

HH-43 SAR pilot's diary, 1964-1965, Vietnam by Archie Taylor

November 16, 2013

Introduction



It is not often that we get access to a fairly detailed diary of a combat air commander from the Indochina War. We have such a diary written by Lt. Colonel (and earlier major) Archie Taylor, shown here with one of his HH-43 Huskie Search and Rescue (SAR) and Local Base firefighting and crash Recovery (LBR) helicopters. These were superb firefighting machines --- indeed, many crews called them “aerial fire trucks.” They also turned out to be fantastic SAR machines, indeed early in the war, which is where we are with Taylor’s diaries, among the only USAF SAR helicopters. They were nicknamed “Pedro.” I did a story on the Pedro’s of Vietnam, “Our Pedro’s, rotors of wood, men of steel,” which I commend to you. Lots of good history on them.

The diaries were found and provided by his son, also named Archie Taylor.

I want to warn you, before you get too settled in your seats or at your printer, this is a very long report. Taylor’s notes are extensive. I chose a strategy that amplified his notes to give you a more

complete idea of what he was noting. So you'll have to be prepared for the long haul here. In my view, it's worth it. I will conclude with words from General Mark Welsh, the current Chief of Staff, USAF (CSAF), while he was talking about something else, which I will recount at the close. But if you go through this entire report, "Every once in a while, it will remind yourself of who you are."

His diary comes in two parts.



First, as commander, Det 4, Pacific Air Rescue Center (PARC) during October 1964-May 1965. He, his crews and his HH-43F Pedro's were located at Bien Hoa AB, Republic of Vietnam (RVN), located outside Saigon. His notes here were quite legible and understandable to the non-professional airman. He also saved his typewritten reports to higher headquarters which were easily readable. This photo shows a Bien Hoa-based HH-43 taking off, year unknown.



Second, we have his notes during the period May-October 1965 when he served at the Search and Rescue Center (SAR) located with Air Operations Center (AOC) at Tan Son Nhut AB, Vietnam, outside Saigon. He worked the SAR problem while there. This center was established in 1961, the same year the Military Assistance Command Vietnam, MACV, was established. When three officers and two enlisted men arrived to operate the SAR center, they did not have, phones, chairs or tables. They had to find a way to set up shop in a prefabricated Jamesway Hut such as shown here at an Army outpost. They shared their hut with others who served as a control center for air attacks in Vietnam. Furthermore, in 1961 the US Air Rescue Service (ARS) had no forces in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). As a result, the SAR Center had to coordinate with the Army to make arrangements.

I want to emphasize that US military forces, especially the USAF, were in no way, shape or form prepared to conduct SAR operations early in the war. It is a sad episode. It's almost as though the powers to be thought their air forces were invincible. They were not, as you will soon see.

I will call Lt. Colonel Archie Taylor "Archie" from now on so you know about whom I am talking.

For me, Archie's diaries are a goldmine of first hand observation of the air war in 1964-1965. This was a dynamic period of time in the war.



The suits in Washington thought they could bomb North Vietnam (NVN) into submission and end the war early. So, they organized and executed a massive aerial bombardment campaign from March 2, 1965 through November 2, 1968, known as Rolling Thunder. This arguably became the most intense air-ground battle of the war. However, the main problem with the operation was that it built up gradually, very slowly, from just a few flights against insignificant targets all the way to bombing of Hanoi. USAF, USN and Republic of Vietnam (RVN) Air Force (RVNAF) participated in bombing the north. The Navy largely came from the Gulf of Tonkin, while the USAF largely staged from

secret bases in Thailand, flying through Laos to get to their targets in NVN, a perilous flight. The bases in Thailand were secret in that neither Thailand or the US would admit to their existence; the media pretty well knew about them however.

John T. Correll, writing “Rolling Thunder” for the March 2005 edition of *Air Force Magazine*, said this:

“In Rolling Thunder, the US attacked the North with all sorts of aircraft, but the worst of the fighting was borne by the F-105s and the F-4s.”

Archie’s notes will bear that out. I would remark, however, that to conduct Rolling Thunder attacks required a host of tankers, SAR aircraft, command and control aircraft, and reconnaissance aircraft, to name a few.

I commend Correll’s article to you --- it tells it like it was, the decisions, the mistakes, the problems, the courage.



This map shows how the USAF and USN divided NVN for bombing and strafing purposes. You are looking at numbered “Route Packages.” These packages were not formalized until December 1965, but the services were sort of using them earlier.

The Navy concentrated on 6B, including Haiphong harbor, 4, 3, and 2, targets easily accessible from the Gulf of Tonkin. MACV employed USAF, USN and RVNAF aircraft to strike at area 1 in the NVN close to the DMZ and targets inside the RVN. The USAF had areas 5 and 6A, the latter of which included Hanoi, both of which included numerous transportation links between China and the NVN. And, of course all the services with fixed and rotary wing attack aircraft attacked throughout the RVN.

Lima Sites (LS) were set up in Laos to, among other missions, host USAF fighters and SAR helicopters to help downed airmen in NVN. They played an enormous role in hosting supplies and airlifting indigenous and US special forces to the fight inside Laos. They further worked as key communications and navigation sites. I did a story on one of them, "LS-36, 'The Alamo' in Laos," which also provides some valuable history on these sites.

I assembled the stories that follow knowing the risks associated with such a long report. I felt compelled to do it this way. Our air forces had a very tough time going into NVN in the early years. The enemy was far better prepared than we expected to defend themselves. This turned out not be a cake walk. And our pilots and crews paid a huge price.

In the early years, the enemy's most potent weapon was anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) and even automatic weapons. As time went on, they employed more sophisticated radar controlled AAA and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), all provided them by the USSR and China. Added to all this, the Chinese inserted an estimated 320,000 troops into NVN to operate antiaircraft guns, build and repair roads, bridges, railroads and assemble factories. The Chinese focused a great deal of attention on the highways that connected Hanoi with China, over which an enormous amount of supplies to the NVN flowed. They were well trained and had the very best air defense equipment, and the highways had airfields nearby from which the NVN Air Force (NVNAF) could provide air defense coverage of Hanoi and these roads. To a large extent the Chinese and Soviets protected NVN enabling NVN forces to go south and fight the Americans and South Vietnamese inside the RVN. That's what our air forces were up against.

And therein lies the value of this presentation --- you see first hand a glimpse of what went on as this war got underway. For those of you who participated in flying combat during the war, these notes and stories will bring back a lot of memories, perhaps some not so much fun to re-live. For those of you who did not participate, it is important that you comprehend the service and sacrifice of our men at war. Perhaps most important, this is history, as told to us by Archie in the best way he could, through cryptic notes jotted down rapidly during the heat of battle, from the scene.

Before we get going, I want to name the pilots and crews I was able to identify after researching Archie's notes. His notes consisted mostly of call signs, sometimes aircraft type, almost always locations where the aircraft was reported down, and the date and a running time hack. I could not tell whether he was dealing in local time or Zulu time (Greenwich Meridian Time), so I just use the time hacks he wrote down. I took this data, searched for the incidents, tried to identify the crews, their units and home bases, and background information surrounding their mission and loss.

These are the crews I was able to identify. While commanding Det 4, PARC HH-43s at Bien Hoa AB, RVN, so Archie naturally concentrated on rescue efforts in that area. Once you get to the section when he served in the SAR Rescue Center at Tan Son Nhut, you will see most of the losses were over NVN.

[Det 4 PARC diary](#)

Lt. Glenn Dyer, USAF, A-1E, 1st Air Commando Squadron, Tan Son Nhut, RVN, October 26, 1964, KIA

1st Lt. K.P. B”Buddy” Roedema, USAF, A-1E, 1st Commando Air Squadron, Bien Hoa AB, RVN, December 1, 1964, Rescued

Capt. Lyal H. Erwin, USA, the pilot, and Pfc. Alton L. Hornbuckle, USA, the gunner, UH-1B, January 15, 1965, KIA

Major George F. Vlisides, USAF, A-1E, 1st Air Commando Squadron, Bien Hoa AB, RVN, January 27, 1965, KIA along with a RVNAF crew member

Captains Thomas C. McEwen, USAF and Kurt W. Gareiss, USAF, A-1E, 1st Air Commando Squadron, Bien Hoa AB, KIA, February 24, 1965

A1C Robert Doss, USAF, Fireman, Det 4, PARC, Bien Hoa AB, RVN, April 27, 1965, KIA

[SAR Rescue Center notes](#)

Capt. Carl E. Jackson, USAF, MACV SOG, C-123, at least 3 KIA, probably more

Capt. Marvin Nelson, USAF, 15th TRS, “Fox 23,” RF-101, June 29, 1965, KIA

Capt. Don Ira Williamson, USAF, “Elm 2,” F-105D, 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 7, 1965, KIA or died in captivity

Capt. William J. Barthelmas Jr., USAF, “Pepper 02”, F-105D, 357th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 27, 1965, KIA

Major Jack G. Farr, USAF, ”Pepper 01,” F-105D, 357th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 27, 1965, KIA

Capt. Walter Kosko, USAF, “Healy 2”, F-105D, 563rd TFS, Takhli RTAFB, July 27, 1965, KIA

Capt Kile Dag Berg, USAF, 563rd TFS, Takhli RTAFB, July 27, 1965, POW

Capt. Robert B. “Percy” Purcell, 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 27, 1965, POW

Capt. Frank J. Tullo, “Dogwood 02”, F-105D, 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB, Rescued

Capt. Robert Norlan Daughtrey, USAF, F-105D, 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB, August 2, 1965, POW

Major Joseph E. Bower, F-105D, 421st TFS attached to 12th TRS, Korat RTAFB, August 3, 1965, KIA-MIA

Pilatus PC-6 Porter, Air America , August 8, 1965, pilot-crew not found in research

Major Dean A. Pogreba, USAF, “Hudson 09,” F-105D, 49th TFS, Yokota, Japan, on temporary duty with the 36th TFS Takhli, RTAFB, August 24, 1965, Rescued

Commander Fred Franke and Lt. Commander R. B. Doremus, USN, “Sundown,” F-4B, VF-21, USS Midway, August 24, 1965, both POWs

Lt. J.G. Richard M. Brunhaver, USN, “Beefeater,” A-4C, VA-22, USS *Midway*, August 24, 1965, POW

Capt. Wesley D. Scheirman, USAF, “Elm 1,” F-105F, 67th TFS, Korat RTAFB, August 28, 1965, POW

Lt. Edd D. Taylor, USN, USN, A-1H, VA-152, USS *Oriskany*, August 29, 1965, KIA

Lt. Henry S. McWhorter, USN, “Corktip 919,” RF-8A, VFP-63, USS *Oriskany*, August 29, 1965, KIA

Capt. James A. Branch and 1st Lt. Eugene M. Jewell, USAF, “Rhino,” F-4C, 15th TFW, Ubon RTAFB, September 4, 1965, MIA

Lt. J.G. Edward B. Shaw, USN, “Firewood 203,” A-1H, VA-165, USS *Coral Sea*, September 5, 1965, KIA

Lt. James L. Burton, USN, “Elm,” A-4E, VA-164, USS *Oriskany*, September 6, 1965, Rescued

Capt. Ricard C. Marshall, USAF, A-1G, 1131st USAF Special Activities Squadron, MACV SOG, and Chief Warrant Officer William J. LaGrand, USA, 197th Aviation Co., 145th Aviation Battalion, September 6, 1965, KIA

Capt. John T. Clark, Jr., USAF, “Dodge 2,” F-105D, 67th TFS, Korat RTAFB, , September 6, 1965, Rescued

Lt. J.G. Robert David Rudolph, USN, “Corktip 918,” RF-8, VP-63 Det G, September 8, 1965, KIA

Major Edgar Lee Hawkins, USAF, “Elm-2,” F-105D, 67th TFS, Korat RTAFB, KIA

Capt. Phillip Eldon Smith, USAF, F-104C, 435th TFS, Da Nang AB, RVN, POW China

Harvey Quakenbush, USAF, F-104C, 436th TFS, Da Nang AB, RVN, Rescued

Capt. Dale Carlson, USAF, F-104C, 436th TFS, Da Nang AB, RVN, Rescued

Capt. Willis E. Forby, USAF, F-105D, 334th TFS, Takhli RABF, POW

Capt. Thomas J. Curtis, USAF, “Duchy 41,” HH-43, Detachment 3 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS), NKP RTAFB, POW

1st Lt. Duane W. Martin, USAF, “Duchy 41,” HH-43, Det 3, 38th ARRS, NKP RTAFB, escaped, KIA by a villager during his escape

Capt. Joseph Reynes, USAF, F-100D, 481st TFS Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, Rescued

Lt. J.G. Jon R. Harris, USN, A-4E, VA-72, USS *Independence*, September 20, 1965, Rescued

Navy E-1B, VAW-12, USS *Independence*, September 22, 1965, Rescued

Capt. Jack Gravis and 1st Lt. Wylie E. Nolen, USAF, “Grisley Lead,” F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, September 24, 1965, Rescued

Capt. George R. Hall, USAF, “Dagger 54,” RF-101, 15th TRS, Ubon RTAFB, September 27, 1965, POW

Lt. Cmdr. Carl J. Woods, USN, “Milestone 602,” VA-196, USS *Bon Homme Richard*, September 28, 1965, KIA

Lt. Colonel Melvin J. Killian, USAF, “Mercury Lead,” F-105D, 334th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, September 30, 1965, KIA

Capt. Chambless M. Chesnutt and his WSO Capt. Michael Chwan, USAF, “Cobra 4,” F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, September 20, 1965, both KIA

Capt. Charles J. “Chuck” Scharf, USAF (top photo), and his WSO 1st Lt. Martin J. “Marty” Massucci, USAF, “Gator 3” and then “Gator Lead,” 43rd TFS, Ubon RTAFB, October 1, 1965, Scharf KIA, Massucci MIA

Lt. J.G. Richard F. Adams, USN, “Chevy Lead,” F-8E, VF-162, USS *Oriskany*, Rescued

Major James O. Hivner, USAF, “Panther 3,” F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, POW

1st Lt. Thomas Barrett, USAF, “Panther 3,” F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, POW

Major Dean A. Pogreba, USAF, “Mercury 01 (Mercury Lead),” F-105D, 49th TFS Yokota, Japan flying for the 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, KIA

Capt. Bruce G. Seeber, USAF, “Mercury 02,” F-105D, 49th TFS Yokota, Japan flying for the 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, POW

Capt. Robert Pitt, USAF, RF-101C, 15th TRS, Udorn RTAFB, Crash landing survived

First Lt. John C. Hauschildt, USAF, F-100, 481st TFS, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, KIA

Lt. J.G. Richard F. Adams, USN, “Chevy Lead,” F-8E, VF-162, USS *Oriskany*, October 5, 1965, Rescued

Major James O. Hivner, USAF, “Panther 3,” F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, POW and 1st Lt. Thomas Barrett, USAF, “Panther 3,” F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, POW

Major Dean A. Pogreba, USAF, “Mercury 01 (Mercury Lead),” F-105D, 49th TFS Yokota, Japan flying for the 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, KIA

Capt. Bruce G. Seeber, USAF “Mercury 02,” F-105D, 49th TFS Yokota, Japan flying for the 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, October 5, 1965, POW

“Hawk 1,” EB-66, Takhli RTAFB, October 5, 1965, Attached by MiGs, escaped the MiG attack safely

First Lt. John C. Hauschildt, USAF, F-100, 481st TFS, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, KIA

Major James E. Randall, USAF, “Triumph 01, F-105D, 562 TFS, Takhli RTAFB, October 5, 1965, Rescued

Capt. Thomas W. Sima, USAF, “Olds Lead,” F-105D, 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, October 15, 2013, POW

Capt. Robert H. Schuler, USAF, “Olds 02,” F-105D, 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, October 15, 2013, KIA

These are the losses that occurred during Archie’s watch about which he knew and took notes for his diary. It is a humbling experience to look at this list, research these men, and write about them, however briefly. Like I mentioned earlier, quoting from the CSAF, General Welsh:

“Every once in a while (it will) remind yourself of who you are.”

Archie Taylor, commander, Det 4, Pacific Air Rescue Center (PARC), October 1964-May 1965

Background



As mentioned in the introduction, Major, later Lt. Colonel Archie Taylor, his crews and his HH-43F Pedro's were located at Bien Hoa AB, Republic of Vietnam (RVN), located outside Saigon. This photo shows a Bien Hoa-based HH-43 taking off in 1965.



This map shows you Bien Hoa's location outside Saigon. Note Tan Son Nhut AB also outside Saigon. The former was more of an operational base than the latter. The latter hosted many headquarters though combat aircraft did launch from her.

The PARC was co-located with the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) during the war and administratively subordinate to the Air Rescue Service (ARS), which was part of the Military Air Transport Command (MATS).

I provided some history about the decision process to send the HH-43 to the RVN in a separate report. I'd like to provide some additional background:

"Major Alan Saunders, USAF, an H-43 "Huskie" helicopter driver, did a study in August 1963 that said the H-43 helicopter, heretofore used for LBR operations, should be modified for combat operations and be used for the SAR mission ... The study bounced from the 'too-hard-to-handle' box to 'too-hard-to-handle' box in the military hierarchy."

A note to remember as you read ahead. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution did not become law until August 1964. In effect, it authorized the president to go to war in Southeast Asia. The truth was the

US had been fighting there for several years before that.

It turns out Saunders, who did this August 1963 study, was the commander of Det 3, PARC, Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base (NKP RTAFB), long before the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. He recommended air rescue detachments be deployed to Da Nang, Pleiku, Bien Hoa, and Can Tho, all in the RVN. The study emphasized that the standard HH-43 helicopter be modified for combat operations. These modifications included a longer hoist cable, self-sealing fuel tanks, and armor plating. He sent the study to the commander, 2nd Air Division (AD) in Saigon, the forerunner of the 7th Air Force.



Major General Anthis, USAF, the commander, 2nd AD agreed with the study and forwarded a request for three HH-43s for Det 3 up the chain: first to MACV and then to the commander-in-chief, Pacific (CINCPAC). The Army was not hot on the idea, instead preferring to use Army helicopters. So the Anthis request bounced back and forth between MACV (against) and CINCPAC (in favor). As USAF people are wont to do, while the debate was going on between MACV and CINCPAC, both PACAF and the US-based ARS started planning to establish the needed SAR coverage.

Headquarters USAF approved the transfer of three HH-43B detachments to the RVN in March 1964 and planned for that to begin in June 1964. A decision was made to modify some HH-43s which meant the deployments would have to wait until October 1964.

But, in April 1964 MACV and CINCPAC still had not agreed to use the Huskies in the SAR role. The whole reason for wanting to deploy them in the first place was because the air war was ramping up. The problem was most of the air war was supposed to be covert. Introducing SAR forces would open up the box. Nonetheless, PACAF was ready to go. It needed SAR forces for its pilots already flying combat.

Then the next shoe dropped.

In May 1964 the USAF began flying reconnaissance missions over the Laotian Panhandle to get a handle on traffic on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Then so too the Navy over Laos. They found it had grown to be a major thoroughfare for the enemy. Air America (CIA) was tasked for the SAR job. It could not handle the whole task, so Anthis again pleaded for the introduction of US military SAR forces.



He heard nothing, that is, until Lt. Charles Klusmann, USN was shot down on June 6, 1964 in his RF-8A Crusader near the Plaines des Jars (PDJ), Laos, in north central Laos. An Air America C-123 Caribou heard his Mayday and spotted him on the ground, and guided Air America Sikorsky H-34s to the spot but they had to leave under intense hostile fire. The C-123 called for fighters, and T-28s launched from Vientiane but they could not help, mainly because of weather.

PACAF approved a rescue combat air patrol (RESCAP) and sent F-100 fighters to the scene from Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB), a base the USAF was trying to keep covert. The Navy sent in aircraft as well. CINCPAC ordered them to leave the area, so Air America again took over the SAR. The Pathet Lao captured Klusmann. Klusman and two Laotian soldiers escaped on August 30, 1964, evaded enemy forces for two days, and were successfully rescued.

But the incident highlighted the problem with the SAR program.





In June, an F-8B fighter aircraft (looks quite similar to the RF-8A) nicknamed “Old Nick 110” flown by Commander Doyle W. Lynn, assigned to Fighter Squadron III, escorting a reconnaissance mission was shot down. Fortunately the SAR response had improved and he was rescued. An Air America H-34 (example shown here) picked him up, but Lynn had evaded enemy forces to an altitude of 4300 ft., a bit too high for the H-34 to work effectively because of insufficient hover power, but the H-34 did the job nonetheless. Unfortunately, Lynn, flying a F-8D escorting a Yankee Team reconnaissance mission over Laos, was shot down again by AAA on May 27, 1965 near Vinh and crashed. No parachute was seen and no contact made. He was declared Killed Body Not Recovered.

After all kinds of weird plans were set up, CINCPAC finally said to hell with all this, bring in the USAF SAR forces. That decision came in May 1964. The USAF moved two HH-43B Huskies into NKP RTAFB on the Laotian border. But they did not come with USAF pararescue forces (PJs), only medical people crew. The 33rd ARS LBR in Okinawa activated the unit at NKP as Det 3 PARC Provisional, meaning temporary, on June 19, 1964. The 33rd ARS sent two more to Korat RTAFB on temporary duty.



It also sent in two Grumman HU-16 Albatross amphibious flying boats (example shown here) on temporary duty to operate as a command and control (C2) aircraft, and also to do seaborne rescues.

In August 1964 came the Gulf of Tonkin resolution and bombing of the NVN.



The NVN began to gain the upper hand against Royal Laotian Army (RLA) forces in the PDJ region, so President Johnson sent in F-100 fighters (example shown here) to retaliate against the enemy. These attacks expanded through December 1964 and the Rolling Thunder operation began in March 1965. Rolling Thunder was a gradual and sustained USAF, USN and Republic of Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) aerial bombardment campaign conducted against the NVN through November 2, 1968. As you will see, SAR was now mission essential stuff. Old hands know the military services were not prepared for SAR at the levels they would have to fly them, and in the hostile environments they would encounter. As has always been the case, the honchos played catch-up while the fliers figured out how to get it done with what they had.

Archie's Det 4 PARC notes

This part of Archie's diary deals with the time he commanded Det 4, PARC at Bien Hoa. He had three HH-43Fs. Much of my presentation of his diary for this period is drawn from his written notes and his formal reports to higher headquarters.



In August 1964, a HH-43B unit arrived in Korat, designated Det 4, PARC Provisional. The HH-43B was powered by a 860 hp Lycoming T53-L-1B turbine engine, a change from the piston powered engine of the A model. In essence, the HH-43As were upgraded.

The photo shows a HH-43B at Korat, provided by [Mike Hoffman to westin553.net](#). It started SAR operations right away, nicknamed the “Pedro,” call signs Pedro with a number following. They flew deeply into NVN. This was amazing since the aircraft was designed for short range, about 185 miles.

Now the US got more serious about SAR. In August, five stateside LBR units were ordered to the theater. The ambassador in Vientiane was authorized to use T-28s flown by USAF pilots to escort the HH-43s.

In September 1964 PARCS were set up at Bien Hoa and Da Nang, each with two HH-43Bs. Then in November 1964 the various PARCs were moved around, and Det 4, the unit we are interested in for Archie’s diary, was activated at Bien Hoa with three HH-43Fs, a new rendition of the Old Huskie designed for SAR operations in war. It had added armament and better fuel tanks for extended range.



Bien Hoa was the home of the 34th Tactical Group (TAC GP), Colonel William Bethea in command. Major Archie Taylor, in command of the newly activated Det 4 PARC, and his detachment had already arrived at Bien Hoa on October 22, 1964. They managed to secure a couple tents and put their equipment under cover at night because of the weather. That same night, the airmen moved into a 1,000 sq. ft. hut where they lived for a month. They started assembling two HH-43Fs the next day. Apparently only two of the expected three had arrived. The photo shows the men assembling a HH-43F 63-9712 at Bien Hoa in October 1964. [Photo by Mr. Joseph T. Connell -via Mr. Steve Mock.](#)



I want to back up for just a moment to address the 34th TAC GP and Bien Hoa, aerial photo of base shown here.



Bien Hoa was a Vietnamese base commanded by a Vietnamese officer with a control tower operated by Vietnamese. Here you see Vietnamese, I believe hoisting the Vietnamese Flag at the base, photo taken by Lt. Col. Wayne Adelsberger and seen at vnafmamn.com. The South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) used the base as an air depot and an IRAN (Inspect and Repair As Necessary) facility for the VNAF. The VNAF operated 50 A-1H and 25 A-1E aircraft which had just been turned over to them by the USN. They also flew O-1F Bird Dogs as forward air controllers (FAC).

The 34th TAC GP trained VNAF pilots and observers in counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare. It commanded the 1st Air Commando Squadron using A-1E, C-47 and U-10 aircraft, the 602nd Fighter Squadron (Commando) using A-1E aircraft, and the 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron employing O-1Fs. The 8th and 13th Bomb squadrons were also there with B-57B Canberra aircraft. This was a major base at the time. The Strategic Air Command (SAC) moved its U-2 “Dragon Lady” photo reconnaissance aircraft and its “Blue Springs” drone operations to Bien Hoa in October 1964. There were three Army companies with 25 UH-1 Huey helicopters assigned to the base as well. Archie said that not counting helicopter operations, some 15-20,000 takeoffs and landings occurred here each month using all types of aircraft. His Det 4 in October 1964 was among the newest units to be assigned to the base.

I’ll be showing you some of these aircraft types and others during the course of the story.

His detachment was assigned to the PARC for administrative, command and technical control but was under the operational control (OPCON) of the 2nd Air Division (AD) in Saigon. The 2nd AD exercised this OPCON through Det 3 PARC, which was located at NKP, though I believe it then moved to Ubon RTAFB when Det 2 moved to NKP in November 1964. I am not sure why this arrangement was needed; i.e., why couldn’t 2 AD go directly to Det 4 as it did to Det 3? Perhaps because Det 4 was so new. I will remark here that units were being moved all over the place all the time, aircraft and crews were being sent from Japan and elsewhere on a temporary duty (TDY) status, and trying to keep up with all the changes today, over 50 years later is a real task. This was happening because none of the services were prepared for this SAR job, and frankly the USAF was not prepared for the bombing missions that were being tasked out, so the USAF had to grab aircraft and crews and ordnance from wherever it could and get them over there as fast as they could. TDYs were a fast way of moving things around.

In any event, the mission for the PARC units was “recover aircrew personnel in support of the United States Armed Forces counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam.” A secondary mission was to provide LBR coverage within the unit’s capabilities.



When Archie’s Det 4 PARC got going, it had three HH-43Fs, nine officers, and 27 airmen. Ten of the airmen had been trained as firefighters, five were PJs, and five were crew chiefs. The unit moved to Bien Hoa from Stead AFB, Nevada. This photo shows a HH-43 flying near Bien Hoa in 1965.

I mentioned the crews started assembling two HH-43Fs on October 23. On October 24 Capt. Layman flew the first test hop on #711 by noon. By sundown he had flown the second aircraft, #712 on her first test flight.

Business began almost immediately thereafter. You will see as we march through the diary how diverse Det 4's activities were.

Speaking broadly, the new HH-43 units had no written directives, no tactics, no rules of engagement, and no concept of combat rescue operations on the part of the Air Rescue Service. The learning curve had to be mounted with dispatch.

Lt. Glenn Dyer, USAF, A-1E, 1st Air Commando Squadron, Tan Son Nhut, RVN, October 26, 1964, KIA



On October 26, 1964, an A-1E crashed 20 miles north of the Bien Hoa and Det 4 helped remove the two bodies and prepare them for movement to Tan Son Nhut AB, Saigon. I believe the pilot was Lt. Glenn Dyer, USAF, shown here. Dyer was assigned to the 1st Air Commando Squadron, 34th TACGP, Bien Hoa, flying A-1E Skyraiders. His aircraft, 52-132411 was shot down while flying

airborne alert west of Tan Son Nhut AB. He flew with a VNAF observer who was also KIA. As an aside, I will try to present as many serial numbers of aircraft lost as I can. For your background, the first two numbers always followed by a hyphen stand for the year the aircraft was built, in this case, 1952.

This photo of Dyer was taken while he was at A-1 flight training school, class "Express 02". As you will see in a moment, three other class mates would crash their A-1Es as well, two KIA, one rescued, all near Bien Hoa.

This photo shows a HH-43 responding to a A-1E crash at Da Nang AB, RVN just to give you an idea of the HH-43 responding to such a crash. It is hauling what was known as a fire suppression kit (FSK), which was a foam system. I will describe it more in a few moments.

Capt. Edward Aloysius Blake, USAF and Capt. John Christopher Knaggs, USAF, A-1E, Bien Hoa AB, RVN, October 29, 1964, KIA



Then on October 29, 1964 another A-1E crashed five miles south of the base and Det 4 delivered its FSK to the crash and again helped remove the two bodies. This crash has been listed as non-hostile, an air accident that occurred on a training flight. One of the crew was Capt. Edward Aloysius Blake, USAF (left) while the other was Capt. John Christopher Knaggs, USAF. Both were also assigned to the 1st Air Commando Squadron, 34th TACGP, Bien Hoa. It turns out Knaggs was in the same A-1 Skyraider training class as Lt. Dyer who died on October 26.



Bien Hoa was hit by a Viet Cong (VC) mortar attack on November 1 shortly after midnight for about 15-20 minutes. Archie said the crews were awakened by the sound of “whump-whump” followed by more “whump-whumps.” Jumping out of the rack, they looked outside and could see the flight line was under attack near the control tower. The crews hurriedly dressed and ran to the gun room for armaments. This photo shows burning aircraft on the ramp at Bien Hoa following the attack.



Aircrews were called to report to the flight line and worked feverishly to get airborne to counter-attack the enemy infiltrators. The Det 4 Econoline was fired up to take the Det 4 crews to their helicopters but an ambulance backed into it before they got very far, mostly because of darkness. The Det 4 alert area was hit by at least six mortar shells. One dud was sticking up through the Pierced Steel Plank (PSP) right next to a HH-43. The auxiliary power unit (APU) for the alert HH-43 was on fire after taking a direct hit. They dragged it out into a dirt area. This photo shows a HH-43B damaged during the attack. Photo credit: Joseph T. Connell (HH-43 pilot at that time).



The Army launched every UH-1 Huey they could fly to evacuate wounded, but the downside was that their prop wash spread sparks all over the place. The Army area just across the street from Det 4 took direct hits on the huts and killed four soldiers. I don't know if these were those barracks, but they are the damaged barracks of the Army's 118th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC) which flew UH-1 Huey's. The Det 4 tent took a direct hit and wounded two men sleeping there. Just about everyone was at least scratched when shrapnel blasted the trailer and also took .30 cal fire. Airman Walsh was hit in the leg as he ran toward the Army area and also took shrapnel to the back before he passed out. Colleagues carried him to safety and help. Airman Snook was also hit when he prepared to evacuate the tent.

All together, after investigating the attack, seven mortars had landed on or near the PSP parking area damaging all helicopters. Aircraft #712 had blade damage. Nr 711 had a hole in the skin and one in the glass. No problem, she flew that morning to an emergency when a C-47 suffered damage from a mid-air during the counter-attack. The smoke was so thick it was hard to see but she launched anyway.



The attack was a good one for the VC as they hit 20 B-57s of which five were destroyed, four helicopters and three A-1Hs. This photo shows damage to one of the B-57s.

Det 4 men guarded the helicopters and watched the A-1Es taking off, striking their targets, landing, getting uploaded again and launching again. Army helicopter tracers were used to direct their attacks. Archie said the Army helo's had some firepower and "they put out tracers like we dispense foam (to put out fires)."

When the fighting was over, the men returned to their tents which were filled with holes and tears. Archie said, "Parachutes, flak vests, fire fighting clothing, chairs and even waste paper baskets suffered either flak damage or damage from the .30 cal fire." They had to condemn four parachutes and the rest were drenched in rain. Following all this, the men had to put their damaged helicopters back together.

As an aside, Major Archie then outlined helicopter crash procedures which addressed crew behavior and signals.

- First, the crew must take defensive actions as necessary to protect themselves and their aircraft. They should use a smoke signal to indicate security of the area. Green smoke should be used when a rescue aircraft is spotted if the area is considered safe. The crew should not limit themselves to signaling just rescue helicopters, but should signal any friendly aircraft since any of them could be used in a rescue effort.
- If a crew member has sustained an injury and rescue is urgent, the crew should employ green smoke and then white smoke in close succession.
- If there are hostile troops in the area, the crew should fire a red flare in the general direction of the enemy. Rescue aircraft will know what that means and will get the word out to other aircraft in the area.
- Crew has to worry about being used as decoys by hostile forces. If the crew feels they are being used as decoys that would endanger an aircraft that might land or hover to rescue the crew, one of the crew should wave his left arm overhead regardless of any other signals the crew may have employed.
- When bringing a rescued downed crew member aboard, that crewman should be searched by a paramedic when bringing him aboard. The flight mechanic will assist the paramedic in removing any dangerous weapons from the rescued crewman during flight. The Pedro crew is to keep weapons aboard the aircraft and on the rescued crewman out of all unknown persons during the flight.
- Red smoke will be used when it is unsafe to land for a rescue.

VNAF crashes near Bien Hoa

The VNAF conducted an air attack on November 7 against the VC located some 15 miles north of the base in the woods and Det 4 flew four hours during the night in case the VNAF needed SAR help. On November 13 Det 4 delivered firemen by hoist to a crash site two miles from the end of the runway and removed one body from the wreckage. Since he is not listed on the Vietnam Wall, I have assumed this pilot was VNAF. Det 4's Airman Donnigan helped a VNAF fire truck fireman when a round of ammunition cooked-off. Donnigan found himself alone with the hose and continued putting out the fire.

On November 14, 1964 a VNAF pilot crash landed his A-1H, was hit by a strong crosswind, veered off the runway and overturned in a shallow muddy ditch. The aircraft was sinking. One of the

aircraft's fuel tanks was ruptured and leaking gasoline over the area. Captains John Boyles and Kenneth Spaur went out in their Huskie. They set down the FSK close to the crash site so TSgts Charles Watters and Dominick Cocuzzi could put it to use. The two fireman immediately foamed the area and had to dig a tunnel down to the canopy to see if the pilot were still alive. Walther was also a paramedic, found a way to grasp the pilot's hand, and felt a strong pulse. The aircraft kept sinking. The two NCOs dug with their bare hands to keep an airway open.

A few minutes later, a fire truck arrived and the Vietnamese firemen shoveled their way to the pilot. Then a heavy American crane truck arrived manned by Vietnamese who were able to hitch the crane to the front of the aircraft and lift it up a bit. Walther moved under the cockpit, cut the pilot's harness, and carried him out to the waiting Huskie which evacuated him right away. Archie made a note indicating that the VNAF pilot later returned to the Det 4 area hoping the crew had found his scooter keys. He wanted to go to Saigon to party I guess!

HH-43 Ranch Hand escort mission

While talking about the firefighting mission, I want to switch to another mission that Archie did not like and he complained about it ---- escorting Ranch Hand missions. As it turns out, the example he presented below involved his crews escorting the Ranch Hands but also involved a firefighting mission when one of them crashed.



Between 1962 and 1971 US aircraft conducted chemical warfare missions known as Ranch Hand, spraying defoliants and herbicides over rural areas trying to destroy food and vegetation cover used by the VC. This photo shows an UC-123 Ranch Hand mission spraying in 1962. On November 29, 1964, two HH-43s were escorting a Ranch Hand mission, the UC-123 was hit and his engine caught fire. This aircraft made a mad dash for the Bien Hoa runway with the two escorting HH-43s in hot pursuit. Capt. Warden was flying the second Pedro and realized the tower was not operating due to a power failure. He called the Army company on FM and asked them to alert the command post that a burning aircraft was coming in to Bien Hoa for an in-flight emergency (IFE). A third HH-43 carrying his Fire Suppression Kit (FSK) was launched and met the Ranch Hand aircraft when he touched down. All three Pedro's converged on the incident to help.

Archie objected to escorting these Ranch Hand missions. He felt he had too few aircraft, and too few

crew to fly such missions given they were so busy doing their main mission. An off-base crash or escort mission required four pilots. A (FSK) mission must be manned by two more pilots. Yet another pilot is needed to work as a controller, keep track of everyone, have fuel and flight information ready, and, as Archie pointed out, the nearest latrine as well.” He lost this argument to his seniors.

Let me pause to describe the HH-43’s “FSK,” Fire Suppression Kit.



The HH-43 achieved its original fame by responding to local base area and on base crashes, especially when the aircraft was on fire. This was especially useful for off base crashes and other locations inaccessible to fire trucks. In many instances, it would take too long or even be too hard to get fire trucks to the scene. So the USAF called on the HH-43. On the alarm, the HH-43 would rev up engines, get up in the air a bit, move over to the FSK, and hover. A red FSK was prepared by a man on the ground, the HH-43 would hover over it, the crewman on the ground would attach it to the HH-43’s hook, and the Pedro would head out as you see above in this training flight at RAF Upper Heyford, England. The HH-43 would set the FSK down on the ground as close to the fire as the firemen wanted it, the firemen would unhook it and move it into better position if required, and then start spraying foam over the fire. The HH-43 in turn would back away, continue hovering, and, if required, move closer and use its propeller wash to force the flames away from the firemen so they could get as close as possible to the wreckage to lay down the foam and, hopefully, rescue the crew.

F-102, Det 5, 509th Fighter Intercept Squadron (FIS), Tan Son Nhut, November 27, 1964, Rescued



On November 27, one of Archie's pilots, Lt. Cook, was alerted to a Tan Son Nhut-based F-102 crash four miles south of Bien Hoa. As an aside, Lt. Cook held the record with 12 scrambles in a 24 hour period. In the instance of this F-102 crash, the pilot got out and ran safely into the woods. Friendly soldiers came to his assistance but he ran into the woods and it took several hours to get him out. A "loud hailer" aircraft equipped with a bullhorn was called in to convince the pilot to come out for rescue. He did, walked over to the road, waived at an Army helicopter just ahead of Lt. Cook's HH-43 and picked him up. Again on a light note, the F-102 pilot had collected \$6.00 in change from his buddies and he threw the money away in the woods because it made too much noise, a lesson learned. He had suffered engine failure and was from Det 5, 509th Fighter Intercept Squadron (FIS). This was the first F-102 lost in Vietnam.

1st Lt. K.P. B"Buddy" Roedema, USAF, A-1E, 1st Commando Air Squadron, Bien Hoa AB, RVN, December 1, 1964, Rescued



On December 1, an A-1E pilot was conducting a napalm run when he was shot down 14 miles north of Bien Hoa. The pilot bailed out at 700 ft. He had a VNAF student with him whose chute did not open and he landed in the trees. While hiding in the brush, the pilot heard the VC chopping on the wings of his aircraft. A RESCAP arrived and caused the VC to run and hide very close to where the A-1E pilot was hiding. The area of the crash was known to be infested with enemy.



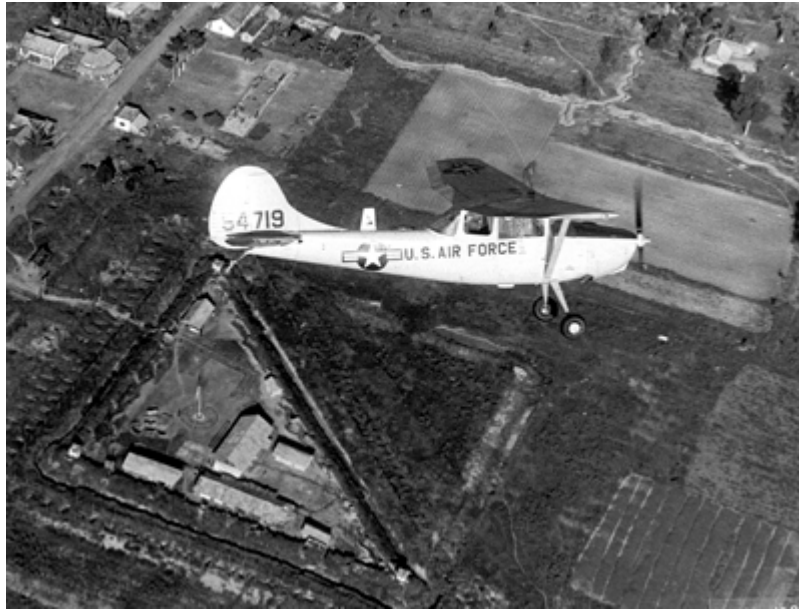
They made radio contact with the hiding US pilot, the A-1E pilot finally made his presence known, and all hands were hoisted aboard a Pedro and returned safely to base. I believe the pilot was 1st Lt. K.P. "Buddy" Roedema, shown here in a photo clip from a group photo of his A-1 training class, the sam class, Express 02, attended by Lt. Glen Dyer and Capt. John Christopher Knaggs, both just mentioned, the latter two KIA.

Capt. John Boyles flew an HH-43F in for the rescue effort with SSgt. Miehlke and put Capt. Kenneth Spaur, A2C Steinert and Airman Donnigan on the ground to inspect the downed aircraft and see if they could find the A-1E pilot. Spaur, Steinert and Donnigan were recommended for the Silver Star for searching on foot in the middle of concentrated enemy forces. They were so close to the enemy that they observed the enemy dismantling the crashed aircraft. Boyles and Miehlke were recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross. Boyles hovered his HH-43 over the three on the ground for over an hour before picking them up.

During their first combat month at Bien Hoa, Det 4 enjoyed a very high in-commission rate, 95 percent, and flew almost 97 hours with their three aircraft. The problem was that their in-commission rate was so high and business so frequent that the Det did not have enough crews and could not rotate them properly to give them sufficient crew rest. Taking on the dual mission of SAR and fire-fighting-LBR put on a special strain, but the Det met all its commitments. This underscores why Archie did not want to escort Ranch Hand missions.



Boyles may have established another Det 4 record on December 16, 1964 when he used a 150 foot hoist cable to rescue a Special Forces sergeant who had impaled his knee on a “Pungi” stake which was found in hospital to be tipped with poison. This is a photo of a Pungi stake pit exhibit at the National Museum of the Marine Corps. These sticks could be placed in high numbers above ground, or in hidden traps such as this where an infantry man would fall into the trap and go through the stakes.



Throughout December, the Det was kept busy with aircraft coming in with battle damage. Two A-1Es landed with gas tanks shot up in what was a dangerous night landing. An O-1F FAC such as shown here took bullets through his cowling and windshield, and an A-1E was shot while on the taxiway.



Archie decided to recommend the HH-43F for the LBR mission and the Sikorsky CH-3C such as shown here for the combat aircrew recovery mission in the Bien Hoa area. The CH-3C became known as the Jolly Green Giant. The CH-3C was built to be a long range transport helicopter. It is my

understanding that the CH-3C did not have a refueling probe to extend its range and did not have a hoist to lift up a down crew member, though it did have a winch cargo hoist with 100 ft. of cable below the fuselage.

A note on the CH-3C vs. the HH-43. In July 1965 the USAF was becoming gravely concerned about its losses. It needed to act quickly. At the time, the USAF felt the longer range HH-43 was the best bet, but a near term solution was needed. That solution was to send CH-3 crews to Udorn RTAFB to fly two CH-3s located there. TAC would loan these to the SAR guys. You will see later on that Capt. George Martin in early July was flying support missions with the CH-3 at Eglin AFB, Florida, and then promptly found himself in charge of 120 airmen on TDY status to Vietnam to fly these two CH-3 loaners on SAR missions. On July 27, 1965 he not only would fly a beat-up old CH-3 on a SAR mission, but he would penetrate deeply into the NVN and conduct the first CH-3 rescue mission in the war. Here again, the crews were not in the SAR business, had no experience, no tactics, no rules, no nothing except their expertise, ingenuity and aircraft.



By December's end, Colonel Walter Derck, the commander of the PARC, sent a memo to Archie, among other things, congratulating him for the outstanding unit he was running. In this letter, Derck raised some issues about the HH-43 that Archie had brought to his attention. You mechanics, engineers and pilots might find this interesting.

Archie had forwarded some recommendations for modifying the HH-43F, and PARC had forwarded these to the ARS with comments. PARC agreed the torque limit on the transmission should be increased to take advantage of available engine power and also supported Archie's ideas on installing an auxiliary fuel tank. PARC favored the idea of attaching externally mounted drop tanks instead of using dump valves to operate with the internal tank.

Then Derck raised what seems to have been a controversial point with Archie. Derck reminded Archie that the original requirement for air recovery units was to support tactical forces, not specifically for the RVN, but anywhere USAF tactical forces might be exposed to hostile fire. Derck said they wanted to make this a world-wide application. As a result, he urged Archie not to confine his thinking about air recovery to the RVN environment, but for all those other areas where the HH-43 might be exercised to its fullest. He seemed to be very down on continued discussions of modifying the internal fuel tank and instead wanted to concentrate on getting a wholly new fuel tank or new aircraft.

Archie also had complained about having to escort fighter aircraft to their targets. While Derck agreed this was not part of the original mission, the brass wanted to project the fighting image of the ARS. Archie's argument I think was centered on how this added mission was creating excessive fatigue on sparse crews. Nonetheless, Derck urged him to do the best he can. Archie was not pleased with this response, scribbling this on the memo, "Easy for you to say when it's our ass!"

Archie reported January 1965 as a very busy month. An A-1E experienced an engine failure and did a belly landing on a dirt strip about 10 miles from Bien Hoa. Lt. Cook launched out and brought the crew back safely.

Capt. Lyal H. Erwin, USA, the pilot, and Pfc. Alton L. Hornbuckle, USA, the gunner, UH-1B, January 15, 1965, KIA



An armed UH-1 Huey such as shown here crashed across the river on January 15, 1965, hit a house and caught fire. Det 4 expended three FSKs on the crash; there was no other fire equipment available. Archie noted the Det 4 crews removed three bodies and two survivors. I believe the losses were aboard UH-1B 63-08718 flown by Capt. Lyal H. Erwin, the pilot, and Pfc. Alton L. Hornbuckle, the gunner, shown here. If this is correct, they were flying low level reconnaissance for the 571st Transportation Company Det, supporting a convoy on its way to Saigon and they hit a high tension power line, crashed and burned on impact. There were two other crew, Chief Warrant W.F. Beyers and Pfc C. O'Donnell, the crew chief. Another two Hueys crashed on the base during the month.

Escorting the Ranch Hand missions had to continue. They returned to Bien Hoa twice with emergencies while the HH-43s were still on their way out. Archie said he needed another aircraft.

Major George F. Vlisides, USAF, A-1E, 1st Air Commando Squadron, Bien Hoa AB, RVN, January 27, 1965, KIA along with a RVNAF crew member



The base experienced a very bad A-1E crash on January 27, 1965 with USAF and VNAF pilots aboard. The A-1E crew had conducted a successful combat mission with no problems but made a hard touchdown at Bien Hoa. The aircraft snapped, inverted and landed on the canopy. Both crew were killed. The A-1E's engine caught fire in what would have been a perfect location to put a fire bottle to fight the fire. As a result, Sgt. Blaquiere and Airman Donegan had to run through the grass fire to reach the burning aircraft. The A-1E was flown by Major George F. Vlisides, USAF, a West Point graduate, known while with the Long Grey Line as "The Gorgeous One." For this mission, he was serving with the 1st Air Commando Squadron, 34th Tactical Group. He was a F-84 veteran of Korea and flew the A-1E to support the Army of Vietnam, the ARVN.

There was no let-up in February. The Det flew 104 hours of which 88 were mission hours. Capt. Cook had a tough month. The good news was he was promoted from 1st lieutenant. The bad news was he was hit in the rear by hostile fire, but was okay, and he tried to get out on Rest and Relaxation vacation (R&R) but was trapped in Saigon during a coup. He would finally make it to Hong Kong for a few days off.

As an aside, this was a coup attempt of February 19, 1965, led by an ARVN general which would eventually bring Air Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky to power. Interestingly, the coup leader, General Phat, attempted to seize Bien Hoa but Ky had already flown there to take control. Ky immediately put air patrols up to protect the base. Ky himself took to the air and flew an air patrol over Tan Son Nhut AB threatening to bomb the rebels, but General Westmoreland intervened and stopped the attack. US forces stayed out of the fray, but Ky became a wonder boy in the eye of the Americans. So Capt. Cook didn't pick a trivial coup while waiting for his plane in Saigon.

Captains Thomas C. McEwen, USAF and Kurt W. Gareiss, USAF, A-1E, 1st Air Commando Squadron, Bien Hoa AB, both KIA, February 24, 1965

An A-1E ditched 80 miles south of Bien Hoa after being hit by ground fire. An Army UH-1 picked up the pilot but his observer bailed out and was captured. The Huey took the rescued pilot to Soc Trang, leaving the HH-43 rescue aircraft flying around there at night with an AC-47 providing cover. The HH-43 was forced to Soc Trang and returned in the morning, after which the VNAF took over the rescue effort.

Another A-1E went down on February 24 with two USAF crew aboard. They crashed on a rubber

plantation about 15 miles south of the base. The rescue effort got to be, as Archie put it, “(a game of) musical chairs with three helicopters between Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut and the crash site.”

Here’s how it went down.

Capt. Warden and Lt Connell for Det 4 were on secondary alert and got aloft in HH-43 #712. Captains Boyles and Spaur launched with the FSK in #711. Capt. LeFevre and Archie assumed LBR alert in #716 and were scrambled on another aircraft incident just minutes later.

Nr. 712 lowered two men by hoist to cut a landing pad for #711 and the FSK. Capt. Warden recovered one body and two wing guns and returned to Bien Hoa for fuel. As he approached the base, LeFevre and Archie departed in #716 to help Capt. Boyles in #711. But when they got there, Boyles had to return for fuel. So #716 circled to land, but in swooped a VNAF H-34 from Tan Son Nhut and he took #716’s landing pad. An H-34 was brought in by USAF Capt. Fetzner and an EOD team. They picked up two more guns and left. They received one hit from hostile fire on departure. LeFevre and Archie on #716 landed with a chain saw. Then Capt. Boyles returned with #711 and helped search for the second body. In the mean time, Warden flying #712 with an A-1E body was ordered to go to Tan Son Nhut. Armed UH-1s arrived to provide cover as a group of Lambettas (motor scooters) were seen coming down the road. They also spotted a couple ox carts approaching, often used to transport mortars and shells.



I believe the two lost in the A-1E were Captains Thomas C. McEwen and Kurt W. Gareiss (shown here), USAF. If correct, Gareiss was an instructor pilot and McEwan was on an evaluation and training flight. The aircraft entered a spin at about 3,000 ft. while executing an acrobatic maneuver and struck the ground in a flat attitude and exploded about 15 miles from Bien Hoa. They were flying with the 1st Air Commando Squadron of the 34th Tactical Group. Nr. 716 left and I am not sure whether they found the second pilot. Both are listed on the Vietnam War Memorial.

As an aside, the Det 4’s HH-43’s were unarmed. Archie, in his report, said he felt the ARS had to outfit the HH-43 with what he called “some FORCE,” which I interpret to mean some weapons. The HH-43s had only the weapons carried by the crew which they would strap out the door to fire when aloft.

Archie was promoted to lieutenant colonel in April 1965. Col. Derck told Archie he was making progress on getting some CH-3Cs and talked to him about taking two of Det 4’s “long range tanks” and putting them up at NKP to be installed on other HH-43s. Det 4 had the HH-43F which had additional internal fuel tanks for extended range.

There is a most interesting story to go with this told by Robert L. LaPointe in his book, *PJs in Vietnam: The story of air rescue in Vietnam as through the eyes of Pararescuemen*. LaPointe wrote

that the NKP HH-43 pilots were worried the pilots shot down in NVN were out of the HH-43B's fuel range. LaPointe said that one of the crew members, Fred Glover, had devised a means while in Texas to refuel the aircraft from 55-gallon barrels while still in flight. Basically, the crews did some midnight requisitioning while at Udorn RTAFB and got some hoses and plumbing parts. Then the HH-43 maintenance guys built a cradle with lumber and put it on the crew cabin floor. The cradle could hold three 55-gallon drums, two on the bottom, one on top. They equipped each drum with a spigot adapter and attached hose that could run to the HH-43's main fuel tank. That was a 200 gallon tank under the cabin floor. When the skipper needed fuel, a crew member would open the spigot and fuel would gravity feed into the main tank.



This is known as GI ingenuity. Now these guys might have been aerial fireman, but this was of course a dangerous arrangement. However, they did increase their total fuel capacity by 75 percent and extended their range from an 85-miles radius to a 145-mile radius. Once a drum was empty, they just rolled it out of the aft of the helicopter. My guess here is that once word got out about this to the honchos in Hawaii, Col. Derck ordered the HH-43F's larger internal fuel tanks sent to NKP's HH-43Bs. The cartoon, by Udo C.J. Fischer, was in LaPointe's book and tells the story as only a GI can tell it.

LaPointe's book is very interesting in that he tells of a lot of things the crews did to arrange their helicopters the way they wanted, and never asked permission. It's good military tradition for the guys in the fight to have a bad taste in their mouths with the higher headquarters, especially those located in Hawaii!

Colonel Derck was adamantly opposed to Archie's idea of arming the HH-43s. Fundamentally, he said he wanted other aircraft built for the job to come in and sanitize an area for a recovery and provide the needed air cover. He did not want HH-43 pilots spending their time and energy hosing down recovery areas. In short, he opposed the idea of a "self-contained rescue force." This is very

similar to an issue associated with the RF-4C photo reconnaissance aircraft. It's pilots urged they be armed for air-to-air combat to protect themselves. My recollection is that the USAF opposed that fearing the RF-4C pilots would turn into dog fighters instead of photographers.

April 1965 began with a "bang" at Bien Hoa as twelve 500 lb. bombs on a flat bed coming from the bomb dump exploded. Apparently a bomb had rubbed against a tire for half the trip, which caused the explosion.

A1C Robert Doss, USAF, Fireman, Det 4, PARC, Bien Hoa AB, RVN, April 27, 1965, KIA



On April 27 a VNAF A-1H from the RVNAF 23rd Tactical Wing ran off the runway on take-off, and the plane blew up as his bombs skidded along the taxiway. He was fully laden with fuel and Mk82 500 lb. bombs. The pilot was killed, and a Det 4 fireman, A1C Robert Doss, Det 4 PARC, was killed when struck in the chest by flying debris from the rear of the aircraft. This was his first day of duty at the base.

On April 30 Capt. Cook, Sgt. Walthers and Sgt. Hughes responded to a fully loaded B-57 fire on the flight line. Cook carried an FSK and determined the fire was not from the fuel tank but rather from flares under the open bomb-bay. He felt he could save the bomber and the flight line. His crew smothered the flames with foam from the FSK, and moved back to allow the fire trucks to move in. The water used by the fire trucks simply made the flare fire worse. Cook returned to the immediate area and used prop backwash, foam and courage to suppress the flames. The firefighters on the ground used their hands to pile the foam on top of the flames. Cook was recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross and the two NCOs for the Airman's Medal.

In May 1965, Archie was moved to Tan Son Nhut where he would work in the SAR Rescue Center. His notes while there are voluminous and the stories surrounding them, well ...



I'll conclude this introduction with a poem. It is entitled, "One more roll," and was written by the Lt. Gerald L. "Jerry" Coffee, USN, while he was a POW in Hanoi. Coffee flew the RA-5C assigned to Reconnaissance Squadron 13 on board the USS *Kitty Hawk* (CVA-63). On February 3, 1966 he and his navigator Lt. Robert T. Hanson ran a reconnaissance mission over a heavily defended area of the NVN. They were hit by enemy fire, their aircraft exploded and crashed in the water bear the coast of the NVN. No parachutes were observed, but an emergency beeper was heard. Both crew had actually successfully ejected into the Gulf of Tonkin. The NVN sent out several boats and local militia captured Coffee. Hanson was not found and was assumed KIA. His remains were returned to the US by the Vietnamese in November 1988. Coffee served in the POW system until release in February 1973. By the time he was released, he had been promoted to commander, and would eventually rise to the rank of captain. Here is his poem.

One More Roll

"We toast our hearty comrades who have fallen from the skies, and were gently caught by God's own hand to be with him on High.

"To dwell among the soaring clouds they've known so well before. From victory roll to tail chase, at heaven's very door.

"As we fly among them there, we're sure to head their plea. To take care my friend, watch your six, and do one more roll for me."

— Commander Jerry Coffee, Hanoi, 1968.

November 16, 2013

SAR Rescue Center, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, May-October 1965

Before going on, I want to mention that the USAF reorganized its SAR operations in Indochina starting on June 30, 1965, shortly after Archie left Bien Hoa and Det 4 PARC. The 38th Air Rescue Squadron (ARRS) was activated at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN and all the PARCs and other units became detachments of the 38th, ultimately operating 14 SAR detachments throughout the RVN and Thailand. The PARC dets were subsumed by the 38th.

In May 1965, Archie was moved to Tan Son Nhut (TSN) which served among other things as a headquarters for the South Vietnamese Air Force, the VNAF, and the USAF's 2nd Air Division (2nd AD), which later became 7th AF. Most operational activity went out of Bien Hoa while most command activity occurred at Tan Son Nhut (TSN).



The USAF set up its Tactical Air Control System (TACS) and employed the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) (shown here, probably in later years of war) to lead the Direct Air Support Centers (DASC) at Da Nang AB, Nha Trang AB, Pleiku AB, Bien Hoa AB and Can Tho AB. The DASCs were responsible for the deployment of aircraft in their sector of operations. All of this was tied into a radar network located throughout the region. Then beneath them were the Tactical Air Control Parties (TACP) usually manned by one or more VNAF-USAF people posted with the ground forces.

Thus far for this report I have used mostly formal reports submitted by Archie to his higher headquarters combined with written notes he had. Archie, while working in the SAR Rescue Center, kept notes, sometimes sketchy and filled with acronyms and call signs to capture segments of SAR missions worked from the TACC. I have had to work with just these notes. I have taken a different approach with these notes than I did in the first section while he was with Det 4, PARC. My vision here is that he was working the SAR problem in the TACC and taking very brief notes for himself to keep things straight in his mind while the SAR effort was or was not underway. Usually, his notes do

not describe a full and complete SAR endeavor, but they do give an insight into the kinds of things that occurred during a SAR, and these are interesting and history worthy. I decided to take the individual sets and try to correlate them with the official record of what happened in order to give more meaning to his notes. If any of you who have participated in any of these can jot down some of your memories, please send them to me at edmarek@mac.com and I will weave your remarks in there. Otherwise, I'm on my own here and will have to do the best I can. There is a pride of authorship, but if I make a mistake, be sure to tell me as I do not like posting bad info.

I confess there is a risk of error here on my part as I do plenty of educated guessing, but I do so based on correlating his notes to events that are on the record. In most cases, I have been surprised to find the probability of a good correlation to be very high. I will tell you when I feel a bit uncomfortable.

Please recall that SAR operations to the extent they were employed in the Indochina War at this time were fairly new to the military services, especially the USAF. The USAF knew how to conduct and was equipped for LBR, but not for longer-range and more complicated SARs under intense hostile fire often involving the choreography of many responding aircraft. You will get a sense for the degree of difficulty our forces encountered in the early years. These notes cover roughly May through October 1965.

When Archie got settled at TSN he sketched out his SAR inventory, which I presume was for the entire war area. He had 3 HH-43s, Det 2 PARC, and, I believe 2 "C/H" at NKP, Thailand, which I will simply believe are cargo/rescue helicopters of some sort. I thought these might be CH-3s but my brief research reflects that the CH-3 did not arrive until July 1965; but perhaps a few snuck in to NKP earlier. He noted he had 2 HH-43Bs at Takhli, Det 1 PARC; two at Ubon, two at Korat, and 4 at Udorn, all in Thailand. He had 3 HH-43Fs at Bien Hoa, Det 4 PARC; and three HH-43Bs at Da Nang, Det 5, PARC. So his total SAR helicopter force was 21 aircraft. His notes reflect four C-54 transports and 3 HU-16 Flying Albatross aircraft as available to him as well, for a total of 28 aircraft. We'll talk more about those in a moment.

Let me start going through the SAR events Archie observed in the SAR Rescue Center by presenting you his exact notes about a single event, and then follow that with the results of my research and correlation. I will do this just for the first event to show you the translation effort married to research I will try to present throughout the rest of this report. In the future, I will not give you his notes, just the integrated story I have assembled using his notes as the lead.

Archie's notes:

27 June

C123 SOG

T of crash 2245

5 mi S of Bien Hoa

1058N - 10652S

In charge SOG MACV

Material section has A/C recovery team for assistance

For security go to III Corps

Col Head (possibly Heap) at MACV

3 bodies removed last night

40 Popular Forces and 2 Sgts protecting area

33rd TAC GP Command Post to help recovery

Now the story as I see it.

Capt. Carl E. Jackson, USAF, MACV SOG, C-123, at least 3 KIA, probably more



On June 27, 1965 a C-123 MACV SOG (1131st USAF Special Activities squadron) such as shown here crashed near Xom Long Dinh, Vietnam, near Saigon. MACV SOG was a highly classified multi-service special operations unit named “Studies and Observations Group” set up in 1964. It conducted strategic reconnaissance, covert action, flare ship, and psychological warfare among other missions, including night attack and transport. It operated throughout the Indochina theater. You might wish to look up C-123 Duck Hook and you’ll find out more about them.



Capt. Carl E. Jackson, USAF was the pilot and aircraft commander. His co-pilot was a Chinese Nationalist. His loadmaster was SSgt. Billie L. Roth, USAF. There were 14 other Chinese Nationalists on board. Nationalist China had offered military assistance and an advisory group did arrive in the RVN in October 1964. On the surface, they were to provide political warfare advice, agricultural and construction support. The official explanation for this crash was that there was a mid-air explosion, but I understand some in CIA dispute that. A report by POW Net says the family was told the aircraft was at Nha Trang which was warned of an impending attack. Jackson drove to his aircraft and headed for Tan Son Nhut, but was hit by ground fire and crashed. The crash occurred at 2245 hours, 5 miles south of Bien Hoa. Immediately MACV SOG took charge and sent out an aircraft recovery team. Three bodies were removed, but Capt. Jackson’s and SSgt. Roth’s bodies were not recovered. Forty Popular Forces personnel and two sergeants were sent to protect the crash site.

Just a moment on the Nationalist Chinese. In his book *Air Commando: Inside the Air Force Special Operations Command* by Phillip D. Chinnery, the author talks about Project Duck Hook. I do not

know if this was a Duck Hook mission, though the aircraft shown above is a Duck Hook C-123. In any event, Chinnery wrote:

“Project Duck Hook involved special C-123 training at Hurlburt (AB, Florida) for 38 Nationalist Chinese and 23 South Vietnamese. Ten of the 60 were interpreters. The training emphasized night low-level and bad-weather missions in mountainous terrain, using three serially configured aircraft.”

He goes on to say that the Chinese and Vietnamese crews might be used to fly where it would be embarrassing for the US to fly such as over NVN, Laos, Cambodia, Burma and even southern provinces of China.

So now I will press ahead in presenting the stories I have built around his notes of many other SAR events.

First, I’m a map nut because I like to see where locations are that we talk about.



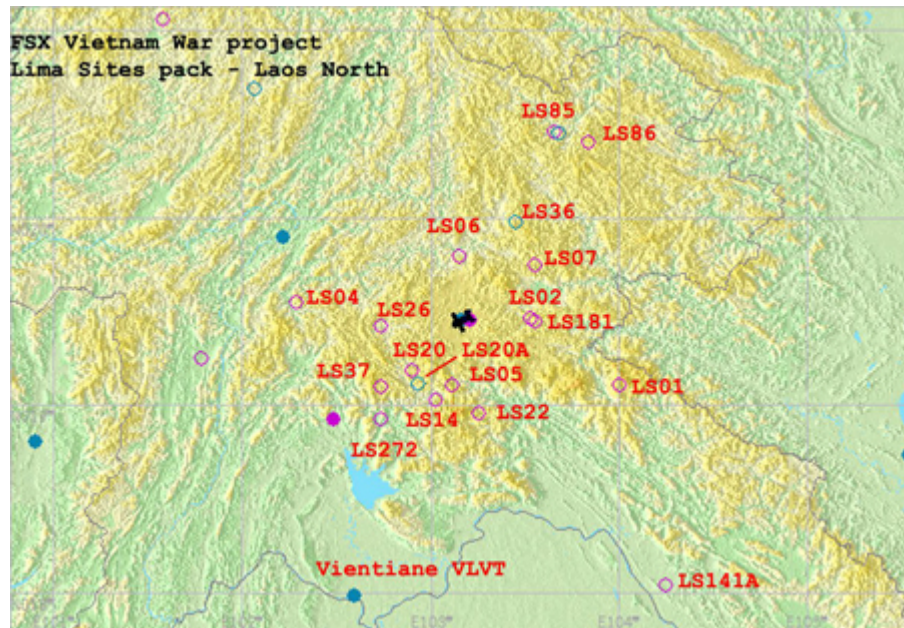
This map shows the main Royal Thai Air Force (RTAFB) bases we will be talking about.



This map shows a lot of things. The ovals, I believe, are refueling tanker orbits. You can see the DMZ. Steel Tiger and Tiger Hound denote areas of the Laotian Panhandle over which US aircraft flew. Northern Laos was called the Barrel Roll. You can see the location of Hanoi in North Vietnam. You also see North Vietnam divided into sectors, known as Route Packages (RP). This system did not formalize until late 1965 but it gives an idea of how the USAF and Navy divided the country for attacking purposes. The USAF had RP 1 just above the DMZ, and RPs 5 and 6A in northern NVN which included Hanoi. The Navy had RPs 2,3,4, and 6B which were easily available to carrier-based aircraft in the Gulf of Tonkin. RP 6B hosted the Haiphong harbor.



This map shows the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the main logistics lifeline to support NVN and Viet Cong (VC) forces in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Note how it was routed from the NVN through Laos and Cambodia with offshoot runs into the RVN. That was a long and difficult logistics tail, one which the US was able to impede, but never shut down. That would have required ground forces inside Laos and Cambodia to block the trail supported by air. General Westmoreland, USA, commander MACV, wanted to do this but the suits in Washington would not let him. NVN generals say such an effort would have ended the war promptly.



This is a map showing some Lima Sites (LS) in northern Laos. “Lima Site” stood for “Laos Site.” There were almost 200 of them in Laos during the Indochina War. Each one of them was numbered. “LS” was the acronym. A few Lima Sites were rather large, with fairly sophisticated runways, but most were barebones, nothing more than dirt landing patches with some huts or tents, trucks or jeeps, and people, civilian and military, who could move friendly ground forces, equipment and supplies to those fighting against the NVA regulars and Pathet Lao indigenous forces who were fighting against the Royal Lao Government (RLG). In some, perhaps many, cases they also served as sites hosting critical communications and navigation equipments to help facilitate coordination of the air and ground war in Laos and over NVN. They were also used as airstrips from which SAR aircraft could launch to recover aircrews downed mostly over NVN or Laos. Quite often SAR aircraft, helicopters and fighters, usually A-1Es, were deployed at one or more of these so they could get to the downed aircrews fast. The Navy, sitting offshore, also could often get to the aircrews rapidly as well.

It will be a bit of a pain, but you might wish to refer to these maps as we press ahead. I will tell you in advance that during the period we are covering, Vinh, which hosted a large NVNAF air base, and Than Hoa, which hosted a major bridge conduit to the Ho Chi Minh Trail were hit a lot by the men I will talk about. So were transportation links from Hanoi to China.

Capt. Marvin Nelson, USAF, 15th TRS, “Fox 23,” RF-101, June 29, 1965, KIA



On June 29, 1965, Fox 23, a RF-101 “Voodoo” photoreconnaissance aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) flak over North Vietnam and crashed. I believe this aircraft was flown by Capt. Marvin Nelson, 15th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (TRS). His wingman, Fox 24 reported seeing Fox 23 eject but saw no chute. Brigham, which used the call sign “Compress,” was a TCS Rescue Control at Udorn and took control of the incident. Udorn advised Air America (CIA) to be alert for a rescue. There was a weather problem, visibility 200-400 ft. at Lima Sites 20 (LS-20) and 36 in northeastern Laos. Both sites had limited SAR forces standing alert there for just this kind of thing. Fox 23 was lost near the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Nelson’s body was not recovered. The RF-101 had the speed to outrun MiG fighters, but were susceptible to ground small arms and AAA fire. They were initially designed to be long range bomber escorts. In the Indochina war, she flew mostly low-altitude missions, often “pathfinder” missions for F-100 bombers, providing in-bound weather and visual guidance, and then conducting bomb damage assessment missions. As an aside, the RF-101 was the first USAF combat jet fighter to arrive in Vietnam, October 18, 1961, landing at Tan Son Nhut AB. The Vietnamese invited four aircraft for an air show, which never took place. They were part of Project Pipe Stem. By 1964 they had increased to 10 covering all South Vietnam and under Project Able Mable also flew over Laos. The RF-101s and Naval RF-8s discovered the extent of the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos into the RVN. These findings eventually led to the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign against the NVN.

Capt. Don Ira Williamson, USAF, “Elm 2,” F-105D, 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 7, 1965, KIA or died in captivity



At 0805 on July 7, 1965, Elm 2 was downed during a reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam, by Archie’s notes, fairly close to the South China Sea. I believe this was a F-105D on an armed reconnaissance mission near the NVNAF fighter base at Vinh on the shore of the South China Sea. I also believe it was flown by Capt. Don Ira Williamson, USAF, 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB.



A chute was spotted at 0820 and a C-54 transport such as is shown here was scrambled to provide high cover, an overview and command and control support to SAR forces.



At 0837 four VNAF A-1H fighters were scrambled for rescue Combat Air Patrol (RESCAP). Helicopters were scrambled from NKP at 0843. Lynch Alfa was one of these. But by 0900 no chute was found and no signal from the pilot was heard. At 0930 the helicopters were turned around and brought back to home base.



An aircraft call sign Cotton Picker was scrambled at 0945. I believe this might have been a Marine EF-10B Skynight fighter. At 1010 another helicopter was over the area but could not find the downed pilot or any leads on him. Please allow me to note that the POW Network report on this loss reflects that Williamson was seen to eject and land safely and that radio signals from him were heard. Archie's notes were real time while POW Network had time to issue a report much later, so there could be a bit of "Fog of War" in Archie's notes. The NVN issued press reports indicating Williamson was alive. On June 23, 1989, the Vietnamese "discovered" Williamson's remains and he was returned to his family.

July 27, 1965, a bad day: "Doomsday Missions" for sure, six F-105Ds down



Capt. William J. Barthelmas Jr., USAF, "Pepper 02", F-105D, 357th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 27, 1965, KIA

Major Jack G. Farr, USAF, "Pepper 01," F-105D, 357th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 27, 1965, KIA

Capt. Walter Kosko, USAF, "Healy 2", F-105D, 563rd TFS, Takhli RTAFB, July 27, 1965, KIA

Capt. Kile Dag Berg, USAF, “Hudson 2,” 563rd TFS, Takhli RTAFB, July 27, 1965, POW*
Capt. Robert B. “Percy” Purcell, “Ceader 2,” 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 27, 1965, POW*
Capt. Frank J. Tullo, “Dogwood 02”, F-105D, 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB, Rescued

*** Archie’s notes indicated two call signs, “Hudson 02” and “Ceader 02,” which I believe belong to Berg and Purcell. Since doing this report, Purcell’s daughter has informed me Capt. Purcell’s call sign was definitely Ceader 2. Therefore, I have assigned Hudson 2 to Capt Berg.**

Pilots tasked to attack areas in and around Hanoi often called them “Doomsday Missions” as they knew someone was going to be shot down. Gary Barnhill, writing, “SAM Hunter-Killer Missions,” wrote:

“Did guys shy away from these missions? Are you kidding? Your best friend would lie, cheat and screw you to get your slot on a Dooms Day mission.”

You’ll have to bear with me here. It’s July 27, 1965, and Archie’s notes are jam packed with action. He had multiple pages of his “shorthand” notes and as I dug into them, I found the whole thing very complicated. But there is a helluva story here that took me days to reconstruct from multiple sources.

First, I will try to run through Archie’s notes without much interpretation. These notes move at a feverish pace --- it’ll give you a good idea of how the world seemed to be falling apart at once, which is the way war can be. Then, after considerable research and some luck, I think I am able to piece together the story from those notes.

The Notes



For Archie, July 27, 1965 started off badly. He was called to the command post where Capt. Brandon told him no Navy A-1s would be available on this day. No reason given. Archie reported the problem up the chain and the report made it to General George Simler, USAF, director of operations, 7th AF, shown here. Simler instructed the command post to get some A-1s from Bien Hoa. The command post did so and asked that they be re-positioned over to Udorn. Weather was bad so only four Bien Hoa A-1s could make it over to Udorn on the southern route and would not get there until 0730 the next morning so long as they did not have to refuel.



At 0245 Archie was informed by a C-54 that a CH-3C Jolly Green Giant, such as shown here, was refueling at LS-98, Long Tieng, also known as LS-20A. They too had been delayed by weather at NKP.

The CH-3C launched out of LS-98 and moved over to the Lima Site farther to the northeast of Laos, LS-36, also known as "The Alamo." I did a story on LS-36. Quite a place. The Jolly made it to LS-36 and was in position at 0409. As an aside, NKP-based Jolly Greens, usually two at a time, stood alert at LS-36 for SAR missions. So, some SAR support was in place or getting there.

Archie's notes start off a bit vague. There was so much activity he was not noting call signs or aircraft identifications. On a later page, he pieced that together a little bit, which was most helpful to me.

At 1525, I believe on July 27, 1965, Archie was notified that there was a downed pilot, southwest of Hanoi and not far from Hanoi. He was said to be in the river. Then at 1530 the word came in a second aircraft was down. A HH-43 Pedro launched from LS-98 at 1532. So we've got two aircraft down.

They were next notified there was a mid-air collision about 10 miles southeast of Udorn in Thailand at 1540. One chute was spotted. So it would appear two more aircraft are down, but in Thailand. Nonetheless, that's four. I should note here that Archie's notes are very brief on the mid-air. It was almost as though he might have figured it was a local training accident. As you'll see later, the accident was between two F-105Ds returning from their mission in the North --- he may not have known that, given all the other events of the day.

Then at 1549 Udorn reported that Ceader 2 was down just west of Hanoi, so we have a fifth aircraft down near Hanoi.



Two B-57 Canberra bombers were launched from Da Nang, RVN, such as this one shown at Da Nang in 1965. At 1610 the SAR force informed all hands that men were down “in the ring” and that ground defenses were southeast of the downed crew members. I believe “in the ring” to mean in the middle of enemy forces.

Then, at 1620 Archie noted that another F-105D was down, call sign Dogwood, also up near Hanoi. Archie noted that Dogwood was working with SAR forces on the radio, operating as a kind of controller, which meant he was on the ground and in pretty good shape.

At 1650 the HC-54s controlling the SAR mission were told to stay out of the ring referred to earlier.



A call also went out at this time to see if a HU-16 Albatross was on its way, such as the one shown here.

Well, it looks like the SAR force had a real set of challenges on its plate. Up west of Hanoi, it appears there were four F-105Ds involved, which Archie later identified: Hudson 2, Healy 2, Ceader 2 and Dogwood, all on the ground. Dogwood was still on his radio operating as a voice controller. It looks like no chute was seen for Hudson 2’s loss. Healy 2’s chute was seen in the water, so it looks like he was the one I reported earlier who was in the river.

At 1710, a CH-3C Jolly Green call sign Shed 85 fired up his engines and was aloft by 1714. At 1743

another HH-43 was launched.

At 1845 a report came in that Canister Flight had a good location on Dogwood and that he was okay. Canister also reported that a CH-3C was about to go in after him.

At 1905 Healy 1 who was flight lead said Healy 2 went in to the river and Healy 1 saw a dingy but never saw the pilot. Healy 1 was running out of fuel and had to leave, and on his way out he reported seeing boats within 300 yards of the dingy. After getting refueled and returning to the scene, Healy 1 saw nothing in the area.

Also at 1905 a CH-3C was hovering over Dogwood who was hiding in the woods but could not get at him with the hoist. So he looked for a place to land. At 1915 the SAR force reported picking up Dogwood and all the SAR forces were on their way out.

So, where are we here? We had four F-105Ds down near Hanoi. One of them, Dogwood was picked up and rescued. We also had a mid-air collision in Thailand, though Archie made no further mention of them. In any event, two more aircraft were down, for a total of six.

Those were the notes. I presented them this way to show you how crazy a day it was and how fast events transpired. I will now tell the sort behind all this --- it took me days to figure it out.

The reconstructed story



This entire suite of events was part of Operation Spring High, which was the first strike against Soviet SA-2 surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites in the NVN. The NVN introduced SAM missiles in the summer of 1965. Up to this point, the NVN felt it could get by with its anti-aircraft artillery (AAA), fighter aircraft and radar network. After all, many of the US air attacks were largely symbolic, so as not to cause undue concern in the USSR and China. Slowly but surely the US ramped up to hit the radar networks and other more important targets.

Then Rolling Thunder began in March 1965. You will recall Rolling Thunder was a gradual and sustained USAF, USN and Republic of Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) aerial bombardment campaign conducted against the NVN through November 2, 1968. Soviet leader Alexei Kosygin was visiting Hanoi and the NVN asked for improved air defenses, including SAMs. Kosygin is said to have agreed instantly. This irritated the Chinese, and they made that known to the Soviets.



MiG-17



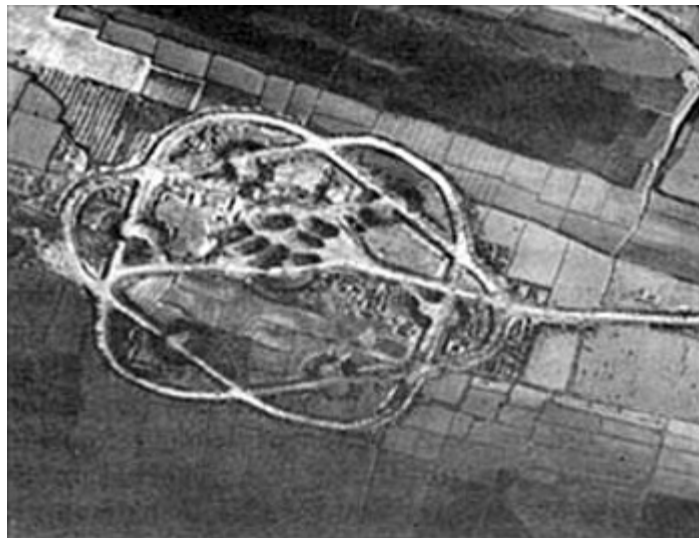
MiG-21

Finally an agreement was reached for the Soviets to provide SAMs and the MiG-21s while China would provide MiG-17s and MiG-19s. So when Rolling Thunder got in full gear, the USAF and USN faced a whole new air defense system. Taken as a whole, radar networks, communications, AAA, SAMs, and MiGs, the NVN had a formidable air defense system. You will see that all too painfully in the report to follow. That said, analysts seem to agree that the NVN AAA was the biggest threat. The US went after those SAMs often taking away valuable resources from destroying the AAA sites instead. The SAMs would set up shop in many cases to lure US air into AAA or flak traps. The MiGs were good as well, but frankly the US pilots married with their aircraft were better. The US air surveillance warning systems also improved rapidly and US pilots were increasingly given heads up. But those AAAs were tough, especially for fighter bombers that worked their targets at relatively low altitudes. It must also be said that the suits in Washington put far too many restrictions in US bombers and fighters, so many that one would hate to count how many men and aircraft the US lost because of these restrictions.



In any event, U-2s staging from Tan Son Nhut spotted the construction efforts for the SAMs in April 1965. In Saigon, General William Westmoreland, MACV, and General Joseph H. Moore, Jr., commanding the 2nd Air Division, pressed for authority to attack the sites. The CINCPAC, Admiral Sharp, agreed. President Johnson's advisors disagreed. SecDef McNamara pointed out if the US attacked SAM sites it would have to attack airfields, and that point had not been reached in his mind. SecState was worried about Chinese air forces entering the picture and he opposed hitting the SAMs and airfields as well. Chinese and Soviet pilots flew combat missions over NVN anyway.

There was much give and take and hemming and hawing over the months ahead in Washington. Then the US lost two F-4 aircraft to SAMs. That was it for Johnson. And so Operation Spring High was approved.



It is my understanding that the photo above shows a typical Soviet SA-2 site in NVN in the early days. As you will see, the USAF decided to approach these sites at low altitude, often at about 500 knots (even though instructions were sometimes given to attack at slower speeds) and 50 ft. above the ground. That made it hard for them to spot these sites, but their configuration was so obvious they did find them. Later on, the NVN figured this out and changed the configuration. However, the mistake the NVN made was they left their radars on, allowing US electronic intercept equipment to lock on to

their signals, which enabled analysts to determine where they were in their acquisition and firing sequence. This ultimately enabled engineers to build equipment for the fighters to carry that allowed them to fire their ordnance right down the throats of the signals their equipment was picking up. But that's all another story --- I digress as usual.

Okay, so let's dig into Archie's notes with amplifying information. I have read a report that said six F-105s from Korat and six from Takhli participated in Operation Spring High on July 27, 1965. My count of those lost from Archie's notes was four, but I think I misinterpreted them. The number lost was six. Three pilots were KIA, two were captured as POWs, and one was rescued. Let's take them in that order.

Capt. Barthelmas Jr., USAF, "Pepper 02", F-105D, 357th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 27, 1965, KIA

Major Jack G. Farr, USAF, "Pepper 01," F-105D, 357th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 27, 1965, KIA



Capt. William J. Barthelmas, Jr. (left) flying his F-105D out of Korat RTAFB with the 357th TFS was KIA, hit by a SAM some 30 miles from Hanoi. Major Jack G. Farr (right), flying his F-105D out of Korat RTAFB also with the 357th TFS crashed in Thailand, obviously trying to make it home, and was also KIA. They were on their way out after hitting their targets.

I need to stop for a moment on these two. Their story is incredible and tragic.

Farr was Pepper 01 and Barthelmas was Pepper 02. Their target was a SAM site 30 miles west of Hanoi, and Barthelmas, Pepper 02, was apparently hit by a SAM but he was able to make his way back to Thailand. Pepper 01 of course stuck with him. On their way back to Thailand, Pepper 01 inspected Pepper 02 and said, "I can see daylight right through you." The battle damage was severe. The conjecture is Barthelmas' hydraulics gave out and his aircraft unexpectedly pitched up. Unbelievably, after everything they had gone through, Pepper 02's tail slammed into Pepper 01's cockpit. Barthelmas ejected but his parachute streamed, meaning it did not fully open. He is said to have landed in a rice paddy alive, but with multiple injuries. Tragically, he drowned in the paddy. Also tragically, Farr's aircraft, Pepper 01 was sufficiently damaged that he crashed about 10 miles south of Ubon RTAFB. He did not eject and was killed. So these are the two Archie said were in a

mid-air collision. It's hard to know what Archie knew at the moment, but they were involved in far more than a simple or accidental mid-air.

Capt. Walter Kosko, USAF, "Healy 2", F-105D, 563rd TFS, Takhli RTAFB, July 27, 1965, KIA



Capt. Walter Kosko flying a F-105D #624257 for the 563rd TFS out of Takhli targeted a SAM site 30 miles west of Hanoi and reportedly was hit by AAA. So he was the third pilot lost on this day. He landed in a river and drowned. I believe from Archie's notes his call sign was Healy 02. Kosko was part of a flight of four F-105Ds out of Takhli on a bombing mission over Phu Tho Province, NVN. AAA fire was said to be intense. There was an explosion near Kosko's aircraft and he reported he was hit and had smoke in his cockpit. He later ejected and flight members saw a fully deployed chute in the water and survival gear, but there was no voice contact and no beeper after ejection. His colleagues on the mission tried to find him even through heavy hostile fire, but to no avail. Later attempts to find his remains revealed that he was down in the Black River. US forces searched the river but could not find him. He was later declared dead-body not recovered.

Capt. Bill "Sparky" Sparks, USAF, comments on these kinds of missions



Capt. Bill "Sparky" Sparks, USAF, writing, "Bad day at Black Rock," said he flew on these missions with the 563rd from Takhli which employed three flights of four F-105Ds in trail with one minute spacing to hit a SAM site that had fired a few days earlier. Sparks is shown here when he was with the 357th TFS. Korat-based aircraft were in the mix as well, which would probably account for Barthelmas and Farr discussed above. At Takhli, one or more flights were ordered to drop rear-dispersed bomblets, CBU-2 from 50 ft. altitude at 360 knots. He commented, "My Grandmother knew more about targeting than that!" Another flight would follow with napalm also to be dropped from 50 ft. at 360 knots. He added:

"The idiocy of DoD was now apparent to all. If you tell anyone that you are going to hit him, and then give him almost a week's notice, any half-wit can figure out that the place will be empty and/or well defended. To over-fly an extremely well defended complex at 50 feet and 360 knots is a suicide order. The Japanese had better sense when they sent out their Kamikazes. To exacerbate an already

insane order, have all aircraft fly at the same altitude, airspeed and attack from the same direction, with close intervals. I may have been a Slick Wing Captain, but I certainly knew better than that.”

He went on to say that the pilots complained bitterly. They wanted to change the ingress and egress routes, altitudes and increase their drop speed to at least 500 knots. Their superiors called everyone to get the orders changed. All this fell on deaf ears, and they went out as ordered, though with some “GI adjustments.” They came in at 540 knots and soon encountered heavy 37 mm flak. Sparks said it was obvious the enemy knew they were coming. Luckily, they were flying so low the 37 mm were ineffective. However, many were hit by small arms and .50 caliber equivalent automatic weapons.

So that’s a brief recap of the KIAs. Let’s turn to the POWs.

Capt. Kile Dag Berg, “Hudson 2,” USAF, 563rd TFS, Takhli RTAFB, July 27, 1965, POW*

Capt. Robert B. “Percy” Purcell, “Ceader 2,” 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB, July 27, 1965, POW*



The two captured as POWs were Capt. Kile Dag Berg (left), flying his F-105D #610113 for the 563rd TFS at Takhli, and Capt. Robert B. “Percy” Purcell (right shown as lieutenant colonel), flying his F-105D #6224252 for the 12th TFS out of Korat. They were both shot down over NVN, about 40 miles northwest of Hanoi. Both men’s target was the barracks at Can Doi and they both were reportedly hit by AAA. Berg and Purcell were released with the other POWs in February 1973. While Archie did not identify these pilots’ call signs, Purcell’s daughter has contacted me to confirm Purcell’s call sign was “Ceader 2.” Therefore, I have decided to assign the call sign “Hudson 2” to Berg.

Returning to Sparks’ memoir, he said he saw Berg get hit with his aircraft on fire from in front of the inlets past the afterburner. Berg’s aircraft slowly pulled up, rolled right and then crashed. Sparks said after the POWs returned; he learned that Berg was hit right after he dropped his napalm. He said Berg ejected at 50 ft. and 540 knots which blew some panels in his chute and without a doubt gave him one helluva jolt as well.

Capt. Frank J. Tullo, “Dogwood 02”, F-105D, 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB, rescued

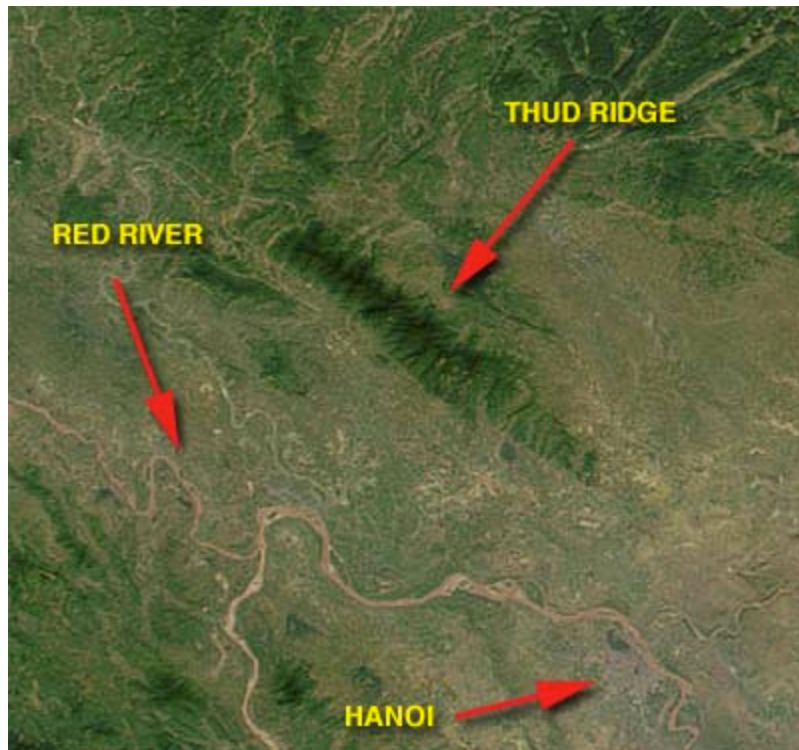
Now, finally, to the one pilot who was rescued. Here again, allow me to alert you to the full story on the rescue, “Tullo and the Giant,” *Air & Space Smithsonian*, July 1997, by Robert Hanson.



We've got one more in the crowd to talk about, call sign Dogwood 02. He was the lucky one of the crew. He was rescued. He was Capt. Frank J. Tullo, flying his F-105D #624407 for the 12th TFS out of Korat, call sign Dogwood 02. Tullo's group entered the fray after most of the beating took place. Their job was "to clean up." Tullo said when he arrived over the target area, "To a good Catholic boy, this was a description of hell." The enemy fire was the worst he had seen, and the burning fires and smoke below was a cauldron. Tullo said they approached at about 200 ft. and 700 knots. Right away he was hit, his fire warning lights blazing.



Dogwood 01, Major Bill Hosmer, shown here, came over to take a look. Hosmer told him to get rid of his tanks and rocket pods to lighten the aircraft. Flames were now trailing about 200 ft. behind him. He was still flying and had control. They were still over Hanoi. Hosmer told him to bail out, but Tullo refused, saying he could still fly.



He wanted to make it to the hills of Thud Ridge where a bailout might result in a rescue. But the aircraft then lost control, and he had to bail out, but again, at the speed he was traveling, he really got whipped around on the way out.

Let me pause for just a moment. Thud Ridge is important. Colonel Jack Broughton, USAF, was a F-105 Thud driver who later wrote a book entitled, *Thud Ridge*. The thing to remember from his words that follow is that on most occasions, the F-105s came in low along Thud Ridge to go after the Hanoi area. It was actually named Tam Dao range and served as a waypoint during air attacks in the vicinity of Hanoi and a terrain masking feature for ingressing fighters. Here's an excerpt from Broughton's book:

"Alongside Thud Ridge—a north-south mountain range lying between our bases in Thailand and Hanoi—was the MiG fighter base at Phuc Yen. We would fly inbound en route to Hanoi, and I would have, say, five flights of fighters—four aircraft to each flight. And as I would approach Phuc Yen I would watch the MiGs come out and taxi to the end of the runway and run their engines up and get ready for takeoff. Now, I could have dumped my nose right then and got four MiGs on the ground on almost every mission up there. But I couldn't touch them ... So I would go past the airfield and the MiGs would roll for takeoff and be on the tail of my last flight and in position to shoot down whomever they wanted to."

The Rules of Engagement (ROE) developed by the suits in Washington prevented him from hitting those MiGs.

Back to Tullo. He said from his parachute he could see Hanoi about 25 miles away. Once on the ground, he hid his chute and called on the radio, and made contact. But his partners were running out of fuel and had to leave. After some time on the ground and attempting to climb up a hill, which was what they were taught to do --- make the enemy climb the hill, and if they do, then you are close to the top and can go over the top of the hill and try to hide --- he heard an A-1 Spad call sign Canasta.

Archie had Canasta in his notes and wrote that Canasta had a good indication that Dogwood 02 was okay and that a CH-3C Jolly Green was closing in.



Canasta Flight as Archie put it consisted of two Navy A-1Hs, such as the one shown here. Then a couple F-105s came by and he contacted them. The F-105s asked him to pop smoke so they could get his location. Tullo refused, fearing he would give away his location to the enemy, as he knew the enemy was coming to his area.

Some enemy started climbing the hill, Tullo dug in to hide, and the enemy troops moved away and down the hill. The hill strategy seemed to work.



A CH-3C such as shown here flown by Capt. George Martin, USAF was at NKP and was flying to LS-36 to pull SAR alert, call sign Shed 85. His USAF crew consisted of his co-pilot, Lt. Orville Keese, (HM) Sgt. Curtis Pert and PJ Sgt. George Thayer. HM stands for “hoist mechanic” and PJ for pararescueman. Martin was told to divert to get Dogwood 02. He said he had to land at LS-36 to drop

off supplies and passengers --- he could not hover the way he needed to for a rescue with such a heavy load. After landing at LS-36, his number two engine warning lights indicated they had overheated, a condition which would normally mean he was grounded. But he was Tullo's only chance at the moment. He was worried he would not be able to restart his engines, informed the crew he felt they should go get Tullo, the crew agreed, the engine started without a hitch, and off he went. He had little idea of where he was going other than to head for Hanoi.



About 50 miles from Hanoi he was met by Canasta flight, flown by Lt. Commander Ed Greathouse, USN, (shown here on another occasion after taking down a MiG-17 jet with his A-1H prop fighter), and Holt Livesay from Attack Squadron 25 (VA-25) embarked aboard the USS *Midway*.

It was getting late, dusk was coming. Canasta reported to Tullo he had a chopper and flew directly over Tullo's position, with Shed 85 right behind him. Tullo expected something like a HH-43 Pedro and had never seen one this big. It turns out this would be the CH-3C Jolly Green's first rescue. The Jolly crew had a very hard time pulling Tullo up the hoist, which was not yet designed for this kind of work. And, of course, the CH-3C's engine started to overheat again. But he lifted up, dragging Tullo through bushes etc. up into the air and finally found a spot where he could let him down on the ground. Tullo got out of his harness and the chopper landed about 50 ft away.

Incredibly, now they started receiving hostile fire from the ground. The Jolly had all kinds of problems, an overheated engine, coming darkness, and clouds at altitude. Plus the crew had no maps of the area. The Jolly crew hollered at Tullo to aboard. He did, diving through the door, and off they went. Capt. Martin pointed his chopper in the direction of LS-36 which was surrounded by enemy. LS-36 lit up landing lights by igniting flares in 55-gallon drums, and Martin landed the CH-3C with all hands in one piece.

This was the farthest north a successful rescue had been made. You will recall my earlier recap of how Martin and his crews got to the war flying two loaner CH-3Cs on SAR missions for the first time. Just a few weeks earlier, Capt. Martin and his crews were flying support missions with the CH-3 in Florida! So here they are, now in the Vietnam War, flying a beat-up old CH-3 on a SAR mission, no previous SAR experience, a rigged up wench to pull up the downed aircrew member, and they are penetrating deeply into the NVN and conducting the first CH-3 rescue mission in the war.

Given what he and his crew went through on this day to get Tullo, theirs is an incredible story. What a day.

Sparks said several of the low flying F-105s concluded they were hitting a dummy SAM site, though other reports say the enemy vacated it as he knew the force was coming. Jacob Van Staavern, in his book, *Gradual failure: the air war over North Vietnam, 1965-1966*, wrote that the incoming USAF force was after several targets. First, SAM sites 6 and 7, and a barracks suspected of housing SAM air defense personnel at nearby Cam Doi and Phu Nieu. He said that there was a dummy missile site at

SAM site 6 set up as a trap, and site 7 was empty.

In his paper “The ’65 decision, bombing Soviet SAM sites in North Vietnam,” John Prados wrote the following:

“Spring High involved more than a hundred Air Force, Marine, and Navy aircraft. A pair of EC-121 radar planes monitored VPAF (NVNAF) activity, directing the combat air patrol. Ten electronic warfare craft jammed the enemy radars. A dozen Phantoms and eight more F-104 Starfighters flew air cover. There were fifteen KC-135s for aerial refueling, and a search and rescue flight to recover downed aircrews.

“On the cutting edge, 46 F-105s hit SAM sites and nearby barracks presumed to house the defenders with napalm and cluster bombs. Four RF-101s then streaked past to photograph the targets for bomb-damage assessment. Spring High cost half a dozen planes: four F-105s over the targets, plus one more damaged so badly the aircraft lost control making an emergency landing at Udorn, colliding with its escort and destroying both warplanes. All the losses were inflicted by flak, not SAMs. One pilot was rescued. Damage assessment showed that one of the target SAM sites had been a dummy and another was unoccupied. The Soviet Union did not respond openly, but Moscow secretly accelerated its shipment of SAMs to North Vietnam.

“These engagements in the summer of 1965 marked the beginning of a whole new facet of Rolling Thunder. Henceforth the air campaign featured extensive efforts to neutralize VPAF surface-to-air-missile installations. In fact, SAM site attacks were a major element in the next bimonthly plan for the air effort.”

This is what I was alluding to earlier. The US air forces became obsessed with the SAMs, which is understandable, but the AAA is what was most threatening to them.

Capt. Robert Norlan Daughtrey, USAF, F-105D, 12th TFS, Korat RTAFB, August 2, 1965, POW





At 1245 on August 2, 1965 an aircraft was down at the bridge in the city of Than Hoa, NVN, a bridge the US spent a great deal of time, resources and blood trying to destroy. This bridge came to be known as the "Dragon's Jaw Bridge." I will address it a bit more later. I saw one rough coordinate in Archie's notes that places the incident in the area of Than Hoa, NVN, south of Hanoi near the coast of the Gulf of Tonkin. Archie's notes identify the bridge and he wrote down Than Hoa bridge.

This flight was conducted by Capt. Robert Norlan Daughtrey, USAF, 12th TFS, flying a F-105 #62-4249. He was shot down and bailed out in the area of the bridge. The ejection broke both of his arms. He was unable to move and was captured promptly. Radio Hanoi announced his capture on August 30, 1965. He served four years prison near Hanoi, known as "The Zoo," and another 3.5 years in the Hanoi Hilton. He said the torture was intense. He was released on February 12, 1973.

Five minutes after the report of the aircraft going down, two Canasta aircraft, call signs Beefeater and Lawcase, reported to be in the area of the Nape Pass. As far as I can tell, aircraft using Canasta call signs were Navy A-1Hs assigned to VA-25, nicknamed "The Fist of the Fleet," flying from the USS *Coral Sea* which was in the Gulf of Tonkin during this period. As I said, Daughtrey's aircraft was reported down at 1245; at 1250 two Canasta A-1Hs were in the area of the Nape Pass, and at 1255 a CH-3C Jolly Green was launched from LS-36. At 1300 a HU-16 Flying Albatross responding to the SAR was hit by flak. At 1305 two HC-54 SAR control aircraft were inbound. The HU-16 was hit in the aileron and had to leave. Another was launched from Da Nang at 1320.



At 1340, Lt. Col. Edward Krafka, who was commander, 38th ARS, called and asked if the flak could be suppressed to make a pickup. He recommended a major strike as fire was being received by the SAR force from four sites in the area. At 1345 a second CH-3C Jolly was launched. At 1400 the report was that all they had was a beacon from the pilot. Huck 85, which was a CH-3C, the first one

there, had to return to home base, called “home plate,” and then reported at 1423 he was running low on fuel (“bingo for fuel”) and would recover at NKP instead of LS-36 because of weather. The SAR force thought they had Daughtrey pretty well located about 2-3 miles south of the bridge on the south shore of the river, but it looks like they could not get to him. At 1430, Archie noted that General Myers, USAF called off the SAR effort due to a lack of a target. I believe this is a reference to Major General Gilbert L. Meyers, at the time the commander, 2nd AD, Saigon.

Major Joseph E. Bower, F-105D, 421st TFS attached to 12th TRS, Korat RTAFB, August 3, 1965, KIA-MIA



On August 3, the next day, the SAR Rescue Center at Tan Son Nhut received a HU-16 Flying Albatross message that said an aircraft had gone down, again near the South China Sea coast of North Vietnam. Archie has two sets of coordinates down, one about half-way between Than Hoa and Vinh, the other about 20 miles southeast of Vinh. However, Archie has drawn a line through this latter position. I have found that Major Joseph E. Bower, flying a F-105D Thud #61-0098 for the 421st TFS was hit during his mission over North Vietnam and reported he was heading to the sea to eject. Shortly thereafter, his aircraft became uncontrollable and he ejected. Observers have said his parachute did not open until just prior to impact with the water, in the Gulf of Tonkin.

An aircraft at the scene said he needed more RESCAP. But the command post said it did not want a USAF CH-3C that was on its way to put a man in the water because the sea state was poor, definitely

too poor for an HU-16 to land and pick him up. Two F-105s went to the scene to provide cover, and two more would escort a C-54 and the HU-16. That's the end of Archie's notes. Bower was not recovered. He was listed assigned to the 421st TFS, McConnell AFB, Kansas. Aircraft from this squadron had deployed to Kadena AB, Okinawa and rotated in and out of Thailand. In 1966 the squadron was assigned to Korat RTAFB, I believe attached to the 12th TFS.

Pilatus PC-6 Porter, Air America , August 8, 1965, pilot-crew not found in research



On August 8, 1965 an Air America Pilatus PC-6 Turboprop Porter was hit by ground fire over Laos. The example shown here is an Air America Porter in Laos. He wanted to go to LS-86 but it was under attack, so he chose to go LS-121, which was 36 miles west of LS-36. The HC-54 command aircraft requested to launch a CH-3C and asked if medical attention was required. The response was to the affirmative. The HC-54 said the pilot was bleeding badly. However, the HC-54 was told not to land at LS-121 with medical aid, and instead a doctor would be brought to the site by a C7A Caribou. The doctor got there and tended to the wounded pilot. The University of Texas Dallas, Dr. Joe F. Leeker, documented the Air America Porters using official Air America documents, recording individual aircraft histories. His notes confirm a Porter CH-2 #N285L received ground fire in Laos and was in an accident. It was apparently repaired since I see it was flying again in the 1970s.

Major Dean A. Pogreba, USAF, "Hudson 09," F-105D, 49th TFS, Yokota, Japan, on temporary duty with the 36th TFS Takhli, RTAFB, August 24, 1965, Rescued





At 0705 on August 24, 1965 Hudson 09 called in a "Mayday." He was about 20 miles west of Than Hoa. Five minutes later the pilot was on the ground and had his beeper signaling to help SAR forces hone in on him. The HC-54 airborne at the time reported marginal contact with the pilot. CH-3C "Alley" had been in the air since 0615 Vietnam time, 0515 Thai-Laos time. At 0735 a HU-16 responding to the call was taking ground fire. At 0745 the controlling authority "Compress" informed all hands that a HH-43 Pedro was ready as a backup. A CH-3C said he would be off the coast and asked for a Sandy A-1E fighter to be scrambled. At 0820 a CH-3C said he could not land at LS-36 for fuel because of weather. A RESCAP arrived on the scene at 0830 and picked up the beeper. At 0840 the CH-3C reported he had to return to NKP for fuel as he was unable to get into LS-36. At 0900 the HC-54 reported being over the scene and said he had a CH-3C west of the downed pilot. The CH-3C, call sign Alley 76, had to land at LS-46, nickname "Shoestring," at 0905, was on the ground and getting his fuel at 0910, and estimated being airborne again at 0950 and on the target by 1050. Alley 76 reported airborne from LS-46 at 0955. A Sandy A-1E from Udorn RTAFB was airborne and estimated LS-46 at 1000. The Sandy and Alley 76 estimated meeting near the target at 1120. A HH-43 did get airborne at 0954 and headed toward LS-36. At 1050 Alley 76 began his descent toward the target area. He was picking up a strong beeper signal but could not make visual contact. At 1115 Alley 76 reported visual contact and picked up his man at 1119 in good condition. Then, all together they got the hell out of there.



As far as I can tell, this was a rescue by CH-3C #63-09676 using call sign Jolly Green 2 which picked up Major Dean A. Pogreba, USAF, a F-105 pilot. The Jolly crew included Captain Phil Stambaugh, Capt. George Martin, Sgt. Francis Hill, Sgt. James Armenia and PJ Sgt. George Thayer. This is a

photo of the rescue crew and Major Pogreba, who I believe is second from the right standing. This particular helicopter would later be named “The Black Mariah.” This was the second Jolly Green rescue of the war.

Commander Fred Franke and Lt. Commander R. B. Doremus, USN, “Sundown,” F-4B, VF-21, USS Midway, August 24, 1965, both POWs

The Navy had a tough day on August 24, 1965 as well. Two aircraft went down according to Archie’s notes, which syncs with what I have found.



Commander Fred Augustus Franke, USN, commander of VF-21 Freelancers embarked on the USS *Midway* (CVA-41), was flying a F-4B Phantom #152215 NE-21, call sign “Sundown,” and was hit by a SAM SA-2 at about 11,000 ft. near the village of Phu Binh, north of Than Hoa. The photo shows a different Navy F-4B-19-MC Phantom from VF-21 dropping Mk 82 Snakeye bombs over Vietnam in 1966, also from the *Midway*.

Franke’s mission was to hit the Dragon’s Jaw Bridge at Than Hoa, known to the Vietnamese as Ham Rung, which translates in English to Dragon’s Jaws. I’ve mentioned this bridge before. Let’s spend a moment on it.



The USAF launched the first attempt at the bridge on April 3, 1965, employing 79 fighter bombers. While they hit the bridge over and over, once the smoke cleared, she was still standing with minimal damage. The USAF tried again the next day, on April 5, 1965, employing 48 F-105Ds. The estimate is that 300 bombs hit the bridge and did force the NVN to close it. But they kept on repairing it and she opened again. Then, in September 1965 the job was given to the Navy since by this time in the war, the bridge was in the Navy's route package along the coast. The Navy flew 873 sorties, lost 95 aircraft, and the bridge remained operational. It was not until May 13, 1972 when 14 USAF F-4s armed with laser guided bombs hit the bridge and destroyed it without losing an aircraft. The NVN kept trying to rebuild it, but the USAF kept coming back and thwarted their efforts. The age of the smart bomb had arrived, late but nonetheless they were here, and the NVN paid a price for it.



Commander Franke was flying with his Naval Flight Officer (NFO), also serving as Radar Intercept Officer (RIO), Lt. Commander R. B. Doremus. They both successfully ejected and were captured in the rice fields almost immediately. Oddly, his wingman reported seeing no chutes, so they were declared killed in action (KIA). However, both were held as a POW for 7.5 years in Hanoi. Franke has commented that there was no chance for a SAR. They were released on February 2, 1973.

Prior to this mission, Doremus, flying as NFO-RIO and his pilot, Lt. J.E. Smith, were credited with two MiG-17 kills on June 17, 1965. They were flying in a pair, with the other F-4B flown by Commander Louis C. Page, USN, VF-21, and his RIO, Lt. Jack E.D. Batson. The two F-4Bs fought it out with four MiG-17s south of Hanoi and shot down two with Sparrow air-to-air missiles. These were the first MiG kills of the war.

Lt. J.G. Richard M. Brunhaver, USN, “Beefeater,” A-4C, VA-22, USS *Midway*, August 24, 1965, POW



The second loss was of an A-4C Skyhawk assigned to VA-22 also embarked on the USS *Midway*. She was flown by Lt. (J.G.) Richard M. Brunhaver, USN, call sign “Beefeater.” The A-4C was designed for low speed ground attack. The photo shows a VA-22 A-4C embarked on the USS *Midway* firing Zuni rockets sometime during the 1960s. Brunhaver was part of a three-ship formation tasked to conduct an armed road reconnaissance mission over NVN. It looks like they were flying southeast of Thanh Hoa. Brunhaver ran a normal low-level bombing attack against a bridge. As he recovered from his attack, his aircraft was seen to be on fire. He was told to eject and the flight lead saw his parachute deploy just as the aircraft was breaking apart. The parachute landed in heavy brush and he managed to turn on his beeper. His two fellow A-4 pilots were low on fuel and had to leave, but they plotted his location and called for helicopter SAR. The search was called off because of darkness but began again the next morning, but to no avail. He was listed as missing in action (MIA) but later a source advised he was in a NVN POW camp. He too was released after 6.5 years on February 12, 1973.

Capt. Wesley D. Scheirman, USAF, “Elm 1,” F-105F, 67th TFS, Korat RTAFB, August 28, 1965, POW



On August 28, 1965, a report was received that a F-105 was down. Archie noted it was “Spruce Bird (105).” He also noted a man was sighted on the ground. I believe this was a F-105F from the 67th TFS at Korat, flown by Capt. Wesley D. Schierman, call sign “Elm 1” or “Elm Lead.” Some sources identified the aircraft as a F-105D but Scheirman, who was captured, would later say his was in a F-105F. He went down about 40 miles north of Hanoi and SAR forces did spot him on the ground. However, he was captured and put in 7.5 years in a NVN POW camp. His target was a set of barracks near Son La about 105 miles from Hanoi. I’m not sure what Archie meant by “Spruce Bird.”



Second AD in Saigon wanted Schierman and his flight to carry eight 500 lb. MK-82 “Snakeye” bombs centerline. The Snakeye was a general purpose bomb designed as a new series of low drag bombs. Note the tail retarding device. This was used for low level attacks in order to be sure the aircraft was gone before the bomb exploded. But Scheirman was skeptical about that kind of load, and studied reports from Nellis AFB and learned the F-105 had never successfully dropped even six of these Snakeyes centerline. He told 2nd AD through his wing operations officer that he would carry only four, and wanted Sidewinder air-to-air missiles outboard for MiG protection. He also complained this was not a good mission. Nonetheless, 2nd AD said the target was very important and had to be flown. It was so important he had no photos of the target, only geographical coordinates!

Saigon approved his load request so he and three other F-105s loaded up. His F-105D had mechanical problems so he was given a F-105F two seater. His Elm Flight refueled in the air, the weather was not very good, so he took his flight into the undercast as they crossed into NVN. The weather broke a bit which was good and he told his flight to break off into two elements. They were paralleling Highway 6 at 400-550 ft. and 420 knots. He checked his coordinates but saw no barracks. But then he found the target off in a different direction from the coordinates. Scheirman had already passed the target so he told his element leader to go ahead and make the run. Something went wrong with the element leader’s bomb drop, which Scheirman realized because of the nature of the explosions. This was no good. After fixing some flight coordination issues, Scheirman took the flight on one more strafing pass over the target. He fired a burst but his gun malfunctioned. Then he was hit in the aft section and his engine shut down.

He tried to establish a glide and informed his flight he was hit and may have to bail out. I’m no flier, but I thought it a bit amusing that he would glide a “Thud.” Pilots would often say it flew like a rock. One commented it would only glide for about 50 ft. The truth is a F-105 pilot, like others, had to adjust his angle of attack to maintain the best angle for glide speed giving the pilot a chance to figure out whether to bail out. The F-105 apparently had a glide ratio of 7, meaning at one mile high he could glide for seven miles. Indeed Scheirman wrote that as soon as he was hit, “I pulled up to establish a glide.” However, he quickly saw he did not have enough altitude to make it out of the valley, so he looked for a place to bail out, and found a hill.

Then one in the flight told him he had a fire out the back. Worried it might ignite his Sidewinders, the fire went out but he was losing speed rapidly, so he said he was getting out. He bailed out and his engine then exploded. He landed near the top of that hill he had seen, climbed to the top, and spoke to his flight circling above. He then discovered he had a very deep cut in his left wrist. He applied a

tourniquet, his flight said a helicopter was on its way from Laos. He had his beeper on. The rest of his flight ran low on fuel and had to leave, but another flight was inbound to cover the area. A platoon of enemy had climbed the hill, and after four trips through his area finally found him. One among the enemy heard the beeper, found it, and ordered Scheirman to turn it off, which he did. The C-54 rescue coordinator arrived and a chopper was not far behind. Col. James Risner, leading the incoming flight, was forced to take on a group of enemy guns. The enemy got Scheirman in the dense jungle and off to the Hoa Lo Prison. He was released with the others in February 1973.

He later learned the Snakeye was an unauthorized loading for the F-105. His number four, I assume Elm 4, had his aircraft riddled with holes because the Snakeye was detonating prematurely. He further learned he received compression fractures of two vertebrae from the ejection.

Lt. Edd D. Taylor, USN, USN, A-1H, VA-152, USS *Oriskany*, August 29, 1965, KIA



On August 29, 1965, Lt. Edd D. Taylor, USN, VA-152 Fighting Aces, launched his A-1H #134619 off the carrier USS *Oriskany* in search of Capt. Wesley Schierman and his F-105 lost a day earlier, as reported above. Taylor was receiving Scheirman's beeper signals and flew a tight pattern around the area from which he thought the signals were coming. He was on his third low level pass trying to locate the source of a beeper signal when he was hit by heavy automatic weapons ground fire. An A-1 pilot was in the air and close by and reported seeing Taylor's aircraft crash into a ridge and burn. In March 2000, remains were found and a skeletal section matched that of a family member of Lt. Taylor. These remains were returned home to his family. Taylor was the first KIA from the *Oriskany*

of the war. Schierman, as noted above, had been captured. As an aside, on August 24, 1965, just a few days before he was lost, Taylor and Lt. J.G. Zambori rescued another pilot near Bong Ho.

Lt. Henry S. McWhorter, USN, "Corktip 919," RF-8A, VFP-63, USS *Oriskany*, August 29, 1965, KIA



Lt. Henry S. McWhorter, USN, was flying his RF-8A Vought Crusader Corktip 919 photo reconnaissance aircraft in Nghe An Province, NVN. He was hit by enemy fire about 25 miles northwest of Vinh. Both he and his wingman had encountered heavy AAA at 8,000 ft. They took evasive action. McWhorter's wingman reported him flying straight and level, but with no canopy or ejection seat. The wingman concluded the AAA hit in a location that fired off the ejection seat and probably killed McWhorter. The wingman reported McWhorter's landing gear coming down as a result of the damage to the hydraulic systems. The aircraft entered a gentle glide until it hit the ground. Two A-1s were on the scene five minutes after the crash and, according to Archie's notes, said they saw a chute leaving the aircraft. However, other reports said no chute was sighted. A HU-16 Flying Albatross also responded, but had to abort due to an engine loss. Another one came to the scene, but again, no contact. There was no beeper heard. He was listed as killed/body not recovered as the assessment was there was a slim hope of survival. Remains were found in 1987 and identified as those of Lt. McWhorter. These remains were returned to his family in February 1987.

Capt. James A. Branch and 1st Lt. Eugene M. Jewell, USAF, “Rhino,” F-4C, 15th TFW, Ubon RTAFB, September 4, 1965, MIA



On September 4, 1965 a 15th TFW F-4C call sign Rhino was lost along the coastline area north of Vinh. The crew consisted of Capt. James A. Branch (left) and 1st Lt. Eugene M. Jewell (right). Both are listed as assigned to 6233rd Combat Support Group, Ubon RTAFB. I have not found such a unit, though I have found the 6233rd Air Base Group, which is probably what was meant. Interestingly, I have also found the two men assigned to both the 15th TFW and the 8th TFW. The 15th TFW arrived Ubon June 1965 with two fighter squadrons, the 45th and 47th. Pilots of the 45th TFS were credited with the first air victories of the Vietnam War, shooting down two MiG-17s. The 8th TFW arrived in December 1965, so the two crew members of the Rhino mission must have been assigned to the 15th TFW. It appears both squadrons were there on temporary duty (TDY), so I can also understand how they might be seen as assigned to the Air Base Group. I believe the 15th rotated out when the 8th TFW got there.

All that organizational stuff aside, the crew was tasked to attack a rail bridge in Nghe An Province at a position about halfway between Tho Trang and Phu Dien Chau. They were hit during a low-altitude strafing run, crashed and exploded. The POW Network said no parachutes were sighted. However, Archie's notes indicate that Dodge Flight thought he saw a chute but that was not verified and there were no beepers or radio calls. Both men were listed as MIA.

Lt. J.G. Edward B. Shaw, USN, “Firewood 203,” A-1H, VA-165, USS Coral Sea, September 5, 1965, KIA



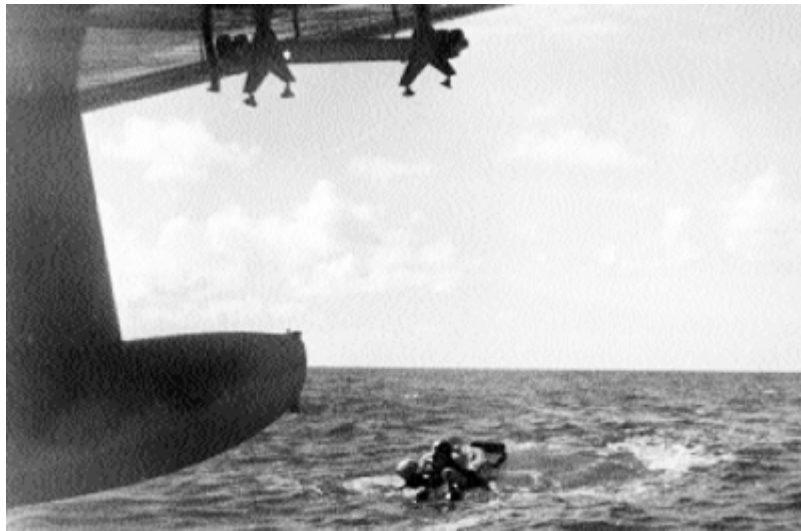
Lt. J.G. Edward B. Shaw, USN, call sign Firewood 203, VA-165 Boomers, flying his A-1H #139693 from the USS *Coral Sea* was hit by AAA on September 5, 1965 while attacking supply barges on the Song Gia Hoi River. The Rolling Thunder operation was well underway over NVN, hitting strategic targets in the North with jet fighter aircraft. Navy A-1Hs were employed mainly to go after enemy facilities and transportation lines, especially water-borne logistics craft, frequently employed in what the Navy called Alpha Strikes, which were large scale attacks employing just about every aircraft in the carrier's inventory. For Shaw's mission, several VFA-165 aircraft were conducting armed reconnaissance missions south of Vinh and spotted a number of barges in the mouth of the Song Gia Hoi River. They attacked, and Shaw was hit. He was not seen to eject from his aircraft and no one in the area sighted him or heard from him. No further SAR support was requested. Shaw's remains were not recovered.

On May 17, 1965, Shaw participated in a SAR effort to recover an USAF pilot down in NVN. Shaw located the pilot, rendezvoused with rescue helicopters and provided them protective air cover while guiding them to the scene. He conducted repeated strafing and rocket attacks on enemy forces closing in on the downed pilot while the helicopters were completing their mission.

Lt. James L. Burton, USN, “Elm,” A-4E, VA-164, USS *Oriskany*, September 6, 1965, Rescued



Lt. James L. Burton, USN, VA-164, flying his A-4E Skyhawk 152042 from the USS *Oriskany*, was shot down near Dong Hoi, North Vietnam by AAA on September 6, 1965. He was in a two ship formation tasked to attack a primary NVN truck route along Route 1A at Ha Tinh east of Vinh. They both took heavy fire. One landed safely on the *Oriskany*, but Burton's aircraft caught fire. I believe he used an Elm call sign. Burton headed out to sea and bailed out just before his aircraft exploded.



It was Burton's lucky day, as a HU-16 Flying Albatross was in the area and spotted Burton in the water. There was no beeper but there was smoke in the water. He was about 15 miles off the coast. A RESCAP was launched and the area was clear of enemy ships and junks. A HU-16 landed in the water, described as "bumpy," and the pilot saw Burton's arms waving. The HU-16 picked him up, such as is shown here in another example. Dong Hoi was located on the coast on the Gulf of Dong Hoi and not far from the DMZ between NVN and RVN. It was a favorite target, especially for B-52s, because of its proximity to the DMZ and location on the Nhat Le River emptying into the South China Sea, a means of moving supplies to the DMZ area.

This was Burton's second ejection. While still in San Diego on February 27, 1965, he and his A-4 were involved in a mid-air collision with a Marine F-8E Crusader off the *Oriskany* during an exercise. Burton was rescued by a destroyer and uninjured. Second Lieutenant Glenn R. Hollenback, USMC was also rescued.

Capt. Ricard C. Marshall, USAF, A-1G, 1131st USAF Special Activities Squadron, MACV SOG, and Chief Warrant Officer William J. LaGrand, USA, 197th Aviation Co., 145th Aviation Battalion, September 6, 1965, KIA



At 1345 an A-1G flown by Capt. Richard C. Marshall, USAF, assigned to the 1131st USAF Special Activities Squadron, to wit MACV SOG, crashed near Bien Hoa. Marshall was reported to have crashed in a steep dive. Bien Hoa, of course, was the major combat air base outside Saigon. Nonetheless, the VNAF and MACV advised there was a Viet Cong battalion located in the area where Marshall crashed, and they would not attempt a recovery due to the size of the enemy force. Marshall was listed as died while missing. Chief Warrant Officer William J. LaGrand, 197th Aviation Co., 145th Aviation Battalion was on board the aircraft with Marshall, and was also declared died while missing.

While Bien Hoa was close to Saigon and we are only in 1965, any review of the base's situation would tell you it was always in danger and endured constant attacks. So the enemy was out there to be sure. I believe the 173rd Airborne Brigade was tasked to defend the base. The US asked for allied help, and the Australians sent the 1st Royal Australian Regiment to the base to work with the Americans on its defense. They arrived in June 1965. The 1 RAR First Battalion Association has written a report on their experience. Here's an excerpt description of their assessment of the enemy surrounding Bien Hoa:

“Viet Cong military units were either Main Force or Local. The Main Force guerillas were cunning, well disciplined, adequately trained and adept at jungle operations using stealth, rapid movement on foot and deception. They would attack vigorously and bravely when they had the initiative or assessed they would greatly outnumber their opponents ... The people of the Bien Hoa province were told the American and Australians were invaders and were in their country to protect the corrupt government in Saigon. The Viet Cong enforced this message with propaganda publications and promises of a prosperous and generous way of life to follow the overthrow of the invaders. The enemy was fighting in his own backyard and used this knowledge to the best advantage.”

Capt. John T. Clark, Jr., USAF, “Dodge 2,” F-105D, 67th TFS, Korat RTAFB, , September 6, 1965, Rescued



Again on September 6, Dodge 2 was reported down 44 miles from Udorn at 0940. Dodge 2 was positioned southeast of Udorn RTAFB. A Pedro HH-43 launched at 0945. At 0948, a nearby aircraft spotted a good chute and saw smoke from the pilot. It appears that the pilot was near or in Lake Pao, a fairly large lake south of Udorn. At 0952 a USAF HU-16 was airborne and at 0955 reported the water as choppy. Archie's notes listed Capt. John T. Clark, Jr., 67th TFS Fighting Cocks. He also used the call sign Elm which was used by 67th Korat F-105s. I do not know why he wrote that name down. But the 67th consisted of F-105s located at Korat RTAFB, and Archie's notes said to notify Korat. I assume the pilot was picked up since he was alive and on Thai soil, or in the water. I have confirmed Clark was with the 67th and arrived at Korat on August 25, 1965. Clark flew his F-105 as part of Elm flight on a bombing mission two days later, on September 9, 1965. No rest for the weary.

Lt. J.G. Robert David Rudolph, USN, "Corktip 918," RF-8, VP-63 Det G, September 8, 1965, KIA

On September 8, two Navy RF-8As off the USS *Oriskany* were lost in North Vietnam. At 0800, Corktip 922 was reported overdue. He should have recovered at 0600. Archie noted his last known position as halfway between Ha Tinh and Dong Hoi near the coast. He has no further notes on this loss and I have not found a record of a RF-8 loss during this time period.



A second RF-8, piloted by Lt. J.G. Robert David Rudolph, VP-63 Det G, call sign Corktip 918, went down in his RF-8A 146825 PP-918 at 1118 about 10 miles north of Thanh Hoa. He was flying a photo reconnaissance mission to find SAM sites near Thanh Hoa. He was part of a six plane mission led by Cmdr. James B. Stockdale, commander of CVW-16. They found an 18-truck convoy northeast of Thanh Hoa. Shortly after crossing the coastline Rudolph and his wingman came under heavy 37 mm automatic weapons fire. Rudolph was hit just after crossing the beach. Archie's notes indicate his wingman saw his canopy go. However, the POW Network report says Rudolph's aircraft was seen to go inverted into a steep descent. The wingman had to implement immediate evasive maneuvers and did not see an ejection of the aircraft which subsequently hit the ground. The Navy has reported that his aircraft caught fire almost immediately, and rolled into an inverted dive. An immediate SAR could not find the crash site, and there was no beeper. He was listed as killed and his body was not recovered. As an aside, Stockdale flew another mission the next day, was shot down, captured, and served as a POW until February 12, 1973. He retired at the rank of vice admiral. Stockdale was the highest ranking POW in Vietnam, and received the Medal of Honor.

September 20, 1965, a horrid day for US military fliers in the Indochina War

September 20, 1965 was a horrid day for US fliers in the Vietnam War. Archie's notes simply say eight aircraft were down, including a HH-43 Pedro with Capt. Curtis and Lt. Martin flying.

Major Edgar Lee Hawkins, USAF, "Elm-2," F-105D, 67th TFS, Korat RTAFB, KIA
Capt. Phillip Eldon Smith, USAF, F-104C, 435th TFS, Da Nang AB, RVN, POW China
Capt. Harvey Quakenbush, USAF, F-104C, 435th TFS, Da Nang AB, RVN, Rescued
Capt. Dale Carlson, USAF, F-104C, 436th TFS, Da Nang AB, RVN, Rescued
Capt. Willis E. Forby, USAF, F-105D, 334th TFS, Takhli RAFB, POW
Capt. Thomas J. Curtis, USAF, "Duchy 41," HH-43, Detachment 3 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS), NKP RTAFB, POW
1st Lt. Duane W. Martin, USAF, "Duchy 41," HH-43, Det 3, 38th ARRS, NKP RTAFB, escaped, KIA by a villager during his escape
Capt. Joseph Reynes, USAF, F-100D, 481st TFS Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, Rescued
Lt. J.G. Jon R. Harris, USN, A-4E, VA-72, USS *Independence*, September 20, 1965, Rescued

Archie's reporting of the days' events was sparse and very brief --- I figured it was simply too much and he too busy to jot down in a diary.

So all together, eight aircraft in one day. I'll try to do them in the order listed above.

Major Edgar Lee Hawkins, "Elm-2," F-105D, 67th TFS, Korat RTAFB, September 20, 1965, KIA



On September 20, 1965, Major Edgar Lee Hawkins, 67th TFS, Korat RTAFB, flying an F-105D over the NVN was shot down and lost. During the period August 28 - September 20, 1965, the 67th TFS lost eight F-105Ds to enemy action. Two were rescued, four were captured, held POWs and released

in February 1973, and two, Hawkins included, were listed MIA/KIA. Hawkins was lost north northwest of Houaphan in northwestern NVN, close to the Laos border. I have seen a report that said he crashed into a hillside in Laos. I do not believe his body was ever recovered.

Hawkins' target was a military storage area and bridge about six miles north of the NVN-Laos border. This was a major area of enemy activity moving supplies. Hawkins followed his flight lead in for a rocket attack from 7-8,000 ft. on a 30 degree dive. Hawkins fired his rocket. He then rotated for recovery and approached the mountain on the other side. There was no ejection seen, no beeper, and the weather turned bad by the time the SAR force arrived. The force was not able to conduct a close observation of the crash site and the USAF declared him MIA-KIA.

Capt. Phillip Eldon Smith, USAF, F-104C, 435th TFS, Da Nang AB, RVN, September 20, 1965, POW China



This next loss was rare. Capt. Phillip Eldon "Smitty" Smith, USAF, flying his F-104C Starfighter on a MiG CAP (combat air patrol) for the 436th TFS, Da Nang AB, RVN, escorting an EC-121 radar warning mission over the Gulf of Tonkin was caught in bad weather and lost his bearings. He had reported navigational problems with his equipment. I have also seen a book that says he was

escorting Silver Dawn C-130Bs flying electronic reconnaissance missions. Furthermore, I have seen him listed with the 435th TFS but I think the documentation is confusing because the 436th replaced the 435th in October 1965.



He flew eastward and was attacked and shot down by two Chinese MiG-19s over the center of Hainan Island. The Chinese held him captive until March 1973. He was the only USAF pilot known to be held captive by the Chinese. The F-104 was primarily a supersonic low altitude all-weather attack aircraft. So there has been conjecture about why he was over Hainan --- lost perhaps, or on a clandestine mission perhaps, but doubtful. Smith successfully ejected from his crippled aircraft and was captured shortly after reaching the ground. After capture, the communist Chinese transported him to Canton where he underwent intensive interrogation. Later Capt. Smith was transferred to the capital of China, Peking, where he spent the bulk of his captivity in solitary confinement. He was released on March 15, 1973 about a year after President Nixon made his historic trip to China. Smith had flown 80 combat missions out of Da Nang prior to his shoot-down.

In any event two other F-104Cs, 56-0911 and 57-0921 attempted to search for him and collided mid-air as they returned to Da Nang while penetrating foul weather and on a nighttime approach. One pilot was Harvey Quakenbush, the other Dale Carlson.

Harvey Quakenbush, USAF, F-104C, 435th TFS, Da Nang AB, RVN, September 20, 1965, Rescued

Dale Carlson, USAF, F-104C, 43th TFS, Da Nang AB, RVN, September 20, 1965, Rescued

As noted above, two other F-104Cs, 56-0911 and 57-0921 attempted to search for Capt. Smith and collided mid-air as they returned to Da Nang while penetrating foul weather on a nighttime approach. One pilot was Capt. Harvey Quakenbush, the other Capt. Dale Carlson. Both the F-104Cs were day fighters and each had electrical problems and no lights. They lost contact with each other, so the lead lit his afterburners so #2 could identify him. Carlson could not fly night navigation as well as he would have liked because his navigation lights were not working and had not been replaced prior to launch. I believe #2 struck the flight lead anyway. Both pilots ejected safely and were rescued. Quakenbush would comment later that the maintenance crews knew their lights were not working, but a decision was made not to ground the aircraft for that since they were daylight fighters only. Smith and the other two F-104Cs were from the 436th TFS, 6252nd TFW, Da Nang AB, RVN. I have also seen 435th TFS, but I think that is because in October 1965 the 436th replaced the 435th and there is some confusion in the documentation.



The F-104Cs from Da Nang were used primarily to escort aircraft such as the EC-121. The NVNAF hated to tangle with the F-104C aircraft when it escorted attack missions and generally avoided them. The 104s were simply too fast. Here you see two F-104Cs with an EC-121 Warning Star aircraft.

As an aside, EC-121 escort mission usually involved three flights of four F-104s, and two KC-135 tankers. One sortie would last about 2-5 hours and the operating area was typically 250-300 miles north-northwest of Da Nang. MiG CAP missions over NVN used one to three flights of four F-104s each deployed at various altitudes between the strike area and the Hanoi-Haiphong area.

Capt. Willis E. Forby, USAF, "Essex 04," F-105D, 334th TFS, Takhli RAFB, September 20, 1965, POW



Essex 04, a F-105D flown by Capt. Willis E. Forby from the 334th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, was hit by a large caliber AAA while on his way to attack a rail bridge near Ha Tinh, about 35 miles south of Vinh. After feeling the jolt, Forby turned his aircraft around, headed toward Laos. His aircraft had caught fire and he ejected a few minutes later, about ten miles east of the Laotian border. His wingman circled above and heard him on the survival radio. Forby dispensed smoke. Regrettably, the enemy had used Forby to set a trap for the SAR forces. Forby said he did not know they were there.



Crown, one of the HC-130P Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Aircraft (ABCCC) always airborne, 24-7, directed two HH-43s to the site. Forby said he was captured by Vietnamese militia and spent 7 years 5 months in the NVN slammer. A NVN soldier captured and taken to the RVN later revealed he had captured Forby. Now let's turn to Duchy 41, the HH-43 crew that attempted to rescue Forby.

Capt. Thomas J. Curtis, USAF, "Duchy 41," HH-43, Detachment 1 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS), NKP RTAFB, September 20, 1965, POW
1st Lt. Duane W. Martin, USAF, "Duchy 41," HH-43, Det 1, 28th ARRS, NKP RTAFB, September 20, 1965, escaped, KIA by a villager during his escape



HH-43



Capt. Thomas J. Curtis, pilot, shown here, and 1st Lt. Duane W. Martin, co-pilot, launched their HH-43 Duchy 41 62-4510 from NKP RTAFB and were over Ha Tinh Province, NVN which straddled the DMZ, in response to the shoot down of Essex 04. The rest of the crew included SSgt. William A. Robinson, flight engineer; and Airman Arthur N. Black, pararescue. Duchy 41 found Forby and hovered over him. The enemy then sprung the trap, shot up Duchy 41, he was hit badly and crashed into the jungle. The second HH-43 rolled in to try to get Forby. USAF A-1Es came in and strafed the area but the enemy responded by shooting at the second HH-43, which decided he had to get out of there and over to a Lima Site. Crown called in for a massive air attack by a large group of A-1s but they could not find any of the downed crewmen.

It turns out Forby was captured by the North Vietnamese militia, and was turned over to the NVN who sent him to Hanoi. The US was unsure of his fate until the Allies captured a NVA soldier who confirmed they had Forby. He was released on February 12, 1973.



With regard to Duchy 41, Lt. Martin was captured and held by the Pathet Lao, while the remainder of the crew was captured by the NVN-VC and held until release in February 23, 1973. The Pathet Lao held Martin in Laos. At some point, they also captured and brought in the more well-known Navy pilot Lt. Dieter Dengler, USN. Martin escaped along with Dengler. During their escape effort, Martin, stricken with malaria and very weak, decided to go into a village looking for help. He was hacked to death by a villager with a machete. Dengler managed to escape again and was eventually rescued.

So between the HH-43 Duchy 41 and the F-105D Essex 04 shoot-downs, five men were captured with one of those ultimately being murdered.

**Capt. Joseph Reynes, F-100D, 481st TFS Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, September 20, 1965,
Rescued**





Capt. Joseph Reynes, 481st TFS Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, was shot down on September 20, 1965 in his F-100D Hun 56-3177 by AAA. The AAA flak caused his engine to seize up following a loss of fuel and oil pressure. He ejected near the Mekong Delta. First Lieutenant Peter Vanderhoef, also a F-100D pilot said to have flown "Pretty Penney," watched Reynes' aircraft go down, and described it this way:

"He was dumping JP-4 (fuel) in a sheet about a foot wide from the underside split line of his aircraft, and we decided he had best leave before it lit off. Everything happened in slow motion just like the book said. Joe floated down as I watched his bird fly way out to sea."

He was rescued and returned to flying duties.

Lt. J.G. Jon R. Harris, USN, A-4E, VA-72, USS *Independence*, September 20, 1965, Rescued



The final aircraft loss on September 20, 1965 was that of an A-4E Skyhawk II flown by Lt. J.G. Jon R. Harris, VA-72 off the USS *Independence*, hit by AAA over North Vietnam, about 20 miles east of Hanoi. He was wounded but rescued. He was rescued by a UH-1B which flew him to safety aboard the USS *Galveston* (CLG-3), a guided missile light cruiser. The book, *Navy: An illustrated History: the US Navy from 1775 to the 21st century*, said this rescue was the “first recorded rescue ... inside North Vietnam.” Harris would later write a book, *Wings of the Morning*. In it he said he was the junior member of his squadron. He was on what they called an Alpha Strike, which meant major strike, coordinated with aircraft from another carrier. Their mission was to attack a highway and railway bridge leading north out of Hanoi. Harris wrote that they approached Hanoi at 20,000 ft., and then the SAMs came flying. He said, “This was the beginning of the first major guided missile counter-attack in history.” The Air Group Commander ordered them to “hit the deck” and get below radar coverage. So they went down to 500 ft. Harris said he was in “Decoy Flight,” and his flight was ordered to attack. Their instructions were to climb to 12,000 ft., roll in to a 70 degree dive, drop their loads at 7,000 and exit at 4,000 ft. The problem was they were carrying 3,000 lbs. of armament, six 500 lb. bombs, and it was a slow-go to climb to 12,000 ft. He got to his altitude, and made his run on the target, dropped his ordnance, and then turned to make a bee-line to the South China Sea. He and his lead checked each other for damage and all was okay.

They spotted an A-6 Intruder, which was an electronic countermeasures (ECM) aircraft, so they slid under his wings, and figured they were home free. Not so. Harris got a fire warning light. Then he started to lose hydraulics, concluding the fire had burned through one of the lines. He had trouble operating the rudder pedals, and then his stick froze up. He ejected.

As fate would have it, he landed on his feet, with his parachute lines caught in the tress at just the right height that he landed standing up. After doing his best to escape and evade, he heard an A-1 Skyraider overhead. Harris would later learn the A-1 was circling over his parachute, which he had left behind some time ago, and the A-1 driver told the helicopter not to come in, thinking the pilot was either dead or unconscious. The helicopter was already low on fuel, but decided to come in for one pass anyway before he would have to return to home plate. The helo flew right over Harris, they made contact, the helo, even though short on fuel, had to dump some because it was so hot and humid his bird would have trouble picking up Harris’ weight. The enemy started firing at him, and he was hit in the tail. But then the A-1 swooped in and started his 20 mm cannon fire runs against the enemy. Enemy fire went silent.

The helo drove in and hovered about 40 ft. above Harris, dropped the horse collar, Harris wrapped it around him, and up he went, but not all the way into the helo. The helicopter pilot lurched forward and upward and Harris flew with him about 40 ft. below him holding on to his horse collar.



He was rescued by Lt. Commander Weslie Wetzel and Lt. Kent Vandervelde, with an aircrewman, AD1 Charles Bowman. They had no prior SAR training and no tactics, not even decent charts. Nonetheless, they flew directly to Harris' location and snatched him up. They employed an UH-2A nicknamed "Angel" from HU-1 Detachment One, Unit Alfa (HU-1 later re-designated helicopter Support Squadron One - HC-1). They were originally on the USS *Midway* but were transferred to the USS *Galveston*. Wetzel was escorted by two VA-25 A-1 Skyraiders from the USS *Midway* who helped guide them in. They all made the rescue in broad daylight under small arms fire.

In sum, on September 20, 1965 the US lost five fighter aircraft over North Vietnam and one over Hainan, China, two in a crash near Da Nang AB, RVN, one over Hainan Island, China, and one HH-43 SAR helicopter, also over NVN but close to the Laos border, with the possibility it was lost just inside Laos. Eleven crewmen were involved. Six were captured, of which one was captured by the Chinese and one of those captured was murdered by a Laotian villager. Five of the six captives were released after long imprisonments. One was killed in his crash. Four were rescued.

Navy E-1B, VAW-12, USS *Independence*, September 22, 1965, Rescued



On September 22, 1965, a Navy E-1B Tracer 148918 from VAW-12 off the USS *Independence* was down on an operational mission but due to non-combat reasons. The crew was rescued. The E-1B was an early warning aircraft which saw extensive service in the early years of the war providing CAP aircraft with target vectors and controlling strikes over NVN and warning those aircraft of MiG action. She was also thought to have a SAR application in coordinating SAR aircraft.

Capt. Jack Gravis and 1st Lt. Wylie E. Nolen, USAF, “Grisley Lead,” F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, September 24, 1965, Rescued



An USAF F-4C “Grisley lead” 64-0700 flown by Capt. Jack Gravis and 1st Lt. Wylie E. Nolen were hit by AAA while attacking enemy army barracks at the village of Vinh near the South China Sea coast on September 24, 1965. They were from the 47th TFS at Ubon RTAFB. The Panama controller reported two pilots in the water. A HU-16 spotted the two about 5 miles off the coast and picked them both up. The HU-16 was flown by Major D.C. Hollenfeld, who returned them to Da Nang. Capt. Jim Coyne was the wingman and watched the HU-16 come in for the rescue. He said this:



“The Albatross touched down in a shower of white spray and taxied toward the raft. As it approached Wylie, enemy gunners begin to get the range. Artillery shells caused geysers to spew on both sides of the HU-16. My throat was dry as I realized what a sitting duck the flying boat was as it churns slowly through the swells. I saw a geyser erupt directly in front of the HU-16, so close the spray drenched the cockpit windows. Three rescuemen were attempting a pickup in almost suicidal conditions.”

Fortunately, there was an F-4 CAP supporting the HU-16 and it went after the enemy gun emplacements. Capt. Gravis would later say that he could see the F-4s attacking the beach while incoming shells were flying over his head. He said, “The scene looked just like a war movie.” The F-4s suppressed the enemy fire and the HU-16 made his pickup and got out of there safely.

Capt. George R. Hall, USAF, “Dagger 54,” RF-101, 15th TRS, Ubon RTAFB, September 27, 1965, POW





Capt. George R. Hall, USAF, assigned to the 15th TRS, Ubon RTAFB, flying his RF-101 Dagger 54 northeast of Than Hoa close to the South China Sea coast was shot down by ground fire on September 27, 1965. His aircraft was reported on fire. A HU-16 called the Navy for choppers, but there were none in the area. One A-1E Sandy fighter came to the area, checked, and could not find the pilot. It turned out he was captured and served as a POW until his release on February 12, 1973. Hall was due to head back to Okinawa, but he was a seasoned pilot and his commander extended him for one more month. This was to be his final photo mission over bridges near Hanoi. He was hit by ground fire and his aircraft was on fire. Both sides had broken apart. He hit the ejection handle and the next thing he remembers is being on a table in terrible pain surrounded by Vietnamese peasants. He has written a book in which he says:

“I spent seven and one half years in and around Hanoi as a prisoner of war. For seven and one half long, lonely, years, some in isolation, suffering from torture and a variety of illnesses, ‘Home with Honor’ was my hope and my vision, as it was with the 350 plus other American military, mostly pilots, who suffered with me.”

He has said:

“Since my return in 1973 I have suffered post traumatic stress syndrome which has included nightmares, sleep walking, anxiety attacks, restless leg syndrome, heavy thrashing about in bed with near blows to my wife by kicking and hitting out with my arms. I also sometimes scream out during my nightmares.”

Lt. Cmdr. Carl J. Woods, USN, “Milestone 602,” VA-196, USS *Bon Homme Richard*, September 28, 1965, KIA





Milestone 602, an A-1H 134482 piloted by Lt. Cmdr. Carl J. Woods assigned to VA-196 off the USS *Bon Homme Richard* was shot down by AAA on September 28, 1965 southeast of Vinh. He was flying armed reconnaissance along a railway line near Qui Vinh, north of the DMZ. He flew his stricken A-1H more than 40 miles to the Gulf of Tonkin and bailed out of his burning aircraft off the coast. His chute did not open. A HU-16 asked for a replacement and said he was going down on the water to get the pilot. Another HU-16 launched shortly thereafter. When the HU-16 landed on the water and got to the pilot, the rescue crew found he had been killed. His remains were recovered by the HU-16.

Archie also noted a F-105D from the 562th TFS crashed about 25 miles from home base, Takhli RTAFB. He had a good chute and was rescued.

Lt. Colonel Melvin J. Killian, USAF, “Mercury Lead,” F-105D, 334th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, September 30, 1965, KIA





On September 30, 1965, Lt. Colonel Melvin J. Killian, USAF, was assigned to and commanded the 334th TFS temporarily assigned to Takhli RTAFB and was piloting a F-105D and leading a major bombing mission near the Ninh Binh bridges. I believe he was Mercury lead. He was hit by a SAM. He was the first F-105 pilot to be hit by a NVN SAM over the NVN. His aircraft exploded in the air. He was listed as MIA until May 14, 1973 when his status was changed to KIA. His remains were returned to the US on March 20, 1985. He was the only member of the 334th not to return from this assignment. He arrived in the target area ahead of the rest of his flight, wanting to conduct a survey of the area to give directions to the rest of his flight. He came under heavy fire but nonetheless flew over the gun emplacement and gave instructions to his pilots what to go after. His brother, Harold, who retired an USAF colonel, commented to the press after learning Melvin's remains were to be returned:

"When they last saw him, his head and helmet were lying over against the canopy. He was either dead or unconscious when the airplane hit the ground."

Capt. Chambless M. Chesnutt and his WSO Capt. Michael Chwan, USAF, "Cobra 4," F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, September 20, 1965, both KIA





Also on September 30, 1965, "Cobra 4," a F-4C flown by Capt. Chambless M. Chesnutt and his WSO Capt. Michael Chwan (shown here) from the 47th TFS at Ubon RTAFB, flying lead went down near Ninh Binh. His wingman, also a F-4C, Cobra 3, said he lost contact with him. Compress Rescue Control at Udorn directed that no RESCAP was needed. There was no beeper and Cobra 3 could not find him. I have seen a report that said Cobra 4 was hit by a SAM over the Ninh Binh Bridge. The remains of both men were found and returned to the US. Cobra Flight was part of the same attack conducted by Colonel Killian just mentioned. Their mission was to hit the road and rail bridge at Ninh Binh.

Capt. Charles J. "Chuck" Scharf, USAF, and his WSO 1st Lt. Martin J. "Marty" Massucci , USAF, "Gator 3," 43rd TFS, Ubon RTAFB, October 1, 1965, Scharf KIA, Massucci MIA





Capt. Charles J. “Chuck” Scharf, USAF (middle photo), and his WSO 1st Lt Martin J. “Marty” Massucci (bottom photo), call sign Gator 3, flying a F-4C 63-7712 for the 43rd TFS out of Ubon RTAFB, went down at 1355 about 68 miles west-northwest of Hanoi on October 1, 1965. A Sandy A-1E was scrambled. Compress reported a good chute and the pilot on the ground. A Pedro HH-43 estimated LS-36 at 1655 and the Sandy estimated arrival in the area at 1530. Gator 2 said he saw one good chute and reported that Gator 3 had been hit by automatic weapons fire. One of his colleagues reported him on fire and urged him to bail out. A chute was seen leaving the aircraft as it disintegrated. Scharf was part of a four F-4C flight tasked to conduct road reconnaissance and a major enemy concentration on that road, Route 155, about 79 miles west-northwest of Hanoi, only 15 kms from the Chinese border. This highway was the major route used to transport supplies from China to Hanoi, initially to go to the Ban Tain staging area located along the route in Son La Province. The Ban Tain staging area was a suspected truck park near the Black River Valley. One of the four aircraft developed problems shortly after takeoff and had to return to base, leaving three F-4Cs in the flight, and requiring Scharf to take lead.

Gator flight approached the target at low altitude to avoid SAM detection by those SAMs guarding the Ban Tain area. Capt. Marvin C. Quist, pilot; and 1st Lt. Philip M. Ordway, co-pilot; comprised the crew of Gator 4, Gator 3's wingman. Capt. Ralph D. Steele was the pilot of Gator 2. These surviving crews reported their intelligence on the target area was poor. Gator 2 thought he saw the truck park and dropped his bombs on it. Gator 3 and 4 did not drop ordnance. All three aircraft separated after the pop-up maneuver and Scharf reported he was going up the road. Gator 2 misunderstood and flew a direction opposite to that being flown by Scharf. Gator 4 saw Scharf get hit and said, “the flame was small at first and gradually increased for about 15-20 seconds until it trailed the aircraft approximately one plane length.”

Scharf radioed the Mayday distress signals that he was bailing out. He first jettisoned his external stores without telling his backseater. When this is done, there is considerable noise and flashing debris. Massucci apparently thought they were in very bad shape and bailed out.

Gator 4 saw the aircraft crash site on the side of Phu Suong Mountain, spotted a small hole in the foliage with a plume of smoke rising. On debriefing, Gator 4 reported, "In my opinion, there is a strong possibility that the other occupant bailed out prior to aircraft impact. He had sufficient altitude and it is felt he had sufficient time for a successful ejection ... the aircraft was in a very steady course toward mountainous terrain. The engines and afterburners appeared to be functioning properly."

Because of sighting the chute and Gator 4's debrief, there was hope either or both of the men were alive and captured, even though no one could see either of them on the ground and there were no beeper signals. Scharf's remains were found and returned to the US. The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) later found that the chute was that of the F-4C's drag parachute. Though evidence was found belonging to Massucci, I believe he is carried as MIA.

October 5, 1965, another bad and for me complicated day.

This one took me time to unravel. I found some "fog of war" involved here, I think.

Here's what I know. Eighteen F-105Ds attacked the bridge at Long Het on October 5, 1965, leaving it unserviceable. Two F-105s were downed and three were damaged. A RF-101C accompanied them, was hit badly by AAA, and was destroyed attempting to land at Da Nang AB, RVN. In a separate mission, eight F-4Cs struck the Long Het ammunition depot, with undetermined results. One F-4C was lost. Also, a Navy F-8E was hit by a SAM and disabled. Furthermore, one F-100 Super Sabre was lost on a bombing mission in the RVN, near Phu Yen. So I can account for six aircraft being lost, with different outcomes for the six pilots, one WSO, which I will discuss.

Lt. J.G. Richard F. Adams, USN, "Chevy Lead," F-8E, VF-162, USS *Oriskany*, Rescued
Major James O. Hivner, USAF, "Panther 3," F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, POW
1st Lt. Thomas Barrett, USAF, "Panther 3," F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, POW
Major Dean A. Pogreba, USAF, "Mercury 01 (Mercury Lead)," F-105D, 49th TFS Yokota, Japan flying for the 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, KIA
Capt. Bruce G. Seeber, USAF, "Mercury 02," F-105D, 49th TFS Yokota, Japan flying for the 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, POW
Capt. Robert Pitt, USAF, RF-101C, 15th TRS, Udorn RTAFB, Crash landing survived
First Lt. John C. Hauschildt, USAF, F-100, 481st TFS, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, KIA

Military commanders as you might suspect were preoccupied with neutralizing SAM and AAA sites in NVN. At the beginning of 1965 bombing was authorized against the northeast quadrant of NVN which included a large segment of a rail line from Hanoi to China, which were defended heavily by the enemy.

October 5, 1965 turned out to be a big day. I had problems weaving Archie's notes with research reports about this day. As a result, I have been confronted with different pictures of the number of losses. I am going to present my best assessment of what they were.

Some were reflected in Archie's notes, some are not. But here we go.

To my knowledge, Archie did not note Hauschildt (F-100) or Pitt (RF-101C), mentioned in the opening list. Furthermore, I have four losses listed by Archie I cannot resolve. One was Honda 4 who reportedly ejected in the same area where Mercury 1, Mercury 2 and Panther 3 ejected, up north of Hanoi. Archie also noted that the command post had advised that Rhino 3 and 4 were missing, and that a F-4C in Leopard flight was unaccounted for. So based on Archie's notes, I've got two losses Archie did not note, Hauschildt and Pitt, and three more he did note that I cannot correlate, Rhino 3, Rhino 4 and Leopard. I have found this very frustrating. Based on my review of losses for the day, I have had to assume Rhino 3 and 4 and Leopard flight all made it to safety. Honda 4 remains a mystery to me because only three aircraft were lost in the area of the Long Het attack which is where he was reported down. For the moment, I will not address any of these four losses further.

But we have to move on with what I have been able to confirm. If you pay attention to Archie's time-hacks during this day, you'll see it was busy. It was early in the war. I don't think the US expected these kinds of losses, so I can see how things can get tense when you have a day like this.

Lt. J.G. Richard F. Adams, USN, "Chevy Lead," F-8E, VF-162, USS *Oriskany*, October 5, 1965, Rescued



Archie noted that at 1120, a Navy F-8E 150848 was reported down over the Gulf of Tonkin southeast of Haiphong. Archie's notes are a little unclear here. First, he identified the call sign as Chevy Lead and identified the aircraft as a F-105. I think this was a mistake, a fog of war kind of thing.

I believe Chevy Lead was a F-8 hit by a missile (other reports say small arms fire) and on fire, having received tail damage. It also appears the location given to Archie out over the Gulf of Tonkin was wrong.



The pilot was Lt. J.G. Richard F. Adams, VF-162 embarked the USS *Oriskany*. The reason I believe Chevy Lead was Adams and his F-8 is because in his continuous notes of the event, Archie noted at 1212 “Lockett” entered the area as low cover and asked for high cover to watch over him. Four Skyraiders in Lockett flight did respond to Adams. One said he spotted a pilot on a 200 ft. hill. I believe Lockett was an A-1 Skyraider from VA-152 Mavericks, also flying from the *Oriskany*. (The photos shows USAF A-1E Skyraiders but you get the idea).



Corroborating this, the website of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Six (HS-6), the Raunchy Redskins, reported on Adams. Its report said a Navy SH-3 Sea King flown by Lt. Bill Waechter (shown here), Lt. J.G. Bob Wildman, ADJ2 Harley Olsen and AX1 Michael Brantly penetrated NVN territory to 35 miles northwest of Haiphong to rescue Adams who was located in a high altitude karst mountain area. Archie's notes do reflect that Navy helicopters were going into the area as of 1215, so all in all I think Archie and I are in synch here.

The HS-6 crew had to fly aggressive evasive maneuvers to make it through the heavy and intense AAA and automatic weapons fire to get through the 70-mile flight to Adams. Adams contacted the crew by survival radio, and noted his difficult position on the hill. The HS-6 crew decided to go in after him, hovered over a gorge and began a very treacherous descent to where they thought Adams was. Adams was under dense foliage but the HS-6 crew picked him up and fought their way out of more enemy fire. They got their man.

At 1225 a Navy A-1 reported being hit and was going down. I'm guessing, but I suspect this was an A-1H or an A-1J from VA-152 embarked the USS *Oriskany*. I have read the VA-152 history for this time period and there is no report of losing an A-1 on this date. In any event, Compress Control said the area cited for the A-1 was not suitable for a Jolly Green. To my knowledge, the subject was dropped. The report was either a mistake or he brought his crippled aircraft to safety.

The attacks against Long Het and surrounding targets, NVN

We need to go over a bit of history in this next section of October 5, 1965 attacks in NVN. Today, we always hear, whether it was the war against Iraq or Afghanistan, or even the threatened attacks against Syria, that the air forces, USAF and Navy, have as their first order of business shutting down the enemy's air defense systems, fighters, AAA and SAMs including any associated radars and command and control (C2) sites. That is because we want air superiority, as unfettered as we can get it, prior to putting in ground forces. That way, we can command the skies and provide the forces on the ground with the best available air support.

This was not the case early on in the Vietnam War, and it would be a bone of contention throughout the war. We are at October 5, 1965. Prior to this, most air sorties were flown against non-SAM targets. Air commanders did not like this at all. At the beginning of 1965, the suits in Washington allowed bombing of the northeast sector of NVN which included Hanoi and rail and other supply lines to China from Hanoi.

I want to insert excerpts from a note written by a friend familiar with the situation during these days. For starters, he recommends we read *Going Downtown*, by Jack Broughton, to get a full perspective. But here are few words my friend had to say:

"The main reason NVN air defenses were so effective is because of the **idiots** in Washington DC (LBJ and Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense) were trying to run a war they weren't committed to winning. U.S. fighter jets were **prohibited** from bombing the two main MiG bases in North Vietnam, Phuc Yen and Kep. I've heard stories of large attack groups of fighters going to bomb Hanoi and Haiphong and watching fighters on the ground taking off.....they would have been court martialed if they had dropped their bombs on those airfields. The MiGs that were allowed to takeoff killed a lot of our guys and sent lots more to live in prison as POW's. Our fighters weren't allowed to bomb stockpiles of SAMs even though we knew where they were.....they were stockpiled at locations known by the enemy to be 'off limits' to our bombing. We let any country deliver war materiel to the North unmolested in Haiphong harbor. We could have easily denied any shipping and

a lot of the overland supply from China.....however the brilliant leadership in Washington didn't want to attack another country's ship even though they were supplying our enemy."

Jacob van Staaveren, writing, "Gradual Failure, the air war over North Vietnam 1965-1966," notes the situation was no different on October 5, 1965. The most important targets for the first half of October 1965 were the bridges at Long Het, Xom Phuong, and Vu Chua and an ammunition depot near Long Het.



This is not the best map for what I want to show. The black line shows Route 1A which, among other things, tied Hanoi to China, a major supply route during the war. I have located Vu Chua. It is on Hwy 1A. Very close by is the Kep Airfield, a major NVN air defense fighter base and Long Het. All of this is just northeast of Hanoi. Hanoi, of course, was protected by heavy air defenses, but so was Kep Airfield and key bridges along Hwy 1A and nearby areas, all located in Lang Son Province.

Okay, back to October 5, 1965. The attacks were launched, most notably against the Kep highway bridge. After attacking the bridge, pilots reported numerous bursts of fire, and felt they had hit some SAMs. They also attacked the Long Het bridge and Long Het ammunition depot.

Life now gets complicated. Within a span of five minutes, 1235-1240, three aircraft were reported down, all three in roughly the same area, a bit to the northeast of Kep Airfield, which was about 40 miles northeast of Hanoi. It was one of the principal air bases for the NVNAF MiGs. These MiGs could challenge American aircraft attempting to interdict an important transportation network including rail lines and roads that connected NVN with China.

Major James O. Hivner, USAF, "Panther 3," F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, POW
1st Lt. Thomas Barrett, USAF, "Panther 3," F-4C, 47th TFS, Ubon RTAFB, POW



At 1235 a report came in saying Panther 4, an F-4C reported ejecting about 5 miles from the city of Kep, in the area described above. Someone on the scene asked for CH-3C Jolly Greens. But at 1300 Compress control said the area was out of Jolly Greene range and therefore they will not respond. Also at 1235 Honda 4 was reported to have ejected, also in this same area. Then at 1240 Panther 3 was reported down here as well, no doubt flying with Panther 4.



I believe Panther 3 was a F-4C 63-7563 flown by Major James O. Hivner (left with his F-4C circa 1965) and 1st Lt. Thomas Barrett (right shown as a lieutenant colonel). They went down near a road bridge at Lang Met, forty miles northeast of Hanoi and just nine miles northeast of Kep airfield. They were on a bombing run and apparently were able to drop their bombs before being hit and ejecting from their burning plane. Both men were captured almost immediately. They were assigned to the 43rd TFS, Clark AB, Philippines, but deployed to Ubon RTAFB for 90 days, tasked to support the 47th TFS located there. Both were released in February 1973.

Then, seemingly miraculously, Archie wrote that at 1305 Panther 4 was reported as still airborne. The pilot apparently had not ejected as originally reported. Panther 4 located Panther 3 five miles east of the target. But it was too late. Both men had been captured.

At 1320, the Navy reported it was unable to enter the area with SAR support.

Major Dean A. Pogreba, USAF, “Mercury 01 (Mercury Lead),” F-105D, 49th TFS Yokota, Japan flying for the 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, KIA



Okay, back to that five minute span, 1320-1325. At 1235 Mercury flight squawked emergency and said he intended to land at Da Nang, RVN. Mercury flight was a group of five F-105Ds (other documents say four) led by Major Dean Pogreba tasked to attack targets north of Hanoi. His wingman was Capt. Bruce G. Seeber. It turns out these F-105Ds were involved in the same overall operation as were the F-4Cs Panther 3 and 4 mentioned previously.

Then, at 1355 the command post received a report that Mercury Lead was unaccounted for. It is interesting that there are no more references of Mercury Lead in Archie’s note. This struck me as odd because this was one helluva event. I am assuming here again that Archie might have been too busy to take detailed notes about Mercury Lead.



Mercury Lead, or Mercury 01, was a F-105D 62-4295 flown by Major Dean A. Pogreba. Archie identifies him as such in his single entry about the incident. Pogreba was attached to the 49th TFS at Yokota, Japan, and was sent on “temporary” duty to fly combat out of Takhli RTAFB. I should have mentioned earlier that in these early days of the war, the existence of Takhli has hugely hush-hush, even though many in the press knew about it. Furthermore, units and members of units were quietly being transferred back and forth from places like Japan to Thailand to fly combat missions, again, at the time a secret. In those days, permanent stationing of these kinds of fighters at bases in Thailand was politically tricky. For the moment, I will say that Pogreba was listed as KIA. There has been controversy about that which I will discuss a bit later.

I'd like to interject here. Jacob van Staaveren, writing "Gradual Failure, the air war over North Vietnam 1965-1966," highlighted that these F-105D missions were known as Iron Hand. The suits in Washington had placed all kinds of restrictions on the bombing which I do not care to go into. However, the service chiefs were able to exempt "sorties flown by specialized aircraft earmarked for anti-SAM missiles," and those were nicknamed Iron Hand by the Pacific Command.



General Hunter Harris, shown here, was the commander-in-chief Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), and "he selected a number of F-105Ds as Iron Hand aircraft." Furthermore, "if weather or operational problems canceled an anti-SAM mission, they could strike other targets," to wit things like bridges! This strikes me as "GI ingenuity" to work around all the restrictions placed on our war fighters. It also demonstrates the huge divide between our top commanders and the suits in Washington.

Pogreba led Mercury Flight of five F-105s (some reports say four) on a bridge strike mission north of Hanoi. Mercury Flight's mission I believe was to attack Dong Dang, about 40 miles from the Chinese border.



Google maps and other maps for Dong Dang show it residing almost on the Chinese border. This photo, credited to QT Luong for terrgalleria.com, shows a modern day photo of the border crossing to China at Dong Dang. There was and is a train line from Dong Dang to Hanoi, so no doubt the target was selected to stop the flow of supplies from China to the NVN. That this was the target will become an important point later when I return to the controversy surround Pogreba.

Capt. Bruce G. Seeber, USAF “Mercury 02,” F-105D, 49th TFS Yokota, Japan flying for the 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, October 5, 1965, POW



Capt. Bruce G. Seeber was Pogreba's wingman, flying F-105D 62-4376. POW Network said both Pogreba and Seeber were hit by enemy fire near the borders of Lang Son and Ha Bac provinces, roughly this area. POW Net said both crashed. Seeber was captured close to the target.

Archie's notes did not record Seeber's loss, which would have been another “Mercury” F-105 flight. Several reports I read said we lost only one F-105 on this day. That is wrong; we lost the two I have described.



Pogreba and Seeber ejected near Lang Het bridge, about 15 miles north of Bac Giang and on Route 1A north of Hanoi. The 18 F-105Ds reportedly dropped one span of the bridge. This is a bomb damage assessment photo of the collapsed bridge following this attack.

I have read the 6235 Combat Support Group, Takhli RTAFB loss report about this incident, dated September 18, 1975. It maintains that the pilots had intended to make a bee-line to the South China Sea Coast under radio silence. The report also said that while airborne and after his attack run, Pogreba did not complain of any damage to his aircraft. But he was never heard from again and did not show up on the coastline. There has long been speculation that he actually headed north and crashed in China. More on that in a moment,

A memoir filed by W. Howard Plunkett, Lt. Col., USAF (Ret.) commented on these F-105s:

“They just disappeared. No one saw them and no one can find them.”

He added that the F-105s were each carrying two 3,000 lb. bombs and were hitting targets near the Chinese border.

The Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA affairs took up Pogreba’s and Seeber’s loss. Its report said Pogreba had completed his bombing run through dense cloud cover, and that he was seen rolling off his target in an area of heavy AAA fire and from which three SAMs were launched. This report goes on to say:

“He (Pogreba) radioed he was departing the area on the prebriefed exit route. The members of the flight also used the prebriefed exit route and maintained radio silence until reaching the coast. Major Pogreba never arrived and was declared missing. Visual and electronic search failed to disclose any evidence of either him or his aircraft.”

Pogreba was declared MIA, fate unknown. As I mentioned, Seeber was captured and later identified as a POW. While my information is that Pogreba was lead, Seeber’s citation for the Silver Star says:

“He (Seeber) led a flight of F-105 Fighter-Bombers against a vital target complex deep within hostile territory. Penetrating perimeter defenses on a high speed low level approach to minimize the effectiveness of anti-aircraft fire, Captain Seeber found the primary target obscured by clouds and rain. Not to be deterred, he selected a target of opportunity and changed his tactics by climbing into the overhanging clouds, thus exposing himself to radar controlled gunfire, to position his flight for a perfect bombing pass on a key roadway.”

I want to highlight a controversy surrounding the fate of Major Dean Pogreba, whose F-105 went down while on a raid near the Chinese border. He has never been found. Returning POWs could not provide any information on him, though one opined that some felt he might have gone down in China. A former POW who is said to have reported this was Leo K. Thorsness who, the F-105F Wild Weasel mission, was shot down by a MiG-21 and captured. He would later receive the Medal of Honor.

Whatever the case, in November 1977 Pogreba was declared KIA, body not recovered.



Then, in 1991, Tom Lacy, Brigadier General, USAF (Ret.) told Pogreba's next of kin he had spoken with Pogreba and knew where he was. Lacy reportedly said Pogreba was shot down over China, and Lacy had made two failed attempts to rescue him. According to the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, Lacy, retired at the time, said he saw Pogreba working on an opium farm in the NVN. However, a Senate subcommittee questioned Lacy and attached little credibility to his story.

Chinese and NVN radio stations said that on October 5, 1965 four US aircraft intruded into Chinese airspace, US aircraft had been shot down, and pilots had been captured.

Lacy's rendition is curious. He retired in 1977. While Lacy did fly the F-105 with the 355th TFW and served as a flight commander with the 354th TFS until July 1964, after which he returned to the US. In August 1965, he returned to Vietnam and served as operations staff at Headquarters 7th AF in Saigon through July 1966, after which he went to Pacific Air Forces headquarters in Hawaii. He died on October 15, 2010.

Authors of the book, *Inside Hanoi's Secretive Archives*, found and photographed Pogreba's identification card and Geneva Convention Card which are on display at the Hanoi Military War Museum. The card was said to be in pristine condition.

To my knowledge, nothing more has come of all this.

This next group of notes, I believe, did not involve any losses.

At 1410 Bravo reported being fired at 19 miles north of Buccaneer. Then Archie's notes read "Lockett 588/585." On the side of his note pad, Archie wrote Buccaneer 18 108, and DLG King /18108. I assume these are mile and radial readings off of radar stations Buccaneer and DLG King; for example, 18 miles off the 108 radial from the location of the radar site. I think Bravo is a HU-16 and, as noted earlier, Lockett 588 and 585 were probably two Navy A-1 Skyraiders from VA-152 Mavericks, flying from the *Oriskany*.

Two minutes later, the Command Post at 1412 reported Rhino 3 and 4 were missing.

At 1421, trying to interpret a short note by Archie, it appears that Lion took control of the SAR effort from a command and control standpoint. Lion was a radar and flight following site from Det 3, 621st Tactical Control Squadron, Ubon RTAFB.

Also at 1412, the Command post reported Leopard flight, F-4C, was unaccounted for.

So what do we have here? I don't know what-who Buccaneer is. I do not know what Lockett 588 and 585 were doing. I can find no evidence Rhino 3 and 4 failed to make it home. I also can find no evidence Leopard flight failed to make it home. Frankly, I have no idea who Rhino 3 and 4 were. I only know Leopard was a F-4C.

I'm exhausted trying to resolve these, so once again, we move on. I feel lousy about this but we have to press ahead.

“Hawk 1,” EB-66, Takhli RTAFB, October 5, 1965, Attacked by MiGs, escaped the MiG attack safely



At 1425 Compress asked for information on Hawk 1; Compress had negative contact since he first refueled. Archie noted Hawk 1 was a Takhli based RB-66 and at 1430 reported him inbound to home plate --- home base and landing. Initially in the war, people in theater confused the RB-66 photo reconnaissance aircraft with the EB-66 ECM aircraft. The RB-66s and EB-66s arrived in theater in May 1965. I understand they started at Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, but were transferred to Takhli RTAFB. The EB-66's job was to escort strike aircraft into NVN and alert them to enemy radars, their locations, and then jam the radars with chaff. This inhibited NVN gunners using radar controlled guns from being effective. At first, the EB-66 did not work well against SAMs, though improvements were made over time.

In any event, an EB-66C out of Takhli participated in the Long Het mission discussed earlier. Five MiGs intercepted him. Two made firing passes, but missed. The EB-66C pilot said he believed the MiGs had Chinese markings, and they flew north after the attack.

So, that's a summary of what I've learned from Archie's notes about October 5, 1965. But, nothing is easy in life, and I'm not finished.

I have two more losses on October 5, 1965, but cannot match them with Archie's notes. It is possible that these might be some of those call signs I could not find, but I don't think so because other parts of Archie's notes don't match up with these two losses.

First Lt. John C. Hauschildt, USAF, F-100, 481st TFS, Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, KIA



First Lt. John C. Hauschildt, USAF, flying an F-100 Super Sabre for the 481st TFS was lost on a bombing mission in the RVN, near Phu Yen, and listed as KIA. Phu Yen is on the South China Sea coast about halfway between Qui Nhon and Nha Trang. So he is in this mix someplace, but I cannot find his call sign. He was on an ordnance run and crashed and exploded. Hostile ground fire was in the area, but the specific cause of accident I believe remains unknown.

Wikipedia reported a story about Hauschildt which adds to the sorrow of our losses in Vietnam. It reads:

“The death ... of Hauschildt was part of a larger coincidental tragedy. When four friends who had attended the Air Force Academy together were all assigned to Cannon AFB as pilots, they decided to pool their money and buy a house. Three of the four pilots were assigned to the 481st and the fourth, Lt. Thomas McAtee, was assigned to the 429th Tactical Fighter Squadron. In the space of ten weeks, three of the four friends were killed. On 29 July 1965, Lt. Donald Watson was killed in South Vietnam. On 23 August 1965, Lt. Ralph Ford was killed on a training flight near Nara Visa, New Mexico and on 5 October 1965, Lt. John Hauschildt was killed on a bombing mission in South Vietnam. Lt. McAtee was in Vietnam during this time and had flown 36 combat missions with the 429th TFS. He was shocked to learn of the deaths of his three friends and returned to Clovis, New Mexico in October 1965 to sell the house.”



I have also found an USAF RF-101C Voodoo 56-0178 flown by Robert Pitt from the 15th TRS at Udorn RTAFB lost on October 5 to AAA. He crash landed at Da Nang. The aircraft was destroyed but the pilot survived. This photo was sent to me by Bob Pitt; it shows him after completing his 100th mission over NVN and the troops covered him with the usual welcoming debris!

As I mentioned earlier, he accompanied the eighteen F-105Ds attacking the bridge at Long Het. His task was to get bomb damage assessment on the bridge and an ammunition storage area. Two RF-101Cs were on the mission, the other flown by Major Tony Weissgarber. Pitt was flight lead, Weissgarber his wingman. Weissgarber wrote a good article about this mission published on Yahoo back in April 2008, entitled "A combat mission over Vietnam." I will extract from it but commend it to you. Bob Pitt also wrote an article published by the 24th Flight newsletter of El Paso, Texas. I'll integrate some of what he said also.

Following launch from Udorn RTAFB, they headed out to the Gulf of Tonkin after which they released their drop tanks and proceeded on a westerly heading to the target area. They flew at low level, one hundred feet altitude, and smoking in at 600 knots (Pitt says 480 knots, but said they did crank it up to 600 knots once they approached Hanoi). Speed was their main defense. Pitt was to take the ammo storage area while Weissgarber took the Long Het bridge.

Both pilots understood enemy would be located on mountains and hills to spot them coming in through the valet about 1,000 ft. below and alert defense forces. Furthermore, they almost always

came in 10-15 minutes after the last attack. They had no element of surprise, just low altitude and speed galore. They encountered intensive ground fire on their way in. Pitt was hit, with flames burning from behind to twice the length of his aircraft. Pitt asked Weissgarber which engine was hit, the response was the left engine, so Pitt shut it down and the fire went out.

Pitt thought about ejecting, but determined he would hit the karsts in the area and decided against it, figuring if his aircraft blows up, it blows up. Pitt did a u-turn and headed out to the Gulf. Pitt said his right overheat light was on, he was losing fuel rapidly, and his left wing seemed to have more surface outboard than it had near the fuselage. That's where he took his hit --- he later learned he was hit by an 85 mm through the left engine.

Weissgarber had also been hit, but all his instruments said he was okay, so he kept on going in, having decided it was his job to photograph both targets. He got the bridge with cameras on, then headed to the ammo storage area when he came under intensive fire again. He was hit again, but saw no flames and his instruments still said he was okay.

Weissgarber then headed out to the Gulf of Tonkin and started looking for Pitt. Pitt was able to only hold at about 300 knots with one engine. Once he made it to the Gulf, he figured he could not keep flying low because that ate up too much fuel, he worried about climbing out fearing Chinese MiGs would come after him, but decided he had to climb and take his chances.

They met up, Weissgarber looked over Pitt's aircraft, and saw "Pitt's left side was gutted from the leading edge of the wing, along the fuselage to the tail section." To him, the plane did not look flyable, but he told Pitt she looked okay with some burn damage to keep Pitt's morale up. Weissgarber admitted lying. Pitt was shooting for Da Nang AB, the closest friendly base, but was low on fuel. He wanted to take on fuel, called for a tanker, married up with it, but the hydraulics operating his boom receptacle did not work, so he could not take on fuel. Interestingly, the tanker, a KC-135, was much farther to the north than allowed --- that's the way it is; you've gotta be there for your guys so that rule must have "escape the crews' s minds!" Once Pitt discovered he could not take on fuel, he told the tanker guys to get out of there since they were so far north.

Weissgarber told Pitt to move over and he would take on some fuel, but he was sufficiently battle damaged that much of it simply flowed out of the aircraft. Pitt reported to his wingman that his fuel gauge read empty and asked how much might be still in the lines. Weissgarber told him he didn't know how much might be left in the lines, but to trim his nose down and punch out when the engine stops.

Pitt lowered his landing gear using the pneumatic system. He would have to do a no-flap landing and should have been at 190 knots, but he maintained 250 knots just in case he had a flame out just before landing. Pitt said if the engine quit above 100 ft, he'd pull up and eject. If he was below 100 ft., well, he'd ride her in. Just as he made it to the Da Nang overrun he was hit by a hard crosswind from the right and was forced to put his right wing very low. He pulled the drag chute in the air to slow down and made a pretty good landing. But he had no nose gear steering and no rudder control, so he could not maintain direction aerodynamically. He could only ride wherever the aircraft took him. The aircraft drifted off the runway and hit a small building, a ground control approach (GCA) shack. Then there was a cloud of dust, he was sliding over the terrain on his aircraft's belly, with his right wing trying to dig into the mud, which would probably have flipped him over. But he did not flip, he spun around a few times, and his aircraft came to a rest. Pitt managed to get out of the aircraft and get away.

Pitt said among the first things he saw was a fireman in his silver suit staring at him through a window. He told the fireman, "Don't worry about this thing burning. There's nothing in it to burn." And then he remarked the next two people he saw were officers in Class-B uniforms, one the flight surgeon, the other the chaplain!

Pitt's aircraft was destroyed. Weissgarber flew on to Udorn. When he landed, he saw how much fuel was leaking from the battle damage, and was startled his aircraft did not catch on fire. But it was no longer flyable and never flew again.

Pitt said Weissgarber calls him every October 5th to remind him of the day and congratulate him for his surviving the mission over Hanoi. Weissberger learned about my effort here and called me. We had a great chat and he told me how to contact Pitt. I did that and had another great chat. Men of steel as far as I am concerned.

So that's October 5, 1965. I would like to comment here that as I researched this day I came across a lot of research about US air forces against the NVN in the early days of the war. I was amazed to see how many aircraft we lost. I guess I fell victim to the idea that we had such a powerful Air Force and Naval Air Force that we would make minced meat out of the enemy. In many respects our pilots did do that, but they incurred far more losses than I would have imagined. There has been a lot of study on this issue which is worth reading.

It turns out the NVN had one of the best air defense systems in the world, Soviet and Chinese supplied, and quite often our air forces' hands were tied by the suits in Washington from destroying them. The next loss involved Major James Randall. In an article done by Dave Phillips for *The Gazette* of Colorado Springs published on July 21, 2013, Randall remarked that when he arrived in August 1965, F-105s were being shot down at a rate of two per week. Phillips also quoted Ed Rasimus, a F-105 pilot, writing in his 2003 book, *When Thunder Rolled*:

"The losses were appalling. For every five pilots that started the tour, three would not complete it."

Major James E. Randall, USAF, "Triumph 01, F-105D, 562 TFS, Takhli RTAFB, October 5, 1965, Rescued





On October 13, 1965, at 1410, Compress control at Udorn reported Triumph 01, a F-105D down 90 miles north of LS-36, just northwest of Dien Bien Phu, close to the Laotian border. Crown 27, a H-130P airborne SAR controller said he and a USAF Sandy A-1E were going to the border, I assume Laos-NVN border, and hold. At 1420 a Jolly Green CH-3C was airborne and the Sandy A-1E was aloft at 1435. Sandy made radio contact with the pilot at 1455. The Jolly Green estimated arriving at 1525. Jolly made the pickup while taking ground fire. I believe this was a F-105D 61-0180, 562nd TFS, Takhli RTAFB, down near Tuan Gio, NVN not far from Dien Bien Phu. The pilot was Major James E. Randall.

Randall was flight lead for a four ship formation tasked to destroy a bridge in far northwestern NVN not far from Dien Bien Phu. Another 15 F-105s were attacking dams, roads and bridges all over Vietnam. Looking ahead, Randall spotted his bridge. The four Thuds prepared for their attack run, Randall pushed into a steep dive, the others followed and at about 8,000 ft. Randall released his bombs, and then pulled up. Then boom, he felt a jolt. He had been hit by AAA in the rear end. His warning lights were humming. He was losing his hydraulics, and his control system died on him. He was still flying at 600 mph when he ejected. Randall said to himself, "I'm not going home tonight."

His leg was bleeding, he dumped his parachute and harness and helmet, and limped into the undergrowth. Enemy forces approached as Randall hid as quietly as he could. They moved toward the wreckage, allowing Randall to crawl uphill to a small clearing. He pulled out his radio and called for help. He waited two hours, but he then heard the sounds of freedom associated with the incoming SAR rescue force. A Jolly Green hovered over him, took hostile fire, but managed to get Randall aboard, and out they flew.



As an interesting aside, in 1990 a Frenchman named Dominique Eluere was shopping in an Army surplus store in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), spotted an American pilot's helmet, and bought it. The

helmet still had the oxygen mask attached and had the marking of “562 Tac Fighter Sq” on one side, and “Jim” on the other. In the middle was a small embossed label saying, “Maj. Randall.” Eluere decided he simply had to return it to Randall and after some exhausting and time consuming research, finally found him after 22 years. Eluere met a Vietnam vet named Gary “Paco” Gregg,” told him about the helmet, asked Gregg for help, and Gregg took on the job. Gregg had fought at Khe Sanh. Gregg finally got the helmet back to Randall --- quite a surprise after all those years.

Randall talks of the ordeal in a very nice interview that can be seen at *The Gazette*’s web site, along with Phillips’ article.

Capt. Thomas W. Sima, USAF, “Olds Lead,” F-105D, 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, October 15, 2013, POW

Capt. Robert H. Schuler, USAF, “Olds 02,” F-105D, 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, October 15, 2013, KIA



Archie marked down that at 0730 an aircraft was reported down and at 0750 a CH-3C Jolly Green estimated arriving on the scene at 0940. The coordinates noted by Archie match where a F-105D 62-4333, 36th TFS, Takhli RTAFB, went down after being hit by 37 mm AAA. Capt. Thomas W. Sima, USAF was the pilot. He ejected near Moc Chau. Sima too was on temporary duty from Yokota AB, Japan.

Sima and Capt. Robert H. Schuler, USAF launched together in their F-105s from Takhli to attack targets near Ha TIeng, NVN. A total of four F-105Ds left on this mission. Sima ejected safely and was captured and held as a POW in Hanoi. Schuler apparently stayed by his flight lead and orbited above him. I have seen a report that says he was hit by a MiG-17. No trace of Schuler and no word about him from POWs when they were released. Schuler was also on temporary duty from Yokota.

Sima did not like the lay of the land when they reached the target area: too many nearby villages, the clouds were very low, and he worried they could not make a "clean run." So he broke off the mission and told the others they would go to another target. Shortly thereafter he was hit in the rear of the aircraft, and he lost control of it. He recalled, "My controls went in one particular direction and locked there. I lost complete control of the aircraft. After a few seconds of trying to gain control and realizing I couldn't, I radioed to the rest of the flight that I was hit, had no controls and had to get out immediately. Just before I ejected I heard somebody acknowledge."

He was flying below 1,000 ft. at the time. He commented after squeezing the ejection trigger, "It was an awful jolt ... Then I lost my breath because I hit the airstream. I just felt the air blast and being compressed in the seat, like a rocket shooting off." Then the mechanism designed to get him out of his seat did just that: "You're sitting down and all of a sudden it's like someone kicked you in the behind." Then his parachute opened. He saw his aircraft explode. Then he looked down at the ground:

"I was cursing a lot because people on the ground were shooting at me. They kept firing. All I had was a little snub-nose .38 and I was not about to declare war on the country with that." He rushed away and hid in some bushes, but was found. He commented, "They kind of made a little circle around me and poked me with a bayonet," he said.

"I looked up and there they were." He then said to himself, "I'm dead."

Let me return to Capt. Schuler, later promoted to major posthumous. His remains were found in the late 1990s-early 2000s (I have seen 1995 but am not sure of that) near the crash aircraft site, but it took several years to identify them to Schuler.

Just a moment on how they identified him.

Between 1999 and 2001 the military found many remains and personal effects of US military forces in excavations looking for such things. The technicians had tried for years to identify them. Technicians somehow decided to contact the Schuler family, probably as part of an overall effort to get some identification leads. Schuler's parents lived in a home in Ashland, NY, not far from Elmira. They did not talk much about their son to neighbors. In 1978 his parents died and the house sat vacant. A neighbor tried to keep vandals away and was in the house several times. He spotted medals and photos. He decided not to touch them. One or two years later he went back inside, saw the medals were gone, and so he grabbed up the photos. This neighbor eventually bought the property for his daughter. But the neighbor contacted another neighbor who was a Vietnam veteran and told him about the photos. That neighbor in turn named the Elmira Chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America after Major Schuler.

Then the military finally found and contacted Schuler's brother, Fred. The military asked if he had anything that could help them identify the remains they had, and he remembered he had his father's shaving kit, which included a hair brush. The hair from Schuler's father was enough to make a DNA

match. As one of the people involved said, "It's really incomprehensible."

Well, for my purposes this ends my travels through Archie's notes.

General Mark Welsh, when he commanded USAF Europe, spoke to the Air Force Academy cadets on November 3, 2011. It is a magnificent speech which I commend to you. It takes almost an hour, but it is an hour well spent. He is now the Chief of Staff, USAF, Uno-Uno. I was looking for a way to close out this very long report gleaned from Archie Taylor's notes of 1964-1965, so I went back to listen to General Welsh's talk. I'm going to close by stealing some of his talk early on and adapting it to what I wish to say here.

There is a place at the Air Force Academy called the Honor Court. Welsh urged the cadets to go there at a time when there is no one else around, perhaps at night.



He talked about standing next to a model aircraft of an old B-17 bomber at the Court, and told them to put their hands on the marble and close their eyes. He said:

"Strange things happen. You'll hear the bogey calls. Then you'll hear the bandit calls. You'll hear the waste gunners testing their guns. You'll sense the tension as they anticipate the attack. You'll sense the fear. And you'll feel the pride."

He said a few moments later:

"Every once in a while remind yourself of who you are."
