

AIR AMERICA

REAL LIFE AIR AMERICA: THE CIA'S COVERT AIRLINE USED FOR EVERYTHING, INCLUDING DRUG SMUGGLING

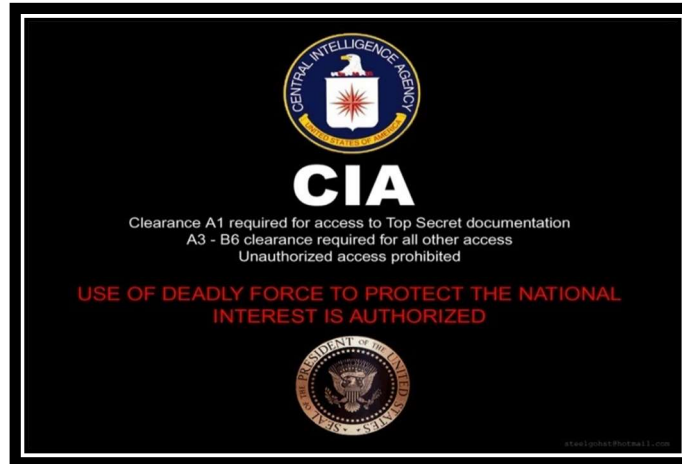
AIR AMERICA ...ANYTHING, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE, PROFESSIONALLY

HERO'S, MURDERERS, DRUG TRAFFICKERS, ENEMY SUPPORTERS, CHEATERS, ILLEGAL WORLDWIDE OPERATORS,

THE SCUM OF THE EARTH, IGNORED, MISTREATED AND FORGOTTEN... OR JUST DOING WHAT OUR GOVERNMENT TOLD THEM TO DO????

DID OUR GOVERNMENT AND THE CIA CAUSE AIR AMERICA AND ITS PILOTS TO GET A BUM WRAP ?????

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Air America was an American passenger and cargo airline covertly owned by the US government in 1950 as a dummy corporation for Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operations in China. The CIA did not have enough work to keep the asset afloat and the National Security Council farmed the airline out to various government entities that included the USAF, US Army, and USAID and for a brief time the French Republic.

Essentially, Air America was used by the US government covertly to conduct military operations, posing as a civilian air carrier, in areas the US armed forces could not go due to treaty restraints contained in the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Accords.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

In August 1950, the CIA, at the direction of the National Security Council, formed a corporation named Airdale. They bought 40% shares of Civil Air Transport or CAT, an airline that was started in China in 1946 and remained in existence throughout the tenure of Air America from 1950 through 1976.

In 1957 Airdale changed its name to Pacific Corporation. CAT changed its name to Air America in 1959. Air America's slogan was "Anything, Anywhere, Anytime, Professionally"



They flew many types of cargo to countries such as the Republic of Vietnam, the Kingdom of Laos, and Cambodia. It operated from bases in those countries and also from bases in Thailand and as far afield as Taiwan and Japan. It also on occasion flew top-secret missions into Burma and the People's Republic of China.

THE VIETNAM WAR

From 1959 to 1962 the airline provided direct and indirect support to US Special Forces "Ambidextrous", "Hotfoot", and "White Star", which trained the regular Royal Lao Army armed forces. After 1962 a similar operation known as Project 404 fielded numerous US Army attachés (ARMA) and air attachés (AIRA) to the US embassy in Vientiane.



Air America Bell 205 helicopter leaving a Hmong fire support base in the Laotian Plain of Jars

From 1962 to 1975, Air America inserted and extracted US personnel who provided logistical support to the Royal Lao Army, the Hmong Army under the command of Royal Lao Army Major General Vang Pao, and combatant Thai volunteer forces transported refugees and flew photo reconnaissance missions that provided intelligence on NLF activities. Its civilian-marked craft was frequently used, under the control of the Seventh/Thirteenth Air Force, to launch search and rescue missions for US pilots downed throughout Southeast Asia. Air America pilots were the only known private US corporate employees to operate non-Federal Aviation Administration-certified military aircraft in a combat role.



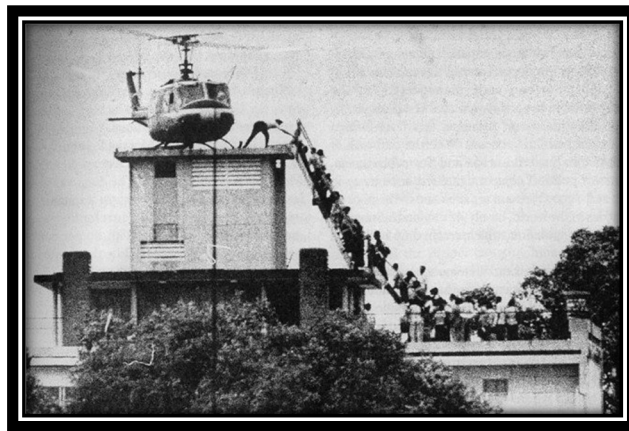
By mid-1970, the airline had two dozen twin-engine transport aircraft, another two dozen short-take off-and-landing aircraft, and 30 helicopters dedicated to operations in Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos.

There were more than 300 pilots, copilots, flight mechanics, and airfreight specialists based in Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand.

During 1970, Air America delivered 46 million pounds (21,000 metric tons) of food in Laos. Helicopter flight time reached more than 4,000 hours a month in the same year.

Air America flew civilians, diplomats, spies, refugees, commandos, sabotage teams, doctors, war casualties, drug enforcement officers, and even visiting VIPs like Richard Nixon all over Southeast Asia. Its non-human passengers were even more bizarre on occasion. Part of the CIA's support operations in Laos, for instance, involved logistical support for local tribes fighting the North Vietnamese forces and the Pathet Lao, their local opponents.

They forced draft urbanization policies, such as the widespread application of Agent Orange to Vietnamese farmland disrupted local food production, so thousands of tons of food had to be flown in, including live chickens, pigs, water buffalo, and cattle. On top of the food drops (known as "rice drops") came the logistical demands for the war itself, and Air America pilots flew thousands of flights transporting and air-dropping ammunition and weapons (referred to as "hard rice") to friendly forces.



Evacuation of CIA station personnel by Air America on the rooftop of 22 Gia Long Street in Saigon on April 29, 1975.

When the North Vietnamese Army overran South Vietnam in 1975, Air America helicopters participated in Operation Frequent Wind evacuating both US civilians and South Vietnamese people associated with the Saigon regime.

The famous photograph depicting the final evacuation by Dutch photographer, Hubert van Es, was an Air America helicopter taking people from an apartment building at 22 Gia Long St used by USAID and CIA employees.

ALLEGATIONS OF DRUG SMUGGLING

During the CIA's secret war in Laos, the CIA used the Meo (Hmong) population to fight Pathet Lao rebels. Because of the war against Pathet Lao rebels, the Meo depended upon poppy cultivation for hard currency. The Meo were very important to CIA operations and the CIA was very concerned with their well-being.

The Plain of Jars had been captured by Pathet Lao rebels in 1964 which resulted in the Laotian Air Force not being able to land their C-47 transport aircraft on the Plain of Jars for opium transport.

The Laotian Air Force had almost no light planes that could land on the dirt runways near the mountaintop poppy fields. Having no way to transport their opium, the Meo were faced with economic ruin. Air America was the only airline available in northern Laos. "According to several sources, Air America began flying opium from mountain villages north and east of the Plain of Jars to Gen Vang Pao's headquarters at Long Tieng."



Air America complex at Udorn AB, Thailand, 1973 (CIA.gov) - I was stationed here in 1973- JEC

Air America was alleged to have profited from transporting opium and heroin on behalf of Hmong leader Vang Pao, or of "turning a blind eye" to the Laotian military doing it. This allegation has been supported by former Laos CIA paramilitary Anthony Poshepny (aka Tony Poe), former Air America pilots, and other people involved in the war. It is portrayed in the movie Air America. However, University of Georgia historian William M. Leary, writing on behalf of Air America, claims that this was done without the airline employees' direct knowledge and that the airline did not trade in drugs. Curtis Peebles denies the allegation, citing Leary's study as evidence.

NOTE

Although the following statement does not identify the plane as being an Air America plane flown by an Air America pilot it well could be as it shows that it was a leased CIA plane.



THE AIR AMERICA FLEET

During its existence, Air America operated a diverse fleet of aircraft, the majority of which could take off from short runway. There was "fluidity" of aircraft between some companies like Air America, Boun Oum Airways, Continental Air Services, Inc., and the United States Air Force.

It was not uncommon for USAF and United States Army Aviation units to lend aircraft to Air America for specific missions. Air America tended to register its aircraft in Taiwan.

They operated in Laos without the B- nationality prefix. US military aircraft were often used with the "last three" digits of the military serial as a civil marking.



Air America UH-34s at Sam Thong, Laos, 1961.



Air America C-123 on-ramp at Long Tieng, 1970 (CIA.gov)

The first two transports of Air America arrived in Vientiane, Laos on 23 August 1959. The Air America operations at Udorn, Thailand were closed down on 30 June 1974. Air America's operating authority was cancelled on 31 January 1974.

Air America aircraft included:

Curtiss C-46 Commando,
 Pilatus PC-6 Portde Havilland Canada DHC-4 Caribou
 C-130
 Fairchild C-123 Provider
 UH34D helicopter
 Bell 204B helicopter
 Bell 205 helicopter
 CH47C helicopter and others....

INCIDENTS AND ACCIDENTS

On 5 May 1954, a C-119 crashed in Laos after being hit by ground fire. Pilot James B. McGovern, Jr. and Wallace Buford were killed.

On 5 September 1963, a C-46 aircraft was hit by ground fire and crashed about two kilometers from Tchepone in the Savannakhet Province. American DeBruin, Chinese Y.C. To, and the three Thai nationals, Pisidhi Indradat, Prasit Promsuwan, and Prasit Thanee parachuted to safety but were immediately captured by the Pathet Lao. Joseph C. Cheney and Charles Herrick were killed in the crash. DeBruin, To, Promsuwan, and Thanee are still missing in action. Pisidhi Indradat was later rescued in January 1967.

On 27 September 1965, a plane was shot down by small arms fire as it attempted to land near Bao Trai Airstrip, Hau Nghia Province, Vietnam. Pilot John Lerdo Oyer and Jack J Wells were killed in the crash.



1966 CIA-Air America C-46 COMMANDO plane crash at NHA TRANG AB

On 16 January 1969, a Douglas C-47A "949" crashed in the Hai Van Pass, 18 miles (29 km) south of Huế, South Vietnam. The aircraft was on a domestic cargo flight from Phu Bai International Airport to Da Nang International Airport. All 12 passengers and crew were killed.

In the spring of 1972, a C7-A Caribou loaded with Nationalist Lao Troops "mysteriously" experienced a simultaneous twin-engine failure on the final approach. Both pilots were seriously injured. Sabotage suspected.

On 29 December 1973, a Douglas C-53D EM-3 overran the runway on landing at Dalat Airport, South Vietnam. The aircraft was substantially damaged and was not salvaged due to the presence of land mines in the area. It was operating a non-scheduled passenger flight. All nine people on board survived.

On 29 April 1975, a Douglas VC-47A 084 crashed on landing at U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Airfield, Sattahip, Thailand. The aircraft was on a flight from Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Saigon, Vietnam.

AFTER THE WAR



Air America Bell 205s being evacuated aboard USS Hancock, in 1975.

After pulling out of South Vietnam in 1975, there was an attempt to keep a company presence in Thailand. After this fell through, *Air America was dissolved on 30 June 1976*. Air Asia, the company that held all of the Air America assets, was later purchased by Evergreen International Airlines.

All proceeds, a sum between 20-25 million dollars, were returned to the US Treasury. The employees were released unceremoniously with no accolades and no benefits except for those who suffered long-term disabilities and death benefits for families of employees killed in action. The benefits came from workman's compensation insurance required by contracts with the US Air Force that few knew about

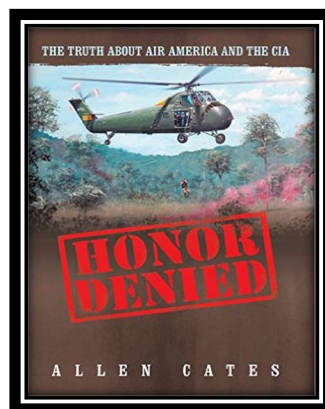
The benefits were not awarded easily. Many disabled pilots were ultimately compensated under the Federal Longshoreman's Act after lengthy battles with CIA bureaucrats who denied the existence of the airline for years. Many died of their injuries before they could be compensated adequately.

Accident reports were falsified, redacted, and stonewalled by CIA officials who to this day (2015) deny accident reports.

Air America flight crews, hired as civilians but castigated as mercenaries, malcontents, and psychopaths, operated military aircraft and performed yeoman service for twenty-five years until the war in Southeast Asia ended on a rooftop in downtown Saigon. They have never been recognized for their sacrifices. Author and former Air America pilot Allen Cates cuts through the myths and subterfuge surrounding this elite stealth Air Force used by the United States to fight a secret war in Honor Denied in his book.

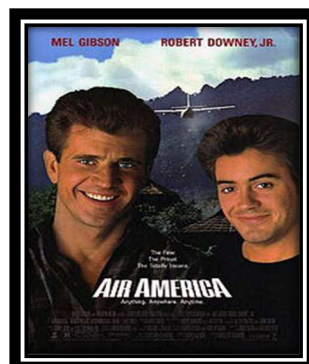
Allen Cates' book is the first in a long while to paint an accurate picture of what it was like to be a pilot for Air America during the war in Indochina.

Cates, who flew rotary and fixed-wing aircraft for the airline in Laos after his tour as a Marine H-34 helicopter pilot, negates the oft-held belief that it was the CIA that owned and operated the airline for its clandestine purposes. While Cates acknowledges the CIA was a frequent flyer on Air America, he writes that the real owner was the U.S. government, which also conjured the image of a band of drug-running rogue pilots so it



"HONOR DENIED": THE TRUTH ABOUT AIR AMERICA AND THE CIA ...BY ALLEN CATES... PUBLISHED IN 2011

ABOUT THE FILM "AIR AMERICA"



Air America is a 1990 American action comedy film directed by Roger Spottiswoode, starring Mel Gibson and Robert Downey Jr. as Air America pilots, during the Vietnam War, flying missions in Laos. When the protagonists discover their aircraft is being used by other government agents to smuggle heroin, they must avoid being framed as the smugglers.

The plot of Air America is adapted from Christopher Robbins' 1979 non-fiction book, chronicling the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency financed airline during the Vietnam War to transport weapons and supplies in Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam in the 1960s, after the North Vietnamese invasion of Laos.

The publicity for the film, advertised as a light-hearted buddy movie, implied a tone that differs greatly from the actual film's tone, which includes such serious themes as an anti-war message, focus on the opium trade, and a negative portrayal of Royal Laotian General Vang Pao (played by actor Burt Kwouk as "General Lu Soong")

CIA AIR OPERATIONS IN LAOS 1955 – 1974



SUPPORTING THE SECRET WAR

Several writers have claimed that the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is or has been involved in drug trafficking. Books on the subject that have received general notice include works by historian Alfred McCoy, English professor and poet Peter Dale Scott, and journalists Gary Webb and Alexander Cockburn. These claims have led to investigations by the United States government, including hearings and reports by the United States House of Representatives, Senate, Department of Justice, and the CIA's Office of the Inspector General. The subject remains controversial.

Following is a summary of some of the main claims made by geographical area.



MENA ARKANSAS

Several allegations have been written about and several local, state, and federal investigations have taken place related to the alleged use of the Mena Intermountain Municipal Airport as a CIA drop point in large-scale cocaine trafficking beginning in the early 1980s. The topic has received some press coverage that has included allegations of awareness, participation, and/or cover-up involvement of figures such as Oliver North and former president Bill Clinton.

An investigation by the CIA's inspector general concluded that the CIA had no involvement in or knowledge of any illegal activities that may have occurred in Mena. The report said that the agency had conducted a training exercise at the airport in partnership with *another Federal agency and that companies located at the airport had performed "routine aviation-related services on equipment owned by the CIA".*

Hollywood film director Ron Howard is currently making a movie about these events, called 'Mena',¹ and focusing on the notorious pilot and Medellin cartel drug smuggler Adler Berriman Seal, a.k.a. Barry Seal, in which Seal is played by actor Tom Cruise.

LAOS

The CIA's front company, Air America was alleged to have profited from transporting opium and heroin on behalf of Hmong leader Vang Pao, or of "turning a blind eye" to the Laotian military doing it. This allegation has been supported by former Laos CIA paramilitary Anthony Poshepny (aka Tony Poe), former Air America pilots, and other people involved in the war. It is portrayed in the movie Air America. However, University of Georgia historian William M. Leary, writing on behalf of Air America, claims that this was done without the airline employees' direct knowledge and that the airline did not trade in drugs. Curtis Peebles denies the allegation, citing Leary's study as evidence.

In most cases, the CIA's role involved various forms of complicity, tolerance, or studied ignorance about the trade, not any direct culpability in the actual trafficking. *The CIA did not handle heroin, but it did provide its drug lord allies with transport, arms, and political protection.* In sum, the CIA's role in the Southeast Asian heroin trade involved indirect complicity rather than direct culpability.

MEXICO

The oldest Mexican Cartel, the Guadalajara cartel, benefited from the CIA for having connections with the Honduran drug lord Juan Matta-Ballesteros. A CIA asset, Juan was the head of SETCO, an airline used for smuggling drugs into the US and also used to transport military supplies and personnel for the Nicaraguan Contras, *using funds from the accounts established by Oliver North.*

It is also alleged that the DFS, the main Mexican intelligence agency, which was in part a CIA creation and later became the Mexican Center for Research and National Security(CISEN), had among its members the CIA's closest government allies in Mexico. DFS badges, "handed out to top-level Mexican drug-traffickers, have been labeled by DEA agents a virtual 'license to traffic.'".

It is also known that the Guadalajara Cartel, Mexico's most powerful drug-trafficking network in the early 1980s, prospered largely, among other reasons, because it enjoyed the protection of the DFS, under its chief Miguel Nazar Haro, a CIA asset.

Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, known as the Godfather of the Mexican drug business and the first Mexican drug lord, provided a significant amount of funding, weapons, and other aid to the Contras in Nicaragua. His pilot, Werner Lotz, stated that Gallardo once had him deliver \$150,000 in cash to a Contra group, and Gallardo often boasted about smuggling arms to them. His activities were known to several U.S. federal agencies, including the CIA and DEA, *but he was granted immunity due to his "charitable contributions to the Contras".*

Vicente Zambada Niebla, the son of Ismael Zambada García, one of the top drug lords in Mexico, claimed after his arrest to his attorneys that he and other top Sinaloa Cartel members had received *immunity from U.S. agents and a virtual license to smuggle cocaine* over the United States border, in *exchange for intelligence about rival cartels engaged in the Mexican Drug War*. It is important to note that this cartel has been classified as the most powerful drug trafficking, money laundering, and organized crime syndicate in the world.

In October 2013, two former federal agents and an ex-CIA contractor told an American television network that CIA operatives were involved in the kidnapping and murder of DEA covert agent Enrique Camarena because he was a threat to the agency's drug operations in Mexico. According to the three men, the CIA was collaborating with drug traffickers moving cocaine and marijuana to the United States, and using its share of the profits to finance Nicaraguan Contra rebels attempting to overthrow Nicaragua's Sandinista government

A CIA spokesman responded, calling it "ridiculous" to suggest that the Agency had anything to do with the murder of a US federal agent or the escape of his alleged killer.

NICARAGUA

Main article: CIA involvement in Contra cocaine trafficking

In 1986, the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations began investigating drug trafficking from Central and South America and the Caribbean to the United States. The investigation was conducted by the Sub-Committee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations, chaired by Senator John Kerry, so its final 1989 report was known as the Kerry Committee report. The Report concluded that "it is clear that individuals who provided support for the Contras were involved in drug trafficking, the supply network of the Contras was used by drug trafficking organizations, and elements of the Contras themselves knowingly received financial and material assistance from drug traffickers."

In 1996 Gary Webb wrote a series of articles published in the San Jose Mercury News, which investigated Nicaraguans linked to the CIA-backed Contras who had smuggled cocaine into the U.S. which was then distributed as crack cocaine into Los Angeles and funneled profits to the Contras.

His articles asserted that the CIA was aware of the cocaine transactions and the large shipments of drugs into the U.S. by the Contra personnel and directly aided drug dealers in raising money for the Contras. The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, and The Washington Post launched their investigations and rejected Webb's allegations. In May 1997, the Mercury News executive editor Jerry Ceppos, who had approved the series, published a column that acknowledged shortcomings in the series' reporting, editing, and production, while maintaining the story was correct "on many important points." Webb later published a book based on the series, *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras, and the Crack Cocaine Explosion*.

PANAMA

The U.S. military invasion of Panama after which dictator Manuel Noriega was captured.

In 1989, the United States invaded Panama as part of Operation Just Cause, which involved 25,000 American troops. Gen. Manuel Noriega, head of government of Panama, had been giving military assistance to Contra groups in Nicaragua at the request of the U.S.—which, in exchange, allowed him to continue his drug-trafficking activities—which they had known about since the 1960s. **When the DEA tried to indict Noriega in 1971, the CIA prevented them from doing so.**

The CIA, which was then directed by future president George H. W. Bush, provided Noriega with hundreds of thousands of dollars per year as payment for his work in Latin America. However, when CIA pilot Eugene Hasenfus was shot down over Nicaragua by the Sandinistas, documents aboard the plane revealed many of the CIA's activities in Latin America, and the CIA's connections with Noriega became a public relations "liability" for the U.S. government, which finally allowed the DEA to indict him for drug trafficking, after decades of allowing his drug operations to proceed unchecked. Operation Just Cause, whose ostensible purpose was to capture Noriega, pushed the former Panamanian leader into the Papal Nuncio where he surrendered to U.S. authorities. His trial took place in Miami, where he was sentenced to 45 years in prison.

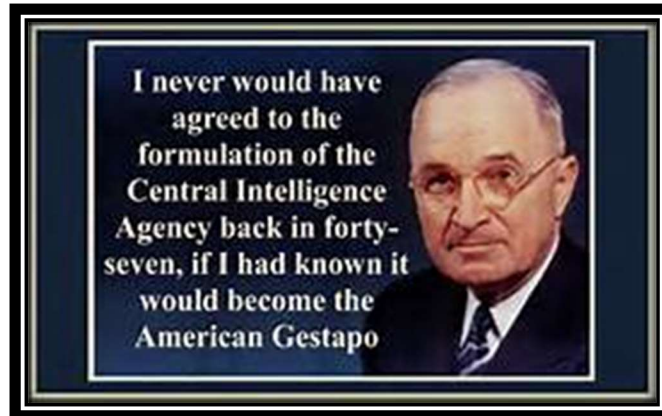
Noriega's prison sentence was reduced from 30 years to 17 years for good behavior. After serving 17 years in detention and imprisonment, his prison sentence ended on September 9, 2007. He was held in U.S. custody before being extradited to France where he was sentenced to 7 years for laundering money from Colombian drug cartels.

VENEZUELAN NATIONAL GUARD AFFAIR

The CIA, despite objections from the Drug Enforcement Administration, allowed at least one ton of nearly pure cocaine to be shipped to Miami International Airport. The CIA claimed to have done this as a way of gathering information about Colombian drug cartels, **but the cocaine ended up being sold on the street.**

In November 1993, the former head of the DEA, Robert C. Bonner appeared on 60 Minutes and criticized the CIA for allowing several tons of pure cocaine to be smuggled into the U.S. via Venezuela without first notifying and securing the approval of the DEA.

In November 1996, a Miami grand jury indicted former Venezuelan anti-narcotics chief and longtime CIA asset, General Ramon Guillen Davila, who was smuggling many tons of cocaine into the United States from a Venezuelan warehouse owned by the CIA. In his trial defense, Guillen claimed that all of his drug smuggling operations were approved by the CIA.



CIA CLAIMS THE IMAGE OF AIR AMERICA IS A BUM RAP AND MORE INFO



CLICK ON THE CIA WEBSITE LINK BELOW

<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter99-00/art7.html>

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED

AIR AMERICA & THE CIA – ONE MAN'S STORY (53 Minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0jIBB9t3Ao>

AIR AMERICA MEMORIAL DEDICATION – MCDERMOTT LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS @ DALLAS MAY 30, 1987

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN SPOKE

(SEE SPEECH BELOW)



EULOGY PROVIDED BY MR JERRY FINK, FORMER DEPUTY COUNCIL OF CAT, AIR ASIA
AND AIR AMERICA

A PORTION OF THAT EULOGY APPEARS BELOW

"To everything, there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven." The time to honor those who died or disappeared is Now, Today, at this dedication ceremony.

We honor them for the courage of their convictions supporting foreign Wars where democracy and freedom of the individual were being challenged;

We honor them for the devotion to duty required by working side by side with citizens of countries who were fighting a losing battle to keep their lands free, often under substandard conditions and in hostile situations;

We honor them for the humanity they displayed in supporting the efforts to provide food and evacuation for people whose lives were threatened;

We honor them for serving the cause of freedom as civilians during which their death or disappearance occurred with the same finality as their uniformed comrades; We honor them for their loyalty to their countries and to the company for which they worked;

Finally, we honor them because they may not otherwise be honored publicly by the United States Government and the Central Intelligence Agency which was their ultimate Employer and for whom they made the supreme sacrifice serving the cause of freedom.

MEMORIAL PLAQUE



PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN SPEAKS AT THE AIR AMERICA CLUB 1987 REUNION
MAY 5, 1987



It gives me great pleasure to greet everyone gathered for the Air America Club's 1987 reunion and to dedicate a memorial for the pilots and associates of Air America who died in the line of duty in Asia from 1947-1975.

Each of you has gone his separate way in the world, but as this reunion shows once again, the unique service you shared in defense of freedom forged a bond of brotherhood that time and distance cannot break. Unsung and unrecognized, each of you confronted danger and endured terrible hardships, and each of you rose to the challenge; you never faltered. Although free people everywhere owe you more than we can hope to repay our greatest debt is to your companions who gave their last full measure of devotion. Just as their names are inscribed on this memorial, so their memories are inscribed in our hearts. We will never forget them or their families, some of whom still seek answers.

I send a special salute to all those members of Air America present **and reaffirm my Administration's pledge to obtain the fullest possible accounting of the fate of our missing in action.** You have my best wishes. God bless you, and God bless America.



AIR AMERICA: FIRST IN – LAST OUT



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