THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN
IN THEIR PSYOP MACHINES

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Man for man, this team could run circles around any postal service in the world.

The Air Force's 14th Special Operations Wing (SOW), South Vietnam's exclusive mailman for airborne PSYOP messages, last year delivered over six million leaflets to enemy addresses throughout the country.

In addition, wing aircraft delivered 16,500 hours of on-target loudspeaker broadcasts—certainly enough to shame any commercial "singing telegram" service.

The 14th SOW, commanded by Colonel William K. Bush, began flying PSYOP missions with its activation in Vietnam three years ago. Two of its six squadrons are committed primarily to aerial delivery of PSYOP messages. These, the 5th and 9th Special Operations Squadrons (SOS), operate all delivery flights for U.S. and Free World psychological operations from the southern-most Delta to the Demilitarized Zone.

Although the 5th and 9th SOS frequently fly PSYOP missions for Korean and Vietnamese units and for U.S. Marines and Air Force, 4th PSYOP Group units are the heaviest users of their services.

Both of the squadrons have their headquarters with 14th Wing headquarters at Nha Trang, but each of the subordinate flights committed to psychological operations is based near a 4th Group unit. From the 9th SOS, 'A' Flight flies out of Da Nang for the 7th PSYOP Battalion, 'B' Flight is based at Pleiku with Company B, 8th PSYOP Battalion, and 'C' Flight flies out of Nha Trang for Company A, 8th Battalion. The 5th SOS, covering III and IV Corps Tactical Zones, has its 'B' Flight with the 6th Battalion, and its 'C' Flight at Binh Thuy Air Base, near
10th Battalion headquarters.

The Air Force crews flying the missions are what Lieutenant Colonel T. Katagiri, 4th PSYOP Group commander, describes as "really hot on PSYOP—they believe in what they're doing."

Major Kenneth H. Moses, a pilot with the 9th SOS 'C' Flight, said he, like most pilots in the PSYOP effort, thinks psychological operations "have the greatest potential of any new development in warfare.

"There will have to be a stage of acceptance before its value is fully realized, though," he said, "and that's what we're going through now."

With the full value of psychological operations still not widely recognized, "the glory kind of falls in other directions while we in PSYOP just go plodding along," he said.

Air Force crews' conviction that they are playing an important part in the war gives them high esprit de corps. At 9th SOS 'C' Flight, there are abundant signs that the group is close-knit and happy with its work: a carefully decorated and much-used clubroom (dedicated to a pilot shot down on a PSYOP mission in October 1968) is a favorite gathering place, and small talk there invariably turns to flying and the PSYOP effort.

Major Moses, who flew an average of 100 hours each in the last two months and has been hit by hostile fire six times on his current tour, said PSYOP pilots believe there are definite hazards in their type of flying.

"There is a saying, 'Unarmed, alone and unafraid,' he said. "With me, it's more like, Unarmed, alone and terrified."

In the past 18 months, the squadrons' aircraft have been hit more than 125 times, with one plane downed by enemy fire.

Major Mayer Littman, 14th SOS PSYOP officer, said the 26,000 missions tallied by the 5th and 9th squadrons in 1968 indicate a greater feat than meets the eye.
With roughly 50 aircraft between the two squadrons, the statistics show large amounts of flying time per aircraft and crew member, and represent an outstanding maintenance achievement for the units' ground crews.

The maintenance achievement is heightened by the fact that the two squadrons are using different types of planes, and thus need a wide range of knowledge among repairmen and a large parts resupply effort.

The 9th SOS is flying C-47s and O2Bs in the two northern corps zones, while in the south the 5th SOS is using C-47s and U-10s. All three types have loudspeaker systems installed and can drop leaflets, though the large C-47 is used primarily on leaflet drops.

Air Force workers in the PSYOP effort have taken pains to provide exceptional service. The Nha Trang flight, for example, keeps one O2B on a ready status every day, and can put a quick-reaction message on target in a matter of minutes.

Despite heavy schedules of pre-arranged missions, flight crews have gone out of their way to put psychological operations on the scene wherever possible. The fliers have arranged FM radio nets with U.S., Vietnamese and Korean ground units, so that crews can check for hot PSYOP opportunities in every area they enter.

When these radio checks reveal ground situations ripe for PSYOP exploitation, the crews fly immediately to the scene to play tapes or drop leaflets brought along for such emergencies. Later, the teams return to complete their original leaflet or loudspeaker assignments.

One PSYOP tactic that is particularly popular with the fliers is to follow up air and artillery strikes with leaflet drops and Chieu Hoi broadcasts. The airmen feel this technique reaches an audience highly susceptible to PSYOP appeals and search for opportunities to use it.
For Air Force psyoperators, the rewards of the job lie mainly in the satisfaction of performing well on missions they think important. Feedback on their accomplishments is limited and quantifying results is difficult, but the fliers are satisfied with their lot.

As one of them explained it, "everyone here feels he's contributing something vital to the war effort. We've got a good thing going."