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JANUARY-JUNE 1968

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(THIS PAGE IS UNCLASSIFIED) SAC CY 2 OF 5 CYS

ACC 94-HO-65

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U ~~for~~ While at Eglin for Short Trip XVII in June, the 306th Wing aircraft and crew completed an additional brief test--Short Trip IX Sierra. Its purpose was to clear release of M-117 bombs with Minol II high explosive fill (a substitute for Tritonal).²⁵¹

U ~~for~~ The Air Force Special Weapons Center, using its own B-52D, completed a SAC-oriented conventional test at White Sands in February 1968. The purpose of Short Trip XIV Alpha was to certify carriage of eight 2000 pound MK-55 Navy mines. Previously, the maximum B-52 load was four 2000 pound mines. The B-52 capacity had been limited to two mines on each of two MHU-20/C clip-in racks, using the lower stations only. The February test demonstrated that the upper stations could also be used, thus doubling the B-52 load.²⁵²

Contingency Operations

U ~~for~~ The SAC conventional bombing operation in Southeast Asia, which had grown steadily since its inception in mid-1965, more than doubled in size in the first few months of 1968. In December 1967, the Secretary of Defense had approved an increase to 1200 sorties per month for February of the next year, but a general offensive launched by the enemy in January necessitated a further temporary increase in the sortie rate. Almost simultaneously, a buildup of United States forces in Northeast Asia, as a consequence of North Korea's seizure of the USS Pueblo, resulted in the deployment of additional B-52 forces to the Western Pacific. The enemy offensive, coupled with the large increase in Arc Light sorties, also resulted in a basic change in B-52 bombing tactics. In response to Operation Niagara, the largest air offensive thus far in the Vietnamese War, SAC devised new tactics in area bombing to increase the effectiveness of the available aircraft. This new method of operation was so successful that it was later expanded for use throughout South Vietnam. The increase in the number of KC-135s and B-52s forced a realignment of SAC forces in Southeast Asia. Additional B-52s were sent to U Tapao Airfield in Thailand and for the first time bombers were stationed at Kadena Air Base on Okinawa. A SAC tanker squadron was activated at Ching Chuan Kang Air Base, Taiwan. By mid-year, it appeared that the sortie increases resulting from the enemy's TET offensive would be permanent. B-52 basing remained in doubt,

however, with the possibility that B-52 operations would be confined to Andersen AFB, Guam, and U Tapao Airfield, Thailand.

Organization and Location of Forces

U ~~407~~ The basic command structure of the Strategic Air Command in the western Pacific changed very little during the first half of 1968, although one new unit was added to the organization. The size and scope of the SAC operation, however, increased significantly during this same period. A large increase in the Arc Light sortie rate, as well as additional refueling requirements, necessitated a considerable increase in SAC forces assigned to the western Pacific. For the most part, these bombers and tankers were sent to bases already in use by SAC. However, a new air refueling squadron was activated at Ching Chuan Kang Air Base on Taiwan.

U ~~407~~ The Third Air Division, with headquarters at Andersen AFB, Guam, retained operational control of SAC forces in the western Pacific. Units in the United States furnished aircraft and crews on TDY. The principal units subordinate to the Third Air Division remained the same. The 4133d Bomb Wing (Provisional), located at Andersen AFB, Guam, controlled the bulk of the Arc Light bomber force. It was made up entirely of TDY personnel, and was commanded by the senior TDY bomb wing commander. Bomb wings sent TDY from the United States were augmented by individual crews and aircraft from bomber units remaining in the continental U. S. In addition, part of the Port Bow B-52 force²⁵³ (the Korean contingency force), was based at Andersen and came under the control of the 4133d Bomb Wing. The 4252d Strategic Wing, located at Kadena AB, Okinawa, controlled a variety of SAC operations. The bulk of the Port Bow B-52 force was located at Kadena. KC-135 tankers from Kadena supported Arc Light operations in Southeast Asia and PACAF operations in Northeast Asia. The 82d Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, assigned to the 4252d, was moved to Kadena from Yokota AB, Japan on 2 January 1968.²⁵⁴ This unit supported SAC reconnaissance activities in the western Pacific.²⁵⁵ Detachment 1, 4252d Strategic Wing, located at Yokota, was activated at the same time the 82d Strategic Reconnaissance

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Squadron was moved, to provide transient support for SAC aircraft.²⁵⁶ Finally, the 4220th Air Refueling Squadron, also assigned to the 4252d Strategic Wing, provided KC-135 radio relay (Combat Lightning) support for PACAF operations in Southeast Asia, as well as Arc Light refueling support. The 4220th activated in January 1968, was located at Ching Chuan Kang AB, Taiwan, a new operating location for SAC forces.²⁵⁷ The 4258th Strategic Wing, located at U Tapao Airfield, Thailand, controlled the Young Tiger refueling operation. The Young Tiger force furnished PACAF with refueling support for its operations in Southeast Asia. In addition, the 4258th supported that part of the Arc Light bomber force operating from U Tapao.²⁵⁸ Detachment 1, 4258th Strategic Wing, located at Takhlī AB, Thailand, was discontinued on 15 February.²⁵⁹

u ~~(S)~~ The two remaining Third Air Division subordinate units, the 3960th Strategic Wing and the 27th Communications Squadron, both located at Andersen AFB, Guam, provided the Division with base support and communications support respectively. The 27th Communications Squadron also maintained two operating locations in South Vietnam for radio support for the Arc Light force: OL 20 at Bien Hoa and OL 40 at Da Nang. In addition to Third Air Division, SAC also maintained a SAC ADVON located at Tan Son Nhut Airfield, South Vietnam.²⁶⁰

Arc Light Sortie Rate

u ~~(S)~~ The Arc Light program continued to grow during the early months of 1968, going beyond even the planned increase in the monthly sortie rate. In November 1967, the Secretary of Defense had approved an increase from 800 to 1200 sorties per month. This increase was programmed to go into effect on 1 February, after a gradual build-up during January. Ten additional B-52s, for a total of 25, were to be sent to U Tapao. The necessary construction to accommodate these aircraft was begun, and facilities for the first five B-52s were expected to be complete by the end of January. When the remaining construction was complete, about June 1968, the last five B-52s would be sent. The final basing plan called for 52 B-52s and two KC-135s at Andersen AFB, Guam, and 25 B-52s and 30 KC-135s at U Tapao Airfield, Thailand.²⁶¹

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U (S) SAC had planned a gradual buildup starting the first of the year. From 1 through 19 January, 27 sorties per day would be flown; from 20 through 24 January, 30 sorties per day; from 25 through 28 January, 33 sorties per day; and from 29 through 31 January, 37 sorties per day. Finally, 40 sorties per day, or 1200 sorties per month, would be reached on 1 February. The plan called for a total of 906 sorties for January, while 926 sorties were actually launched.²⁶²

U (S) These plans for an orderly transition to the 1200 sortie rate were not destined for fulfillment, however. On the morning of 23 January, the USS Pueblo, a Navy intelligence gathering vessel, was cruising off the coast of North Korea in international waters about 24 miles offshore from the port of Wonsan. The Pueblo was on a relatively routine intelligence gathering mission; one of a series of similar missions that had been carried out since November 1966.²⁶³ At noon the Pueblo was intercepted by a North Korean patrol boat and ordered to heave to. The Pueblo replied that she was in international waters, and continued on course. An hour later, three more patrol boats arrived, accompanied by two MIG aircraft. The North Korean vessels again directed the Pueblo to heave to. At 1345 local time, the Pueblo radioed that she was being boarded. Forty-seven minutes later the Pueblo radioed that all engines were stopped and that she was going off the air. The Pueblo was then forcibly escorted to the port of Wonsan by the North Korean boats. Her position at the time of capture was 127:54E X 39:25N, about three and one-half miles outside North Korean territorial waters.²⁶⁴

U (S) Though seemingly far removed from the Arc Light operation in Southeast Asia, this event was to result in important changes in B-52 strength, basing, and tactics in the Far East. Three days after the Pueblo's capture, Headquarters USAF notified the major commands that reinforcement of Army, Navy, and Air Force units in Korea and contiguous waters was under consideration, and that the call up of certain Air National Guard, Air Reserve, and Naval Reserve units was in process. Headquarters USAF told SAC that the Secretary of Defense

at Andersen and Kadena, for Southeast Asia strikes. At the same time, the JCS advised that separate action was being taken to obtain approval for a temporary increase in the 1200 sortie per month Arc Light authorization.²⁷³

u ~~(S)~~ The proposal was received by COMUSMACV with considerable enthusiasm. With the TET offensive at its height and the situation becoming critical around Khe Sanh, General Westmoreland could use all the Arc Light sorties he could get. He asked for 48 sorties per day for Operation Niagara, and another 12 sorties per day to be used south of the fourteenth parallel. He also recommended the additional sorties be available by 15 February.²⁷⁴ After receiving COMUSMACV's recommendation, along with that of CINCPAC, the JCS authorized a temporary increase in the sortie rate to 1800 per month.²⁷⁵ As a result of this latest increase, the sortie rate had been more than doubled since the first of the year.

u ~~(S)~~ While the Pueblo incident provided a very convenient opportunity to augment the Arc Light force and temporarily increase the sortie rate, the Port Bow force was never used for operations against targets in Korea during the first half of 1968. The prospect of any military action being taken in that area as a result of the Pueblo incident was becoming increasingly remote. Discussions by the Military Armistice Commission in Korea regarding the return of the Pueblo had begun even before the Port Bow force arrived in WESTPAC.²⁷⁶ Though unproductive so far, U. S. authorities were apparently content to continue the talks in lieu of any forcible action to recover the Pueblo. United States forces in the Northwest Pacific area had been substantially reinforced, contingency strike plans were complete, and there was nothing left to do but await the outcome of the negotiations at Panmunjom.

u ~~(S)~~ In the meantime, SAC was considering the possibility that the sortie rate would not return to the approved 1200 rate after the conclusion of Operation Niagara. In a message to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, SAC noted that if consideration was being given to

248. Incl 10, "CINCSAC Presentation to the NAMC," by Maj T. E. Schaefer, DOPLTE, Hq SAC, 20 Sep 67, to Ltr, P. E. Pugh, Dep for Current Ops, PACOM, to OGD et al., "Non-Nuclear Air Munitions Conference (NAMC) Notes; Forwarding of (U)," 6 Nov 67.
249. Msg, SAC (DOPLT) to CSAF et al., "Interim Report on Short Trip XII/XVI and XVII," 12/2208Z Apr 68, Ex 43.
250. Summary Rpt, "Non-Nuclear Munitions Tests, January 1967-June 1968," extract of machine run listing, prep by DOPLTE, Hq SAC, 16 Aug 68, Ex 40.
251. Msg, SAC (DOPL) to SAAF, "Combined Test of Minol II filled M-117s and CDU-2411/Bs (U)," 03/1945Z Jun 68.
252. Summary Rpt, "Non-Nuclear Munitions Tests, January 1967-June 1968," extract of machine run listing, prep by DOPLTE, Hq SAC, 16 Aug 68, Ex 40.
253. The Port Bow force is discussed later in this chapter.
254. Hq SAC MO-2, 5 Oct 67; Hq SAC MO-3, 20 Dec 67.
255. See Hist of SAC Reconnaissance, Jan-Jun 68.
256. Hq SAC BO O-195, 20 Dec 67.
257. Hq SAC BO O-14, 23 Jan 68.
258. Extract of Briefing, "SAC Organization In WESTPAC," presented to CINCEAC by DPLM1, 7 Feb 68.
259. Hq SAC BO O-14, 23 Jan 68.
260. Extract of Briefing, "SAC Organization in WESTPAC," presented to CINCSAC by DPLM1, 7 Feb 68.
261. Hist of SAC, Jul-Dec 67, pp 136-148.
262. Hist of SAC, Jul-Dec 67, p 147; Rpt, "SAC Southeast Asia Operations Progress Report," prepared by Hq SAC DCRYS, Jan 68.
263. Rpt, "The Pueblo Incident," by Project CHECO, Hq PACAF DTE, 15 Apr 1968 (68-B-1945).
264. Rpt, "The Pueblo Incident," by Project CHECO, Hq PACAF DTE, 15 Apr 1968 (68-B-1945); Msg, JCS 8006, JCS to AIG 836, "USS Pueblo Incident Situation Report," 24/0052Z Jan 68 (68JJ2194).

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265. (S) Msg, CSAF to MAJCOMs, n.s. 26/0053Z Jan 68 (68JJ2210). The day before SAC had sent Third Air Division preliminary guidance concerning the JCS proposal to send an additional 26 B-52Ds to WESTPAC. (Msg, SAC to 3AD, For Wells From Gillem, "Arc Light," 25/1705Z Jan 68.)
266. Msg, SAC to AIG 667 et al., "Deployment of SAC Forces to WESTPAC," 26/0140Z Jan 68; Msg, SAC to AIG 667 et al., "Deployment of SAC Forces," 26/0244Z Jan 68.
267. Msg, SAC to CSAF & JCS, For Simler (USAF) and Pickett (JCS) and Wells From Gillem, n.s., 26/1555Z Jan 68 (68-B-0341), Ex 46; Msg, SAC to PACOM, PACAF, 3AD, Personal for Allison and Vogt from Gillem, 3AD for Wells, n.s., 28/1930Z Jan 68 (68-B-0371), Ex 47.
268. Msg, JCS 8344, JCS to CINCSAC, "B-52 Support of Operations in Korea," 27/0044Z Jan 68 (68JJ2241).
269. Rpt, "Chronology of the Korean Crisis 1968," prepared by USAF Historical Division Liaison Office, Jul 68 (68-B-2669).
270. Msg, 4252 SW to SAC, "Port Bow," 06/0805Z Feb 68; Chart, "Tactical Aircraft Deployment," prepared by 91 BW (DCMCPR), 03/1430Z Feb 68.
271. Msg, CINCSAC to CINCPAC, "Port Bow," 03/1955Z Feb 68 (68-B-0483), Ex 48.
272. Msg, CINCSAC to JCS/J-3, "Port Bow," 03/2045Z Feb 68 (68-B-0485), Ex 47; Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, "Port Bow," 05/0623Z Feb 68 (68-B-0498).
273. Msg, JCS 9801, JCS to CINCPAC, "Employment of B-52s," 11/2125Z Feb 68; Msg, JCS 9802, JCS to CINCPAC, "Employment of B-52s," 11/2126Z Feb 68.
274. Msg, 04272, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, for Adm Sharp, Info Gen Wheeler, Gen Nazzaro and Maj Gen Wells from Gen Westmoreland, "Employment of B-52s," 10/1420Z Feb 68; Msg, JJ 04499, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, "Continuous Arc Light Emergency Capability for Operation Niagara," 13/0030Z Feb 68.
275. Msg, JCS 9947, JCS to CINCPAC, "Employment of B-52s," 13/1611Z Feb 68.
276. Rpt, "Chronology of the Korean Crisis 1968," prepared by USAF Historical Division Liaison Office, July 68 (68-B-2669).
277. Msg, SAC to CSAF, "Force Availability Versus SEA Requirements," 24/1954Z Feb 68, Ex 50.

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278. Msg, CSAF to SAC, "Arc Light," 26/2320Z Feb 68; Msg, CSAF to SAC, "Force Availability Versus SEA Requirements," 04/1714Z Mar 68.
279. Msg, SAC to CSAF, "Arc Light," 01/2223Z Mar 68, Ex 51; Msg, SAC to JCS, "B-52 Sortie Rate for Arc Light," 06/2335Z Mar 68, Ex 52; Memo for the Record, "Arc Light," by Maj Gen J. B. Knapp, Chief of Staff, 7 Mar 68, Ex 53; Msg, SAC to 3AD, "Arc Light Planning Factors," 08/2325Z Mar 68, Ex 54.
280. Msg, SAC to CSAF, "B-52 Sortie Rate for Arc Light," 13/1944Z Mar 68, Ex 55.
281. Msg, JCS 4151, JCS to CINCPAC, "B-52 Sortie Rate for Arc Light," 20/2306Z Mar 68.
282. Msg, JJ 08069, CINCPAC to JCS, "Arc Light Sortie Rate," 22/0553Z Mar 68.
283. Msg, JCS 6571, JCS to CINCPAC, "Arc Light Sortie Rate," 16/2050Z Apr 68.
284. Msg, 10882, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, "Arc Light," 17/1230Z Apr 68; Msg, 11852, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, "Arc Light," 27/0134Z Apr 68.
285. Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, "Arc Light," 18/0203Z Apr 68.
286. Msg, JCS 8003, JCS to CINCPAC, "Request for Area Clearance," 02/1712Z May 68.
287. Rpt, "Arc Light Operations," prepared by J-3 OJCS, 23 May 68. Ex 56.
288. Msg, JCS 3210, JCS to CINCPAC, "Arc Light Sortie Rate," 24/2103Z Jun 68.
289. Msg, SAC to JCS, "Arc Light Sortie Rate," 08/1635Z Apr 68, Ex 57.
290. Msg, SAC(VC) to CSAF, "Arc Light Sortie Rate," 25/2340Z Apr 68, Ex 58.
291. Msg, SAC to JCS, "B-52 Sortie Rate," 25/0040Z Jun 68, Ex 59.
292. Fold.
293. Msg, Lt Gen Compton, Vice CINCSAC to Lt Gen Meyer, JCS J-3, "Arc Light Sortie Rate," 26/1945Z Jun 68, Ex 60.
294. Rpt, "SAC Southeast Asia Operations Progress Report," prepared by Hq SAC (DCRMS), 28 Dec 67.