

Welcome to Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base



In 1969 the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing Office of Information produced a 20-page, 5"x8" booklet with information about the USAF base at Takhli, Thailand. The booklet was apparently designed to inform newly assigned airmen of what to expect when they arrived in Thailand.

COMMANDER'S WELCOME

On behalf of the officers and men of the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing, and our hosts, the Royal Thai Air Force, welcome to Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand.

Ours is a vital and tough mission, and we are proud of the way our personnel are contributing to the accomplishment of a demanding job. As a new member of the team, you are accepted with pleasure into our dedicated fraternity of Air Force "Professionals."

WING HISTORY

The 355th Tactical Fighter Wing was originally activated as the 355th Fighter Group on 12 November 1942 at Orlando Air Field, Florida, and began preparation for combat flying in P-47s. The group moved to England 9 July 1943 and was assigned to the English Air Force. On 14 September 1943 the group flew its first combat mission - a fighter sweep over Belgium.

The 355th Group flew 349 combat missions from 14 September 1943 to 25 April 1945, comprising a total of 17,222 sorties. The group converted from P-47s to P-51s in early 1944.

On 5 April 1944, the 355th Fighter Group successfully bombed and strafed German airdromes during a snow squall - which earned the group the Distinguished Unit Citation.

During World War II the 355th Fighter Group in aerial combat destroyed 365 2/3 enemy aircraft, probably destroyed 30 more, and damaged 141 1/2 others. On the ground, the 355th Group destroyed 502 1/3 enemy aircraft, probably destroyed 10 more, and damaged 411 others.

The group flew and fought in Europe until VE Day and then moved from England to Germany with the occupational forces. The 355th transferred to the United States on 1 August 1945 and was inactivated 20 November 1946.

Then on 18 August 1955, the 355th Fighter Group was reactivated and assigned to the Air Defense Command. They remained with ADC until 8 January 1958 when they were again inactivated. The group received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for meritorious service during the period 1 July 1955 to 30 June 1957. During this time of activation, the group was equipped with F-86s.

On 8 July 1962 at George AFB, the 355th was reactivated but with a new name - the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing. The Wing was equipped with F-105 Thunderchiefs. The wing first moved to McConnell AFB, Kans., then to Takhli, moving here in 1965.

The three tactical fighter squadrons in the wing were the 333rd, 354th and 357th. In August 1967, two EB-66 "Destroyer" squadrons joined the wing in the area of electronic warfare.

The wing participated in all major air strikes against North Vietnam. The most spectacular strike was the one against the Doumer Highway and Railroad Bridge where 355th bombs caused severe structural damage and collapsed several spans.

Wing pilots have scored 19 1/2 MIG kills. In addition, they destroyed eight more on the ground and damaged nine others. Wing pilots destroyed six helicopters in battle.



The wing has received three awards for efforts in Southeast Asia - two Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards and one Presidential Unit Citation.

For its past accomplishments, the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing has been nicknamed "PACAF's Pride" and "The Professionals", two titles the unit has very well deserved.

USAF AT TAKHLI

In 1961, the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) started an expansion program to counteract the unstable conditions of surrounding countries and support SEATO commitments. As the RTAF grew in scope, U.S. Air Force personnel in Thailand increased to meet support requirements.

Personnel began arriving in Takhli as early as 1961. Detachments from various units in the United States, flying F-100 Super Sabers, rotated with each other. On March 4, 1965, the 36th TFS assumed the commitment with their F-105s. A second squadron of "Thuds" arrived in April, the 563d TFS.

These squadrons rotated with other worldwide squadrons flying the same type aircraft. In late 1965, the 355th TFW was deployed permanently to Takhli RTAFB. Relieving the TDY units, the wing brought over its own squadrons of Thunderchiefs. They were the 333d, 354th, and 357th TFS. Two TEW Squadrons joined the wing in Aug., 1967, with their EB-66 Destroyers.

THAI FOREIGN POLICY

Thailand was the first Asian country to recognize the U.S. after the Declaration of Independence was issued in 1776. Thailand was also the first Asian nation to enter into diplomatic relations with the U.S. The first country to offer land forces in support of those of the U.S. after the outbreak of hostilities in Korea was Thailand. The Thai contingent served with distinction in Korea and a Thai force is still maintained there.



***The 4th Wing (RTAF) at
Takhli flies F-86s.***

Meeting the threat of Communist aggression and subversion, and thus preserving the country's independence and integrity, is a most important task of the Thai government. The need to meet this threat has been the principal motivation behind Thai foreign policy in recent years. Mutual recognition of the threat and common action to meet it have been factors forging the close friendship between Thailand and the United States.

OUR MISSION IN THAILAND

The primary mission of the 355th TFW is to support and direct the USAF units at Takhli. These units are here to support the overall SEA effort. In 1965, the Royal Thai Government allowed the US to station personnel and equipment in their country in large contingents. We are all guests and ambassadors of goodwill from the U.S.

Our assistance to the friendly governments of SEA has been of the highest importance in deterring the spread of Communist-inspired insurgency. At no point in the history of U.S. international relations has the challenge been greater than it is in SEA today. We are here to help our nation meet that challenge.

KING AND QUEEN OF THAILAND

The most honored and respected person in Thailand is the King. He is the head of state, symbol of unity and spiritual leader of his people. Under the concepts of Thai kingship he is the father of all Thais and defender of the faith. He is a living symbol of the country's rich culture.

The King's Anthem is played at the end of large public gatherings, plays, motion pictures and other similar events. The audience, including Americans, is expected to stand up. The present king is His Majesty Bhumibol Adulyadej, who was born in Cambridge, Mass., Dec. 5, 1927. He married Queen Sirikit in 1949. Their majesties have four children, a son and three daughters. The Crown Prince was born July 8, 1952.

The Thai people are extremely sensitive about derogatory comments made about the King, Queen, or any of their family, whether in jest or seriousness. It is disrespectful to step on anything which bears their picture, or to hang another photograph higher than that of the King and Queen.

THE PEOPLE

Thailand is about the size of Texas or France with a population of 30 million. It is the only country in Southeast Asia which has never been ruled by a European nation. The word

Thailand means "land of the free." The country produces more food than its people can consume. In 1964, Thailand exported more rice than any other nation in the world - 1.8 million tons. Rice exporting is possible because the tropical climate and highly fertile land can support two rice crops each year.

Thailand possesses a homogenous population, about 80 Percent of which is of Thai stock. The present population traces its ancestry to many sources. The distinctly Thai type is generally small and well proportioned, with smooth skin varying in shade from the light brown of the city dweller to the dark brown of the farmer.

The state religion in Thailand is Theravada Buddhism. A number of other religions exist, such as Taoism, Islamism, Confucianism, and Christianity, but they affect less than six per cent of the population. Religion is the keystone of Thai culture. Thai Buddhism cannot be fully described or easily understood. It has a spirit of tolerance which allows its people to absorb other beliefs and practices. It might be well to point out that Buddhism's spirit of brotherhood and morality are not far different from the basic Christian concepts.

The difference between the rural and urban societies in Thailand is striking. The Thai village has a virtually classless society; the city has a highly developed class, on the other hand. A small urban middle class has emerged during the past three decades. However, still about 85 percent of the population is actively engaged in agriculture in communities ranging in size from 300-to-3,000 persons.

Thailand has a highly centralized government, a constitutional monarchy. The King is the head of state and powers are exercised in his name. However, the King in fact has very few real powers. Every act must be countersigned by a responsible minister.

The country is divided into 71 provinces or "chang wats." The provinces are divided into districts, with the villages in these districts being the lowest level of government in Thailand. The village head man or mayor, known as "Pu Yai Ban" - which literally means big man in the village - is chosen by popular vote. All other positions in the provinces are appointed by the Minister of the Interior.

THE LOCAL AREA

Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base is three miles from the town of Takhli. The town is a junction of rail and bus lines and has a population of 12,000. Takhli town is the largest village in the district of Takhli called Amphur Takhli. The district's 130,900 people are primarily rice farmers. There are 46 rice mills in the district, which is the largest in the province of Nakhon Sawan.

The King Cobra snake was once numerous in the area, hence the nickname, "Land of the King Cobra." These and other varieties of poisonous snakes are still a hazard to the unwary.

Generally, the Thailand climate is considered tropical. Northern, eastern and central sections of the country have three distinct seasons: the hot season from March to May; the rainy season from June to October; and the cool season from November to February. The hottest month of the year is April, when the maximum temperatures exceed 100 degrees.

YOUR ARRIVAL IN-COUNTRY

Most people assigned to Takhli arrive here via Bangkok and Don Muang RTAFB. Immediately after your arrival at Don Muang you will be advised of your flight number to Takhli. Often the aircraft scheduling necessitates anywhere from a 24-to-48-hour stopover in Bangkok. In such cases you will be bussed to a military hotel in Bangkok where lodging and messing facilities are available. Bangkok is a very modern city with sights and attractions which will make your stay there most enjoyable.

When you get to Takhli, you will be greeted by a member of Consolidated Base Personnel Office (CBPO) in-processing section who will give you detailed instructions and information which will get you started on your tour of duty at Takhli.

PERSONAL AFFAIRS

Before leaving your family, be sure to make allotments and other arrangements necessary for their financial security. To delay this until your arrival can cause unnecessary hardship to yourself and your family. You must bring with you supporting documents such as termination of government quarters certificates, marriage license, documents supporting VRB payments and other such papers which will speed your in-processing at Takhli. Remember, Takhli people are paid on the last day of each month.

At the present time, all enlisted men except the top three eat in government messing facilities at Takhli. The top three get Rations in Kind (\$2.57/day) and Cost of Living Allowance (COLA), while all officers receive COLA. All enlisted men receive foreign service pay. Family Separation Allowance II (FSA II) is payable to everyone who is married and an E-4 (over four year's service) or higher. To qualify for the payment, you must be maintaining a home for your family subject to your management and control. You can speed the processing of your travel and per diem vouchers if you have an accurate itinerary of your trip.

CLOTHING

Each individual will be issued two sets of lightweight "jungle fatigues" and one pair of "jungle boots" after arriving on base. Most enlisted men, including clerks, personnel specialists and supply personnel, etc., are permitted to wear fatigues at work. Bring sufficient sets of 1505s

and fatigues, with the accent on fatigues. If you are going to be pounding the ramp frequently in your particular specialty, you should bring three or four pair of wool cushion-soled socks to protect your feet from the extremely hot concrete.

Officers would probably find it useful to bring one set of lightweight blues. Officers will not need their mess dress uniform; however, they should bring sufficient flight caps and miniature uniform insignia. Make sure you have enough uniforms to last at least seven days, as you usually get but one day's wear out of a uniform.

Flying personnel should insure that equipment issued on AF Form 538 is in good condition. EMO has a limited capability for individual issue. You should bring a good, waterproof flashlight and a windup alarm clock.

All base personnel wear civilian clothes off-base. One item of civilian attire not worn off-base is Bermuda shorts. Bring items which are washable, preferably cotton. It is not advisable to bring clothes which require dry cleaning. Nylon and similar materials are not recommended for use in Thailand. You can purchase tailor-made clothes at a reasonable price locally. Bring civilian shoes. Leave your heavier woolen clothing, it will mildew or deteriorate in the hot, humid climate.

OTHER SERVICES

The Red Cross is the only officially recognized non-government agency for notification of emergency situations. Advise your families to notify the local chapter of the Red Cross in case of births, deaths or other situations which would require your presence at home. Remember - emergencies must be verified by the Red Cross before a commander may grant emergency leave. Save precious time and have your relatives start with the Red Cross. At Takhli, the Red Cross representative is ready to serve you 'round the clock in time of need.

The base dispensary has a 25-bed capacity and includes a separate medical warehouse and veterinary services building. The dispensary offers dental service, a flight medicine activity, military public health and occupational medicine branches. Services include radiology, laboratory, nursing, pharmacy, general therapy, emergency room and an immunization clinic.

In addition to its military justice and claims activities, the office of the staff judge advocate offers an extensive legal assistance program: Virtually all legal services available in CONUS exist here at Takhli. Three legal officers are assigned to the base.

FACILITIES

Everyone lives on base at Takhli. Senior officers and aircrew members live in air conditioned

quarters. All other Officers share two-man rooms. Non-commissioned officers live in tropical-type buildings called "hootches." E-9s have one-man rooms, while all other NCOs live in either two or four-man rooms.

Airmen are billeted in two-story, open bay dormitories, or open bay hootches. Quarter have ceiling fans for air circulation. Hot and cold running water is available in each set of quarters; also 60 cycle, 117-volt electricity. Metal wall lockers are used for storage of clothing and valuables.

U.S. currency will not be used on the local economy. Currency exchanges are located at the Military Finance Facility and the open messes. The currency unit of Thailand is the baht, which is divided into 100 stang. The value of the baht is set at 20.67 per U.S. dollar. One baht approximates one nickel, 20 baht one dollar and 100 baht five dollars when dealing with the local merchants.

During your year here one of the most important places to you will be the post office. Stateside service is available Wednesday through Monday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. This includes registered mail, insurance for packages and bulk stamp stock. Airmail usually averages from four to seven days from the U.S. The post office does not offer a money order service.

Your address here will be:

Name, rank, serial number

Organization / Box Number

APO San Francisco 96273

The military finance facility acts as a base bank, providing checking account service that draws 5% per annum on a calendar quarter basis with a minimum deposit of \$100.00, baht sales, travelers checks and money orders.

A varied and active religious program is offered. Along with the regular schedule of religious services, there are many groups that meet to enjoy fellowship and the opportunity to work together. A chaplain is always available and willing to assist you with any personal problem.

TAKHLI CLUBS AND BASE EXCHANGE

There are three open messes at Takhli. Each has a snack bar, entertainment, recreational facilities and most conveniences of state-side clubs - and operate 24 hours a day all week. The Takhli officers' Open Mess is completely air conditioned with dining facilities available. Members pay monthly dues.

NCO and airmen Open Messes are air conditioned and located together. There is a small membership fee at both clubs. In addition to the main club, there is an NCO Annex located near the NCO living area. Airmen use the NCO Class VI store. Top entertainers from all over the world perform at each of the clubs each week.

Takhli's base exchange carries a variety of items. The stereo and camera section, which also features a wide variety of tape recorders and other sound equipment, is of special interest. Also offered is a repair facility for radios, watches, cameras and related items. A photo developing and portrait service is also available.

RADIO, TELEVISION AND NEWSPAPERS

The Armed Forces Thailand Network Radio and TV Station at Takhli provides its listening and watching audience with a balanced program of music and news on radio and of news and series on TV. The television station went on the air in early April 1969.

A Military Affiliated Radio System (MARS) station makes patches via radio-telephone to the United States on a first come, first served basis. The station operates 24 hours a day. Emergency calls may be made at any time.

The Takhli Times is the weekly base newspaper. Editorial offices and staff are located in building 312 on Takhli. Other English language newspapers in the area include the Bangkok Post, Bangkok World and Pacific Stars and Stripes. All these newspapers, plus a variety of the weekly news magazines are available on base.

PERSONNEL SERVICES

Best in PACAF For 1968

The base theater is air conditioned and seats 250 people. It is in a convenient location for all personnel. Near the theater is an outdoor stage where USO-sponsored shows are presented.

Other services include a recreation center and USO Club, both open 24 hours a day. The base library stocks current magazines along with its over 8,000 volumes which span from Hemmingway to Webster. Air conditioning in this facility has provided the avid reader with a comfortable area to pursue his pleasure.

The hobby shop complex includes a hobby sales store and golf pro shop, lapidary (jewelry), photography, stereo tape, model airplane, leather and electronics shops. The stereo shop is open 24 hours each day, photo 22 hours, and the others from 8 am. to 10 p.m. daily seven

days a week.

The base has archery and golf driving ranges behind the NCO Annex. These stay open until after dark. Takhli has four tennis courts and two outdoor basketball courts. Intramural competition includes softball, flag football, volleyball, basketball and all minor sports. The base gymnasium is rated one of the best in SEA, with basketball court, weight room, steam room and outdoor paddleball / handball courts along with the tennis, basketball and volleyball areas. The base bowling alley located in the community center offers open and league bowling 24 hours daily. Various recreational equipment is available at recreational supply. This equipment includes golf and archery supplies, softball bats, balls and gloves, 35 mm slide projectors, and some of the indoor sports equipment - chess, checkers, table tennis and dominoes.

WHILE IN THAILAND.....

keep these nine rules in mind.....

1. Remember, we are guests here; we make no demands and seek no special treatment.
2. Every American is an ambassador to the Thai he meets and should act accordingly.
3. Get Acquainted with the Thai people. Understand their life and honor their customs and laws.
4. Treat women with politeness and respect.
5. Establish friendships among the Thai people, both military and civilian.
6. Adjust to local driving. The situations and laws are often different from those to which you are accustomed.
7. Don't attract attention by loud, rude or unusual behavior.
8. Avoid separating yourself from the people by a display of wealth or privilege.
9. Remember that you are members of the U.S. military forces and your country is judged by your conduct. You are responsible for all your official and personal actions. Reflect honor upon yourself and the United States of America.

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***Last Updated by Jack
Gurner on Saturday, 16
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