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SMC of
7TH AIR FORCE

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Narrative - Chapters I to III

Assigned to:

PACIFIC AIR FORCES

Stationed at:

Tan Son Nhut Airfield, Republic of Vietnam

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(U) Policy and planning guidance was provided through the TACC, various operating staff divisions.

Current Operations

(U) The Current Operations Division (TACO) of TACC directed and controlled the offensive and defensive air effort in South Vietnam. The division monitored all air movements within the Da Nang and Saigon Air Defense Sub-Sectors of the Mainland Southeast Asia Air Defense Region. Status boards were maintained to reflect air defense, tactical action, ground electronic equipment status, aircraft status, air defense fighter alert status, naval vessel locations, current and forecast weather, HAWK missile status, and the pre-planned and immediate missions for each of the four Corps areas in RVN.

Western Pistol

(●) In January, reports of unidentified helicopter sightings in the Western II CTZ increased concern that it could represent a threat to the I FFORCEV operational area. A program (Western Pistol) to attempt identification of these tracks was proposed by Seventh Air Force in January, approved by COMUSMACV, and implemented on 165 February.

(C) The program established a tightly prohibited flying area, emplaced an Army HAWK radar in the area and employed airborne vehicles to investigate the tracks. Aircraft used included USAF AC-119G, AC-47, O-1, A-1 and Army OV-1 and UH-1H.

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(C) For approximately three weeks in March, an Army anti-aircraft searchlight was positioned in the area. Also, representatives from the MACV Office of Scientific Advisors made three visits to record HAWK radar doppler audio returns from track detections, for comparison with cataloged recordings of foreign nation's helicopters.

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(C) Track data reported by the Combat Reporting Post at Pleiku and the HAWK radar site at LZ Oasis were recorded and analyzed during April and early May. Most of the tracks were investigated by helicopter crews scrambled from strip alert at LZ Oasis. On two occasions in April, the air crews reported sighting a blacked out silhouette of a helicopter, for a very short duration; they compared it to a Soviet type helicopter in an identification manual.

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(C) On the night of 10 May, LZ Oasis came under ground attack and the HAWK site had two prime radars destroyed by rockets and also sustained damage to other equipment.

1) No concrete results had been attained from the project to that point with the exception of the two possible identifications. On 27 June, the Director of the TACC briefed COMUSMACV on the project status, concluding that there was no hard evidence of enemy helicopter operations in the area and recommended the termination of the project. Approval was granted by COMUSMACV.

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Air Activity

2) The 2nd of January saw the highest number of strike sorties, 717, flown since September 1968. On 3 January, sorties dropped back to normal and the average daily sortie rate for January was 568. On 9 February, A-37s were grounded due to wing spar problems. A special team began putting them back into service in March.

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3) The first half of February was characterized by preparation for an expected Tet offensive. On Tet, 17 February, allied forces observed a 24 hour stand-down in operations. The stand-down was marred by numerous VC violations, triggering over 100 alert sorties in response to VC attacks. The expected offensive came late enough on 23 February to be called the Post Tet Offensive.

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165. Hist (S) 7AF (TACO), Jan - Mar 69.

166-167. Ibid.

168. Hist (S) 7AF (TACO), Apr-Jun 69.

169. Ibid.