

SAWADEE FLYER

Korat RTAFB, Thailand

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1975, the final story of Korat

1975 was a big year for Korat in many ways. In January a memorial was dedicated to the prisoners of war/missing in action airmen from Korat. With Lt. Gen. John W. Roberts, personnel director, Headquarters USAF, in attendance. Local Korat City journalists were given a tour of four 388th Military Civic Action projects spread throughout the 16 kilometer CivAc area.

The 347th Tactical Fighter Wing overcame the obstacles associated with moving their entire Wing to Korat in 1974 and still performed the best maintenance in Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) to win the PACAF Outstanding Maintenance Award Trophy for the second straight year.

The 347th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) redeployed its aircraft in June with the F-111 fighter-bombers being reassigned to Nellis AFB, Nev., and the Wing being deactivated. This was the beginning of the end for Korat RTAFB.

The five remaining AC-130A gunships assigned to the 16th Special Operations Squadron left June 30. "A" model gunships were first introduced into Southeast Asia (SEA) in September 1967. They flew more than 11,000 combat sorties and logged almost 45,000 combat hours during their stay in SEA.

In July the 388th TFW got a new Wing commander. Col. Neil L. Eddins took over the reins of the oldest wing in Thailand from Col. John P. Russell who moved to PACAF Headquarters. Both colonels had previously served with the 388th TFW in 1966.

August and September brought the base a remodeled NCO Club that the 388th Civil Engineering Squadron spent nearly \$50,000 on. The club held a gala grand opening featuring Kiko Gatchalian and His Band from the Clark AB, P.I., Coconut Grove (Airmen's Club). As a result of the U.S. withdrawal from Nakhon Phanom RTAFB the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS) moved to Korat and absorbed the 56th ARRS that had been here. The combined unit flew HH-53C Super Jolly Green Giant helicopters and HC-130P "King" search and rescue aircraft.

The saddest event that occurred in September was the death of the 388th TFW mascot, Roscoe. Roscoe died outside his favorite place, the Officer's Open Mess Sept. 13. The cause of death was old age and a heart attack. As a member of the 388th, he received a full funeral service with military honors and eulogy by Col. Neil L. Eddins, 388th TFW commander.

Throughout October and November activities went on as normal but every organization was making preparations for the impending announcement of United States withdrawal from Korat. On Nov. 24 the official announcement was made by the governments of Thailand and the U.S. to close the U.S. facility at Korat RTAFB by Feb. 29, 1976.

December was a memorable month for all personnel at Korat. All combat aircraft departed the base that month which represented three squadrons and 54 aircraft. The 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS) flew 24 F-4D Phantoms, the 3rd TFS flew out 24 A-7D Sandies and the 16th Special Operations Squadron flew out six AC-130 Hercules gunships, all to new assignments worldwide. The fantastic fact about these aircraft departures is that all 54 aircraft departed on schedule without a single abort. On Dec. 23 the 388th TFW, host wing here since 1966, was symbolically transferred to Hill AFB, Utah, from Korat RTAFB, with ceremonies at both Hill and Korat. The 388th TFW commander, Col. Neil L. Eddins, assumed the same position with the Wing at Hill AFB.

The last aircraft to depart Korat belonged to the 40th ARRS. The HC-130P "King" aircraft flew to their new assignments and the HH-53C Super Jolly Green Giant helicopters were airlifted to their new homes via C-5A Galaxies.

388 TFW shifted to H11 AFB

Effective Dec. 23, 1975, the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW), host Wing here since 1966, was symbolically transferred from Korat RTAFB to Hill AFB, Utah, with ceremonies at both Korat and Hill.

The 388th TFW commander, Col. Neil L. Eddins, assumed the same position with the Wing at Hill AFB.

The 388th has a long and impressive history dating back to its beginnings as the 388th Bombardment Group (heavy) during World War II, when its aircraft struck a number of significant targets in the course of the conflict. The 388th also performed interdiction missions during the war as well.

In August 1945 the 388th returned to the U.S. and was deactivated at Sioux Falls AAB, S.D., Aug. 28, 1945.

March 23, 1953, saw the 388th designation return to the rolls of the Air Force units with the institution of the 388th Fighter-Day Wing. The Wing was redesignated as a fighter-bomber unit on Nov. 5, 1953, and on Nov. 23, 1953, it was activated at Clovis, N.M. The 388th FBW began training on the F-86 Sabre jet in 1954, and on Nov. 28, 1954, began its move to Europe as part of the buildup of U.S. forces under the NATO agreement.

During 1956-57 the 388th was assigned to the F-100D Super Sabre and on Dec. 1, 1957, was activated in France.

The third 388th was activated at Hill AFB, Utah, on May 1, 1962, and was assigned to the F-105. The 388th was equipped with F-105 Thunderbolts on Oct. 8, 1964, the 388th continued and inactivated at McConnell.

The need for a more stable organizational control of combat units operating in Southeast Asia and missions over North Vietnam brought about the 388th's return to combat status once more, this time in 1966. Activated on March 14, 1966, the 388th TFW was organized at Korat RTAFB on April 8, 1966.

While being organized at Korat, the 388th TFW inherited the history and honors of the 388th Bombardment Group (heavy), which had been activated Christmas Eve of 1942 at Gowen Field, Idaho. The group trained for combat in the famed Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, moving from Gowen Field to Sioux City Army Station, Knettishall, England, where it remained throughout the war as one of the key units of the Eighth Air Force.

In June 1966 F-105s of the 13th and 34th Tactical Fighter Squadrons deployed from Japan and were assigned to Korat for combat duty with the 388th TFW.

The 388th TFW established an unrivaled reputation for the aggressiveness of its aircrews in attacking and destroying surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites, anti-aircraft flak sites, MIGs and other defensive installations surrounding the major enemy targets throughout the Vietnam era.

The year that was, 1974

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There was a great deal of coming and going of people and aircraft at Korat during 1974. Perhaps one of the most important of the comings was the visit by His Majesty the King of Thailand and the Royal Family. Their Majesties the King and Queen and the two Princesses arrived at Korat RTAFB by plane to make an alms offering in honor of the annual Kratin's Ceremony. The Royal Family also participated in opening ceremonies at the new Boon Watana School in Korat City. Among U.S. Air Force officials on hand to meet Their Majesties were Colonels John P. Russell, Maurice Seaver and Kenneth H. Gallagher.

Early in the year Col. Thomas H. Normile assumed command of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing from Col. Robert K. Crouch. Among the first groups to leave in 1974 was the 42nd Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron which redeployed to Clark AB with its EB-66 aircraft. The 42nd was the final Air Force squadron to fly the venerable EB-66 "Soobie."

In April, the Sawadee Club closed, consolidating enlisted entertainment in the NCO Open Mess.

Also in that month the 355th Tactical Fighter Squadron departed Korat for Myrtle Beach AFB, S.C. with 19 A-7D Corsair II aircraft. Their departure left the 3rd TFS as the only USAF A-7

unit in the Pacific. The 3rd TFS became a part of the 388th TFW.

The 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron and the College Eye Task Force followed the A-7s in May. When the final EC-121 Constellation lifted from the Korat runway it ended more than nine years of airborne radar operations in Southeast Asia.

On July 3 Col. John P. Russell assumed command of the 388th from Colonel Normile. COLONEL Russell had previously served as vice commander. On the sports scene the U-Tapao Bombers claimed the All-Thailand Fast Pitch Championship in July from Korat's Cobras in the series' final two play off games, 4-3 and 8-4.

The F-111's of the 347th Tactical Fighter Wing joined the F-105s, A-7Ds and F-4Ds of the 388th TFW on the Korat flightline in July. The swing wings made the move from Takhli under the command of Col. Cecil D. Crabb. Also in July the 16th Special Operations Squadron left Ubon and brought their AC-130 gunships to Korat and the 388th.

On Oct. 30 the F-105s and men of the 17th Wild Weasel Squadron wrote the final chapter of their exciting book as they left for the United States after 10 years in Thailand.

Thuds leave SEA; loved by all pilots

It smashed bridges and railways; destroyed steel mills, tangled with enemy MiGs and flew SAM suppression missions. It carried the brunt of the bombing campaign over North Vietnam in the middle sixties. The F-105 Thunderchief proved itself a formidable weapons system. The Thuds ended their illustrious combat story Oct. 30 when the 17th Wild Weasel Squadron departed Korat for the United States after 10 years in Thailand.

The men who flew the Thunderchief had a real love affair with their bird as one 105 driver put it: "Sometimes I go out on the ramp and just look at the beauty, even on days I don't fly."

Because of the nature of the specialized mission of the Thuds, its crewmen were some of the more experienced flyers. Their mission was the support of aircraft entering areas defended by anti-aircraft

artillery (AAA) and surface-to-air missiles (SAM), and the destruction of those SAM and AAA sites when they posed an actual threat to American aircraft.

On what was acknowledged as one of the most dangerous missions over the North, the Weasels waited for the SAM or AAA sites to "come on the air," locking their radar in on the approaching flight. Then the F-105 crews quickly fired their radar homing Shrike or Standard ARM missiles into the launch site.

They also went after enemy ground control intercept radar sites.

It was believed that occasionally the North Vietnamese AAA and SAM sites would even stay "off the air" fearful of the Thud's deadly response.



Most popular place on base

Most popular place on base A LETTER FROM HOME was usually enough to cure the "depression blues" on any given day. On most days at Korat's Air Post Office (APO), you could see many GIs waiting by their post office box for their hopeful letter from Mom or wife or sweetheart or friend. No doubt about it, this was definitely one of the most popular places on Korat RTAFB. (U.S. Air Force Photo)



His Majesty King
Bhumibol Adulyadej



Her Majesty
Queen Sirikit

Korat grows from clearing into bustling installation

In April 1962, the U.S. Air Force had one officer and 14 airmen assigned to Korat RTAFB on temporary duty status.

From this meager beginning, Korat's military population peaked to almost 7,000 in the early 70s and the air base had grown from a little clearing in the brush of the Korat Plateau into a sprawling installation dotted with single and two-story dormitory buildings, modern maintenance facilities and well-designed offices.

Korat RTAFB is headquarters for Wing Three of the Royal Thai Air Force. For many years before it was relocated near Nakhon Phanom it was the headquarters for the Royal Thai Air Force flying training school.

At various periods during the U.S. facility's existence, it has supported two operational wings simultaneously, always with the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) as host wing. These "tenant" wings were the 553rd Reconnaissance Wing, flying the Lockheed EC-121 Constellation, the 354th TFW, flying LTV A-7D Corsair IIS and the 347th TFW, flying the General Dynamics F-111 fighter-bomber.

In addition to the operational wings, Korat was home for more than 30 associate units representing seven Air Force commands.

Aerial traffic at Korat presented an unusual picture over the 10-year period. Sleek Republic F-105 Thunderchiefs, McDonnell-Douglas F-4 Phantoms, F-111s, A-7Ds, shared the sky with versions of the EC-121 "Connies" as well as Douglas EB-66 Destroyers and the versatile Lockheed C-130 Hercules gunship, rescue and cargo versions. And of course there were the Lockheed C-141 Starlifters and C-5 Galaxies which passed through Korat bringing in people and equipment and later taking them out.

The base is located about five miles south of Korat City (the real name of Korat City is Nakhorn Rajisima) whose population is in excess of 100,000. It is approximately 170 miles north-northeast of Thailand's capital city, Bangkok.

King, Queen of Thailand, loved and revered by all

Beauty, grace and charm—

These descriptions immediately come to mind as Queen Sirikit appears in sight. These qualities alone would have won her the admiration and loyalty of her people.

But Queen Sirikit, whose birthday is celebrated Aug. 12, has also demonstrated how a queen should act to effectively fill her place in a constitutional monarchy.

As the model of Thai women, Her Majesty the Queen exemplifies what an ideal mother and wife are like. One of the best-dressed women in the world, the Queen encourages good taste, well grooming and fashion on a country-wide basis. She promotes the use of Thai silks, one of Thailand's home products, Thai national costumes and demonstrates Thai cultures and characteristics.

As a tireless social worker, the Queen insists on various programs encouraging the social well-being of the population. She realizes her programs through her position as honorary president of the National Council of Social Welfare and as president of the Thai Red Cross.

Her capability as Queen has been proved many times. In 1956, when His Majesty the King entered the monkhood, the Queen assumed the responsibilities of head of state, winning the distinction of "Somdej Phraborom Rajinirath," the title given to a Queen capable of performing the functions on the King's behalf.

As Thailand's ambassador, Her Majesty has brought good will and friendship to numerous countries around the world where Their Majesties have paid state

visits. She has left such a favorable impression on her host countries that people still talk of her admiringly. At home Queen Sirikit graciously hostesses visiting foreign dignitaries and heads of state.

Queen Sirikit's official performances are unsurpassable. Grace is what she brings to her people. Admiration and loyalty are what she wins from them.

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej was born at Brookline, Mass., Dec. 5, 1927, while his father was a medical student at Harvard University. His father was the late King Mahidol Adulyadej; his mother was HRH Srisangwal.

He has one sister, Princess Kalayanee Wattana. An older brother, the former King Anandamahidol, was killed in 1946.

When he was a year old, his parents returned to Thailand after his father earned a medical degree from Harvard. His father died a year later.

The young prince attended school in Bangkok until he was 5, and in 1933 he accompanied his mother to Switzerland and attended Mere Mont primary school in Lausanne.

He grew up with the royal servants at a palace decorated with Thai objects of art and culture. As a young man he was interested in music, carpentry, ship building and photography.

In 1943 his brother took the throne as King Rama VIII. Prince Bhumibol returned to Thailand when he was 11, but spent only a short time in Thailand before returning to Switzerland to continue his studies.



sawadee flyer



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Part beagle and all Bat Cat

"SNOOPY," THE OFFICIAL mascot of the 553rd Reconnaissance Wing at Korat RTAFB looks as though he might be thinking of the night when, "There I was in a thunderstorm and..." (U.S. Air Force Photo)

Roscoe, Snoopy two special dogs

July, 1969 - They're only dogs, but the lives they lead are pampered.

One is Roscoe; he's the grizzled old veteran who has the run of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW). The youngster is Snoopy, a flying mascot with the 553rd Reconnaissance Wing.

As the senior mascot, Roscoe receives preferential treatment at the Officer's Open Mess where he eats what the other members are served - free of charge.

Snoopy, who came to Korat RTAFB with the 553rd Reconnaissance Wing, still flies his missions aboard the Lockheed EC-121R Constellation. And, he still comes and goes pretty much as he pleases, dividing home between the wing's two flying squadrons, the 553rd and the 554th. He became a two-year veteran with the Wing in June 1969.

Roscoe came to the 388th TFW in mid-May 1966. He, too, shares his time equally with the flying squadrons of the Wing, though he has been known to prolong his visits to those outfits that had especially well-stocked larders or extra-soft chairs in which he could curl up for long afternoon naps.

The two dogs are the only authorized mascots on Korat RTAFB, and both are allowed to roam freely. Pictures of them are posted in the 388th Security Police Squadron's operations center, and policemen are admonished to insure that nothing happens to either.



A dog's Life?

ROSCOE, THE FAMED mascot of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing, relaxes in one of his favorite places, the office of the 388th TFW Commander, Col. Allen K. McDonald. Roscoe came to Korat in mid-May 1966 and was adopted by the Wing when his master was shot down shortly after arriving here. (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Anthony Pacheco)



Grin and Bear It

TRANSFER OF OPERATION and maintenance responsibility from Philco-Ford to the 1998th Communications Squadron (AFCS) for the Korat RTAFB AUTODIN Switching Center is symbolized by the handover of "ASCII," the bear. Ray Summerfield, Philco-Ford site manager, makes this presentation to Capt. William Scott, officer-in-charge. ASCII is about the same age as the ASC which was "born" Dec. 23, 1967, and is named after computer language coding for the American Standard Code for Information Interchange. The computer feeds data while ASCII specializes in hot dogs, doughnuts, ice cream cones and coke. (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Tim Monk)



7th ACCS mascot

"JOHN," THE MASCOT of the 7th ACCS, loves to give the girls a hard time, according to legend. You have to feed John and then run around to feed the female or John will take it away from her. (U.S. Air Force Photo)



Tiger for Tiger

THE 388TH SECURITY Police Tiger Flight's mascot blends into the camouflaged uniform of Thai Master Sergeant In Kasem, Thai flight commander of Tiger Flight. The baby tiger, found by Sergeant Kasem in the jungle, receives a gentle stroke from Sgt. Gerald Ammons, a member of the flight's quick response team.