

Operation GALLANT

International Operation Name: International Commission for Control and Supervision



International Operation Dates: 1973/01/29 – 1975/04/30

Mandating Organization: “Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam”

Region Name: Asia

Location: Vietnam

Canadian Operation Name: Operation GALLANT

Canadian Operation Dates: 1973/01/29 – 1973/07/31

Mission Mandate:

To provide a neutral party to investigate compliance and to conduct monitor the enforcement of the terms of the Paris Peace Agreement

Mission Notes:

The Geneva Accords of July 1954 had foreseen the creation of a single, united Vietnamese state, but disagreements over the election process that year resulted in the de facto creation of two separate Vietnams: The Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) backed by the united States, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) backed by the Soviet Union. Almost immediately, communist and populist groups in the south supported by the northern regime, began a guerrilla campaign aimed at the forcible reunification of the country under Hanoi's authority. That insurgency grew in scope until open war broke out in 1965, when both the United States (along with other allies) and North Vietnam entered the conflict in a major (and public) way. By 1972, large tracts of South Vietnam were controlled by the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (Viet Cong) or the North Vietnamese army, the South's ability to retain control of the rest was clearly diminishing, and the United States was anxious to negotiate a peace agreement that would allow it to withdraw its forces from Southeast Asia "with honor." As a result, on 27 January 1973, after years of on and-off discussions, the "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam" was signed in Paris by the United States, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (Viet Cong). This agreement created a Joint Military Commission, composed of the four signatories to the peace agreement, to oversee the implementation of the agreement and to settle disputes arising from it. The agreement also created the International Commission of

Control and Supervision (ICCS) to act as a neutral party in investigating disputes and in supervising some aspects of the agreement.

A second international conference held in Paris from 26 February to 2 March 1973 created the reporting mechanisms for the ICCS and established its rules of conduct. Canada, Hungary, Indonesia, and Poland, the four nations that would form the ICCS, were party to the negotiations and signed the agreement on 2 March.

The ICCS, with its 1160 personnel, had its headquarters in Saigon, in fact taking over the headquarters of the former International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC). Seven teams were set up to supervise prisoner of war and civilian detainee exchanges, three teams for regional operations, and five teams to carry out such other duties as were required. In addition, seven regional headquarters across South Vietnam would supervise the operations of forty field teams, each of which comprised representatives of all four ICCS nations. These teams were to have freedom of movement in order to carry out their tasks and would have diplomatic status. Twelve of these teams were to inspect designated points of entry in South Vietnam for restricted war materiel, while two more were available for inspections at a point of entry to be designated by South Vietnam. Each ICCS team worked with a local Joint Military Team (JMT), part of the JMC. The ICCS teams were expected to provide impartial reports on incidents to these JMT.

The active roles of the ICCS were to assist in the exchange of captured and detained personnel and to monitor the flow of restricted war materiel into South Vietnam. The ICCS would also monitor and investigate all breaches of the cease-fire brought to their attention by any parties to the agreement, by the JMT, or through its own efforts. An additional role, but one in which Canada had no opportunity to take part, was to monitor the scheduled all-party elections in South Vietnam.

In the first 60 days, the seven prisoner of war teams visited locations across North and South Vietnam, supervising the release of over 32,000 POWs. The release of civilian detainees was more problematic

as both North and South Vietnam were determined to gain the maximum political and propaganda advantage from these releases. As a result, only a small percentage of the detainees were actually released. When it came to monitoring the influx of restricted materiel, while South Vietnamese authorities were cooperative the Viet Cong were not, and that prevented the ICCS from carrying out its assigned duties fairly and equitably. The same was true of its cease-fire monitoring role: in the first six months there were at least 18,000 reported violations, causing 76,000 casualties, just four thousand casualties short of the total recorded in the last six months of actual fighting.

The ICCS investigated 1,081 complaints during the period that Canada was a member. South Vietnam laid ninety-five percent of these complaints, but few were investigated because of the same requirement for unanimity that had hamstrung the ICSC: all too often, the Polish or Hungarian representatives concluded that the South Vietnamese had actually been responsible for the violation and that further investigation and rapportage was therefore unwarranted. In short, few reports were written. The JMC were equally ineffective as political machinations prevented their reaching any decisions regarding interpretations of the Paris Agreement when questions arose.

Operation GALLANT

Having participated in the ICSC-Vietnam from 1954 to its dissolution in 1973 and thoroughly disillusioned with both its structure and working mechanisms, Canada doubted whether the ICCS had any better chance of achieving lasting peace and stability. Accordingly, while Ottawa agreed to participate in the ICCS for an initial period of sixty days, Canada insisted upon having the right to withdraw if it found that the ICCS was ineffective. The Canadian contribution to ICCS was to be 240 military personnel and fifty from the Department of External Affairs.

As Canada had been kept abreast of the negotiations in Paris, Ottawa was ready when the agreement was signed on 27 January. Firm planning for Operation GALLANT had begun in December 1972, and

a two-man advance party arrived in Saigon only days before the formal Canadian contingent itself on 29 January. (It would be led by Michel Gauvin, head of the Canadian delegation and ambassador to Vietnam, and Major-General Duncan McAlpine, the Canadian Forces commander.) All were airlifted from Trenton by 436 Squadron Hercules.

So quick was the Canadian response, in fact, that the ICCS operational plan was not ready when they arrived, but the contingent was nevertheless soon transported to its assigned sites. As some were accessible only by air, on 27 February a contract was let to Air America Inc, a commercial enterprise generally accepted as having close links to the American Central Intelligence Agency-backed operation and operating now under the name "ICCS Air Services." However, the Viet Cong's refusal to clarify air regulations over territory it controlled resulted in some sites not being resupplied for several weeks or more: ICCS team members at An Loc, for example, had to fend for themselves for seventy-five days.

There were casualties. An ICCS helicopter was shot down on 7 April over Viet Cong territory, killing all 9 onboard, including one Canadian, Captain C.E. Laviolette, two Hungarians, one Indonesian, two Viet Cong liaison officers and a three-man crew. All ICCS flights were temporarily grounded. Then, on 28 June, two Canadian officers, Captains Ian Patten and Fletcher Thomson, were kidnapped by the Viet Cong just east of Saigon, but careful negotiations finally resulted in their release after seventeen days.

Operationally, conditions were harsh, and unexploded ordnance was an ever-present danger. So were booby-traps left over from the actual fighting. For their part, although guilty of obstructing much of the ICCS's work, the Viet Cong generally tried to make living conditions in sites as comfortable as possible and some, particularly those near former American bases, were very well-equipped. As a result, a rotation policy was devised to move ICCS teams between them and more difficult locations.

Although convinced within the first month that the ICCS was as ineffective as its ICSC predecessor, Canada chose to remain a

participant for two months beyond its initial, limited commitment; but when there was no noticeable improvement in the prospects for success during this period, Canada finally indicated it would withdraw effective 31 July 1973. On 31 July, two 437 Squadron Boeing 707s evacuated the entire Canadian ICCS contingent from Saigon, while a 436 Squadron Hercules carried the luggage and other equipment. Iranian forces replaced the Canadians until the work of the ICCS came to an end with the fall of the South Vietnamese government on 30 April 1975.

Canada maintained one ship near Vietnam from May to July 1973, under the deployment name WESTPLOY. Although not part of the ICCS, HMC Ships Terra Nova and Kootenay were present in case an emergency evacuation of the Canadian ICCS contingent was required.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/past-operations/asia-pacific/gallant.html?fbclid=IwAR01yKsuWHeCv8u0rK4MVSFofejn4ZbjCKtvMLZQN0hfDrzkpEMqenDOIE8>