

'On Again, off Again' Task Of Korat's Det. 3 Reaches Dimensions Unknown to Most

BY SGT JIM CRAWFORD

When important documents need to be rushed to another base, when vital parts are needed in time to keep the mission on schedule, when you make plans to have your whole baggage home ahead of you, and when you plan your TDY and PCS trips, all responsibility falls on the shoulders of a small band of workers here who call themselves Detachment 3 of the 6th Aerial Port Squadron.

Moving tons of cargo and hundreds of people in a single day is routine. Add to that innumerable priorities, schedule changes and flight plan changes, and the job takes on gigantic dimensions.

Two Missions

Detachment 3 actually has two missions. The primary mission to maintain a degree of combat readiness that will insure the success of war plans and provide fixed and mobile intra-theater air terminal capability. A concurrent mission is to plan for, execute and support contingency military operations.

From February 1967 to the end of January, the men of Detachment 3 moved 33,642 tons of cargo and 65,877 passengers while handling 4,702 separate flights. Weekly VIP flights were highlighted by the job of making arrangements for the arrival of President Johnson last December.

Movers Tested Daily

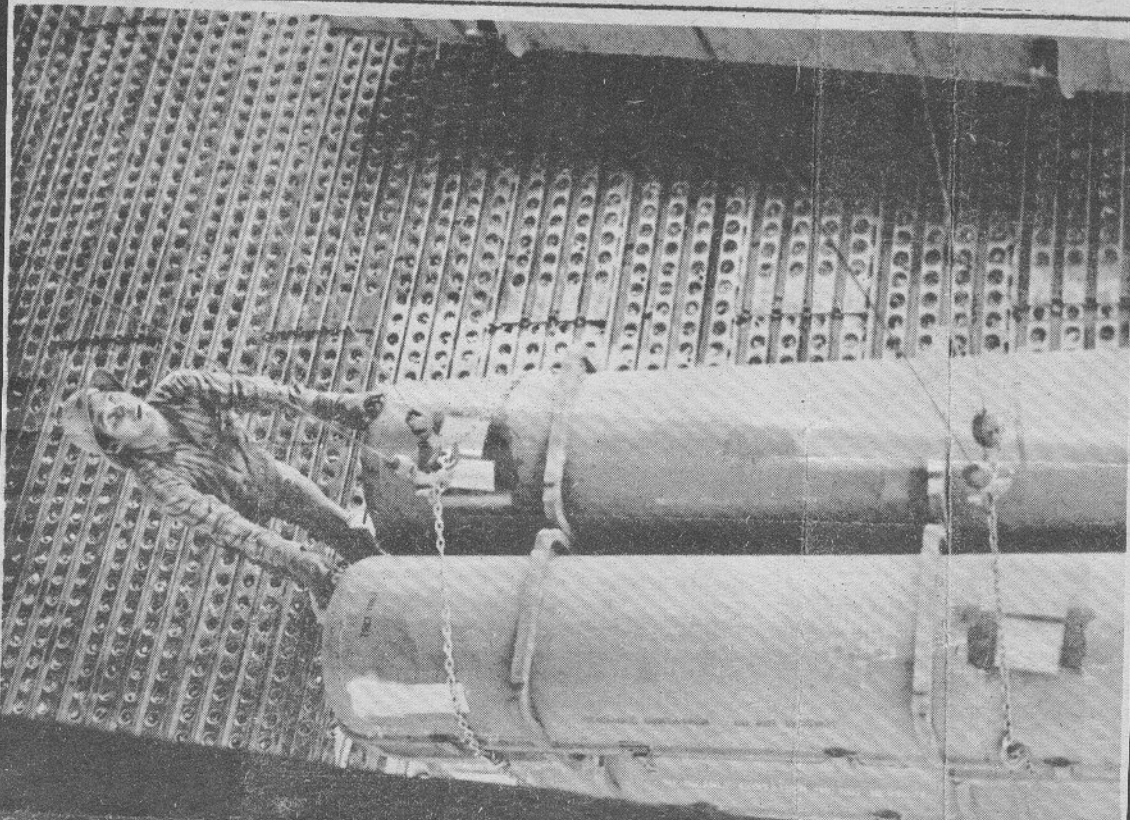
Capt. Hubert D. Songer, Det. 3 commander, and MSgt. Kermit O. Vorpahl, NCOIC, are backed by a 25-man enlisted crew and hired Thai National workers. When a plane lands for loading or unloading, the Det. 3 men completely take over. Only the plane's loadmaster becomes involved in the ground operations. Arrangements must be made in advance so passengers and cargo as well as loading equipment are on hand when the aircraft arrives. Bulky cargo must be handled carefully and professionally to insure that the plane will be properly loaded as quickly as possible. The Det. 3 members recall three particular days last year when their offloading/onloading abilities were put to the test. On July 21, Det. 3 moved 141 tons of cargo in seven hours. On Oct. 16, they handled 160 tons in a 24 hour period, and on Oct. 22, 152 tons of cargo was offloaded/onloaded in just 12 hours. No delays, injuries or damage to equipment or cargo resulted from these stepped-up activities.

For the quarter ending September 1967, the average ground time for C-141 Starlifters at Korat, including refueling and minor maintenance, reached a low of one hour and 55 minutes.

Cargo Without Planes

Another situation which often confronts the Aerial Port directors is the need for emergency or rush transportation when no flights are scheduled. In these cases, Captain Songer relates, we have actually used F-105 Thunderchiefs and A-1E Skyraiders to transport such cargo items as munitions or medical supplies.

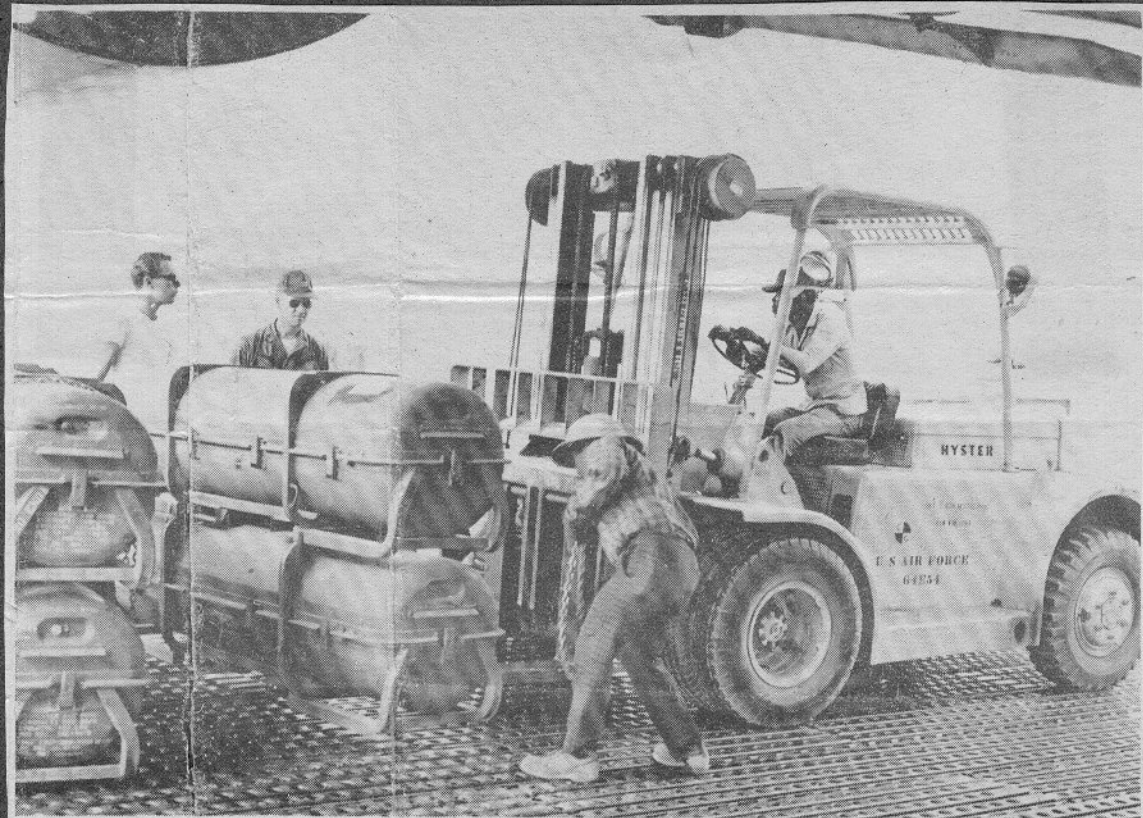
The tasks set before Det. 3 are immense — much more so than would appear to the average passenger who sits in the terminal, fuming over what he feels to be an unnecessarily early showtime.



UP AND AWAY—Sripoh Sartrayos, Thai supervisor, guides a pallet of bombs as they begin their journey into the belly of a C-124.



QUIET MOMENT—Det 3 members, from left, SSgt. Bill Snow, Administrative NCO, Capt. Hugh Songer, commander, and MSgt. Kermit Vorpahl, NCOIC take advantage of a moment between flights to check manifests and flight schedules for the day. Answering an inquiry is passenger service receptionist, Mrs. Luckana Vorpahl, Thongsang.



HANDLE WITH CARE—Sgt. Robert Wortman, left, and Capt. Hugh Songer look on as Thai Supervisor, Sripoh Sartrayos and Tho Harnkoonthod (seated) carefully move two encased bombs for shipment.



SECURING CARGO—A1C Joseph Collete tightens straps and chains across newly-loaded cargo in a C-124. Directing him is an unidentified loadmaster with the aircraft.