริกา โดยมีส่วนช่วยเพิ่มศักยภาพในการต่อสู้ของกองกำลังเหล่านั้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ กลุ่มผู้เข้าทางอากาศมีตำแหน่งสำคัญที่ช่วยเชื่อมโยงข้อมูลและประสานงานในปฏิบัติการทางทหารที่ใหญ่ที่สุดในประวัติศาสตร์สมัยใหม่ของไทย ดังนั้นการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับหน่วยดังกล่าวจึงให้ข้อมูลใหม่และมุมมองใหม่ในความขัดแย้งภายในคาบสมุทรมอินโดจีนในยุคสงครามเย็นได้มาก

5880341222 : MAJOR THAI STUDIES

KEYWORDS: THAI MILITARY / LAOS / SECOND INDOCHINA WAR / UWA
333 / THAI VOLUNTEERS / VIETNAM WAR / FORWARD AIR GUIDES / FAG /
CIA

PAUL TURNER CARTER: THAI FORWARD AIR GUIDES IN LAOS
DURING THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR. ADVISOR: ASST. PROF.
WASANA WONGSURAWAT, Ph.D., pp.

This research is centered on Thai civilians who volunteered to fight in Laos as Forward Air Guides (FAGs) in support of Thai, Lao and U.S. forces in the Laotian Civil War (1953-75), a key battleground of the Second Indochina War. FAGs were U.S. military-trained contract employees of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who coordinated military operations in support of Thai and allied forces in Laos. FAG's primary duties were to coordinate U.S. reconnaissance and strike aircraft, and liaison between the Thai military and CIA. Their role in modern warfare was unique, an anomaly never seen before nor after. My objectives are to better understand Thailand's activities in combating communist forces in peninsular Southeast Asia by documenting and analyzing FAG participation. I argue Thai FAGs played a significant role in support of Thai, Lao and American forces, greatly enhancing the forces' ability to fight. FAGs occupied an instructive vantage point in Thailand's largest military expeditionary effort in modern times and thus are positioned to provide an exclusive glimpse into the conflict.

Field of Study: Thai Studies

Student's Signature

Academic Year: 2016

Advisor's Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to my mentor MacAlan Thompson, my gateway to this project. “Mac,” in Laos with the U.S. government (USAID) from 1966-1975, was an incalculable source of information, took me to Laos several times, and introduced me to the FAGs, who trust him unreservedly. I am always in awe when opening a book on the Laos war and the author lists Mac in the credits. Legendary American doctor in Laos during the conflict, Charles Weldon M.D., author of a book entitled "Tragedy in Paradise: A Country Doctor at War in Laos" wrote that Mac was “The keeper of the Lao archives. If he doesn’t know it, it didn’t happen.” Without Mac, my work would not have been possible.

My thesis advisor Assistant Professor Wasana Wongsurawat, Ph.D. who provided continual guidance and support for this project and her advice and keen judgments aided me greatly. Dr. Richard Ruth, author of a book entitled "In Buddha's Company: Thai Soldiers in the Vietnam War" was extremely instrumental in providing insights, recommendations, and corrections.

My sincere gratitude to the former CIA and U.S. military personnel who fought alongside the Thai and answered my innumerable queries. Particularly Mike Ingham, Mike Lynch, Jim “Mule” Parker, Thomas Leo Briggs, Craig Duehring, Joe Celeski, Scott Crerar (RIP), Rick Crutchfield, Gene Adcock, Bill Fitzgerald, Ray Roddy, and Jack Teague. My deepest appreciation to Khun Preecha Nithisupha (callsign SPOTLIGHT) and Thai FAGs BEECHNUT, IRON CITY, SPACE, SPARKPLUG and others for the countless hours in their homes, offices, and social venues aiding my research, access to the Unit 333 photos and files, and their sacrifices and undying devotion to - and love for - their King and country. Any errors in fact or judgment in this work are my mine alone.

CONTENTS

	Page
THAI ABSTRACT	iv
ENGLISH ABSTRACT.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF THE PHOTOS.....	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Significance of Research	3
1.2 Research Questions.....	4
1.3 Objective.....	5
1.4 Hypothesis/Main Arguments	5
1.5 Methodology	6
FAG Interviews	6
Academic works	7
Thai veteran written accounts.....	7
Existing books on the conflict written by American authors	7
Americans who were involved in the Laotian conflict, their blogs and independent websites.....	8
University resources	8
Declassified State Department and CIA documents, and Wikileaks documents.....	9
U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Records	10
Miscellaneous	11
1.6 Constraints	11
1.7 Literature Review	13
Academic Books and Studies	14
Former CIA Personnel turned Author	18
U.S. Air Force Pilots and Veterans	18
William M. Leary Papers	19

	Page
Miscellaneous U.S. Authors on the War in Laos	21
University Resources.....	21
U.S. Government sources.....	22
Thai Books and Articles	23
1.8. Organization of the Study	24
CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND TO THE WAR.....	26
2.1 Origins of the struggle	26
2.2 Communist threat: Thai and U.S. concerns	28
2.3 The Cold War and Thai Security	34
2.4 Laos: Increasing Thai and U.S. involvement.....	40
2.5 Thai shift to aggressive actions in Laos.....	43
2.6 1970: The Thai execute massive military deployments into Laos	46
CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND TO FAG CREATION	51
3.1 The early air war	51
3.2 FAG origins	52
3.3 Catalysts for Creation	56
CHAPTER 4: RECRUITING AND TRAINING	57
4.1 Finding recruits	57
4.2 The “mercenary” question	59
4.3 Motivations to join.....	63
4.4 Training.....	65
CHAPTER 5: OPERATIONS IN LAOS.....	73
5.1 Across the Mekong	73
5.3 Conducting an airstrike.....	75
5.3.1 <i>Marking targets</i>	76
5.3.2 <i>Battle damage assessment (BDA)</i>	79
5.4 Additional duties.....	79
5.5 Serving two masters.....	82
5.6 Criticality of FAG mission	85

	Page
CHAPTER 6: KEEPING THEIR WARRIOR DREAM ALIVE	87
6.1 Fight for recognition	87
6.2 Achieving recognition	89
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION	90
7.1 Recommendations for further researches	92
REFERENCES	93
APPENDIX.....	97
APPENDIX A: FAGS KILLED IN ACTION AND PRISONER OF WAR	98
APPENDIX B: CROWBAR, FAG POW	100
APPENDIX C: EQUIPMENT CARRIED	103
APPENDIX D: FAG LIST	105
VITA.....	109

LIST OF THE PHOTOS

	Page
Photo 1: Laos. Red circle approximate location of Long Tieng, the Hmong, CIA, and Thai Secret base.	1
Photo 2: L to R, CIA Officer Mike Ingham (HARDNOSE), FAGs OFFICE, HACKSAW, COWHIDE, ca. 1971.....	3
Photo 3: L to R, FAGs SPARKPLUG and HAWKEYE at Thai Veterans Day Event, February 2017.....	4
Photo 4: UWA 333 Veterans 2016.	6
Photo 5: FAG ROSSINI, ca 1971.....	8
Photo 6: L to R, FAG SPOTLIGHT, Author, FAGs FLY ROD, BEECHNUT, IRON CITY, Bangkok 2016.	12
Photo 7: FAG SUNFLOWER (middle) with two Thai volunteers at Thai camp, Laos, ca 1972.	16
Photo 8: FAG SMALLMAN, Bangkok, 2012.....	16
Photo 9: FAG WILDBILL, Bangkok 2012.	17
Photo 10: Author and FAG OFFICE, Bangkok, 2016.....	19
Photo 11: FAG SPOTLIGHT, ca. 1972.....	20
Photo 12: Author and FAG SPARKPLUG, Bangkok, 2016.	22
Photo 13: L to R, American John Koren, FAG MOUSETRAP, American Clyde Howard, FAG SMALLMAN.....	27
Photo 14: FAG CROWBAR with HT-2 radio, ca. 1972. He was a prisoner of war for over 4 years.	28
Photo 15: FAG SMALLMAN, while serving as Ops Assistant to CIA Officer Mike Ingham, ca. 1971.	29
Photo 16: FAG BIG DADDY, ca. 1972.	33
Photo 17: CIA Office Bill Lair (center, second row) with PARU force.....	35
Photo 18: His Majesty King Bhumibol awards Bill Lair, who built the Thai PARU into a professional fighting force.	37
Photo 19: Two Thai PARU, center, in Hmong village, Laos. Date unknown.....	39

Photo 20: L to R, FAGs BATTLESHIP, American Herbert McGhee, WILD BILL, WAR EAGLE, ca. 1972.....	41
Photo 21: Author (L) with FAG SPACE, UWA 333 annual convention, Bangkok, 2016.....	43
Photo 22: L to R, Thai volunteer, FAG STRINGBEAN, Thai Commander, FAG SMALL MAN, Bill Fitzgerald, ca. 1972.....	46
Photo 23: His Majesty King Bhumibol’s visits to northeast Thailand dressed in battle fatigues underscored his commitment to fighting communism.	47
Photo 24: Official UWA 333 emblem.	49
Photo 25: FAG training manual. There were several versions over the years.....	51
Photo 26: L to R Combat Controller Jack Teague with Thai FAC, LS-36, 1965.....	53
Photo 27: Jack Teague, center with hat, at LS-36 with Lao and Thai FACs, ca. 1965.....	54
Photo 28: CIA advertisement for English-speaking Thai, Bangkok Post November 1971.....	57
Photo 29: FAG live bombing training at Nang Bua Lam Phu bombing range, ca. 1971.....	66
Photo 30: FAG live bombing training at Nang Bua Lam Phu bombing range, ca. 1971.....	67
Photo 31: FAG live bombing training at Nang Bua Lam Phu bombing range, ca. 1971.....	67
Photo 32: FAG training aid and strike reporting procedures.	69
Photo 33: Graduation certificate “Forward Air Guide Course.” This one has “LT” before FAGs name.	70
Photo 34: FAG training class, ca. 1971. U.S. Air Force instructors L to R: Cass Seymore, Bill Fitzgerald, Egbert “Doc” Jones, Bobby Johnson, and Larry Hicks. FAG BEECHNUT kneeling far right.	71
Photo 35: Thai Headquarters Long Tieng Laos, ca. 1971.	73
Photo 36: FAG operational report, used to keep track of FAG locations and status...	75
Photo 37: FAG WHISKEY 02. Killed in action when PAVN overran the Plain of Jars in late 1972.	78
Photo 38: L to R Thai Army Officer, FAGs FLYROD, SPOTLIGHT, BULLET HEAD, Long Tieng, ca. 1972.	80

Photo 39: Thai FAG OFFICE at Boudner Control, the CIA communications hub at Long Tieng.....	81
Photo 40: Air Chief Marshal (ret) Kan Phimanthip (far left) and General (ret) Pichit Kullavanijaya (far right) at 2010 UWA 333 event. Phimanthip is currently president of the UWA 333 alumni association. Pichit is on the advisory board, is a member of Thailand’s Privy Council, a U.S. Army West Point graduate, and was commander of Thai forces at Xieng Lom Laos.	88
Photo 41: Thai Prime Minister awarding FAGs, 1976.	90
Photo 42: Water pouring and blessing ceremony, UWA 333 annual convention, 2016.....	92
Photo 43: FAG OFFICE with equipment, date unknown.....	103
Photo 44: Items in FAG survival kit includes rope, medical supplies, wire, and other items, including injectionable morphine (right).	104
Photo 45: FAG carry kit includes compass, battery, water purification tablets, signaling device to aircraft with Morse Code sheet, day and night signaling beacons.....	104

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Laos’ salvation is practically our own...and the real target of the disruptive elements who seek to wrest Laos from the free world...” Thailand Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, 1961¹ (Berrigan, 1961)

From the late 1950s through 1974, Thailand fought communist Pathet Laos guerillas and Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV, communist North Vietnam) soldiers in Laos, with the United States paying for most of the effort, particularly after 1970 when it almost certainly paid for the effort in its entirety. Thailand’s Royal Thai Army deployed an expansive array of its forces to fight in Laos alongside Laotian Hmong tribal allies, Royal Lao Forces, CIA, U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army Special Forces. In addition to Royal Thai Army units, Thai forces deploying into Laos included Border Patrol Police Aerial Reconnaissance (PARU), infantry, artillery, Special Forces, Royal Thai Marines, Royal Thai Air Force, intelligence assets, Army reservists, as well as paid civilian volunteers who were provided military training. Army units, Thai forces deploying into Laos included Border Patrol Police Aerial Reconnaissance (PARU), infantry, artillery, Special Forces, Royal Thai Marines, Royal Thai Air Force, intelligence assets, Army reservists, as well as paid civilian volunteers who were provided military training.



Photo 1: Laos. Red circle approximate location of Long Tieng, the Hmong, CIA, and Thai Secret base.
Source: Peteralanlloyd.com

The fight in Laos was another front to the Second Indochina War concurrently taking place in the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). Thailand’s secret military expeditionary effort in Laos rivaled its public troop commitment to Vietnam. While the aggregate Thai troop commitment over the years that Thailand deployed troops to

Vietnam was probably around 36,000 troops – likely surpassing the aggregate Thai troop deployment numbers to Laos – at one point in 1972 Thailand had 20,913 troops deployed inside Laos.ⁱⁱ (C-SPAN Book TV, 2012) (U.S. Senate, 1973) This arguably represents the single largest Thai expeditionary effort in modern times, as at no single point did Thailand place more than 12,000 military personnel in Vietnam.

By 1972 Thailand had deployed up to thirty combat battalions to Laos. This was a result of a 1970 agreement between the United States and Thailand which created the Unity program (the American name for the program), whereby Thai military battalions manned by regular Thai military (core cadre) and paid volunteers would deploy to Laos to fight.ⁱⁱⁱ (Conboy, 1995) The Thai refer to the forces as Thai Volunteer Corps, or Tahan Sua Pran, Tiger Hunter soldiers. The cadre of each Thai battalion was regular Thai Army personnel, but the remainder of the battalion – the so called “foot-soldier” – was paid volunteers with a minimum of military training. The CIA was the U.S. agency responsible for the execution of the Unity program.

A key element to the Thai-American fighting effort in the Unity program was English-speaking Thai FAGs. A FAG was a U.S. military trained Thai civilian working on contract for the CIA. A FAG’s primary duty was to coordinate U.S. reconnaissance and attack aircraft in identifying and attacking targets, and conduct strike battle damage assessment. FAGs also often acted as a primary liaison element between Thai military battalions and the CIA. Thai FAGs performed many additional duties for the CIA and the Thai battalions on an ad hoc basis, depending upon the exigencies of combat. Thai FAGs had “validation authority” to clear U.S. aircraft to strike targets, a significant authority and probably the only time in U.S. warfare foreign civilian personnel were given authority to clear U.S. air strikes.¹ This is the quality that makes them unique. “Validation authority” means the FAG had validated to U.S. force aircraft that the enemy target was a legitimate, located target, friendly troops were clear from the area, and therefore U.S. or allied aircraft could attack it.

¹ In Vietnam, there were likely instances of South Vietnamese soldier combat controllers performing similar forward air controller functions for U.S. aircraft, but they would have been the exception rather than the rule given the heavy U.S. military presence. Also, they would have been soldiers, whereas the Thai FAGs were civilians.

1.1 Significance of Research

The Thai FAGs unique and instructive vantage point made them witnesses to events that few people officially or unofficially know about. Their recollections of their experiences provide our best opportunity to fill a vacuum of secrecy that still pervades most studies of the Second Indochina War; particularly Thai participation in the Laotian Civil War. Understanding Thai FAGs backgrounds, perceptions, motivations, wartime role and activities, and responsibilities, will fill current knowledge gaps in the greater Thai military effort.



Photo 2: L to R, CIA Officer Mike Ingham (HARDNOSE), FAGs OFFICE, HACKSAW, COWHIDE, ca. 1971.

Source: Mike Ingham

Thai FAGs occupied a unique, unparalleled role in modern warfare. They were recruited from among the Thai civilian population, many without military experience. Next, while they worked for the CIA, they also co-located and fought with the Thai military and therefore have perspectives of both Thai and U.S. actions. Several of the FAGs have written Thai language books on their experiences in the war, but no one has written English language studies, articles, or books on their activities or even their existence. FAGs occupy an unprecedented position in the annals of modern military warfare as they were foreigners who had validation

authority for U.S. airstrikes. To recruit a civilian and provide him a 10 or 14-day training class on coordinating air strikes and then send him into combat with military units where he was making life and death decisions and communicating with U.S. strike aircraft and Thai battalion commanders, is quite extraordinary. FAGs were key components of the military fight with critical functions for the Thai and U.S. effort in the Lao fight. This is quite remarkable given many had no prior military experience.



Photo 3: L to R, FAGs SPARKPLUG and HAWKEYE at Thai Veterans Day Event, February 2017.

Source: SPARKPLUG

CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

1.2 Research Questions

How did Thailand view its position in the Cold War vis-à-vis China and the United States? What was the Thai national interest in Laos? How did Thai leaders and the monarchy view the communist threat? What were the role, function, and duties of FAGs? How were they recruited and trained? Why did the Thai volunteer to fight in Laos? What contributions did they make? What was their purpose? How do the FAGs maintain their identity as a fraternal organization today?

1.3 Objective

The goal of my research was to generate a clearer picture of Thai combat actions in the Laotian Civil War (1953-75) by documenting and analyzing FAG motivations, perceptions and roles through their participation in the Laos war. The documentation should provide keener insights into the Thai government and Thai military's role in combating communist forces in peninsular Southeast Asia through Thailand's alliance with the United States throughout the period of the Laotian Civil War. I do not intend to dissect nor resuscitate the war's history, for although interesting, it is beyond the scope of this project.

1.4 Hypothesis/Main Arguments

Thailand's involvement in the Laotian Civil War was a massive military expeditionary effort, resulting in almost 21,000 soldiers on the ground in Laos in 1972. The Thai FAGs played a significant role in tactical support for the Thai, Laos and American forces in combating communist forces in Laos during this period, and were an essential element to the conduct of the fight, greatly enhancing Thai and allied forces ability to fight. The primary, unique quality that the FAGs possessed was being trilingual, therefore they could speak to three of the four allied forces in the conflict (Thai, English, Lao with the Hmong being the fourth language). The Lao and Thai languages are close enough linguistically to permit communication, particularly for those FAGs from northeast Thailand already possessing a Lao dialect. Another quality was that many of the FAGs had already been working for U.S. military forces in some capacity; therefore they were familiar with U.S. customs and military operating procedures.



Photo 4: UWA 333 Veterans 2016.

Source: Paul Carter

Once Thailand decided upon the mass deployment of troops to Laos, the formal creation and implementation of the FAG program was essential to the conduct of the war. I show instances of Thai FAGs performing many duties and missions which otherwise would have either been neglected, or done insufficiently.

1.5 Methodology

My research approach seeks qualitative data primarily because there is a lack of quantitative “ground truth” information available or data sets to survey or measure. I used descriptive material such as interviews, casual conversations, documents and field notes as well as existing literature such as academic articles, web blogs, books, magazine articles, declassified U.S. government documents, and archival information. The following are my primary information sources:

FAG Interviews

Most of the remaining FAGs belong to a Thai alumni association consisting of Laos war veterans called the “Unknown Warriors Association 333,” or UWA 333, named after the Thai military headquarters that ran the Laos war effort, Unit 333. In my research, I met with FAGs regularly at coffee shops, malls, and in their homes. All my interviews were conducted in person, and in the English language. I have also

socialized with them. Several have written books or newspaper articles in the Thai language on their efforts, and I have had several articles translated into English. The translator I used was a Thai who worked for the U.S. military as a translator/interpreter back in 1960s. I have focused on the FAGs rather than the larger Thai military effort and expanded from this central group, as necessary, to interview other Thai veterans that form this organization. The UWA 333 alumni association headquarters also provided me several unpublished articles they have written, and I have translated articles from their booklets/newsletters. The association has also provided me access to their photo collection.

Academic works

There are several books and academic papers, some written by Thai authors, that provide good social and political background on Thailand's participation in the Second Indochina War. These also serve as a good source on Thai and American political and military relations towards the other.

Thai veteran written accounts

Several non-FAG Thai veterans of the Laos war have also written articles and even small books in the Thai language on their time in Laos. I have had several chapters translated from these.

Existing books on the conflict written by American authors

American former CIA officers, Air Force pilots, Air America (the CIA owned and contracted airline) pilots, U.S. State Department personnel, doctors, aid workers, regular military and others have written books documenting their experiences during the Laos war. These volumes serve collectively as the largest existing body of literature on the war. Little of it covers the Thai effort, except as a side note; however, several of the authors worked with, or were familiar with, Thai FAGs. I maintain regular contact with many in this group, exchanging emails, telephone calls, and taking trips to Laos with some members. I completed yet another trip to Laos in January 2017 with Mac Thompson. During a previous trip, I climbed to the top of

Phou Kheng mountain on the Plain of Jars to observe former battlefields. Phou



Kheng was a key battle site for Thai forces, and still pocked with bomb craters. On a trip previous to that one I visited Long Tieng, former Hmong, Thai, and CIA headquarters in Laos, an area typically off limits to foreigners.

*Photo 5: FAG ROSSINI, ca 1971.
Source: Mike Ingham Collection,
Texas Tech Vietnam Archives*

Americans who were involved in the Laotian conflict, their blogs and independent websites

Several U.S. veterans, CIA case officers, and others involved in the conflict have established a web presence that describes their time in the war, accompanied by pictures and links to other anecdotal sources. My initial contact with them comes from interviews (phone and email) as well as reading their web blogs. The Air America Association has a website as does the Ravens – the then secret group of U.S. pilots based out of Udon Thani and Vientiane during the war. My visit to Long Tieng in 2016 was with, among others, a former Raven.² As with the other accounts, Ravens' memoirs mention the Thai presence only when it supports their story.

University resources

I used materials from the Vietnam Center and Archive maintained by Texas Tech University. Primarily, I used its extensive Vietnam War library called the Vietnam War Virtual Archives, which includes material from the Laos war. It contains a massive collection of photos, diaries, interviews, and films. Some former CIA operatives of the Laos war as well as others involved in the war have donated

² U.S. Air Force COL (Ret) and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Manpower & Reserve Affairs) Craig Duehring, Raven 27.

pictures and written accounts to the library. I also used the extensive Air America collection housed at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Declassified State Department and CIA documents, and Wikileaks documents

Some State and CIA documents are available online at the CIA and State Department Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) websites. Unfortunately, most key documents related to the war remain classified. The website Wikileaks maintains some leaked classified State Department records specifically concerning the Thai drawdown in 1973 and 1974. I submitted Freedom of Information requests to the CIA and U.S. State Department, which they have acknowledged, for information on the Thai units and the broader U.S/Thai military relationship, respectively. The CIA has yet to provide me information from my FOIA request. One State Department source however is extremely helpful in documenting Thai and U.S. relations, and the decisions leading up to the Thai deployments into Laos. This is the State Department's FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES series. They contain candid accounts of senior State meetings with Thai officials and can be found online.

Media

I researched media accounts of the war, which were not published until the late 1960's and early 1970's because of the war's secrecy. Despite the secrecy long surrounding the war in Laos, some mainstream media outlets did produce accurate accounts of the war. Others were less successful. After the early reporting, later media accounts – more retrospective in nature - have become more biased either towards or against the war and therefore less accurate. A particularly instructive documentary providing a thorough examination of the early years of the conflict is a documentary made by the American television network NBC. It was written and produced by legendary U.S. war correspondent Ted Yates. The Battle for Asia: Laos: The Forgotten War, filmed in 1967, contains the first media footage of a U.S. air strike on the Ho Chi Minh trail. Yates and his crew filmed the airstrike and captured the audio from within the cockpit of an attacking aircraft. Approximately

two hours in length, the documentary can be found on YouTube and the NBC archives. Yates apparently was given unfettered access to the secret CIA base at Long Tieng, Laos. According to NBC News:

Ted Yates was one of NBC News' best story tellers and he went to great lengths to tell a story and make it visually compelling. This particular excerpt is the most dramatic scene in a film filled with images and words which exposed the diplomatic pipe-dream of Laotian neutrality. Yate's penchant for traveling to countries in turmoil and illustrating those conflicts was legendary. 'The Documentaries of Ted Yates,' a compilation of segments from his best documentaries, aired in August 1967, two months after his death.^{iv} (NBC Universal Archives, 1967)

Unfortunately, little on the Thai effort is contained in these news features.

U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Records

The U.S. DoD kept few records on the fight in Laos because the war was a secret effort. No Thai records exist to my knowledge. Some exceptions are U.S. Air Force Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations (CHECO) reports which I will discuss in the literature review. The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration has an extensive record on DoD forces in Thailand, however. In June of 2016 I visited and researched this record group, and found (then) “Top Secret – Sensitive” U.S. DoD records on the U.S. and Thai effort revealing the path and decision points the U.S. and Thai government took to get to Laos. These have never been written about or sourced in any published accounts that I can find, so I am possibly the first Laos war researcher to examine them. I also visited Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania, home to the U.S. Army's War College, where I examined the personal records of General Richard Stilwell. Stilwell was the key DoD representative for the U.S. during the discussions with the Thai in 1970 concerning the Unity battalions. I found some ancillary information there that is helpful to my project.

Miscellaneous

In addition to the above, I have interviewed several former American officials who live in Thailand now but were in Laos during the conflict.

1.6 Constraints

Typically, a section on constraints is not part of a thesis, as every researcher faces constraints. But in this case the research constraints are significant enough to bear mentioning as an aid to future researchers. There are several unique characteristics in researching and writing about FAGs specifically, and the Laos war in general, that not only will inform future researchers, but also provide the reader certain conceptual boundaries when trying to understand this project. As I touched on earlier, because the war in Laos was conducted in secrecy, official military records were not kept, other than a few U.S. military ancillary records and records of U.S. units in Thailand. Normally in the U.S. military, during conflict an officer in the unit is assigned secondary duties to record the history, which provides information on the conflict for researchers in later years. No such effort was made to retain written history during the Laos war. This means almost all the information on the war comes from people involved in the conflict, recollecting events decades later. Memories fade, facts become obscured, key participants die, and biases escalate.

The fallibility of memory posed its own challenges. It was not uncommon for me to have an individual recall conflicting accounts of the same event over separate interviews or emails. In another case an ex-CIA officer had told Dr. William Leary, author of *CIA Air Operations in Laos, 1955-1974*, in an interview in the 1990s that the Thais in Laos knew they were expendable. In 2015 when I asked him what he had meant when he made that comment, he replied he did not know. I think he had forgotten he had even made the comment. Numerous scientific studies reveal that eyewitness accounts are often shockingly inaccurate, and in some cases the most unreliable sources of information. ^v (Hal & Lilienfeld, 2010)



*Photo 6: L to R, FAG SPOTLIGHT, Author, FAGs FLY ROD, BEECHNUT, IRON CITY, Bangkok 2016.
Source: Paul Carter*

Furthermore, because the war was conducted in secrecy, elements participating in the conflict within both the Thai military and U.S. establishment were compartmented from other Thai and U.S. elements. For example, for many years no U.S. military personnel in Laos – other than those with a need-to-know - were allowed access to the forward Thai, CIA, and Hmong military headquarters at Long Tieng, even though they conducted the war effort in other parts of Laos.

Long Tieng was the primary base and hub within Laos from where the war was fought, but access to it was highly restricted. In fact, few DoD personnel in Laos were even aware of its existence, at least early in the war.

Small DoD elements, USAID workers, and CIA officers worked only their narrow missions often without access or knowledge of what other elements were doing. Because it was a secret war, there was no broad cross-fertilization of knowledge or information. Therefore, many personnel today can only speak to what they personally saw, heard or experienced based upon what their organization was doing in the war. Cases abound of participants having diametrically opposing views of events that transpired where they participated.

Next, the CIA primarily ran the war in Laos, although the U.S. Ambassador in Laos was the de facto military commander ultimately in charge of all Laos operations. Most CIA, State Department, and other U.S. government records from the Laos war remain classified. Typically, the CIA and State would have declassified (with redactions) such records by now given the time frame. I can only speculate that

because these records contain large amounts of information on Thailand's involvement in the fight, the CIA has chosen not to release them. I suspect it may be to respect Thai wishes, or protect loyal Lao who may still be alive. Additionally, release of such records would be admitting the U.S. violated international agreements and participated in a secret war.

Finally, as is often the case in war accounts, there is the embellishment or "hero-making" factor, in which participants intentionally or through faulty memory exaggerate their contributions to an event. In some cases, they are the only participant left, or available, to recall an event. To many FAGs it is important that the public know of the war and the contributions they made.

1.7 Literature Review

U.S. authors have written the most about the Laos war, primarily chronicling the U.S. fight there. Most of these accounts mention Thailand's role in the Laos war as a side note. Some former Thai soldiers and volunteers have talked to American authors concerning their time in Laos, but much remains undocumented simply because authors chose not to focus exclusively on the Thai role. The Thai personnel written accounts, both published and personal, of their participation in the war have not been translated from Thai language. I am the first Westerner, to my knowledge, to have any of these documents translated into English. Several Thai authors have contributed significantly however to the literature covering the strategic alliance between the United States and Thailand and the drivers creating and sustaining the relationship.

The scope of my literature review is to cover broadly the categories I detailed in my research methodology. The primary problem with existing literature is simply a lack of published literature on the Thai effort in Laos. What literature does exist is mostly written by Thai who fought in the war, and thus – just as with many American books – while providing firsthand accounts, also contain biases, motivations, false memories, and a focus on only what they saw and experienced firsthand.

Academic Books and Studies

It is first worthy to note that two academic studies have shed considerably more light on the Thai role. Neither covered the tactics of the war however, or the role of the FAGs. In 2003, Suchada Maktara wrote an Ph.D dissertation *Why Did the Thais Go to War?: A Study of Thailand's response to the Conflicts in Vietnam and Laos, 1960-1968*, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Her work was primarily policy-oriented, focused largely on Vietnam, and she ended her study before the onset of the Thai surge into Laos in late 1970.

In 2006 Mr. Satayut Osornprasop wrote a ground-breaking Ph.D. dissertation which detailed both the Thai policy and some of the on-the-ground activities in Laos. His dissertation *Thailand and the American Secret War in Indochina, 1960-1974*, Centre of International Studies, The University of Cambridge, significantly contributed to understanding the conflict not only because his primary focus was the Thai effort; he talked to several Thai soldiers who had previously remained silent. His monumental work was quite broad, scanning 14 years, and as thorough as it was, did not include FAGs.

Satayut, a Thai, left no stone unturned in his research and does confirm for us that information regarding Thai participation in the secret war in Laos is publicly unavailable:

Not only are the Thai people deprived of the oral histories, but they are also unable to access in-country archival resources on the subject. The fact that the clandestine Thai military involvement in Laos took place under the military dictatorship regimes of Field Marshals Sarit Thanarat and Thanom Kittikachorn has meant that all the relevant information related to this subject have been deposited at the Supreme Command of the Thai Forces. None of them has been declassified (per information received from the Supreme Command of the Thai Forces). The author has conducted research at the National Archives of Thailand, as well as the archives of the Thai Foreign Ministry. Information on the clandestine Thai military involvement in Laos could not be found in the Thai civilian archives.^{vi} (Satayut Osornprasop, 2003)

Satayut does an excellent job in explaining the background of war, why Laos was important to the Thai, and therefore the reasons for the Thai aggressive posture there.

Dr. Richard Ruth's *In Buddha's Company: Thai Soldiers in the Vietnam War* is helpful for detailing the context for Thailand's entry into the Second Indochina War. Although his book is not about Thai efforts in Laos, he does speak Thai and interviewed over 60 Thai veterans who served in Vietnam, some of which also served in Laos. He did an excellent job of outlining King Bhumibol's stance on the war and the King's efforts to protect Thailand from communism. Understanding why Thailand committed troops to fight in Vietnam is obviously instructive to understanding the Laos fight, since both fights were against the same enemy, communism.

R. Sean Randolph has written what I assess to be the most complete account of Thai and United States relations in the 21st century. His *The United States and Thailand, Alliance Dynamics, 1950-1985* is an extremely detailed exposition of the motivations and actions which tied the two nations together during this period. Dr. Randolph's credentials are sound, he is a member of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations and spent considerable time in policy positions with the U.S. government and was a special advisor for policy in the State Department's Bureau for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. With an undergraduate education at Georgetown University and the London School of Economics, a Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and a law degree from Georgetown University, he brings the background, experience and skills to tie the political and very important economic themes together. He does this quite well in his book.



Photo 7: FAG SUNFLOWER (middle) with two Thai volunteers at Thai camp, Laos, ca 1972.

Source: Bill Fitzgerald

Phimmasone Michael Rattanasengchanh wrote a master's thesis at the University of Washington in 2012 called "*Thailand's Second Triumvirate: Sarit Thanarat and the military, King Bhumibol Adulyadej and the monarchy and the United States. 1957-1963*". He dismisses the communist threat to Thailand at the expense of bolstering his arguments that Thai leaders manufactured the threat of communism to secure more power. Although I find his research and conclusions of the communist threat not very convincing, I do find his analysis of other reasons for enhanced Thai and United States relations quite instructive.



Photo 8: FAG SMALLMAN, Bangkok, 2012.

Source: Jim Parker

Surachart Bamrungsuk has written an excellent book on the United States and Thai relations post-World War II through the American force departure after the end of the Second Indochina War. His *The United States Foreign Policy and Thai Military Rule 1947-1977* is an excellent companion to R. Sean Randolph's work, and focuses

both on the macro aspects of the alliance (Cold War drivers) and Thai internal politics. Like Phimmasone, he too demonstrates how Thai leaders used the communist threat to bolster their hold on power. Unlike Phimmasone, he does not dismiss their motive as manufactured, nor does he dismiss the communist threat. Rather, he shows how the threat of communism was a convenient vehicle for the United States, Thai military leaders, and the monarchy to form a symbiotic relationship.

The civilian-authored book that touches the closest to the ground-based airstrike story in Laos is Jan Churchill's *Classified Secret: Controlling Airstrikes in the Clandestine War in Laos*. The strength of the book is that it covers in greater detail the story and the process of the air campaign over Laos, as told by primarily U.S. Air Force participants. It is an essential book to understanding the air war over Laos and the men on the ground directing airstrikes. It covers the CIA airlines in the conflict, U.S. Air Force fighter pilot activities, and the U.S. Air Force Forward Air Controllers (FAC). It does not contain however a comprehensive examination of the Thai FAGs.



Photo 9: FAG WILDBILL, Bangkok 2012.
Source: Jim Parker

Arne Kislenko wrote a thorough yet concise paper on Thailand's role and public as well as covert activities during the Second Indochina War called *A Not So Silent Partner: Thailand's Role in Covert Operations, Counter-Insurgency, and the Wars in Indochina* in the University of New Brunswick Journal of Conflict Studies. The significance of the paper is that it provides a good balance in covering the broad spectrum between the strategic context of Thailand's activities, and the tactical significance of Thailand's actions. Particularly enlightening is the section on counterinsurgency and insurgency in Thailand. An interesting point Kislenko makes – as Dr. Richard Ruth does as well – is that in a sense Thailand won the Second Indochina War by not falling to communism. “In many ways Thailand was a success story for American policy, amidst a sea of failures in Southeast Asia. The United

States clearly failed to ‘save’ Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia from communism, but did succeed in helping Thailand,” he argues. An unfortunate aspect of Kislenko’s work – at least the online version – is that several of the footnotes are incorrect. I attribute this most likely to clerical error vice purposeful error, given the corroborant information that can be found from other sources.

Former CIA Personnel turned Author

The largest body of literature on the Thai and U.S. involvement in the Laos war seems to be from former U.S. CIA officials who also worked with the Thai military and local Lao forces such as the Hmong. A body similar in size is from U.S. Air Force and Air America pilots; however, it was the CIA case officers who had the most contact with the Thai because the CIA case officers ran the joint Thai/U.S. war effort. CIA case officers in Laos such as Jim Parker (*Vietnam War Its Own self* and several other books on the war, albeit he worked primarily with the Hmong), Terrence Burke (*Stories from the Secret War, CIA Special Ops in Laos*) and Thomas Leo Briggs (*Cash on Delivery: CIA Special Operations During the Secret War in Laos*) are examples of former CIA officers providing firsthand accounts of the war. I exchange email regularly with Parker and Briggs, and visited with both in 2016.

Both Parker and Dr. William Leary, an air historian, provide excellent accounts (in book and online at CIA, respectively) of the longest battle of the Laos war and one in which Thai forces significantly distinguished themselves, the Battle for Skyline Ridge. It resulted in a victory for the Hmong, Thai, American, and Laotian forces. The Parker and Leary accounts are the only accounts focused entirely on this battle and are most comprehensive and authoritative.

U.S. Air Force Pilots and Veterans

A similarly robust collection of books and recollections come from the American pilots who fought the war over Laos. Books such as *The Ravens*, *The Lair of Raven*,³ and *Air America*, provide the reader a good account of the air aspect of the

³ Authored by U.S. Air Force COL (Ret) Craig Duehring, Raven 27, who I accompanied to Long Tieng Laos in 2015, his first return the former CIA, Thai, and Hmong base in over four decades.

war, but lacking is the tactical ground component of Thai military operations. Author Dr. Timothy Castle, a U.S. Air Force veteran stationed in Thailand during a portion of the war, has written two significant works which help explain the overall foundation



and conduct of the war, both of which offer some insights into the tactical details of the war. *One Day Too Long: Top Secret Site 85 and the Bombing of North Vietnam* and his earlier more fundamental work *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: U.S. Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government, 1955-1975* are good foundational books that provide some glimpses into the Thai side of the fight.

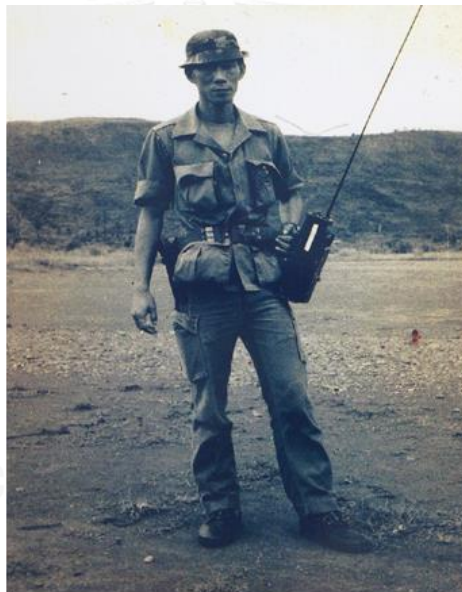
Photo 10: Author and FAG OFFICE, Bangkok, 2016.
Source: Paul Carter

Ray Roddy's *Circles in the Sky: The Secret War in Southeast Asia – a Command and Control Perspective* is a unique book on the war because it provides some rare quantifiable data regarding Thai FAGs, their missions, locations, and time on the ground conducting air support missions. The book uses U.S. Air Force archival information and draws upon technical communications data between ground elements such as Thai FAGs and U.S. Airborne Battlefield Command and Control aircraft (ABCCC), FAC aircraft, and strike aircraft. The technical data contains dates, missions, and locations. It uniquely helps to place those Thai FAGs communicating with aircraft at an exact moment of time, mission and location. Because some Thai FAGs were chosen to be CIA operations assistants (ops assistants to any one CIA officer) with others at forward command posts, not all were talking with U.S. aircraft. For the times they were coordinating U.S. aircraft, this book provides the documentation and context to the missions.

William M. Leary Papers

Dr. William M. Leary – mentioned previously with Jim Parker - was an American academic and aviation historian. Leary taught at the University of Georgia for 32

years and retired from there in 2005 as the E. Merton Coulter Professor of History. Leary “documented the history of the China National Aviation Corporation, Civil Air Transport, and Air America, and their links to the United States Intelligence Community, in a trilogy of books: *The Dragon's Wings: the Story of the China National Aviation Corporation*, *Perilous Missions: Civil Air Transport and CIA Covert Operations in Asia*, a history of Civil Air Transport, and a third unfinished, unpublished book about Air America.^{vii} (Thomas) His papers and notes towards the third unfinished, unpublished book contain many interviews with CIA officers who worked with Thai FAGs and have been donated the Eugene McDermott Library at the University of Texas at Dallas. They can be found online and provide a wealth of information on the war in Laos.



*Photo 11: FAG SPOTLIGHT, ca. 1972.
Source: UWA 333*

Military Historical Interviews

The U.S. Department of Army in Washington D.C. produced a unique, enlightening set of historical books from interviews of high ranking Laos and Vietnamese who fled to the United States after the war. These fall under the *Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program*. One volume that was particularly useful in understanding the details of the fight in Laos was *The Royal Lao Army and*

U.S. Army Advice and Support by Oudone Sananikone, a Royal Laos Army general who came to America after the war. Oudone provides some particularly revealing details from the Laos perspective on coordination with the Thai government and military. Occasionally the Thai and Royal Lao government coordinated and cooperated without the United States knowledge, and his work provides some useful detail on that effort. One thing that concerns me however is that he is incorrect by over six months in specifying when the first Thai Unity battalions came to Laos. Based on his access and placement, I believe he was involved in the most key decisions regarding the Thai deployment. It is possible there was a translation error regarding dates. If not, then it calls into question the remainder of his work although most of what he says about other detailed and minute aspects of the war seem to fit in with what we know regarding the larger picture.

Miscellaneous U.S. Authors on the War in Laos

Probably the best overall work on the secret war in Laos is Ken Conboy's *Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos*. Many consider it, as I do, the "Bible" for the war. It probably provides the most complete accounting overall of Thai efforts in Laos, but does not particularly focus on the Thai-centric aspects of the war. Roger Warner's *Shooting at the Moon* is another solid, informative read on the American efforts in Laos. It provides a good over view of the war, but Thai activities are beyond the scope of the book.

Several additional books such as *Sky is Falling: An Oral History of the CIA's Evacuation of the Hmong from Lao* and *Tragedy in Paradise: A Country Doctor at War in Laos* provide some insights into the war, but do little to nothing to illuminate the Thai presence.

University Resources

The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University deserves mention because of its collection of personal photos, interviews, diaries, and other effects from some very key players in the war such as William Lair (probably the CIA officer most

responsible for the conduct of the war, although he left in 1968 prior to the Thai surge in 1970), soldiers, and other CIA officers. These in fact do offer some insights into the Thai fight from CIA officers who provided documents to the archives.

U.S. Government sources

These include DoD and CIA sources. Under Research Methodology I covered some of the DoD sources I researched, but one that is readily available and quite detailed are declassified Air Force studies called *Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations* (CHECO) reports.

According to the Vietnam Center and Archives, Texas Tech University, “Project CHECO was a United States Air Force initiative to collect and document Air



Force experiences in the war in Southeast Asia. Begun in 1962, Project CHECO produced a series of classified reports on various phases of the air campaign. Many of these reports have been declassified and are available on-line through The Virtual Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University's Vietnam Project.”

*Photo 12: Author and FAG SPARKPLUG, Bangkok, 2016.
Source: Paul Carter*

The reports are declassified, then-contemporary examinations of U.S. Air Force operations to “provide timely and analytical studies of U.S. Air Force combat operations in Southeast Asia” to the U.S. Air Force headquarters, according to the reports. These studies have titles such as *Air Operations in Northern Laos, 1 Nov 70 - 1 Apr 71*, or *U.S. Air Force Control of Airstrikes in Support of Indigenous Lao Ground Forces*. These studies are useful because they relate to the type of operations the FAGs participated in, namely coordination of airstrikes against their enemy.

As far as other U.S. government records, current declassified documents from the CIA and U.S. State Department are few, and are only useful in providing some detail to tie seemingly remote events together. The CIA did authorize a robust study of the Laos war and its operations in it called *Undercover Armies: CIA and Surrogate Warfare in Laos*. Publicly released in 2009, the heavily redacted report does not contain information on the Thai fight, probably to protect Thai national interests.

Thai Books and Articles

Thai books and articles written in the Thai language are valuable and Thai-centric. They are written by Thai who participated in the war and detail both the Thai military effort and FAG efforts. I have had several articles and some book chapters translated into English. I think these alongside the CIA case officer accounts (and my interviews) provide the most accurate and insightful information for this study. The UWA 333 has compiled several accounts of the war by writing about specific battles and FAG activities in these battles. These accounts are authoritative and accurate, in my opinion. These documents contain battle accounts, detail FAG training, and offer other insights into their activities in the war.

Retired Royal Thai Air Force General Saiyud Kerdphol wrote a book *Cheewit Nee Mee Kaa Ying* (roughly translates as “This Precious Life), described by Google Books as “[the] author’s account as a Royal Thai army officer and his thoughts on military strategy, national defenses, and internal security in Thailand; volume commemorating his 80th birthday.” I have had parts of the book summarized which deal with the Thai involvement in the Laos war.

In conclusion, most of the accounts of the war taken from the literature review only offer glimpses into specific segments of the operations, so I have had to piece together a patchwork quilt from many pieces of proverbial literary cloth in varied colors, patterns, types, and strengths, to try to reveal an overall picture.

1.8. Organization of the Study

Apart from appendices, list of references, and recommendation, the thesis includes six main chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Background to the War

In this chapter I focus on the post-World War Two Cold War period, Thailand's position in that context, and the drivers that led Thailand and America to view Laos as a critical battlefield in the war. I discuss the emerging communist threat in peninsular Southeast Asia, and the activities of China and North Vietnam in promoting a communist movement in Thailand.

Chapter 3: At War: FAG creation

This chapter examines the origins of the air war over Laos, and the factors that came together to cause the CIA to conclude that FAGs were needed on the battlefield to coordinate airstrikes.

Chapter 4: Recruiting and training

To better understand the FAGs, it is necessary to examine how they were recruited, from where they came, and what their training entailed. This chapter also discusses two key components of this study, the FAG motivations to join the fight in Laos, and examination of the question should they be considered mercenaries.

Chapter 5: Operations in Laos

Once training was complete, the FAGs deployed to Laos to conduct their missions, which I examine in this chapter. I detail their duties in Laos, and explain how they conducted their two primary missions, coordinating airstrikes and conducting battle damage assessments. FAGs also assumed additional duties in Laos which I detail

here, and I also examine some of the pitfalls and hazards of their mission, and how important their function was on the battlefield.

Chapter 6: Keeping their warrior dream alive

After the war in Laos ended, many FAGs struggled to make sense of it, particularly their role in the war and the importance of gaining recognition for their contributions. This chapter describes why it was difficult for them to gain recognition for their efforts, and steps they took to finally achieve recognition for what they did.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

An important part of my conclusion is to examine how real and how viable the communist threat was to the Thai government and system of governance.



CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND TO THE WAR

2.1 Origins of the struggle

My intent is not to provide an exhaustive examination of the origins of the Laotian civil war or its relation to the Second Indochina War, but rather to provide sufficient background to understand the Thai world view as a neighbor of Laos and a vulnerable country facing a threat of encroaching communism on the Southeast Asia Peninsula.

I do outline the very real communist threat to Thailand's governments and system of governance after World War II and through the 1970s. This threat shaped the world view of those Thai who volunteered to fight in Laos. Communist threats in 2017 seem like a history far distant, but causally going through the Bangkok Post newspaper, for example, in 1970 the reader can quite vividly see the acts of terrorism which were occurring, threatening the Thai order. One must understand this threat to Thailand at the time, to fully understand the context of the fight in Laos.

After World War II Laos found itself in the middle of a struggle between global powers. On one side was the Communist bloc led by the Soviet Union and the Peoples Republic of China. Moscow and Beijing cooperated to spread communism throughout the developing world. On the other side was the so-called Free World. Led by the United States, these nations sought to contain the spread of communism. Complicating the geopolitical balance was France's attempt to recolonize the Southeast Asian territory it lost during World War II, which included Laos. Although landlocked, Laos was a strategic piece of terrain competing powers sought to use to their advantage in this struggle, none more so than the Vietnamese communists. Laos was strategically situated as a bulwark separating communist North Vietnam and China from Thailand. Historically mountainous Laos had been important to Thailand as a buffer from China and Vietnam.

According to a 1969 RAND Corporation study, the Vietnamese communists interest in Laos was primarily threefold. Firstly, Hanoi's attempt to assert hegemony over Laotian territory on Vietnam's western border would protect the newly independent country from French attempts at re-colonizing both North Vietnam and Laos. Secondly, Hanoi would use Laos as an annex for funneling troops and supplies southward in support of its war against South Vietnam, especially along the network



of trails and roads known popularly as Ho Chi Minh Trail. And, thirdly, to support Laotian communists in their internal fight against the Royal Lao government.^{viii} (Langer & J.J., 1969)

Photo 13: L to R, American John Koren, FAG MOUSETRAP, American Clyde Howard, FAG SMALLMAN.

Source: Bill Fitzgerald.

The war in Laos, which was essentially a civil war with the actors progressively acting as proxies to world powers, has been widely referred to as a secret war because it was intentionally hidden from the public. The United States, Thailand, and Laos, as well as the USSR, China, and the DRV tacitly agreed to conceal their operations in Laos because such efforts violated international agreements.^{ix} (CIA, 2006).

The war was kept secret first due to the 1954 Geneva Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, in which Laos agreed never to pursue aggression or allow its territory to be used for aggression.⁴ Again in 1962, the International Agreement on the Neutrality of Laos between major world powers and several other countries (to include Thailand), prohibited “interference — direct or indirect — in the internal affairs of Laos, and to refrain from drawing Laos into military alliance or to establish military bases in Laotian territory.”^x (United Nations, 1962) (The lone exception was

⁴ Neither the U.S. nor its ally in South Vietnam signed the accord.

France which was guaranteed a small military training presence). Therefore, all countries strove to keep information secret concerning their involvement in Laos. The United States, USSR, and China sustained the war effort in Laos primarily through support to proxy forces. Yet unlike the DRV, these powers carefully calibrated their support to minimize their footprint for fear of escalating the conflict, and opening yet another large war front.

2.2 Communist threat: Thai and U.S. concerns

“Once I talked with them (his North Vietnamese captors) about captured soldiers at the front line. They asked me which front line? I was thinking of Plain De Jars and Sky Line Ridge, so I told them. They laughed and told me that that’s not the front line. They said their front line was Thailand. FAG CROWBAR who was a North Vietnamese prisoner of war for over four years.”^{xi} (FAG CROWBAR, 1987)



*Photo 14: FAG CROWBAR with HT-2 radio, ca. 1972. He was a prisoner of war for over 4 years.
Source: Bill Fitzgerald.*

To understand why Thailand fought a war in Laos, one first must understand how Thailand viewed the encroaching communist threat and also U.S. strategic concerns regarding Laos and Thailand.

For the U.S., Laos was important not only because a communist takeover of the country would place a communist threat directly on Thai borders, but also because it provided an enhanced, primary supply route for North Vietnam to supply its fighters in South Vietnam. In fact, later in the war one of the United States goals was to engage North Vietnamese in Laos to keep them from the fight in Vietnam. Given the U.S. desire that Thailand be the peninsular Southeast Asian bulwark against communism, I would argue the protection of Thailand by keeping Laos at least neutral was a primary concern, at least in the early years.⁵

U.S. concerns regarding communist encroachment into Laos began as early as the Eisenhower administration. Both President Eisenhower and Kennedy viewed Laos as a linchpin in Southeast Asia for stopping communism (albeit Kennedy to a lesser degree). Laos was “...the major issue Kennedy and his foreign policy team...focused on during the days leading up to Kennedy’s inauguration on January 20, 1961” (albeit the Kennedy administration seems to have ignored all of Eisenhower’s recommendations for Laos).^{xii} (U.S. State Department, 1955b)

Thailand meanwhile saw the fight in Laos as means to stop Chinese and Vietnamese communist military and political advancement into Thailand. Dr. Tim



Castle concludes that “Laos, a country with little intrinsic value, had become an important chip in a deadly serious superpower poker game.”^{xiii} (Castle, 1993)

*Photo 15: FAG SMALLMAN, while serving as Ops Assistant to CIA Officer Mike Ingham, ca. 1971.
Source: Mike Ingham Collection, Texas Tech Archives*

⁵ In 1953 in a then-Top Secret National Security Council memorandum, U.S. ambassador to Thailand Edwin Stanton recommended “...in coordination with U.S. military programs, to consolidate Thailand as a secure base, by increasing its strength and making its frontiers more defensible. This, in essence, is what the U.S. government has been doing during the past two and one-half years through the extension of military and economic assistance...”

Thailand had legitimate concerns about the threat from communism. In early 1953 Beijing created the “Thai Nationality Autonomous Area” in China's Yunnan province, where the Thai probably originated, and established the communist “Voice of Thailand.” Former Prime Minister Pridi Banomyong, whose civilian government was overthrown in 1947, emerged in China and called for Thai to wage war against Americans. Many Thai took these as signs that Thailand was next on Beijing’s agenda for communist expansion.^{xiv} (Kislenko, 2004) Thai strongman and Prime Minister Plaek Phibunsongkhram told U.S. Secretary of State Dulles in 1955 that the Vietnamese communists in northern Laos were “a spearhead aimed at the rest of Southeast Asia.”^{xv} (U.S. State Department, 1955c)

In 1965 the foreign minister for the Peoples Republic of China stated in a radio address that Thailand would be the next front for a guerilla-driven civil war. Thailand also faced an internal threat. More than 40,000 Vietnamese had fled to Thailand’s northeast Isan Region for safety after the First Indochina War, many probably sympathetic to the communist Viet Minh. After the French left Indochina in 1954 the Viet Minh’s influence in the region grew. At least some of these Vietnamese probably posed a threat to Thailand’s security.^{xvi} (Satayut Osornprasop, 2003) Unquestionably there was a foreign communist-sponsored insurgency in Isan in the 1960s and 1970s. Its size has always been in question.

According to their own documents, Thai communists strove for and received external support. The 35th Pathet Lao (communist guerrilla forces)/95th North Vietnamese Army Command were responsible for the movement of Thai cadres into Vietnam for training.^{xvii} Intelligence produced from Thai insurgents pointed to training in North Vietnam, according to a then-classified CIA estimate in 1966. (CIA, 1966)

The estimate stated:

One recently captured terrorist stated he and 60 other Thai recruits received a six-month guerilla course near Hanoi in 1962. His story generally parallels that of an insurgent defector who was a member of 130 Thais who received an eight-month political and military training course in the Hoa Binh district of North Vietnam in 1965-1966.

The Isan Region presented problems for the Thai government in Bangkok. Ethnically there was little difference between Isan Thai and Laotians, and the U.S. Embassy in a cable to the U.S. State Department in 1955 claimed there were “disaffected Thai elements in Thailand, particularly those in the Northeast,” as well as “The Viet Minh minority in the Northeast Provinces.”^{xviii} (U.S. State Department, 1955a)

This assertion likely reflected Bangkok’s views. The region was also economically disadvantaged, and therefore U.S. intelligence agencies and the Thai government considered it ripe for insurgency. The embassy claimed in this cable “The Communist threat is recognized by Thai Government leaders and many educated Thais, and counter-measures are being taken.” Isan was considered by both the Thai and U.S. governments to be rife with bandits, drugs, lawlessness, and absent a sense of nationalism.

In his dissertation on the Laos war, Satayut Osornprasop argues “The Thai fear of ‘Red’ China was unquestionable; it was clear even before the establishment of the PRC” (see footnote for additional detail).⁶

⁶ Per Osornprasop’s footnote 31, pg 14, “With the imminent victory of the communist Chinese in mainland China, Thai Premier Plaek declared in an interview with the United Press on 12 September 1949 that Thailand was ready to go to war, and if attacked, would welcome American and British troops in the country.” For more information about Thailand’s relations with the United States and China during the late 1940s and the 1950s, please see: Daniel Fineman, *A Special Relationship: the United States and Military Government in Thailand, 1947-1958* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pg 96; Anuson Chinwanno, *Thailand’s Policies towards China, 1949-54* (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with St. Antony’s College, Oxford, 1992), and Apichart Chinwanno, *Thailand’s Search for Protection: The Making of the Alliance with the United States: 1947-54*, Dr. Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1985.

Anuson Chinvanho in his Thailand's Policies towards China states:

The events of 1953, especially the establishment of the Tai Autonomous Area in Yunnan... the Vietminh's invasion of Laos, together with the signing of the Korean armistice, heightened the Thai leaders fear that the communists had now turned their attention towards Southeast Asia, and that the aggression against Thailand was imminent.^{xi} (Anuson Chinvanho, 1992)

Suchada Maktara concludes the threat was real in the 1960s:

Unlike the period of the late 1940s and 1950s, the communist threat to Thailand in the 1960s was real because of what was happening to its immediate neighbors, Laos and Vietnam. These threats seem to be even clearer when one takes into account the communist views and responses at the time. Equally important was the steadily increasing threat of domestic communist subversion and insurgency during this period.^{xx} (Suchada Maktara, 2003)

U.S. intelligence analysts estimated in the mid-1960s that over 3,000 communist guerillas – sponsored by China and North Vietnam – were operating in Thailand's northeast, on its border with Laos.^{xxi} (Kislenko, 2004)

Successive Thai governments after World War II decided they were going to side with the United States. in the Cold War. Thai leaders increasingly viewed a close alliance with the United States as the kingdom's best guarantor against encroaching communism, and signed several defense pacts with Washington in the 1950s. One of the first pacts allowed the U.S. military access to Thai air bases in the northeast.



Photo 16: FAG BIG DADDY, ca. 1972.
Source Bill Fitzgerald

In 1954 Thailand signed the Manila Treaty, which established the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). This was “the ‘fulfillment of the goal of Phibun’s (Thai dictator) foreign policy of searching for protection, from external power as a guarantee against the growing communist threat.’ Symbolically, it was also the ‘final act of public commitment’ by Thailand to the Western side in the Cold War.”^{xxii} (Suchada Maktara, 2003)

The Thai government was so concerned about the communist threat that in addition to military and civil actions, the Department of Religious Affairs in the 1960s sent monks to Isan to promote Buddhism, combat communist ideology, and pacify the locals.^{xxiii} (McDaniel, 2006)

2.3 The Cold War and Thai Security

No country in South-east Asia held such historical and strategic importance for Thailand as did the tiny kingdom of Laos. Donald E. Nuechterlein^{xxiv} (Satayut Osornprasop, 2003)

In this section I address the security actions Thai leaders took in this critical period of the 1950s and 1960s, which reveal more about their view of the the cold war. Questions on how they viewed their relationship with the United States and China, and why they placed almost double the number of troops in Laos than South Vietnam are important for understanding their world view and thoughts of Thai security.

Much literature has been written on Thailand's pivot towards America from 1948 on, and away from China. This swing is well documented. As Thai Prime Minister for the second time, strongman Phibun resumed an anti-Chinese campaign, and his government restricted Chinese immigration while implementing measures to restrict Chinese Thai economic domination of the local market. His government arrested large numbers of Chinese, and closed Chinese schools and associations.^{xxv} (Surachart Bamrungsuk, 1988)

The Korean War that followed in 1950 brought Thailand and America even closer. The United States and Thailand signed two agreements in 1950, one economic and one military.⁷ The economic agreement provided \$U.S. 8 million in economic aid, and 50 technical experts in agriculture, irrigation, education, commerce, transportation, communication, public health, and others. In the Korean War, Thailand provided soldiers and much-required rice shipments – 40,000 tons - to U.S.-led multinational United Nations forces.^{xxvi} (Surachart Bamrungsuk, 1988) In return, the United States assisted Thailand in receiving a World Bank loan. In October, the World Bank awarded Thailand a \$U.S. 25.5 million development loan, the first ever

⁷ These were called the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement signed on September 19, 1950 and the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement signed on October 17, 1950.

to a Southeast Asian country. U.S. military aid from 1951 to 1953 increased significantly from \$U.S. 4.5 million to \$U.S. 56 million.^{xxvii} (Kislenko, 2004)



*Photo 17: CIA Office Bill Lair (center, second row) with PARU force.
Source: UWA 333*

R. Sean Randolph argues:

The tightening of the Thai-American relationship and the extension of military and economic cooperation at this time were in large part a reaction to the emergence of Communist China as a regional power. Since the Chinese intervention in the Korean War, China had in the eyes of Washington policy makers replaced the Soviet Union as the chief adversary of the West in Asia. This was a perception shared by the Thais as well. Bombastic and strident declarations emanating from Radio Peking did little to lessen the apprehensions of Southeast Asian governments for their immediate security.^{xxviii} (Randolph, 1986)

One other Thai action in 1951 shows that Thai leaders understood the very real and demonstrable communist threat (as I previously outlined) to the Thai monarchy, security, and way of life; it also was another action demonstrating the swing to the United States. Thai leaders called upon the United States to enhance an internal security force to protect Thai borders and guard against internal insurgency. This decision shows Bangkok had clearly decided the United States was Thailand's best guarantor for safety and security.

With King Bhumibol's approval and almost certain advocacy, in early 1951 the CIA sent an unassuming young operative named Bill Lair to establish a counterinsurgency training program for the Thai police.^{xxix} (Maxner, 2001) This program significantly increased Thai ability to protect its northeastern borders and demonstrated Thai trust in America to improve its security. The program was significant both in terms of the large numbers of Thai police trained and the enhanced level of their training.

These Thai Police were designated the Royal Guards in 1955, and later renamed the PARU. The primary purpose of these specialized Thai police was to deploy to Thailand's northeast and provide counterinsurgency and law enforcement capability where none existed.

According to Lair, at the time there was a real concern among Thai and U.S. leaders that China was going to invade Thailand and this was the real impetus for establishing this force. Lair and his CIA colleagues began training Thai in earnest, and expanded the training to include Royal Air Force, Navy, Army, and "Administrative Interior" personnel. The primary training audience however was the police because Lair believed if guerilla warfare was required in Thailand "...you had police present in every major village... so you had access to all of the people." By the end of 1953, Lair had trained 94 Thai Border Patrol Police platoons, each averaging 45 men, and had deployed them along the Thai border with Laos.^{xxx} (Conboy, 1995)

One other Thai action in 1951 shows that Thai leaders understood the very real and demonstrable communist threat (as I previously outlined) to the Thai monarchy, security, and way of life; it also was another action demonstrating the swing to the United States. Thai leaders called upon the United States to enhance an internal security force to protect Thai borders and guard against internal insurgency. This decision shows Bangkok had clearly decided the United States was Thailand's best guarantor for safety and security.

At this time, Lair recommended the force be reshaped into an elite Thai special operations unit. Thai Police General Phao Siyanon, who strongly supported the CIA's training efforts, endorsed the idea. The CIA as well as the U.S. military attaché in Bangkok also agreed. Lair then moved to a new training camp near Hua Hin primarily because it offered every kind of training terrain desired and was near the monarch's summer residence. Phao made Lair a uniformed officer in the Royal Thai Police, which likely thrilled the CIA, and Lair went on to marry into a notable Thai family.



Photo 18: His Majesty King Bhumibol awards Bill Lair, who built the Thai PARU into a professional fighting force.

Source: UWA 333

The CIA had also been concerned early on with its ability to extract Southeast Asian royalty to safety in the event of an emergency, and introduced new small aircraft for that probable mission, according to Lair. Probably while at Hua Hin Lair began to cultivate a relationship with the Thai king, one that apparently grew close over the years. Lair was granted a private audience with King Bhumibol prior to his retirement from the CIA in 1975. ^{xxxix} (Warner, 1996) Lair's personal relationship with the king, the establishment of a training camp near the monarch's summer residence, and the apparent agreement that the CIA would whisk the royal family to safety in the event of a communist takeover, demonstrate that the CIA's mission was sanctioned by the highest levels of the Thai government and royalty.

By the end of the 1950s, Lair had built the PARA strength to about a four-hundred-man force with a Thai commander, Col. Pranet Ritchenchai, who was also Lair's brother-in-law.^{xxxii} (Lair, 1993) PARU officers trained at U.S. military bases, and Lair was deploying them just inside Thailand's eastern border with Laos, where they performed police duties, and trained local villagers in self-protection.^{xxxiii} (Warner, 1996)

During this period in the early 1950s, events in Laos was the second driver that propelled Bangkok closer to the United States. Specifically, communist gains there. While the CIA and Thai leaders had focused on improving Thailand's internal security, an external security threat now appeared on Thai borders. That communists were conducting aggressive moves in Laos was particularly alarming to the Thai because of their view of Laos' geo-political importance.

Historically Thailand had significant control over the area that is now Laos and had developed a symbiotic relationship with the country. Since the early eighteenth century Thailand had occupied parts of the three Laos kingdoms, and at times they were vassal states of greater Siam. Next, Laos served as a buffer between Thailand and Vietnam and as such both countries chose to assert as much influence as possible over Laos.

For several hundred years Indochina, had been a pawn in a competition for power and security between Thailand and Vietnam. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in particular, these two rival states were in contention for control over Cambodia and Laos.^{xxxiv} (Suchada Maktara, 2003)

As I addressed before, Thai in the northeast share an ethnic identity with the Lao, and they have strong linguistic and cultural ties. The Mekong may separate the two countries, but the people share many common identities. Given that northeastern Thai are the poorest in the nation and historically felt neglect from Bangkok, Thai leaders felt the area was ripe for insurgency. They felt this was particularly true given the influx of Vietnamese refugees following the First Indochina War.

When the Vietnamese communists invaded Laos in 1953, it greatly alarmed Thai leaders. A communist Laos would mean the Vietnamese would have a base on the Thai border to ferry weapons across the Mekong and mount a more effective insurrection in northeast Thailand.



*Photo 19: Two Thai PARU, center, in Hmong village, Laos. Date unknown.
Source UWA 333*

Therefore, in the 1950s, Thai leaders developed a “forward strategy” in Laos, meaning Thailand would confront communism there. Laos would be the front line in the Thai war, to defeat communism before it could advance into Thailand. Prime Minister Thanom summed the thought up well when he stated in 1970 “It is better for Thailand to fight the enemy away from home than ‘wait for him to arrive at one’s door.’ ”^{xxxv} (Satayut Osornprasop, 2003)

I conclude this section with a final thought on the United States and Thai alliance. The reasons for the alliance have been written about fairly extensively in other works. Following World War II, the U.S. emerged as perhaps the strongest world power and successive Thai leaders forged closer economic and security ties. Thai governments feared the threat of communist expansion, and the U.S. was seen as a reliable partner. While such an alliance made sense for the Thai and came with great benefit, an aspect often overlooked is the risk associated in siding with the United States. It is too simplistic to simply argue that it was a logical decision to make. Arne Kislenko argues:

Thailand risked a great deal in its association with the United States. Helping Americans to defend Thailand from invasion or insurgency was one thing, but assisting in wars elsewhere was quite another. First and foremost, the Thais risked antagonizing their neighbors, with whom they had an already difficult, violent history. If for any reason the United States did not succeed in Southeast Asia, Thailand would be left alone, surrounded by communist states. Secondly, joining the United States in any wars against communism necessitated considerable American intervention in Thailand. This would invariably expose traditional Thai culture and society to powerful foreign influences, which could have serious political implications. The Thais guarded their independence jealously, and were proud of being the only country in Southeast Asia to have avoided European colonization during the nineteenth century. Although historically the Thais occasionally entered into diplomatic pacts with foreign powers, they were extremely careful to avoid anything more than temporary arrangements. Formal alliances were infrequent in Thai history, and Thais considered the stationing of even friendly foreign troops on their soil a serious affront to their independence.^{xxxvi}
(Kislenko, 2004)

2.4 Laos: Increasing Thai and U.S. involvement

Thailand's role assisting the United States in Laos first began unassumingly in 1955. In a 1950 agreement between the United States and Laos, Washington began to provide economic and military assistance. It expanded this program in 1955 by establishing the United States Operations Mission office in Vientiane. Also, that year the CIA realized it needed an air transport capability to conduct covert operations in Southeast Asia. It secretly had purchased an airline named Civil Air Transport (CAT) previously, which later became known as Air America. This secret air fleet would later conduct the supply for Laotian and Thai military forces.⁸

⁸ The CIA also purchased the private air company Bird and Sons which later was named Continental Air Services, Inc., or CASI



Photo 20: L to R, FAGs BATTLESHIP, American Herbert McGhee, WILD BILL, WAR EAGLE, ca. 1972.

Source: Bill Fitzgerald

The airline's first entry into Laos was for humanitarian reasons. In 1955 due to a rice failure, parts of Laos were threatened with famine. Because of the remote terrain, air lift was the only way to get supplies to many areas. The solution was CAT. In September CAT began its airlift support of rice and salt to Laotians and by the end of the month had flown more than 200 missions out of Udorn Royal Thai Air Force base, a large air base near the Laotian border.^{xxxvii} (Leary, Undated)

Thai and Laos relations had been strained as late as 1953 when Thailand issued protests condemning French-Lao patrolling near its border. By 1954 however Thai border police were providing Laotian Army officers heavy weapons training at a CIA-sponsored training camp near Hua Hin.^{xxxviii} In 1956, according to the U.S. government, Thai Police Director General Phao Siyanon offered – pending a Lao government request – to send a Thai border police contingent to northern Laos to help retake northern Laos provinces lost to communists.^{xxxix} (Conboy, 1995) Thai and American security cooperation, Thai training of Laotian military inside Thailand, and Thai security force deployments to Laos increased after September 1957. This was following a coup that propelled staunchly anti-communist Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat to power in Thailand.

Thai leaders increasingly began to fear Chinese encroachment. Chinese involvement in the Korean War had already confirmed in Thai leaders' minds that China was bent on expanding communist influence in the region. The Chinese invasion of Tibet confirmed these fears. Sarit adopted a very right-wing policy, arresting those suspected of communism and shutting down publishing companies, theaters, and schools suspected of supporting communism.^{x1} (Surachart Bamrungsuk, 1988) Fear of communist China encroachment was a primary reason the United States and Thailand increased their training of the Laotian military following Sarit's ascension to power. The Pentagon began allocating slots for Laotian soldiers in U.S. military schools, while the Royal Thai Army agreed to provide an eight-week training course for 1,400 Laotian soldiers in unconventional warfare. This training took place in Lopburi, at Camp Erawan, and was called the Erawan Program.

Probably at the urging of Sarit and the U.S. CIA, on Christmas day 1959, Sarit's first cousin once-removed (who was younger than Sarit and called Sarit "uncle"), Laotian Major General Phoumi Nosavan the Laotian Defense Minister, took over Vientiane in a bloodless coup. Phoumi also had the support of the Pentagon and CIA. He was a strong anti-communist, an extreme rightist.

Phimmasone Michael Rattanasengchanh argues that the Thai and American alliance greatly strengthened after Sarit came to power, but he ascribed it to a different reason.^{xii} (Phimmasone Michael Rattanasengchanh, 2012) He says the communist threat to Thailand was never great, a theme Thai leaders generated to increase their power. "The coups of 1957 and 1958 brought Sarit, the monarchy, and the United States into an informal relationship. The palace supported Sarit's coup and his regime. In return, Sarit promised to protect the monarchy. The Eisenhower administration and embassy officials were still leery of their new working arrangement with Sarit but were willing to give him a shot. Sarit's 1958 coup showed that he was willing to implement U.S.'s anti-communist policies to the tee."

Most scholars would disagree with his assertion that Thailand had little to fear from communism. He is correct that the United States and Thai relationship strengthened after Sarit came to power. I would also agree with his claim that "Anti-

communism became a mechanism that converged Sarit, the monarchy, and the United States into a strong alliance.” Perhaps there was a purposeful manipulation on Sarit’s



part to play the communist threat card. That of course doesn’t mean the threat wasn’t real.

Photo 21: Author (L) with FAG SPACE, UWA 333 annual convention, Bangkok, 2016.

Source: Paul Carter

I will leave it to Thai scholars to evaluate his claim that “Sarit used anti-communism as a ploy to enact a set of policies that would help him craft a modern Thai identity. Anti-communism was incorporated into the idea of Thai nationalism. The royalists saw the over-obsession with communism as an opportunity to intervene and influence Thai politics after a couple of decades of obscurity and irrelevance.” Continuing, he argues that “Sarit, the monarchy, and the United States saw that the mutual goal of anti-communism was a means of furthering their own individual interests.”^{xliii} (Phimmasone Michael Rattanasengchanh, 2012)

2.5 Thai shift to aggressive actions in Laos

In 1964, the Thai shifted from a primarily para-military effort to a more aggressive approach with conventional military deployments into Laos. The next two years the Laotian Civil War intensified greatly and so had American and Thai involvement. Several preceding events had caused great alarm among Thai and U.S. leaders. Despite the communist Pathet Laos accepting a cease fire in May 1961 that would lead to eventual signing of Geneva Peace Accords in July 1962, in May 1962 just prior to signing the accord Pathet Laos forces achieved a huge victory by seizing the town of Nam Tha in northwest Laos.

Sarit feared this might be a precursor to a communist invasion of Thailand, and deployed several thousand troops to the Thai/Laos border along the Mekong River. The People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) meanwhile had conducted an offensive in southern Laos, capturing a key village of Tchepone and critical terrain necessary to facilitate use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Worse, while the Kennedy administration had in late 1963 pulled U.S. personnel from Laos because of the Geneva agreement, the PAVN kept 7000-9000 combat and support troops there. This was in violation of the agreement and consolidated communist gains.

Additionally, in 1962 the Chinese began construction on a series of highways northern Laos, beginning in 1962. These roads provided significant tactical and strategic considerations for Thailand and the United States, possibly as an attempt for China to breakout of their "encirclement," a term they used frequently in the 1950s to describe their security posture. One of the major roads was Route 46, begun in the 1966 dry season, stretching from Yunnan Province southward toward the Thai border. China eventually posted up to 25,000 Chinese troops and 400 antiaircraft guns to defend Route 46, causing Thailand and the United States concern about Chinese intentions through 1973.

Following the failure of the second Geneva Accords due to the PAVN refusal to remove troops from Laos, the U.S. secret effort in Laos was "on" again. In May 1959, the North Vietnamese had created the 559th Engineering Brigade to build the Ho Chi Minh logistical trail complex from North Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia down to South Vietnam, an effort they continued to expand. Thailand now began to play an increasing role in Laos, one that was more aggressive. Satayut Osornprasop in his very thorough dissertation on the Thai effort in Laos, argues there were four primary reasons for the Thai to abandon cautious policies and shift to a more aggressive posture in Laos:

- *Both the United States and Thailand lost their two supreme leaders within days of each other in 1963. Sarit and Kennedy's deaths ushered in changes. Lao general Phoumi no longer had the sway with Thailand leaders as he did with his cousin Sarit, which allowed Thailand a greater range of options*

(Phoumi went into exile in Thailand in 1965). General Thanom Kittikachorn, the new prime minister of Thailand, formed an effective alliance with Thai General Prapart Charusathien, the interior minister, and Osornprasop states that both “were able to consolidate their positions in the government and had firm grips on power. This contributed to a relatively stable political atmosphere in Bangkok for several years, and enabled the Thai government to pursue a more adventurous, proactive policy towards Laos.” ^{xliii} (Satayut Osornprasop, 2003)

- *The U.S. president following Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, had developed a truly fond relationship with the Thai while vice president. This very warm and mutually admirable relationship carried on into his presidency and unlike Kennedy who was Euro-centric, Johnson had a great interest in Asia. Johnson demonstrated to the Thai his strong commitment to their security, and this in turn allowed the Thai greater freedom to take more aggressive actions because of their increased confidence that Johnson would be a more reliable protector and ally.*
- *In 1964 the communist Pathet Laos and PAVN conducted extremely effective offensives against Laos right-wing and neutralists forces, strengthening their hand, gaining territory, and weakening anti-communist forces. This greatly concerned the Thai and the United States. Early that year the CIA assessed in a memo to President Johnson that there was “continuing erosion of the situation in Laos.” ^{xliiv} (CIA, 1964)*
- *In June 1964, the Pathet Laos shot down a U.S. reconnaissance flight over Laos and a U.S. fighter escort the next day. These shoot-downs incensed leaders in Washington and propelled Johnson to take more aggressive actions in Laos. This marked the real beginning of the air war over Laos, in which the Thai participated.*

I would argue there was one other important factor. The Pathet Laos position now in Laos had strengthened, and Thailand was in fact experiencing a growing insurgency in the northeast. The Thai had conducted war in Laos to try to keep the enemy at bay there, to fight them in Laos to prevent a war inside Thailand.

Meanwhile in Vietnam, the Thai troop commitment in 1967 was largely symbolic. As Dr. Richard Ruth points out, “In truth, the few thousand Thai promised for the war made little difference to the dimensions of the conflict. The same month that Thailand offered its 2,205-man volunteer regiment, the United States added another 10,000 troops to a force that now topped 400,000.”^{xlv} (Ruth, 2015-2017) U.S. Army General Westmoreland was asking for 100,000 more U.S. troops by the year’s end.



Photo 22: L to R, Thai volunteer, FAG STRINGBEAN, Thai Commander, FAG SMALL MAN, Bill Fitzgerald, ca. 1972.

Source: Bill Fitzgerald

2.6 1970: The Thai execute massive military deployments into Laos

In 1970 the U.S. and Thai government came to an agreement to greatly expand the Thai military presence in Laos and probably Cambodia, and the next year the CIA formally instituted a formal FAG training and deployment program.

The probable reasons for the Thai plunge into Laos in 1970 were that first, the PAVN had continued to make gains each year in Laos, and were edging closer to the Thai border. The North Vietnamese in February launched a blitzkrieg-type offensive there “the intensity and sophistication which had not been seen since the 1968 Tet Offensive.”^{xlvi} (Conboy, 1995)

The primary U.S. and Thai ally, the Hmong, were by this time degraded as a military force after years of fighting PAVN regular forces. More than any time previously the PAVN was threatening the Hmong base at Long Tieng. The town of Sam Thong, just a few kilometers from Long Tieng and an important base for the Hmong, had recently fallen with refugees fleeing into the mountains. The PAVN was consistently shelling Long Tieng, and Hmong were beginning to evacuate from there as well. The Thai deployed three hundred Thai troops in February, under enemy artillery shelling, to reinforce the base.

Next, it was clear to all the U.S. effort in South Vietnam was drawing down.⁹ This alarmed the Thai. Feeling more threatened than ever with the PAVN offensive and the United States projecting a Southeast Asia drawdown, the Thai began to push for more aggressive actions. In Laos in late February 1970, Thai Foreign Minister Thanat in a visit to Washington expressed worry about the Laos situation. He told the



U.S. government that prior to his departure from Bangkok the Thai Security Council had held several meetings on the subject.^{xlvii} (U.S. State Department, 1955c) It is apparent the Thai government was leaning forward in its approach to Laos, and Thanat offered to increase Thai support by operating helicopter gunships in Laos, stating the Royal Laos government was in favor of such.

Photo 23: His Majesty King Bhumibol's visits to northeast Thailand dressed in battle fatigues underscored his commitment to fighting communism.

Source: Bangkok Post January 9, 1971

⁹ While the Royal Laos military were also a Thai and U.S. ally, they were rarely effective.

It was around this time the Laos and Thai governments began to increase their communication and contact regarding combat cooperation, without American participation (or probably knowledge) of the meetings, according to Major General Oudone Sananikone, former Director General of the Laotian Defense Ministry.^{xlviii} (Major General Oudone Sananikone, 1978)

Events in March indicate Bangkok was advocating more aggressive actions than Washington in Laos. The Thai Foreign Minister with Laos government assent suggested in a March 22 letter to the United States that Thai forces (three battalions) deploy to Long Tieng to supplement those already there (which included the existing Thai artillery battery.) U.S. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger responded the next day saying the U.S. government was not convinced the addition of troops at that time would affect the fate of Long Tieng. He suggested instead the Thai assemble battalions into a Regimental Combat Team and place them at a Thai base, such as Udorn, ready to deploy in case the need arose.^{xlix} (Kissinger, 1970a)

Despite having sent a letter to Thanat and Laos leader Souvanna that the U.S. government would not support the deployment of additional Thai units to Laos at the time, on March 26 Kissinger sent a memo to U.S. President Nixon outlining two potential options to the Thai and Laos request.¹ (Kissinger, 1970b) Nixon's response was to agree with the Thai and Laos request, and the option that the U.S. would airlift and support a Thai battalion in Long Tieng. The CIA would have the responsibility for the unacknowledged movement, and all "operational communications" involving the movement would be handled in CIA channels. The movement of a Thai battalion into Laos opened the spigot, clearing the way for more support. Soon the flow would go from a trickle to a stream, as within three weeks Laos Prime Minister Souvanna asked the U.S. for yet another Thai battalion. It is almost certain these requests were coordinated between the Laos and Thai government before presentation to the U.S. government.

Another event occurred that summer which continued the momentum of forces into Laos. Representatives of the CIA, U.S. military, U.S. State Department, and possibly the Thai military met in Bangkok and conducted negotiations to launch the

Unity Program (CIA name for the program). The name, purpose, and composition of the meetings/conference are in question, and it is possible there were a series of meetings and conferences to launch this effort, which I examine in my doctoral thesis. The meetings and resulting agreement called for the Thai to greatly expand the number of military personnel and units deployed to Cambodia and Laos. The United States would pay for the Thai military effort.^{li} (Conboy, 1995) The Thai military called the new units and the program that eventually came to be in Laos *Tahan Sua Pran*, or Tiger Hunter soldiers.

Associated with this effort, in June 1970 Bangkok publicly announced it would send volunteers to Cambodia to help defend cities. This ultimately led to more Thai in Laos. Because of Bangkok's announcement, Thai volunteers flocked to recruiting centers, and the U.S. military began training Thai recruits. The U.S. Special Forces and Royal Thai Special Forces trained the battalions at a makeshift camp near Prachinburi and later at a Royal Thai military base near Kanchanaburi, as well as other small Thai military camps. Bangkok abruptly announced on September 9 that it would not send volunteers to Cambodia. This was largely a result of Cambodian leader Lon Nol informing the U.S. that the enemy situation in Cambodia no longer warranted Thai troops.^{liii} (U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, 1970)



Photo 24: Official UWA 333 emblem.
Source: UWA 333

Where to put the trained Thai units? The first two Thai battalions – “Bataillon Commando” (BC) 601 and 602 – originally destined for Cambodia, entered Laos on 15 December 1970 and deployed to the southeast, near the Ho Chi Minh trail complex.^{10, liii, liv} (U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, 1970) (Pichai Chinnasota, Undated)

¹⁰ The French unit nomenclature was used to disguise the Thai units as Laos units

While the Thai government had been recommending more aggressive actions in Laos for some time, the United States had paid for the Thai forces' training and deployment and undoubtedly had a strong hand in the decision to redirect the units to Laos. The planned expeditionary force projection into Laos at that time was nine infantry battalions and one artillery regiment.

As background, the Thai military had created a secret military headquarters in 1961, which was in charge of this effort in Laos. That year the Thai military named the secret headquarters Unit 333, its purpose was to command, control and assume responsibility for all of Thai military units in Laos.^{11, lv} (General Saiyud Kerdphol, 2006) It was subordinate to and under the operational control of the Royal Thai Army's Tactical Operational Center's Headquarters 309. Headquarters 309, also formed that year, was responsible for all Thai cross-border operations."^{lvi, lvii} (Conboy, 1995) (Unknown Warriors Association 333, 2011)

By early 1971, the Thai had deployed six battalions inside Laos. On April 3, 1971, tragedy struck. Thai battalions 603 and 604 were trying to move overland to LS-15, Ban Na, and in the confusion of battle a U.S. aircraft mistakenly dropped a 2000-pound bomb among one of the Thai battalions, killing sixteen Thai including two commanders.^{lviii, lix, 12} (Conboy, 1995) (Parker, 2015-2017) As a result, the CIA made the decision to hire, train and assign FAGs to every Thai battalion to improve airstrike coordination. This decision increased the requirement for FAG recruitment and training.

¹¹ Later renamed Task Force 333, and in June 1964 renamed Combined Task Force 333, to reflect its purpose as a joint coordinating effort for the combined Thai and U.S. operations in Laos. In this paper I frequently interchange the name between HQ 333, Unit 333, or UWA 333, they all refer to the same entity.

¹² LS refers to "Lima Site," the primary designation the U.S. military and CIA used for naming remote clandestine air strips used to ferry materiel to Hmong, other forces, and refugees.

CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND TO FAG CREATION

3.1 The early air war

Despite the obvious failure of the Geneva accords, the Kennedy administration was reluctant to reintroduce significant ground forces into Laos. So, the administration decided upon an air strategy. After Sarit's death, the new Thai Prime Minister, Thanom Kittachakorn in 1964 agreed to allow the United States to conduct airstrikes in Laos and South Vietnam from Thai air bases. That same year the United States began a secret project at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force in coordination with the Thai called PROJECT WATERPUMP. This program trained Lao and Thai pilots to fly unmarked aerial reconnaissance aircraft and T-28 strike aircraft. Thai pilots conducted their first airstrike against communist forces in Laos on April 7, 1965.^{lx} (Roddy, 2015-2017)

Air strikes require air or ground-based FACs to help identify targets and conduct battle damage assessment reports after strikes, thus the U.S. began to train Thais as airborne FACs. Initially Thais flying reconnaissance aircraft performed a FAC role. The purpose of the Airborne FAC “was to conduct visual reconnaissance, locate targets, coordinate air-ground strike operations, and to match aircraft to interdiction missions.”^{lxi} (Celeski, 2017)

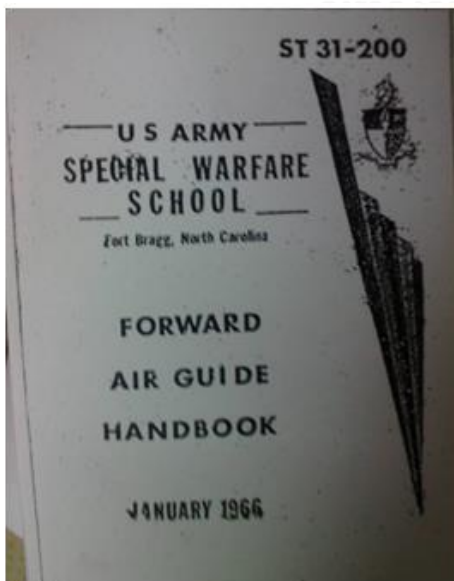


Photo 25: FAG training manual. There were several versions over the years.
Source: SPARKPLUG

3.2 FAG origins

The Thai pilots began acting as airborne FACs for Thai strike aircraft near the time they began flying strike missions in 1964. The U.S. military did not officially begin to train Lao FACs until 1965 however, per a U.S. Air Force publication.^{lxii, 13} (Rowley, 1975) U.S. Air Force Combat Controllers (CCT) – who also perform FAC missions – began to use Thai as ground based FACs in 1965 at LS-36, Na Khang Laos. A CIA operative who along with a colleague pioneered the first use of ground-based Thai and Laos FAGs at LS-36 after the Air Force began to use them there told me they chose the name FAG to differentiate the Thai and Lao from U.S. Air Force FACs. Retired U.S. Special Forces Colonel Joe Celeski who fought in Laos claims the term FAG was used to designate those who conducted ground based (vice airborne) control of strike aircraft (note: Thai FAGs did not control U.S. airstrikes, rather coordinated them). He also states work on the first *Forward Air Guide Pamphlet* began in 1963.^{lxiii} (Celeski, 2017)

According to Celeski, the first manual, now housed at the CCT Museum at Pope Field North, Carolina, defines a FAG as “A trained observer operating with ground or air operational units in counterinsurgency operations, who from his position can guide aircraft in delivering ordnance on targets while the aircraft are engaged in close air support of friendly forces.”

¹³ Despite this early training, a regulated, institutionalized training program did not begin until 1969 when the Air Force and American Embassy-Laos directed the establishment of a formal FAC course at the Air America building, Udorn RTAFB, in 1969. Air Force CCT Gene Adcock first organized this new course and the CCT from the Air Force’s 56th Special Operations Wing ran the course. *Classified Secret: Controlling Airstrikes in the Clandestine War in Laos*. Churchill. 47; Gene Adcock email to author February 18, 2016



*Photo 26: L to R Combat Controller Jack Teague with Thai FAC, LS-36, 1965.
Source: Jack Teague*

In 1965 there were still too few FAGs to support U.S., Thai, and Royal Laos Air Force airstrikes. Furthermore, U.S. airstrikes were restricted to control by U.S. personnel. To remedy the shortfall and add precision to air strikes, the U.S. military that year inserted two U.S. Air Force CCT's into LS-36 (Na Khang), wearing civilian clothes with U.S. embassy identification cards.^{lxiv} (Celeski, 2017) These two U.S. CCT's had Thai assistants who communicated with the Thai and Laos T-28 aircraft attack pilots, but not with U.S. aircraft. Also at LS-36 were two CIA officers who worked with the Air Force CCTs.

According to a former CIA case officer operating in Laos, in 1966 these two officers came up with the concept to send English-speaking Hmong up into Sam Neua province in northern Laos to act as CCTs, so that its Hmong road watch team in position there had linguists who could speak directly to U.S. A-26 "Nimrod" attack aircraft.^{lxv, 14} (Anonymous: former CIA Case Officer who wished to remain anonymous only with the name "Mike", 2015-2017) The road watch team was looking for enemy trucks at night infiltrating from North Vietnam.

¹⁴ The former CIA officer asked non-attribution for his sourcing so names will remain anonymous per his request. He provided me information in 2016 through several email exchanges.



*Photo 27: Jack Teague, center with hat, at LS-36 with Lao and Thai FACs, ca. 1965.
Source: Jack Teague*

The concept worked well with confirmed destruction of enemy targets, and U.S pilots gained confidence in foreign FACs. The officers decided to expand the concept. According to the officer, they decided to try the concept with English-speaking Thai men. They placed a job advertisement in Bangkok's English-language newspapers that sought English-speaking Thai men. The ad promised freedom to travel. They recruited two Thai civilians from among the applicants. Both officers interviewed the two Thai at Air America headquarters in Bangkok; they convinced them to come to Laos and assume this critical and dangerous job. The Thai call signs of these initial recruits became "Red Hat" and "Blue Boy"; this was the first use of Thai FAGs working with U.S. aircraft in Laos.^{lxvi} (Roddy, 2009)

Air Force Master Sergeant Charlie Jones, a Forward Air Controller in Laos who in 1966 had trained Hmong to be Forward Air Guides (Thais translated his "FAC Pamphlet" into Laos and other local languages), may have trained the two Thai as FAGs. "Honestly, nobody believed the guys I taught learned more than basic stuff about how airplanes bring bombs and guns. However, I trained selected guys, whom Air America helicopters airlifted into remote areas close to Sam Neua. They were equipped with PRC-47s and some VHF radios (Bayside 990s) and HT-1s (these are all radios). Two of these were especially effective. One was a Hmong called Tallman. The other was a Thai called Red Hat. Another was Blue Boy. They were

planted in remote areas with Air America H-34s. In small units they would make their way to roadways and truck parks.”^{lxvii} (Churchill, 2000)

The CIA officer stated the first mission with either (in this case Red Hat) took place at 1800 hours on 18 October, 1966, and initially involved two U.S. A-1E "Skyraider" attack aircraft and a B-26 aircraft. Red Hat was embedded with a Hmong ground team; he used a single side band radio powered by a truck battery to contact with the two CIA officers at LS- 36; he used a Bayside 990 VHF FM radio for contact with the U.S. Air Force strike aircraft. “The commo arrangement was crude and unsophisticated, it was simple and quickly cobbled together with materials on hand and did not require outside support,” according to the officer. The inbound aircraft contacted the CIA officers, who then contacted the ground team to see if they had targets, and then relayed the info to the aircraft and directed them to contact the FAG Red Hat when they arrived over the target area.

Due to distances the officers could not monitor the FAG-to-aircraft transmissions, but could hear all U.S. aircraft transmissions to the FAG. The mission was a success and provided the U.S. Air Force further validation that foreign FAGs could perform critical combat controller duties.

Major General Richard Secord, an Air Force officer detailed to the CIA in the late 1960s in Laos, stated “The FAGs (and the designation FAG was not liked) were used on the ground. This was contrary to the dogma that you had to be a fighter pilot. You didn’t need to be a fighter pilot to be a FAC. Maybe this made better FACs, because they weren’t aspiring to become chief of staff. The job takes knowledge of airmanship, even if a man is not a FAG.”^{lxviii} (Churchill, 2000)

Red Hat’s last known mission in Laos was on February 14 1973.^{lxix} (Roddy, 2009) He settled in Udorn Thani after the war, and died some years back. Blue Boy lost his life at LS-36 on the night of March 1, 1969, during a PAVN sustained attack. U.S. aircraft lost radio contact with him, it is unclear how he died. Some say attempting to escape from attacking PAVN forces, others from the U.S. aircraft and

PAVN artillery bombing, and finally others claim he was captured and tortured to death.^{lxx, lxxi, 15} (FAG SPOTLIGHT, 2015 - 2017) (Roddy, 2009)

3.3 Catalysts for Creation

In early 1971, the United States and Thailand were well on their way sustaining and increasing the program they had created the year prior, which was training, equipping, and deploying Thai volunteer combat battalions into Laos. The fratricidal bombing incident of 3 April convinced the CIA that they needed a more effective way to coordinate airstrikes, prevent such future incidents, and improve airstrike capability. With an increase of Thai soldiers on the ground, effective airstrike capability would be even more important.

Placing U.S. Air Force combat controllers on the ground was obviously not an option due to prohibitions. The experiments in 1966 with Thai FAGs on the ground in the LS-36 area had proven successful, and Thai FACs as “back seaters” in U.S. aircraft had been successful for some years. Therefore, the CIA decided to establish a program to place Thai FAGs on the ground with each Thai battalion, to coordinate airstrikes. The CIA had already established a formal, institutionalized FAC training program at its Air America headquarters in 1969 for U.S. Air Force combat controllers to train Laotian, Hmong, and Thai FACs. This existing program would serve as the platform to train the Thai FAGs.

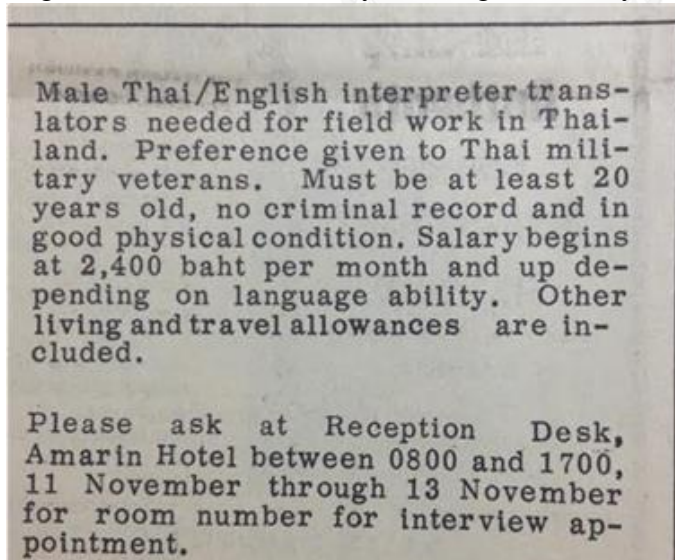
Placing foreign nationals with little more than two weeks of training in such a position certainly assumed much risk. However, based on the parameters the CIA was confined to operate in, it seemed the best choice available.

¹⁵ Also killed was Thai Somsak Arkaraporn, interpreter at LS-36. One Thai PARU who was captured and repatriated after the war, per Roddy.

CHAPTER 4: RECRUITING AND TRAINING

4.1 Finding recruits

In the late 1960s the U.S. military presence in Thailand was large enough to require U.S. DoD, State Department, and CIA to hire local English-speaking Thai as interpreters, clerks, document translators, mechanics, security guards, and a host of other positions. With the launching of the Unity program in 1970, the U.S. – specifically the CIA - needed an even larger, rapid infusion of Thai men to translate for U.S. Special Forces personnel training Thai soldiers at Kanchanaburi and other military training camps.¹⁶ The CIA recruited the new translators two ways; by selecting the most effective existing English-speaking Thai employees working for the United States, and placing English language ads in the newspapers *Bangkok Post*, *the Nation*, and *Bangkok World*. Interested personnel were directed to report to the Amerin Hotel in Bangkok for an interview. The interviewers were Thai and American. Most said the interview was fairly easy; the main requirement being to speak English. After the interview, if selected the individuals would receive a telegram within a few days asking that they report to a Thai Border Police



headquarters in Bangkok. From there they would be shipped via bus to Korat.

Photo 28: CIA advertisement for English-speaking Thai, Bangkok Post November 1971.

Source: Bangkok Post, pg 8, Nov 10-13, 1971

¹⁶ Although it was DoD Special Forces soldiers and airmen that trained Thai Unity soldiers at camps such as in Kanchanaburi, the CIA ran the program. Therefore, Thai translators for the DoD training were CIA contract employees, not DoD.

All FAGs that I interviewed came to the position from one of two sources. They were either recruited while working under contract for the United States, or they came from the ranks of military translators recruited through English-language newspapers. Some FAGs came from the PARU ranks. In 1971 when the CIA determined it needed FAGs in large numbers, it first recruited from within its Thai contract employee ranks and Thai military.

There doesn't seem to be a typical "FAG profile," but they all share some common characteristics. They all spoke good English at the time (and still do) either through formal training (Roman Catholic or other schools) or self-teaching and exposure to Americans. Several had relatives already working for the Americans.¹⁷ Almost all of them were in their 20s and sought adventure and good paying jobs. Many were already working for the U.S. before undergoing FAG training. Many of these young Thai men took their initial jobs with the U.S. military much for the same reasons most people anywhere take a job - the pay was very good, much better than they could have gotten otherwise, particularly for a young man with little job experience. No technical skills were required other than to speak English.¹⁸

Thai working for the U.S. government in Thailand made significantly more money than the average Thai, so it is not difficult to understand why Thai men would want to take jobs working for the U.S. More so, the FAG pay was exponentially higher. According to Surachart Bamrungsuk (quoting N. Sinsawad), in the early 1960s, the average wage for a Thai working in the fields was 12 baht per day, or about 360 baht per month assuming work every day.^{lxxiii} (Surachart Bamrungsuk, 1988) Contrast that to a Thai interpreter/translator who on average made 100 baht per day, or a FAG who typically made 333 baht per day.

¹⁷ For example, OFFICE's sister's husband was a Continental Air (CIA airline) pilot, BEECHNUT's uncle was also a Continental Air pilot

¹⁸ FAG LADYBUG is a fairly typical example. Nineteen years of age and unsure what he wanted to do in life, he answered the ad, went to the Amerin Hotel for the interview, and was hired as a translator for 2000 Baht per month (ad states 2400 baht and up per month). His father was a policeman, so he had a healthy respect for things military. Later he was recruited to be a FAG. Conversation in Bangkok with author February 9, 2016.

According to a CIA Officer who spent two years in Laos working with Thai units and FAGs, “They (FAGs) came from many places. A number of the real veterans were already involved in Laos working for the Thai PARU units supporting the Hmong. FAGs SMALLMAN, ROSSINI and PINGO come to mind as former PARU. Some came to us from the cruise ship industry where they had learned to speak English. Some came from the ranks of the volunteer units. I brought several of them into the program when I found that they spoke good English learned when they had served with the Thai units in Vietnam.”^{lxxiii, lxxiv} (Ingham, 2016, 2017)

Of the 127 FAGs, the above CIA officer and the 333 UWA office was able to provide the origins of 78 FAGs. According to these two sources:

45 FAGs were civilians

13 FAGs were prior Thai military

5 FAGs were former PARU

17 FAGs were civilians working for the U.S. military or CIA in some other capacity

4.2 The “mercenary” question

Motivations for Thai men already working for the U.S. military to become FAGs and go to war in Laos is an important component of this study, because it provides insights into Thai thinking on the communist threat to Thailand during this period. Equally important, it allows for an examination of the common perception – at least in published works - that Thai fighting in Laos were mercenaries.

In many books, articles, and even U.S. DoD documents, the phrase “Thai Mercenary” is frequently used to describe the Thai fighters who made up the volunteer Unity battalions and fought in Laos. I suspect it was a legacy characterization first applied to the Thai troops in Vietnam by the U.S. press. I found the first widespread use of the term from the 1969 “Symington Subcommittee Hearings,” the U.S Senate Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign Relations, held on November 10–

14, and 17, 1969. During the hearing, it was revealed that the U.S. government had been paying \$50 million a year to Thailand for sending its Black Panther combat division to South Vietnam, resulting in press articles characterizing the Thai as “mercenaries.”^{lxxv} (Kissinger, 1969) It was a charge Thai Foreign Minister Thanat obviously resented.^{lxxvi} (U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, 1969, November 20, 1132Z)

Because the Thai government had to raise an Army for Laos so quickly, it could only do so by paying high salaries to the volunteers.¹⁹ Perhaps from that viewpoint, the mercenary label was repeated with little thought as to its origin. An American CIA operative who fought in Laos with the Thai stated “Thai mercenaries... where did that moniker come from? I don't know. That's just what they were called. Like the Hmong were Meo.”^{lxxvii} (Parker, 2015-2017) I think such a characterization is without justification, and moreover does not meet the dictionary definition of “mercenary.” According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a common definition of mercenary is “one that serves merely for wages; especially: a soldier hired into foreign service.”

Although I suspect some Thai probably volunteered primarily for money, as a group financial reward was not the FAGs sole motivation. One FAG told me “I didn’t do it for money. Maybe it was God? (chuckle). I was young, didn’t think of money, I wanted adventure. I didn’t even think of fighting communists, I just wanted adventure.”^{lxxviii} (FAG BEECHNUT, 2015-2016) Another FAG seemed to dismiss the question with “I was young and not afraid to die.”^{lxxix} (FAG OFFICE, 2016) As a common practice governments around the world use money as an incentive for citizens to volunteer for military service, and financial incentive is the primary means the U.S. government has used to recruit volunteers since the end of the U.S. draft. That one would join the military because the pay is good does not make one a mercenary. Similarly, in 1870-1871 in an effort to raise a professional Army, King Rama V “introduced the salary system for the Royal Pages Body Guard.”^{lxxx}

¹⁹ From my research, I assess the primary reason for the Thai military not wanting to use regular Thai soldiers in Laos (except for officer and noncommissioned office cadre) is that the leadership didn’t want the Thai military to get bogged down in Laos, constricting its flexibility to respond elsewhere and possibly degrading the quality and strength of the force, as was arguably happening with U.S. forces in Vietnam.

(Surachart Bamrungsuk, 1988) A few years later, the King began modernization efforts for the regular Thai Army, paying troops for their service to create a standing army.

I have met no Thai who served in Laos that I judge did so merely for wages. Being shot at, captured, killed, hungry, cold, tired, lacking sleep, away from home and away from one's family in a foreign land, watching friends die, and under stress is not a life money can buy. As FAG SPOTLIGHT writes concerning the difficulties in battle of Samthong in January 1972:

The enemy would use 82 mm mortars and 120 mm mortars firing in the front line starting from 0500 – 0700 hrs. which would be the time when soldiers had woken up and were cooking breakfast. Thereafter, before lunch time and in the evening, 1700-1800 hrs. to annoy and demoralize. When helicopters came to supply us, the enemy would fire in the area where the helicopter landed or the area nearby. So, we had to place the injured and dead soldiers on the helicopter ... as soon as possible.^{lxxxii} (Preecha Nithisubha, 2004)

Nor were they hired into foreign service. Rather, they fought for a cause that the Thai monarchy heavily promoted, in a real struggle for their homeland. It is true that FAGs were hired by, and in the pay of, the CIA, but the FAGs lived and fought on the battlefield alongside, and in support of, Thai military forces and the Thai mission.

Thai leaders were sensitive to the mercenary label. In early January 1970 U.S. Vice President Agnew visited Thailand. In a meeting with the Thai Prime Minister, the Prime Minister stated the Thai were insulted over the mercenary charge, and felt that many Americans did not appreciate what the Thai were doing in Vietnam. Agnew responded that “The mercenary argument was so weak...that he doubted any fair-minded American would subscribe to it. Mercenaries had historically fought far from home and had never felt any particular involvement in the conflicts they participated in. It is impossible to imagine that the Thai are not vitally concerned with what happens in Vietnam, so the mercenary argument really makes no sense.”^{lxxxiii} (Vice President Agnew, 1970)

I think it is both problematic and incorrect to brand any citizen of any country who fights for a cause a mercenary, when that country's monarchy is vigorously promoting the cause. The Thai King made it clear to the Thai public that the fight against communism was every citizen's duty because of the real threat it posed to Thailand. According to historian Richard Ruth, "The escalation in the fighting in Laos and South Vietnam and the increase in insurgent violence within Thailand's borders prompted the King to move away from jazz concerts, oil painting, and sailboat races to take up matters directly related to Thailand's security. The newly militarized king spoke out increasingly against looming threats (i.e. communism) to the region and to Thailand itself." ^{lxxxiii} (Ruth, 2011) By the late 1960s, he began to openly advocate military action against communist forces in the region.

King Bhumibol warned Thai citizens that foreign aggression was continuing, and failure to meet that threat could cause damage to Thailand. Previously, I outlined the very real threat Thailand faced. *The Bangkok Post* posted an article on its front page on January 14, 1972 titled "Threat to Nation Intensifies" regarding communist actions in Laos. The King publicly demonstrated his support for the war in Vietnam, participating in the ceremony honoring the Queen's Cobra Regiment as it prepared to depart to fight in Vietnam. Thailand's Supreme Patriarch of its Buddhist sangha, Sordet Phra Wannarat, cast holy water onto the soldiers during this event, and later the soldiers marched to Wat Phra Kaeo as an assemblage of senior monks blessed them. King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit visited wounded Thai soldiers from the Vietnam conflict in hospitals, participated in funeral ceremonies, and honored the soldiers and their families on multiple occasions. The King's support and promotion of conflict to save Thailand from communism is a matter of public record.

The record of the FAGs killed in action (Appendix A) reveals the hardships and dangerous duties FAGs endured, certainly nothing profiteers would be drawn too. Nor would profiteers display the kinds of heroic actions the FAGs undertook. DRAGONFLY was killed while carrying a wounded commander from his position. WHISKEY 02 died calling for artillery on his position as the enemy was overrunning the Thai position. MOUSE TRAP died in hand-to-hand combat. Others died as their positions were overrun, staying in place until the last.

The rainy season in early 1972 was a particularly perilous time for FAGs as the PAVN through vicious combat actions was penetrating farther south than ever in attacking Thai and Lao military formations. *Circles in the Sky: The Secret War in Southeast Asia – a Command and Control Perspective* provides data on just how engaged the FAGs were in these combat actions, as it documents empirically the combat actions and FAG activities via their radio transmissions. From January through March 1972, twenty-four FAGs participated in 122 combat actions where they were contacting U.S. reconnaissance or attack aircraft for support. These combat actions ranged from enemy assaults and friendly troops in enemy contact, to overrun friendly positions, enemy artillery assaults, and enemy ground and air penetrations.

Two American CIA operatives who fought with the Thai in Laos did not consider the Thai soldiers mercenaries. One said “We did not think of the Thais as mercenaries. Their government sent them to fight in Laos because the North Vietnamese had a declared goal of uniting Southeast Asia...including Thailand. Does the fact that they got paid pretty well negate that very critical goal of the Thai government?”^{lxxxiv} (Ingham, 2016, 2017) Jim Parker stated “we don't refer to those fine Thai men who came to the rescue of our Secret War as ‘mercenaries' anymore.”^{lxxxv} (Parker, 2015-2017)

General Thep, during the battle for Long Tieng in March 1972, reminded his subordinates why they were there: “All you guys should be proud and understand that the reason of our coming out of our country to battle this time; it's not for money, but everybody has risked their lives and sacrificed, it's for Thailand, and it's a thankless operation.”^{lxxxvi} (Preecha Nithisubha, Unknown)

4.3 Motivations to join

So, what were the specific motivations for Thai to become FAGs? All FAGs I spoke with weighted various factors differently, but there were some common threads. Adventure, patriotism, and the chance to have a good job and make more money were the primary motivations. Their current position already working for the

U.S. or already engaged in the fight against communism was a contributing factor for many. This was particularly true if they were translating the training for Thai soldiers, training which they enjoyed and viewed as supporting an important Thai national mission. Meaning, all enjoyed their current jobs, found the work meaningful, therefore were comfortable working with the U.S. and the mission. Their CIA bosses also encouraged them to apply for the FAG position. A significant pay boost was certainly attractive. Most translators were making between 2,000-4,000 Thai Baht per month, while the salary for a FAG was typically 10,000 Thai Baht per month, some receiving additional money for flight pay.

FAGs were paid in cash, usually monthly. Some CIA officers were more liberal in payments than others. FAGs in the Pakse area (Military Region IV) were paid at the CIA annex there, while the FAGs in the Long Tieng area (Military Region II) were typically paid at the Thai Task Force headquarters at Long Tieng.^{lxxxvii} (FAG SPACE, 2015, 2016) Money for FAGs was not routed through the Thai military. One FAG I interviewed only made 7,500 Baht per month, and in this case, it was dispersed by a senior FAG.²⁰ The variances in pay was a result of, in my opinion, the flexibility of each CIA officer in dispersing money, and the level of seniority among FAGs. One FAG said he earned an extra 100 Baht each time he flew in aircraft, another received flight pay of 400 Baht per hour, while another received no extra money for flying.²¹ Sometimes case officers would hand out extra money or even cases of beer for a 'job well done.'

The chance for greater adventure was usually an added motivation. One said it was his sole motivation, throwing caution to the wind. FAG SPACE told me he joined firstly because he identified with the military and the mission, and secondly for the money. He said he purposely chose BC-613 to deploy with into Laos, because of its number 13. It is almost if he were challenging fate. For those that were not motivated by the communist threat, they claimed they simply were not aware of the threat from Laos. One said while working as an interpreter/translator at Nam Phong training

²⁰ I purposely have not documented in this paper what any individual FAG earned, so as not to create any potential jealousies or divisions among them

²¹ SPOTLIGHT, SPACE, and SPARKPLUG respectively

Unity medics (at 3,000 Baht per month), he was not even aware there was a fight in Laos until he and the medics visited a hospital at Nam Phong and saw the Thai who had been injured there. ^{lxxxviii} (FAG SPARKPLUG, 2015-2017) Another who was motivated by patriotic duty stated:

I was a Motor Pool Dispatcher at the Joint Liaison Detachment (the CIA Unit) at Udorn Airbase. When working night shift, one duty I had was to send a truck to pick up the remains of Thai killed in action from Laos from the ramp of Air Continental aircraft. One night I accompanied the truck to fetch the remains of maybe six or seven. With deep condolences to see the lying dead bodies of my native fighters (in plastic bags) I promised to go across to fight in Laos with the belief that I will be able to help save the lives of our friend fighters, or die with them if I can't. ^{lxxxix} (FAG IRON CITY, 2015-2017)

A Thai officer writing about battles in late 1971 against the PAVN in Laos stated he felt he and his soldiers would be safe with “Royal power ruling over us” and in Laos he always wore a Rama V amulet. ^{xc} (Unknown author, Undated) Although I am not clear as to his exact point beyond wearing the amulet for protection, it is possible he was suggesting that because the mission in Laos was royally sanctioned it was therefore worthy.

4.4 Training

The program for robust Thai FAG training began in late 1971 following the friendly fire incident previously described. A U.S. Air Force unit consisting primarily of CCT's were the course instructors, the classroom portion of the training held at the Air America building, Udorn Royal Thai Air Force base. Once selected for FAG training, Thai personnel not already on base were bused to Korat and then onto Udorn Royal Thai Air Force base where they underwent 10 to 14 days of training at the Air America building. The course was so abbreviated because of the requirement to quickly place FAGs on the battlefield. All FAGs knew prior to training that they would be deploying to Laos. Some who finished training decided not to go. There

are no records to indicate how many. I suspect some of these went back to translator duties, others may have lost face and quit working for the Americans altogether.

The United States had established the following procedures to secretly train the Thai FAGs. For its entire effort to prosecute the secret war in Laos, it had established a military headquarters in Bangkok called Deputy Chief Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group Thai, or DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI. DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI only dealt with the Laos war effort. Its name mimicked the official Thai advisory group, Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group Thai, JUSMAGTHAI. The headquarters was in the Capitol Hotel in Bangkok. The CIA would provide DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI the Thai trainee names and training dates, who in turn would provide this information to the Air Force Combat Controllers who did the training at Udorn.

It is unclear how many FAGs were ever trained. One senior FAG speculated 200-300 FAGs were trained but approximately only 108 “ever crossed the river” (meaning the Mekong river) to perform duties as FAGs in Laos.^{xci} (FAG SPARKPLUG, 2015-2017) Another senior FAG who is in charge of the 333-alumni office stated only 88 ever crossed the river.^{xcii} (FAG SPOTLIGHT, 2015 - 2017) This senior FAG at the 333 office is the one who compiled the official FAG roster (see Appendix D), which contains 127 FAG names.



*Photo 29: FAG live bombing training at Nang Bua Lam Phu bombing range, ca. 1971.
Source: U.S. Air Force Det 1. 56th SOW*

One former Air Force CCT who was responsible for validating FAGs both before and after training claimed to me that occasionally the CIA would slip Thai into the class who were not very proficient in the English language, and he or the instructors would discover this they would quickly remove them from the program.^{xciii} (Crutchfield, 2015-2017) “Continental Air Service (another CIA contracted airline) contacts often tried to by-pass established language criteria by inviting other students to jointly function as interpreters. Consequently, unqualified students were eliminated at initial interviews, as school standards were strictly enforced.”^{xciv} (Adcock, 2012) It is possible many more showed up for the FAG training than were actually trained, and in one FAG class only two out of seven passed.^{xcv} (FAG SPARKPLUG, 2015-2017)



Photo 30: FAG live bombing training at Nang Bua Lam Phu bombing range, ca. 1971.

Source: U.S. Air Force Det 1. 56th SOW

According to a former U.S. Air Force FAG trainer, the program’s “mission was to train and qualify students in close air support tactics, techniques, and procedures.”^{xcvi} (Adcock, 2012) Successful completion of the FAG school was required before the students could have an operating call sign assigned, validated and registered with allied Air Forces’ headquarters in the region. Interestingly, typical soldier skills such as weapons qualification or medical training were not part of the curricula. Several FAGs who had been translators at the military training camp in



Kanchanaburi said they had learned basic soldiering skills by translating the training from English to Thai.

Photo 31: FAG live bombing training at Nang Bua Lam Phu bombing range, ca. 1971.

Source: U.S. Air Force Det 1. 56th SOW

The class room had chalkboards, movies (Air Force movies), and slides. The FAG training consisted of classroom training and lectures, practical exercises on sand tables, map reading and compass use, air attack tactics and control measures, communicating with various type of aircraft, assessing battle damage, some basic field subjects, and providing appropriate information for air attack. They also learned battle capacities of those airplanes and helicopters and their identification. Each student also made two helicopter flights, two T-28 sorties and an AC-47 flight to see how terrain looked from the air. “A generic terrain board was used to prepare the students for the bombing range. Also taught were some field survival skills, how to use the radios, and how to conduct re-supply drops.”^{xcvii} (Celeski, 2017)

“By 1972, the FAG Course curriculum was modernized to incorporate the newest techniques and equipment. It was a formal course; attendance was arranged by the Agency, with about six to ten students in each class. Even at this late date in the school’s evolvement, the English proficiency of the students was lacking. Those students who could speak English fairly well assisted the instructors to teach the others. Between Pidgin English, some French and Thai, the class instruction proceeded.”^{xcviii} (Celeski, 2017)

After classroom training, a practical exercise was conducted at the T-28 aircraft bombing range 20-30 miles southwest of Udorn RTAF Base at Nang Bua Lam Phu; it consisted of directing an actual U.S. aircraft onto a designated training target. “Prior to conducting range day the cadre made coordination with the local Thai PARU or Border Police to access updates on any local communist threat. On the day of the range exercise, the Cadre and the FAG students flew out to the site dressed in their combat equipment and armed, transported by the 21st SOS. A day at the range was typically six to eight hours, allowing the students to make repetitive calls for air strikes.”^{xcix} (Celeski, 2017)

“We allowed each student to control one aircraft through a half dozen passes, with bombs and guns. At the same time the other students were nearby, watching and learning from the ongoing action.”^c (Adcock, Gene)



Photo 33: Graduation certificate “Forward Air Guide Course.” This one has “LT” before FAGs name.
Source: FAG OFFICE

FAGS had to successfully complete the mission in five minutes, meaning identify the target, make contact with the aircraft, and direct them to successfully put live ordnance on the target.^{ci} The gunnery range where they conducted the live fire exercises was considered a Communist Terrorist flagged area, requiring a Thai Border Police security team to deploy with them each time they went to the range. The security team would deploy with the CCTs and FAGs via an Air America-provided helicopter.^{cii} (Crutchfield, 2015-2017)

All FAGs were given unique call signs such as SPOTLIGHT, RACECAR, IRON CITY, or other similar names, and the key determinant in assigning the call sign was how well they could pronounce it during training. One Thai FAG stood out. “One of them was call-signed *Small Man*, a famous Thai FAG. He was a fearless guy, did a lot of PARU missions. He was very well received by the Agency- just a good troop.”^{ciii} (Celeski, 2017)



Photo 34: FAG training class, ca. 1971. U.S. Air Force instructors L to R: Cass Seymore, Bill Fitzgerald, Egbert “Doc” Jones, Bobby Johnson, and Larry Hicks. FAG BEECHNUT kneeling far right.
Source: BEECHNUT

Graduates were given U.S. Air Force certificates of graduation, Once the field exercise was completed, the FAG training cadre held a graduation and dinner to celebrate. Interestingly some were designated with the rank of U.S. “LT” on their graduation certificate.^{civ} (FAG OFFICE, 2016) I photographed one such certificate. According to FAG SPACE, the certificates either designated 1st or 2nd Lieutenant based on class standing. Although another FAG told me graduates were given the rank of LT, he understood this wasn’t a real commission in the U.S. Air Force.^{cv}

(FAG SPACE, 2015, 2016) I never interviewed an American who acknowledged that this occurred. I can only speculate that it was done to motivate and honor the FAG, giving him prestige. It seems to have worked as FAG OFFICE was very proud of the honor. A FAG would not have taken the certificate with him to Laos, so it would not have been done for cover purposes.



CHAPTER 5: OPERATIONS IN LAOS

5.1 Across the Mekong

Once FAGS were graduated from the course, most were soon sent to Laos. Some were given time off to say good bye to their families, while others went back to the previous interpreter positions until time to depart for Laos. Several said they did not tell their families they were going to Laos to fight for fear of family disapproval or causing worry to their family. Once in Laos, FAGs were validated by U.S. CCT's to ensure they could execute the mission and "then and only then would they be able to work with U.S. aircraft in combat operations."^{cvi} (Crutchfield, 2015-2017) FAGs deployed to Laos were attached to a deploying Thai battalion, with which they would serve during their tour.



*Photo 35: Thai Headquarters Long Tieng Laos, ca. 1971.
Source: Mike Ingham Collection, Texas Tech
University Vietnam Archives*

They were now officially contract employees of an organization called the 4802nd Joint Liaison Detachment (JLD), the CIA's command center for military operations in Laos.^{cvii} (Leary, Undated) Those who had been translators at the Kanchanaburi military camp had been JLD employees as well. The employment this time was secret, however. The only document signed between a FAG and the 4802nd JLD was a \$10,000 life insurance policy, where FAGs named beneficiaries in case of their death.^{cviii, cix} (FAG BEECHNUT, 2015-2016) (FAG SPARKPLUG, 2015-2017) There were no set employment lengths or other binding requirements. While in Laos, some rose to the unofficial rank of senior FAG, in charge of other FAGs. After the peace agreement was signed in 1973 ending the Second Indochina War, CIA

officers were no longer on the battlefield and this senior FAG position became official to replace CIA officer duties.²²

5.2 FAG primary duties in Laos

“Because of their constant presence with the units and their language facility the FAGs were absolutely critical to us keeping a finger on the pulse of what was going on ... in the field.” Mike Ingham, CIA Officer Laos 1971 ^{cx} (Ingham, 2016, 2017)

A FAG’s primary duty was to assist U.S. reconnaissance and attack aircraft in identifying and attacking targets, and conduct battle damage assessment as a result of the strikes. In the U.S. military, CCTs conduct this function, but Thai FAGs were created due to the prohibition of U.S. military personnel in Laos and to bring precision to airstrikes, better facilitate U.S. communications with Thai and Lao aircraft, and liaison with Thai ground forces.

The difficulty of their positions was that rarely was an action done singularly. Most of the time – as is the case in combat – FAGs were executing multiple tasks. For example, in March 1972 when the PAVN was pressing attacks against the Thai near Long Tieng, the FAGs found themselves pressed to their operational limits in executing very precise maneuvers with little room for error. Severely wounded Thai soldiers required evacuation, so FAGs were talking and coordinating with U.S. helicopters as they were landing to evacuate the Thai wounded, while synchronizing airstrikes in a deliberate effort to keep the enemy from destroying the vulnerable helicopters. CROWBAR, who ended up a prisoner of war, was one of the FAGs executing this difficult maneuver, and he was captured during this action. This had to be done all the while coordinating with the Thai battalion command to position the wounded and prepare for the medical evacuation. Such a maneuver would be difficult even in normal conditions. Facing an enemy shooting artillery and mounting ground attacks made the maneuver perilous.

²² A very few CIA officers remained at Long Tieng after the peace accord signed, but were restricted to Long Tieng and could not deploy onto the battleground.

5.3 Conducting an airstrike

Because coordinating airstrikes was a primary FAG duty, it is useful at this point to describe the duty, and what assisting U.S. reconnaissance and attack aircraft in identifying and attacking targets, and constructing battle damage assessment after strikes, entailed. ^{cx} (Duerhing, 2015-2017) The purpose of this explanation is not to educate the reader on military tactics, but rather to show the criticality of a FAG's

FAG OPERATIONAL REPORT				DATE : 18 OCT '72
CALL SIGN	FREQ	UNIT/LOCATION	STATUS	
*SMALL MAN	125.5/19.05	20 - A	OPNS/CH.FAG	
*BIG NO		20 - A	OPNS	
HELMET X-RAY BEACON # 215		603 GY TG 903208	OPNS	
FLASH GORDON		605 GY TG 903208	OPNS	
DIAMOND BACK		606 LK TG 853281	OPNS	
NIGHT FIGHTER		606 FE TG 897264	OPNS	
WOOD PECKER			STO/AL/RTN 19 OCT	
APPLE PIE			STO/AL/RTN 27 OCT	

*STRING BEAN		20 - A	OPNS	
SUNFLOWER		607 FH TG 877266	OPNS	
HILL BILLY		609 BJ TG 853283	OPNS	
WAR EAGLE		609 GF TG 868219	OPNS	
BIG DADDY			STO/RTN 21 OCT	
HORSE POWER			STO/RTN 21 OCT	
SIX GUN			STO/AL/RTN 22 OCT	

*BOOSTER		20 - A	OPNS	
GREEN BACK		616 KL WG 013215	OPNS	
BLUE BIRD X-RAY BEACON # 215284		616 KL UG 013215	OPNS	
BATTLE SHIP		618 U UG 038253	OPNS	
FLY ROD		20 - A	OPNS	
SUN BURN (K I W I)		636 RE TG 846234	OPNS	
RATTLE SNAKE			T-08	

*GND BIRD (SPARROW)		634 DG TG 776209	OPNS	
SUPER STUD (K I W I)		636 RE TG 846234	OPNS	

*BULLET HEAD 125.4/118.3/19.05/54.20		BOUNDER CONTROL	OPNS	
BOOSTER		" "	OPNS	

WIA	WILD BILL			
	STING RAY			
	RACE CAR			
KIA	HAMMER			
	SPIKE			
MIA	MOUSE TRAP			

Photo 36: FAG operational report, used to keep track of FAG locations and status.
Source: Bill Fitzgerald

Two key criteria had to be met before an attack was approved. First, the target had to be absolutely identified as enemy, and second that there be no danger of striking friendly troops. FAGs were critical in satisfying these information requirements. This second requirement was flexible in one regard, and that is there

mission and complexity of his mission. The U.S. employed air strikes to target PAVN and Pathet Lao logistic sites, troops as they attacked or maneuvered, vehicle formations, or anywhere the enemy was sighted. U.S. fighter pilots flew most of the attack aircraft and gunships from Thai Air Force bases, or secondarily from U.S. bases in South Vietnam. Hmong and Thai pilots also flew strike missions.

were occasions when Thai commanders and co-located FAGs ordered air strikes essentially on their own positions because the PAVN was on top of them, overruling the position. While a last-ditch maneuver, this at least allowed the Thai personnel to take cover as the airstrike came in.

The U.S. also flew at a very high altitude a large airborne platform (a plane, C-130 aircraft) called the Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Center (ABCCC). ABCCCs were stationed over Laos airspace both day and night. A total of four aircraft were used during any 24-hour period. The purpose of the ABCCC aircraft was to provide an airborne command, control, and communications center to facilitate airstrikes. The “command” in the name is a bit of a misnomer. The ABCCC did not control airstrikes. Rather, it was a communications platform for coordination among all the elements. The ABCCC was outfitted with multiple radio suites so that it could talk to FAGs on the ground, high speed strike aircraft, and U.S. airborne reconnaissance aircraft such as “Ravens” and other FACs which performed airborne (as opposed to land-based) forward air control duties.²³

5.3.1 Marking targets

A typical strike could occur as follows. A Thai FAG, assigned to a Thai battalion, might spot enemy troops approaching the Thai battalion. The FAG desires an airstrike to hit the enemy formation, so he would contact the ABCCC and the U.S. airborne FAC (all on the same communications frequency). The first task of FAGs working with U.S. aircraft was to conduct authentication prior to any ordnance being delivered, meaning, to positively authentic their identities and to establish the FAG’s exact location. The FAG also had to identify the target type, composition, size, and location accurately using a map, compass, and terrain features so the strike aircraft can hit it. Often the enemy was concealed in jungle, or at locations obscured from the air.

The next step was to mark it as an enemy target with some sort of visible munition (smoke) so the strike aircraft would know where to drop the ordnance. The

²³ The U.S. also employed Hmong and Thai FACs, but they were not designated “Raven.”

FAG, using binoculars, would inform the FAC of the type of target (e.g. troops in open, enemy vehicles) and size and describe the target's location to the airborne FAC, who would attempt to mark the target by firing a smoke rocket on or near it. By marking a target, strike aircraft could see the mark and attack the target. During this era, identifying and marking targets was not easy like it is today using sophisticated laser devices or laser guided munitions. These actions could be occurring – and did on occasion - while the enemy was firing upon or attacking the FAG's position. Identifying and marking targets are inherently dangerous because it means one is close enough to the enemy so that the enemy might locate and place a munition on him.

Describing the enemy location could be as crude as providing an estimated grid coordinate obtained from a map, or a description such as “100 meters due east of the bend in the river.” The FAC would then fly over the location as described by the FAG, and mark it by firing a 2.75 mm white phosphorus rocket or dropping ordnance such as a white phosphorus smoke grenade on top of (preferably), or close to, the enemy. Perhaps the FAC would see the enemy, but if not, the FAG, having observed where the munition landed, could tell the airborne FAC where the enemy was located relative to where the munition landed. For example, saying that the strike should be 50 meters due south of where the mark landed. The FAG could confirm no friendly troops were in the area, and clear (validate) the target for strike.

The FAC would then direct the orbiting strike aircraft to conduct a strike on the target. It should be noted in some cases FAGs talked directly to strike aircraft and gunships, but generally not the highest performance “fast-mover” jets such as F-4 Phantom jets or B-52s.²⁴ An exception might be at night if a FAG was under fire from enemy units, the high-performance strike aircraft could communicate directly with the FAG. If an airborne FAC was not in the area, then the FAG could direct a strike

²⁴ Per FAG SPOTLIGHT (conversation) and former CIA Operative Jim Schofield (email), FAGs could talk to U.S. fast-movers until a point in 1971 when a fast mover mistakenly dropped ordnance on a Thai unit on the west side of the Plain of Jars, at Phou (mountain) Long Mat. SPOTLIGHT and BEECHNUT said it was a newly-assigned FAG's fault. I assess this prohibition was not a reflection of FAG inabilities, rather, FAGs had to quickly translate from English to Thai and Thai to English, and fast-moving aircraft required very quick coordination. Afterwards FAGs could still talk to strike aircraft such as the slower T-28

aircraft or gunship to fire at the target with a lesser munition for marking, and the FAG would adjust fire based on the strike aircraft's placement of the munition. It was a very dynamic process.²⁵

FAG duties were dangerous not only because of an active PAVN force firing weaponry against Thai forces but the PAVN would employ deception operations. There were instances in the war where U.S. aircraft would ask the FAG to identify his position with red smoke, and the PAVN – overhearing the conversation – would deploy red smoke. In the heat of battle this can have debilitating consequences.^{cxiii} (Crutchfield, 2015-2017)

FAG duties were dangerous not only because of an active PAVN force firing weaponry against Thai forces but the PAVN would employ deception operations. There were instances in the war where U.S. aircraft would ask the FAG to identify his position with red smoke, and the PAVN – overhearing the conversation – would deploy red smoke. In the heat of battle this can have debilitating consequences.^{cxiii} (Crutchfield, 2015-2017)



Photo 37: FAG WHISKEY 02. Killed in action when PAVN overran the Plain of Jars in late 1972.
Source: Mike Ingham

The battlefield was also dangerous because of the threat of friendly aircraft mistakenly dropping ordnance on Thai forces, which happened several times. Calling in airstrikes is a not an exact science, its fraught with misjudgments and errors, with an active enemy continually trying to evade the airstrikes and shooting at Thai forces. As Raven 27 told me, “We never ‘fired for effect’ as they did in artillery, but we corrected each pass by using the smoke from the preceding aircraft’s bomb. So, we

²⁵ Obviously the most powerful munition is desired for striking a target, therefore the less powerful – and most visible – munition would be used for marking.

were constantly moving the ordnance around, pass after pass.”^{cxiv} (Duerhing, 2015-2017)

5.3.2 Battle damage assessment (BDA)

A key task in warfare after any type of artillery or aircraft strike is to perform BDA, that is, what effect did the strike have on the target. After the first strike, the FAG would attempt to assess what damage was inflicted upon the target. If the strike missed the target altogether, the FAG could adjust the fire, meaning provide the airborne FAC or strike aircraft the distance and direction from the strike to the actual enemy, and ask for another strike. If the strike was on target, the FAG would attempt, along with the airborne FAC, to conduct battle damage assessment, which would determine if another strike was necessary.

5.4 Additional duties

One FAG was assigned to each Thai battalion, and this put them in a unique position to know what was going on with the Thai units, specifically problems the unit was experiencing as well as equipment or personnel needs. FAGs often were the primary liaison element between Thai military battalions and the CIA. A key duty was crafting situation reports twice daily between 6:00 and 7:00 AM and then again in the PM for the CIA and Thai headquarters.^{cxv, cxvi} (Preecha Nithisubha, Undated) (FAG SPOTLIGHT, 2015 - 2017) These reports were daily updates containing information on military unit ammunition requirements, transportation requests, equipment needs and status, medical requirements, personnel status, weather information, ammunition expended, and any factors affecting the Thai battalions’ ability to fight. Occasionally they would also direct artillery strikes given their familiarity with the fires process, as well as coordinating Air America logistics and medical evacuations.^{cxvii} (Ingham, 2016, 2017)



Photo 38: L to R Thai Army Officer, FAGs FLYROD, SPOTLIGHT, BULLET HEAD, Long Tieng, ca. 1972.

Source: UWA 333

Most CIA officers chose a FAG to be his ops assistant. An ops assistant was similar to a personal assistant who accompanied the CIA officer around the battlefield. This was not like a secretary position or porter, rather, like a trusted aide. In this case, the FAG would typically not be coordinating air strikes, but rather performing whatever duties the CIA officer required to assist him as the CIA officer carried out his daily duties.

Sometimes the CIA case officers would send FAGs with Thai forward combat patrols to assist in conducting reconnaissance activity, so that the patrol could have a quick air response if needed. Often this resulted in vicious combat and heavy casualties.^{cxviii} (FAG SPARKPLUG, 2015-2017) Some were positioned at forward command posts which served as defensive and early warning posts. Having English-speaking Thai there served as an excellent source of intelligence and information. On other occasions, they would fly in aircraft to assist CIA case officers in identifying friendly versus enemy troops.

In early 1972 when the PAVN gains drove Thai troops from their positions, one FAG and a CIA officer flew trying to find scattered Thai soldiers and when they did so would drop batteries, radios, and/or food for the scattered soldiers, or pick them up.^{cxix} On another occasion, the CIA sent a FAG on a mission with others into Laos to retrieve a downed aircraft.^{cxx} FAGs found themselves doing many other tasks as the situation required from assisting with the movement of food, supplies, or ammunition from the rear areas to the front lines, to conducting aerial reconnaissance.^{cxxi} (FAG BEECHNUT, 2015-2016) ^{cxxii} (FAG SPARKPLUG, 2015-2017) (Preecha Nithisubha, Undated) Specifically, FAGs would coordinate with incoming aircraft for the drop of supplies. An additional responsibility was that U.S. airdrops or landings

among Thai units also required FAGs to signal to U.S. pilots that the area was safe for the operation (clear of enemy activity), or pilots would not execute the mission.

FAGs also rotated in and out of two communication huts, one in Long Tieng called Bounder Control and the other for the Pakse area in southern Laos called Stonewall Control. These were collocated with the Thai headquarters and were English-speaking communications facilities under CIA control and the main source of information/communications for the CIA officers, FAGs with the field units, and ABCCC. FAGs were typically the supervisors in these communication facilities.

Due to the strenuous demands of battle, FAGs were given varying degrees of time off. The time varied depending upon what military region they were in, and possibly for which CIA officer they worked. Some received liberal time off, such as one night off every week and seven days off every month.^{cxxiii} (FAG SPOTLIGHT, 2015 - 2017) Travel time – flight to and from Long Tieng and Udorn Royal Thai Air Force base – was not additional time off, but had to be incorporated in that time. Others got five-six days off per month, yet others time off every two-three months.^{cxxiv, cxxv, cxxvi} (FAG SPACE, 2015, 2016) (FAG BEECHNUT, 2015-2016) (FAG IRON CITY, 2015-2017) Another stated he worked twenty-four days on, and then six day's rest and relaxation. Of those six days, two were for travel to and from Thailand.^{cxxvii} (FAG SPARKPLUG, 2015-2017) FAGs were often rotated out of Laos for a few months to perform other functions, such as translator duties. This was done to give them a break from battle and the monotony of deployment away from home.



Photo 39: Thai FAG OFFICE at Bounder Control, the CIA communications hub at Long Tieng.

Source: OFFICE

When the U.S. military pulled out of Vietnam and Laos in early 1973 due to the Paris Peace accords, ending its involvement in the Second Indochina War, the Thai continued to fight. The burdens on the Thai FAG increased with the pullout of the CIA, who continued to support the Thai effort from Thailand (albeit some officers remained at Long Tieng but were prohibited from going into the field). The Thai changed its unit structure from battalions to regiments - "Groups Mobile" - designated as GMs 201, 202, and 203. Due to the loss of CIA officers on the battlefield, FAGs assumed their duties. From the group of FAGs a position was created called the Field Liaison Officer (FLO), to replicate the duties that a CIA officer was doing. One FLO was stationed in each regiment, and below him was an ops assistant. This ops assistant supervised a regimental team of FAGs. ^{cxxviii} (Preecha Nithisubha, Undated)

5.5 Serving two masters

The position of a FAG presented a dilemma that required them walking a fine line, and that is they were Thai civilians on the battlefield sleeping, eating (with some exceptions) and working with Thai military units, yet they worked for the CIA. The cadre of the Thai units was regular Royal Thai officers and noncommissioned officers, although they had a healthy respect for FAGs since they fought beside them. FAGs were not however on the same military professional footing as the Regular Thai officers in the Unity battalions. The CIA directed the FAGs' missions, yet the FAGs had to coordinate with the Thai unit military commander, deputy commander, or operations officer. They had to perform a balancing act by not appearing to be lackeys for the CIA, such as running to the CIA officer and providing him information on everything that was going on inside the Thai unit or sharing with the CIA confidential conversations they had with the Thai officers. Yet they had to carry out orders from the CIA. FAGs were in the spotlight.

Usually the FAGs would get along well with the Thai battalion commanders, although on rare occasions there were personality conflicts – usually with a fresh battalion commander – and the current FAG would move to a new unit and a new FAG would rotate in. Most of the FAG'S working on the front line with the Thai battalions would take their meals with the battalion commander or his deputy, or

sometimes with a member of his primary staff. This indicates the Thai officers placed the FAGs in high social standing.^{cxxxix} (FAG SPOTLIGHT, 2015 - 2017) Generally, relations between them all were good. “Relations in our little community of FAGs and (CIA officers) were surprisingly good. The FAGs were well paid and well treated by both the (CIA officers) and the Thai officers and they (Thai officers) knew that they (FAGs) were a critical part of the operation.”^{cxxx} (Ingham, 2016, 2017)

There was a practical component for Thai battalion commanders to respect and treat FAGs well. FAGs were the access point to the powerful U.S. air capability. It would only be through FAGs that Thai commanders would have access to U.S. reconnaissance, fighter, and bomber aircraft. So, commanders had a vested interest in keeping FAGs from harm’s way.

FAG SPACE tells of his reporting to his Thai unit in Laos military region IV in the Pakse area. Arriving at night, he bedded down quickly and was awoken the next morning by a soldier saying “interpreter, interpreter, the battalion commander wants to have coffee with you.” The commander did so, apologizing for not taking better care of SPACE the night before.

The commander ordered the soldiers to treat SPACE the same as an officer, and in fact assigned three soldiers to care for him. He protested, but the order stood and the commander ordered the soldiers build a bunker for SPACE next to the command bunker. He told SPACE to join the staff officers for each meal.^{cxxxix} (Chalermchai Tanvethin, Undated)

Once during an enemy attack when he was coordinating air assets, “The three body guards watched me, providing careful protection. Bullets struck the front group of soldiers, and the wounded cried out. The bodyguards jumped over near me together. I whispered to them to keep their distance.”^{cxxxii} (Chalermchai Tanvethin, Undated)

FAGs also occupied a higher social standing than regular troops in the hierarchy, which caused the commanders to treat them with greater respect. One has to understand Thai culture to fully understand this point. Thai culture is very

hierarchical and class conscious. That the FAGs spoke English, worked for the Americans, and had such power at their control (air assets) gave them a higher social status.

Thai units had their own cooks, and fresh food was flown in as often as possible. Commanders had their own separate cooks. In battle, FAGs along with the Thai soldiers ate canned food such as dried fish or pork in various types of Thai sauces such as green curry, etc. These were Thai military “C-rations,” probably like U.S. C-rations.^{cxxxiii} (FAG SPOTLIGHT, 2015 - 2017) For the Thai soldiers in the Pakse, Laos area (Military Region IV), a Thai contractor in Ubon Thailand brought in the food.^{cxxxiv} For this area “In normal or quiet situations we were supported with raw foods and vegetables field-delivered by a convoy. But in a fighting situation we received the same by air resupply during the night instead. In tense or continuous fighting situations we were unable to get air resupply we had to eat dry rations from the stocks to survive.”^{cxxxv} (FAG IRON CITY, 2015-2017)

FAGs often faced moral dilemmas with competing demands. According to one of their documents detailing FAG duties, “In some cases, a FAG was in a difficult situation. They cannot report some fact because it would harm him and his teammate in the mission. But if FAG intentionally gave a false report, for whatever reason, the CIA office would fire him immediately if discovered.”^{cxxxvi} (Preecha Nithisubha, Undated)

An example of this dilemma was shared by a FAG when he informed me of a situation where a young Thai lieutenant reported his unit had received enemy mortar fire that morning. The FAG was required to report that information in his morning situation report to the CIA and Thai higher headquarters, so he warned the lieutenant that if the lieutenant insisted on reporting the information, the FAG would have to report it as well due to standard operating procedure guidelines. American aircraft would consequently not land on the airstrip that day because of the threat to the aircraft and personnel servicing or boarding the aircraft. The lieutenant insisted on reporting the information in his report to the FAG, who passed along the information, so U.S. aircraft refused to land that day. As a result, wounded Thai soldiers later had

to be carried by foot over a mountain for evacuation, rather than evacuation by landing U.S. aircraft.^{cxxxvii} (FAG SPOTLIGHT, 2015 - 2017)

Thai FAGs quickly gained experience on the battlefield, and often Thai commanders would seek their guidance, especially commanders new to Laos. During the battle for Sam Thong in 1972, a battalion commander sought a FAG's guidance during the fight and after the battalion commander was wounded, the FAG directed the deputy commander to take certain actions.^{cxxxviii} (Preecha Nithisubha, 2004)

On January 25, 1973, a patrol from Thai BC-602 walked straight into the PAVN 9th Regimental Headquarters camp unknowingly near Paksong and Phou Chung Tua, and got into a vicious firefight. The commander sought the FAG's guidance, who established communications with a Royal Laotian aircraft pilot who provided directions on how to escape.^{cxxxix} (FAG SPARKPLUG, 2015-2017)

5.6 Criticality of FAG mission

There is a certain bias I bring to this project, that is, as a 21 year U.S. Army veteran with five tours in combat zones in Iraq and Afghanistan, I empathize and perhaps sympathize with the hardships FAGs endured and the demanding situations they found themselves in. I acknowledge this bias, however, and then compensate for it in my analysis and writing. Conversely, I believe my experience provides useful knowledge with which to better evaluate the FAGs positions and criticality of their roles.

The CIA certainly believed FAGs contributed to the mission in Laos and were a combat multiplier as the FAG program continued until the Thai withdrew in 1974. Most importantly, FAGs were an operational and linguistic bridge between Thai, Laos, and American elements. A CIA Officer with two years of experience in Laos stated "The FAGs were also the eyes and ears for the COs (CIA officers) as they were with the battalion commander 24/7. In most cases the FAG was leaned on heavily by the battalion commanders."^{cxl} (Ingham, 2016, 2017)

An official with the Heritage Foundation, Asian Studies Center, said "As the Deputy Director for Asian Studies at the Heritage Foundation in Washington D.C. I

have been researching the war in Laos for the last decade. Throughout my contact with members of UNITY, I am constantly impressed by their professionalism and dedication to the mission. This is especially true of the forward air guides, whose unique language skills was the vital link between air and ground forces.”^{cxli} (Conboy, 1992)

The versatility they possessed in filling a range of duties within their FAG positions is quite remarkable. This probably can partially be ascribed to a variety of positions they held with the U.S. prior to employment as FAGs. While not typical, one FAG started working for Air America as a teenager, beginning as a steward (Air America also performed as a commercial airline in the region) and later as a “kicker,” which was a crew member on U.S. aircraft that kicked cargo from the belly of an aircraft over a designated drop zone. He later supervised Hmong river watch teams (teams placed near a river or road to report on enemy movements) for the CIA, even leading one team on a mission, and worked directly for the CIA Chief of Station at Luang Prabang Laos doing miscellaneous tasks, all prior to his training and subsequent duty as a FAG.^{cxlii} (FAG OFFICE, 2016) He also was shot down in a U.S. helicopter and his actions helped save the life of the American pilot.^{cxliii} (Fraham, 2008)

CHAPTER 6: KEEPING THEIR WARRIOR DREAM ALIVE

6.1 Fight for recognition

It is important to the FAGs that Thai people understand their contributions to the war effort against communism, not for selfish reasons, but historical. Several teared up when I informed them that I wanted people to understand their story. They say it has been difficult to achieve recognition for their efforts in fighting communism and keeping Thailand free from communism. An additional fight was to receive some type of monetary compensation. As civilians, they were not entitled to any military benefits.

Time in Laos for them – strange, deeply personal, and indescribable to outsiders – was akin to a dream for many veterans. It was borne heavily by the FAGs in the post-war years, but was impossible to relate to anyone outside a small circle of comrades.

I will attempt in this section to describe why I assess it was difficult for them to achieve recognition; efforts they took to be recognized; how they are recognized now.

The last Thai contingent pulled out of Long Tieng Laos on May 22, 1974, over a year after major world powers signed a peace agreement ending the Second Indochina War, and a year before communists seized Saigon and Vientiane. During the war the position that made them unique – CIA contract employees–left them isolated and largely forgotten.²⁶

²⁶ Several FAGs provided this information with requests of confidentiality. Getting Thai government recognition involved many personalities and is still a sensitive subject, as many of those involved are still alive.

The FAGs fought in a secret war, so it should come as no surprise that the public did not know of their activities during the war. The only Thai who knew anything about them were the Thai military on the battlefield with which they served. Certainly, the same could be said for U.S. personnel who fought in the war, at least early on. Their activities were secret, hidden, and only a few Regular Thai military personnel who fought alongside of them knew of their activities.

By contrast, for the Royal Thai officers, the war in Laos was in large part a “ticket punch.” Combat operations provided them the war experience deemed necessary for promotion to the upper echelons. Several Thai officers later became generals.



Photo 40: Air Chief Marshal (ret) Kan Phimanthip (far left) and General (ret) Pichit Kullavanijaya (far right) at 2010 UWA 333 event. Phimanthip is currently president of the UWA 333 alumni association. Pichit is on the advisory board, is a member of Thailand's Privy Council, a U.S. Army West Point graduate, and was commander of Thai forces at Xieng Lom Laos.

Source: UWA 333

Another factor limiting their exposure and inhibiting recognition was that they were not employees of the Thai government, rather of a super-secret foreign intelligence agency, the CIA. Since FAGs were not Thai government or military members, the Thai military and the Thai government never maintained any type of administrative records on them; no one recorded their numbers, or even knew how many were on the battlefield. This administratively inhibited recognition.

The next factor inhibiting recognition was that Thai General Vitoon Yasawat – the commander of Unit 333 during the war – soon found himself on the wrong side of a military coup, and left Thailand in self-imposed exile. “Vitoon was distancing himself from the Laos war and his wife discouraged him from helping vets,” said one FAG. The *Bangkok Post* wrote “Politically, Gen Vitoon was no angel, and his poor decision making in the 1973 revolution and the 1976 coup put a stain on his legacy. But as a field commander and a leader of men in combat, Thailand has had few equals.”^{cxliv} (Dawson, 2013) With the commander of Unit 333 disgraced and unable – or unwilling - to help FAGs achieve recognition, it is difficult to think who would help them.

Finally, although the war in Laos had been an open secret, with the communist final victories in 1975, leaders and the public – other than liberal activists determined to expose the sins of war – did not want to talk about it. The Second Indochina War was over, and a wave of liberalism was spreading among youth activists in the urban areas. Many in the public wanted to put the war behind them, others – the activists – wanted to resurrect it but only to expose those responsible.

Despite these factors inhibiting recognition, the FAGs banded together. In an informal social group, they stayed in touch, socialized, and tried to form an organization. Some members of the UWA 333 claimed that after the Laos war ended, the Vietnamese came to Laos to claim their dead and build monuments in their honor, and rued that in Thailand “every sector, even the Thai army, tried to forget the heroic missions of these brave Thai warriors” and it was left to the UWA 333 to honor their Laos war veterans.^{cxlv} (FAG SPARKPLUG, 2015)

6.2 Achieving recognition

FAGs banded together forming a social network with a newsletter. Soon, Regular Royal Thai military officers who had fought with them joined the group. The FAGs then lobbied the government for recognition. I was told that initially Thai Prime Minister Seni Pramoj claimed not to know anything about the FAGs, and asked who

they were fighting in this “3d country.”²⁷ After many attempts, the government came to recognize the FAGs but the initial list of recognition only included 30 FAGs, and so was incomplete. More lobbying ensued to complete the list. Seni presided over a ceremony honoring and presenting awards to fifty-six FAGs in September 1976. Those who could not attend still received the award. It is unclear if all FAGs made it onto the government-recognized list.^{cxlvi} (FAG SPOTLIGHT, 2015 - 2017)

Several FAGs told me they felt that the primary reason for the Thai government to recognize them was that Royal Thai officers who had fought in Laos with the FAGs began to join their fraternal organization. The Royal Thai officers’ friendship with - and acknowledgment of - the FAGs seems to have gone a long way in contributing to the Thai government’s recognition of the FAGs.



*Photo 41: Thai Prime Minister awarding FAGs, 1976.
Source: OFFICE*

Since that time animosities amongst the public about the war have faded and while the public still knows little about the FAGs, at least the Thai military recognizes and embraces them.

Upon government recognition, they were awarded a medal (called the “Free People Protection Medal” by one FAG and “VZV Chaisamorabumi” pin by another, which “represents recognition and provides certain minimal privileges for the

²⁷ For reasons not clear to me, Cambodia was referred to as 1st country, Vietnam 2d, and Laos 3d.

bearer”), and allowed some benefits such as lifetime health care.²⁸ To get the health benefits, they had to present the medal to the Thai veteran’s affairs office, and had to have been in the field in Laos for six months. One FAG stated that most FAGs, but not all, got the medal, and those who died received no benefits for their families. Of course, the families would have received life insurance policy proceeds.

In order to keep their history alive, the FAGs as well as the Thai military veterans who served in Laos (some of whom later became high ranking officers in the Thai military) maintain an alumni association called Unknown Warriors Association 333 (UAW 333) based at the Royal Thai Air Force base behind Don Muang airport. The association office is at 172 Don Muang Royal Thai Airforce Club, Old Building behind Karntarat Meeting Hall, Don Muang Royal Thai Force Base, Phaholyothin Road, Sai Mai District, Bangkok 10220 Tel/Fax 02 152 6263.

The primary daily staff at the UWA 333 alumni office are primarily FAGs, which demonstrates the high esteem UWA 333 military veteran members hold for the FAGs, even though they were not regular military members. Preecha Nithisupha (callsign SPOTLIGHT) working at the headquarters, with his supportive wife Wannipa, along with RACECAR is a keeper of the flame. The FAGs enjoy the same honors from the group (but not benefits) as the previous military members, as the FAGs served right alongside the military, making the same sacrifices and experiencing the same deprivations. The organization is comprised of “Civilian, Police and all military forces volunteers who participated in the special expeditionary mission for national defense under command of The Combined Task Force 333 Head Quarters,” according to UWA 333. It is important to them to keep their legacy alive, and for Thai and others to understand what contributions they made to Thai security.

²⁸ I did confirm FAGs are entitled to health care at Thai government veterans facilities as a result of this award, and the Thai Veterans Affairs Office maintains a list of FAGs and provides them a once-a-year stipend from an annual emergency assistant fund which is only 500 baht, per one FAG. According to FAG OFFICE, the award was a Free People Protection medal class II, according to the proclamation published in the Thai government gazette, Book 93, Section 111 Line number 21, Dated 15 September B.E. 2519 presented by Seni Pramoch, the Prime Minister, on 16 October 1976 at the Government House at Dusit District, Bangkok.

Each year on December the 8th FAGs speak at Prachuab Khrikhan in southern Thailand where the Japanese landed in World War II. The last two years, several have spoken at the war monument at Khao Kho, Phetchabun. This marble monument was erected in 1982, and commemorates the many people that died protecting the country from the communists.



Photo 42: Water pouring and blessing ceremony, UWA 333 annual convention, 2016.

Source: Paul Carter

Many FAGs consider their time working for the U.S. Army and fighting against communism as FAGs in Laos as the defining experience of their lives. It is what binds many of them today and forms the nucleus of their social networks. Per their association booklet concerning the members they left behind on the battlefield,

“Legally, these unknown soldiers have no claim of justification of their actions because of the secrecy surrounding original units’ records. But in actuality, events in Laos did occur and these men’s actions are commendable. The armed conflict in Laos has long been settled and old soldiers who took part in it are slowly fading away. But tales of their sacrifices in the name of unknown soldiers are very much vivid in our memories today.”

The association issues a quarterly newsletter and also a booklet at the annual association meeting at the Royal Thai Air Force Convention Hall, Donmuang, Paholyothin Road, Bangkok. The author attended the 2016 event and is a life-long member of the organization. Their meeting brochure states the annual meeting is a

“Religious function in dedication to all heroes who sacrificed their lives during the mission, traditional water pouring to get blessings from Senior Ex. Commanders, General annual meeting, and a reunion party to recall the past among war comrades.”

The April 2, 2016, festivities started at 9:00 AM, which included book signings, a small band on stage, and members meeting and greeting each other, many of whom had not seen each other in some time. I witnessed two members who had not seen each other since their Kanchanaburi days. While I did not get a count, there were several hundred members present, I estimate in the 300-400 person range. Later in the morning the traditional water pouring ceremony occurred which all veterans (to include me) were invited to participate. Food was also served that day, with many catered dishes being brought to the tables. The official function ended at 2:30 PM. At that time, several of the FAGs invited me (more like directed) to a Bangkok karaoke bar, where we sang, ate dinner, and drank into the evening. A few other UAW 333 non-FAG members attended the karaoke event. I attended the event again in 2017, and the schedule as well as the number of people seemed to be about the same.

While many have written accounts of their time in Laos, it is only now that most seem eager to tell their stories, as most are in their 70's now. As one told me, “now I have nothing to lose” by telling his stories. After the war, several FAGs went to work in Middle Eastern countries for a time working for companies requiring English language skills. The pay was good, and once again their spirit of adventure was a compelling force to seek employment in a foreign land. Preecha Nithisupha (SPOTLIGHT), a keeper of the flame, should be recognized for his undying efforts and devotion at the UWA 333 office to keep their warrior dream alive. A heavy lifter, he wrote many accounts of the war action not for profit but solely for the preservation of history and his comrades' efforts. SPARKPLUG maintains a separate library and an extensive collection of Thai military efforts in Laos. With tremendous personal and financial sacrifice, he has been especially instrumental in saving an historic Thai home in Phrae, called Wichairacha, from destruction. This story is noteworthy because it is indicative of the FAGs recognition and respect for Thai history and their efforts to keep the history alive.

Phra Wichairacha, a Thai patriot, warrior, and nobleman, built the magnificent home in the old Lana style before 1887, passing it to his son Chao Wongs Seansiribhan (1898-1970) who was an instrumental member of the Seri Thai, or Free Thai Movement, in the Second World War against Japanese occupying forces in Thailand. Ignoring the threat from Japanese forces in the area, he used his elephants to ferry allied air drop supplies from Wientga, a secret base deep in the jungle 30km away from town. Chao also used a room in Wichairacha to store weapons and ammunition. Unfortunately, due to internal Thai political conflicts many Seri Thai cadres and associates were jailed, kidnapped, and murdered. The Thai government seized his home and becoming destitute, he left town and lived a simple, quiet life in a shack. The home was left for abandonment. As an article in the Bangkok Post stated, “The grand old teak house has witnessed incursions, revolutions and invasions for more than 100 years and every joint, knot and plank reeks of Thai history.”^{cxlvii} (Piyaporn Wongruang, 2012) SPARKPLUG has saved the home from ruin, and is bringing publicity to save and memorialize it.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

I would be remiss if I did not first address my thoughts on the degree to which communism was a threat to the Thai government and its system of governance during the post-World War II period until 1975. Some academics have questioned the magnitude of the threat, dismissing its strength. Many scholars argue that the Thai government itself, through repressive policies, actually increased the internal threat by alienating liberal students and driving them to the northeastern jungles and into the communist ranks. Their flight added intellectual heft to the communist movement in Thailand. Regardless of the assessment as to the degree to which communism was a threat, there are three salient facts impacting its strength that we do know. These are a matter of record. The first is that the People's Republic of China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam both were determined to achieve a communist victory in Thailand and took active measures to achieve such. China was very vocal about this effort, and both governments actively fomented insurgency inside Thailand. History has taught us that when two foreign powers – one arguably a world power, certainly soon to become one – say their goal is to overthrow a government, the threat is probably a significant one and cannot be taken lightly. I think it is rather disingenuous to say the communist threat to Thailand's system of governance was not great when both powers were allocating personnel and resources to attack Thailand and change its system of government. The Vietnamese communists eventually asserted dominance over Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos, so they were unquestionably a dangerous threat. China and Vietnam were formidable enemies.

The next fact we know not only from credible intelligence documents but from statements of Thai citizens who were former communists, is that Thai cadres trained in North Vietnam. The Vietnamese then sent them back into Thailand where they executed acts of violence and terrorism and recruited more citizens to the communist cause. It is difficult to minimize the scope and severity of this type of threat from a foreign power. It actually is quite jolting today to read the Bangkok Post editions from

the early 1970's and see the violence and extensiveness of communist attacks inside Thailand.

I assess that because successive Thai governments used the communist threat –probably inflating its strength – to secure increased levels of U.S. funding, that some authors have therefore used this action as a reason to undervalue the communist threat. That successive Thai governments advantaged the existence of the communist threat to secure their power and status does in no way diminish the threat.

Likewise, because Thailand constructed deliberate and effective counterinsurgency and other measures beginning in 1951 to combat communism does not negate the strength of the threat. Although I have mentioned some of those measures in this thesis, it beyond the scope of my project to document and evaluate them. Suffice it to say that Thailand created several practical and beneficial measures to stem communism. This success is a tribute to the measures themselves and those who implemented and executed them, not a measure of the strength of the threat.

Regarding the FAGs, it is quite surprising that the story of Thai FAGs in the Laos war has not been told in English language publications. I'm not sure such an arrangement will ever be duplicated, where a foreign civilian is given less than two weeks of training and placed on the battlefield coordinating air strikes for a foreign power. The Thai FAGs justifiably feel history has shortchanged them for the contributions they made to the conflict in Laos, in the defense of Thailand against communism. The story of the loss of Laos and Vietnam to communism could just as easily be written as the salvation of Thailand from communism. It is not by accident Thailand did not succumb to communism. Rather, a host of individual and collective actions, both on the part of individuals and the government, that the Thai took to protect their way of life. As I illustrated, the Thai government, to include the monarchy, viewed Laos as the frontline in the fight against communism, and took actions to confront the threat.

The people of Thailand know little of the Laos war, another sorrow the Thai FAGs suffer. They told me that while Americans celebrate and honor veterans with national holidays, the Thai – in their opinion – fail to honor the sacrifices of military soldiers and care little about their history. Particularly the participation of the Thai in the Second Indochina War. It is almost as if it never occurred in the minds of the Thai - ephemeral as a dream - according to several FAGs.

The Laos war is a tale of tragedy. The communist persecution of a people allied with the Thai and United States in the aftermath of the war such as the Hmong, Lao Thueng, and Lao Puan, the loss of native and allied life, the millions of dollars spent prosecuting the war, the remaining unexploded ordnance littering the country, and the ultimate loss of the country to communism and the communist purges. I think the Thai however can be quite proud that they confronted communism in Laos and demonstrated to the world that they would not back down from a fight for their way of life. The FAGs played an extraordinary role in that fight. FAGs bridged the warfighting gap between Laotian, American and Thai forces. With no military experience and almost no training, they went into battle and facilitated the streamlining of operations between allied forces. Without FAG participation, allied forces would have been severely hampered in their ability to conduct combined operations.

7.1 Recommendations for further researches

It would be useful for a Thai to further interview FAGs and investigate the role of the Thai military in the Laos war. Such an investigation would provide greater insights not only into the conduct of the war, but the motivations of individuals who fought the war. A more insightful study would be to seek and interview those remaining of the 20,000 plus volunteers who fought in Laos. We know that the Royal Thai officers fought in the secret war and the reasons for doing so are fairly obvious. This study examines the role and motivations of the FAGs. There is a vast population of Thai, however, that participated in the war, and research should focus on this population.

REFERENCES

- Adcock, G. (2012). *CCT at The Eye of the Storm*: Author House.
- Anonymous: former CIA Case Officer who wished to remain anonymous only with the name "Mike" (2015-2017, 2015-2017). [Multiple emails with author].
- Anuson Chinvano. (1992). *Thailand's Policies towards China 1949-1954*. London: Macmillan.
- Berrigan, D. (1961). Thailand is on the Spot. *The Reporter*.
- C-SPAN Book TV (Writer). (2012). Interview with Dr. Richard Ruth.
- Castle, T. N. (1993). *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: U.S. Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government 1955-1975*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Celeski, J., U.S. Army COL (Ret.), . (2017). *The Ambassadors SOF and the Secret War in Laos: Green Berets, Air Commandos, and SOF Assistant Attachés 1959 – 1974*. Unpublished at time of writing.
- Chalermchai Tanvethin. (Undated). *The Unknown Warriors: Secret War in Laos*. Bangkok.
- Churchill, J. (2000). *Classified Secret: Controlling Airstrikes in the Clandestine War in Laos*. Manhattan KS: Sunflower University Press.
- CIA. (1964). *Subject: Stabilizing the Situation in Southeast Asia*. Washington D.C. Retrieved from http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP80B01676R000400180009-2.pdf.
- CIA. (1966). *Memorandum for Major General Jack E. Thomas. Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, USAF, The Insurgency Situation in Thailand* Washington, DC: CIA.
- CIA. (2006). *Undercover Armies, CIA and Surrogate Warfare in Laos 1961-1973*. Washington, DC: CIA Center for the Study of Intelligence.
- Conboy, K. (1992). Correspondence to Mr. Star, Heritage Foundation.
- Conboy, K. (1995). *Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos*. Boulder CO, USA: Paladin Press.
- Crutchfield, R., Former CCT Team Lead at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force base, (2015-2017). [Multiple emails with author].
- Dawson, A. (2013). Skyline Ridge Defenders Receive Their Due at Last. *Bangkok Post*, p. 1. Retrieved from <http://www.bangkokpost.com/print/368587/>
- Duerhing, C., Former U.S. Air Force pilot and “Raven 27” in Laos, (2015-2017). [Multiple emails with author].
- FAG BEECHNUT. (2015-2016, Multiple interviews with Author) *Multiple interviews with author/Interviewer: P. T. Carter*.
- FAG CROWBAR. (1987, October). Story about Crowbar. *UWA 333 News about FAG – Volunteer Corps*.
- FAG IRON CITY. (2015-2017) *Multiple interviews and emails with author/Interviewer: P. T. Carter*.
- FAG OFFICE. (2016, Multiple occasions) *Multiple interviews with author/Interviewer: P. T. Carter*.
- FAG SPACE. (2015, 2016) *Multiple interviews with author/Interviewer: P. T. Carter*.
- FAG SPARKPLUG. (2015,). Historical Context of the Laos War and Contribution of the FAG and Thai Army. *UWA 333 Phamplet*.

- FAG SPARKPLUG. (2015-2017) *Multiple interviews with author/Interviewer: P. T. Carter.*
- FAG SPOTLIGHT. (2015 - 2017) *Multiple interviews with author/Interviewer: P. T. Carter.*
- Fraham, F. (2008). H-71 February 1971. *Air America Log*, 25-3(July-September).
- General Saiyud Kerdphol. (2006). *Cheewit Nee Mee Kaa Ying (roughly translated as "This Life is precious")* (Kasamon Pilantandadilok, Trans.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Hal, A., & Lilienfeld, S. O. (Producer). (2010, February 15, 2017). Why Science Tells Us Not to Rely on Eyewitness Accounts, *Scientific American*. Retrieved from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/do-the-eyes-have-it/>.
- Ingham, M., Former CIA officer in Laos, (2016, 2017). [Multiple emails with author].
- Kislenko, A. (2004). A Not So Silent Partner: Thailand's Role in Covert Operations, Counter-insurgency, and the Wars in Indochina. *The Journal of Conflict Studies, The GREGG CENTRE for the Study of War and Society*, 14(No. 1, Summer 2004).
- Kissinger, H. (1969). *Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to Vice President Agnew*. Washington, D.C.
- Kissinger, H. (1970a). *Letter From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman*. Washington: FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969–1976 Retrieved from <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v20/d55>.,
- Kissinger, H. (1970b). *Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon*. Washington: U.S. State Department, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Retrieved from <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v20/d57>.
- Lair, W. (1993) *Interview with William Lair and Pat Landry/Interviewer: Unknown*. Eugene McDermott Library, Air America Notebooks From the William M. Leary Papers Lair University of Texas, Dallas.
- Langer, P. F., & J.J., Z. (1969). *Revolution in Laos: The North Vietnamese and Pathet Laos*. Santa Monica CA: The Rand Corporation.
- Leary, W. M. (Undated). CIA Air Operations in Laos, 1955-1974. Retrieved from Major General Oudone Sananikone. (1978). *The Royal Lao Army and U.S. Army Advice and Support*. McLean VA: Department of the Army, General Research Corporation.
- Maxner, S. (2001) *Interview with William Lair/Interviewer: W. Lair*. Texas Tech University, Oral History project, Texas Tech University.
- McDaniel, J. (2006). *Negotiating the Modern Age: Buddhism in Thailand, Buddhism in World Cultures: Contemporary Perspectives*. Santa Barbara CA, : ABCCLIO.
- NBC Universal Archives (Writer). (1967). *The Battle for Laos: The Forgotten War, 1967*. Los Angeles
- Parker, J., former CIA Officer in Laos, (2015-2017). [Multiple emails with author].
- Phimmasone Michael Rattanasengchanh. (2012). *Thailand's Second Triumvirate: Sarit Thanarat and the military, King Bhumibol Adulyadej and the monarchy and the United States. 1957-1963*. (Masters), Washington, Seattle.

- Pichai Chinnasota, T. G. R. p. (Undated). *UNITY, (Unknown Warriors Association 333, Official History of 333 in the Laos War)*. Personal manuscript, Bangkok.
- Piyaporn Wongruang. (2012, January 7.). History Tangled in Vines and Red Tape. *Bangkok Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/300428/a-valuable-piece-of-thai-history-lies-tangled-in-twisted-vines-and-red-tape>
- Preecha Nithisubha. (2004). *Samthongs Battle*. Bangkok.
- Preecha Nithisubha. (Undated). *FAG: FORWARD AIR GUIDE*. Bangkok.
- Preecha Nithisubha. (Unknown). *SKY LINE & 20A (LONGTIEN or LONGJAENG) BATTLE, . Unpublished, 2.*
- Randolph, R. S. (1986). *The United States and Thailand, Alliance Dynamics, 1950-1985*. Berkley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California.
- Roddy, R. (2009). *Circles in the Sky: The Secret War in Southeast Asia – a Command and Control Perspective*. West Conshohocken Pennsylvania: Infinity Publishing.
- Roddy, R. (2015-2017). [Multiple emails with author].
- Rowley, R. A., Lt. Col., (1975). The Air Force in Southeast Asia FAC Operations, 1965-1970. *Office of Air Force History*, 140.
- Ruth, R. A. (2011). *In Buddha's Company: Thai Soldiers in the Vietnam War*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Ruth, R. A. (2015-2017). [Multiple emails with author].
- Satayut Osornprasop. (2003). *Thailand and the American Secret War in Indochina, 1960-1974*. (Doctoral Degree), Cambridge,, Cambridge.
- Suchada Maktara. (2003). *Why Did the Thais Go to War?: A Study of Thailand's response to the Conflicts in Vietnam and Laos, 1960-1968*. (PhD), London, University of London.
- Surachart Bamrungasuk. (1988). *The United States Foreign Policy and Thai Military Rule 1947-1977*. Bangkok: Duangkamol.
- Thomas, A. William M. Leary Papers. Special Collections Department, History of Aviation Collection. Retrieved from <http://libtreasures.utdallas.edu>
- U.S. Embassy in Bangkok. (1969, November 20, 1132Z). *Telegram from the Embassy in Thailand to the Department of State*. Bangkok. Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh. (1970). *Embassy cable Phnom Penh to SECSTATE DTG 161200Z AUG 1970*
Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Senate. (1973). *U.S. Senate, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam: April 1973*. Washington, DC: Subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad.
- U.S. State Department. (1955a). *Dispatch from the Embassy in Thailand to the Department of State*.
- U.S. State Department. (1955b). *The Laos Crisis, 1960–1963, Bangkok, April 22, 1955*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. State Department. (1955c). *Memorandum of a Conversation, 3 May 1955, FRUS, 1955-1957, as cited by Cheng Guan Ang, Southeast Asia and the Vietnam War, Routledge Studies in the History of Modern Asia, England*.

- BURMA, CAMBODIA, CANADA, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM, etc., Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos, (1962).
- Unknown author. (Undated). Thai People in the Army, Kingdom of Laos – Goodbye...Plain De Jars. Retrieved from <http://www.iseehistory.com/index.php?lay=show&ac=article&Id=538711088>,
- Unknown Warriors Association 333. (2011, April 2,). War for the Protection of the Nation, Religion, King, in Laos. UWA 333
- Vice President Agnew. (1970). *Telegram From the Vice President's Party to the Department of State in Bali* Washington, D.C.
- Warner, R. (1996). *Shooting at the Moon: The Story of America's Clandestine War in Laos*. Vermont: Steerforth Press.





APPENDIX

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

APPENDIX A: FAGS KILLED IN ACTION AND PRISONER OF WAR

This is the list of Thai FAGs who gave their lives in the Laos war.

Chumpol Salawan, BLUE BOY	Lost his life the night of 1 March 1969 in the Battle of Nakang, LS-36, after PAVN overran position
Parinya Intara-kaung, (nickname Pingo), WHISKEY 02. (See pic talking with CIA officer Mike Ingham ((HARDNOSE)), sometime in 1971, probably Long Tieng)	Assumed duty of Battalion Commander for BC-609 at Base B.C, by calling for fire on position at base of Phu Tueng because of PAVN overrun, December 19, 1971
Pisan Suwanmajo, PRESSURE 02	Ambushed while retreating from Base Lion to Ban Hin Tang, 19-21 December 1971
Pitsanu Sathapornwonkul, DRAGONFLY	Killed March 11, 1972 at close range by AK-47, at Base Delta Yankee (BC-608) in movement to Sam Thong air base. Carried wounded company Commander from position
Comsan Prawn, WAR EAGLE	Died from PAVN night attack above Long Tieng at Skyline Ridge, Base CW, as platoon was to reoccupy C.W. April 1972
Sanyarn Bunreungrong, BASE PAY	Enemy ambush April 1972 on Skyline Ridge, BC-617, retreating from Base C.T. to Long Tieng. Radio contact with FAG SPOTLIGHT when overrun
Sa-nga Keaw-arsa, HAMMER	Drove over mine placed by Thai in Sam Thong Valley, June 1972
Subin Baokum, SPIKE	Was with HAMMER
Tawat Tanyaluck, EASY RIDER ²⁹	Was with FAG SPOTLIGHT, killed by mortar round June 15, 1972 five minutes after SPOTLIGHT departed position, Base R.E., Zebra Hill,

²⁹ FAG SPARKPLUG states EASY RIDER was a friend of his, movie star good looking, long hair like Elvis. EASY RIDER failed the FAG course, but SPARKPLUG recommended instructors give him a second chance, and they did, given they were really in need of FAGs. He passed second time. SPARKPLUG went on leave 1-2 months after graduation to say goodbye to family (didn't tell them what he was doing) and when he returned learned EASY RIDER had died, and felt very bad. Conversation with author, Bangkok February 16, 2016.

Yutthana Larmtakul, MOUSE TRAP	Lost his life with B.C 619 (Marine cadre) at Phu Thaen, September 26, 1972. Died in close combat, pistol still in hand, bad weather prevented air support
Sa-ngad Chaipradit, KNIFE	Killed by single 122 mm round incoming near Pakse. FAG SPACE was flying reconnaissance overhead, saw the incoming, and radioed the CIA officer John Kern (Lonestar) but the artillery killed both

Source: FAG SPOTLIGHT and Roddy



APPENDIX B: CROWBAR, FAG POW

FAG CROWBAR was the only FAG prisoner of war (POW) during the conflict. He was captured in the Long Tieng area (LS-20A) on 11 March 1972 and not repatriated until September 1976 together with the Thai Volunteer Corps soldier POWs. Here is an account of the story.³⁰

Each year during the dry season the PAVN would begin an offensive, while the Hmong conducted offensives during the rainy season. Each year these opposing forces would trade terrain in a see-saw battle, with the PAVN penetrating further south with each dry season offensive. In January 1972, the PAVN was pressing on the Long Tieng area and its older sister base to the north, Sam Thong (LS-20).

CROWBAR had been the FAG for BC-616, but in a reshuffle to task organize for battle, was transferred to BC-606, defending at a base just north of LS-20. BC-606 was in a direct line between LS-20 and the approaching PAVN, who was attacking with mortars and artillery in advance of their infantry troops. The Thai battalions were experiencing additional risk because the FAGs had to adjust to battalion commanders and battalion officers and their operating styles with which they had not been acquainted, and the battalions were partially populated with new volunteer soldiers fresh out of training.

In mid-March the PAVN had moved closer to BC-606, 607, and 608 and launched all out attacks. All night on March 10 and into the morning of the 11th the PAVN attacked, with the Thai battalions defending themselves, and the FAGs coordinating airstrikes with U.S. aircraft as the weather was favorable. Around 1000 hours that morning the FAGs had to execute an even more precise maneuver, which was talking with U.S. helicopters as they landed to evacuate the Thai wounded, while coordinating airstrikes in a deliberate effort to keep the enemy from attacking the vulnerable helicopters.

Around noon, bad weather started closing in with fog, low ceilings, and cloud cover, which meant U.S. aircraft were unable to conduct airstrikes, giving an

³⁰ This account of the Battle of Sam Thong comes from *Samthongs Battle*, Unpublished UWA 333 document. October 31, 2004

advantage to the PAVN. Seizing the opportunity, the PAVN began pressing heavier attacks against all three battalions. Without any air cover, the PAVN began to overrun the Thai position, and units began to retreat. The retreat was not orderly, and communication was haphazard. FAG SPOTLIGHT, who had been rotating among battalions, attempted to contact CROWBAR via radio, but there was silence on the other end. The last battalion fell on March 18th and Sam Thong fell. Many Thai soldiers were killed in the battle, the UWA 333 document on the battle says only 40% of the soldiers made it back to Long Tieng. For days individual soldiers were straggling and dispersed trying to make it back, and SPOTLIGHT and a CIA officer flew helicopters over the area, trying to identify Thai troops and picking some up, providing radio batteries and food to others.^{cxlviii} (Preecha Nithisubha, 2004)

CROWBAR had been taken captive, and Roddy's book has this to say:

On 11 March (1972), a major enemy offensive began in the LS-20 area. Beginning at 2245Z, Spotlight, Crowbar, Billy Club and Blue Moon all had ground assaults and incoming fire, which lasted all day. Spotlight, Crowbar, Billy Club and Blue Moon's positions were all lost to the enemy. Thunder FSB was also lost. Lulu, Hacksaw and Parka reported heavy incoming fire and LS-20A reported receiving 94 rounds of suspected 130-mm artillery fire. Enemy attacks near the chopper pads prevented any medevac attempts. The Ravens, Nails, RLAFF T-28s and U.S. TACAIR, including gunships, supported all positions. Raven 23 and Sandy 03 were hit by ground fire - both returned to base safely.^{cxlix} (RODDY) CROWBAR was able to recount his story.³¹

CROWBAR along with several others were captured after their position was overrun, and they spent several days on the march. At the point of capture, a group of PAVN leapt from rocks, knocking CROWBAR down.

Crowbar states "The first question they (his PAVN captors) asked me being 'Are you Hmong or Laotian?' I didn't know what I should say so because of being nationalistic I replied 'Thai.' Once they heard that they all laughed. I felt they were

³¹ His story comes from a speech he gave to the Mekong Yacht Club on August 14, 1989 per this document, recounted in a UWA 333 document *Story about Crowbar*. News about FAG – Volunteer Corps. October 1987

very much content that they could capture Thai people. It might be because we all had bounties or something like that. It's like when the Volunteer Corps captured those North Vietnamese. I knew thereafter that if the person being captured was Hmong belonging to General Vang Pao they would not leave him alive, they would kill him immediately."

As I previously wrote, once he talked with his North Vietnamese captors about captured soldiers at the front line. They asked him which front line? He was thinking of Plain De Jars and Sky Line Ridge, so he told them. He said they laughed and told him that that's not the front line, that their front line was Thailand.

He was marched for five days to a prisoner of war camp in Vietnam. "There was a plain-clothes North Vietnamese speaking fluent Thai like Thai people. He chatted with me, but he chatted contemptuously that he owned a furniture shop at Trokhaotom near a Silver Barber Shop in Udorn Province. He said they could overrun Thailand whenever they need."

Conditions in the camp were obviously horrible, and the PAVN derided him, saying Thai were capitalist, mercenaries, and whores. There were reeducation attempts, and once he tried to escape, and claims he was almost executed for it. Finally, in September 1976, the North Vietnamese released all Thai prisoners

APPENDIX C: EQUIPMENT CARRIED

What follows is a list of some of the equipment FAGs carried, accompanied by pictures. FAG Office, shown below, is carrying three types of communication devices, a PRC-25 FM (behind head) to talk to the Thai units and other FAGs, a Dynair radio aircraft (foot rest), and a DELCO, a Morse Code signaler in case of emergency (not seen in photo, but sitting upright in clothe case just off of his left elbow). FAGs typically also carried an HT-2 used to communicate with the aircraft, other FAGs and the CIA. Not all FAGs carried a Dynair.

OFFICE also has an M-16 carbine. FAGs were issued an M-16 and a Colt 1911 .45 pistol. Some FAGs returned their M-16 because they never used it, others were careful not to openly display their Colt 45 because typically in armies only those of higher rank carried pistols, and in case of snipers or captured, a Colt 45 would increase scrutiny. They possessed a survival kit consisting of such items as morphine, rope, saw, bandages, needles, tourniquet, antiseptic, and other sundry medical and survival items, a compass, water canteens, flashlight, strobe light and infrared strobe light, and a sidearm such as a pistol or M-16, and a map. Some FAGs also carried a state-of-the-art PRD-7880 (TEMIG, or tactical electromagnet pulse generator), a new targeting device that came into play later in the war. It was a device with a beacon, or



beam, and switch that the FAG could use to designate targets as personnel, vehicles, or positions (like a bunker) and distance. The beacon then could be aimed at the target for aerial aircraft gunships to engage. Most FAGs also had a personal locator system beacons for day and night.

Photo 43: FAG OFFICE with equipment, date unknown.

Source: OFFICE



Photo 44: Items in FAG survival kit includes rope, medical supplies, wire, and other items, including injectable morphine (right).

Source: SPARKPLUG



Photo 45: FAG carry kit includes compass, battery, water purification tablets, signaling device to aircraft with Morse Code sheet, day and night signaling beacons.

Source: SPARKPLUG

APPENDIX D: FAG LIST

(source: Alumni Office, UWA 333 Association)

The FAG names and call signs are copies exactly as provided by UWA 333. I suspect there are some transliterations errors. For example, “Hapoon” is probably “Harpoon,” “Bahma” probably should be “Brahma,” etc. Of note, FLY ROD and BOOSTER were brothers. Origins of FAGs come from UWA 333 Alumni office, former CIA Officer Mike Ingham, and FAG SPACE.

FAG Name	Callsign	Remark	Origin (see key code bottom of file)
Amuay Lorlamai	Whip	Longtien (20A)	1
Amnaj Joomphimai	Office	Pakse (1-11)	4
Sakda Amphakham	Knock Out		
Anant Kullatasana	Right Guard	Longtien (20A)	1
Arin Sanitwong	Bullet Head	Longtien (20A)	1
Boakhoon Venbarp	Coffee Cake	Pakse (1-11)	1
Boonjan Panthip	Sure Thing		1
Bansong Sanklang	Iron City	Pakse (1-11)	4
Banyad Pongprated	Apple Pie	Pakse (1-11)	2
Boonsithi Chalie-Ngam	Breaker	Pakse (1-11)	3
Chalermchai Thamvethin	Space	Pakse (1-11)	4
Chaiyoot Charoenpakdee	Hapoon	Chienglom	1
Charoon Phousombatsakoi	Bath Gun	Longtien (20A)	1
Ghon Tha-ying	Watermelon	Pakse (1-11)	1
Choosak Inthavong	Sky Cop	Longtien (20A)	2
Chalerm Maitree	Subway	Longtien (20A)	1
Choomphol Buasing	Playboy		
Chaiyong Wongprasert	Cajun		
Chat Prathomchai	Hot Shot		
Chalong Butrwong	Vampire		
Danai Supharak	Glide Path		
Jerd Thinthanoh	Bahma		
Poi Coi Kiettpong Mepien	Track	Chienglom	1

Kohoi Apiratikul	Race Car	Longtien (20A)	4
Krich-Pechara Salakxul	Boones Farm	Longtien (20A)	1
Luer-Sadki Thamthok	Lady Bug	Pakse (1-11)	4
Montre Watanasarith	Stringbean	Longtien (20A)	4
Manop Teeranit	Dakota	Longtien (20A)	2
Nopporn Promsiri	Gang Buster		
Niem Butrsriphoom	Sunburn	Longtien (20A)	2
Nichet Vadisirisadki	Razor Blade	Pakse (1-11)	1
Uthit Wongglasin	Gambler		
Phaderm Kitkhayan	Billy Club	Longtien (20A)	1
Prakarn Khamsributr	Barhop		
Phichet Panyakham	Hacksaw	Pakse (1-11)	1
Preecha Nithisupha	Spotlight	Longtien (20A)	4
Phitaya Sumitr	Big Daddy	Longtien (20A)	1
Preedee Pinlai	Dogwood	Longtien (20A)	1
Prawat Udomphol	Night Fighter	Longtien (20A)	1
Phichit Prinyakab	Clam Cake		
Praxit Satrawon	Cow Bell		
Wichai Wirasaxdi	Hoot Owl	Huay Sai	1
Phaithoon Ratanasuwan	Tuner	Longtien (20A)	2
Phinit Khoonklang	Ink Spot	Pakse (1-11)	1
Prasert Khamphusaen	Yellow Bird	Pakse (1-11)	1
Phaisarn Sakulbenja	Joe Cool		
Sares Sriprayoon	Pressure	Longtien (20A)	1
Sawai Nathongkham	Snap	Longtien (20A)	1
Sermsax Changphan	Parka	Longtien (20A)	1
Somchai Tunkulsawasdi	Small Man	Longtien (20A)	3
Somchai Acharyachayaphan	Rosini	Longtien (20A)	3
Suthat Namboonlieng	Booster	Longtien (20A)	4
Samarn Charoenchai	Counter	Pakse (L-11)	1
Suthep Duenvarartna	Lawn Mower		1
Sawasdi Sornklin	Battery (Big Mo)	Longtien (20A)	2
Sanya Voharndej	Stingray	Longtien (20A)	1
Samart Thaithonelang	Baldhead	Pakse (L-11)	1
Samarn Chomphoothep	Siamese Cat	Longtien (20A)	1
Somsak Phoothaprun	Football	Huay Sai	1
Surpradit Kalphavanich	Lolly Pop	Pakse (L-11)	1
Somporn Namboonlieng	Flyrod	Longtien (20A)	4
Pol Cpt Saxdisin Kaenthanang	Cactus	Longtien (20A)	3
Sinthu Saenphlang	Dart Board	Pakse (L-11)	1
Sompob Vithayatham	Six Gun		

Sombat Saxdisithi	Colt 45	Longtien (20A)	1
Sakda Boonma	Daredevil	Longtien (20A)	1
Sorn Pravichai	Ohio	Longtien (20A)	4
Surasin Amornsooksiri	Road Sign	Longtien (20A)	4
Sripong Serisikaphoot	Country Club	Pakse (L-11)	2
Somsak Subsombati	Super Stud	Longtien (20A)	2
Sutat Chachom	Sky King	Pakse (L-11)	4
Seni Nakboon	Sunflower	Longtien (20A)	1
Samrueng Sunekovanich	Moonshine	Longtien (20A)	2
Sanit Silpacharoen	Blacklabel		1
Sanit Muenpan	Popcorn	Longtien (20A)	2
Sunit Wacharasith	Candy Bar	Longtien (20A)	1
Somporn	Woodstock	Longtien (20A)	1
Thamsak Phanpak	Iceman	Chienglom	1
Thongchai Kaewmart	Hawkeye	Pakse (L-11)	1
Thongchai Ratanachote	Screwdriver	Longtien (20A)	4
Thanan Udomvilai	Dimond Black	Longtien (20A)	1
Thanan Skakornkul	Battleship	Longtien (20A)	2
Udom Lamphoon	Flat Top	Pakse	1
Urai Srithai	Devil Fish	Longtien (20A)	1
Veera Star	Spark Plug	Pakse (L-11)	4
Visith Sirichumpoi	Can Do	Longtien (20A)	1
Visarn Prathumratana	Green Back	Longtien (20A)	1
Vichas Viseenkham	Blue Ribbon		
Viboon Suwannong	Wild Bill	Longtien (20A)	4
Vithayote Hemthurintra	Cowhide	Pakse (L-11)	2
Wanchai Saengthong	Hardcore		
Surapol Phadungkiet	Beechnut	Longtien (20A)	4
Suvit Lampha	Axe Man	Huay Sai	1
KIA and Deceased (2016):			
Phison Sunanmajo	Pressure 02	KIA	
Phisanu Sathapornvongkol	Dragon Fly	KIA	
Parinya Inthakeun	Whisky 02 (nick name Pingo)	KIA	3
Rabin Baokham	Spike	KIA	
Sanga Kaew-Ar-Sa	Hammer	KIA	
Sanyarn Boonruengrong	Base Pay	KIA	
Sa-ngad Chaides	Knife	KIA	
Yuthana Khamtrakul	Mouse Trap	KIA	
Thavuth Thanyalak	Easy Rider	KIA	
Khomsan Praiwan	War Eagle	KIA	

Choomphol Sarawan	Blue Boy	KIA	
Prasop Sithaphoot	Rattlesnake	Pass Away	
Phisit Kaewkariya	Scotch Piper	Pass Away	
Phoj Rojanarom	Little Joe	Pass Away	
Somjai Yooyong	Scope	Pass Away	
Suparb Chomlak	Dallas	Pass Away	
Suphin Maneenong	Blue Bird	Pass Away	
Saraj Vuthisupmethi	Hollywood	Pass Away	
Suraphol Phokhavanich	Helmet	Pass Away	
Thepphol Nilhongkol	Woopecker	Pass Away	
Thada Kulyanont	Lonestar	Pass Away	
Therdsak Phothilak	Ringer	Pass Away	2
Udom Wongmak	Horsepower	Pass Away	
Jan Chonsith	Dog Face	Pass Away	
Montree Meesook	Hill Billy	Pass Away	
Narin Khaomuengnoi	Whisky 01	Pass Away	
Nikorn Sriroj	Power Burn	Pass Away	
Praden Phothi	Flash Gordon	Pass Away	
Anan Panyathip	Hill Top	Pass Away	4
Chatchai Phanichkul	Sweatsuit	Pass Away	
Chavalit Thepprathoom	Snow Bird	Pass Away	
Chainit Chuer-Bandith	Buckshot	Pass Away	
Rienthong Varong	Bumsteer	Pass Away	
Pinyo Thammawathana	Redhat	Pass Away	
Key code for origins:			
1=Civilian			
2=Prior Military			
3=Former PARU			
4=Civilians working for U.S. Military or CIA			

Source: Alumni Office, UWA 333 Association

VITA

Mr. Paul Turner Carter is a retired U.S. Army officer, and subsequently spent seven years at the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington D.C. He has 5 combat tours between

Afghanistan and Iraq.

ⁱ Darrell Berrigan, *Thailand Is on the Spot*, *The Reporter*, January 19, 1961, 29-31

ⁱⁱ His honors and awards include the U.S. President's Daily Brief Professional Recognition Thailand's Vietnam troop numbers come from C-SPAN TV interview V with Dr. Richard Ruth, Book Award, from the U.S. Office Director of National Intelligence, for coauthoring 14 U.S. Presidential TV Award at the U.S. Naval Academy, October 2, 2012, available at <http://www.dailymilitary.com/2012/10/02/3-vietnam-troop-numbers-14-u-s-presidential-awards/> Daily Briefs from the 2011-2014 3x Vietnam FTYS, Yitaland U.S. National Security (author December 21, 2016). Thai deployment numbers in Laos come from *Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam: April 1973*, A Staff Report of the Subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Decision," U.S. Army Armor Professional Magazine (Jan-Feb 2001) and "Electronic Warfare Procedures" U.S. Army Military Intelligence Professional Magazine (Apr-Jun 1994). He was 1995),

^{iv} Researcher Conboy, *Army Military Intelligence Professional Magazine* (Boulder CO: Paladin Press, 1995), 284 a contributor to the highly-acclaimed U.S. RAND Corporation book "Ending the U.S. War in Iraq,"

^v NBC Universal Archives. *The Battle for Laos: The U.S. Forgotten War, 1961-1975*. http://www.nbcuniversalarchives.com/nbcuni/home/ClipOfTheWeek_04-09-2012.do. Accessed December 23, 2016

In addition to his schooling, he devotes his time in Bangkok to 2 volunteer and charity projects. He volunteers at the U.S. Department of Defense, Retirees, Activities Office which Scientific American, January 1, 2010. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/do-the-eyes-have-it/>. Accessed February 15, 2015 assistance to U.S. military retirees, their wives, and their Thai widows.

^{vi} Satayut Osornprasop, *Thailand and the American Secret War in Indochina, 1960-1974*, (PhD diss Centre of International Studies, The University of Cambridge, 2003), 3 impoverished school funding charity projects in northeast Thailand and Laos.

^{vii} Thomas Allen, *William Carter: A Special Collection*, Special Collection, Department of Special Collections, (Dallas: The University of Texas at Dallas), <http://libtreasures.utdallas.edu>. Accessed November 23, 2016 Mahidol University, International Business class.

^{viii} P.F Langer; J.J. Zasloff, *Revolution in Laos: The North Vietnamese and Pathet Laos* (Santa Monica CA: The Rand Corporation, 1969), 1

^{ix} According to the CIA, "The Geneva Accords of July 1954, which accepted Viet Minh control of North Vietnam, neutralized Laos under a regime to be monitored by an International Control Commission. The United States refused to sign the accords, which it regarded as unduly accommodating to the communists; but it promised to observe them and to help punish anyone who did not." CIA, *Undercover Armies, CIA and Surrogate Warfare in Laos 1961-1973*, Center for the Study of Intelligence. CIA. Washington. 2006. 2

^x United Nations. *BURMA, CAMBODIA, CANADA, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM, etc., Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos. Signed at Geneva, on 23 July 1962*, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20456/volume-456-I-6564-English.pdf>. Accessed March 6, 2016

^{xi} FAG CROWBAR. *Story about Crowbar*. News about FAG – Volunteer Corps. October 1987. 6

^{xii} U.S. State Department, Office of Historian, *The Laos Crisis, 1960–1963*, Bangkok, April 22, 1955, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/laos-crisis>. Accessed October 5, 2015

-
- ^{xiii} Timothy N. Castle, *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: U.S. Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government 1955-1975*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 27
- ^{xiv} Arne Kislenko, *A Not So Silent Partner: Thailand's Role in Covert Operations, Counter-Insurgency, and the Wars in Indochina*. *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol XXIV, No. 1, Summer 2004. The GREGG CENTRE for the Study of War and Society, 2004, footnote 14
- ^{xv} U.S. Department of State, Memorandum of a Conversation, May 3, 1955, FRUS, 1955-1957. Volume XXII, Southeast Asia, 821-22, as cited by Cheng Guan Ang, *Southeast Asia and the Vietnam War*, (England: Routledge Studies in the History of Modern Asia, 2010), 18.
- ^{xvi} Osornprasop, 13
- ^{xvii} Chris Baker (translator), *An Internal History of the Communist Party of Thailand*, in *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Volume 33, Number 4, 2003. 510-41. As cited by Cheng Guan Ang, *Southeast Asia and the Vietnam War*, (England: Routledge Studies in the History of Modern Asia, 2010), 18.
- ^{xviii} U.S. State Department, Dispatch from the Embassy in Thailand to the Department of State. *Bangkok April 22, 1955. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957 Volume XXII, Southeast Asia, Document, 471*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v22/d471>. Accessed October 10, 2015
- ^{xix} Anuson Chinvanno. *Thailand's Policies towards China 1949-1954* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 121
- ^{xx} Suchada Maktara, "Why Did the Thais Go to War?: A Study of Thailand's response to the Conflicts in Vietnam and Laos. 1960-1968," (PhD diss School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2003), 11
- ^{xxi} Kislenko citation: United States Army, Chief of Staff, *Memorandum of Conversation*. General William Westmoreland and General Praphas Charusthian, 16 October 1968, file Thailand Memos Volume 8, 7/68 to 12/68, #96, NSF. Country Files Thailand. Box 284. LBJL
- ^{xxii} Suchada Maktara, "Why Did the Thais Go to War?: A Study of Thailand's response to the Conflicts in Vietnam and Laos. 1960-1968," (PhD diss School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2003), 8
- ^{xxiii} Justin McDaniel, *Negotiating the Modern Age: Buddhism in Thailand*, *Buddhism in World Cultures: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Berkwitz (Santa Barbara CA: ABCCLIO, 2006), 101
- ^{xxiv} Osornprasop citation 11: Donald E. Nuechterlein, *Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965). 138
- ^{xxv} Surachart Bamrungsuk, *The United States Foreign Policy and Thai Military Rule 1947-1977*, (Bangkok: Editions Duangkamol, 1988), 44
- ^{xxvi} *Ibid*, 46
- ^{xxvii} Kislenko citation: *Background briefings, 'Visit of Prime Minister of Thailand, with Marshall Wright, White House, 7 May 1968*, file BB #32 - Background Briefings etc. 7 May 1968-28 June 1968, #1437, Background Briefings, Box 83, White House Press Office Files, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library (hereafter cited as LBJL). MAP aid reached a yearly high of \$US 130 million in 1968."

^{xxviii} R. Sean Randolph, *The United States and Thailand, Alliance Dynamics, 1950-1985*. (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1986), 15

^{xxix} Steve Maxner, The Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University, Oral History project, *Interview with Bill Lair*, 11 December 2001. <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/star/images/oh/oh0200/OH0200-part1.pdf>, Accessed October 5, 2015

^{xxx} Conboy 57

^{xxxi} Roger Warner, *Shooting at the Moon: The Story of America's Clandestine War in Laos*. (Vermont: Steerforth Press, 1996), 373

^{xxxii} University of Texas Archives, Special Collections, Eugene McDermott Library, Air America Notebooks From the William M. Leary Papers Lair Interview, date incorrectly listed as July 3, 1933, <https://www.utdallas.edu/library/specialcollections/hac/cataam/notebooks/sepcop65.pdf>, Accessed October 30, 2015

^{xxxiii} Warner 31 and 41

^{xxxiv} Maktara citation: 12. Thongbai Hongviangchan, "The Dynamics of Thai Foreign Policy towards Indochina, 1938-1950," (M. Phil. Thesis, University of London, 1984), 349.

^{xxxv} Osornprasop citation: 230, New York Times 02/06/70

^{xxxvi} Kislenko, 1

^{xxxvii} William M. Leary, *CIA Air Operations in Laos, 1955-1974* (Washington: CIA Center for the Study of Intelligence, undated), <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter99-00/art7.html>. Accessed October 8, 2015

^{xxxviii} Kenneth Conboy, *Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos* (Boulder CO: Paladin Press, 1995), 17

^{xxxix} U.S. State Department message from Laotian minister Yost, December 3, 1954, as cited by Conboy, *Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos*. 27, footnote 25.

^{xl} Bamrungsuk, 86

^{xli} Phimmasone Michael Rattanasengchanh, "Thailand's Second Triumvirate: Sarit Thanarat and the military, King Bhumibol Adulyadej and the monarchy and the United States. 1957-1963" (Master's thesis University of Washington), 2012

^{xlii} Ibid, 42

^{xliii} Osornprasop, 163

^{xliv} CIA, Memorandum to the President, "*Subject: Stabilizing the Situation in Southeast Asia*," 22 FEB 1964, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP80B01676R000400180009-2.pdf, Accessed October 13 2015

^{xlv} Richard A. Ruth, *In Buddha's Company: Thai Soldiers in the Vietnam War*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), 37

^{xlvi} Conboy, Kenneth, *Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos*, Paladin Press, Boulder CO, 1995, 261

^{xlvii} U.S. State Department, Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, February 25, 1970, 5 p.m., FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969–1976, VOLUME XX, SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1969–1972, pg 110, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v20/d49>, accessed August 25, 2016

^{xlviii} Major General Oudone Sananikone, *The Royal Lao Army and U.S. Army Advice and Support*, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program, Department of the Army, General Research Corporation, McLean VA, 1978, 131

^{xlix} U.S. State Department, *Letter From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman*, Washington, March 23, 1970, FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969–1976, VOLUME XX, SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1969–1972, 119, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v20/d55>, accessed August 25, 2016

¹ U.S. State Department, *Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon*, Washington, March 26, 1970, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972, pg 123, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v20/d57>, accessed October 3, 2016

^{li} Kenneth Conboy, *Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos*, 284

^{lii} U.S. Embassy cable Phnom Penh to SECSTATE DTG 161200Z AUG 1970. “Top Secret Document Files.” Record Group 472, Stack Area 270, Row 76, Compartment 35, Shelf 4, Entry A1 209, Box 1, Records of the United States Forces in Southeast Asia, 1950-1975. NARA, College Park Md.

^{liii} *Ibid.*, 285

^{liv} UWA 333 Official History of 333 in the Laos War, author possibly General Chinnasota Pichai, untitled and undated, 1

^{lv} General Saiyud Kerdphol, “Cheewit Nee Mee Kaa Ying” (roughly translates as “This Precious Life”), (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 202

^{lvi} Kenneth Conboy, *Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos*, 103

^{lvii} UWA 333 Booklet “War for the Protection of the Nation, Religion, King, in Laos,” April 2, 2011, 53

^{lviii} Kenneth Conboy, *Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos*, 284

^{lix} Jim Parker, email to author, January 25, 2016

^{lx} Ray Roddy Jr., *Circles in the Sky: The Secret War in Southeast Asia – a Command and Control Perspective* (West Conshohocken Pennsylvania: Infinity Publishing, 2009), 4.

^{lxi} Joe Celeski, U.S. Army COL (Ret.), *The Ambassadors SOF and the Secret War in Laos: Green Berets, Air Commandos, and SOF Assistant Attachés 1959 – 1974*, Unpublished as of this writing. Citation from Chapter 21. 4.

-
- ^{lxii} Ralph A. Rowley, Lt. Col, *The Air Force in Southeast Asia FAC Operations, 1965-1970* (Washington: Office of Air Force History, May 1975), 140
- ^{lxiii} Celeski. Chapter 21. 8
- ^{lxiv} Celeski. Chapter 21. 13
- ^{lxv} Former CIA Case Officer who wished to remain anonymous only with the name “Mike,” email to author, February 23, 2016
- ^{lxvi} Ray Roddy, *Circles in the Sky: The Secret War in Southeast Asia – a Command and Control Perspective* (West Conshohocken Pennsylvania: Infinity Publishing, 2009), 209
- ^{lxvii} Jan Churchill, *Classified Secret: Controlling Airstrikes in the Clandestine War in Laos*, (Manhattan Kansas: Sunflower University Press Manhattan, 2000), 55
- ^{lxviii} Jan Churchill, *Classified Secret: Controlling Airstrikes in the Clandestine War in Laos*, (Manhattan Kansas: Sunflower University Press Manhattan, 2000), 37
- ^{lxix} Roddy. 115
- ^{lxx} FAG SPOTLIGHT, conversation with author, December 17, 2016
- ^{lxxi} Roddy. 90.
- ^{lxxii} Bamrungsuk, 154 citing Sinsawad, N., *Socio-Economic Impact of the presence of American Troops at Takhli Airbase on Takhli District*, (Bangkok: Thammasat University ((Mimeo)), 1968), 7
- ^{lxxiii} Mike Ingham, email to author, February 8, 2016
- ^{lxxiv} Mike Ingham, email to author, October 3, 2016
- ^{lxxv} State Department, Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to Vice President Agnew. Washington, December 17, 1969. *FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969–1976, VOLUME XX, SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1969–1972*, 85, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v20/d39>. Accessed August 25, 2016
- ^{lxxvi} State Department, Telegram from the Embassy in Thailand to the Department of State. Bangkok, November 20, 1969, 1132Z. *FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969–1976, VOLUME XX, SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1969–1972*, 84, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v20/d38>. Accessed August 24, 2016
- ^{lxxvii} Jim Parker, email to author, August 17, 2016
- ^{lxxviii} FAG BEECHNUT, conversation with author, February 25, 2016.
- ^{lxxix} FAG OFFICE, conversation with author, March 15, 2016
- ^{lxxx} Surachart Bamrungsuk, 27
- ^{lxxxi} Nithisubha, Preecha. *Samthongs Battle*. UWA 333 Document. Unpublished. October 31, 2004. 17

-
- ^{lxxxii} State Department, Telegram From the Vice President's Party to the Department of State, Bali, January 11, 1970, 0813Z. *FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969–1976, VOLUME XX, SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1969–197, 95*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v20/d43>, Accessed August 25, 2016
- ^{lxxxiii} Ruth, 40
- ^{lxxxiv} Mike Ingham, email to author, August 17, 2016
- ^{lxxxv} Jim Parker, email to author, October 5, 2015
- ^{lxxxvi} Nithisubha, Preecha. *SKY LINE & 20A (LONGTIEN or LONGJAENG) BATTLE*. Unpublished. Date unknown. 2
- ^{lxxxvii} FAG SPACE, email to author, January 7, 2017
- ^{lxxxviii} FAG SPARKPLUG, conversation with author, February 9, 2016
- ^{lxxxix} FAG IRON CITY, email to author, March 5, 2016
- ^{xc} Unknown, *Thai People in the Army, Kingdom of Laos – Goodbye...Plain De Jars*, <http://www.iseehistory.com/index.php?lay=show&ac=article&Id=538711088>. Accessed January 3, 2017
- ^{xci} FAG SPARKPLUG, conversation with author, February 9, 2016
- ^{xcii} FAG SPOTLIGHT, conversation with author, December 17, 2016
- ^{xciii} Rick Crutchfield, former CCT Team Lead at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force base, email to author, March 17, 2016
- ^{xciv} Adcock, Gene, *CCT @The Eye of the Storm*, (AuthorHouse, 2012), 128
- ^{xcv} FAG SPARKPLUG, conversation with author, February 9, 2016
- ^{xcvi} Adcock, Gene, 128
- ^{xcvii} Joe Celeski, U.S. Army COL (Ret.), *The Ambassadors SOF and the Secret War in Laos: Green Berets, Air Commandos, and SOF Assistant Attachés 1959 – 1974*, Unpublished as of this writing. Citation from Chapter 28. 70.
- ^{xcviii} Joe Celeski, U.S. Army COL (Ret.), *The Ambassadors SOF and the Secret War in Laos: Green Berets, Air Commandos, and SOF Assistant Attachés 1959 – 1974*, Unpublished as of this writing. Citation from Chapter 28. 70.
- ^{xcix} Ibid
- ^c Gene Adcock, email to author, May 24, 2016
- ^{ci} Nithisupha, Preecha (SPOTLIGHT), *Brief Duty – History of FAGs*. UWA 333 document, unpublished, undated

-
- cii Rick Crutchfield, email to author, February 18, 2016
- ciii Joe Celeski, U.S. Army COL (Ret.), *The Ambassadors SOF and the Secret War in Laos: Green Berets, Air Commandos, and SOF Assistant Attachés 1959 – 1974*, Unpublished as of this writing. Citation from Chapter 28. 72.
- civ FAG OFFICE, conversation with author, March 15, 2016
- cv FAG SPACE, conversation with author, October 12, 2016
- cvi Rick Crutchfield, email to author, June 9, 2016
- cvi Leary, William. *CIA Air Operations in Laos 1955-1974*. CIA Library. <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol43no3/html/v43i3a07p.htm>. Undated. Accessed January 4, 2017
- cvi FAG BEECHNUT, conversation with author, February 25, 2016
- cix FAG SPARKPLUG, conversation with author, March 10, 2016
- cx Mike Ingham, email to author, February 9, 2016
- cx Craig Duerhing, former U.S. Air Force pilot and “Raven 27” in Laos, describing the fires process. Email to author, March 24, 2016
- cxii Rick Crutchfield, email to author, February 18, 2016
- cxiii Rick Crutchfield, email to author, February 18, 2016
- cxiv Craig Duerhing, email to author, November 17, 2016
- cxv UWA 333 booklet. *FAG: FORWARD AIR GUIDE*. Undated. 4
- cxvi FAG SPOTLIGHT, conversation with author, September 10, 2016
- cxvii Former CIA Case Officer in Laos Mike Ingham, email to author, February 8, 2016
- cxviii FAG SPARKPLUG, conversation with author, February 22, 2016
- cxix FAG SPOTLIGHT, conversation with author, April 10, 2016
- cxx FAG BEECHNUT, conversation with author, February 15, 2016
- cxxi FAG SPOTLIGHT, conversation with author April 16, 2016
- cxvii UWA 333 booklet, *FAG: FORWARD AIR GUIDE*. undated. 1
- cxviii FAG SPOTLIGHT, conversation with author, April 16, 2016
- cxvii FAG SPACE, email to author, January 8, 2016

-
- cxxv FAG BEECHNUT, conversation with author, February 15, 2015
- cxxvi FAG IRON CITY, email to author, March 6, 2016
- cxxvii FAG SPARKPLUG, conversation with author, February 9, 2016
- cxxviii UWA 333 booklet. *FAG: FORWARD AIR GUIDE*. Undated. 8
- cxxix FAG SPOTLIGHT, email message to author, January 19, 2017
- cxxxi Mike Ingham, email message to author, February 11, 2016
- cxlii Chalermchai Tanvethin, *The Unknown Warriors: Secret War in Laos*, Unpublished Manuscript 2017, 98
- cxliiii Chalermchai Tanvethin, *The Unknown Warriors: Secret War in Laos*, Unpublished Manuscript 2017, 112
- cxliv FAG SPOTLIGHT, conversation with author, April 10, 2016
- cxlv FAG SPARKPLUG, conversation with author, February 22, 2016
- cxlvi FAG IRON CITY, email to author, March 5, 2016
- cxlvii UWA 333 booklet. *FAG: FORWARD AIR GUIDE*. Undated. 7
- cxlviii FAG SPOTLIGHT, conversation with author, April 16 2016
- cxlix Nithisubha, Preecha. *Samthongs Battle*. UWA 333 Document. Unpublished. October 31, 2004. 66, 69
- cl FAG SPARKPLUG, conversation with author, February 9, 2016.
- cli Mike Ingham, email message to author, March 9, 2016
- clii Kenneth Conboy to Mr. Star. January 7, 1992
- cliii FAG OFFICE, conversation with author, March 11, 2016
- cliv Fraham, Fred. *H-71 February 1971*. Air America Log. Volume 25-3. Jul-Sep 2008. 6
- clv Bangkok Post, *Skyline Ridge Defenders Receive Their Due at Last*, August 9, 2013, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/print/368587/>, Accessed October 30, 2015
- clvi FAG SPARKPLUG. *Historical Context of the Laos War and Contribution of the FAG and Thai Army*. Momento of the Occasion of ACM Kan Pimanthi, President of Anonymous Warriors – 333, at the Seri-Thai Commemoration. August 23, 2015.
- clvii FAG SPOTLIGHT, conversation with author, January 14, 2017

^{cxlvii} Wongruang, Piyaporn. “History Tangled in Vines and Red Tape.” *Bangkok Post*, January 7, 2012. <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/300428/a-valuable-piece-of-thai-history-lies-tangled-in-twisted-vines-and-red-tape>

^{cxlviii} FAG SPOTLIGHT, *Samthongs Battle*, Unpublished UWA 333 document. October 31, 2004. 34

^{cxlix} Roddy. *Circles in the Sky*. 328

