

In mid-1967, I was detailed to HQ Saigon as an Intelligence ' Spook ' providing intelligence . . in whatever discipline and where-ever needed . . using current material my people had collectively vetted . . then laid in my hands.'

At that time, Operation ' Rolling Thunder ' bombing key strategic targets in North Vietnam was now being carried out . . in earnest.

The VN often offered putrid weather . . making it difficult to find . . much less accurately ' hit 'strike targets assigned.

A significant responsibility and personal pressure . . for this newly minted U.S.A.F Captain.

The WX in NVN was often putrid . . making it difficult to handle for our radar and TACAN system just inside the Laotian border . . on a flat topped . . remote sheer-sided . . karst mountain.

The remote site could be reached by helicopter.
Or by climbing a tortuous narrow and winding trail

up the near-vertical limestone karst.

It was thought to be quite easily defended by shooting nearly straight down . . from its steep edges.

On the mountain's top [1] there was a ' kind of flat ' thirty acres [2] supporting a tiny indigenous Hmong [3] a small garrison of Thai and Meo tribe mercenary guards [4] a helicopter pad and a flight shack manned by C.I A.'s Air America Ops and [5] strategic and powerful TACAN and radar transmitter sites.

The site was manned by so-called ' sheep-dipped ' U.S. Air Force enlisted specialists . . who'd whipped off their uniforms off then pulled on scruffy local clothes.

Both the US and NVN paid ' lip service ' to the fiction that Laos government was neutral. And that NO foreign military power was actually posted within its borders.

In reality, we had a couple of hundred people . . . operating several . . . radar sites in ' neutral ' Laos.

And of course, the North Vietnamese had THOUSANDS of Communist troops on a geographical side-step of their Ho Chi Minh supply trail crossing into neighboring Laos.

This specific site was named [L for Laos] LIMA Site 85. But the fighter-bomber crews also called it TACAN 97. Other aircrews simply called it : ' NORTH Station.'

And it was the radar facility . . . ' planted ' . . . the furthest North.

Any point further . . . North . . . was the ' land of the bad guys.'

We were re-using an old SAC bomb scoring radar location. And within 100 miles, it's ' updated radar ' could pin-point an air-craft's bombing effort to a handful of yards from an enemy target's center.

The strike force would fly out from the LIMA Site

85 a given distance on a TACAN directional radial.

Then using a top secret SAC device , operators would tell the strike leaders precisely when to release their bombs after this cunning device had . . factored in ever changing permutations.

Day or night . . foul WX or ' fair ' WX.

The ' ad hoc ' primitive arrangement was surprisingly . . accurate.

And it allowed the air strikes to be run at night and in lousiest weather against the enemy supplies creeping down its trail . . badly damaging the North Vietnamese war plans.

So the Communists decided to destroy the strategic Lima Site 85 from the air. And believe it or not . . the NVNAF elected to use ancient 1930's Russian utility BI-PLANES . . as ' air-strike bombers ! '

The ' bombers ' were Antonov AN-2 general

purpose old workhorse biplanes with a single 1,000 horsepower radial engines And could deliver a one ton payload.

The AN-2 was not a bad choice.

Although, its biggest disadvantage was . . . it was slow.



The Russians had used the AN-2 for multitudes of missions, such as med-evac, parachute training, crop dusting, and so on.

In fact, if you measure success of an aircraft by the number produced . . . and decades of production, the AN-2 was one of the most successful designs in aviation history.

The NVNAF fitted out these AN-2 ' attack bombers ' with twelve shot 58 mm folding fin aerial rocket pods . . . mounted beneath each lower wing.

And twenty 250 mm mortar rounds were carefully placed into vertically mounted tubes on the cargo bay's floor. When the bombs were to be dropped . . . simple bomb-bay doors . . . were manually hinged open.

The idea had a high expected munitions effect . . . to easily wipe out a ' soft ' undefended radar site . . . in primitive enemy locations . . . on crude karst limestone rock.

The NVN Communist attack mission was well-planned.

Well-equipped.

The enemy raid . . . SHOULD HAVE . . . BEEN SUCCESSFUL !

On the other hand, Murphy's Law prevailed against the Communists that day.

The three Russian AN-2 biplane strike force was coordinated . . . using two attack biplanes PLUS a third AN-2 ' standing off ' to serve as command and radio relay.

Although the enemy knew the radar site was positioned a remote karst mountain pinnacle . . . [1] it was well-camouflaged [2] the enemy was not aware they would be diving into an ' anti-aircraft . . . battery.

Also they [3] absolutely were not aware there would be an ' air-to-air ' interceptor aircraft ' to threaten them.

The CIA and their Air America chiefs did not know this, either.

But that's the way it worked out.

The AN-2 biplane strike force rolled in on their target area. In error, they mistook Air America's poorly camouflaged Ops shack . . . for the intended Radar site's Operations shack target . . . a couple of stone throw's distant.

So the AN-2's weapons ' ventilated ' CIA's Air America's Operations shack.

In opposition to enemy's attack . . . the Air America Ops shack's anti-aircraft . . . ' artillery force ' . . . leapt into the center of the bi-plane's munitions ' bull's eye.'

It was . . . a single angry man !

He was a Thai mercenary . . . five feet tall - and all balls - who instantly understood.

And instantly responded.

The little Siamese guy ran out . . and planted his scruffy clothed body . . in the AN-2's weapons path . . just as the bi-plane was releasing its small but effective . . bombs . . and firing its rockets.

He emptied his 27-round AK-47 clip into the engine and cockpit of the dive-bombing biplane.

A handful of seconds later . . the AN-2's pilots crashed . . fatally hard.

The number two attack AN-2 biplane pilot instantly ' chickened out ' of his attack. . .

Banked . . hard and away.

The unplanned 'air-to-air defense interceptor force ' with its hidden teeth . . was an typically unarmed CIA 'Air America' Huey helicopter. Its engine jet turbine had been casually idling on a primitive landing pad . . with its crew half way through a ' Coca Cola ' break in their shack.

The CIA pilot and helicopter mechanic were both drinking their ' cokes '. . kicked back and relaxed

' in the CIA's Ops shack
when enemy shrapnel reshaped their ' sit down '
soda pop drinking space.

You can visualize their ' foot race ' as the
crewmen ran ' flat out ' . . before precisely
leaping into their passenger-carrying
general-purpose ' Huey ' helicopter.

Zooming down off the karst 's edge. . seat
belts not yet fastened . . the two sprinters . .
could hardly believe what they saw
. . as they watched two [2] ancient Russian bi-
planes . . fleeing toward safety in ' bad guy '
land.

**The Huey's pilot . . was no slouch in
the testicles department . . either.
Realizing his twin jet-turbine
Huey helicopter was probably a bit
faster than those ancient biplanes . . .
he did . . *what any combat-
ready pilot . . would have done :***

ATTACK !

A few miles North of the North Vietnam border, the Huey helicopter closed distance then overtook the second Antonoff bi-plane.

Its gutsy helicopter pilot flew extremely closely above the biplane . . then used the Huey's rotor vertical downwash to [1] blow away the bi-plane's aerodynamic lift from its upper wing . . in combination with the [2] helicopter's rotors created a huge down-draft on the Antonov's upper fuselage.

As the AN-2 began sinking like a stone . . and its pilot automatically pulled up the bi-plane's nose. But his effort only further reduced the aircraft's forward airspeed.

Meanwhile, the Huey's gutsy mechanic wasn't to be outdone.

He popped his seat belt . . reached out the open door frame with one hand . . to grab the skid's vertical landing leg . . then partially hauled himself out into a fierce slip stream.

Using his other hand . . clasping a souvenir AK-

**47's stock between his ribs and other bicep . .
pointing it down . . automatically squ-
eezing its trigger.**

**Point-blank the effective weapon spewed
destruction.**



**The AN-2 went out of control . . fell into a spiral . .
then slammed into a vertical finger of karst rock .**

It should be of no surprise that the Air America

helicopter pilot and his gutsy mechanic instantly landed themselves in huge political trouble with the U.S. State Department.



In spite of Washington cookie pushers' discomfort in having to deal with yet another international incident with the Communists . .

These CIA guys were heroes to almost everybody else . . including the 5 foot guy . . who'd stood his ground within the bulls-eye of the bad guys' weaponry.

The CIA had their first and only shoot-down of a biplane using a helicopter . . along with their first known ' air to air ' victory.

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Sources : Vetted from declassified CIA documents being held by the University Of Texas.