

## WHITE STAR



LAOS, 1959 - 1962

PRESENTED BY:  
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### OVERVIEW:

WHITE STAR was a clandestine operation under the auspices of the CIA carried out thru the auspices of the U.S. Ambassador to Laos in order to assist the sovereign country of Laos in fighting the communists.

The teams worked with the Laotian people, mainly the Hmong and other ethnic groups. It was designed to support Vang Pao's Armee Clandestine which was supported by CIA/Air Americas Projects 404 and 603.

Lt. Colonel Arthur D. "Bull" Simons was the Group I commander for the first group inserted in July 1959, then called Operation Hotfoot, and remained so until being replaced by the Group II commander Lt. Colonel Magnus L. Smith in December 1959 to June of 1960. In November 1960, Group IV took over, commanded by Lt. Colonel John "Shark" Little, augmented on January 28, 1961 with a 12-man Psych-Op team under Lt. Colonel Chuck Murray.

In April of 1961, Group V replaced Group IV and was renamed "White Star". In October of 1961 Bull Simons returned as commanding officer. At the height of operation, roughly July 23, 1962 when a Declaration of Neutrality was signed, White Star strength stood at 433.

## SUMMARY OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO OPERATION WHITE STAR

AS RECOUNTED BY  
WILLIAM G. BOWLES  
U.S. Army Sergeant Major (Special Forces)

Late in 1958 and early 1959 our political and military leaders decided to put a highly trained military force into the Laotian Kingdom (Laos) with the mission to organize, train and develop their military forces so they could control, suppress and eliminate the growing communist forces in country, The Pathet Lao.

Then LTC Arthur Simons (Legendary combat leader BULL SIMONS) was tasked to select, organize and train a staff for the mission. He was further tasked to select, organize and train Special Forces "A" teams from the 77th Special Forces Group (Airborne) based at Fort Bragg, NC.

The mission was initially designated Operation Ambidextrous. Later it was changed to Operation Hot Foot.

The Colonel was additionally tasked to develop the logistical support that would be required for a minimum six months mission. That included developing the medical, communications, postal, personnel, combat supplies, even to the development of a cover story for the deploying personnel.

All personnel (hereinafter called the team) was given intensive training and cross training. New communications equipment was introduced and taught to the team. All personnel took daily language lessons in both French and Laotian. Area studies of the country was introduced and studied. Required reading of selected books became mandatory, such books as the Ugly American and Street Without Joy are examples. Week after week this continued.

We were to deploy in civilian clothing, with all military identification left behind. One cover story was, we were members of a Geodetic Survey team. I think (no longer sure) there were about seven, 12 man A teams and the staff to be deployed, somewhere around one hundred-four personnel in all.

After weeks of training in June 1959 at 0330 hours we departed Fort Bragg. All our equipment and personnel loaded aboard two C124's both decks on each plane loaded to the hilt. All dressed in our civilian clothes.

We landed in California and stayed for a couple of days. Reloaded and was ready to continue the journey. The engine on one of the planes caught fire which delayed the second plane departure for a day or so. The team continued on to Kadena AFB on Okinawa. There a hitch developed as the India representative to the UN questioned our status and our mission. We had to stay on Okinawa for couple of weeks while that was straighten out. Finally the full team was ready to go. We flew from Kadena AFB to Bangkok, Thailand. There we loaded onto C-54's and flew into Vientiane, Laos.

Once there rapport was established with the American Ambassador and the MAAG group in country. All A teams were deployed throughout the country, from Pakse to Plain De Belovens, from Savanaket to Saravan. In civilian clothes they began to accomplish the mission they had been assigned. A communications net was established and operational, a logistical support system established and became operational.

June soon became January, the team was extended past the 180 day Max TDY status and continued their operations. Finally the order was given that replacement teams would arrive. The operation was changed to Operation White Star. Colonel Simons and selected members of his staff remained to lead the replacement teams. The original A teams redeployed back to Fort Bragg in late February 1960. The 77th SFG(A) had been redesignated the 7th SFG(A).

White Star teams continued to deploy and rotate in and out of Laos. In 1961 the Special Forces initial A team entry and buildup began in South Vietnam. Our SF troops in Laos rotated in and out of the country for the next ten years. I do not know when the end of Operation White Star was declared.

U.S. Army Sergeant Major (Special Forces) William G. Bowles, 1930 - 2012

## SHEEP DIPPED

## THE SAIGON TEA GIRL

## MEETING WARLORDS, ET AL

## THE PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER AND THE ASIAN WARLORD

## OPERATION HAT THE CIA IN TIBET AND THE HIMALAYAS

**IN MEMORIAM:**

William G. Bowles, SGM, US Army (Ret) passed away December 8, 2012 at a medical facility in Atlanta, Georgia. He had been undergoing treatment for cancer. Bowles was born August 22, 1930 in Alabama. He entered the Army in 1948 and spent subsequent tours in Germany. His first Special Forces assignment was with the 77th Special Forces Group during which he was further assigned to "White Star". His next assignment was 1st Special Forces Group on Okinawa. While assigned to 1st Group, he served three TDY tours in Vietnam, two with Combined Studies, and one with 5th Special Forces Group. Billy also served with the 6th Special Forces Group and the 8th Special Forces Group (Panama). He returned to the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam and served as the Sergeant Major of MACV Recondo School. His many awards and decorations include the Purple Heart, and CIB. Burial was held at Arlington National Cemetery Tuesday, February 19, 2013 at 1500 hours with full Military Honors.

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:  
[CHAPTER 16 SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER](#)  
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