

DRILL PRESS/ABERU

GENESIS/HISTORY TIMELINE

Compiled by Darwin Bruce

- 1958 -1962 Aircraft 43-16254/43-49680 Rose Bowl Korea.
- 1963 -1965 Aircraft 43-16254/43-49680 sent to Eglin AFB and then MacDill AFB.
- 1963 -1964 Aircraft 45-0919 (ex-Rose Bowl) Sour Grapes SEA test, then sent to depot in Korea.
- Jul 1965 14 Jul. 2nd Air Division expresses requirement for Tactical COMINT in SVN using 2 ABERU JC-47's currently in TAC inventory and awaiting disposition.
- Aug-Dec 65 Pentagon, JCS, USAF, USAFSS, NSA, NRV and PACAF work out differences regarding requirements, airframes, backend configurations and manning problems. This process gave a more detailed meaning to the phase "Himalayan Cluster-bleep".
- Oct 1965 Codename DRILL PRESS assigned to 2nd AD ABERU JC-47s.
- Dec 1965 Aircraft 43-16254/43-49680 returned from Florida to Yokota AB, COMINT equipment re-installed and sent to Tan Son Nhut. Aircraft assigned to 460th TRW for maintenance and front-end crew manning. Back-end crews TDY from USAFSS and assigned to AFSSO 2nd Air Division Saigon (TSN).
- Jan 1966 8 Jan. First Drill press test hop. 27 Jan. Second Drill Press plane test hop. Operation Drill Press 120 day test missions begin in SVN. Operations area was southern SVN in support of Army ASA 175th Radio Research Company, 509th RRG.
- Apr 1966 8 Apr. 360th RS Stands up and assumes responsibility for Drill Press aircraft and front-end crews. 15 Apr. 6994th SS stands up and assumes responsibility for back-end crews. TDY back-end crews begin phasing out and PCS crews begin phasing in. Mission areas were War Zones C and D in southern SVN.
- May 1966 Drill Press 120 day test period ends.
- Jun 1966 Drill Press participated in Operation Hawthorne.
- Jul 1966 One Drill Press plane participated in Operation Hastings in the DMZ. The other Drill press plane remained in support of the 175th RRC and Operation Toledo in III CTZ.
- Aug 1966 23 Aug. Drill Press supports Det. 1 and 16th RRU for Operation Paul Revere in Ia Drang valley. Drill Press, supported by the ASA 8th RRU, begins operations in northern SVN supporting the 3rd MAF in I Corps. This mission continued through 1967 and on to Nov 1968. Bed down was Danang AB.
- Sep 1966 Sep 2, ABERU mission. Sep 17. Planes and crews bed down at Hue Phu Bai collocated with 8th RRU. Early Sep Drill Press participates in Operation Paul Revere. Late Sep. Drill Press participates In Operation Prairie.

Oct 1966 3 through 15 Oct .Drill Press also conducts TRANSEC ABERU mission. AMS/analyst mans position 4 for TRANSEC missions. Drill Press supports Operation Attleboro.

Dec 1966 5 – 15 Dec. Drill Press sent “Priority Tip-Offs” to Phyllis Ann aircraft. 13 Dec. Drill Press Aircraft 43-49680 sent for CCC (Corrosion Control Check) at Taipei, Taiwan. To preclude exceeding 125 hr/mo, missions reduced to 1 five hour mission per day and a “non-mission “every third day. Normal operations resumed on 23 Dec.

Jan 1967 17 Jan. Drill Press Aircraft 43-16254 sent for IRAN in Taipei Taiwan. Drill Press sorties again reduced significantly. Drill Press participates in Operation Cedar Falls.

Feb 1967 25 Feb. Aircraft 43-16254 returns from Taipei as Operationally Ready.
Feb/Mar 67. Supported Operation Prairie II.

Mar 1967 Squadron identifiers for the EC-47 Reconnaissance Squadrons changed to Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron (TEWS), e.g., 360th RS to 360th TEWS.
Mar/Apr 67. Supported Operation Prairie III.

Apr 1967 PACAF approves increase in allocated airframe utilization hours for Drill Press use. Apr/May 67. Supported Operation Prairie IV.

May 1967 Aircraft identifiers changed from RC-47 to EC-47 for Compass Dart but remained JC-47 for Drill Press aircraft. “Dog-fight” between MACV, 7th AF, NSA, DDR&E, ASA, and USAFSS for command and control of ARDF/SIGINT assets, including Compass Dart and Drill Press. Drill Press originally programed out of wartime service in Jun 1967. DDR&E recommends Drill Press continue due to value to SIGINT database and unique support to combat operations. One Drill Press aircraft sent to Pleiku temporarily for Tri-Border operations.

Oct 1967 7 Oct Drill Press name changed to Sentinel Sara.

Jan 1968 Sentinel Sara (Drill Press) and Compass Dart (ARDF) aircraft supported Operation Niagara (Khe Sanh).
31 Jan/Mar 68. Supported Operation Hue City.

Feb 1968 Sentinel Sara (Drill Press) aircraft repositioned from Hue Phu Bai to Pleiku AB due to security concerns (TET). 362nd TEWS assumed maintenance and front-end crew manning responsibilities.

Apr 1968 1 Apr. Compass Dart changed to Combat Cougar (Sentinel Sara became part of Combat Cougar later in ‘68. Combat Cougar is forerunner to Combat Cross and Commando Forge.) Decision made and action taken to install KY-8 secure voice system in Sentinel Sara planes.

May 1968 KY-8 cryptographic secure voice gear installed in Sentinel Sara (Drill Press) aircraft for comms with ground units and ARDF aircraft. This installation negated the need for COMUS/KAC one-time use encryption pads.

Aug 1968 Due to success of Sentinel Sara (Drill Press), the decision was made to have two collection-only positions added to designated EC-47N/P/Q aircraft. These were called "Z" positions. (Z1 being VHF capable for voice intercept; Z2 HF Morse.)

Nov 1968 Combat Cougar (ARDF) EC-47N/P/Q's equipped with SIGINT positions (Z's) assume Sentinel Sara (Drill Press) responsibilities. Sentinel Sara aircraft sent to TSN. COMINT gear removed. Drill Press (Sentinel Sara) as a separate and unique entity ceased to exist.

Dec 1968* 11 Dec. Aircraft 43-49680 sent to 6200 ABW Clark AB, PI, for further disposition.
12 Dec. Aircraft 43-16254 sent to 6200 ABW Clark AB, PI, for further disposition.

*Other sources show 43-16254 assigned to the 635th Combat Support Group, U-Tapao RTAFB on 8 April 1969 and then to the Cambodian Air Force. Ultimate fate unknown. 43-49680 is shown as reassigned to the 460th TRW (Tan Son Nhut) on 27 Jan 1969 and ultimately being passed to the VNAF on 23 Aug 1972. Ultimate fate unknown.