

MAGAZINE

He Calls The Shots

A RAAF pilot has made more than 200 combat missions as the eyes of the daily airstrikes against the Viet Cong in South Vietnam.

He is Wing Commander Vance Drummond, AFC, of Hackett, Canberra, who is on attachment to the United States Air Force in Vietnam, flying his tiny Cessna "Bird Dog" aircraft named "Snoopy" in search of targets for the USAF fighter-bombers to blast.

"Bird Dog" is the code-name for the Forward Air Controllers (FAC) who range over the Vietnamese jungles, sometimes only at tree-top height, looking for the tell-tale signs that the Viet Cong are there.

Not only do the FACs ensure that the Viet Cong are there, but make doubly sure that no friendly troops or civilians are likely to be hit by the airstrikes which result.

Target Area

No target is attacked until the FAC has verified it as legitimate. He must check the target against maps and information supplied from the ground controllers, pass the information back to base, and then wait and guide the fighters into the target area which he has described on his radio, or perhaps marked with smoke bombs.

When the attack is over, he must then observe the result

and report on the success of the operation.

Wing Commander Drummond was sent to Vietnam to study tactical air control techniques. His first few weeks were spent at the FAC centre at Saigon Airport, but now, at his own instigation, he regularly flies the "Bird Dog" controllers in a more practical field of study.

The FAC spends a lot of time in the air. One hundred hours a month is the time officially allowed, and most of the pilots reach this limit without fail. An average flight lasts about three hours, usually up to the limit of the fuel of the "Bird Dog".

For most of this time the FAC is ranging the countryside checking on what is going on in his area of responsibility. The Viet Cong know by now that the small silver "Bird Dog" aircraft are out looking for them, and they usually try to keep low. Others naturally resent the watching aircraft and do their best to destroy it with ground fire.

Wing Commander Drummond only sees members of the RAAF when he lands at Vung Tau about once a month to pick up his pay and mail. He has a rare job among the Australians, and regards it as an honour and an opportunity to show that the RAAF air-

crews are equal to the exacting task of calling the shots.

Wing Commander Drummond, who has a wide background of operational flying, is one of the RAAF's most experienced fighter pilots. He served in Korea with No 77 Squadron, and was taken prisoner-of-war by the North Koreans.

● Right: Wing Commander Vance Drummond checking his armalite automatic rifle before another "Bird Dog" mission.



CAF Squadron In Bush Survival Exercise

In snake infested territory 30 miles south of Townsville men of No 22 "City of Sydney" Squadron recently "survived" a crash landing "behind enemy lines".

Led by Squadron Leader Dave Paul, a DFC winner in the Second World War and now a Bondi Detective Sergeant of police, they stayed in the bush for 48 hours.

The men were driven to the "survival" area from Townsville RAAF Base and left.

They "rescued" men stranded in trees after bailing out and also recovered members of the squadron who "landed" in water.

No 22 Squadron flew to Townsville to spend two weeks working with No 10 Squadron.

During the exercise the Squadron trudged through jungle country, forded streams and evacuated "injured" men.

Survival Techniques

The idea of the "survival" course was to train the men to avoid capture if forced to ditch behind enemy lines and to stay alive in difficult terrain.

They were only allowed to use equipment normally worn when an airman is forced to bail out, to make bush stretchers and shelters.

Mac West life vests serve a double role in a "survival" operation. Besides supporting a man who bails out into water, they make a comfortable emergency stretcher when tree branches are run through the shoulder section.

First job for the "ditched" airman was to hide the evidence of survival — the tell-tale white parachute. After this has been buried, or hidden, he continues to search for other survivors, before taking a compass bearing, using his watch and the sun to find his way out of the dense tropical undergrowth.

For many of the newer members of the Squadron, this exercise proved realistic as the area is tough and the going hard.

The men were warned to watch out for snakes.

Much of the exercise involved the men hacking their way through the undergrowth, climbing shaggy cliff faces and pin-pointing positions after climbing trees, or mountain sides to reach vantage points.

The area chosen for the "survival" was selected because it offered a variety of obstacles for the men to overcome.

Normally the 22 Squadron men work in civilian jobs as school teachers, in the aircraft industry, public service and as doctors, a baker, grazier, company director, public servant, banker and in communication posts.

They are keen and recently won the Air Force Association trophy for being the most efficient Reserve Squadron in the nation.

● Watches are synchronised by men of No 22 "City of Sydney" Squadron in snake infested territory near Townsville. Pictured left to right: AC Bill Sander of Epping, Cpl Jeff Douglas of Castle Hill, and Flt Officer Ron Doorey of Padstow.

AVIATION ART COMPETITION

An art competition for paintings on aviation subjects is being conducted by the Royal Aeronautical Society, Australian Division, to celebrate their Centenary year.

The competition closes on January 15, 1967, and the paintings must have been completed in the twelve months ended December 31, 1966.

Paintings are to be on aviation subjects, and must be figurative, but not necessarily representational. Portraits are excluded.

Competitors may enter any number of works, which should not be larger than 5' x 3', and must be framed.

The competition is open to all Australian citizens, and to Australian residents of not less than 2 years standing.

Entry forms are obtainable from the Secretary, The Royal Aeronautical Society (Australian Division), PO Box 30, Bankstown, NSW, or from any Qantas office.

OPEN WIDE!



Members of RAAF, RAF and Australian Army personnel living in Penang Island and at RAAF Base, Butterworth, Malaysia, get the best of dental treatment thanks to the efforts of RAAF dental officers and their staffs.

At the RAAF Dental Clinic on Penang Island, two dental officers, a Malaysian dental assistant and a dental nurse treat about 6,000 men, women and children every year. Two other RAAF dental officers treat about 4,000 RAAF mem-

bers and their dependants at the dental clinic on the Butterworth Base. As well as filling and extracting teeth, the RAAF dental teams make between 50 and 60 new dentures every month.

● At the Penang Clinic, Senior Dental Officer, Squadron Leader D. Litchfield, of Beccroft, Sydney, attends to the teeth of the wife of an RAAF officer, while dental nurse, Mrs. C. Uprichard, wife of Leading Aircraftman E. Uprichard, of Tarrigindi, Brisbane, assists.

"RAAF NEWS" is compiled by the Directorate of Public Relations and printed by RAAF Printing and Publications Unit, RAAF Base Laverton.

