

Armée de l'Air Khmère Khmer Air Force Video Compilation – Part One 1955-1960

English commentary.

khmerairforce.com

1955 Coronation of King Suramarit

The first images of this compilation were shot during the Crowning of King Norodom Suramarit. It was one of the very first times that Khmer airmen took part in a public parade.

Pochentong

Quiet day at the airbase. Apart from a few guards, airmen are required to attend the religious ceremony that took place from time to time.

The French military also are invited ; especially the officers.

- Blessing of the airmen.
- The young Jean-François CLAYEUX. It is thanks to him that we can see these images.
- At the beginning of the Khmer Aviation, instructors were almost all French. French language is so present that in the sixties, some military, some Khmer officers were more comfortable writing in French than in Khmer. French remained the second official language of Cambodia until the fall of Phnom Penh in 1975.

- Sergeant Savath
- Colonel NGO Hou giving instructions to officer TAO Chum
- Blessing of the airplanes

In those years , the Northrop T-6 were still yellow

- Pilots LY Pocheanh, LONG Trasom, LENG Doeun

1957 Two thousand five hundredth anniversary of Buddha

Parade of officials, soldiers, monks ... and a brief air show.

In the background, the Phnom Penh Cathedral and the colonial style villas. It was said that some areas of Phnom Penh looked like a small French provincial town.

These images were shot on 'Thursday' because in this ceremonial day, women wear a green sampot .

1958 Salon de Provence

Meanwhile, other technicians and pilots were attending classes in France and in French colonies like North Africa.

Here Lt SO Satto at the French Air Academy at Salon de Provence, France, Class 1955-1958. He was filmed

by his classmate Lt Norodom Baley. In that class, they were four Cambodians were among the Pilots Cadets.

Air patrol

A patrol departure; a training session for fighter pilots.

- The Pier of Kampong Saom and the French Navy vessels.

Hong Kong

The transport pilots went to Hong-Kong for the complete overhauls of the DC-3s. In the cockpit, KEU Pau An on approach of Kai Tac. Hong Kong was not yet the skyscrapers forest but it was already the frenetic bustle mixing modernity but also lifestyles not particularly advanced comparing to Phnom Penh at that time.

- The Hotel Capitol where the Khmer crews usually stayed in
- Check-List of the "shoppings". Tools and engine spare parts... and the lunchboxes for the return journey.

United Arab Republic

Other pilots are here conveying the Royal convoy.

- Officer KEO Neou on the wing supervising the refueling isomewhere in India.

A convoy consisted of Prince Sihanouk's airplane with a French crew and for rest the aircrafts, crews were Khmer. Those other planes carried the rest of the delegation with gifts and sometimes, the Royal Ballet. It was not uncommon to have up to four, or six airplanes.

- Landing of Prince Sihanouk's plane in the Middle East and an official visit to an oil refinery plant. Prince Sihanouk was accompanied by General Hou NGO
- Next to a French advisor's wife, Princess "Machas Paing", a daughter of Prince Sihanouk.

Cairo

The final destination of the Royal Caravan. Relax and sightseeing for the air crews

- SMUK Chhiap on a camel. RUOS Saphon is standing beside.
- In front the Pyramides, PHLOT Saphat and pilot LONG Sithya.

Return trip via Greece, India and Burma.

1960 China

-LENG Doeun, TAN Than, MAO Kim Sourn

An exemplary model village in the Chinese communist regime: happy children and colorful clothes. Outside the village for foreign guests, living conditions were not as encouraging.

- The "development under MAO regime" and the beginning of the Chinese Latin script.

-NOUTH Chhen, LENG Doeun, AIT Suthan

Beijing

No cars in the streets

The Forbidden City

- KHOUN Sareth, Pierre CLAYEUX, KHOU Leang Hak,..... , DINN Sary, RUOS Saphon,
- PHAN Simton putting a mask

Daily life in Cambodia

A landing strip on the seaside coast. The town and the port of Kampong Saom under construction with the help of French technicians and militaries.

With the (military) aircrafts, the access to the remote North East provinces, lakes and extremely fertile volcanic soil, is easier.

- Fly over roads and dense forests still almost intact
- Fly over Phnom-Penh before landing at Pochentong where the runway extension was ongoing.
- Engineer SO Eng Chun, CHENG Sun, LONG Sithya at a wedding ceremony.

Cambodia was not at war; militaries were few but in constant training; particularly paratroopers.

-Training session with landing on the Mekong river with Navy barges and French advisors.

Some of the Khmer paratroopers including monitors, choose to stay in the French Army after the complete independence of Cambodia. They went to settle at Pau, South of France.

La "Mission Militaire Française de Phnom-Penh ».

The French Military Mission at Phnom-Penh was a small base with colonial buildings

-Drivers and soldiers, unknown airmen.

- The Phnom-Penh's Cathedral, communion day.
- One of Phnom-Penh's churches.
- The French community.
- A horse racing like in France.
- Water distribution in a new district of Phnom Penh not yet connected to running water.

1960 Funeral of King Suramarit

Elephants are out. A ceremony is being prepared.

Another parade, but this time at slow peace. It is the funeral of King Suramarit.

A big boat for his last journey . His body was placed in the position of the fetus inside ia "Ka- oat" or urn .

The Northwest

Towards the Northwest cities, airplanes were not much used. Comparing to other provinces, roads and railways were in good conditions.

-Railway stations; Batdeng, Pursat ...we are approaching rice field regions.

-Even in wartime, Khmer soldiers are always traveling with their wife and their children.

-Terminus Battambang. New passengers are about to leave for the opposite direction.

-Stung (river) Sangker.

-...

It is at Battambang that the Khmer Air Force will establish its Academies in 1971.

End of Part One