

1973 thru 1975

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Linebacker II, the final massive air offensive against North Vietnam was conducted from 18 December 1972 until 10 January 1973. Twenty-six US aircraft downed during this campaign. Fifteen of these were B-52's. Wave after wave of B-52's and fighter bombers dropped 20,370 tons of bombs on targets in extremely heavily defended areas. A SARTF of HC-130's, HH-53's and A-7's (new Sandy's) provided SAR coverage. A total of 46 combat saves were accomplished during Linebacker II. This major bombing campaign forced the DRV back to the Paris Peace Talks where a cessation of hostilities was signed.

A nine-point cease-fire agreement was signed in Paris on January 23, 1973, to become effective on January 28. It called for the U.S. to remove all of its forces from South Vietnam and for all POWs to be returned within 60 days. On March 28th, 1973, the last U.S. military personnel departed South Vietnam.

After North Vietnam agreed on December 29, 1972 to return to the peace table in Paris, the U.S. restricted its air attacks on North Vietnam to the area south of the 20th parallel. On January 15, 1973, the U.S. announced an end of all mining, bombing, and other offensive operations against North Vietnam.

When the Communists violated the Laotian cease-fire signed on 21 February 1973, B-52 bombings were ordered. In April, additional B-52 raids were made south of the Plain of Jars because of additional Communist cease-fire violations. Following these strikes, all USAF missions over Laos ceased after nine years of combat operations.

There was no peace in Cambodia in early 1973. Local Communist insurgents of the Khmer Rouge kept up their attacks on Phnom Penh, so the Cambodian Government urgently called upon the U.S. for help and the Air Force was ordered to carry out a massive bombing campaign against the insurgents on the outskirts of the capital. However, Congressional pressure in Washington grew against these bombings and eventually all funds for military operations in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were cut off.

1973

2 Jan 73

Meetings between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States technical experts resumed in Paris.

Nixon bombing halt extended. 40th ARRS discontinues SAR orbits out of Thailand.
SAR log

2 January 73

Excerpts from Message From the Chief of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks (Porter) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 865, For the President's Files (Winston Lord)—China Trip/Vietnam, Camp David Memcons, December 1972

Paris, January 2, 1973

1. Although we proposed morning meeting January 2, DRV preferred 3 p.m. at Choisy-le-Roi. DRV side represented by Thach plus five others. U.S. side consisted of Sullivan, Isham, Aldrich, Engel and Thompson.

2. DRV mood at outset was deeply somber. Social amenities minimal. Thach began by reading short prepared statement on U.S. bombing. Except for fact he characterized bombing as "criminal," statement seemed perfunctory. Sullivan responded rather curtly by saying we refused to engage in propaganda exchanges or react to provocative words. We were in Paris strictly for business of negotiations.

DRV delegation did not comport itself like a victorious outfit which had just "defeated the U.S. strategic air force." It was generally hang dog, although Thach thawed a bit as afternoon wore on. In general, he appears to be vast improvement over Xuan Thuy, with interest in details rather than rhetoric. Tomorrow afternoon should tell us whether this is deceptive, or whether we will really get down to brass tacks.

3 Jan 73

Ruby 02 SAR. A B-52 hit over NVN tried to make it to DaNang for an emergency landing. The crew was forced to bail out over the water near DaNang. All six crewmembers were located in the water by USAF OV-10's who guided SAR forces in. One survivor was rescued by a Navy helicopter, three by a Marine CH-53, and two by a Pedro based at DaNang.

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Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 865, For the President's Files (Winston Lord)—China Trip/Vietnam, Camp David Memcons, December 1972

Paris, January 3, 1973

January 3 meeting lasted from 10:30 a.m. to 5:20 p.m. DRV side headed by Thach and Blinky, 2 plus five others. U.S. side same as January 2.

Thach opened meeting with response to Sullivan's general statement of January 2. He agreed limit discussions to protocols only. However, he disagreed that only four protocols should be discussed. DRV wished to discuss all protocols it had tabled. Nevertheless, Thach accepted our agenda for ICCS and cease-fire on alternate days. He felt this would occupy our time till January 8 at which stage you and Le Duc Tho could argue about what protocols are to be discussed.

Discussion was businesslike, detailed, and often spirited. Objectively, it could be called serious negotiation and there was genuine give and take.

DRV mood considerably improved over yesterday, with normal amount of badinage and social pleasantries. Negotiation was ponderous but real. Nevertheless, we obviously have major conceptual differences which will stymie agreement on truly substantive issues.

5 Jan 73

Letter from President Nixon to President Thieu

Dear Mr. President:

This will acknowledge your letter of December 20, 1972.

There is nothing substantial that I can add to my many previous messages, including my December 17 letter, which clearly stated my opinions and intentions. With respect to the question of North Vietnamese troops, we will again present your views to the Communists as we have done vigorously at every other opportunity in the negotiations. The result is certain to be once more the rejection of our position. We have explained to you repeatedly why we believe the problem of North Vietnamese troops is manageable under the agreement, and I see no reason to repeat all the arguments.

We will proceed next week in Paris along the lines that General Haig explained to you. Accordingly, if the North Vietnamese meet our concerns on the two outstanding substantive issues in the agreement, concerning the DMZ and type method of signing and if we can arrange acceptable supervisory machinery, we will proceed to conclude the settlement. The gravest consequence would then ensue if your government chose to reject the agreement and split off from the United States. As I said in my December 17 letter, "I am convinced that your refusal to join us would be an invitation to disaster-to the loss of all that we together have fought for over the past decade. It would be inexcusable above all because we will have lost a just and honorable alternative."

As we enter this new round of talks, I hope that our countries will now show a united front. It is imperative for our common objectives that your government take no further actions that complicate our task and would make more difficult the acceptance of the settlement by all parties. We will keep you informed of the negotiations in Paris through daily briefings of Ambassador [Pham Dang] Lam.

I can only repeat what I have so often said: The best guarantee for the survival of South Vietnam is the unity of our two countries which would be gravely jeopardized if you persist in your

present course. The actions of our Congress since its return have clearly borne out the many warnings we have made.

Should you decide, as I trust you will, to go with us, you have my assurance of continued assistance in the post-settlement period and that we will respond with full force should the settlement be violated by North Vietnam. So once more I conclude with an appeal to you to close ranks with us.

Sincerely,

RICHARD NIXON

6 Jan 73

Jackel 33B captured. SAR log

8 January 73

Peace negotiations between Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho started again on 8 January, 1973, and terms were agreed upon the next day, 9 January, 1973. Unofficially the negotiated document had been called the "1973 Paris Peace Accord." The actual title of the signed document is "Agreement on ending the war and restoring peace in Viet-Nam." The effective date of implementation of the agreement was 27 January 1973.

President Thieu accepted the treaty only under threat of having all American aid to the South Vietnamese government discontinued if he rejected it. Thieu called the treaty, which allowed the estimated 150,000 North Vietnamese soldiers then in South Vietnam to remain, "tantamount to surrender" for South Vietnam. The treaty specified that South Vietnam was to be considered one country with two governments, one led by Thieu and one led by the NLF/PALF, until such time as a single government was formed.

15 January 73

President Nixon directed that the bombing, shelling, and mining be suspended above the 17th parallel. The Air Force implements a cessation of all US offensive operations and tactical reconnaissance against North Vietnam.

17 January 73

President Richard Nixon warns South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu in a private letter that his refusal to sign any negotiated peace agreement would render it impossible for the United States to continue assistance to South Vietnam.

23 January 73

In a televised address to the nation, President Nixon announced that Kissinger and Tho had, earlier in the day, initialed an agreement to end the war and restore peace in Vietnam. The agreement will be formally signed on 27 January, and an internationally supervised cease fire will take effect that day. Within 60 days after the signing, all American prisoners will have been released. Also within the 60-day period, all U.S. troops will be withdrawn from South Vietnam.ⁱ

27 January 73

In Paris, the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and Viet Cong delegates formally signed a cease fire agreement to end the war and restore peace in Vietnam. It becomes effective Jan. 28 in Vietnam.ⁱⁱ

0000L (Saigon time) Cease fire goes into effect. Goes into effect 1900 on 28 Jan in CONUS.

The Vietnam cease-fire began; the formal documents were signed on 30 January 1973. Shortly thereafter, all remaining forces in Vietnam were removed from Vietnam. This peace treaty extricated our combat forces from Vietnam, obtained the release of our POW's, but it did not bring peace. Nixon promised the SV government of continued military and economic aid. He also promised that air power would return, if the NVA attacked the South again. These promises were soon to be tested. The NV government watched as Congress took away President Nixon's authority to use American forces without their consent (War Powers Act). Congress also reduced promised aid. The NV government correctly sensed that American's would not return to the defense of SV. In late 1974 they attacked South Vietnam. The South's requests for air support were denied. By April 1975, South Vietnam surrendered. The Vietnam War was finally over. The North Vietnamese had militarily conquered the South. They had also won a war of wills with America.

Combat operations in Vietnam continued until the ceasefire agreement became effective on 28 January. Air operations in South Vietnam ceased at 0800 hours 28 January 1973. Limited combat operations continued in other parts of SEA until 15 August 73, when all US bombing in SEA came to a halt.

29 January 73

Two C-130's land at Gia Lam airport in Hanoi to pick up representatives of the quadrilateral negotiating team members. They were flow to Saigon for discussions on procedural matters that included exchange of POW's, departure of all US troops within 60 days, and ceasefire lines in South Vietnam between areas controlled by ARVN forces and NVA forces

31 Jan 73

AC-130 and HH-53's team up to recover an allied ground party surrounded by enemy forces in Laos.

Rescue 40 ARRS Det Prov 8, Takhli RTAFB inactivated. Thai US SAR forces remaining include 19HH-43, 11 HH-53 assigned to 40 ARRSq & 6 HC-130's assigned to 56 ARRSq.

Two each HH-43's remain at Udorn, Ubon, Nakhon Phanom, Takhli, Korat and U-Tapao. Two spares are at NKP. The five remaining aircraft are in extended storage at NKP awaiting disposition instructions. (3 ARRGp hist Jan 73-Mar 73)

Jan 73

U.S. troop levels fell from 47,000 in June 1972 to 21,500 in January 1973.

10 February 1973

Det 7, 40 ARRS at DaNang RVN and Det 14, 40 ARRS at Tan Son Nhut AB RVN deactivated. Depending on retainability, some members of the detachments were granted curtailments and reassigned to CONUS; however, a large number were transferred to other LBR Rescue units in Thailand. The HH-43F aircraft assigned to these two detachments were transferred to Thailand to replace B models. The 2 F models from DaNang went to NKP, while the other 4 F models from Tan Son Nhut were transferred 2 each to Ubon and Udorn.

12 Feb 73

The first exchange of PWs involving eight American civilian and 19 military personnel was made at Loc Ninh. 116 more Americans were released in Hanoi.

Operation Homecoming, the return of 591 American POWs from North Vietnam, begins. All of the ex-POWs, who come from all military services, are processed through Clark AB, Philippines, to military hospitals in the United States, and, from there, they are quickly reunited with their families.

The release of U.S. POWs begins in Hanoi as part of the Paris peace settlement. The return of U.S. POWs began when North Vietnam released 142 of 591 U.S. prisoners at Hanoi's Gia Lam Airport. Part of what was called Operation Homecoming, the first 20 POWs arrived to a hero's welcome at Travis Air Force Base in California on February 14. Operation Homecoming was completed on March 29, 1973, when the last of 591 U.S. prisoners were released and returned to the United States. (source = history channel)

MAC airlifts 566 U.S. POWs from Gia Lam Airport, Hanoi, to Clark AB, Republic of the Philippines and then to U.S. where they board C-9s for transfer to various military hospitals.

Six ARRS personnel who were POW were released. They were: Capt Thomas Curtis, Capt Warren Lilly, 1Lt Jerry Singleton, SSgt Arthur Cormier, A1C William Robinson and A2C Arthur Black.

Black and Cormier had been battlefield commissioned as officers by POW SRO. They accepted the commission and were retired as Captains. They were the first PJ officers.

See 12 Feb 73 folder

15 Feb 73

As a result of the Vietnam cease fire and subsequent withdrawal of American forces, HQ Military Assistance Command / 7th Air Force (MACV/7AF) was deactivated at Tan Son Nhut AB RVN and the United States Support Activities Group / 7th Air Force (USSAG/7AF) was activated at NKP. HQ 3rd ARRGp was also transferred to NKP on this date. The call sign of the RCC at NKP had been Jack for most of the Vietnam War. The call sign of the 7th AF JRCC at Tan Son Nhut for most of the war had been Joker. When the 7th AF JRCC moved to NKP on 15 Feb, they took their call sign with them and the RCC at NKP (Jack call sign) was deactivated.

Following the cease fire agreement on Vietnam and the accompanying restrictions that limited air operations in Laos to recon only, the area of combat involving US forces shifted to Cambodia. Khmer Government forces were engaged in a rapidly expanding conflict with insurgents and NVA infiltrators. This location of conflict was relatively low threat with only isolated SAM or AAA activity. US air operations were limited in scope to providing support to government forces. One HC-130 flew a daily orbit over Tonle Sap in Cambodia. Another HC-130 was on ground alert at Korat. Two HH-53's were forward deployed to Ubon for ground alert. Two additional HH-53's were on alert at NKP. The two Ubon HH-53's flew a late afternoon orbit over Tonle Sap. The A-7 Sandy force of 3TFS at Korat was kept on 15 minute ground alert. It was reduced from nine to six aircraft in order to release additional A-7's for TACAIR over Cambodia.

21 Feb 73

Laotians sign cease-fire. Bombing operations are halted, but communist cease-fire violations lead to B-52 strikes, which continue into April.



Feb 73

40th ARRS transferred one of its 12 HH-53C's to the 76th ARRS at Hickam. This reduced the 40th ARRS to its authorized 11 HH-53's

4 Feb 73

Prisoners of war, the first group of increment two, were released in Hanoi and flown to Clark Air Base in the Philippines.

5 Feb 73

U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam was reduced to less than 10,000.

MARCH

4 Mar 73

The first group of US POW's captured and detained at the Hoa Lo Prison "Hanoi Hilton" released and picked up by US aircraft at the Gia Lam Airport, Hanoi. The repatriation of American POW's is named "Project Homecoming."

14 March 73

108 POW's are released in North Vietnam

15 Mar 73

3rd Tactical Fighter Squadron with A-7 "Sandy" aircraft was activated at Korat RTAFB. The primary mission of the 3 TFS is support of SAR and SO missions. The alert posture for SAR consists of two cells of three A-7's (call signs Sandy 1, 2, 3; Sandy 4, 6 and 6) with a quick reaction time of 15 minutes of as fraggged by USSAG/7AF during daylight hours.

16 Mar 73

Twenty-seven military and five civilian U.S. prisoners of war, the second group of the third increment arrived at Clark Air Base after being released at Hanoi.

21 Mar 73

The ANPVS/5 (40°FOV) night vision goggles are now listed in TA 016 as the replacement for the SU/50 (60° FOV). Basis of issue is six per NRS HH-53

23 Mar 73

Fire suppression kits deleted from ARRS mission requirements

27 Mar 73

U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam was less than 5,000.

Twenty-seven military and five civilian U.S. prisoners of war, the first group of the fourth increment, held by the Viet Cong, were released in Hanoi.

28 March 73

Seven U.S. military, two U.S. civilian, and one Canadian prisoners were released by the Pathet Lao in Hanoi. Forty prisoners of war arrived at Clark Air Base from their captivity in North Vietnam.

With the exception of the Mayaguez incident, this is the end date for eligibility for the Vietnam Service Medal.

The Vietnam Service Medal is presented to any service member who served on temporary duty for more than 30 consecutive days, or 60 non-consecutive days, attached to or regularly serving for one, or more, days with an organization participating in or directly supporting ground (military) operations or attached to or regularly serving for one, or more, days aboard a naval vessel directly supporting military operations in the Republic of Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos within the defined combat zone (DoD 1348 C6.6.1.1.5. revised September 1996) between the dates of 15 November 1961 and 28 March 1973, and from 29 April 1975 to 30 April 1975. ^[4]

29 Mar 73

The final group of 67 American prisoners departed Hanoi. The last POW to board the aircraft was Sergeant Major Max Bielke USA

U.S. Army, Vietnam was disestablished effective 1800 hours.

The Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) was disestablished effective 1900 hours.

The U.S. troop withdrawal was completed.

29 March 73

MACV disestablished. Seventh Air Force moves to Nakhon Phanom AB, Thailand, takes on dual role as US Support Activities Group and 7th Air Force. Seventh/13th Air Force reverts to Det. 7 of 13th Air Force.

The last US POW's released and picked up in Hanoi.

Below information on POW/MIA extracted from "History ARRS 1 July 72 thru 30 June 1974, Vol. 1, p.36"

See file name VN POW MIA Summary 1973 for jpg copy of excerpt typed below

Among the distinguished personnel of ARRS were the men who were “prisoners of war” (POW) or “missing in action” (MIA), some for more than seven years. At the end of US participation in hostilities in Vietnam, ARRS listed six men POW and twelve men MIA. All six POW’s were released by the enemy on 12 February 1973, but a complete accounting of MIA’s was not available at HQ ARRS by the end of FY 1974. The names of POW’s and MIA’s are listed below:

Crew				
<u>Name</u>	<u>Date Lost</u>	<u>Position/ Aircraft</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Status</u>
Capt Thomas J Curtis	20 Sep 65	P/HH-43	Det 1, 38 ARRS	POW
AIC William A Robinson	20 Sep 65	FM/HH-43	Det 1, 38 ARRS	POW
A2C Arthur N Black	20 Sep 65	PJ/HH-43	Det 1, 38 ARRS	POW
Capt Warren R Lilly	6 Nov 65	P/CH-3	Det 5, 38 ARRS	POW
1 st Lt Jerry A Singleton	6 Nov 65	CP/CH-3	Det 5, 38 ARRS	POW
SSgt Arthur Cormier	6 Nov 65	PJ/CH-3	Det 5, 38 ARRS	POW
Maj Ralph H Angstedt	18 Oct 66	P/HU-16	37 ARRS	MIA
1 st Lt John H Long	18 Oct 66	CP/HU-16	37 ARRS	MIA
Capt Inzar W Rackley	18 Oct 66	N/HU-16	37 ARRS	MIA
Sgt Robert L Hill	18 Oct 66	FM/HU-16	37 ARRS	MIA
SSgt John R Shoeneck	18 Oct 66	FM/HU-16	37 ARRS	MIA
SSgt Lawrence Clark	18 Oct 66	RO/HU-16	37 ARRS	MIA
A2C Steven H Adams	18 Oct 66	PJ/HU-16	37 ARRS	MIA
Maj Patrick H Wood	6 Feb 67	P/HU-16	Det 5, 38 ARRS	MIA
Capt Richard A Kibby	6 Feb 67	CP/HU-16	Det 7, 38 ARRS	MIA
SSgt Donald J Hall	6 Feb 67	FM/HU-16	Det 5, 38 ARRS	MIA
SSgt James R Thomas	25 Nov 71	PJ/HH-53	37 ARRS	MIA
AIC Charles D King	25 Dec 68	PJ/HH-3	Det 1, 40 ARRS	MIA

Note: Crew Position codes:

P = Pilot CP = Copilot N = Navigator RO = Radio Operator FM = Flight Engineer
PJ = Pararescueman

29 March 73 See file = 29Mar73

7th AF Moves to NKP

The United States officially withdrew the last American troops from Vietnam. President Nixon announced that “The day we have all worked and prayed for has finally come.”

Operation Homecoming was completed on March 29, 1973, when the last of 591 U.S. prisoners were released and returned to the United States. (source = history channel)

March 73

40th ARRS transferred a second HH-53C to the 76th in order to meet support requirements of NASA SKYLAB program.

Installation of the Electronic Location Finder (ELF) ARD-21 on all of the 40th ARRS HH-53's was completed by the end of March.

The AN/PVS-5 NVG's (40° field of view) are being issued as available to HH-53 aircrews for use on Night Recovery Equipped (NRS) HH-53's. These NVG's will replace the SU-50 (60° field of view) goggles.

The 56th ARRS transferred one HC-130P to the 76th ARRS and reduced the 56th ARRS to its authorized 6 HC-130's

APRIL

1 Apr 73

Captain Robert T. White, U.S.A, the last known U.S. prisoner held by the Viet Cong, was released at Xom Tien, Vinh Binh Province.

17 April 73

Taking off from Guam, B-52s make the last bombing missions over Laos, attacking targets south of the Plain of Jars because of communist cease-fire violations.

26 May 73

Wolf 06 SAR in Cambodia.

14 June 73

HH-53C, serial number 68-10362 was lost during an accident at ToleSap, Cambodia on 14 June 1973. The aircraft had just disconnected from air refueling with an HC-130 when the HH-53 pitched up and then straight down. The aircraft began an uncontrolled spiraling descent as the tail separated from the

fuselage. The HH-53 inverted and crashed into the lake, fatally injuring three aircrewmembers. Two PJs were thrown clear and parachuted to safety. They were picked up by another HH-53

Jolly 64 (68-10362) of the 40th ARRS was lost over Ton le Sap Lake in the Khmer Republic. Immediately after refueling, the helicopter went out of control and crashed inverted into the lake. Only the two PJ's were able to bail out of the aircraft. They were picked up shortly after the crash by Jolly 32. PJ's, Sgt Caldwell and Sgt Morgan parachute to safety. The rest of the crew are killed in the crash. 1Lt Gilbert Rovito AC, 1Lt Francis Meador CP, MSgt David McLeod FE. This reduced the 40th ARRS to nine HH-53C's.

1 July 73

The United States Congress passed the Case-Church Amendment on 29 June 1973. This Act specifically forbade any further US military activity in Southeast Asia, beginning August 15, 1973. It passed on 1 July 73 by a vote of 278-124 in the House of Representatives and 64-26 in the senate. That vote would have been adequate to override a Presidential veto.

14 August 73

B-52s fly last Arc Light sortie in Cambodia. The United States stopped its bombing in Cambodia

15 Aug 73

Air Force A-7Ds fly last US combat mission of the war, attacking targets near Phnom Penh late in the afternoon. An EC-121 from Korat, landing after the A-7s return, earns the distinction of flying the last US mission of the war.

U.S. bombing in SEA ceased. All US combat air operations in SEA ceased as a result of Congressional legislation passed on June 29th.

7 Nov 73

"War Powers Resolution (sometimes referred to as the War Powers Act) became law over a Presidential veto and subsequent override vote by the Senate. It was introduced into the House on May 3, 1970 by Clement J. Zablocki (D-WI). It passed the house on July 18, 1973. It passed the Senate vote on July 20, 1973. President Nixon vetoed it on October 24, 1973. His veto was overridden by the House and Senate on November 7, 1973.

The resolution ([50 U.S.C. 1541-1548](#)) was adopted in the form of a United States Congress joint resolution. It is a federal law intended to check the power of the President in committing the United States to an armed conflict without the consent of Congress.

December 1973

ARRS SAR assets assigned Thailand include:

8 HH-53C assigned to 40 ARRS NKP RTAFB
12 HH-43 assigned Det 3 40th ARRS Ubon
 Det 5 40 ARRS Udorn
 Det 10 40 ARRS Takhli
 Det 12 40 ARRS U-Tapao
6 HC-130 assigned to 56 ARRS Korat RTAFB

By the time 1973 had come to an end, fighting between North and South Vietnam had renewed. North Vietnam almost immediately began violating the agreements they signed in Paris at the beginning of the year. They were sure that June congressional amendment and the November congressional resolution would prohibit President Nixon from reintroducing US forces into South Vietnam. One of the promises made by the US to SVN was that if the fighting began again that the USA would resupply SVN with war material equal to that of what NVN received from the Soviet Union and China. South Vietnam suddenly discovered that the resupply of weapons and munitions was slow in coming and in far smaller quantities than NVN was using against them. To conserve ammunition, the ARVN was issued considerably less than they needed. This emboldened the NVA to increase their attacks even more. The USA's sudden reversal of providing required logistical support would eventually doom the ARVN. The DRV had achieved by negotiation what they could not achieve on the battlefield. The Paris negotiations primary purpose was to get the USA out of Vietnam. With the US gone, they could renew attacks free of interference by US military forces.

1974

Preparations for a new North Vietnamese offensive began in the spring of 1974 with plans for large scale attacks in 1975. As the communists expanded their fighting in 1974, the United States progressively reduced its support for South Vietnam.

9 May 74

The United States Congress began impeachment proceedings against President Nixon on. The move related to Nixon's involvement in the Watergate scandal.

June 1974

AC-130 Spectre gunship incorporated conceptually into SARTF. (3ARRGp history Jun 74)

30 July 74

Det 10 40 ARRS deactivated at Tahkli RTAFB.

8 August 74

Richard M Nixon became the first United States President to resign. Gerald Ford became the first US President to hold that office without having been elected to the Presidency or Vice Presidency.

The Ho Chi Ming Trail is paved into a highway. A fuel pipeline is installed next to the roadway. Supplies and equipment are moved south and position for another major offensive.

20 August 74

Det 3 40 ARRS deactivated at Ubon RTAFB. See new AOB (3 ARRGp Dec 74 history)

16 September 74

President Ford announced a clemency program for draft evaders and military deserters. The program was to run until 31 March, 1975. It required that participants take an oath of allegiance and perform up to two years of community service. About 22,500 people participated in the program, out of an estimated 124,000 eligible.

October 74

North Vietnamese expelled the ARVN from northern Kontum Province and secured important roads in the Central Highlands.

December 74

CINCPAC saw the enemy threat in South Vietnam as the most serious to date. Enemy troops in the south had increased by 91,000 since January 1973; combat battalions had risen from 344 to 565; and armor, artillery, and air defense had vastly improved. The enemy had also improved his logistics systems and CINCPAC estimated that communist ammunition stockpiles could support an offensive of greater intensity than the one in 1972.

18 Dec 74

The ruling Politburo of North Vietnam met in Hanoi from 18 December 1974 until 8 January 1975 for the purpose of resolving the timetable for the conquest of South Vietnam. Le Duan proposed a major offensive involving multiple army corps. The plan was for a spring offensive to start a process that was expected to end the war in two years. In the course of the meeting, the question of US reaction was discussed. The Chief of Staff of the North Vietnamese Army, General Van Tien Dung, summed up the consensus as follows:

The Watergate scandal had seriously affected the entire United States and precipitated the resignation of an extremely reactionary president—Nixon. The United States faced economic recession, mounting inflation, serious unemployment and an oil crisis. . . . U.S. aid to the Saigon puppet administration was decreasing. Having already withdrawn from the south, the United States could hardly jump back in. . . .

End of December 74

In preparation for the 1975 offensive, the North Vietnamese opened a drive on Phuoc Binh, the capital of Phuoc Long Province on the last day of 1974. After a seven-day siege, Phuoc Binh fell on 7 January 1975, giving the communists control of all of the northernmost province of MR 3. President Ford registered diplomatic protests, but complied with the Congressional ban on all US military activity in Southeast Asia. President Thieu announced that the war had resumed. South Vietnam prepared for a significant North Vietnamese and NLF/PALF offensive.

1975

1 January 75

The NVA launched a large scale invasion into Phuoc Long Province SVN. This offensive marked the beginning of North Vietnam's new strategy of attacking not only to destroy the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, but to capture populated areas as well. To accomplish its objective of seizing the provincial capital of Phuoc Long City, 75 miles northeast of Saigon, the NVA employed its recently formed 3d Division, 7th Division, a tank battalion, an artillery regiment, an antiaircraft regiment, and local force and sapper units. When the US failed to take any type of military counter reaction, the DRV felt free to launch additional attacks.

6 January 75

After the loss of more than 3,000 troops, the defenders of Phuoc Long surrendered, making it the first province since 1954 to fall permanently to the Communists. This victory convinced Hanoi that the balance of had shifted decisively in their favor. Furthermore, the failure of the United States to intervene in the conflict resulted in their concluding that America's willingness to support the South Vietnamese had ended. Based on these assumptions, the DRV's politburo adopted a two-year plan which aimed for a complete and final victory over the South.

21 January 75

President Ford, during a press conference, stated the US would not re-enter the war.

10 March 75

North Vietnamese Army attacked Ban Me Thuot, in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. Half of the South Vietnamese soldiers surrendered or deserted. Three days later, President Thieu decided to abandon the Highlands region and two northern provinces of South Vietnam.

Between 19 March and 30 March, the North Vietnamese Army captured Quang Tri City, Tam Ky, Hue, Chu Lai and Da Nang. In Da Nang, 100,000 South Vietnamese soldiers surrendered after their commanding officers abandoned them. The North Vietnamese Army started its final push to Saigon on 31 March.

29 March 75

DaNang falls to the NVA. The Politburo passed a resolution to complete the campaign in the South within a month (source = Following Ho Chi Minh p82)

12 April 75

Operation Eagle Pull option 3 executed. 287 U.S. and foreign nationals were evacuated from Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

21 April 75

President Thieu resigned from office. During his 90-minute resignation speech, he read a letter sent to him by Nixon in 1972, in which Nixon promised 'severe retaliatory action' if South Vietnam was threatened. Thieu condemned the Peace Treaty that had been forced on him, Henry Kissinger, and the United States. He said that "The United States has not respected its promises. It is inhumane. It is untrustworthy. It is irresponsible."

Two days later, as 100,000 North Vietnamese soldiers advanced on Saigon, President Ford, speaking at Tulane University, said that the war in Vietnam was 'a war that is finished as far as America is concerned'.

28 April 75

General Duong Van Minh became the new president of South Vietnam. He immediately appealed for a ceasefire. The march on Saigon continued.

29 April 75

Operation Frequent Wind, the evacuation of Vietnam, moved over 50,000 people. The initial decision to depart Saigon was made to evacuate the Defense Attaché's office by fixed-wing aircraft. This fixed-

wing evacuation was determined impossible when hostile artillery and rocket fire closed the air base at Tan Son Nhut. The decision to evacuate the entire US presence by helicopter under Operation Frequent Wind was made late morning, 29 April 1975, Saigon time. Due to the delayed timing of the order, the capability for rapid response to such an order was imperative. The deteriorating situation at the Defense Attaché location required the Embassy to become a major site.

The North Vietnamese Army shelled the Tan Son Nhut air base in Saigon. President Ford ordered the evacuation of all Americans. As the helicopter evacuation got under way, South Vietnamese civilians made their way into the base and started looting. The evacuation was shifted to the American embassy, which was walled in and secured by US Marines in full combat gear.

This effort consisted of: 444 USAF/USMC helicopter sorties; 204 TACAIR sorties; 24 AH-1J (Cobra) combat escort sorties; 8 AC-130 gunship sorties; 5 EC-130 (ABCCC) sorties; 44 KC-135 tanker sorties; and 2 HC-130 search and rescue support sorties. Total casualties were relatively light: two USMC Embassy Security Guards killed in an attack by ground fire, and two USMC CH-46 search and rescue helicopter aircrews presumed dead following a crash at sea.

30 April 75

Saigon falls to North Vietnamese forces, finally bringing the long conflict in Southeast Asia to an end.

At 8.35 am, 30 April, the last ten Marines were evacuated from the Embassy. The United States was no longer involved in the Vietnamese War. By 11.00 am, the North Vietnamese Flag was flying over the presidential palace in Saigon. Acting President Minh broadcast a message of unconditional surrender. The North Vietnamese Army had completed the campaign, which had been expected to last two years, in 55 days.

North Vietnamese Colonel Bui Tin accepted the surrender, telling SVN President Minh that "Only the Americans have been beaten. If you are patriots, consider this a moment of joy." Saigon, within 24 hours, had become Ho Chi Minh City.

In the closing scene of his "Vietnam: A History", a narrative of 30 years of war in the Southeast Asian country, veteran US newsman Stanley Karnow describes how, on April 30, 1975, North Vietnamese Colonel Bui Tin accepted the surrender of Saigon's US-backed regime.

With the capitulation of Saigon, now renamed Ho Chi Minh City, Bui Tin stepped into history almost inadvertently -- "completely by accident," as he put it in an interview with Agence France-Presse.

While he happened to be the highest ranking officer with the first tank unit to ride into the presidential palace grounds, Bui Tin was there, in fact, not as a field commander but as a senior war correspondent for Quan Doi Nhan Dan, communist North Vietnam's army newspaper. So, the next thing he did was to file his dispatch.

Then, Karnow writes, Bui Tin "strolled into the park behind the palace. Stretching out on the grass, he gazed at the sky, exalted."

That state of exaltation was to be very short-lived.

"I became disillusioned almost immediately with Hanoi's leadership," Bui Tin said in the interview.

"There they were, with their lofty talk of national reconciliation and clemency, while at the same time sending South Vietnamese army and government officials to so-called re-education camps -- in effect, sentencing hundreds of thousands to years of forced labour and brainwashing."

Bui Tin also recalled how appalled he was at finding out that Communist police officials were charging Vietnamese boat people hefty bribes to allow them to leave their country illegally, often aboard overladen and unseaworthy ships.

"They were demanding payment in gold bars or wads of US dollars to send desperate people on highly risky journeys, in many cases to their deaths," he said.

Now 73, the wiry officer had joined Vietnam's small communist guerrilla force in the mid '40s, in the early days of the war that led to independence from France.

He was at Dien Bien Phu, the legendary 1954 battle in which the communist troops, who had become under Ho Chi Minh's leadership one of the world's most formidable fighting forces, routed the French, and he later participated as a frontline commander or as a war correspondent in the fighting that ended up in defeat for the Americans and their South Vietnamese allies.

But in 1990 Bui Tin fled Vietnam to France. He now lives in a Paris suburb and Hanoi critics consider his defection as one of the most powerful indictments of the communist regime in Vietnam.

13 May 75

Mayaguez p147-154#7

The following PJ's flew on the Mayaguez mission: MSgt John Eldridge, SSgt Joseph Stanaland, A1C Brad Marx, MSgt David Grey, TSgt David Patterson, Sgt Cook, A1C Fredrick Rheinhardt, SSgt Karl Froehlich, Sgt Lundrigan, Sgt Steven Lemminn, Sgt Tom Beranek, A1C Ferris, Sgt Mike Brown, A1C Lewis Dunham, TSgt Peter Harding, Sgt Tom Bateson, A1C Dennis McKiver, Sgt Bruce Daly, A1C David Ash and Sgt Wayne Fiske. Pete Harding stuck his head out the window during a low level run-in to the island and lost his helmet. Captain Purser the A/C of one of the Jolly's forgot his gas mask and only realized it after he volunteered to fly into a cloud of gas.

McKiver file

The following is a copy of the recommendation for medals for one Jolly crew of the Mayaguez operation. It is reflective of all those who participated in this operation.

Jolly Green 43 (Captain Purser)

Subject: Recommendation for Decoration for Heroism

The following information is provided for your consideration and action for the award of the appropriate decorations.

- a. During joint operations resulting in the recovery of the SS Mayaguez and return of her crew, the crew of HH-53C Jolly Green 43, consisting of Captain Roland W. Purser, aircraft commander; First Lieutenant Robert P. Gradle, co-pilot; Technical Sergeant Billy D. Willingham, flight engineer; Technical Sergeant Peter S. Harding, pararescueman; Sergeant Thomas J. Bateson, pararescueman; Airman First Class Dennis W. McKiver, pararescueman, displayed extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force on and near Koh Tang Island, Gulf of Thailand, on 15 May 1975.
- b. On that date Captain Purser and his crew were tasked with the insertion of twenty-nine United States Marines on Koh Tang Island as number two in a flight of two. He and his crew arrived off the island to learn that three of the four CH-53's tasked with the initial insertion of U.S. Marines had been shot down. One exploded on the eastern landing zone and two others going down in the waters close offshore. A fourth CH-53 was badly shot up prior to insertion and pulled off for the Thailand coastline. Jolly Green 42 was informed by their flight leader, that they would attempt simultaneous insertions on the two western landing zones, Captain Purser began his run in at about 0615. Jolly Green 43 was forced to abort the approach by accurate and intense small arms and automatic weapons fire, sustaining repeated hits in the attempt. Informed by his crew that Jolly Green 42's second attempt at insertion was successful and aware that Jolly 42 had suffered heavy battle damage in the process, Captain Purser diverted to the second western landing zone, successfully discharging his Marines. Sergeants Harding and Bateson and Airman McKiver suppressed ground fire throughout the two approaches despite the fact that the left hand minigun had jammed, forcing Airman McKiver to use his AR-15. Following insertion, Jolly Green 43 escorted Jolly 42 back to U-Tapao where Jolly 42 was grounded because of battle damage. Captain Purser's crew refueled and loaded with Marines for a second insertion. Sergeant Bateson repaired his minigun with parts cannibalized off of Jolly 42. Jolly 43 departed U-Tapao in formation with Knife 52 at 0930. Captain Purser assumed flight lead, arriving off of Kho Tang at 1130. Aware that Knife 52 was unable to refuel in flight and was low on fuel, Captain Purser elected to stand off while Knife 52 attempted insertion. While waiting his turn to run in to the landing zone, Lt. Gradle coordinated the flights activities through Cricket (ABCCC). A few minutes later, Knife 52 had been forced to discontinue efforts to insert his Marines by accurate and intense ground fire around the western LZ's. Knife 52 departed with battle damage and bingo fuel at 1205. Captain Purser and his crew unhesitatingly volunteered to attempt to insert their Marines. They succeeded on their first attempt in spite of intense small arms fire, automatic weapons fire, and incoming mortar rounds on the landing zone. Captain Purser's crew shot their way into and shot their way out of the landing zone with almost continuous suppressive fire from all three of the helicopters mini-guns. They returned fire from weapons located a mere 50 yards of the helicopter. Jolly Green 43 sustained numerous hits. This was one of the last troop insertions of the operation, providing the Marine force on the ground with badly needed manpower at a critical time. Remaining on

scene despite battle damage, Captain Purser's crew volunteered to begin extracting isolated groups of Marines on the eastern landing zones. Preceded by an A-7 flight dropping riot control agents, Jolly 43 initiated a low level run-in at 1420. After locating the eastern LZ despite an extremely confusing tactical situation and the confining effects of their gas masks, Jolly Green 43's crew discovered that the gas had fallen short, missing the LZ area entirely and afforded them no protection. By now, the number one mini-gun had jammed again, this time for good, forcing Sergeant Harding to rely on his AR-15 for protection of the left side of the helicopter. With full knowledge of the desperate situation of the Marines in the LZ, Captain Purser and his crew elected to continue the approach despite the lack of gas cover. As their helicopter entered a hover, intense ground fire erupted. Additional battle damage was sustained from small arms, automatic weapons fire, and mortar fragments. A 12.7mm round penetrated the #1 engine fuel line causing a massive leak. Sergeant Bateson on the ramp minigun was hit and knocked down by a mortar fragment that struck him in the left shoulder. The number two jammed during the approach, leaving only the ramp in operation. With the main fuel line punctured, the number one engine unwound, going immediately to zero torque. Raw fuel under pressure began venting into the rear cabin. Informed of the situation by Sergeant Harding and Airman McKiver and aware that Sergeant Willingham and Lt Gradle were coolly dealing with the failed engine, Captain Purser, in a calm display of flying skill, all the while under intense fire, nursed his stricken helicopter out of the LZ, obtaining the maximum power from the only remaining engine. Having shut down the number one engine and stopped the fuel leak under Sergeant Willingham's guidance, Jolly Green 43 pulled back under escort from Jolly 11. Aware of the critical tactical situation back at Koh Tang Island, Captain Purser diverted to the USS Coral Sea, making a single engine landing at 1545, landing with only 500 pounds of fuel remaining. With Sergeant Willingham's assistance, US Navy personnel affected emergency repairs to the ruptured fuel line with rubber hosing and duct tape. Captain Purser and his crew then returned to Koh Tang as soon as repairs were completed despite the still unknown extent of other battle damage to their aircraft. Jolly Green 43 departed the Coral Sea at 1700, arriving back at Koh Tang at about 1730. They were to be committed in the final effort to withdraw the remaining Marines from the island in the rapidly fading twilight. Facing ground fire which was still accurate and at times as intense as earlier in the day, Jolly 43 extracted 54 Marines on their first attempt, sustaining numerous additional hits in the process, including a 7.62 round in the main rotor spar. While on the ground loading the Marines, Sergeant Harding and Airman McKiver responded to the constant ground fire, using the one remaining AR-15's to maximum effect. As the Marines were on-loading, Lt Gradle while monitoring all radio channels, in addition to the intercom, realized that another helicopter was inbound to the LZ they were sitting on. He briefly turned on his helicopters searchlight allowing the inbound helicopter to avoid crashing into Jolly 43 and it's now full load of Marines. His actions prevented a catastrophe that would probably have ended the operation. After off-loading 54 Marines on the Coral Sea, Jolly 43 once more refueled and returned to the scene. Upon arriving, they found that the last of the Marines had just been extracted. In the course of this operation, the crew of Jolly Green 43 logged over 16 hours of flying time, during four sorties. They had made two opposed assault landings, one opposed extraction, and one attempted extraction during which they were forced off scene.

after losing an engine due to battle damage. They had received battle damage on every sortie, except their last.

- c. Through extraordinary heroism, incredible tenacity, magnificent airmanship and almost unbelievable aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, despite repeated and severe damage to their aircraft, the crew of Jolly Green 43 reflected the highest credit upon themselves and the United States Air Force.

McKiver award submission - What a way to end the war.

20 September 1975

Final operational flight of a USAF Huskie was made on 20 September 1975 by HH-43F 64-17559 assigned to Det. 5, 40 ARRS at Udorn RTAFB, Thailand. Det. 5 was deactivated on 30 September 1975, according to Udorn RTAFB "EASY FLYER", dated 12 September 1975

Udorn Pedro unit last in AF

By Capt. Allan H. Jacobsen
Det. 5, 40th ARRS

Detachment 5, 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS), Udorn RTAFB, became the last Kaman HH-43 Huskie (Pedro) unit in the Air Force Aug. 31, when Detachment 12, 40th ARRS, U-Tapao RTNAF, Thailand, completed its conversion to the Bell UH-1N helicopter.

Udorn's Pedro detachment will deactivate here Sept. 30, ending



the proud Pedro and rescue tradition. For 10 years, the men of Detachment 5 have distinguished themselves while performing their mission. They have lived up to their motto that "Pedro Cared So That Others May Live."

"Our main mission," says Maj. Fredrik M. Bergold, "Last of the Pedros" commander, "is to provide the 432nd Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) with aircrew re-

(Continued on page 7)

Vol. 9 No. 18 Udorn RTAFB, Thailand September 12, 1975

EASY FLYER

People—Our Most Important Resource

1 Oct 1975

40th ARRS moved from NKP to Korat RTAFB because NKP was closing up as the Vietnam era for our Air Force was coming to an end.

The Price of the War

An estimated total of 2,122,244 people were killed during the war in Vietnam. Of these, 58,169 were Americans. An estimated 3,650,946 additional people were wounded, of whom 304,000 were Americans. 153,329 Americans were categorized as 'seriously' wounded. An estimated 444,000 North Vietnamese and 220,557 South Vietnamese military personnel and 587,000 civilians were killed. The dollar cost of the United States involvement in the war in Vietnam has been estimated at \$140 billion.

The 40th moved to Korat RTAFB after NKP. This occurred in 75 and the unit disbanded in 76 at Korat

20 December 1975 or 31 Jan 76

JRCC deactivated. The era ends!

During its involvement in the wars of SEA, the USAF lost 2,254 aircraft. Summary of SEA SAR data.
P155#7

Bob Hope on the end of the Vietnam War

On January 27, the delegates at Paris finally signed the Vietnam peace agreement. It included a cease-fire, the withdrawal of all American troops within 60 days, and the reunification of the North and South through peaceful elections. North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam would remain in place.

We all knew it was a phony peace. The NVA and VC would just sit back, waiting for the U.S. forces to get out. Then the roof would fall in. And half of Saigon would try to be choppered out along with the last of our marines. By that time, the U.S. did not care. Most of the country was glad to forget Vietnam.

Bob Hope, *Don't Shoot, It's Only Me*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1990), 293

No parades for Vietnam veterans. Unlike WWII, America was not at all pleased about the way this war ended. At the end of WWII, American soldiers came home en masse. It was logical that America celebrate this reunion of friends and families. Vietnam veterans came home in small groups. In some cases, when they returned home people would ask where had they been for the last couple of years. These citizens never gave it a thought that these men had been soldiers. This was also a war fought largely by the lower class of America. During WWII, the rich in America sent their sons off to defend their country. A classic case would be the Kennedy's. The eldest son, Joe died as a fighter pilot in the Pacific. One daughter died in a plane crash returning from Europe. John Fitzgerald Kennedy was a PT boat commander, war hero and became our 35th President. During Vietnam, virtually all of the upper class found deferments for their sons. The majority of our middle class did the same. Certainly there were exceptions but the majority of American warriors came from its lower middle class and below. One significant group of exceptions were American pilots. Most were middle class Americans and most who found themselves in Vietnam volunteered for that duty. In fact, the majority of Pararescuemen in Vietnam were exceptionally aggressive in seeking assignments in SEA.

Feats of the pararescuemen in the Vietnam War became legendary. The records show an amazing array of awards which the PJ's garnered. Include summary of awards.

This is all the more significant considering this group never exceeded 100 men in SEA at any time. Of course, opportunity played a large part. In 1968 the PJ NCOIC of the 3 ARRGp said the following:

All pararescuemen assigned to 3d ARRGp units are highly motivated and mentally oriented toward mission accomplishment. Their self-reliance is considerably greater than that of other airmen of similar military experience and age level. This apparently is a result of completion of the rigorous training they have accomplished. I believe that the Parachute School, SCUBA School and all other training they have received is an extremely important factor toward their preparation for performing the Rescue Mission in a combat environment. This training substitutes to a great extent for military experience.

Corona Harvest USAF SAR in SEA 1954 – 1968 323

ⁱ 7th AF Command History 1972-73

ⁱⁱ Ibid