

DET 8, 600TH PHOTO SQUADRON

Tuy Hoa AB, Vietnam

Detachment 8 came into being on 5 Nov 1966 with twelve assigned personnel. TSgt Donald F. Monn, was the commander. By early December an interim still lab was in place and operating and a trailer housed office and workshop space for the ComDoc, Maintenance, Still Lab Office and Command Section. At the brand new Tuy Hoa Air Base all personnel were living in tents under field conditions.

The mission of Det 8 was to service and maintain all gun cameras (60) and blisters (3) of the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing, to supply Base Photo Lab service to Tuy Hoa Air Base, and to document in still and motion pictures all Air Force activities in the base area including Air Rescue and Civic Action projects. In its month-and-a-half of operation through December the Detachment exposed 1055 feet of gun camera film, 3060 feet of blister footage, 7445 feet of motion picture documentation, and 1519 still photographs in support of its mission. While the gun camera and blister programs were not, in the early weeks, 100% operational, by the end of December every aircraft that took off had a loaded, working gun camera and all three blisters were operating at full capacity.

Also by the end of the year detachment manning was supplemented by three maintenance men, a TDY motion picture cameraman, and a TDY interim Commander, 1st Lt Rogert H. Gordon.

Two of the primary jobs of Det 8 were the continuing documentation of the Turnkey and Red Horse base construction programs. One full day a week was scheduled for photography on each of these projects. Coverage was given in both color and black and white stills and in 16mm ECO motion pictures. The detachment also performed all the duties of Base Photo Lab, i.e. Air Police investigation photography, accident reports, portraits and I.E. photos and support for the Office of Information.

In late December an ABC Television crew arrived on base to do a documentary film about the 31st TFW. Det 8 supported them with blister photography and installed a special mount in an F-100 model aircraft cockpit in order to obtain in-flight photography of one of the pilots. The resulting footage was scheduled to be used in the production of an ABC-TV one hour special to be aired in June 1967.

The major problems encountered by Det 8 were lack of work space, equipment, and transportation. Sixteen men were operating out of a very small still lab and one support trailer. This crowding caused inefficiency. The scheduled arrival of additional trailers should solve the problem. (see picture following page) Lack of equipment, in the form of an inadequate still lab, insufficient cameras and camera accessories (both motion picture and still), insufficient tools for the maintenance section, and general shortages in supplies also caused difficulty to varying degrees. The major problem was transportation. Tuy Hoa AB, built entirely on a sandy beach, was



a vehicle killer. The constant wind forced grit into all moving parts and eventually destroyed them. The lack of paved roads, which made all driving a long succession of bumps, caused trucks not built for such treatment to be literally shaken apart. Det 8 had three vehicles by 31 Dec 66. All three were in maintenance awaiting parts which were not available. During the period of this report the vehicle "in service" record was no better than 40%. The only possible solution to this problem was the importation of newer, heavier duty vehicles for this location.

Both the base and the Detachment were beginning to fall into shape by the end of November. Soon it was scheduled to have all its facilities, all its equipment, and all its personnel, then it would be ready to swing into full operation.