

ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS, and GLOSSARY OF TERMS
Used in My Songs of the Southeast Asia War (SEA)

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20 Mike Mike: 20-mm gun and/or ammunition (used by fighters for air-to-ground strafing or, more rarely, close-in air-to-air combat)

A-10 “Warthog”: Post-SEA close air support aircraft. Two high wing-mounted engines, one seat, 30-mm tank-killing gun, heavily armored aircraft. OA-10 used for post-1970s FAC operations

AAA: Anti-aircraft artillery, usually pronounced “Triple-A.” Ground defense crew-served weapons ranging from 37-mm through 100-mm rapid-firing cannon

AK-47: Designation of Soviet assault rifle used by Communist forces in SEA, non-Western forces the world over today. Then prized as a souvenir

Alert: Tactical aircraft readiness status where it is fuelled and loaded with armament, and ready for instant takeoff (“scramble”) and flight

Apron: Airfield’s parking ramp area

ARVN: Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (“Arvin”)

Auger In: Crash the aircraft; reference is to making a hole, like a drill bit

AT-6 “Texan”: Attack (“A”) version of the T (Trainer) -6. Used in the Korean War as the first real forward air control (FAC) aircraft

A-Team: U.S. Special Forces field unit (10-12 men; two officers, others NCOs)

BDA: Bomb Damage Assessment (currently “Battle” Damage Assessment)

Beer: Essential dietary supplement, used either alone or to wash down any of the four basic food groups: meat, potatoes, biscuits, and gravy

Bien Hoa: Major city and base in III Corps, NE of Saigon (“Bin Wah”)

Bird: Often a reference to an aircraft (usually a smaller type, like a fighter)

B-Team: U.S. Special Forces HQ unit at province or higher level, responsible for several A-teams

'Burner: Short for "Afterburner," an additional stage of most fighters' jet engine combustion that enables faster acceleration, higher altitude and/or supersonic speed, albeit at a significant increase in fuel consumption

Cam Ranh Bay: Major U.S. military facility in South Vietnam

Cammies: Camouflage fatigue uniforms

Carrier: Usually, a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier (in SEA, operating in the South China Sea off the east coast of Viet Nam)

CAS: Close Air Support (mission and flight operations focused on the delivery of ordnance close to friendly forces usually engaged with the enemy; (see also "TIC"))

Cat Shot: Catapult shot, Naval term for the compressed-air or other accelerator system that helps to launch an aircraft from the carrier deck

CBU, CBUs: Cluster Bomb Unit(s); reference is to the canister that carried these grenade-size submunitions

Chopper: Vietnam-era slang for military helicopter (currently "helo")

Club (The): Reference to an Officers', NCO or Enlisted Club on a military facility (where Stateside-peace-time dress codes are not appreciated if applied in a combat zone)

Crab: Flying technique for maintaining a ground course by heading into a crosswind just enough to counter its effects; wings are thus kept level as the wind effect causes the plane to "drift" along its desired course. (See also "wing low," as landing in a crab is not advisable)

Crewdog: Aircraft crewchief, maintenance support person

C-Team: U.S. Special Forces HQ unit at corps level (four corps in RVN, q.v.)

DEROS: Date of Estimated Return from Overseas; i.e., projected rotation date

Dinky Dao: Crazy (Vietnamese term)

DMZ: Demilitarized Zone (in SEA, the narrow area that separated North and South Vietnam at about the 17th Parallel (17° north latitude))

Downtown: Flying over or attacking “downtown” Hanoi, capital of the Democratic People’s Republic of Vietnam (or North Vietnam), from the Petula Clark song of the time

FAC: Forward air controller (as noun). Perform forward air control mission and functions (as verb); occasionally used as a euphemism for other activities

Fighters: Generic term for small-to-medium size tactical aircraft (“tacair”), comprising U.S. Air Force, Navy, Marine and allied aircraft that “deliver ordnance” or launch other weapons against enemy targets on the surface or in the air

Freaking: Along with “friggin’,” a euphemism for “fucking” (used as an adjective)

Freedom Bird: Military or civil airliner returning U.S. troops to the U.S. of A.

GCA: Ground-Controlled Approach. Radar equipment and operator’s process for radioing approach and landing instructions to an aircraft flying in low weather conditions

Golden BB, “Golden Bee-Bee”: reference to a lucky (i.e., UNlucky) shot that hits an airman or brings down his aircraft. A round “with one’s name on it”

Go West: Slang reference to dying, or flying a mission and not returning (per RAF)

Green Beret: Colloquial name for a member of the U.S. Army Special Forces (USSF)

Hanoi Hilton: Reference to the prisoner-of-war (POW) compound(s) near Hanoi for U.S. military and other POWs

Helo: Generic reference to helicopters

Ho Chi Minh Trail: Infiltration routes for forces and supplies from North Vietnam through Laos, then south and east into several areas of South Vietnam

Hose: Delivering a continuous stream of fire from an automatic weapon (verb)

Jarhead: Slang term for a U.S. Marine

Jungle Suit: Camouflaged fatigues (field uniform)

KIA: Killed in Action (also MIA and WIA, for Missing and Wounded in Action)

Kontum: Both city and largest province in the Republic of Viet Nam; also, the northernmost province of RVN’s Military Region II, or II Corps. Located in VietNam’s Central Highlands, Kontum was also bordered by both Cambodia and Laos, the “Tri-Border Area”

L-19 “Bird Dog”: Aka “Lima One-Nine” (“L” = Liaison); earlier Army designation for the O-1 aircraft

LZ: Landing Zone: designated area for debarkation of troops for ground operations or for their extraction afterwards

LZ Prep: Preparation of an LZ by “attacking” it and its environs before landing troops there, to reduce the chance of an ambush

McNamara: Robert S. McNamara, U.S. Secretary of Defense during much of the Southeast Asia War

M-16: In several models, the standard 5.56-mm (.222-in) automatic rifle used by U.S. Army and Air Force and ARVN forces in SEA

Mach 1, Mach One: The speed of sound, ranging from 760 mph at sea level to 660 mph at high altitudes, standard day conditions (i.e., temperature decreasing from 15°C at sea level to minus 55°C at high altitudes (above 36,000 ft)

Mang Buk: Special Forces camp in the mountainous NE area of Kontum Province, hard to get to in bad weather

Med-Evac: Medical Evacuation (used as noun and verb), usually by helicopter in the field, and by hospital aircraft from a major airfield

MiG: Generic reference to North Vietnamese fighters (usually MiG-17s and MiG-21s) used against U.S. air strike forces over North Vietnam

Napalm, “Nape” Canisters of jellied petroleum used for close air support operations

O-1 “Bird Dog”: O (Observation) -1 series (A through G), renamed from the Army L-19. One engine, two tandem seats, tail wheel. First major FAC aircraft used in the Southeast Asia War.

O-2 “Oscar Deuce”: Cessna Super Skymaster. Two engines in pusher-puller configuration; two side-by-side seats, tricycle gear. Second major FAC aircraft used in SEA

“Operations”: As used in the song, a safe headquarters position (in lieu of flying)

OV-10 “Bronco”: Designed as a FAC aircraft. Two engines mounted mid-wing; two tandem seats, tricycle gear. Third major FAC aircraft used in SEA

Phantom: Nickname for F-4 "Phantom II," U.S. Air Force fighter-bomber series used for air strikes against both South and North Vietnam and for counter-air support of other aircraft striking heavily defended targets in North Vietnam

Pierced Steel Planking: Also "PSP", corrugated metal strips used to make a landing strip out in the field

Pipper: Fighter aircraft bombing system's computer reference mark

"Plateau" (The): Plateau Gi, a flatland of 3,800 to 4,000 ft. elevation NE of Kontum City (and location of a Special Forces A-Team camp)

Polei Kleng: Village and Special Forces A-Team camp 15 km WSW of Kontum City ("Polei" or "Plei"="village")

R and R: Rest and Recuperation (aka Rest and Recreation); time away from a combat zone during which a variety of sybaritic activities may be undertaken

Recce: Air Force term for "reconnaissance" (usually from the air); the Army uses "recon" (usually from the ground, but also from their own aircraft)

REMF: Rear-Echelon Maternal Fornicator (itself a euphemism for...)

Rocker: Rocking chair

RON: Remain Overnight

RVN: Republic of Viet Nam (aka South Vietnam)

Saigon: Capital of the Republic of Viet Nam (South Vietnam)

SAM: Surface-to-air missile, primarily SA-2s, which defended North Vietnam against U.S. air attacks

Scramble horn: Usual method of instantly notifying a flight and ground crew that their airplane (already on alert) is being ordered into the air

Shake and bake: Derivative reference to the effects of HE (high explosive) and napalm ordnance on the enemy

Silver Star: Third-highest military award for bravery and accomplishment in combat

Simulator: Ground system that “simulates” an aircraft in instrument readings and indicated responses to aircrew control actions, used to train aircrews in normal, emergency and combat mission procedures

Snake-Eye, “Snake”: High-explosive (HE) bomb (e.g., Mk 82) with pop-open fins that slowed it down after release, which enabled improved accuracy and lower release altitude

Supply: The unit on a major military facility that dispenses equipment of various kinds. (Frontline troops are universally convinced that most of it goes to the REMFs [q.v.]

Tailhook: A selectable hooking device mounted under Naval and some Air Force Air Force fighters to snag the arresting gear aboard carriers or at the end of a runway. In the song, the name of the Naval association whose 1991 convention resulted in a major scandal over sexual misconduct

Take a Hit: Incur a hole from some weapon, whether to the aircraft or vehicle or to a human inside

Tan Son Nhut: Military air base and civil airport serving Saigon (“Tan Son Nyewt”)

Temp: Temperature

The Trail: Ho Chi Minh Trail; i.e., infiltration routes from North Vietnam through Laos into several areas of South Vietnam

Thud: Nickname for F-105 “Thunderchief,” U.S. Air Force fighter-bomber used mostly for air strikes against North Vietnam

TIC: Troops in Contact, i.e., with the enemy on the ground; reference implies urgency of response, to include requests for Immediate airstrikes and CAS (close air support) operations

Trap: Naval term for aircraft recovery aboard a carrier, by which the aircraft is “trapped” by hooking one of four wires across the landing deck

Triple-A: AAA, or anti-aircraft artillery (q.v.)

Uncle Ho: Jocular reference to Ho Chi Minh, leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Vietnam

VC: Aka “Victor Charlie,” or “Charlie”: the Viet Cong or “Cong” (= “Communist Vietnamese”). The indigenous Communist-supported rebels against the RVN government

Wall, The: Reference to the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C., where 58,200-plus U.S. military KIAs and MIAs (q.v.) from the Southeast Asia War are memorialized in the black marble of its shallow V-shaped "wall"

Wheels: Aircraft landing gear. As used in the song, "dropping wheels" refers to lowering the aircraft's (landing) gear

Willie Pete: Slang for "white phosphorus" or "WP" smoke-tipped target marking rockets

Wing Flaps, Flaps: Adjustable extensions to an aircraft's wing surfaces that provide extra lift for takeoffs and landings

Wing Low: Flying technique for landing in a crosswind by "leaning" the plane into the wind while maintaining heading by holding the opposite rudder. When held to landing, the upwind main wheel touches down first while the plane's heading is maintained down the runway. Akin to a "side-slip" at altitude. (See also "crab")

Wingman: Supporting member of an aircraft flight. Wingmen may take off, fly and land in formation, but position is loosened or abandoned for combat operations so that the wingman (-men) can keep the flight leader visually cleared of threats and take turns delivering their own ordnance

This is a "living document"; it is *not* authoritative but an ad hoc collection of terms used then and now, as included in my songs. They may be amended at any time.

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4 April, 2002