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Fairchild C-123 in RThai AF Service

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Post-1950 Specifications

The Fairchild C-123 Provider in Royal Thai Air Force Service

Part A: Aircraft Histories

By Martin S. Best and Stephen M. Darke



The brand-new C-123B '564'. (RTAF Museum)

Introduction

This article describes the history of the Fairchild C-123 Provider in Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) service from 1964 to 1991. Both the C-123B (1964-1989) and C-123K (1973-1991) models were used. This article is based on two RTAF documents compiled (in Thai) by the Directorate of Aeronautical Engineering (DAE) and translated by Steve Darke. The original documents include some errors, which we correct, and many abbreviations that were difficult to translate. Numerous references to Thai documents have been deleted but Struck of Charge (SOC) and Withdrawn From Service (WFS) dates have been retained, where appropriate. This information has been augmented with additional data from other identified sources. In Part B we will consider preserved C-123s in Thailand, aircraft used in movies, and the C-123T project.

The Royal Thai Air Force

The RTAF is celebrating its 100th anniversary on 2nd July 2012. This date relates to the first flight of a Thai pilot in France on 2nd July 1912.

The defeat of French forces in Indochina in 1954 and the emergence of

a communist regime in North Vietnam caused the Thai government to request additional military aid from the United States. Thailand also joined the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO), which was organised to block further communist expansion in South-east Asia. Thailand was one of the founding members of SEATO in 1954 and received substantial American aid via the Military Aid Program (MAP).

Thai support for the American fighting in Indochina was more than just passive, although at the time much of the assistance the Thais provided was classified. The Thai government agreed to a US request to send combat troops to Vietnam, and as part of this effort a group of Royal Thai Air Force transport pilots were assigned to the South Vietnamese Air Force to fly C-47 and C-123 transport aircraft. The Thai government also provided extensive support to the American clandestine war in Laos.

A detailed history of the Royal Thai Air Force, which is outside the scope of this article, can be found in *Aerial Nationalism*, by Edward Young. See also *Ninety Years of Air Power*, published by the RTAF in 2004, Steve Darke's website at www.thai-aviation.net and the Scramble military database at www.scramble.nl/.

RTAF serial number system

Squadron code numbers

For modern RTAF aircraft, the most visible identity on the aircraft is the squadron code number, which changes with the squadron number. For example, the C-130Hs of 601 Squadron are numbered from 60101 to 60112. (61 Squadron was renumbered 601 on 1 October 1977, when RTAF re-organized her structure.) This system was not in use with C-123s, however. In that era, squadron code numbers were based on the USAF serial numbers, initially as a 5-digit code but later truncated to a 3-digit code based on the 'last three' of the USAF serial number. The latter can lead to potential ambiguities between FY54 and FY55 production. For example, one source has suggested (incorrectly) that '555' in the RTAF Museum might be 55-4555 c/n 20216 rather than 54-0555 c/n 20004. All these potential ambiguities are resolved in this article, given official RTAF data and correlation with known 5-digit codes. The 5-digit and 3-digit codes use Western numerals that are more easily understood by most spotters. 5-digit codes were in use in 1970 and only 3-digit codes by 1980.



USAF C-123K 360 [56-4360] 'WE' of 19th TAS in R Thai AF markings at Bien Hoa. (US-NARA)



C-123B 54-0561 at Yokota AB in Japan on 11Jun1972. (Hideki Nagakubo)

Translation of Thai Numerals

Thai	๐	๑	๒	๓	๔	๕	๖	๗	๘	๙
English	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Further information on the serial number system is given at www.thai-aviation.net/files/Air_Force_Summary.pdf.

Structure of RTAF serial number

The official serial number painted on most RTAF aircraft is much smaller and written in Thai characters, so is rarely reported by spotters in comparison with the squadron codes. The structure of this serial number can best be explained using the C-123B "B.L.4-xx/yy" and C-123K "B.L.4K-xx/yy" as examples:

B = Krueng Bin (aircraft)

L = Lumliang (Cargo)

4 = (Cargo aircraft) type 4

K(๓) = first sub-type of basic model (coincidentally C-123K, whereas C-123B is just '4'. Second model variant would be Kh(๓).)

xx = number of aircraft in series: 1, 2, 3, ... , written in Thai numerals (with no leading '0').

yy = last two digits of Buddhist year of acquisition (similar to FY), written in Thai numerals.

During the time of the C-123, Thai serials used Western numerals. We think this was to help US agencies to keep track of "their" aircraft.

The Buddhist year

The current Western year, 2012 AD, is Buddhist year 2555, so to get the Western year, subtract 543 from the Buddhist year. Thus /07 (2507) is 1964 AD and /16 (2516) is 1973 AD.

Location of dataplate

On the C-123 the aircraft data plate is on the left bulkhead as you go up the ladder into the cockpit from the cargo bay.



C-123K 54-0650 at Tan Son Nhut, 20Jun1968. (Bob Burgess)

The Fairchild C-123 Provider

For the purpose of this article, it is assumed that readers are familiar with the Fairchild C-123 Provider but it is worth recording the USAF serial number blocks for the C-123Bs, as the RTAF aircraft codes were based on these numbers. Further information on the C-123 is given in *Fairchild Aircraft 1926-1987*, by Kent A Mitchell and *C-123 Provider in action*, by Al Adcock. (Bibliographical details are given below.) The C-123T programme will be described in Part B, as this was initially a Thai-funded project.

C-123B

On 20 July 1954 Fairchild rolled out the first production Provider, c/n 20001; it was formally accepted by the USAF ten days later with the tail number 54-552. While the initial contract had called for 165 C-123B aircraft, Fairchild production continued until 303 aircraft had been built, the last on 31 July 1958. A production list for the C-123 Provider was published in AMCAR Nos. 84 & 85.

54-552 to 54-715 c/n 20001 to 20164, less 54-554 c/n 20003 (cancelled);

55-4505 to 55-4577 c/n 20166 to 20238;

56-4355 to 56-4396 c/n 20239 to 20280;

57-6185 to 57-6202 c/n 20281 to 20298 (FAV);

57-6289 to 57-6294 c/n 20299 to 20304.

C-123K

Appreciating the increased performance provided by the GE J85 jets on the YC-123H, the US Air Force approached Fairchild about installing them on C-123Bs. Fairchild provided prices and schedules and received a contract in February 1966 for the modifications, given the designation C-123K.

The prototype C-123K was USAF 54-581 c/n 20030. In addition to the installation of the two 2,850-pound thrust J85 turbojet engines, the modified aircraft incorporated a modulated anti-skid brake system, a new stall-warning system, new fuel cells and stronger windshields.

Initially, C-123Bs stationed stateside were rebuilt to K-configuration and sent to Vietnam in 1967 so that aircraft there could be rotated back to the USA for modification. Fairchild delivered the last C-123Ks to the USAF in September 1969.

A total of 183 C-123B-FA were converted to C-123K configuration with

two 2,850 pounds thrust J85-GE-17 in under-wing pods, larger wheels and anti-skid braking system: 54-565, 576/586, 590/596, 598/610, 612/613, 615/622, 624/629, 632/637, 639/640, 642/643, 645, 648/651, 653/654, 656, 658/665, 667/671, 673/675, 677/701, 703/704, 706/707, 709, 711, 713/714; 55-4506/ 4512, 4514/4515, 4517/4518, 4520, 4523/

4525, 4527/4528, 4531/4533, 4535/4536, 4542/4548, 4552/4556, 4559, 4561/4562, 4564/4571, 4574/ 4577; 56-4359/4363, 4365, 4370, 4373/4375, 4377, 4384, 4386; 57-6289/ 6291, 6293/6294.

RTAF C-123B (B.L.4-)

Eight Fairchild C-123 Providers were provided by the United States in 1964, designated Cargo Type 4. An additional fourteen were delivered by 1973 (see Summary table on page 54).

The numerous Thai abbreviations in the original RTAF documents are translated and explained in the Abbreviations section at the end of this article.

The first eight C-123Bs underwent overhaul by Fairchild at St Augustine, FL before delivery in 1964. Generally subsequent C-123B deliveries came straight from operational USAF units. 54-0705 (B.L.4-19/15) and 56-4358 (B.L.4-20/15) were former US Coast Guard aircraft in storage at MASDC that were taken back on USAF charge there in Mar72 before being dispatched to Hayes Aircraft at Dothan-Napier Field, AL for overhaul and then delivery to Thailand, possibly still in the USCG white scheme.

B.L.4-7/07 and 5/07 were the first and second aircraft manufactured on the first production line of the Fairchild Company. B.L.4-7/07 moved to Krom Tahan Tor Su Akas Yan = Anti-Aircraft Division, RTAF Security Forces, just opposite to the National Memorial, and 5/07 moved to Dusit Palace.

20 of 22 aircraft entered service with 61 Squadron except 9/09 & 10/09, which were assigned to service with Victory Squadron in Vietnam. There is no indication on USAF record cards that 54-0594 (B.L.4/09) or 54-0632 (B.L.4/10) ever left the USAF inventory. In *"The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia: Tactical Airlift"*, Office of Air Force History (page 412) it says: "As finally agreed, two of the 315th Group's C-123s were given Thai markings and returned to Vietnam in July 1966 with a detachment of twenty Thai crewmen. This Royal Thai Air Force Victory Flight thereafter served as part of the 19th Air Commando Squadron."

The RTAF stopped classifying Kong Bin Yai (group) and Kong Bin Noi (Wing) sometime after WW II and used common name Kong Bin (Wing) instead. However, the abbreviation BN for Kong Bin Noi is still in use for Kong Bin.

54-0558 (B.L.4/15), 54-0570 (B.L.4/16) and 54-0575 (B.L.4/17) were all spray-gear equipped UC-123Bs with the 4500thABW (TAC) at Langley AFB, VA, when transferred to Thailand in 1971.

It is assumed that C-123K aircraft that were converted to C-123B configuration (see below) retained their B.L.4K- serial numbers.

Individual aircraft histories

B.L.4-1/07: Received from MDAP by Ch.Or. on 09-Jun-64. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 10-Jun-65. Landing accident at BN.4 which



C-123K 54-0569 of 6 Wing RTAF at Don Muang on 02Feb1981. (Adrian Balch)



C-123B at Yokota AB, Japan, November 1974. (Hideki Nagakubo)



C-123K '698' [54-0698], as restored by 'Tango Squadron'. (G/Capt Sakpinit Promthep, R Thai AF)

Summary

22 aircraft received by the RTAF between 1964 and 1973:

<i>RTAF s/n B.L.4-</i>	<i>USAF s/n</i>	<i>c/n</i>	<i>TOC (date)</i>	<i>TOC (hours)</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>SOC (date)</i>	<i>SOC (hours)</i>
8 aircraft accepted from MDAP, batch 1, as follows:							
1/07	54-0566	20015	09-Jun-64	4218.9	40566, 566	19-Apr-76	7202.9
2/07	54-0573	20022	09-Jun-64	4428.3	40573, 573	12-Nov-80, 05-Jan-82	7816.7
3/07	54-0563	20012	09-Jun-64	3496.2	40563, 563	08-Sep-81, 21-Oct-82	8166.2
4/07	54-0572	20021	09-Jun-64	5830.2	40572, 572	30-Jan-81, 21-Oct-82	9133.0
5/07	54-0553	20002	09-Jun-64	3571.5	40553, 553	30-Jan-81, 21-Oct-82	7698.2
6/07	54-0555	20004	09-Jun-64	3415.5	40555, 555	20-Oct-82	8079.8
7/07	54-0552	20001	09-Jun-64	3517.3	40552, 552	30-Jan-81, 21-Oct-82	8064.4
8/07	54-0564	20013	09-Jun-64	4068.9	40564, 564	12-Nov-80, 05-Jan-82	7726.0
2 aircraft accepted from MAP, batch 2, as follows:							
9/09	54-0594	20043	1966		40594, ?	to Vietnam, 1966	
10/09	54-0632	20081	1966		40632, 632	to Vietnam, 1966	
2 aircraft accepted from MAP, batch 3, as follows:							
11/11	54-0665	20114	03-Jun-68	7006.9	40665, 665	11-Sep-81, 21-Oct-82	10,781.2
12/11	55-4557	20218	03-Jun-68	8061.8	?', 557	30-Jan-81, 21-Oct-82	12,301.9
2 aircraft accepted from MAP, batch 4, as follows:							
13/11	54-0561A	20010	08-Nov-68	5907.1	40561, 561	08-Sep-81, 21-Oct-82	10,858.4
14/11	54-0574	20023	08-Nov-68	6053.8	40574, 574	08-Sep-81, 20-Oct-82	11,642.3
2 aircraft accepted from MAP, batch 5, as follows:							
15/14	54-0558	20007	01-Mar-71	7476.0	40558, 558	19-Apr-76	9189.3
16/14	54-0570	20019	01-Mar-71	7024.8	40570, 570	11-Mar-82, 21-Oct-82	9081.2
1 aircraft accepted from MAP, batch 6, as follows:							
17/14	54-0575	20024	05-Apr-71	5955.6	40575, 575	20-Oct-82	8616.9
1 aircraft accepted from MAP, batch 7, as follows:							
18/14	54-0571	20020	14-Dec-71	7272.1	40571, 571	30-Jan-81, 21-Oct-82	9580.0
1 aircraft accepted from MAP, batch 8, as follows:							
19/15	54-0705	20154	13-Oct-72	3665.2	40705, 705	20-Oct-82	9951.8
1 aircraft accepted from MAP, batch 9, as follows:							
20/15	56-4358	20242	22-Oct-72	7135.1	64358, 358	16-Jan-89	10,935.0
2 aircraft accepted from MAP, batch 10, as follows:							
21/16	54-0567	20016	18-Oct-73	8679.6	40567, 567	08-Sep-81, 21-Oct-82	10,679.7
22/16	54-0569	20018	18-Oct-73	7420.4	40569, 569	08-Sep-81, 21-Oct-82	9285.7
Note 1: '40557' has been reported, but c/n 20006 was a static test airframe; this should have been '54557'.							

damaged bottom skin, tail section and door assembly, and sent for repair at GC.COr. between 19-Jul-65 and 08-Feb-66. Ran off the runway at Chiang Mai 16-Aug-66, and right propeller blade shaft and all 3 undercarriage units badly damaged. Sent for repair at GC.COr. between 06-Oct-66 and 19-Feb-68. Transferred to Ch.Or. from BY on 07-Oct-75 for repair and return to TOr.OrM., but struck off charge as badly damaged and not fit to return to service again 19-Apr-76. Stripped of useable parts which could be used to repair other aircraft, and remains returned to DPDO.

Additional notes: Noted at Don Muang Feb-82, presumably in store. (Now officially written as Don Mueang, but not when C-123s were in use; the airport was then 'BKK' but is now 'DMK').

B.L.4-2/07: Received from MDAP by Ch.Or. on 09-Jun-64. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 07-Sep-64. Accident at Surat Thani Airport 25-Apr-70, and repaired between 07-May-70 and 22-Jun-71. Withdrawn from service from Dec-75 (summary says 1980, but that may just be referring to the paperwork) and struck off charge 05-Jan-83. Useable parts stripped and put into store, and remains returned to DPDO.

Additional notes: Noted in Mar-83, presumably in store. Wings believed used on the C-123 preserved at Army Quartermaster School, Bangpho by 2007 (see BL4-3/07). (Note: Aircraft preserved in Thailand will be discussed in Part B of this article).

B.L.4-3/07: Received from MDAP by Ch.Or. on 09-Jun-64. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 07-Sep-64. Withdrawn from service 08-Sep-81. Transferred to PhL.M.1 (พหลม.๑) in support of the suppression of terrorists, and modified as a testing aircraft for fighting forces. Struck off charge 09-Apr-82, and not returned to DPDO but kept as a memorial at PhL.M.1 until moved to PT.TB. (พท.ทบ.) school (Bangpho).

Additional notes: Preserved at Army Quartermaster School, Bangpho by 2007 (see BL4-2/07)

B.L.4-4/07: Received from MDAP by Ch.Or. on 09-Jun-64. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 07-Sep-64 and operated until Feb-77 when withdrawn from service, and accepted back by Ch.Or. from BY on 18-Mar-77 for repair. To Thai-Am 05-Oct-77 for repair. Struck off charge 30-Jan-81. Returned to Ch.Or., and withdrawn from service 06-Mar-81 and stored. Useable parts stripped by S.TOr. and put into store. Struck off charge 21-Oct-82, and remains returned to DPDO.

Additional notes: Noted in Jan-84, presumably in store at Don Muang.

B.L.4-5/07: Received from MDAP by Ch.Or. on 09-Jun-64. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 07-Sep-64.

Transferred to BL.TOr. for service in Japan (Korea) on 14-Nov-68 and BY received it back from BL.TOr. on 08-Jul-70. IRAN at GC.COr. completed on 02-Sep-71, and returned to BY on 05-Aug-71 (*before IRAN completed! Original document checked*). Struck off charge 30-Jan-81, later changed to be withdrawn from service. Kept at BN.6 for training and as a memorial. Struck off charge. Remains not returned to DPDO but kept at BN.6, and later transferred from BN.6 to be set up at Dusit Palace from 12-Oct-83 until now. GB.TOr has verified that it is the 2nd aircraft which was manufactured on the first production line of Fairchild Company.

Additional notes: Preserved at Chitlada (Dusit) Palace, then stored 'Tango' apron Don Muang 1996.

B.L.4-6/07: Received from MDAP by Ch.Or. on 09-Jun-64. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 07-Sep-64 and operated until Feb-83. Withdrawn from service on 30-Feb-83 (sic, Summary says SOC 20-Oct-82) and transferred to Ch.Or. on 09-Mar-83. Useable parts stripped and put into store. Aircraft to RTAF Museum 06-Mar-81, which asked for change from 7/07 to 6/07 on 08-Jun-83 and kept it until present (1996).

Additional notes: Currently still in RTAF Museum.

B.L.4-7/07: Received from MDAP by Ch.Or. on 09-Jun-64. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 07-Sep-64. Struck off charge 30-Jan-81, later changed to be withdrawn from service 06-Mar-81. To RTAF Museum as a memorial and struck off charge 21-Oct-82. Transferred as a training aircraft at OrY 26-Jun-83, when aircraft at Museum changed to 6/07. GB.TOr has verified that it is the 1st aircraft which was manufactured on the first production line of Fairchild Company.

Additional notes: preserved at Anti-Aircraft Division, near Don Muang.

B.L.4-8/07: Received from MDAP by Ch.Or. on 09-Jun-64. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 07-Sep-64. Withdrawn from service on 15-Oct-75 then repaired and returned to TOr.OrM. until 1980. Struck off charge 11-Nov-80. Useable parts stripped and put into store. Later changed to be withdrawn from service. Struck off charge 05-Jan-83 and remains returned to DRMO.

Additional notes: Noted Mar-83, presumably in store at Don Muang.

B.L.4-9/09: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. Assigned to service with Victory Squadron in Vietnam on 22-Jul-66.

Additional notes: Assumed returned to USAF and reported as destroyed at Khe Sanh, 6/7-Mar-68 [Hobson p.140].

B.L.4-10/09: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. Assigned to service with Victory Squadron in Vietnam on 22-Jul-66.

Additional notes: Later reported to Philippine Air Force, presumably via USAF and conversion to C-123K. Reported preserved at Mactan AFB Mar-93 but no longer present by Mar-97, presumably scrapped.

B.L.4-11/11: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 03-Jun-68. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 04-Jul-68. Withdrawn from service on 25-Feb-81 by 61 Squadron and transferred to Ch.Or. to check and repair in factory, and found that right wing was broken, screw was not fitted and both wings were twisted. Stripped of useable parts and equipment by S.TOr., and later struck off charge 21-Oct-82 and remains returned to DRMO.

Additional notes: Noted Feb-85, presumably in store at Don Muang.

B.L.4-12/11: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 03-Jun-68. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 04-Jul-68. Withdrawn from service on 22-Jul-80 by 601 Squadron and transferred to Ch.Or. to IRAN. Struck off charge 30-Jan-81, later changed to be withdrawn from service 06-Mar-81 then being kept as spare and be struck off charge 21-Oct-82 and remains returned to DPDO.

Additional notes: Noted Mar-83, presumably in store at Don Muang.

B.L.4-13/11: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 08-Nov-68. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 06-Dec-68. Transferred to BL.TOr. for service in Japan (Korea) on 01-May-69 and BY received it back from BL.TOr. on 25-Aug-76. Withdrawn from service on 30-Sep-81 and Ch.Or. received it back from 601 Squadron on 20-Oct-81. Withdrawn from service in Oct-81 and was struck off charge 21-Oct-82 and remains returned to DPDO.

Adcock (p.21) shows RTAF C-123B code 40561. The caption says: "A C-123B (54-561) of the Royal Thai Air Force takes off from Yakota Air Base, Japan on 7 December 1974. The C-123B had been assigned to a United Nations Detachment in South Korea. This aircraft was the tenth Fairchild-built C-123B."

Additional notes: Noted Mar-83, presumably in store at Don Muang.

B.L.4-14/11: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. in Oct-68 (Summary list says 08-Nov-68). Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 18-Dec-68. Transferred to BL.TOr. for service in Japan (Korea) on 20-May-70 and BY received it back from BL.TOr. on 25-Aug-76. Withdrawn from service on 30-Nov-82 and Ch.Or. received it back from 601 Squadron on 03-Dec-82. Withdrawn from service in Nov-82 and given to Special War Centre.

Additional notes: Noted at Don Muang Dec-81, presumably in store. Fin believed to be used on the C-123 preserved at Army Quartermaster School, Bangpho by 2007 (see L4-3/07).

B.L.4-15/14: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 01-Mar-71. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 07-Apr-71 and operated until 30-Nov-75. Withdrawn from service and transferred to Ch.Or. on 05-Jan-76 because badly damaged and could not be repaired. Struck off charge 19-Apr-76, and stripped of useable parts which could be used to repair other aircraft, and remains returned to DPDO. Later repaired and modified as a testing aircraft.

Additional notes: Last noted at Don Muang Aug-76.

B.L.4-16/14: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 01-Mar-71. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 07-Apr-71 and operated until Jan-79. IRAN at Thai Am. Transferred back Ch.Or. on 28-Apr-82. Withdrawn from service in Mar-82 and struck off charge 21-Oct-82. Later reported delivered to BN.41 for display instead of B.L.4-22/16 (previous) which was moved to make a film at Mae Hong Son Province, and installation completed on 07-Nov-90, but this is believed to be an error in the official records as the aircraft displayed at BN.41 is 55-4570 L4K-13/18 (54-0570 probably confused with 55-4570).

Additional notes: Noted 1983, Apr-87 & Apr-89.

B.L.4-17/14: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 05-Apr-71. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 22-Apr-71 and operated until Feb-83. Withdrawn from service and transferred to Ch.Or. on 09-Mar-83 because of its withdrawal in Feb-83. Flown one-way to BN.21 to be put on display. Stripped of useable parts and equipment by S.TOr. and NGKH.

Additional notes: Preserved at Ubon Ratchathani AFB.

B.L.4-18/14: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 14-Dec-71. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 07-Jan-72 and operated by 61 Squadron. Artificial rain-making equipment installed 08-Jul-75 until 30-Dec-81. Withdrawn from service and transferred to Ch.Or. on 20-Feb-81 having been struck off charge 30-Jan-81, later changed to be withdrawn from service 06-Mar-81. Remains kept by Ch.Or. Struck off charge 21-Oct-82, and remains returned to DPDO.

Additional notes: Noted at Don Muang Nov-89, presumably in store.

B.L.4-19/15: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 13-Oct-72. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 17-Nov-72. Damaged (?) off-airport on 19-Nov-73. Repaired at GCh.Ch.Or. (กรมช่างอากาศยาน) between 12-Dec-73 and 15-May-74. Modified to Royal aircraft on 25-Jul-75. With-

drawn from service on 30-Dec-82 and transferred to Ch.Or. on 10-Jan-83 because of its withdrawal in Dec-82. Flown one-way to FTS to be put on display. Stripped of useable parts and equipment by S.TOr. and NGKH.

Additional notes: Preserved at Khampaeng Saen in Survival Training Center.

B.L.4-20/15: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 22-Oct-72. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 21-Nov-72 for operation until Nov-88. Withdrawn from service and struck off charge 16-Jan-89, and remains returned to DPDO.

B.L.4-21/16: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 18-Oct-73. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 09-Nov-73 for



Royal Flight C-123K 55-569 [55-4569] at Khampaeng Saen, 8Sep1982. (Surapol Yaovasuta)



C-123K 542 [55-4542]. (via G/Capt Sakpinit Promthep)



'705' HC-123 at Khampaeng Saen, 27Mar2012. (Trevor Bartlett)

operation until Nov-81. Withdrawn from service 08-Sep-81. Struck off charge 21-Oct-82, and remains returned to DPDO.

Additional notes: Noted Feb-81, presumably stored at Don Muang.

B.L.4-22/16: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 18-Oct-73. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 09-Nov-73 for operation until May-82. Withdrawn from service 24-Sep-81. Struck off charge 21-Oct-82, and allocated for display at BN.41. Later, in 1988-1989, used in the film 'Air America' at Mae Hong Son. Replaced on display at BN.41 by B.L.4-16/14, which flew from BN.6, and was put on display on 07-Nov-90.

Additional notes: Believed destroyed at Mae Hong Son after filming.

RTAF C-123K (B.L.4K-)

Eight Fairchild C-123K Providers were received from the United States in 1973, designated Cargo Type 4K. An additional twelve were received during 1975-1976.

The first eight C-123Ks were all formerly MAP aircraft transferred to the South Vietnamese Air Force with the following USAF SOC details:

54-0576 (UC-123K) SOC 17Jul71 (to South Vietnam), restored 12Dec72, (C-123K) SOC 16Jun73 (to Thailand)

54-0584 (UC-123K) SOC 02Jul71 (to South Vietnam), restored 20Dec72, (C-123K) SOC 21Jun73 (to Thailand)

54-0626 SOC 15Sep71 (to South Vietnam), restored 10Jan73, SOC 10Jun73 (to Thailand)

54-0670 SOC 18Sep71 (to South Vietnam), restored 12Dec72, SOC 21Jun73 (to Thailand)

55-4542 SOC 27Jun72 (to South Vietnam), restored 10Dec72, SOC 16Jun73 (to Thailand)

55-4548 SOC 22Jun72 (to South Vietnam), restored 12Dec72, SOC 22Jun73 (to Thailand)

55-4569 SOC 14Jul71 (to South Vietnam), restored 07Dec72, SOC 22Jun73 (to Thailand)

57-6289 (UC-123K) SOC 15Jul71 (to South Vietnam), restored 15Jan73, SOC 13Jun73 (to Thailand)

55-4569 (B.L.4K-7/16) and 55-4570 (B.L.4K-17/18) had previously served with the Royal Saudi Air Force as C-123Bs from July 1957 to November 1966.

Between 11 April and 17 April 1975, 97 Khmer Air Force aircraft were evacuated to Thailand, including ten C-123Ks. The C-123Ks were all transferred to the RTAF. The dispositions of these ten C-123Ks, as at 24Apr75, were as follows:

54-0680: under contract maintenance, Thai-Am, Udorn

54-0682: under contract maintenance, Thai-Am, Don Muang

54-0691: under contract maintenance, Thai-Am, Udorn

54-0698: under contract maintenance, Thai-Am, Udorn

54-0700: under contract maintenance, Thai-Am, Udorn

54-0713: under contract maintenance, Thai-Am, Udorn

55-4553: under contract maintenance, Thai-Am, Udorn

55-4565: under contract maintenance, Thai-Am, Don Muang

55-4566: under contract maintenance, Thai-Am, Don Muang

55-4570: under contract maintenance, Thai-Am, Udorn

These are all included in the table below.

Summary

RTAF s/n	USAF s/n	c/n	TOC (date)	TOC (hours)	Codes	SOC (date)	SOC (hours)
B.L.4K-							
8 aircraft received from MAP, having serial numbers as follows:							
1/16	54-0576	20025	17-Jun-73	8819.1	40576, 576	21-May-91	12,076.8
2/16	54-0584	20033	21-Jun-73	9042.7	?	30-Jun-77	9401.4
3/16	54-0626	20075	15-Jun-73	10,466.8	?, 626	9-Aug-77	10,735.9
4/16	54-0670	20119	21-Jun-73	14,113.6	40670, 670	27-Feb-84	14,984.7
5/16	55-4542	20203	17-Jun-73	10,750.5	54542, 542	27-Feb-84	12,322.0
6/16	55-4548	20209	23-Jun-73	12,935.5	54548, 548	27-Feb-84	14,117.6
7/16	55-4569	20230	23-Jun-73	6261.6	54569, 569	21-May-91	8478.3
8/16	57-6289	20299	23-Jun-73	8775.0	76289, 289	21-May-91, 15-Nov-95	13,022.2
12 aircraft received from BK.SN (Don Muang), having serial numbers as follows:							
9/18	54-0691	20140	22-Sep-75	9351.7	40691, 691	29-Mar-89	10,458.1
10/18	54-0698	20147	18-Sep-75	4068.9	40698, 698	21-May-91	(?)
11/18	55-4565	20226	17-Oct-75	(?)	54565, 565	2-Oct-90	(?)
12/18	55-4566	20227	18-Sep-75	12,373.2	?	19-May-83	13,707.6
13/18	55-4570	20231	9-Sep-75	4874.7	?	29-Mar-89	6582.0
14/18	54-0680	20129	28-Nov-75	9875.3	40680, 680	27-Feb-84	11,256.5
15/18	54-0682	20131	20-Nov-75	13,653.1	40682, 682	27-Feb-84	15,623.9
16/18	54-0700	20149	20-Nov-75	921.9	40700, 700	21-May-91	(?)
17/18	54-0713	20162	28-Nov-75	9150.1	?, 713	21-May-91	12,841.6
18/18	55-4553	20214	11-Nov-75	12,493.4	54553, 553	29-Mar-89	14,297.7
19/19	54-0636	20085	6-Feb-76	14,750.4	?	28-Jan-77	14,847.7
20/19	55-4576A	20237	6-Feb-76	20,405.5	54576, 576A	12-Oct-90	23,304.4

The ten Cambodian C-123Ks that were evacuated to Thailand in April 1975 had the following USAF SOC details:

54-0680 SOC 11Mar75 (to Cambodia)
(note short time in Cambodia)
54-0682 SOC 03May71 (to South Vietnam, passed to Cambodia 1973)
54-0691 SOC 24Jan75 (to Cambodia)
54-0698 SOC 05Feb75 (to Cambodia)
54-0700 SOC 12Dec74 (to Cambodia)
54-0713 SOC 26Jul74 (to Cambodia)
55-4553 SOC 08Jul71 (to South Vietnam, passed to Cambodia 1973)
55-4565 SOC 28Apr71 (to South Vietnam, passed to Cambodia 1973)
55-4566 SOC 08Jul71 (to South Vietnam), restored to USAF 10Dec72, SOC 18Apr73 (to Cambodia)
55-4570 SOC 13Dec74 (UC-123K, to Cambodia)

The two C-123Ks received in 1976 were former Air America aircraft that were transferred to the Royal Lao Air Force as MAP aircraft in 1973:

54-0636 SOC 20Jan73 (to Laos)
55-4576 SOC 20Jan73 (to Laos).

Individual aircraft histories

B.L.4K-1/16: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 17-Jun-73. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 23-Nov-73 and operated until withdrawn from flying in Jan-91 because of high maintenance costs, used for a long time and difficulty finding spares. De-commissioned 21-May-91 because of problems with maintenance and finding spares. Later on restored and re-entered service with Artificial Rainmaking Project 14-Feb-94. Used on Artificial Rainmaking Project with 602 Squadron until 1995 when stopped operating 15-Feb-95. Transferred to Ch.Or. 17-Nov-95 for Artificial Rainmaking Project service at BN.41.

Additional notes: Reported as used in 'Operation Dumbo Drop' movie 1994. Final withdrawal date not clear – appears still to be in use at Chiang Mai from late 1995 (We saw it stored at Don Muang in late Oct-95). Noted in Ratchaburi scrapyard 2003; to Jesada Technik Museum, Nakhon Chaisi, by 2006.

B.L.4K-2/16: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 21-Jun-73. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 23-Nov-73. Involved in accident with Army C-47 on 21-Jun-77 and struck off charge 30-Jun-77.

B.L.4K-3/16: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 15-Jun-73. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 15-Mar-74. Operated until crashed into mountain and DBF in Lampang province 29-Jul-77. Struck off charge 9-Aug-77. Remains destroyed by BY at scene of accident.

B.L.4K-4/16: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 21-Jun-73. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 7-Jan-74 and

operated until Feb-84. Struck off charge 27-Feb-84 (during Jan to Mar-84). DRMO informed of de-commissioning 18-Mar-84 and asked for aircraft to be displayed at Special Warfare Center, Lopburi 8-Nov-84. Aircraft not found there during audit and believed broken up by DRMO.

Additional notes: Noted at Don Muang Nov-86; presumably stored.

B.L.4K-5/16: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 17-Jun-73. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 17-Feb-75 and operated until Dec-83. Struck off charge 27-Feb-84 (during Jan to Mar-84). DRMO informed of de-commissioning 18-Mar-84. In 1994 GB.TOr. asked T.Or. to check information about C-123K 55-4542, because TOr.OrM. wanted to know where their aircraft was, as T.Or. have no report. The officer appointed to carry out the check concluded that T.Or. had informed TOr.OrM that there was a record of the aircraft in document JM.TOr. (Inventory of MAP Equipment), and that the aircraft was no longer under T.Or. control.

Additional notes: Noted at Don Muang Nov-86, presumably stored.

B.L.4K-6/16: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 23-Jun-73. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 4-Feb-74 and operated until Jun-84. Struck off charge 27-Feb-84 (during Apr to Jun-84). DRMO informed of de-commissioning 18-Mar-84. Aircraft allocated for display at BN.6.

Additional notes: Displayed outside Parachute Battalion HQ (n front of Ewing 6 HQ), Don Muang (re-painted with false serial '55-569' in 2003).

B.L.4K-7/16: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 23-Jun-73. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 23-Nov-73. Upgraded to Royal aircraft 1-Jun-76. Air conditioner installed 28-May-80. Tailplane damaged by rainstorm 2-May-81 whilst parked south of hangar and repaired at a total cost of 159,943. Port undercarriage collapsed on landing whilst training at U-Tapao 10-Jul-85, damaging port undercarriage, port propeller and wheel well. Sent for repair 28-Jul-85 and completed 16-Jan-86. Ordered to be withdrawn 13-Feb-91 because used for a long time and spares difficult to find. De-commissioned 21-May-91 because of maintenance problems and not safe to fly. After withdrawal given to Foundation for the Preservation and Development of Thai Aircraft ("Tango Squadron") and now (May-96) stored at GCO.1 CO.1.

Additional notes: Noted stored on "Tango" apron Don Muang 1996 and noted still stored at Don Muang 2000. To Armed Forces Preparatory School, Nakhon Nayok by 2005.

B.L.4K-8/16: Received from MAP by Ch.Or. on 14-Jun-73. Entered service

with BY (61 Squadron) on 24-Jun-75 and operated until Jun-79. Transferred from 602 Squadron to CO. on 8-Aug-79. IRAN checks and maintenance at Thai-Am from 17-Mar-80 until 22-Aug-83 and then operated until 1991. Aircraft withdrawn from flying 13-Feb-91 because used for a long time and spares difficult to find. Later on, in 1994, restored and re-entered service with Artificial Rainmaking Project 14-Feb-94. Used on Artificial Rainmaking Project with 602 Squadron until 1995 when stopped operating 15-Nov-95. Aircraft brought back and stored at GCO.2 CO.1.

Additional notes: Noted stored at Don Muang at least 1996-2000; to Duckhams (later Caltex) garage at Bang Wua for display by 2001.

B.L.4K-9/18: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 22-Sep-75. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 9-Dec-75 and operated until 4-Apr-84. Modified to be B.L.4 (C-123B) at SS.DM.CO. on 13-Jun-84. De-commissioned 21-Mar-89 and kept for spares to support maintenance of B.L.4K which are still in service but short of spares. DRMO informed, and remains to be sent back to TOr.OrM.

Additional notes: Ex Khmer A/F; escaped to Thailand April 1975.

B.L.4K-10/18: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 18-Sep-75. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 9-Dec-75 and operated until Feb-91. De-commissioned 21-May-91 because of maintenance problems and not safe to fly. After withdrawal given to Foundation for the Preservation and Development of Thai Aircraft. Later on, in 1994, restored and re-entered service with Artificial Rainmaking Project 14-Feb-94. Used on Artificial Rainmaking Project with 602 Squadron. In 1995 was brought back into service and transferred to Ch.Or. 17-Nov-95 for Artificial Rainmaking Project service at BN.41.

Additional notes: Ex Khmer A/F; escaped to Thailand April 1975. Reported used in 'Air America' movie 1991. To Sri Racha scrapyard by early 2000. To Caterpillar dealership at Bang Plee for display in November 2000 and still there in 2011.

B.L.4K-11/18: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 17-Oct-75. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 13-Nov-75 and operated until withdrawn from flying in Jun-90. Struck off charge 2-Oct-90 because not worth repairing. Given to the Crown Prince for display and now (May-96) stored at GCO.1 CO.1.

Additional notes: Ex Khmer A/F; escaped to Thailand April 1975. Noted stored at Don Muang at least 1994 through 2000. To Jomtien Waterpark by 2003 and still there in 2010.

B.L.4K-12/18: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 18-Sep-75. Entered service

with BY (61 Squadron) on 9-Dec-75 and operated until on 6-May-83 when aircraft suffered an accident whilst landing at Takhli. Instructed to go around because construction work was blocking the runway, but crashed and burned, killing all 30 on board. Aircraft struck off charge 19-May-83. Aircraft remains were broken up at BN.4.

Additional notes: Ex Khmer A/F; escaped to Thailand April 1975.

B.L.4K-13/18: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 9-Sep-75. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 7-Apr-77 and operated until Mar-89 De-commissioned 21-Mar-89 and stored for spares. Aircraft modified to be B.L.4 (C-123B) and tested with R2800-99W engines installed after modification. Aircraft not operational and DRMO informed. Remains sent to T.Or.OrM.

Additional notes: Ex Khmer A/F; escaped to Thailand April 1975. Put on display as C-123B at Wing 41, Chiang Mai, by 1997, coded '4113'. (No dataplate but ID confirmed by call-sign plate in cockpit.). See also B.L.4-16.14 (above)

B.L.4K-14/18: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 28-Nov-75. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 19-Jan-76 and operated until Sep-84. Aircraft withdrawn from flying and struck off charge 27-Feb-84 (during Jul to Sep-84). JM.T.Or. informed of de-commissioning 18-Mar-84.

Additional notes: Ex Khmer A/F; escaped to Thailand April 1975. Reported scrapped Apr-88

B.L.4K-15/18: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 20-Nov-75. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 29-Dec-75 and operated until Oct-84. Aircraft

withdrawn from flying and struck off charge 27-Feb-84 (during Oct to Dec-84). JM.T.Or. informed of de-commissioning 18-Mar-84.

Additional notes: Ex Khmer A/F; escaped to Thailand April 1975. Noted at Don Muang Aug-87; presumably stored. Reported scrapped Apr-88

B.L.4K-16/18: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 20-Nov-75. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 29-Dec-75 and operated until Feb-91. Aircraft withdrawn from flying 13-Feb-91 because of high maintenance costs, used for a long time and difficulty finding spares. Aircraft stored at GCO.2 CO (May-96).

Additional notes: Ex Khmer A/F; escaped to Thailand April 1975. Reported with code 'WH'. Noted dumped at Lopburi at least 1998 through 2000. Noted parked on apron Aug-02 through Jan-12.

B.L.4K-17/18: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 28-Nov-75. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 19-Jan-76 and operated until Feb-91. Aircraft withdrawn from flying 13-Feb-91 because of high maintenance costs, used for a long time and difficulty finding spares. Aircraft stored at GCO.2 CO. Later approved for display at Vietnam War Veterans Memorial Museum, Kanchanaburi Province 02-Mar-94.

Additional notes: Ex Khmer A/F; escaped to Thailand April 1975. Still displayed at Vietnam War Veterans Memorial Museum, Kanchanaburi, Jan-12.

B.L.4K-18/18: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 11-Nov-75. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 11-Dec-75. Modified to be B.L.4 (C-123B) on 14-Sep-83. Modified for artificial rain opera-

tion on 26-Aug-87 and operated until Jan-89. De-commissioned 21-Mar-89 and stored for spare parts.

Additional notes: Ex Khmer A/F; escaped to Thailand April 1975.

B.L.4K-19/19: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 6-Feb-76. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 22-Mar-76. On 11-Jan-77 aircraft ran off the side of the runway whilst landing at Don Muang. Struck off charge 28-Jan-77 because too expensive to repair. Stripped for spares, which were sent to the CO store, and remains not returned to DPDO.

B.L.4K-20/19: Received from BK.SN. by Ch.Or. on 6-Feb-76. Entered service with BY (61 Squadron) on 22-Mar-76 and operated until Jun-80. Aircraft then at Thai-Am for IRAN checks and maintenance from 11-Jul-80 until 17-Aug-84. Operated until Sep-90 when withdrawn from flying and struck off charge 12-Oct-90, because not worth rebuilding, and aircraft stored at GCO.2 CO.

Additional notes: Stored at Don Muang at least 1994 through 2000. Noted in Ratchaburi scrapyard 2003; to Jesada Technik Museum, Nakhon Chaisi, by 2006.

USAF C-123s in RTAF colours

In mid-1966, following government approval on 2 May, Victory Squadron was established to send two C-123Bs with 27 crew members to Vietnam to assist air transport in the war zone. The unit left Thailand on 22 July with C-123Bs L4-9/09 and L4-10/09. Neither aircraft returned to Thailand, but the detachment was extended in 1967 when



C-123B '358' in US Coast Guard colours with Thai markings. (RTAF Museum)

Thai crew member were brought into the USAF transport fleet to ease an existing pilot shortage.

The Thai pilots were assigned to the 19th ACS of the 315th ACW, which was headquartered at Phan Rang, South Vietnam. Subordinate squadrons were 12th ACS at Bien Hoa, 19th ACS at Tan Son Nhut and 309th/310th/311th ACS all at Phan Rang. As the Thai crews were assigned to the 19th ACS, they would have been at Tan Son Nhut. The wing was officially redesignated as the 315th SOW with effect from 1 August 1968 and then 315th TAW with effect from 1 June 1970, with its subordinate squadrons being redesignated as SOS and the TAS on the same dates.

The Thai pilots were highly qualified, even including a few instructor pilots in their numbers. In flying the 19th TAS Providers, they had only to get used to the added jet engines of the USAF C-123Ks. The rest of what they learned had to do with mission technique. The Thais stayed for a six month tour in Vietnam before they rotated back to Thailand and were replaced by other crews.

Although the Thai crews were often assigned to the regular aircraft of the 19th TAS, three of the 19th TAS C-123K carried Thai markings over the USAF paint and the 'WE' code of the 315th, but the aircraft still belonged to the USAF: 54-650 c/n 20099, 54-686 c/n 20135 and 56-4360 (360, 'QB') c/n 20244.

The reason to use Thai markings was to give visual evidence of the RTAF's presence and the prestige of the crews

to fly a foreign aircraft, even when they flew home to Bangkok and were greeted by the RTAF Chief of Staff. These C-123Ks were USAF planes and on each flight at least one member of the USAF had to be on board. The deployment of the RTAF in Vietnam ended at the end of 1970.

Adcock (p.43) has a picture of 19th TAS C-123K 54-686. The caption says: *"Still carrying the markings of the 19th Tactical Airlift Squadron, this C-123K (54-686) was being turned over [sic] to the Royal Thai Air Force during 1970. The aircraft carried Thai markings on the starboard side of the fuselage and English markings on the port side."*

Replacement aircraft

The C-123 (B.L.4) has been replaced in RTAF service by six Alenia G.222 (B.L.14, with 603 Squadron) and twelve C-130H (B.L.8, in 601 Squadron). The G.222s were being withdrawn from service from 2009.

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To be concluded

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Abbreviations

ACS	Air Commando Squadron
ACW	Air Commando Wing
AFB	Air Force Base
ARP	Artificial Rainmaking Project
BK.SN.	Kong Banchakarn Suan Nah = Forward Headquarters
BL.Tor.	Kong Bin Lumliang, RTAF = RTAF transport unit in Japan
BN.	Kong Bin = Wing
BN.4	Kong Bin Noi 4 = Wing 4 (Takhli)
BN.6	Kong Bin 4 = Wing 4 (Takhli) Kong Bin Noi 6 = Wing 6 (Don Muang) Kong Bin 6 = Wing 6 (Don Muang)
BN.21	Kong Bin Noi 21 = Wing 21 (Ubon Ratchathani) Kong Bin 21 = Wing 21 (Ubon Ratchathani)
BN.41	Kong Bin Noi 41 = Wing 41 (Chiang Mai) Kong Bin 41 = Wing 41 (Chiang Mai)
BY	Kong Bin Yuttakarn = Tactical Air Command
c/n	construction number
Ch.Or.	Krom Chang Akas = Directorate of Aeronautical Engineering (DAE)
DAE	Directorate of Aeronautical Engineering (RTAF)
DBF	Destroyed By Fire
DPDO	(US) Defense Property Disposal Office (predecessor to DRMO)
DRMO	(US) Defense Reutilization & Marketing Office (successor to DPDO)
GB.Tor.	Krom Song Kumling Bumrung Taharn Akas = Directorate of Logistics
GC.CO.	Kong Som, Krom Chang Akas = Maintenance Division, DAE
GCOr1 CO.	Aircraft Maintenance Division 1, Don Muang
GCOr2.CO.	Aircraft Maintenance Division 2, Lopburi
IRAN	Inspect and Repair As Necessary
JM.T.Or.	Inventory of MAP Equipment
JUSMAG	Kong Thap Akas = Joint United States Military Advisory Group, Air Force
MAP	Military Aid Program
MASDC	Military Aircraft Storage and Disposition Center
MDAP	Mutual Defense Assistance Program
NGKH	Nuay Kiaw Kong = Related Units
Or.Y.	Akas Yothin = Security Forces
PhL.M.1	Kong Phol Tahan Ma Tee Nueng = 1st Cavalry Division
RR.FTS	Rong Rian Karn Bin = Flying Training School
RR.PT.TB	Rong Rian Palatikarn Tahan Bok = Army Quartermaster School
RTA	Royal Thai Army
RTAF	Royal Thai Air Force
S.Tor.	Krom Suesarn Tahan Akas = Directorate of Communication, RTAF
s/n	serial number
SEATO	South East Asia Treaty Organisation
SOC	Struck Off Charge
SOS	Special Operations Squadron
SOW	Special Operations Wing
SS.DM.CO	Sune Som Donmuang, Krom Chang Akas = Donmuang Maintenance Centre, DAE
Tango	Foundation for the Preservation and Development of Thai Aircraft
Squadron	Tactical Airlift Squadron
TAS	Tactical Airlift Squadron
TAW	Tactical Airlift Wing
TOC	Taken on Charge
T.Or.	Kong Thap Akas = Royal Thai Air Force
Tor.OrM.	Kong Thap Akas American = USAF
USCG	United States Coast Guard
WFS	Withdrawn From Service

The Fairchild C-123 Provider in Royal Thai Air Force Service

Part B: Preserved Aircraft and the C-123T Project

By Martin S. Best and Stephen M. Darke

In this concluding article, we look at the current disposition of preserved C-123s in Thailand, Thai C-123s in films, and describe the Thai C-123T project.



C-123B No.555 at the Royal Thai AF Museum on 13th January, 2012. (Martin S. Best)



This photo of '576' was taken at Jesada Technik Museum on 2nd July, 2012 by Steve Darke.

Preserved C-123s in Thailand

ID	S/n	C/n	Model	Location	L/n	Notes
289	8/16	20299	C-123K	W side of Route 34 at km 52, Bang Wua, N of Chonburi	Jul12	Above Caltex (ex-Duckhams) petrol station
(548) '55-569'	6/16	20209	C-123K	Outside Parachute Battalion HQ, Don Muang AFB	Jul12	In front of Wing 6 HQ, false marks
552	7/07	20001	C-123B	Thanon Phahon Yothin (Anti-Aircraft Division, RTAF Security Forces)	Jul12	Opposite National Memorial
555	6/07	20004	C-123B	RTAF Museum, Don Muang	Jul12	
563	3/07	20012	C-123B	RTA Quartermaster School, Bangpho	Dec10	Composite: fin '574', wing '0573', fuselage L4-3/07 '563'
565	11/18	20226	C-123K	Jomtien Water Park, 2 km E of Highway 3, km 154	Apr10	
55-569	7/16	20230	C-123K	Armed Forces Preparatory School, Nakhon Nayok	Jul12	
570 / '4113'	13/18	20231	C-123B	Chiang Mai AFB	Apr12	Converted from C-123K
575	17/14	20024	C-123B	Ubon Ratchathani AFB	Feb11	
576	1/16	20025	C-123K	Jesada Technik Museum, Salaya	Jul12	Stored at
576A	20/19	20237	C-123K	Jesada Technik Museum, Salaya	Jul12	Stored at
698	10/18	20147	C-123K	N side of Route 34 at 30km, Bang Plee,	Jul12	Caterpillar dealership car park
700	16/18	20149	C-123K	Lopburi AFB	Jul12	On apron
705	19/15	20154	HC-123B	Survival Training Camp, Khamphaeng Saen AFB	Mar12	
713	17/18	20162	C-123K	Vietnam Veterans Museum, Kanchanaburi	Dec11	Surasri Army Camp
Unidentified	?	?	C-123B	Muak Lek, 30.4 km Highway 2	Jul12	Previously in use as a restaurant at Royal Plaza Hotel, Nakhon Ratchasima – See Note 3

Notes:

1. Please see www.thai-aviation.net for map references for preserved aircraft.
2. The best opportunity to visit military bases is on Thai Children's Day, which is celebrated on the second Saturday of January each year.
3. The C-123B at Muak Lek, by the side of the road between Saraburi and Korat (Highway 2), is unidentified with no dataplate inside. This aircraft is painted in garish colours and no original markings are visible. Some sources suggest this might be 54568/568 c/n 20229, which was an Air America C-123K. The aircraft was between the km 138 and 139 posts, counting from Bangkok, perhaps at about km 138.4, but they renumbered the posts in about 2009, counting instead from the start of Highway 2, which is at the Saraburi junction, so now it is at km 30.4; location 14-38.229N x 101-9.773E.



Movie stars

Details of aircraft used in many movies are listed at the Military Aviation Movie List and other websites. For the movie "Air America", this site says:

"4 C-123K Providers (from 602 Sqdn., Bangkok), 8 UH-1B/H, 4 Fairchild AU-23A Pacemakers [sic] (Turbo-Porter, of 202 Sqdn. Lop Buri), 2 C-47. Schweizer TH-300C (TH-55), Sikorsky S.58T, C-130H, 2 O-1 Bird Dog hulks, US Civil Bell 47.

"1 Fairchild C-123K Provider hulk plus a full size C-123 mock-up for the first crash. Bell UH-1 hulk. Turbo-Porter hulk rebuilt to flying condition for the stunts."

C-123B L4-22/16 ('569'), which had been on display at Wing 41, Chiang Mai, was used in the filming of 'Air America' in 1989, and the remains left at Mae Hong Son. It was replaced at Wing 41 by L4-13/18 ('570'). Several other RTAF C-123s were also used in this movie, including '698' (B.L4K-10/18).

Another C-123B was used in the 1995 film 'Operation Dumbo Drop', filmed partly in Thailand. This C-123, clearly marked as '702', was 54-702 c/n 20151, which had crashed near Binh Khe, South Vietnam, on 25 January 1966. It is not clear how the surviving remains came to

Left: No.698 at Bang Plee in January, 2010, in the yard of a 'Caterpillar' dealer. (Tom Milliken)

be available for the film, or if the marks '702' were fictitious.

Several RTAF C-123s were also used in the 'Operation Dumbo Drop' movie, including '576' (B.L.4K-1/16). (This movie is not listed in the Military Aviation Movie List.)

The C-123T project

In the mid-1960s, Fairchild made a proposal to the USAF to re-engine the entire fleet of C-123B aircraft with 3,420 shp Allison T56 turboprop engines. The intention was to use the experience gained with the YC-123H with its wide spaced main landing gear and auxiliary jet engines mated with the proven turboprop power plants from the Lockheed C-130 assault transport. This proposal would have given the C-123, with its airframe life (in 1960) estimated to be at least another 20 years. The USAF, however, had placed most of its available money in C-130 development and no contracts were forthcoming.

During the latter part of the U.S. involvement in South Vietnam, the USAF began turning over C-123B and C-123Ks to allied air forces in the region. Thailand received a number of C-123Bs and C-123Ks along with one HC-123B (56-4357). The Royal Thai Air Force became aware early on that the supply of new and good used Pratt and Whitney R2800 radial engines was limited and began a research project aimed at finding an alternate power plant for their fleet of aging C-123s.

That project led to a contract being placed with the Mancro Aircraft Company of Paramount, California. Mancro, in cooperation with the USAF (which supported the project by the loan of engines, propellers and associated equipment), began a conversion of the C-123 to turboprop power.

The aircraft chosen for the conversion was not from the RTAF fleet, but was C-123B 56-4357 c/n 20241, which had initially been delivered to the USAF. It was almost immediately transferred to the US Coast Guard on 29 October 1958 with the serial '4357', and temporarily re-designated as an HC-123B to indicate its new Search and Rescue role. It was returned to the USAF (as a C-123B again) on 22 May 1972, when it was assigned to the 457th TFS (AFRes) at Carswell AFB and received unit code 'TH'. On 20 June 1975 it entered storage at MASDC, Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ with park code 'CP036', until it was transferred to Mancro Aircraft Co, Paramount, CA. on 1 June 1979. It was painted with Thai roundels but with no serial or code number.

C-123B 56-4357 was sold to the Royal Thai Air Force on FMS case TH-D-SDW on 09May79 and subsequently transferred its title to the Mancro Aircraft Company International on 7 September 1981 with approval of the United States Congress.

The conversion did not end with simply replacing the Pratt and Whitney piston engines with turboprop Allison engines. The work included wetting the wing

(turning the wing into a fuel tank), the installation of a gas turbine Auxiliary Power Unit (APU), installation of hydraulic boost units to provide power steering for the rudder, aileron and elevators and bleed air was channelled from the engines to provide heat for the cockpit, cargo compartment, wing leading edges as well as horizontal and vertical stabiliser leading edges (to act as de-icers).

The turboprop engines chosen for the project were 3,420 shp Allison T56-A-7 driving four blade Hamilton Standard 56H60-91 propellers. Mancro intended to use the later Allison T56-A-15 engine once full scale conversions of the Thai C-123 fleet began.

Wetting the wing was necessary since installation of the turboprop engine made it necessary to remove the engine nacelle fuel tanks on the C-123B. The wings were sealed and plumbed, becoming a fuel tank with a capacity of some 3,290 gallons, far surpassing the C-123B's original capacity of 1,462 gallons. Empty weight rose to 32,500 pounds (C-123T) from 31,058 pounds (C-123B) and a range of 2,737 nautical miles, far surpassing the C-123B which had a range of 1,470 miles.

When the C-123T made its first flight from Compton/Woodley Airport on 24 October 1980, it also made history. The C-123 airframe had now flown in four modes: glider, pure jet, piston and turboprop. No other airframe built has ever flown in these four modes.

During 1981, the RTAF was forced to withdraw from the project due to budgetary restrictions and, since no other air force flying the C-123B was interested in converting their fleet to turboprop power, the whole project was dropped by Mancro and the Thai Government. Of course, by 1981 most C-123 airframes were approaching a service life of some twenty-five years. Additionally, there were many new tactical transports on the market.

Presumably the C-123T would have had a serial something like B.L.4Kh-1/24 if accepted by the RTAF in 1981.

After all tests were completed Mancro Aircraft Co. International sold 56-4357 to Turboconversions Inc. of California on 29 July 1983, who transferred it to Turboconversions Inc. of Nevada on 18 April 1994 and then it was sold to H & R Corporation of Tucson, AZ, on 29 November 1995, to whom it was registered as N6828 on 17 December 1998. On 13 June 2002, the C-123B was sold to Provider Aviation Services Inc. The C-123B, 64357 c/n 20241, was stored at Tucson International Airport, Tucson, AZ from 1981, and the fuselage last noted there in March 2010. N6828 is currently registered to Provider Aviation Services, Inc. of Chesterfield, MO as a Fairchild C-123 with CofR issued on 19 August 2002.

Abbreviations

AFB	Air Force Base
AFRes	Air Force Reserve
APU	Auxiliary Power Unit
C/n	Construction number
CofR	Certificate of Registration
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
ID	Identity
L/n	Last noted (date)
MASDC	Military Aircraft Storage & Disposition Center
RTAF	Royal Thai Air Force
TFS	Tactical Fighter Squadron
S/n	Serial number

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Preserved C-123s in Thailand

*Left: No.289 at Bang Wua in May, 2011.
(Don McHugh)*



*Right: 55-569 photographed at Nakhon
Nayok on 7th March, 2012.
(‘Thai Ranger’)*



*Left: No.563 at Bangpho on
18th March, 2007. (‘Thai Ranger’)*

*Below: ‘565’ at Jomtien Water Park on
23rd February, 2004. The aircraft was
last noted there in April, 2010.
(Steve Darke)*





Above: This photograph shows the world's only C-123T Provider (ex 56-4357) after having been in storage at Tucson, AZ, for nine years. The engines were taken off this Turbo Provider many years ago, but other than that the aircraft is still complete and in good condition. The colours have clearly been faded by the many years of unrelenting Arizona sunshine, but the Thai Air Force roundel is still clearly visible on the rear fuselage. The photograph was taken on 31st May, 1990. (Aad van der Voet)



Above: '552', seen in a photograph taken at a site near Don Muang AFB in June, 2009. (Mark Rourke)



Right: '575' at Ubon Ratchathani on 22nd February, 2011. (G/Capt Sakpinit Promthep)



Left: C-123K 55-4548 at Don Muang in October, 1995; the aircraft was still there in July, 2012, incorrectly marked as 55-569. (Steve Darke)