

CIA's Intelligence Art Collection

Commemoration of the Historical, Inspiration for the Future

-Toni L. Hiley

It is critical that we pass along to our thousands of new officers the accumulated wisdom and decades of experience that have made CIA the world's premier intelligence service.

—General Michael V. Hayden, *Studies in Intelligence*
Awards Ceremony, 13 December 2006

By the end of 2008, 52 percent of CIA's workforce will have entered on duty since 11 September 2001. CIA's history and museum programs provide institutional cohesion to communicate CIA's corporate culture and identity during this demographic revolution. Recent additions to the Agency's historical holdings include intelligence-themed paintings and sculpture that record for posterity the experiences of intelligence officers in peace and war.

CIA's fine arts program—administered by its Fine Arts Commission since the 1960s—has benefited over the years from donations of sculptures and paintings that celebrate historical accomplishments in intelligence. The commission reviews donation proposals and, when it finds them appropriate, officially recommends works for acceptance. Before any work is accepted, however, Agency financial and legal officers, the Office of Security, and the Office of Public Affairs all consider the recommendation. The CIA Museum and History Staff of the Center for the Study of Intelligence advise the Fine Arts Commission on historical content.

As the following pages demonstrate, the drama of an event can often be conveyed in a painting or sculpture more powerfully and immediately than in a written volume. Such art, in addition, can bring to life history that may be unknown to new employees or that has been lost in time among veterans. The collection thus helps to illuminate the past and provide inspiration for the present and the future.

The works shown in the following pages appear in the chronological order of the scenes they depict.



Les Marguerites Fleuriront ce Soir

by Jeffrey W. Bass, Oil on Canvas, 2006
Donated by Richard J. Guggenlime

Virginia Hall was a Baltimore native who joined the US State Department in the 1930s, serving as a clerk with postings in Warsaw, Poland, Venice, Italy, and Izmir, Turkey. A hunting accident resulted in the amputation of her left leg and precluded her from overseas assignments with the State Department, so she resigned. At the outbreak of WW II, she eagerly joined the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) to fight fascism. Her fluency in French landed her a clandestine assignment in Lyons, where she went to work developing the area's resistance operations. Over the next 15 months, every British agent arriving in France passed through her flat for instructions, counterfeit money, and contacts. In addition, she orchestrated supply drops and helped endangered agents escape to England. Betrayed in November 1942, she had to use her own escape route out of France, just steps ahead of her now infamous pursuer, Klaus Barbie, "the butcher of Lyons."

Hall then joined the Special Operations Branch of the Office of Strategic Services in March 1944 and asked to return to occupied France. OSS promptly granted her request and reinfiltred her aboard a British PT boat. Disguised as a farmwoman, she carried cheese to local villages to count German troops and identify drop zones for the Allied invasion to come.

The painting portrays Hall in the early morning hours, radioing London from an old barn near Le Chambon sur Ligon to request supplies and personnel. Power for her radio was provided by a discarded bicycle rigged to turn an electric generator, the clever invention of one of her captains, Edmund Lebrat. Coded messages such as "Les marguerites fleuriront ce soir" (the daisies will bloom at night) apprised Hall of what airdrops to expect from London and when. After D-Day, a Jedburgh team joined her, and together they trained resistance forces to wage guerrilla warfare. OSS Director William Donovan awarded Virginia Hall the Distinguished Service Cross—the only one given to a civilian woman during that war. Hall later worked for the CIA, serving in many jobs as one of CIA's first female operations officers.

Forty years after she retired from CIA and almost 25 years after her death, the painting honoring Hall's work was unveiled in 2006 at the French ambassador's residence in Washington, DC. Ambassador Jean-David Levitte read a letter from French President Jacques Chirac. In it, he called Ms. Hall a "true hero of the French Resistance" and added, "On behalf of her comrades in the Resistance, French combatants, and all of France, I want to tell her family and friends that France will never forget this American friend who risked her life to serve our country."



Earthquake's Final Flight

by Jeffrey W. Bass, Oil on Canvas, 2006
Donated by the Fairchild Corporation

This painting commemorates air operations of Civil Air Transport, an Agency proprietary, and its CIA contract pilots in support of French forces at Dien Bien Phu, Indochina, in 1954, during the final days of the conflict between the French and Viet Minh. In Fairchild C-119s with US Air Force markings hurriedly painted over with French Air Force roundels, 37 CAT pilots volunteered to fly supplies from the French airbase at Haiphong to the battlefield near the border with Laos.

Between 13 March and 6 May 1954, the pilots and crews made 682 airdrops to the beleaguered French forces, flying through murderous anti-aircraft fire from guns that ringed the valley at Dien Bien Phu. On 6 May, the day before the Viet Minh overran the French fortifications, anti-aircraft fire hit the C-119 flown by legendary CAT pilot James McGovern (nicknamed "Earthquake McGoon") and co-pilot Wallace Buford. The pilots struggled to keep the plane airborne despite flak damage to the control surfaces and the port engine. The plane limped over the border into Laos and crashed, killing McGovern and Buford and two French paratroopers. The CAT pilots were thus among the first Americans to die in the Indochina conflict, which would eventually fully engage US military forces and end only in 1975.

The painting depicts McGovern's C-119 shortly after it was hit by flak over the drop zone at "Isabelle," an outpost of the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu.

The crash site was located in 2002, and in 2006 DNA testing confirmed that the remains recovered were McGovern's. He was buried with honors at Arlington Cemetery on 24 May 2007. Pieces of his C-119 are now in the CIA Museum collection.

When the painting was unveiled at his residence in 2005, French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte presented the French Republic's highest award (the Légion d'Honneur) to five of the six surviving CAT pilots for their heroic performance in the epic battle that marked the end of French colonial rule in Indochina.



Seven Days in the Arctic

by Keith Woodcock, Oil on Canvas, 2007
Donated by Gar and Audrey Thorsrud

During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union competed for every advantage, including study of the Arctic for its strategic value. For seven days in May 1962, under Project COLDFEET, the US Intelligence Community pursued an opportunity to collect intelligence from an abandoned Soviet drift station on a floating ice island deep in the Arctic. The Soviets had hastily evacuated the station when shifting ice made its aircraft runway unusable, abandoning the remote base and its equipment and research materials.

Upon discovering that the station had been abandoned, the Intelligence Community formed a team of officers from the Office of Naval Research, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the US Air Force, and the CIA to develop a plan conceived by a Navy Maj. Lt (jg), Leonard LeSchack, to parachute specialists on to the site and retrieve them using a unique airborne pickup device, Robert Fulton's Skyhook. The Skyhook was an adaptation of devices Great Britain and the United States had used in the 1940s and early 1950s to allow fixed-wing aircraft to pick up people or objects from the ground without landing. Fulton's device had been tested, but it had never been used operationally.

COLDFEET came to life on 28 May, when LeSchack and Air Force Major James F. Smith were dropped on to the abandoned post from a B-17. The plane belonged to CIA proprietary Intermountain Aviation and was flown by the company's pilots, Connie Seigrist and Doug Price, accompanied by a polar navigator borrowed from Pan American Airlines and other Intermountain crew members to operate the recovery equipment. On 2 June, under extremely difficult conditions caused by poor visibility and high winds, the B-17 returned to make three successful passes with the Skyhook to collect the men and the Soviet material they had retrieved. The mission yielded information on the Soviet Union's Arctic research activities, including evidence of advanced research on acoustical systems to detect under-ice US submarines and efforts to develop Arctic anti-submarine warfare techniques.

The painting's unveiling at CIA headquarters on 21 April 2008 and the ceremony honoring COLDFEET participants brought team members together for the first time in 46 years. Many of the family members who joined them had never been to CIA Headquarters, let alone heard of the contributions their relatives had made in an extraordinarily challenging Cold War mission.



Untouchable

by Dru Blair, Mixed Media on Illustration Board, 2007

Donated by Daniel K. Hilton

No question in the early 1950s had greater implications for US security than determining the kinds and numbers of strategic weapons the Soviet Union possessed and how Moscow intended to use them. The U-2 was built to help answer that question, but the aircraft was barely in production when it became plain that a radical improvement was needed, and efforts were begun under CIA supervision in 1957 to create a new aircraft. The result was the Lockheed “Skunk Works”-designed A-12, OXCART. Only 15 were built, and only three would fly operational missions, ironically none over the USSR, before the aircraft were put in storage to be replaced by the US Air Force version of the plane, the SR-71.

Unveiled with the presentation of an A-12 OXCART on static display at CIA’s Headquarters during its 60th anniversary in September 2007, *Untouchable* depicts the first operational flight of the A-12 on 31 May 1967. Piloted by Mele Vojvodich, the aircraft “Article 131” took off from Kadena Air Base in Okinawa during a torrential downpour just before 1100 local time that day. The A-12 had never operated in heavy rain before, but the weather over the target area was forecast to be satisfactory. Vojvodich crossed the coast of North Vietnam one hour and 14 minutes later, flying at a speed of Mach 3.1 at an altitude of 80,000 feet. He flew the planned route in less than nine minutes, refueled over Thailand, exited near the Demilitarized Zone, and touched down at Kadena in the rain three hours and 39 minutes after he had lifted off. The mission was a success, photographing 70 of the 190 known SAM sites and nine other priority targets, including an airfield, a military training area, an army barracks, and the port at Haiphong. No surface-to-surface missile facilities were located. Contrary to some published accounts, neither Chinese nor North Vietnamese radar tracked the aircraft, nor were North Vietnamese missiles launched at it. A-12 flights remained “untouchable” for another four months.

OXCART’s 29 operational missions over East Asia in CIA’s Operation BLACK SHIELD provided timely threat assessments of SA-2 SAMs in North Vietnam; determined that North Vietnam had no surface-to-surface missiles threatening US and allied military forces in the South; provided information on key installations in North Vietnam; and located the intelligence ship USS *Pueblo*, which had been seized by North Korea; and confirmed that no further hostilities were imminent there.



An Air Combat First

by Keith Woodcock, *Oil on Canvas*, 2007
Donated by Marius Burke and Boyd D. Mesecher

On 12 January 1968, four North Vietnamese Air Force AN-2 Colt biplanes lifted off from an airfield in northeastern North Vietnam and headed west toward Laos. The aircraft were on a mission to destroy a US radar base that was guiding bombers in attacks against targets in North Vietnam. Known to the Americans as Site 85, the radar facility was perched atop a 5,800-foot-high mountain, Phou Pha Thi. Manned by US Air Force volunteers “sheep-dipped” as employees of the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, the site had been in operation only a few months. The mountain, used for many years as a staging base for CIA-directed Hmong guerilla fighters and American special operations and rescue helicopters, was only 125 nautical miles from Hanoi. Air America, a CIA-proprietary, provided aerial support for the facility, the technicians, and the security forces.

The Colts reached Site 85 early in the afternoon, and two began bombing and strafing passes as the others circled nearby. Coincidentally, Air America captain Ted Moore, flying a UH-1D Huey helicopter carrying ammunition to the site, saw the attack (“It looked like World War I,” he recalled.) and gave chase to a Colt as it turned back to the Vietnamese border. Moore positioned his helicopter above the biplane, as crewman Glenn Woods fired an AK-47 rifle down on it. The pursuit continued for more than 20 minutes until the second AN-2 flew underneath the helicopter. Dropping back, Moore and Woods watched as the first AN-2 dropped and crashed into a ridge just west of the North Vietnamese border. Minutes later, the second Colt hit the side of a mountain three miles farther north. The other Colts escaped, inactive observers throughout. Within hours a CIA-controlled ground team reached the crashed aircraft and found bullet holes in the downed planes.

In the mists of the Annamite Mountains and part of a secret war, Air America employees Ted Moore and Glenn Woods gained the distinction of having shot down a fixed-wing aircraft from a helicopter, a singular aerial victory in the Vietnam War. Two months later, North Vietnamese commandos attacked and destroyed Site 85, inflicting the deadliest single ground loss of US Air Force personnel of the Vietnam War.

On 27 July 2007, CIA officially received *An Air Combat First* in an event attended by members of the Air America Board; pilot Ted Moore; Sawang Reed, the wife of flight mechanic Glenn Woods; CIA paramilitary legend Bill Lair; and the donors of the painting, former Air America officers Marius Burke and Boyd D. Mesecher.



The Day the Wall Came Down

by Veryl Goodnight, Bronze, 2004

Donated by Sarah and John Lindahl, Jr.

Veryl Goodnight watched raptly with the rest of the world as the Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989. That night, she says, in a dream, her plan for a sculpture of five horses racing across a prairie was transformed into a sculpture depicting the spirited animals leaping to freedom over the Berlin Wall's ruins. Today, two monumental (1¼ life-size) installations of her sculpture exist. One is at the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas. The other, donated to the German people, is in Berlin. In 2004, US patrons of the arts, Sarah and John Lindahl, Jr., commissioned a one-quarter life-size version for presentation to the CIA. In explaining their reasons, John Lindahl recalled reading DCI George Tenet's farewell remarks in July 2004, in which he said, "I am convinced that if the American people were fully aware of what you do—around the clock and around the world—they would line up at that front gate in huge, record numbers, come in here, and say thank you." Lindahl offered the Goodnight work as such a thank you, coming, he said, "from a sincere appreciation for the patriotic sacrifice that our fellow citizens (neighbors and friends) make on our country's behalf. . . . Our hope is that Veryl's visionary sculpture will add a little balance to the landscape and perhaps lift a spirit or two along the way." Today, *The Day the Wall Came Down* stands in the entrance of the New Headquarters Building.

At our request, Goodnight added, as graffiti on the ruins of the wall, symbols with particular meaning for CIA's workforce. First, she added the inscription "And Ye Shall Know the Truth, and the Truth Shall Make You Free," which graces the lobby of the Original Headquarters Building. Now, employees and visitors entering either portal will see the inscription drawn from the Bible (John 8:32) that serves as a philosophical foundation of our work. Also on the wall's fragments is President Ronald Reagan's famous admonition: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" Finally, Goodnight added a single white star. Like the stars on CIA's Wall of Honor that pay tribute to fallen colleagues, this star honors the fallen. But in this case, it marks the sacrifices of CIA's foreign agents who gave their lives in a common mission during the Cold War. The CIA has recognized few such people publicly, but they were memorialized collectively in November 1999 at a ceremony in front of Goodnight's statue at the Bush Library attended by many US political and intelligence leaders, including former President George H.W. Bush, DCI Tenet, and other former DCIs.



Cast of a Few, Courage of a Nation

by James Dietz, Oil on Canvas, 2008
Donated by Alan Seigrist and Christopher Exline

In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks, the President of the United States ordered the Director of Central Intelligence to immediately launch operations against al-Qa'ida and its Taliban supporters in Afghanistan and to collect intelligence to help pave the way for US military operations. Within 15 days of the attacks in the United States, the first team of CIA officers was on the ground and operating in Afghanistan to make contacts with opposition groups in the prelude to Operation Enduring Freedom. Under CIA leadership, multiple paramilitary teams composed of extremely resourceful and courageous people worked alongside every key opposition tribal group around the country, usually in isolation far behind enemy lines and away from ground reinforcements.

Cast of a Few, Courage of a Nation was unveiled on 17 April 2008 to commemorate these early operations and the later combined efforts of US intelligence and military forces, Afghan allies, and coalition partners in Afghanistan. The painting depicts a CIA-owned, Soviet-built Mi-17 helicopter conducting a night resupply mission of food, equipment, operational funds, and ammunition to a team in Afghanistan. The scene, repeated hundreds of times in Afghanistan, conveys a sense of the perils and physical difficulty faced by small groups of paramilitary officers working in the hostile environment. The work resonated strongly for the veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom who were present at the unveiling. They all said Dietz's painting has masterfully captured their own personal moments in the experience.

Unseen but implied is the full range of activity that goes into such missions, not only in Afghanistan, but in places many miles distant. Each landing would have included contingency planning and intelligence collection done months before; planning and coordination of the specific mission; rapid acquisition of equipment involved in the delivery; and the assembly and delivery of goods from main bases oceans away. People engaged in these efforts, but not seen in the painting, would have included operational planners, intelligence analysts, logisticians, security officers, indigenous allies, and US military components.

Co-donor Alan Seigrist said that with this donation he has also honored the contribution to CIA operations over a three-decade period of his father, Connie Seigrist, who as a CIA contract pilot, logged more than 30,000 hours in Agency aircraft, including the B-17 pictured in the painting of the COLDFEET mission.

Looking Ahead

British aviation artist Keith Woodcock will add a third painting of his to the collection. This one, to be presented by the Air America Board, will depict Air America search and rescue operations in Laos during the 1960s.

Jeff Bass has also been commissioned to provide a third painting. His will show a flight of B-26s flown by CIA contract pilots on a mission to support ground troops landed in the Bay of Pigs, Cuba, in April 1961.

Related Readings

Timothy N. Castle, *One Day Too Long: Top Secret Site 85 and the Bombing of North Vietnam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)

William M. Leary, "CIA Air Operations in Laos, 1955–1974," *Studies in Intelligence*, Unclassified Edition, (Winter 1999–2000)

William M. Leary and Leonard A. LeSchack, *Project Coldfeet: Secret Mission to a Soviet Ice Station* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996)

Judith L. Pearson, *The Wolves at the Door: The True Story of America's Greatest Female Spy* (Guilford, CT: The Lyon Press, 2005)

David Robarge, *Archangel: The CIA's Supersonic A-12 Reconnaissance Aircraft* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2007)

Gary C. Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005)

Martin Windrow, *The Last Valley: Dien Bien Phu and the French Defeat in Vietnam* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2005)