



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Combat Air Activities Files (CACTA), 10/1965 - 12/1970

Record Group 218

Updated May 21, 2020

1. What information is in these records?

These files contain records on air combat (fixed-wing airplane and helicopter) missions flown in Southeast Asia by the United States Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, South Vietnam Air Force, Royal Laotian Air Force, Korean Air Force and Royal Australian Force during the Vietnam Conflict. Each record contains data on a mission, one sortie of that mission, and one or more incidents of different types that occurred during the sortie. If more than one incident of the same type occurred during the sortie, a separate record for each incident exists. Each record is divided into groups of fields, known as "sets." There are eight possible sets and the information in each set includes: control set data with the date, mission and unit identifier; fixed set data with the branch of U.S. service or country of Air Force, country of origin, mission name, target location, type and number of military aircraft, war damage, and target terrain and weather; and up to six periodic sets of repeatable data including enemy defense data and mission altitudes; formation of aircraft, military tactics and enemy attacks; ordnance type and tonnage; results of the attack; aircraft lost or diverted, and flight crew status; and comments.

This series is the predecessor to the "Records About Air Sorties Flown in Southeast Asia, 1970 - 1975" (NAID 602566).

2. Why were these records created?

The Operations Directorate (J-3) of the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS) created CACTA to collect information on U.S. and South Vietnamese combat air activities in Southeast Asia. The agency provided CACTA report data to a variety of organizations in the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency.

3. Where did these records come from?

The Operations Directorate (J-3) of the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS) received the information monthly from the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) and the Commander-in-Chief, Strategic Air Command (CINCSAC), which in turn received daily input from squadron debriefing reports.

In 1992 a set of similar CACTA files was sent to NARA from the Survivability and Vulnerability Information Analysis Center (SURVIAC) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. SURVIAC had received the data from Pacific Command (PACOM). These files contain data collected monthly, as opposed to bi-monthly, and so are slightly different from the OJCS CACTA data. These monthly files are described in the National Archives Catalog (NAID 2123846), but are not available in AAD. Copies may be ordered.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES *and*
RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

8601 ADELPHI ROAD
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20740-6001

www.archives.gov

4. Why do the 1965 data use the 1970 layout?

We don't know when the October and November 1965 CACTA file was created, but since the file format table is identical to the format file table used for the 1970 records, we think that the Oct.-Nov. 1965 CACTA file was created sometime in the 1970s.

5. Were there also multiple versions of the code tables?

We don't know, but one group of researchers has told us that the code meanings evolved over time. The only agency documentation that we have, other than the file format tables, is dated 10 July, 1970. It is therefore possible that documentation and code lists for pre-1970 data differ from the codes as currently displayed in AAD.

6. How do I search for records in this series?

To search for records in any file in this series, users should start at the "Series Description" page. If you have specific information conforming to one of the fields, use the "Free Text" search option on this page. Or, you can search for a records covering a specific time period, by using the "Fielded Search" page. The search results will present information that may lead you to other search topics. To help users search a single file, NARA has preselected certain fields (based on an evaluation of the records). However, users can choose their own fields by clicking on the "Show More Fields" button on the "Fielded Search" page.

7. How can I access a copy of the full file(s)?

The raw data files, along with the associated technical documentation, may be downloaded from the National Archives Catalog at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>. There you can search by the series name, Combat Air Activities Files (CACTA), or using the National Archives Identifier 634496, which is the description identifier for this series.

In the results, select to view the full series description. Click on the link "file(s) described in the catalog" next to "Includes:" for a list of the file units within this series. Then select the file unit containing the records of interest to you. The file unit description will include the list of electronic records and documentation files available for viewing and/or downloading.

Additional information about downloading electronic records from the Catalog is available at: <https://www.archives.gov/research/electronic-records/access-in-catalog-faqs>.

Please keep in mind that the data file consists of the raw structured data as loaded into AAD (i.e. the coded values without meanings), but without the AAD software that displays the meanings for coded values and field titles. For more details about using files containing raw structured data, you may wish to review our "Introduction to Raw Data" at: <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/electronic-records/raw-data-intro.pdf>.