THE DEFENSE OF ATTOPEU

15 JAN 71
HQ PACAF
Tactical Evaluation Center
PROJECT CHECO REPORT

Prepared by: Captain Melvin
S.E. Asia Team
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seasoned veterans, according to Ma. These troops were reported to push the villagers ahead of them when attacking or when being attacked - and if the villagers refused, they were shot anyway. All prisoners were killed, frequently beheaded or disemboweled. Ma estimated that 200 FAR soldiers had been killed, and another 100 wounded since the hand-to-hand encounters had begun a few days before. Most of the friendlies killed in action were from Group Mobile 16, and included two majors, both assistant battalion commanders. The FAR troops were reported to be badly demoralized.

General Ma was convinced that Attopeu would fall if the enemy made an attempt to take it. He felt that air power was the only hope, and then only if he could get plenty of USAF assistance. The Communists had told the villagers that they were not afraid of the Laotian T-28's; that to them these were a "small air show" and that they had had hundreds of modern jet planes over their heads in South Vietnam. These reports had further demoralized the FAR forces, but Ma was convinced they would not be able to stand against a determined advance.

According to the villagers, the enemy, on the other hand, treated the operation almost as a lark. They were usually inactive at night, except for dancing the "lanvong" and engaging in other camp entertainment. They had on occasion even fired flares from 81 mm mortars, apparently in celebration. The Communists were obviously confident of victory.

It was on this note that General Ma requested Air Force assistance for the 4th of March. Day air strikes were not the problem. These
PRINTING NOTE

For reasons of "National Security," page 3 of this report remains classified.

[Signature]
George W. Dalley, President of Dalley Book Service
Kagerstrom had an idea he wanted tested under the guidance of an experienced pilot. Late in January, Colonel Hagerstrom had heard of an instrument called the "Starlight Scope", a light-intensifying four-power scope used primarily by ground forces during night operations in Vietnam, and had acquired one for testing in the Laotian area. It had been tried by Forward Air Controllers flying OPE's in South Vietnam with unfavorable results because of the instability of the aircraft and the cramped working quarters. Colonel Hagerstrom wanted to give it a more thorough evaluation and determined that it would work best in the AC-47. Major Jensen's crew had used it on a road recce over the jungle region east of Nakhon Phanom and indicated it showed promise. The more open territory around Attopeu, with its rice paddies and fields afforded another, possibly lucrative, area in which to try the Starscope. Colonel Hagerstrom made certain that it was aboard the first AC-47, Spooky 41, when Major Jensen departed for Savannakhet.

Spooky 41 took off from Udorn at 1520H on the 4th of March and landed at Savannakhet at 1705H where they were met by General Ma and his staff, along with Captain Ryan, the Assistant Air Attache. Ma personally briefed Major Jensen and his navigator, 1st Lt George W. Thompson, on the situation at Attopeu. The threat was a real one. The latest reports estimated the enemy strength was at six Viet Minh battalions opposing the three Laotian battalions. In action only a few days before, Group Mobile 16 had lost nearly the equivalent of two companies to the battle-wise and heavily armed Communists. Ma firmly believed the enemy intended to seize and hold Attopeu in order to secure...
the Xe Kong and Xe Kaman (Xe River) and the area to the south for the purpose of expanding the infiltration routes from Cambodia. The General assigned two RLAF officers, Captain Pho Kit and Warrant Officer Siro (called phonetically by Major Jensen and his crew "Papa Kilo" and "Sierra Romeo" respectively during the flight) to ride along in the AC-47 to observe and act as coordinators during the mission. The aircraft left Savannakhet at 1740H with frequencies to contact the USAF FAC at Attopeu.

Major Jensen had intended only to contact the forces there by radio and then begin his airborne alert posture; but, upon arriving at 1850H, he found radio communications unsatisfactory and decided to land. Because of the tactical situation and the closeness of the enemy and friendly forces, he was hesitant to expend any ordnance without a more detailed briefing by the people directly involved. Darkness had fallen but he landed the aircraft on the 37 foot-wide dirt strip with the aid of flares on each side of the approach end and the lights of a jeep at the far end of the runway.

The crew was met by Captain Dalton and other Americans, and by Colonel Ly, Laotian regional field commander. After a jeep ride to the command post, they sat down to a detailed and up-to-the-minute briefing by several of the Laotian Army officers. Major Jensen said later:

"...They outlined the exact positions of the friendly forces, the exact front as they knew it, of the Viet Cong - and they called them Viet Cong. They said they'd come in from Vietnam, that they'd been badly beat up over there, that they'd come back into Laos to reorganize,
re-equip and retrain, that they'd gathered quite a few new troops. I'm not sure how they'd enlisted them, but they had a lot of new recruits that they were training. Apparently, it was a tri-pronged effort - they were giving them field training under combat conditions without having the Air Force beat them up too much... They also had another objective - they were in there to secure the area at Attopeu, to use the tributaries of the Mekong to take supplies down through Cambodia to Southern Laos and the Delta area as an alternate supply route down into South Vietnam. So it seemed like a very critical situation. They told us they (the enemy forces) had upwards of 3600 men there, with only 1600 friendly forces defending Attopeu. It was apparent to me that the Laos Army personnel were quite nervous about the situation and not too happy."

During the briefing, the Laotian officers pointed out several sites where they suspected heavy concentrations of the enemy and listed five specific areas that they wanted the AC-47 to strike. Major Jensen established firm radio frequencies for all his radios with Captain Dalton, and, further, explained to the Americans there, and to the Laotians, what tactics he would use, the orbiting procedures, and generally what they could expect.

Captain Witterman and Captain Cool, the Forward Air Controllers sent down to support the daylight operations at Attopeu, had arrived at 0925H that morning and had spent the day in visual reconnaissance and controlling the area. Neither had seen evidence of the enemy troops. Captain Witterman stated:

"...We flew over it at a moderately high altitude of about 1500 feet, and didn't see anything, so we just progressively started getting down lower and lower and didn't see a trace of anything there. This was around the outskirts of it and everything else. Nothing. We were under the impression that they'd all pulled out, but we had the aircraft coming in, so we decided to work over the most likely areas of refuge...well, we poured
everything in there, and I never saw a trace of anything and never received any ground fire, so I kind of thought this was more of the - uh - Vietnamese (sic) intelligence, you know, two battalions out there and they never seem to show up.”

Spooky 41 was airborne at 2005H and within five minutes was over the target area after two orbits of the field to gain altitude. The first target struck was the main road between Attopeu and Muong Cau, a sizeable town about ten kilometers east, that was already occupied by the Viet Minh. None of the crew could make any damage assessment after this first strike. But then, in Major Jensen’s words:

“...While we were orbiting, after hitting the road, the navigator, who was in the rear at the main cargo door, sitting there - he was tied in by rope - spotted between 150 and 200 VC, or what we found out to be VC, in the rice paddies between the two known areas of the friendlies and the unfriendlies. Kind of in a no-mans land. ...he was using the Starscope. We did not drop flares, there was a good moon out. There was a minimum of haze at that time and the Starscope really worked to full advantage. He saw these personnel moving on the ground. I called back and asked if they by chance had an operation out there that was utilizing these people and if they were friendlies. They came back and said that they had no operation, that these people were fair game - so we hit them!"

The navigator, 1st Lt Thompson, was quite surprised to see the movement of the people on the ground through the Starscope. He had spotted trucks before, and it was quite easy, with the Starscope, to make out the difference between tree lines and open field, roads, houses, and hamlets; but, he had never observed individual people moving. It was apparent that the enemy felt secure under the cover of darkness, and were openly moving toward the Attopeu airstrip at the time they were seen. With no flares dropped, to give them warning,
they had no fear of being seen and had left the tree lines to march across the open paddies.

The element of surprise could have been even greater. After only 1500 rounds from the 7.62 Miniguns, both of Spooky 41's guns jammed. This was after approximately a two and one half second burst. During the period that TSgt Lonsie R. Colston and SSgt William L. Madison, the gunners, were working feverishly to clear the malfunctions, the Viet Minh disappeared back into the trees. After the guns were repaired, Major Jensen fired another 3000 rounds into the wooded area in hope that the enemy troops had not been able to get under substantial cover.

Following several subsequent gun malfunctions, the navigator located another group of Viet Minh with the Starscope. The aircraft was actually in orbit with the armament men repairing the guns, when 1st Lt Thompson spotted approximately 100 men crossing an open field and going into a building. Major Jensen was getting ready to roll in for a firing run when Captain "Papa Kilo" stopped him with the words, "Don't shoot! That is a pagoda." A favorite Viet Cong evasion tactic is to take sanctuary in a pagoda, knowing that the chances are good they will not be fired upon. In this case, Major Jensen radioed back to the command post to explain the situation to Colonel Ly and to request permission to expend upon it if the Laotians themselves felt it was justified.

The Viet Cong and the Viet Minh rely upon the innate compassion of Americans and the natural hesitancy of sincerely religious Buddhists to fire upon or otherwise desecrate such a shrine. They, themselves, however, have no such compunctions, as witnessed by their massacre of
23 civilian workers sleeping in a pagoda on 12 December 1965 in IV Corps, RVN. The workers, men, women, and children had been hired by a contractor to dig a canal for the Dinh Thuong Agriculture Office. They were asleep in a pagoda, 12 kilometers north of the city of My Tho, when a group of Viet Cong entered at 0100H and sprayed the unarmed civilians with submachine gun fire. Twenty-three were killed, including women and children, and eight wounded. While waiting for clearance, Spooky 41 returned to the original road target, the main artery between Muong Cao and Attopeu. While they could spot no movement, they fire along the side of the road and created a large secondary explosion with billowing white smoke that continued for several minutes. At this point, they observed the only ground fire of the evening, but took no hits.

The pagoda was well within the area occupied by the Viet Minh. Direction to fire upon it came from the command post, and Major Jensen immediately stopped firing at the road and returned to put 3000 rounds into the pagoda and the surrounding fields. None of Major Jensen's crew observed any movement in the area. Major Jensen felt that all the Viet Minh seen entering the pagoda, remained, thinking it would provide sanctuary for them.

Following this attack, Spooky 41 cruised back to the area into which the first troops sighted had retreated. Four flares were dropped for psychological effect while the guns were being repaired following another malfunction. The aircraft then went to the eastern end of Attopeu to two pre-briefed targets, a dry creek bed and a road. In
Courting at these targets, Spooky 41 created another large secondary explosion, this one with a bright flash and, again, with white billowing smoke. 15/

During this period the aircraft developed electrical problems. Major Jensen chose to continue to fly the mission despite the partial electrical failure, because he felt that the effectiveness of the weapons system warranted staying on target as long as he had an operable aircraft, and as long as they could keep the guns firing. Finally, after nursing the Miniguns through 13,500 rounds, and with Spooky 43 on the way to relieve him, Major Jensen turned off target at 2215H and returned to Nakhon Phanom. Spooky 43 stayed on target for the remainder of the night, dropping flares in the absence of a Starscope, and firing into likely areas. The aircraft received no ground fire and its crew observed no ground movement.

At first light on the morning of 5 March, Captain Witterman, lacking any solid confirmation of enemy killed from the Spooky aircraft, admitted, 17/ "...This was like most missions, we figured they were shooting at shadows again." Captain Cool and Dalton took off in an OIF at 0730H for a visual recce of the area, and in Captain Witterman's words:

"...and by God, they look in a rice paddy and there's a bunch of bodies laying there. Men in uniform - rather non-descript uniforms - but they were there. So they came back, and I had my camera - they just hadn't taken a camera along - so, Captain Cool and I went up, and we went around and we found the original 26 bodies, and then by God, we found another 26 bodies, all laying out in a relatively open area, in a paddy. Uh...these paddies are kind of divided up by small shallow canals, and of course in the dry season they were all dried up..."
VIET MINH KBA Attopeu, Laos

Photo taken by Capt. Ben H. Witterman

5 Mar 1966 from 01 F at 50 ft AGL
so they were just like ditches, and these people were strung out in the ditches, and that's where they apparently had been spotted...and about a half dozen were right in the open in the paddies, sprawled out, and in several places you could see spots where obviously a body had been laying, and bled a lot, and then they pulled it away..." 

Captain Witterman photographed the enemy troops from extremely low altitudes to establish a permanent record of the effectiveness of the weapons system. He flew to the pagoda in an effort to determine if there had been a corresponding KBA in that area, but although the roof of the pagoda had been perforated by the minigun bullets, no confirmation of enemy dead was possible. Altogether, Captain Cool and Witterman spent 45 minutes flying around the area at "sitting duck" altitudes without drawing enemy ground fire, something they felt would have been patently impossible prior to the AC-47 operation.

Reaction to the results of the mission was immediate. Captain Dalton called the Assistant Air Attache, Captain Ryan, at Savannakhet to relay the information about Spooky 41's outstanding job, who sent the message on to AIRA Vientiane and to 2d Air Division Thai. General Ma was highly pleased after RLAF and FAR personnel, and the USAF FAC at the scene, all reported excellent results. Captain Dalton, however, tempered the report with the information that the friendly units were "still somewhat demoralized" as a result of their costly encounter with the enemy during the last part of the week. He agreed that they needed continuing air support. Captain Ryan, the Assistant Air Attache, sent another message to Vientiane:

-11-
"...USAF FAC at Attopeu used the words 'delirious with job' in describing the ground troops' reaction to the performance of Spooky Birds near Attopeu last night. They requested Major Jensen and his crew of Spooky 41 be sent back for a repeat performance tonight, using the same time and procedures. They feel one aircraft can provide all the support required for tonight. General Ma, however, says hold off on sending aircraft until further notice. He will be in Attopeu today and will evaluate the requirements for tonight and advise."

Major Jensen, his crew, and Captain Witterman were asked by Colonel Carter to come up to Udorn for a complete taped debriefing in order to glean as many 'lessons learned' as possible and to contribute to the historical record. Major General Charles R. Bond, Deputy Commander 2d Air Division/13th Air Force Thai, sent a congratulatory message to the commander of the 4th Air Commando Squadron at Tan Son Nhut.

"...For Commander from General Bond. Outstanding airmanship, personal bravery, and hard work of your AC-47 crews (Spooky 41 and 43) no doubt saved Attopeu from probable capture night of 4 Mar 66 and dealt a devastating blow to attacking enemy battalions. A review of the action indicates a minimum of 100 killed by air and actual number was probably over 250 with many more wounded. My personal congratulations on a most effective display of tactical air power..."

From being a 'lost cause' on 4 March, the situation at Attopeu improved following the AC-47 strikes, until on 11 March the Air Attache at Vientiane sent the following message to Lt General Joseph H. Moore, Commander of the 2d Air Division:

"Information received that Muong Cao and Fangdeng, villages east of Attopeu, were reoccupied by elements of FAR 10 Mar 1966. This re-establishes FAR lines to their former position."

Commenting on the operation, Colonel Bagerstrom said:
"...This (Attopeu) was a classic example (of the response of air support to a ground situation when the only alternative was the massive injections of ground troops). I think the odds were something like eight to two, four to one, some such odds, and it would have required a massive injection of ground troops to save this day - unless air was available and on the spot - and air was available. In this case, I think conservatively - there were 200 VC killed - very conservatively - and broke the back of the VC, and the odds were completely against the friendly Laotians. Without air, there's no doubt about it, the Laotians would have been overrun and the place occupied. The real evaluation of this - in terms of enemy versus the friendly - was that here we have conservatively 800 enemy troops being opposed by a 30-year-old airplane with seven men and three machine guns, and they literally decimated the capability of these 800 people...with no losses to themselves at all. Seven against 800. Pretty good odds, with good results.

I think the whole essence of the U. S. operation is not to fight a war of attrition - infantryman versus infantryman but to let air power destroy the enemy once the ground has identified them and has put his finger on them; always keeping contact, but with a long enough arm so that we can give close air support and destroy the enemy...but always using air power to deliver the mail."
UNCLASSIFIED

THE DEFENSE OF ATTOPEU

Footnotes

(References as noted provided in copies to AFCHO and in DOPEC file copy)


3/ (S) Mag, AAIRA Savannakhet to 2d Air Div/13th Air Force Thai A00173, 031315Z Mar 66 (Doc 1).

4/ Ibid.

5/ (S) Interview by Captain Melvin F. Porter with Colonel James P. Hagerstrom, Director TACC, 2d Air Div Thai, 17 Mar 66 (Doc 2).

6/ (S) Mag, AAIRA Savannakhet to AIRA Vientiane, A00178, 050315Z Mar 66 (Doc 3).

7/ (S) Mag, AAIRA, Savannakhet to 2TACC Udorn Thai, A00175, 041100Z Mar 66 (Doc 4).

8/ (S) Extract After Action Taped Debrief by Major George W. Jensen, 5 Mar 66 (Doc 5).

9/ Ibid.

10/ (S) Extract After Action Taped Debrief by Captain Ben H. Witterman, 5 Mar 66 (Doc 6).

11/ (S) Extract After Action Taped Debrief by Major George W. Jensen, 5 Mar 66 (Doc 5).

12/ Ibid.

13/ (C) USMACV SITREP 43623, 131000Z Dec 65.

14/ (S) Extract After Action Taped Debrief by Major George W. Jensen, 5 Mar 66 (Doc 5).

15/ Ibid.

16/ Ibid.

17/ (S) Extract After Action Taped Debrief by Captain Ben W. Witterman, 5 Mar 66 (Doc 6).

-14-
10/ UNCLASSIFIED

Ibid.

19/ (S) Msg, AAIRA Savannakhet to AIRA Vientiane, AO0176, 042350 Mar 66 (Doc 7).

20/ (S) Msg, AAIRA Savannakhet to AIRA Vientiane, AO0178, 050315Z Mar 66 (Doc 3).

21/ (S) Msg, AAIRA Savannakhet to Dep Comdr 2d Air Div Thai, AO0179, 050315Z Mar 66 (Doc 8).

22/ (S) Msg, Dept Comdr 2d Air Div/13th Air Force Thai to Comdr, 4ACS, TSN RVN, 081700Z Mar 66 (Doc 9).


24/ (S) Interview by Captain Melvin F. Porter with Colonel James P. Hagerstrom, Director TACC, 2d Air Div Thai, 17 Mar 66 (Doc 2).
SECRET

ATTOPEU

SECRET INFOFRM, AATRA SVET to 2AD/13AF Thai, Cite Br. A00173, dated 3 March 1966, 1315Z.

Quote the following is an extract of my report to Colonel Pettigrew concerning the Attopeu situation. It is a result of a conversation with General Ma, late this PM (3 March 1966). Since the action at Attopeu appears to be uppermost in General Ma's mind at this moment, I'm sending this along merely as background info for meeting tomorrow. General Ma returned from Pakse this afternoon with the following information on the Attopeu situation. The town Muong Ca YBO938 is completely destroyed and the area firmly held by V.N. The V.N. are well dug in, have no fear of air strikes and appear to be well disciplined veterans. Ma describes them as completely different from V.N. troops encountered near Thakhet last November. He said the troops in the Thakhet area were young green troops, straight from training in North Vietnam. Those at Attopeu are well seasoned soldiers, whom he believes are coming into Laos from South Vietnam. They push the villagers ahead of them when attacking or when they are attacked. If the villagers refuse, they are shot anyway. All prisoners are killed, frequently beheaded or disemboweled. There have been many hand to hand encounters and many KIA and MIA on both sides. Ma estimates 200 friendly KIA and 100 WIA since the encounter began. Two of the KIA were Majors, Assistant Commanders of Battalions. Most of the KIA and WIA are from GM-16. The enemy is usually inactive at night except for "dancing the lamvong" and other merriment and have even fired flares from 81mm mortars, apparently in celebration. The friendlies are reported to be badly demoralized, except for the one battalion of GM-21. Ma feels that Attopeu will fall if the enemy makes an attempt to take it. He feels that air power is the only hope
and only if we can get plenty of USAF assistance. Refugees report that when an air strike begins, a smoke grenade is fired as a warning and all troops go underground until it is over, then they come out firing in the air. Speaking of T-28s they tell the villagers they are not afraid of such a small air show because they have had hundreds of planes over their heads in South Vietnam. These reports have further demoralized the troops. Ma says General Phouc was very upset when he (Ma) had to leave Pakse this P.M., but Ma said he assured Phouc that the two Americans would remain at Attopeu and would call in USAF help as required. Acknowledge this msg by phone.

Ryan sends. End quote.
The following is a transcript of a taped interview between Captain Melvin F. Porter, GHQG Team SEA, and Colonel James P. Hagerstrom, Director of TACC, 2AD Thai, at Udorn, Thailand. The interview was taped on 17 March 1966, in an effort to get Colonel Hagerstrom's overview of the highly successful AC-47 night operation at Attapeu, Laos, 4 March 1966.

"As Captain Porter pointed out, I will be speaking about the AC-47 attack east of Attapeu on the 4th of March. I have a series - couple - of cards here, typed out, one of them is titled 'questions' for Colonel Hagerstrom. I'll run through those, and then I'll run through the second card, which is a number of statements - about a half-dozen statements - and make some response with regard to them.

The first one is, 'How - and who - was the FAC/Puff concept for the night of 4 March at Attapeu conceived, or developed?' I'd like to lay claim for all good things, and all bad things belong to someone else. I think that perhaps the concept of how we operated was more a composite thing, really the result of thinking out the problem of total interdiction of the panhandle of Laos, with the O-1s operating during the daylight hours, FACing and visual reconnaissance, coupled with certain Controlled American Source intelligence. This, in conjunction with a night surveillance on the part of the AC-47s to complete the 24 hour period in an attempt to deny the movement of all traffic particularly truck traffic on the LOC's leading from Hane and Magua Passes, south through the Panhandle of Laos. And it was with this problem confronting me that I addressed the night operation thing. How can we see what's going on at night and truly stop the movement, or at least greatly impair the movement of truck traffic and troops on those LOC's at night?

I had heard sometime before that - back in February - actually I think it was towards the end of January, when I was passing through Saigon, I talked with Colonel Donald Page, Special Projects in the In-Country TACC, about a
functioning normal with this equipment?" James: Not with new equipment. I think we've exceeded General Electric's and the Air Force's actual anticipated life span of all the gun parts. The guns were - I think there was a desire to get a lot of guns in service, and this was some at the expense of adequate serviceable parts. These...this one gun has fired 60,000 rounds. Well, G.E. is pretty sharp and they programmed for full depot overhaul at 60,000 rounds, so I guess we've milked 8,000 rounds out of it that it wasn't supposed to get. And like the old horse shay, it just came apart on us. In fact that's what's happening to all our guns right now. We need - desperately need - to get gun parts and 100% gun spares, so we can have operational guns on the aircraft, and still have guns stacked in maintenance, being brought up to snuff. We're getting pretty thin on our weapons systems. And it's very very frustrating to be out there, have all the advantages going for you, the target right there, squeeze the trigger and - nothing happens. As I say, we lost our advantage of surprise. I knew we could have doubled or tripled our kill, out there in that field if we'd had the guns working. But they were able to escape the open area and get into the forest because the guns wouldn't continue firing. Also, I'm quite satisfied we got a lot of kills in the forest - but these are unconfirmed, and as long as they're unconfirmed, there's a question about the validity of the estimate. Colonel Carter: "Could you tell me a little more about the stereoscope, the position of the navigator, how he actually used this, how it feels to use it, the affect it has if any. Perhaps you'd be the one to tell me about this, Lt Thompson."

Lt Thompson: Up to right now we've got about eight hours we out of the starlight scope. This isn't much time to completely evaluate it, but I think
It's not much on anyone else in the theatre then get right now. The engine first
Like a pair of binoculars in the daytime, you can take movement. Movement and objects, contrasting area, show up real well. This is typical of what we had here. One area of the rice paddies adjacent to the tree line, I spotted quite a bit of movement 'cause the rice paddies show up at night as a sort of a light brown color, contrast to the dark green trees, and the bodies they show up real dark and it appears as though a whole group of ants are moving across a small square on the ground. The field of vision looks like it's four or five degrees, much like a periscope sextant, and the area of the pagoda, there's two buildings and a group of trees in the middle of an area or and area and a half square, it seemed like. Open area around the pagoda was the same color as the rice paddies, a light brown, contrasting to all the trees around it. You could see the dark bodies moving into the pagoda. In the field area, we spotted a hundred and fifty or two hundred moving into the tree line. Must have been many more, because by the time Major Jensen was firing into the area I couldn't see any more movement in the field. It looked like everyone had moved into the tree area. We didn't actually fire on the pagoda until about ten minutes after we spotted everyone moving into the pagoda. Couple of things we've experienced so far - not only myself, but Sergeant Lane has probably an hour and a half or two hours on the scope, times when I've gotten tired of using it. Has a tendency to give you a head ache. Two occasions I've used it and one occasion Sergeant Lane has used it; gives you a sort of a throbbing headache, usually an hour or two after the mission, generally over the eye you were using the scope. I don't believe this is due to the scope itself, so much, as the fact that it's a telescope operation rather than a binocular operation. You're only using one eye, keeping it open at all times, and you
have to exert a little bit of pressure, more than a normal amount of pressure, keeping the other eye closed, so that it doesn’t destroy your vision. The scope itself does have a tendency to destroy your night vision. I don’t think it would work very good up in the cockpit, at least if the man that was flying the airplane was using it, ’cause for a couple minutes afterwards, after you’re using the scope, everything appears real dark, even though maybe you’ve got a little bit of moonlight out. One thing that I didn’t know about, that might have made our strike a little bit more effective, I guess you sort of have a tendency to get a little bit lax with the scope, after I’d described to Major Jensen the movement I saw into the pagoda, and the area around the pagoda, there is one group of trees and there’s two buildings in the square area, and he didn’t know which was the pagoda and which was the building and which was the trees. I just assumed that he could see the pagoda once I’d told him, so when he fired into the area, he just attempted to more or less saturate the area and I think we would have been more effective if we’d had just a little bit more coordination. perhaps explain the exact location of the pagoda in the area to fire into, I’m sure he could have probably doubled his rounds into the pagoda. And there were at least 100, 150 people in the pagoda. Unless in that ten minutes they’d left the pagoda, and I doubt they’d done that. We’d had experiences in other operations working with pagodas in South Vietnam, where we’d get the bad guys on the run and they’d take haven in a pagoda, and I know there’s several cases where we hadn’t been able to fire upon it, and I think this is what they were thinking about when they went into the pagoda area, after being under attack. (Background)(Question: “Any modifications you’d
suggest that would make the operation more effective? Jenson: Yes, the navigator and I have discussed modifications that would make our mission more effective, using the stereoscope, and one of the first is the orientation of the navigator in the rear, we strongly recommend that we put a slave gyro, a compass, in the rear, where he could visually see the exact heading of the aircraft, so that he would have compass references all the time. Another one is that he should have his own individual interphone receptacle - jackbox - in the rear so that he could hear all the communications frequencies as well as the interphone, so that he would know when if he was intercepting any important outside communications, or when, so that he could talk on interphone. The present situation is very unsatisfactory. We've got only one junction box for the entire rear portion of the aircraft, in which five persons are working with, this is very vulnerable, if it goes out we lose complete communication with the entire rear of the aircraft. So this is bad. Another disadvantage is that when they use this, they are in the "call" position, so that when they use this it blocks out any transmissions from outside the aircraft. I may be listening on UHF, or VHF, or HF, to a very important transmission, coming into the aircraft, and anyone in the rear of the aircraft using the interphone, blocks out all these outside transmissions. This is a very, very poor arrangement. Very unsatisfactory. There's a couple of other things we've talked about. One of them is, there should be a very firmly mounted seat, a very firm seat, in the rear of the aircraft, with seat belt and shoulder harness, for the navigator. So that he can feel reasonably secure while he is sitting there looking out the door. I'm sure this would improve his ability to observe
things on the ground because he would be more willing to lean forward and take a good look. Right now he's dangling on the end of a rope, and I'm sure that's not too satisfactory - I wouldn't want to be back there. (Background)(Question: "Would it help to have a mount for the steroscope?") Jansen: Yes, there's several possibilities on the steroscope. Understand Colonel Hagerstrom has one suggestion, whereby it would be mounted on a swivel arrangement which would permit him to look freely, and not carry the weight of the scope, and also that this swivel would have a detent position that would harmonize with the gunsight and the gun, so that once he's identified the target and explained it to me, then he could put it into the detent or would identify when it goes to the detent and could verbally tell me when I'm on target and could fire. This has a lot of very fine ideas in this. Another idea, a very cheap one, would be to get some bungee cord and suspend it from three sides - the top and two sides - and that would take the weight off and permit him to have freedom of movement. But I'm sure he's got some ideas on the subject. Lt Thompson: "I think Colonel Hagerstrom's idea is quite good. The tripod idea, with possibly one detent position that could be boresighted, or aligned with the guns, would make it easy to coordinate on target position. I think it's worthwhile being looked into, because right now, after a couple of hours, you're finding ways to rest it, leashing it on your knees, it gets a little bit heavy. Couple of things I could mention about the scopes, I didn't mention earlier, it ought to be very good for read room work. I'm of the opinion that just about any kind of light, even starlight, is enough to make these objects visible on the ground. The scope cuts right through haze, and your roads and your creeks
ATTOPEN

Secret NOPFORM, USAFRICA Vicrt, re Cmdr 2AD/1ST ARVN, Gt. Mr. AFR 00477, dated 11 March 1966, 0920Z.

Information received that Haeng Cae and Feng Beng, villages east of Attopen, were recaptured by elements of FAR 10 March 1966. This re-establishes FAR lines to their former position.
GEORGE

( Speech 01)

Sir: We let one the right road or the other, into the town that was once

Talk to the others. From the other, one of the first

the crew all had their P-16's out and all the others they could get. They were
down. Aboard were hospital patients on board, and to the landing, some
almost made his speech in sound that was a strange. Stuttering, we went
and I had come the reason I sort of double checked with the captain and
and the speech that was a little clear,oyoped, that they wanted

I think the reason was only three miles from the airport.

Here they could watch the show, but then jail on the way, we were all we could get to get a people

are that the first, have the very ground. Very much what they could expect. They were important.

get the idea, if only the moment, we are concerned to show the country, we would go, the

I think that they had been very

I don't want to express, what is this, because it of more benefit. We are not just here, is this, because we are not.

We saw the people involved with the boat's before we got there.

These, we were never out of reach with them, because of the few.

the most become we had real firm communication with them once we were out.

We could communicate with them, and that was in

the other's inventions, that we could communicate with them, and that was in

one different radical. We explained to our inventions, the inventions.

and they did not want to hit it. We are involved inventions for all

we (00) hands, but there's people in there, a lot of old people, still in the

sent to, and this was just the opposite. That was the scene was in March.
of there. They felt that there would be the heaviest concentration of forces there because this was a good road, and they felt that along that area we would find some very lucrative targets. So this was our first area that we hit. While we were orbiting, after hitting the road, the navigator who was in the rear, at the main cargo door, sitting there - he was tied in by rope - he spotted between 150 to 200 VC, or what we found out to be VC, in the rice paddies between the two known areas of the friendlylies and the unfriendlylies. Kind of in a no-man's-land. (Unreadable question) Yes, he was using the stereoscope. We did not drop any flares - there was a good moon out, there was a minimum of bases at that time and the stereoscope really worked to full advantage. He saw these personnel moving on the ground. I called back and asked if they by chance had an operation on there that was utilizing these people. If they were friendlylies. They come back and said that they had no operation, that these people were fair game so we hit them. (Captain McCrea Interjected: "Majord Jansen, you might mention that the reason we went over to the rice paddie area was that we saw numerous camp fires in a wooded area that we had been briefed that we might hit, and it was almost by chance that Lt. Thompson saw these people and he was rather surprised to see movement on the ground, because we had never actually seen personnel up to this time, with the stereoscope."

Majord Jansen: Right. This was only our second mission with the stereoscope, and we had worked out very effective coordination with it on the prior mission, but had never observed personnel. We'd seen a truck, or trunks, but we'd never seen personnel. And so this really impressed me. (Colonel Carter Interjected: "Maybe this would be a good time to describe how you
AIRCRAFT "CQI"

SECRET NOT FORWARDED TO TACU/UAN, Code No. A00175, dated 4 March 1966, 1100Z.

Spoopy 41 departed Savannah after refueling and short briefing by General Ma. MLAF representative on board. MLAF PAC at Attopen will be using call sign "CQI" on 235.5 or 304.5, PM 44.4 and SSB 3800KC upper sideband. General Ma request Spoopy 43 arrive Savannah at 1400Z for fuel if required and briefing in order to arrive target area shortly after Spoopy 41 departs. Info will be related from target area to Savannah by PAC using SSB. For crew of Spoopy 43, Savannah tower has 118.1 and 236.5. Also suggest aircraft contact branch 55 (AIRCRAFT "CQI") on 139.4 when inbound to Savannah. Long range comm with branch 55 also available on 3800 USD nite and 710 USD day.
SECRET

SECRET MEMO, A11049 SVEF to 2AD/43AF Thai, Cite Br. AC0170, dated 5 February 1966, 0915/.

General Ma is highly pleased with the results of the U.S. Air support in the Attopeu area yesterday and last night. ANAF, FAN, ground personnel and USAF FAC in area all report excellent results. FAC reports 26 enemy KIA seen in area at first light this morning which the enemy was unable to carry away during the night. Estimates of total KIA yesterday exceed 100. USAF FAC reports friendly units still somewhat demoralized and disorganized as result of their rather costly encounter with enemy during last part of week. They are taking advantage of this period of air support to consolidate their positions for defense of Attopeu. The enemy strength is estimated to be six VM battalions opposing the three friendly battalions. Gen Ma now believes the enemy intends to take and hold Attopeu in order to firmly secure the Ho Chi Minh River and area to the south for the purpose of expanding the infiltration routes from Cambodia. He feels that without properly applied air power Attopeu will fall.