

## **DCOI (Wing Intelligence)** By Charlotte Holder Clinger

The Deputy Chief of Operations for Intelligence (DCOI) office was located next to the TOC in the 553<sup>rd</sup> Reconnaissance Wing headquarters building, located at Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand. This article covers the period from September 1968 through September 1969, more or less. It was an eventful period in the Wing's SEA combat experience, for it included two aircraft accidents and a TDY to U-Tapao RTAFB while the runway was being re-paved (affectionately known as the Battle of Bang Saree, the location where most of the aircrews were billeted during the TDY.)

It has been a long time since I (2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Charlotte J. C. Holder, in those days) tried to re-create the events in a precise manner so I welcome comments and corrections from anyone else stationed at Korat. I arrived at Korat on September 16, 1968, as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt right out of AFAITC (Intelligence training) at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado. I was the first woman assigned to the 553<sup>rd</sup>. Apparently, the base had not focused on my arrival because billeting was unprepared for me. I was billeted in the VOQ until they could figure out what to do with me. Therefore, the first crew I really got to know was a Rivet Top crew there TDY. Later, I was billeted with other women on base in one of the one-story buildings, two to a room, with a bathroom in the middle, which we shared with the occasional viper. I learned to love geckos because one lived over my bed under my fan and ate mosquitoes and other bugs. Then, the women officers on base were moved to what I recall was the old base hospital, wood siding with permanent louvers. They partitioned it into separate rooms. At that time, there were only women officers, including nurses, on base. The heat was unbearable for the older officers who were not used to it. I felt lucky to have been raised in the South in hot, humid weather. Aircrews accustomed to air conditioning found the building intolerable when they visited us.

On the other hand, the Wing was ready for me and I was warmly received. The Commander gave up his private bathroom for me as a Ladies Room and only had one admonition "Lt Holder, you will not fly missions." He said that because the other members of the DCOI office who were trained intelligence officers did fly with crews on missions, but as a woman, I could not fly combat missions. While the transition into the Wing went smoothly, there was another surprise for me besides billeting. The small BX did not carry women's necessities. For my entire year at Korat, I had to rely on "CARE" packages from home for the basics, including personal hygiene items, underwear, and hosiery, a requirement with the summer polys I wore. I was not the first woman on the base so I am not sure why I came as such a surprise. There were several. The 388<sup>th</sup> had at least one woman in its intelligence shop when I arrived, Lt. Valerie Galullo. She was a class ahead of me at Intel school. The Club had not yet gotten a Ladies Room when Val arrived. I felt privileged to be there, doing my part for the war effort, so I didn't give it much thought.

Speaking of the Club, I noticed from the beginning that the 388<sup>th</sup> and the 553<sup>rd</sup> did not mingle in the Club. Everyone sat with the ones they knew. That meant that I always sat with my crews at the Club. I was expected to do so. The *7<sup>th</sup> Air Force Combat Unit Intelligence Officer's Guide to Southeast Asia* said that the intelligence officer must establish rapport with his (her) pilot, in my case crew, and that included socializing with them. Crews were a little superstitious and I made sure to adhere to those routines which

had been established over time before I arrived, particularly with regards to items covered in briefings, to include the obligatory humorous vu-graph or pin-up.

I have included the DCOI organizational chart with this article. The line of authority went from the TOC to the DCOI Duty Officer. While I was there, the DCOI personnel were as follows: Chief, Lt. Col. Victor Lumovich (who followed Lt. Col. Thomas R. Forbes, who had been my sponsor and was my original reporting official,) Maj. Cournoyer was Deputy and under him were Captains Strong and Day, and Lieutenants Holder and Richard Reynolds. On the enlisted side, MSgt Haberkern was in charge of TSgt Whiting, Sgt Smallwood, and Sgt Kuzma, with MSgt Sullivan over SSgt Richardson, Sgt Rickerson, Sgt Kennedy, Sgt Scott, and A1C Burman.

To accommodate flying schedules for both crews and office personnel who flew, the office ran on three shifts of two days, two swings, and two mids, followed by a day off. The usual routine was that the AAA and SAMs would be plotted each day, using new information, and would be changed during the day or night should newer information be garnered from various debriefings from all sources. Our goal was to make sure that the 553<sup>rd</sup> aircraft were never in the path of either AAA which could reach their altitude nor SAMs. Crew briefings were accomplished in the Wing headquarters building in a briefing room equipped with the necessary tools, vu-graph (overhead) projector, screen, and podium. There was a weather briefer, operations briefer, and an intelligence briefer for each mission briefing. Intelligence included such things as enemy capabilities, escape and evasion, and the general ground situation, as well as a more general overview of the war effort. These were all updated daily. The atmosphere was always one of professionalism on all sides. Luckily for the officers, the Club was open for meals 24 hours a day and the Ops duty officer and Intel duty officer normally went to meals together between briefings. When I was stationed at Korat, Major Moore was one of the officers in the TOC. The TOC officers and Intel officers worked closely together. I always felt warmly accepted as part of the team, as evidenced by the rather witty welcoming proclamation which said in part "In conclusion, although we would never be guilty of looking at you as being one of the boys, we want you to now you have already been chosen as the girl we would most like to de-brief. ALL THE GANG IN OPERATIONS"

There were several interesting deviations to the normal operational life at Korat. Around February 1969 flying operations were moved for more than a month to U-Tapao Airfield (near the Sattahip area) where SAC B-52s and KC-135s were stationed. The runway at Korat was being re-surfaced. The intelligence personnel were billeted at U-Tapao and the aircrews were billeted at Bang Saree nearby. Bang Saree was a resort on the Gulf of Siam. The intelligence shop was set up in a lovely tin building near the flight line and engine run-up area. There was a beach at U-Tapao, but the departing KC-135s and B-52s took off over the beach area and there was also a question about the cleanliness of the water there. The Intel personnel (especially the enlisted men) spent their days off going back "home" to Korat so they could get some rest from the noise of the jet engines. The noise was very loud in my billeting area, but the heat and the fatigue were such that I would sleep through anything. In fact, I slept so soundly that to rouse me, my roommate, who had forgotten her key, had to get the manager of the building to unlock the door. I was able to observe a SAC briefing during my time at U-Tapao and found it much more formal than those at Korat. For example, they included a chaplain as

part of the briefing team to bless the crews. Some of those officers who were assigned temporarily to U-Tapao Airfield were: Lt Col Van Doubleday, Lt Col Thomas McKee, Major Henry "Hank" Cournoyer, Major Daniel Creager, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Holder. We were authorized 15 round trips (from U-Tapao to Korat) between 23 January and 5 March 1969 to comply with Operational Requirements.

In March 1969, a number of Wing personnel attended the 432nd Tac Recon Wing Fighter Tactics Conference at Udorn RTAFB, which concluded in Bangkok. There were no travel expenses involved as none of our Wing personnel had an active role. Those attending were: Col Frank Klotz, Col Ted Ostendorf, Lt Col Barney Clary, Lt Col Thomas McKee, Lt Col Victor Lumovich, Lt Col Thomas Morris, 1Lt Karen Sandquist, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Charlotte Clinger. The 432<sup>nd</sup> issued a humorous and interesting pamphlet of events (with pictures) following the conference, of which I still have a copy.

There were also excursions which were taken during off duty hours or days. A 553<sup>rd</sup> group decided to visit the Elephant Roundup at Surin. Since I was off duty that day, I was invited to join them. We piled into an Air Force bus and took off for Surin, which was in a rural area. The road was bad and rutted and we bent an axle, but we kept on and attended the event. I rode my first elephant and, upon returning, was presented with an 8 X 10 picture of myself trying to struggle into the basket on the back of an unwilling elephant. I did get in, but not without help. For intelligence personnel (not on flight status,) there was a five day in country R & R. Most of us took our R & R in Bangkok.

Another event worth mentioning which was not duty-related was a radio marathon on base to raise money for medical equipment for the Nakhon Rajisima Provincial Hospital in May 1969. Being a junior officer, I was involved with the Junior Officer's Council and was proud that we raised \$7,000 during the marathon. I served on the Publicity Committee and stood a 10 hour tour of duty at AFTN control during the marathon. Capt. Douglas C. Bishop was president of the JOC and a 469<sup>th</sup> TFS Capt. was the emcee or moderator during the marathon.

I felt privileged to have had my first tour of duty with the aircrews and personnel of the 553<sup>rd</sup>. My original date of departure was set for 25 August 1969, but that was amended and I departed on 25 September 1969 for Bergstrom AFB, Texas, and a tour at 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force.