

## **4400<sup>th</sup> COMBAT CREW TRAINING SQUADRON**

While Tactical Bomb Wings and Groups waited for the B-57B Night Intruder models to be completed and delivered, the 345th became the first of the four Bombardment units to receive the Canberra. This was in the form of no less than five RB-57As. arriving singly at Langley AFB between June 22 and July 14. The 345th was not so designated until July 19, 1954, and therefore these assignments were to the 424th and 4400th Bomb Squadrons of the 4400th Combat Crew Training Group Langley, mainly for the purpose of proficiency training for maintenance crews. A few of the pilots were checked out before the planes were reassigned.

### **LINEAGE**

#### **STATIONS**

Langley AFB, VA, 1951

## **4400<sup>th</sup> COMBAT CREW TRAINING SQUADRON**

In 1961, General Curtis LeMay directed the creation of the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) at Hurlburt Field, Florida.<sup>2</sup> The mission of the 4400th CCTS was to provide close air support for American Special Forces teams providing counter-insurgency training and FID in the Laotian interior. By 1961, the 4400th began missions in Vietnam under the code name "Farm Gate." The official mission of Farm Gate was to train South Vietnamese pilots for combat missions throughout the North and South; yet as hostilities escalated, the Farm Gate pilots soon found themselves engaged in combat operations throughout the region. In 1962 General LeMay expanded the 4400th into the Special Air Warfare Center (SAWC), consisting of the newly activated 1st Air Commando Group, 1st Air Combat Applications Group and one combat support group.<sup>3</sup> The SAWC has in its inventory such aircraft as the O-1 and O-2 observation aircraft, the A-37 and A-1 close air support attack aircraft, numerous cargo aircraft and a variety of helicopters. By 1965, the 1st Air Commando Wing, as it was now known, had lost over 40 servicemembers in operations in the region.

The U.S. Air Force established the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS), nicknamed "Jungle Jim," on 14 April 1961 at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. Jungle Jim had a twofold mission: training and combat (very close to the assistance and integration levels discussed earlier in this article). Pilots in friendly foreign air forces received a fifty-hour flying course, while their ground crews were trained to maintain aircraft in very austere conditions. Jungle Jim also provided "USAF personnel with optimum-type training for supervising the development of unit combat capability in similar-type aircraft of friendly foreign nations..."<sup>7</sup> The combat mission was divided into strike, reconnaissance, and airlift operations.

The Jungle Jim units used vintage aircraft, such as the C-47, T-28, and B-26. These aircraft had proved their ability to operate from remote, primitive bases and had useful capabilities in terms of firepower, range, and cargo capacity for counterinsurgency operations.

Jungle Jim was fully operational by 8 September 1961, and everyone assigned to the unit was trained "on the job." The squadron devised the techniques and tactics for building a counterinsurgency capability in developing countries from Latin America to Africa to Southeast Asia without a basic Air Force doctrine to guide them. All the people of Jungle Jim knew was that someone on high had decreed that the Air Force would have a counterinsurgency capability, and they were it. The idea of visualizing how a small war might be planned and carried out using air power, by itself or in conjunction with other capabilities, had never been studied in the Air Force. Jungle Jim put the Air Force into the counterinsurgency activities for the first time. Only four months after activation, Jungle Jim personnel made their first overseas deployment. Code named Sandy Beach One, this operation involved training Mali paratroopers to operate from C-47 aircraft. The Jungle Jim people noted that just across the airfield at Bamako stood Soviet and Czechoslovak aircraft, a stark reminder that superpower rivalry was beginning to occur in some very obscure places.<sup>8</sup> Detachment 1's commandos completed their mission in November and returned to Eglin. Their efforts established such good working relationships that air commandos returned to Mali in 1963 to give more training.

In November 1961, elements from the Jungle Jim squadron deployed to Bien Hoa, Republic of Vietnam. This operation was called Farm Gate; the requirements of supporting it soon became central to Air Force thinking on small wars. The air commandos' equipment was not significantly different from that used by the air commandos in World War II; tactics for using the equipment had to come from the ingenuity and imagination of the men on the scene. To further complicate matters, there was considerable controversy in Washington over just what Farm Gate's mission should be. Some people thought Farm Gate should be involved mostly in operational missions, while others wanted to assign strike sorties to Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) and a training role to Farm Gate. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara chose the latter division of roles in December.<sup>9</sup> Jungle Jim elements continued to conduct combat operations, including night strikes with C-47s dropping flares. Meanwhile, President Kennedy pushed for a universal capability to oppose insurgencies.

In an open letter to the U -S. Armed Services in the spring of 1962, President Kennedy said: The military challenge to freedom includes the threat of war in various forms, and actual combat in many cases. We and our allies can meet the thermonuclear threat. We are building a greater "conventional deterrent capability." It remains for us to add still another military dimension: the ability to combat the threat known as guerrilla warfare."

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He directed the Secretary of Defense to "expand rapidly and substantially the orientation of existing forces for sublimated or unconventional wars."<sup>11</sup> In response to this political pressure, the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Curtis E. LeMay, established the Special Air Warfare Center

(SAWC) at Eglin Air Force Base on 19 April 1962. The unit was composed of the 1st Air Commando Group (1st ACG), the 1st Combat Applications Group (1st CAG), headquarters section. The SAWC absorbed the men and assets of the 4400 CCTS and continued to operate Farm Gate.

The Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen Curtis LeMay, responded to President Kennedy's interest in having the armed forces prepared to fight guerilla war by establishing the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (Jungle Jim) at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida on 14 April, 1961

The first Jungle Jim operation, codenamed SANDY BEACH ONE, involved training Mali paratroopers to operate from C-47 aircraft. The operation was a resounding success.

In November of 1961, 4400th CCTS deployed a detachment to Bien Hoa, Republic of Vietnam, on Operation FARMGATE. Air Force special operations forces flew the first US combat missions in Vietnam. The Bien Hoa operation was soon to consume nearly all of USAF's commitment to supporting counterinsurgency operations.

USAF special operations continued to expand along with the growing commitment to Southeast Asia. The 4400th CCTS grew into the 4400<sup>th</sup> Combat Crew Training Group (CCTG) in March of 1962, with a total strength of 1,800 personnel. On 27 April 1962, the Group was incorporated into the USAF Special Air Warfare Center (USAF SAWC). The mission of SAWC was To Provide command and staff supervision over assigned units engaged in training aircrews and maintenance personnel in operations and employment of aircraft for fulfilling the Air Force mission in counterinsurgency situations and the development, in coordination with other services, of the doctrine, tactics, procedures, and equipment employed by air forces in counterinsurgency operations.

To augment already assigned aircraft, additional assets were added to SAWC throughout the mid 1960s, including A-1, O-1, O-2, A-37, C-46, C-119, C-123, and later C-130 aircraft, along with numerous types of helicopters. 12 The SAWC, commanded by a general officer, reported directly to Headquarters, Tactical Air Command, at Langley AFB, Virginia, an arrangement which bypassed 9th Air Force as an intermediate headquarters." By early 1964, SAWC had grown from a small unit with limited resources to almost 3,000 personnel spread throughout the world, several hundred aircraft, and priority funding for its projects."

The 4400th CCTG was responsible for training crews in all aspects of unconventional warfare and counterinsurgency air operations. The CCTG provided training in low-level parachute resupply, close air support, use of flares for night operations, assault takeoffs and landings, psychological operations with leaflets and loudspeakers, and other counterinsurgency techniques. In addition to flying skills, air commandos were also given area orientation and basic language training for the area in which they were to be deployed. They learned a 600-800 word French or Spanish vocabulary before being certified for OCONUS deployment.

The rapid growth of SAWC can be attributed to Kennedy's call for an unconventional warfare capability. Men and equipment were thrown together quickly, and there was no time to develop doctrine and long range strategies from which Air Force counterinsurgency forces could develop plans for optimum employment. Much of the organization, equipment, planning, doctrine, and concept of operations were ad hoc affairs. By 1966, SOF assets had increased to 5,000 personnel and 550 aircraft in 19 squadrons. Air commandos were deployed worldwide to such countries as Mali, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Iran, Thailand and the Congo Republic. This tremendous operational commitment eliminated the ability to develop long range plans and unconventional warfare strategy.

Entering the counterinsurgency arena without either adequate vision or doctrine had driven the SAWC to employ primarily conventional tactics rather than develop those necessary to fight small wars. As did the air commandos of World War II, the people assigned the task came through by organizing and fielding a credible SOF capability."

SOF forces enjoyed many successes. In 1964, air commandos from Hurlburt Field deployed to Laos and Thailand on Operation WATERPUMP. From a rice warehouse in Vientiane, Laos, a few airmen kept Laotian and Thai T-28s in operation and provided a link between US embassy personnel and Seventh Air Force. Training pilots of the almost defunct Royal Lao Air Force (RLAF) and the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF), air commandos were directly responsible for support of the Royal Lao Army (RLA). A combined RLAF/RTAF/RLA operation successfully blunted a major Pathet Lao offensive. The follow-up operation, known as Operation TRIANGLE, was extremely successful. This was a classic operation whereby USAF knowledge and expertise were taught to a friendly air force without exposing a single American to combat. The RLAF was able to build to a 3,000 strike sortie per month capability over the next several years. Similar successes in Central and South America were enjoyed in civic action and mobile training team deployments during the mid 1960s.

On 8 July 1968, SAWC was redesignated USAF Special Operations Force (USAFSOF) and became the equivalent of a numbered air force. Units under SAWC were redesignated as special operations wings and squadrons, eliminating all reference to air commandos. The Vietnam War was at its peak and consumed virtually all of USAFSOF's attention. From this time forward, the requirement to provide mobile training teams to unified commands outside the Southeast Asia Theater was totally ignored.

At General LeMay's instruction, Headquarters TAC directed its subordinate command, the Ninth Air Force, to activate the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron at Eglin AFB, Florida, on 14 April 1961.<sup>3</sup> Within weeks its original mission to train USAF personnel in COIN air operations, was expanded to include the training of foreign air force personnel in similar tactics. Four months later, Headquarters TAC withdrew the 4400th from Ninth Air Force supervision to assume direct operational control of the unit, a highly unusual step for a major command headquarters like TAC.<sup>4</sup> This move reflected both the growing sense of urgency attached to the Jungle Jim program, as well as the greatly expanded role and organization the concept was about to undergo. The 4400th began with an authorized strength of 124 officers and 228 airmen.<sup>5</sup> It was an all-volunteer force in which every individual had completed stringent physiology testing at the Air Force's medical complex in San Antonio, Texas, as well as USAF's rugged survival training school at Stead AFB, Nevada. All-volunteer units such as the 4400th are relatively expensive to organize and always a drain of high-caliber talent from the ranks of existing forces. The activation

of such units is one practice that every military tries to avoid if suitable alternatives can be found. And it is precisely for these reasons that when they are created, they are inevitably driven by urgent demands that they “absolutely, positively” must produce results now.

The aircraft initially issued to the 4400<sup>th</sup> totaled 16 C-47 transports, eight B-26 medium attack bombers, and eight T-28 trainers. To fulfill the foreign advisory/training mission, an equal number of aircraft by type were placed in storage for eventual transfer to designated foreign air forces.<sup>6</sup> Unlike the stringent selection of the airmen, the aircraft were selected simply because the Air Force had no better alternative on hand for the kind of “bush warfare” described vaguely in military directives as “sublimated warfare and guerrilla operations.”<sup>7</sup> Could these old aircraft produce the required results? As was the case with the still untried airmen, it was still too soon to tell.

The 16 C-47s were heavily modified at the Warner Robins Air Materiel Area, Georgia, after which USAF changed the designation of the transports to SC-47.<sup>8</sup> The modifications included installation of HF, VHF, and HF radio sets, a parapack system, an exhaust flame damper, JATO (jet assisted take-off) racks, loudspeakers for airborne broadcasting, anchor cables for personnel and equipment drops, and strap supports for litters.

Clearly intended to fly in harm’s way, this heavily armed COIN force was equipped to help take a bite out of Khrushchev’s ambitions for Communist-supported insurgency in the Third World. But before biting, they first needed training in this odd assemblage of aircraft,\* and it had to be done in complete secrecy. To help assure this secrecy, the group assembled at one of the many small airstrips on Eglin’s vast reservation. Officially known as Eglin Auxiliary Field No. 9, the airfield would soon become much better known by its name, Hurlburt Field. Though the Jungle Jim men and equipment were only beginning to sort themselves out during the early summer months of 1961, plans were already in place to begin their Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) early the following year; by USAF standards, a very short-time fuse indeed. Then Headquarters TAC cut the fuse shorter still, scheduling the ORI “graduation exercise” to begin 8 September, less than four months after assembling this experimental composite force! From the beginning, pressure from the highest levels to produce quick results never let up on the young group at Hurlburt.

Hurlburt Field became a pressure cooker with heat coming from every direction. President Kennedy’s obvious interest, the growing clamor from the Army for its own air arm to support its Special Forces troops, and the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam all drove the training pace for the 4400th CCTS. Fortunately for the Air Force, the “stew” in this pressure cooker was the 350 “Type A” personalities it had so carefully handpicked for Jungle Jim.

Pitting this high-performance group against an impossible schedule in the sauna-like summer of the Florida panhandle created an astounding spectacle. Snarling piston engines reverberated around the clock, as did bursts of heavy machine-gun fire, rockets, and bomb explosions conducted all over the Eglin reservation. Parachutes blossomed over remote drop zones day and night from low-flying C-47s as new tactics were discussed, cussed, and finally agreed upon by the sweating aircrews and combat controllers on the drop zones. The scene in the maintenance hangars wasn’t any prettier, of course. But a backbreaking, 24-hour-a-day effort succeeded in doing what it had to

do. It kept this “junkyard air force” in the air and on schedule. In July the C-47s exceeded their flying hours during the already demanding training schedule by 47 percent; the T-28s by 35 percent.<sup>12</sup> The following month, the C-47s and their crews were pushed to 65 percent over the flying schedule; the T-28s an incredible 72 percent.<sup>13</sup> Only the B-26s suffered, their tired airframes kept down for lack of spare parts as the bombers flew 21 and then 5.5 percent under schedule for July and August, respectively.

Without notice and at random intervals, aircrews returning from exhausting missions were taken straight from the postflight debriefing room into the nearby swamps for three-day escape survival treks.<sup>15</sup> After the first such surprise, a sharp increase was noted in the number of airmen wearing their aircrew survival vests as required by regulation. Training for the 4400th stopped on 8 September, allowing the unit a short, deep breath before the all-important ORI was launched three days later.\* All the effort, all the team spirit, and all the work over Eglin’s ranges would amount to nothing if the ORI team declared the airmen “not operationally ready.” And nature, as an unofficial member of the ORI team, added a thoughtful touch to the realism by scheduling an especially heavy downpour just as the exercise kicked off. In the ensuing six days, the 4400th demonstrated everything it had learned and how well it had been learned. Four times the old C-47 “Gooney Birds” were flung into the skies as if out of a slingshot to the roar and smoke of the multiple JATO bottles strapped to their fuselage sides. Meanwhile, the B-26s and T-28s thrashed nearly every blade of “enemy” grass on Eglin’s gunnery ranges with a mixture of machine-gun, rocket, and bomb attacks. Problems—stemming primarily from malfunctioning of old equipment\*\*— were noted, but the ORI credited the 4400<sup>th</sup> with “maximum training in a minimum amount of time.”<sup>16</sup> More importantly, the new unit won the coveted “operationally ready” designator. From this date forward, life for the 4400th airmen divided into those remaining at Hurlburt to advance COIN concepts, and those deploying overseas to execute these concepts.

From the beginning, the 4400th had conducted much of its training with US Army Special Forces troops deployed to Eglin from their base at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. To support this joint COIN training, the Army had even provided a Special Forces liaison officer to the Jungle Jim program to assist with paradrop missions. In return, selected airmen from the 4400th were sent to Fort Bragg to attend Special Forces

Indoctrination School while others participated in “survival training” missions with Army Rangers. On 26 March 1962, the Army took this joint training effort a step closer by establishing the Remote Area Conflict Office near the 4400<sup>th</sup> headquarters.<sup>18</sup> It was an investment that would pay off handsomely in some of the most desperate battles soon to take place in faraway Southeast Asia. Still other investments would pay off even sooner.

In March 1962, the 4400th was expanded from squadron to group status. Within another 30 days, it expanded yet again—this time to become USAF’s Special Air Warfare Center. And with the activation of the SAWC came the concurrent reactivation of a subordinate unit, this one boasting the colors, heraldry, and proud heritage of one of World War II’s most famous combat units—the 1st Air Commando Group. Clearly this frenetic expansion rate was being driven by some very serious political clout. Despite the obvious signals, already there were rumbles of discontent coming from some equally serious players in the Pentagon, ones wearing US Army uniforms. The Army had long recognized air support as the key to expanding the number of Special Forces units

it could support in remote locations, especially those in South Vietnam. To provide this air support, it purchased several twin-engined C-7 Caribou STOL transports, aircraft approximating the performance of Air Force's C-123 Provider transports. During this same period, Army helicopter companies began expanding to a size that would reputedly give the US Army the world's fourth largest air force by the late 1960s. And finally, the Army began arming its twin-engined OV-1 Mohawk reconnaissance aircraft with air to-ground rockets to conduct armed reconnaissance missions over hostile territory.

Evolution of Hurlburt Field Air Commando/Special Operations Organization 1961–1979  
Date Event  
April 1961 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) activated at Hurlburt Field, Florida  
March 1962 4400th Combat Crew Training Group (CCTG) activated at Hurlburt Field (as supervisory headquarters for 4400th CCTS)  
April 1962 Special Air Warfare Center (SAWC) activated at Eglin, Florida; concurrent activities: Activation of 1st Air Commando Group (ACG) and 4400th CCTS redesignated 4410th Air Commando Squadron (ACS)  
July 1963 1st ACG redesignated 1st Air Commando Wing (ACW)  
January 1966 1st ACW transferred to England AFB, Louisiana; Hurlburt Field contingent designated Detachment 2, 1st ACW  
July 1968 SAWC redesignated USAF Special Operations Force (USAFSOF); all subordinate Air Commando units redesignated Special Operations wings/squadrons  
July 1969 1st SOW returned to Hurlburt; England AFB contingent designated 4410th Special Operations Training Group (SOTG)  
July 1973 4410th SOTG deactivated; assets moved to Hurlburt Field  
July 1974 USAFSOF deactivated; function and staff moved to Hurlburt Field; redesignated 834th Tactical Composite Wing (TCW) ; redesignated 1st SOW  
July 1975 July 1979 1st SOW falls below Headquarters USAF budget cutoff for active units;

Such was the pressure on the 4400th for quick results that not all its airmen were still present at Hurlburt Field to celebrate their ORI “graduation.” Some of the birds had in fact already been deployed for COIN duty in faraway Africa. A month before the ORI, this deployment had taken place as a joint Army–Air Force Mobile Training Team (MTT) dubbed “Sandy Beach.” Sandy Beach deployed two C-47s and an Army Special Forces team to the Republic of Mali, on Africa's west coast.<sup>19</sup> The Air Force element of the MTT, Detachment 1, 4400th CCTS, provided the aircraft necessary for the paratrooper training requested by the Malis. Flying through a terrible rainstorm and landing without airfield tower assistance, the Air Commandos became a big hit among all the locals who came to watch the training “show.”

Leaving Hurlburt nearly two months to the day from their ORI, nearly half the 4400th CCTS deployed to the Republic of South Vietnam between 5–10 November 1961.<sup>21</sup> The airmen flew four of their C-47s across the Pacific, while eight T-28s and 140 personnel were airlifted by USAF's Military Airlift Transport Service. The four B-26s included in this deployment package were not 4400th CCTS aircraft, but were instead pulled from storage in Okinawa, refurbished in Taiwan, then sent to join the Air Commandos at Bien Hoa Air Base, a major Vietnamese airfield on the outskirts of Saigon.<sup>22</sup> The deployment itself was codenamed “Farm Gate,” while the deployed force was designated Detachment 2A, 4400th CCTS. For the record, the Air Commandos became the first USAF airmen to conduct combat operations in Vietnam.<sup>23</sup> Off the record, they ran into so many problems it frequently seemed to them that their erstwhile Communist adversary, the Vietcong, were the least of their problems. For openers, the Detachment 2A airmen were not happy to discover that training the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) was their primary mission. As

one TAC historian noted, “They [Air Commandos] had landed at Bien Hoa AB all heady with the cloak and dagger, super secret bit, and they bitched and yelled like the devil at having to do a standard job.”

The Ranch Hand shoulder patch is unusually descriptive of the mission. The red and yellow reflect the national flag of the Republic of South Vietnam, the green center the forests sprayed by defoliant aircraft, the brown swath the results of the spray missions, and the Chinese calligraphy the symbol for the color “purple,” the slang expression for the herbicide used by Ranch Hand during the early years.

The all-volunteer aircrews flying these first Providers were solicited from the top of the list of nonselected volunteers for the original 4400<sup>th</sup> CCTS (Jungle Jim), which, as previously noted, had been activated the previous April.<sup>1</sup> And though not yet officially assigned to the Air Commando program, the airmen were scheduled to fly as part of the ongoing, trans-Pacific deployment flow of the 4400th’s Detachment 2A (Farm Gate) to minimize public attention.

Only after their arrival in the Philippines were the aircraft separated from Farm Gate and given the code name that would later become synonymous with their mission: “Ranch Hand.” At the same time, the group was designated Tactical Air Force Transport Squadron, Provisional One, and assigned to the 2d Air Division in South Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> The first three of the six defoliant airplanes flew into Saigon’s Tan Son Nhut airport on 7 January 1962, on what was forecast as only a 120-day-long field test of the aerial spray concept. To avoid the media and ensure their security, they were immediately parked in a special area guarded 24 hours a day by Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) police. But the precautions would prove only half successful, and the missing half was a killer. If the American and South Vietnamese media remained temporarily unaware of the new special unit at Tan Son Nhut, two events quickly carried out at the airport in total silence shocked the American flyers into a new appreciation of “security” in Vietnam. The first was uncovered during a routine morning preflight of the aircraft when maintenance personnel discovered critical control cable turnbuckles on all the aircraft had been cut by saboteurs. The second was an early morning, grisly discovery of one of their VNAF guards . . . with his throat slashed.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, the Americans mounted their own guard of the aircraft every night.

Despite these problems, the program moved out smartly, one crew flying a successful test mission only three days after their arrival. During the early missions, a Farm Gate C-47 frequently preceded the spray aircraft with leaflet drop and loudspeaker messages to the villages below. The aerial communications explained to the population the purpose of the defoliant flights and, undoubtedly of much more interest to the listeners, the fact that the herbicides would not harm humans.

For their first three years, Ranch Hand flights primarily dispensed herbicide “Purple.” Nicknamed from the purple band painted around each 55-gallon drum containing the liquid, it was a commercially proven weed-control agent then in wide use throughout the world.<sup>5</sup> Predictably, this fact was overlooked by the North Vietnamese government, which soon saw the propaganda potential for “gas warfare” in the admittedly ominous looking flights.

Less than a month after its first flight, a Ranch Hand Provider became the first Air Force aircraft lost in Vietnam.<sup>6</sup> On 2 February 1962, a Provider was apparently shot down while on a low-level training mission, killing Capt Fergus C. Groves II, Capt Robert D. Larson, and SSgt Milo B. Coghill. Although proof was never obtained that the C-123 was downed by hostile ground fire, Air Commando T-28s were soon tasked to fly armed escort for future spray missions. By 1963 the “Cowboys,” as the Ranch Hand aircrews called themselves, were busier than ever flying cargo, munitions, and personnel throughout Vietnam in addition to their primary mission. In August, the Thai government requested and received a Ranch Hand deployment that successfully destroyed a locust plague in that country.

The VC may have hated the defoliant flights, but not as much as US and ARVN commanders loved them. The result was the continual expansion of the program, with the Special Aerial Spray Flight (as Ranch Hand had subsequently been designated) attached to the 309th Air Commando Squadron (also flying C-123s) in March 1965.<sup>7</sup> This move brought for the first time the formal inclusion of defoliant operations to the Air Commandos’ already unusual repertoire of weapons. Included in this repertoire was a new herbicide Ranch Hand tested that same month, for the first time in the war. Like Purple, this herbicide got its nickname from the painted band around the 55-gallon drums it arrived in. It was known as “Orange.”

In addition to the organizational expansion, 11 more UC-123s were authorized in May 1966, scheduled to arrive in Vietnam before the year’s end. During this period, the defoliant aircraft had been redesignated with the prefix “U” (UC-123) to differentiate them from standard cargo-hauling Providers. At no time during this organizational upheaval were the UC-123s pulled off combat operations, and the inevitable finally occurred in June 1966, when Ranch Hand took its first confirmed combat loss.

One of two UC-123s flying low, slow passes over a target area was hit by ground fire to an engine, crashing a short distance further down the flight path. Fortunately, a US Marine Corps helicopter flying in the vicinity rescued the three Cowboy crewmen grouped near the still-burning wreckage before the enemy could reach the site. In October, the same scene was played out again, and again a helicopter rescued the crew. Flying at spray altitudes that even pistol bullets could reach was, clearly pushing the Cowboys’ luck. From this time forward, both expansion and attrition became inseparable for the Ranch Hand crews.

On 15 October 1966, the Special Aerial Spray Flight became the 12th Air Commando Squadron, assigned to the 315th Air Commando Wing. Three months later, yet another Provider was downed, this one over Laos and this time with no survivors. In February 1967, Ranch Hand was sent into the dangerous demilitarized zone (DMZ) separating South and North Vietnam. These particular missions proved invaluable in exposing previously hidden North Vietnamese infiltration routes and supply dumps. By June of that year, the total number of UC-123s had risen to 20, but the following month still another Ranch Hand went down with the loss of all four aboard.

As the war’s pace picked up, so did Ranch Hand operations. By 1967, the squadron was flying over 20 missions a day, with as many as three or four Providers flying spray runs in multiship formations for each mission. Each ship could defoliate a swath 80 yards wide on a track up to 10 miles long. Vietnamese observers were frequently carried aboard as “mission commanders,” a

development stemming from a rules-of-engagement requirement imposed on the squadron. When the North Vietnamese Army and VC struck every major city and airfield in South Vietnam during the 1968 Tet offensive, the 12<sup>th</sup> ACS flew nearly 3,000 emergency airlift missions, carrying men and materiel to help stem the attack. Defoliant missions resumed two months later, and in May a fifth Ranch Hand went down under enemy guns. During the same month, some much-appreciated help came to the squadron with the arrival of the new K-model Providers, featuring two J-85 jet auxiliary engines mounted under the wings outboard of the two main piston engines.

By April 1969, all Ranch Hand UC-123s had received the K-model conversion. The problem of enemy ground fire had continued to worsen and that July new escort tactics were adopted to protect the spray planes. Reflecting the seriousness of the ground fire threat, the new escort tactics called for Air Commando-flown, propeller-driven A-1 Skyraiders to provide lowlevel, flank protection on the spray runs, while F-4 jets orbited overhead to strike enemy gun positions that had exposed their positions as the Providers flew overhead. The heavy escort tactic substantially reduced the number of hits taken by Ranch Hand crews.

By the fall of 1969, the Nixon administration's plan to withdraw US forces from Vietnam, "Vietnamization," was taking effect. In September, the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) directed Seventh Air Force to immediately begin reducing monthly herbicide sorties from their current average of 400 per month to a target figure of 280 sorties per month by July 1970.<sup>10</sup> In November, just after the 12th SOS reached its peak wartime strength of 25 defoliant aircraft, the squadron was reduced to 14 UC-123Ks to reflect the reduced operational schedule.

But to the steadily shrinking number of American troops left in Vietnam, the Vietnamization process increased the danger of their situation and resulted in unabated demands for defoliant missions from Army field commanders. Despite this military reality, the 12th was further reduced from 14 to eight aircraft (two of which were configured for insecticide—not herbicide—spray operations only), by June 1970.<sup>12</sup> In February 1970, the Department of Defense approved just \$3 million of the MACV-requested \$27 million for herbicide operations for the period July 1970 to June 1971.

The 12th Special Operations Squadron (redesignated with all other Air Commando units in 1968) was deactivated on 31 July 1970, with the remaining UC-123Ks becoming A Flight, 310<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron. Ranch Hand flew its last mission on 7 January 1971, exactly 10 years to the day from its arrival at Tan Son Nhut airport. In nine years of defoliant operations, Ranch Hand aircraft and crews dispensed between 17.7 and 19.4 million gallons of herbicides in Southeast Asia. Approximately 11 million gallons of it were the controversial Orange herbicide.

## **LINEAGE**

## **STATIONS**

Eglin AF Auxiliary Field #9 (Hurlburt Field), FL, 1961

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **COMMANDERS**

## **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE**

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

General Curtis E. LeMay, Air Force Chief of Staff, established the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) in April 1961. Nicknamed "Jungle Jim," the CCTS based at Hurlburt Field, Florida, held a two-fold mission: counterinsurgency training and combat operations. Aircraft such as U-10s, C-46s, C-47s, B-26s, and AT-28s soon showed up on the Hurlburt flight line. The CCTS devised FID tactics and techniques for building a counterinsurgency capability in Third World countries from Latin America to Africa, and from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. The first Jungle Jim operation, code named SANDY BEACH ONE, involved training Malian paratroopers. Then, in November 1961, the 4400 CCTS deployed a detachment to Bien Hoa, Republic of Vietnam, on Operation FARMGATE. Thus, Air Force special operations forces (SOF) flew some of the first U.S. combat missions in Vietnam.

The Bien Hoa operation soon consumed nearly all of the Air Force's commitment in supporting counterinsurgency operations. As the Vietnam War expanded, the Air Force increased its counterinsurgency capability. The 4400th CCTS became a group in March 1962, and the next month became part of the newly activated U.S. Air Force Special Air Warfare Center (USAF

SAWC) at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

early 1961 the U.S. Army Special Forces entered Viet Nam to train the South Vietnamese. Based on this lead the LJSAF started activating its first special unit for guerrilla warfare since WWII. These units would become known as "Air Commandos". The first Air Commando unit, established on 14 April 1961, was the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron based at Eglin AFB. The unit's original allotment of aircraft were 16 C-47s, 8 B-26s and 8 T-28s. The purpose of this unit, like the Army Special Forces was to train the South Vietnamese. In this capacity, detachment 2A of the 4400th left for South Vietnam on 11 Oct. 1961. For combat purposes, the 4400th was code-named Jungle Jim, and detachment 2A was called Farm Gate. Farm Gate arrived in country with 8 T-28s, 4 SC-47s, 4 B-26s and 151 men. Additionally, all aircraft carried VNAF markings.

Being a training unit for the South Vietnamese, Farm Gate's early combat directive was to "fire back if fired upon". This directive was augmented by one dated 26 Dec. 1961, which required a VNAF crewman aboard during combat operations. T-28s were also authorized to aid the VNAF in emergency situations when the VNAF could not perform the mission. So, like its Army counterparts, the Air Commandos found themselves in a limited combat capacity by the end of 1962.

In addition to Farm Gate's T-28s, the South Vietnamese received 30 T-28s on 13 Nov 1961. This allotment would allow the VNAF to form its first T-28 squadron, known as the 2nd fighter squadron. In Feb. 1962 Farm Gate received five re-placement T-28s plus an additional five in Jan. 1963. 1962 would see another eighteen T-28s shipped to Nam to form the nucleus of a new squadron. The squadron, established in Sept. 1962, was known as the 716th recon squadron, and was allotted 18 RT-28s and 3 RC-47s. A RT-28 was simply a T-28 fitted with a special photographic belly pack. Some of the T-28s used by this squadron were modified Navy T-28Cs with the tailhook removed.

June 1963 marked the end of Farm Gate. The aircraft and personnel of the de-commissioned unit became the 34th tactical group. Under this new structure the 1st Air Commando squadron was activated. During 1963 the Air Commandos would encounter increased ground fire and the resulting losses. In Sept. 1963, .50-caliber ground fire would claim one T-28 during the heavy fighting around Soc Trang airstrip. Then on 19 Oct. 1963 six T-28s were damaged by ground fire while defending the ARVN 21st division. Another T-28 was lost and one was damaged when on 24 Nov. 1963 a mission was attacked by hidden enemy forces equipped with five 7.9 mm guns and a twin .50-caliber weapon. 1964 brought not only more losses by ground fire, but something worse structural failure. Structural failure in the form of wing separations claimed the lives of two men, Capt. Edwin G. Shank Jr. on 24 March 1964, and Capt. Robert Brumert on 9 April 1964. Because the appearance of North Vietnamese regulars and the heavier weapons they fielded made ground attacks in T-28s very unhealthy, and the fact that structural failure was emerging, the Air Force withdrew the T-28 in 1964-65. The Air Force replaced the Trojan with Al-Es in the Air Commando squadrons and with A-1Hs in VNAF units.

Although the T-28 was replaced in Viet Nam, it would appear again in strength in the Royal Laotian Air Force in 1966. As early as April of 1964, Detachment 6 of the 1st Air Commando

wing, stationed at Udorn, Thailand, was responsible for checking out Laotian pilots in T-28 aircraft. By 1967 the unit's strength had risen to approximately fifty T-28s.

*Air Training Command's first direct response to SEA requirements came in mid-1961 in support of Project "Jungle Jim," the nickname for a high-priority special air warfare squadron activated in TAG from which the pilot USAF contingent was selected for deployment to South Vietnam. ATC provided both survival and technical training to airmen who helped make up this unique unit, which was activated as the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTSq) at Eglin AFB effective 14 April 1961. Equipped with C-47, B-26, and T-28 aircraft, the 4400th CCTSq was assigned the mission of developing forces capable of instructing American allies in counterinsurgency operations, primarily under jungle conditions such as those in Southeast Asia. Headquarters USAF directed that Jungle Jim forces be ready for deployment to SEA or other trouble areas by 8 September 1961.*

*To help meet the compressed schedule for readying Jungle Jim forces, HQ TAC asked ATC to provide a condensed version of the advanced survival course for people assigned to the squadron. Accordingly, training officials at Stead developed a proposed 9-day course outline, which was subsequently approved by HQ USAF. The accelerated course provided for an entry rate of 50 students (approximately 20 air crew and 30 ground crew) per class every 11 days with a total of seven classes. Training included water survival, M-6 survival weapons, combative measures, escape and evasion, resistance, and a 30-hour short trek. The first class began on 4 June 1961 and the last one entered on 28 July, with 350 students graduating from this special course. The 4400th CCTSq became operational on 8 September 1961 as scheduled, and almost immediately two C-47 aircraft and teams were sent to Mali, West Africa, another trouble spot at the time, to train paratroopers. Shortly thereafter, between 5 and 10 November, the first Jungle Jim detachment deployed to Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam, to help train the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) in special air warfare operations.*

*Soon after the Jungle Jim detachment deployed to Southeast Asia, ATC was called on once more to support TAC's special air warfare forces under a project nick-named "Big Fence." HQ USAF announced the follow-on project in October 1961, noting the need for the Air Force to expand its capability to assist friendly foreign nations in training their forces in counterinsurgency operations. While ATC supplied some volunteers for this special project, the command was primarily called on to provide survival and resistance training for the selectees. Graduates of the training course were assigned to the 4400th CCTSq at Eglin for further training and subsequent deployment to overseas areas, including Southeast Asia.*

*In contrast to the compressed course of instruction given to Jungle Jim personnel, HQ USAF directed that the course length for Project Big Fence be 21 days, the same as the regular basic survival training course. Instruction covered material from the basic survival course and the special resistance course, plus special material to meet demands peculiar to the project. Air Training Command was responsible for preparing course material and evaluating students throughout the training. Students not meeting desired standards during the training period were eliminated immediately. Liaison officers from TAG and other major commands at Stead were responsible for the disposition of students dropped from the program.*

*Attrition in the first class, which began on 23 November 1961, was unusually high. Of 144 officers and airmen entered in the first class, 36 were eliminated. Following this first course, ATC officials visited Stead and identified several problems, including a high rate of academic failure among nonrated airman support personnel, the poor physical condition of some personnel, and improper briefings given by original units which left personnel unaware of the mission for which they had volunteered. Various administrative actions were recommended to USAF so that deficiencies could be corrected. The TAC liaison officer believed the high elimination rate could be eased by giving all volunteers a physical examination before leaving their home station. He also suggested that separate criteria be used to grade nonrated personnel in the academic phase of training. Despite such actions, the high attrition rate persisted.*

*The second class for Project Big Fence selectees began on 1 March 1962. Of 187 volunteers who reported to Lackland for screening for this second class, only 130 were selected for instruction at Stead, and only 95 graduated. Attrition also remained high for the next two classes, which commenced on 12 April and 24 May respectively. Following screening at Lackland, these classes began with a total of 318 students. Only 226 graduated. Because of the high attrition rate, HQ USAF decided to change the concept of requirements for Project Big Fence. Instructions were issued that no longer would personnel have to volunteer for all phases of the program, and that those participating would be briefed thoroughly before signing the volunteer statement. The effect of the revised policy was discernible in the record of the last two survival classes conducted specifically for Project Big Fence. These classes began on 9 August and 22 November 1962 respectively; a total of 198 personnel entered training and 193 graduated.*

*Other problems faced in the Big Fence training classes were inadequate facilities and too few qualified instructors. Stead officials had to improvise solitary confinement facilities. Some were built, but they only partially met course needs. Other existing facilities had to be modified to provide more interrogation huts and a usable observation tower. Experience during these classes clearly pointed to the requirement for a complete interrogation facility and tower with facilities designed to insure proper control and monitoring. It was also necessary to make adjustments in obstacle course and resistance training due to insufficient personnel. The Stead instructor staff had to be augmented by TDY personnel from HQ USAF and other commands to effectively meet Big Fence requirements. While not optimal, these improvisations did permit the command to meet TAC's special training needs within the time allotted.*

*Trest, Warren and Jay E. Hines. Air Training Command's Support of Forces in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973. History and Research Division, ATC. Randolph AFB TX. Jan 1978*

General Curtis E. LeMay, Air Force Chief of Staff, established the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) in April 1961. Nicknamed "Jungle Jim," the CCTS based at Hurlburt Field, Florida, held a two-fold mission: counterinsurgency training and combat operations. Aircraft such as U-10s, C-46s, C-47s, B-26s, and AT-28s soon showed up on the Hurlburt flight line.

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#### Southeast Asia War (Second Indo-China War)

As the Vietnam War expanded, the Air Force increased its counterinsurgency capability. The 4400<sup>th</sup> CCTS became a group in March 1962, and the next month became part of the newly activated U.S. Air Force Special Air Warfare Center (USAF SAWC) at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. The Special Air Warfare Center obtained additional assets in the mid-1960s, to include O-1 and O-2 observation planes, A-26, A-37, and A-1 attack fighters, C-123, and later C-130 cargo aircraft, along with several types of helicopters. In addition to being an outstanding shortfield tactical transport, the C-123s were also modified as aerial sprayers for the Ranch Hand defoliant missions in Vietnam.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy issued a call to train airborne warfare specialists in response to Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev's declaration directing the spread of communism throughout the Third World. This project, code-named Jungle Jim, began the revival of the air commando legacy here at Hurlburt Field. The Tactical Air Command activated the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) on April 14, 1961. Less than a year later it expanded to become the 4400th Combat Crew Training Group (CCTG), which provided the Air Force with a counterinsurgency and military assistance capability. As its responsibilities and size grew, the group assumed the air commando name and became the 1st Air Commando Wing (ACW) on June 1, 1963.

Worldwide deployment quickly became a way of life for the air commandos at Hurlburt Field. Only four months after activation, the first deployment occurred. Detachment #1, code-named Sandy Beach 1, deployed to Mali, West Africa, in August 1961 to train paratroopers. Before Detachment #1 returned home, Detachment #2, code-named Farmgate, departed Hurlburt in early November for South Vietnam to perform a six-month assignment, later extended. They trained South Vietnamese Air Force personnel and flew some of the earliest US combat missions of the war. The Farmgate contingent represented a significant portion of the 4400 CCTS' authorized manning of 124 officers and 228 enlisted. This initiated the high operations tempo and hazardous duty, which came to be hallmarks of air commando activity.

Detachment #3 personnel and aircraft, also known as Bold Venture, deployed to Panama to initiate air commando involvement in Latin America. This country became a major area of interest to which mobile training and civic action teams deployed regularly. Panama benefited from the

development of airfields, schools, water and sanitation projects, and medical care in the interior. Other countries in which air commandos operated in 1962 included Venezuela, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Greece, Crete, Iran, Turkey, and Germany. Countries seemed to be added every year until 1995, when their number exceeded 65.

The Air Force took one of its first steps to develop a counter-insurgency capability in April 1961 when General LeMay directed the Tactical Air Command (TAC) to establish a special training unit at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. This unit, which became the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron, was given the name Jungle Jim, and it was assigned a threefold mission. First, it was required to train both United States Air Force and foreign air force personnel in the operation of World War II-type aircraft and equipment; next, it was required to prepare World War II-type aircraft for transfer to foreign governments; and, finally, it was required to develop and improve conventional weapon and counter-insurgency tactics and techniques.

AFLC actually became involved in preparing World War II type aircraft for the Pacific Air Forces about three months before TAG established the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron. Near the end of January 1961, the Ogden Air Materiel Area was instructed to rehabilitate 12 B-26 aircraft which were in storage at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. Ogden's maintenance personnel completely dismantled and reworked eight of the aircraft before they were sent to the Pacific area.

AFLC took its first steps to support the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron in April 1961 when the Middletown Air Materiel Area dispatched a team of 30 technicians to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base to rehabilitate and modify 16 T-28A aircraft for the squadron. A few weeks later, Middletown was notified that an additional 16 T-28B aircraft would be withdrawn from storage at the Litchfield Park Naval Air Station, Phoenix, Arizona, and flown to Olmsted Air Force Base, Pennsylvania, for rehabilitation and modification. Middletown completed its work on both the T-28As and T-28Bs in October 1961. The T-28As and eight of the T-28Bs were sent to Hurlburt Field, an auxiliary field adjacent to Eglin Air Force Base, and the other eight T-28B aircraft were dis-assembled, loaded on five C-124s, and flown to South Vietnam.

The Air Force deployed its first unit, a detachment of the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron, to South Vietnam in November 1961. This unit, called Farm Gate, possessed 16 aircraft four SC-47s, four RB-26s, and eight T-28s. The Air Force transferred two other units to South Vietnam in December 1961. The first, called Mule Train, consisted of 16 C-123 aircraft, and the second, called Ranch Hand, consisted of six C-123 aircraft which were equipped with special spray equipment for defoliating jungle areas.

Evolution of Hurlburt Field Air Commando/Special Operations Organization 1961–1979 Date  
Event April 1961 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) activated at Hurlburt Field,

Florida March 1962 4400th Combat Crew Training Group (CCTG) activated at Hurlburt Field (as supervisory headquarters for 4400th CCTS) April 1962 Special Air Warfare Center (SAWC) activated at Eglin, Florida; concurrent activities: Activation of 1st Air Commando Group (ACG) and 4400th CCTS redesignated 4410th Air Commando Squadron (ACS) July 1963 1st ACG redesignated 1st Air Commando Wing (ACW) January 1966 1st ACW transferred to England AFB, Louisiana; Hurlburt Field contingent designated Detachment 2, 1st ACW July 1968 SAWC redesignated USAF Special Operations Force (USAFSOF); all subordinate Air Commando units redesignated Special Operations wings/squadrons July 1969 1st SOW returned to Hurlburt; England AFB contingent designated 4410th Special Operations Training Group (SOTG) July 1973 4410th SOTG deactivated; assets moved to Hurlburt Field July 1974 USAFSOF deactivated; function and staff moved to Hurlburt Field; redesignated 834th Tactical Composite Wing (TCW) ; redesignated 1st SOW July 1975 July 1979 1st SOW falls below Headquarters USAF budget cutoff for active units;

## **LINEAGE**

## **STATIONS**

## **DEPLOYED STATIONS**

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **ATTACHMENTS**

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

## **ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS**

## **ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES**

## **UNIT COLORS**

## **COMMANDERS**

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

## **Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE**

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

The U.S. Air Force on April 14, 1961, activated under TAC the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) at Hurlburt Field, Florida. Its training mission was conducted under cover. The unit was expected to fly operations against guerrillas, either as an overt Air Force operation or in some undefined covert capacity. The capability of operating at austere locations with simple and rugged aircraft was uppermost. To Col. Benjamin H. King, first commander of the 4400th, the main mission was to "get on with the problem ... get the outfit together, learn how to fly the airplanes, learn how to maintain them, and get your supplies set up.

Like the American air commando force in Burma during 1944, the new special warfare unit possessed an integral airlift capability, organized and controlled separately from any conventional theater airlift force. An obvious choice for the airlift arm of the 4400th was the C-47, which had served in Malaya, Indochina, and Algeria. The C-47 Skytrain was less versatile than the C-123 Provider, but was widely used by foreign governments. This was an important advantage which enabled the 4400th crews to work with foreign personnel in training or operations, and strengthened their cover story in the event of covert actions. C-47 airlift squadrons had been assigned overseas for some years, and hundreds of these Gooney Birds (as the aircraft was popularly known) still served in supporting roles. The 4400th was authorized sixteen C-47s, eight B-26s, and eight T 28s, and initial planning called for equal numbers of spare aircraft to be kept in ready storage.

Known by its nickname, Jungle Jim, the 4400th launched into a summer of hard work. Its 125 officers and 235 airmen were volunteers, and had been put through rigid psychological screening. The flavor of eliteness, self-reliance, and personal dedication was strong. The men were taught French and Spanish, the use of infantry weapons, hand-to-hand combat, psychological warfare, and parachuting. C 47 aircrews worked hardest at their most demanding tasks night penetrations and supply of friendly guerrillas or Special Forces. Other missions included day penetrations and drops, medical evacuations, leaflet and loudspeaker operations, and forward field operations. Crews learned to refuel from fifty-five-gallon drums, and each ship carried a hand pump for this purpose. Each Gooney Bird was equipped with ultra high frequency (UHF), very high frequency (VHF), and high frequency (HF) radios, exhaust flame dampeners, attachments for jet-assisted takeoffs, loudspeakers, and litter supports. In a combat readiness test conducted by TAG in September 1961, the C-47 crews scored well ahead of the strike aircraft sections, operating successfully in very difficult weather. The 4400th achieved operational readiness in September.

\* The 4400th CCTS became the 4400th CCTG in March 1962, with three subordinate squadrons, among them the 4400th Air Transport Squadron. SAWC was activated on April 27, 1962.

Two days after President Kennedy's October 11, 1961, decision to dispatch a Jungle Jim task force to Vietnam, a team of officers including the commander of the 4400th, Colonel King, met in Hawaii with Brig. Gen. Theodore R. Milton, commander of the Thirteenth Air Force in the Philippines, and the Pacific Command staff. After explaining the capabilities of Jungle Jim, King's group and General Milton moved on to Saigon, there winning an "enthusiastic" initial response. The MAAGV chief, General McGarr, at once asked that the deploying force be enlarged. Colonel King visited Bien Hoa, Da Nang, and Nha Trang, looking over these bases as possible operating locations. He recommended and McGarr approved Bien Hoa as an operating site, because of its relatively central location and nearness to the various headquarters at Saigon. During the discussions, the idea of training the Vietnamese Air Force was never mentioned; the Jungle Jim mission appeared to be purely operational to respond to the needs of the American ambassador and the military forces in the country.

Returning to Hawaii, Colonel King met with the PACAF staff on October 28, and secured agreements on field kitchen arrangement, ground transportation, refueling, and ammunition supply, all of which were to be provided by PACAF. The Farm Gate element, it was understood, would deploy with organizational maintenance personnel and equipment, supply personnel and "flyaway" spare parts kits, as well as medical, communications, administrative, and combat control team personnel. On November 4 a team deployed from Tachikawa to Bien Hoa to erect a tent camp for the anticipated Farm Gate force.

Four SC-47 aircraft left Hurlburt on November 5, 1961, with King at the controls of the first aircraft and Capt. Richard Tegge as navigator. The four crews had been selected from among the 4400th's most highly qualified personnel. Despite the extra fuel capacity of the SC types, the leg from California to Hawaii so depended on favorable winds that the Alaska route had been chosen. The long haul halfway around the world at 120 knots, in itself proved something of a challenge to airmanship and stamina. The longest leg was the fifteen-hour overland flight from Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana, to Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. One crew made an unplanned but safe landing at White Horse, in the Canadian Yukon. All remained an extra day at Elmendorf, waiting for an engine to be changed on King's aircraft. Leaving Elmendorf on the eighth, the four planes island-hopped to Adak in the Aleutians, Midway, Wake, Guam, and Clark. Crews navigated independently by long-standing loran and celestial techniques, flying at intervals of approximately twenty minutes. The four ships rendezvoused over the Philippine coast, and flew over Clark in formation before landing on November 13. Having logged over seventy-five hours of flying time in eight days, the crews rested forty-eight hours at Clark, meeting there the T-28 pilots who had traveled (along with the T-28s themselves) by MATS heavy airlift. The four SC-47s arrived at Bien Hoa without ceremony on November 16, 1961, met by the main ground echelon. In-country missions began the first week.

The Farm Gate mission as officially stated by Secretary McNamara and President Kennedy had been limited to training and the development of methods. In reality the concept of operations was far broader. PACAF on December 4 proposed employment in actual operations. For the C-47s this meant "aerial resupply, airdrops of Vietnamese paratroopers, tactical intelligence collection, psychological warfare, and other missions as required." Tasks included the resupply of approximately two dozen border patrol bases, each eventually possessing a landing strip capable of handling a C-47. CINCPAC on December 20 clarified a recent ruling by McNamara: Farm Gate's basic mission was to work out tactics and techniques; operational flights were authorized, "provided a Vietnamese is on board for purpose of receiving combat or combat support training.

To the Farm Gate C-47 crewmen, the requirement for a combined crew looked like a purely political matter, since no Vietnamese C-47 trainees in need of training were on hand. To satisfy the proviso, unskilled Vietnamese enlisted personnel were carried on certain "combat" flights. Later, Vietnamese navigators proved useful on Farm Gate night flare missions. Although it was claimed with some validity that Farm Gate served as an example of professional air power for the Vietnamese, the C-47 section performed no direct training of the Vietnamese Air Force. All Farm Gate planes had the red-and-yellow VNAF insignia in place of American markings. In reality the mission was operational, with a secondary experimental purpose.

The Farm Gate unit was officially designated Detachment 2, 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron, to perform missions under the nominal operational control of 2d ADVON. Colonel King, believed from earlier personal conversations with General LeMay that he was supposed to answer directly to the American ambassador and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) representative in Vietnam on matters concerning covert projects. King therefore accepted requests for C-47 supply flights

Each recent arrival flew first a few missions with an instructor to major airfields and accompanied a night flare mission. More rigorous work then followed and each new crewman flew daily with his instructor on resupply missions to isolated points. The checkout ended when the newcomer attained full qualification in the demanding shortfield and airdrop skills.

Expansion and reorganization of Jungle Jim in Florida, meanwhile, reflected President Kennedy's continued interest in counterinsurgency warfare. Replacing the 4400th CCTS\* in the spring of 1962 was a new entity called the Special Air Warfare Center (SAWC) with two subordinate groups. The 1st Air Commando Group had three operational squadrons, one of which flew C-47s and C-46 Commandos. The 1st Combat Applications Group had the role of developing doctrine, tactics, and equipment for field operations. Farm Gate became a detachment of the 1st Air Commando Group. Secretary McNamara late in 1962 approved expansion of the commando group to wing status, which included a squadron of C-47, C-46, and U-10B Super Couriers. The squadron had no transport helicopters, despite Air Force recommendations that it should.

510604	B-26B	41-39535	4400BCTS	4400CCTG	Langley AFB, VA	LACMF	Silva, Tony H.	3 Mi NE Suffolk
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510607	B-26B	44-34657	4400BCTS	4400CCTG	Langley AFB, VA	TOAMF	Petersen, Warren J.	Langley AFB
510713	B-26B	41-39413	4400BCTS	4400CCTG	Langley AFB, VA	KCRGC	Anderson, Robert O.	7 Mi NW Bowling Green
511201	B-26C	44-35943	4400BCTS	4400CCTG	Langley AFB, VA	KBOoG	Cyr, Henry B.	3 Mi N Aylett
501219	B-26B	44-34604	4400CCTS	363TRG	Langley AFB, VA	TAC	Adkins, Jesse O.	Langley AFB
510102	TB-26C	44-35986	4400CTS	363TRG	Langley AFB, VA	LAC	Evans, Wayne K.	Langley AFB
510216	RB-26C	44-35689	4400CTS	363TRG	Langley AFB, VA	TACMF	Morin, John F.	Langley AFB
510305	RB-26C	44-35689	4400CTS	363TRG	Langley AFB, VA	KCRGC	Belleville, Donald H.	17 Mi W Staunton
511025	RB-26C	44-35692	4400RCTS	4400CCTG	Langley AFB, VA	CBL	Collings, Orval D.	Langley AFB
511116	RB-26C	44-35434	4400RCTS	4400CCTG	Langley AFB, VA	KCREF	Walsh, Jerome J.	2.5 Mi SE Aurora