

Vietnam War Glossary

A-1	The “Skyraider.” A propeller-driven, single-reciprocal engine, land-or-carrier-based aircraft capable of carrying heavy bomb loads in an attack role. It was used as a rescue escort aircraft under the call sign "Sandy.”
A1C	AF enlisted rank of Airman First Class
A2C	AF enlisted rank of Airman Second Class
A3C	AF enlisted rank of Airman Third Class
AA	Antiaircraft
	AAA Antiaircraft Artillery; triple A
AB	Air Base
ABCCC	Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Center
	A/C Aircraft Commander
ACR	Aircrew Recovery. This term was use to mean combat rescue during the early years of the war.
ADF	Automatic Direction Finder. A radio receiver used to track the direction to a beeper or other radio transmission.
AF	Air Force
	AFB Air Force Base
AFHRA	Air Force Historical Research Agency
	AFM Air Force Manual
	AFR Air Force Regulation
AFSOF	Air Force Special Operations Force
AGL	Above ground level
	AMC Airborne Mission Commander

Arc Light	A B-52 strike
ARA-25	HU-16 airborne radar
	ARRGp Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group
	ARRS Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service
	ARRSq Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron
	ARRTC Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Training Center
	ARRWg Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Wing
ARS	Air Rescue Service
ATC	Air Training Command
Authentication	A procedure used to confirm that an individual, talking with rescue forces on a survival radio, is actually a valid SAR objective and not a SAR trap.
	Barrel Roll Code name for air interdiction operations in central and northern Laos, including the Plaine des Jarres (PDJ).
Beeper	A radio transmitter which emits a distinctive, high-pitch, wavering audible tone used as a homing device when tracked by a radio compass. All aircrew members flying in combat carry this device in their survival vest.
Bingo Fuel	The point at which your fuel level becomes so low you are forced to leave the area and refuel. Sufficient fuel remains to reach destination or alternate airfield.
Bogey	Unidentified flying aircraft
Brigham	Call sign for Udorn RTAFB radar site
BUFF	Big Ugly Friendly Fucker – another nickname for the HH-53
Bull's-eye	Hanoi
C-47	Propeller-driven, twin-engine, low-wing monoplane used as a transport, cargo carrier, gunship (AC47) and, under the designation SC47, served in the Air Rescue Service in the 1950s.

C-123	The "Provider" is a short-range assault transport used to airlift troops and cargo onto short runways and unprepared airstrips. It was powered by two piston engines. Some of the C-123Bs were converted to C-123Ks by adding two J85 jet engines for improved performance.
C-130	The "Hercules." A high-wing transport, cargo carrier, gunship (AC-130) and airborne command post. Under the designation HC-130P it flew as a rescue airborne command post and was modified to give it the capability to refuel helicopters.
Call Sign	A name used by an aircrew, to identify their aircraft, while talking to others on the radio. Generally, a specific call sign belonged to a particular unit, or a mission that a unit performed (e.g. Jolly & Pedro were rescue helicopter call signs).
Capt	Officer rank of Captain
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
CAS	Close air support. Air-to-ground attacks to provide protection to friendly forces on the ground who are under enemy attack.
CBU	Cluster Bomb Unit
CBU-22	Cluster bomb unit used for air bursting smoke screens
CH-3	The CH-3E is the USAF version of the Sikorsky S-61 helicopter developed for the U.S. Navy. CH-3E's were modified for combat rescue missions and were redesignated HH-3E's. CH-3's were operated throughout the Vietnam War by Special Operations Squadrons that were based in Thailand.
CH-34	The "Choctaw." A four-blade main rotor and a tail stabilizer rotor. It was flown in SEA by U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, Vietnamese Air Force, Royal Laotian Air Force, Royal Thai Air Force and Air America.
Charlie personnel.	One of the slang terms used to refer to enemy Vietnamese
	CHECO Contemporary Historical Evaluation of Combat Operations
CMSgt	Air Force enlisted rank of Chief Master Sergeant

Cigar	Call sign for ARRS forces on ground at Quang Tri
CINC	Commander-in-Chief
CINCPAC	Commander-in-Chief Pacific
CINCPACAF	Commander-in-Chief Pacific Air Forces
COIN	Counter insurgency
Col	Officer rank of Colonel
CONUS	Continental United States
Corona Harvest	U.S. Air Force studies which reported on and evaluated air operations in Southeast Asia.
Cricket	ABCCC “Barrel Roll” day callsign
Crown	HC-130 Airborne Mission Commander callsign
CSAR	Combat Search and Rescue
DEROS	Date of Expected Return from Overseas. This was the date you would leave Vietnam for the United States
DF	Direction find using electronic equipment
Det	Detachment
DME	Distance Measuring Equipment; the distance part of a TACAN
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone; the 17 th parallel of latitude; the line on a map that dividing North and South Vietnam
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The North Vietnamese political government.
Duckbutt	An over-water, precautionary orbit flown by rescue aircraft.
Eagle Pull	Code name for the evacuation of Phnom Penh in 1975.
EB-66	Douglas twin-engine, high-wing, reconnaissance/bomber which had several configurations for ELINT or for electronic jamming to protect strike forces.

ECM	Electronic Countermeasures
ECM Pod	An aerodynamic container which housed multiple transmitters and associated electronic devices. It was carried on an aircraft externally and provided aircraft self-protection in penetration of enemy defenses.
E&E	Escape and Evasion
ELINT	Electronic Intelligence
ETA	Estimated time of arrival
EWO	Electronic Warfare Officer
F	Fighter
F-4	The "Phantom." A twin-engine, low-wing, two-person, fighter-bomber used extensively in both the air superiority and attack missions in Southeast Asia.
F-8	The "Crusader." A single-engine, high-wing, carrier-or-land based fighter-bomber used by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marines in Southeast Asia.
F- 105	The "Thud." A single-engine, high wing, jet fighter-bomber. It carried the brunt of the air war to North Vietnam. The two-seat F-105F version flew surface-to-air-mission "Wild Weasel" suppression missions.
FAC	Forward Air Controller. Normally airborne in an O-1, O-2 or OV-10. The FAC directed air strikes. Could also be a trained individual on the ground directing air strikes.
Farm Gate	Detachment 2, 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron. Trained VNAF pilots in combat operations. Later flew combat support with VNAF observer on board an American piloted aircraft.
Fast FAC	A jet fighter used as a FAC in a high threat area
Fast movers	High performance jet fighter aircraft
Feet dry	Over land
Feet wet	Over water

FE	Flight Engineer
Fence	The fence was a term for the point where one crossed from enemy to friendly territory or from friendly to enemy territory.
FM	Frequency Modulation radio
FOL	Forward Operating Location
frag order	A fragmentary operations order. The daily supplement to the standard operations orders governing the conduct of the air war. It contained mission numbers, targets, types of ordnance, time-on-target, and other instruction.
Freedom Bird	The passenger jet that flew troops home from Vietnam
Frequent Wind	Code name for the evacuation of Saigon in April 1975.
FSK	Fire Suppression Kit. A large fire extinguisher, sling loaded by an HH-43 and flown to the scene of a crashed airplane.
GIB	Guy in back. Some fighter bombers had a crew of two; the pilot and the weapons system officer. Most typically the pilot sat in the front of the plane and the GIB's seat was behind the pilots.
Guard	Guard is an emergency radio frequency, 243.0 UHF. Guard frequency is only used to broadcast emergency messages and warnings. Survival radios all had this frequency installed.
GVN	Government of (South) Vietnam
Hard Ordnance	Air delivered munitions optimized for use against "hard targets" such as bunkers and armored vehicles; iron bombs; MK-82 (500 lb. general purpose bomb). This munition was not suitable for CAS.
H-34	The "Choctaw" was used early in the war by Army and USMC aviation units. It was powered by a single radial piston engine. It was phased out of service when turbine powered helicopters became available.
HH-43	The "Husky." Nicknamed "Pedro" by rescue crews. A twin-rotor, single-engine helicopter, designed for crash-rescue operations and the local base rescue mission. Rotors are intermeshing, counter-

rotating, each with two blades mounted side-by-side. Easily identified due to lack of any tail rotor.

HH-3	The Rescue version of the Sikorsky CH-3. CH-3's were modified for combat rescue missions with armor, defensive armament, self-sealing fuel tanks, a rescue hoist, and in-flight refueling capability. They were redesignated HH-3E's and used extensively in Vietnam under the nickname "Jolly Green Giant."
HH-53	Sikorsky's large, twin-turbine helicopter with a six-blade main rotor and a four-blade tail rotor. The Rescue version of the Sikorsky CH-53
HC-130	See C-130.
HF Radio	High frequency radio. A radio that could transmit and receive hundreds of miles. These long range communications were not line of sight restrictive.
Hillsboro	ABCCC "Steel Tiger" callsign
HM	Helicopter Mechanic. Later in the war the HM's were renamed flight engineers or FE's.
Hobo	Call sign of the 1 st SOS A-1s on strike missions
Ho Chi Minh Trail	A network of roads running along the Laotian Vietnamese border. It was used by NVN to infiltrate men and supplies into SVN
HQ	headquarters
HU-16	The "Albatross." A propeller-driven, twin-reciprocal engine, high-wing, amphibious aircraft was used by the ARS and ARRS for search and rescue missions in SEA from 1963 through 1967.
IFF	Identification, Friend or Foe is a system that uses electronic transmissions to which equipment carried by friendly aircraft automatically responds by emitting impulses that distinguish them from enemy aircraft.
IFR	Flying in the clouds without being able to see the ground.
Invert	Call sign for NKP radar site

IR	Infrared
Iron Hand	Surface-to-air missile (SAM) suppression mission normally performed by specially equipped F-105's and F-4's. Unit nickname was "Wild Weasels."
Jack	Call sign for the sub-RCC in Thailand
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JG	Jolly Green
Jink	A series of random abrupt maneuvers designed to prevent enemy gunners from hitting your aircraft with their weapons fire
Joker	Call sign for the Joint Rescue Coordination Center at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN. The central controlling agency for SAR activity.
Jolly Green Giant	Call sign and nickname for the HH-3E and HH-53 helicopter.
Jolly High	The SAR HH-3's attempted to always fly in pair. The HH-3 which would go in for the pickup was called Jolly Low. The other HH-3, called Jolly High, would remain in a high orbit. Its mission was to rescue low bird crew if they were shot down.
Jolly Low	See Jolly High
JRCC	Joint Rescue Coordination Center
Karst	Rugged rock formations found in Southeast Asia
Khmer Rouge	Cambodian Communists
KIA	Killed in action
King	Call sign of the HC-130P SAR airborne command aircraft. (early in war called Crown)
Knife	Callsign for the 21 st SOS CH-53 helicopters
LBR	Local Base Rescue
Lima Site	Air America designations for landing sites in Laos.
Lima Site 36	A remote SAR staging area located at Na Khang in northern Laos

	Lima Site 85	A site northeastern Laos which operated a ground directed radar bombing system.
	LNRS	Limited Night Recovery System installed on a few HH-53s assigned to the 40 th ARRS
	LORAN	Long Range Navigation; An inflight navigation system used by some aircraft in the Vietnam War
	LPU	Life Preserver Underarm
	LS	Lima Site
	Lt	Officer rank of Lieutenant. 1Lt was a First Lieutenant. 2 nd Lt was a Second Lieutenant
	LtCol	Officer rank of Lieutenant Colonel
	LZ	Landing Zone
	M-16	A 5.56mm, semi or fully automatic fire, assault rifle. Used 20 or 30 round magazines.
	M-47	Smoke bomb that explodes on impact with the ground. Used for smoke screens
gun	M-60	A 7.62, link belt fed, hand-held or bipod mounted light machine
	M-79	A handheld, single shot, 40mm grenade launcher. It had to be reloaded after each shot
	MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
	MAC	Military Airlift Command
Group	MACSOG	Military Assistance Command, Studies and Observation
	MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
	Maj	Officer rank of Major
	MASH	Mobile Army Surgical Hospital
	MOH	Medal of Honor

	Medevac	Medical Evacuation; a mission flown to remove wounded personnel from the battle area
	METO	Maximum Except Takeoff. Maximum power in flight
	MIA	Missing in action
	MiG	A series of aircraft designed by Artem I. Mikoyan and Mikhail I. Gurevich were given the designation MiG
	MiG-15	Soviet-built, single-engine jet fighter of Korean War vintage.
	MiG-17	Soviet-built, single-engine jet fighter used by North Vietnam
	MiG-19	Soviet-built, twin-engine jet fighter used by North Vietnam.
Vietnam.	MiG-21	Soviet-built, single-engine jet fighter used by North
fighters.	MIGCAP	Fighter escort to protect an air mission from hostile
	MK-82	500 lb. general purpose bomb
	MOH	Medal of Honor
	Msg	Message
	MSgt	Air Force enlisted rank of Master Sergeant
	MSL	mean sea level; altitude above sea level as compares to AGL
	Mule Team	Early logistical support in Vietnam
	Nail	Call sign for 23 rd TASS OV-10 FAC aircraft
	Napalm	A petroleum jelly firebomb
	NCOIC	Non-commissioned officer in charge
	NKP	Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand
	NLF	National Liberation Front. The political arm of the Viet Cong.
	NRS	Night Recovery System

NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NVA/PL	North Vietnamese/Pathet Lao
NVNAF	North Vietnamese Air Force
O-1	The "Bird Dog." A single-engine, 2-place, high-wing observation aircraft.
OL	Operating Location
OPCON	Operational Control
Oplan	Operations Plan
ORI	Operational Readiness Inspection
OSC	On-Scene-Commander
OV-10	The "Bronco." A twin-engine, turbo-prop, 2-place, twin-tail observation and attack aircraft used by FAC's and in rescue operations.
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PACOM	Pacific Command
Paddy	Call sign for Binh Thuy radar site
Panama	Call sign for DaNang radar site
PARC	Pacific Air Rescue Center
Pathet Lao	A Laotian communist force or person.
Pave Nail	The OV-10 Pave Spot program (laser target designator) expanded to include integrated loran.
Pave Spot	An OV-10 night observation device with bore-sighted laser range designator.
PCS	Permanent change of station.
PDJ	Plaines des Jars (Plain of Jars). A militarily strategic area

north-northeast of Vientiane, Laos.

Pedro The call sign of the HH-43 rescue helicopters.

PJ Pararescueman; enlisted crewman who often rode the hoist into enemy territory to assist survivors; PJ's were trained in emergency medicine, escape & evasion, SCUBA and small arms and munitions

Play Time Slang for loiter time or the amount of time an aircraft could stay in the objective/target area

PLD Personnel lowering device. A device attached to parachute harnesses that contained 250-feet of ½ inch tubular webbing. Used to lower an aircrew member whose parachute became hung up in trees after his egress of his damaged aircraft.

PLF Parachute landing fall. A technique used to soften a landing under a parachute.

POW Prisoner of War

PSP Planked steel plating. Prefabricated sheets of steel used to construct runways.

Punch Out Slang for ejecting from an aircraft.

Queen The call sign for the sub-Rescue Coordination Center near DaNang

AB RVN

RAF Royal Air Force (United Kingdom)

Ranch Hand C-123 defoliation and herbicide operations

Raven U.S. Air Force FAC's operating in Laos. They flew O-1, Cessna 185, or T-28 aircraft

RCA Riot Control Agents

RCC Rescue Coordination Center

RESCAP Rescue Combat Air Patrol. Aircraft that escort and protect rescue aircraft.

RESCORT Rescue Escort. Same as RESCAP

RF-4	Reconnaissance version of the F4.
RHAW	Radar Homing and Warning
RIO	Radar Intercept Officer. On the F-4 was seated directly behind the pilot. Also known as the GIB (guy in back).
RLG	Royal Laotian Government
ROE	Rules of Engagement. Operating rules and restrictions on air operations
Rolling Thunder	The nickname assigned to air strikes against selected targets and lines of communications in North Vietnam (March 1965 - October 1968).
Route Package	In 1965, North Vietnam was divided into six areas that were used to define bombing areas for the Air Force and Navy.
RT-10	A handheld, single-channel survival radio carried by aircrews. First all solid state survival radio. Used by Army, Navy, and Air Force aircrews
RT-33	Reconnaissance version of the Lockheed T-33 single-engine, two place jet.
RTAF	Royal Thai Air Force
RTAFB	Royal Thai Air Force Base
RTB	Return to base
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
SA-2	Soviet-built "Guideline" surface-to-air-missile (SAM) with a range of 25 miles. Provided the nucleus of NVN's SAM defense.
SA-7	A Soviet hand-held heat-seeking missile provided to the NVA in 1972. Nicknamed "Strella and Grail."
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SAFE Areas	Selected Areas for Evasion. Areas in SEA that were relatively free of enemy influence.
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missile

Sandy	The call sign for A-1 rescue escort aircraft Used by A-7 rescue escort aircraft for the last few months of the war.
Sandy Lead	Also known as Sandy Low. The A-1 pilot responsible for acting as on scene mission coordinator. He directed air strikes and decided when it was the right time to try a pickup.
SAR	Search and Rescue
SARCAP	Search and Rescue Combat Air Patrol. See CAP
SARTF	Search and Rescue Task Force
SAR Trap	An enemy tactic used to shoot down rescue helicopters
Scramble	Technique use to get an aircraft into the air as fast as possible
HC-54	The "Rescuemaster." A four-reciprocal engine, transport used by Air Rescue. It saw limited duty in Vietnam.
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEABEE	A member of one of the construction battalions in the U.S. Navy that builds naval aviation bases and facilities. Alteration of <i>cee bee</i> , pronunciation of the initial letters of <i>construction battalion</i> .
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SECAF	Secretary of the Air Force
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SERE	Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape
Sgt	Air Force enlisted rank of Sergeant
SSgt	Air Force enlisted rank of Staff Sergeant
SMSgt	Air Force enlisted rank of Senior Master Sergeant
Slow Mover	Aircraft that flew slower than jets (A-1s, helicopters, C-130s, OV-10s, etc.)
SOF	Special Operations Force

Soft Ordnance Munitions that were able to be used close to survivors. These munitions were designed for anti-personnel use and included guns, small rockets, cluster bombs units, etc.

SOS Special Operations Squadron

Spectre Call sign for the AC-130 gunships

Steel Tiger Geographic area of southern Laos designated for interdiction missions along the Ho Chi Minh trail.

SVN South Vietnam

T-28 The "Trojan." A propeller-driven, single-engine, low-wing, monoplane with a crew of two, capable of carrying a variety of ordnance.

TAC Tactical Air Command

TACC Tactical Air Control Center

TACAN Tactical air navigation. A radio transmitter on the ground that transmits a signal to an airplane that allows a pilot to determine his direction and distance from the TACAN.

Tag line Rope attached to a swimmer and fed out by another person. Used to pull the swimmer back the spot he began swimming from.

TDY Temporary Duty

TFW Tactical fighter wing

TIC Troops in contact. Troops fighting with the enemy in close quarters.

TOT Time on target. Time scheduled to hit a target.

Transload To move from one aircraft to another aircraft

TSgt Air Force enlisted rank of Technical Sergeant

UH-1 The "Huey." A single-engine, 2-blade single rotor helicopter.

UHF Ultra High Frequency

URC-64 A handheld, 4-channel survival radio carried by aircrews

to

URT-21	A beeper that transmitted on 243.0 which was attached to a pilots parachute harness. It could be set to activate automatically when the parachute opened. It also had a switch to manually turn it on and off.
USA	United States Army
USAF	United States Air Force
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
VC	Viet Cong
VFR	Visual Flight Rules
VHF	Very High Frequency radio
Viet Minh	Initial description of Vietnamese Communists. It was later applied North Vietnamese forces that entered Laos prior to regular North Vietnamese Army troops. By the early 1960s the term had fallen disuse.
VNAF	South Vietnamese Air Force
Waterboy	Call sign for Dong Ha radar site
WIA	Wounded in action
Wild Weasel	An aircraft especially modified to identify, locate, and suppress or destroy enemy ground based air defense systems that employ radars. Used to attack SAM sites. F-100F's, F-105G's and F-4C's flew this mission in Vietnam.
Willie Pete	Slang for white phosphorus rockets or bombs. The billowing white smoke was often used to mark targets or screen rescue helicopters from the view of enemy gunners.
Winchester	A SEA operational term meaning "all ordnance expended."
ZPU	A small caliber antiaircraft gun, effective at low altitude, due to its rapid fire capability.