

Supporting Document# 16

48

<u>SAVE NO</u>	<u>SURVIVOR'S NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>SERIAL NO</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>
29-36	6 ARVN UNK, 2 ARMY UNK	UNK		12 Mar 67	1-3-41
37	M.F. Guy	Cpl-M		13 Mar 67	1-3-42
38	Peter Kruger	Capt-M		15 Mar 67	Sq Scrapbook
39	Jack C. Spillars	Maj-AF		26 Mar 67	1-3-54 M.N.
40	Lyle W. Townsend	Maj-M		1 May 67	1-3-62
41	D.S. Brachins	Capt-M		1 May 67	1-3-62
42	James H. Holland	Cpl-M		1 May 67	1-3-62
43	Thomas E. Hughes	Cpl-M		1 May 67	1-3-62
44	Edward F. Townley	Maj-M		4 May 67	1-3-64
45	L.E. Alexander	Maj-A		10 May 67	1-3-70
46	H.E. Burke	Capt-M		10 May 67	1-3-70
47	J.L. Murphy	1/Lt-M		10 May 67	1-3-70
48	M.W. Leftridge	Cpl-M		10 May 67	1-3-70
49	E.J. Ferraira	Pfc-M		10 May 67	1-3-70
50	Robert Powell	Lt-N		10 May 67	Sq Scrapbook
51	O.E. Hoy	Capt-M		16 May 67	1-3-73
52	Mike Carson	1/Lt		16 May 67	1-3-73
53-56	UNK-ARVN	UNK		21 May 67	1-3-76
57	Charles C. Rhymes	Maj-AF		25 May 67	1-3-78
58	Ronnie E. Randolph	1/Lt-AF		25 May 67	1-3-78
59	Clarence Kough	Maj-AF		5 Jun 67	1-3-83
60	Charles A. Colton	Maj-AF		9 Jun 67	1-3-85

5 April 1967

Dear Captain Davis:

I do not really know how to start this letter because I cannot think of the words that would adequately express my sincere appreciation for what you and your crew did for me on Easter Sunday. Anything I could say would only degrade the deep meaning of my gratitude for your gallant performance in saving my life. Also, please convey my life long thanks to Captain Hillory, Airman Jeffers, and Airman Bettevy for their part in this life saving operation.

I was at Da Nang for four days and then evacuated to Clark for one day. I have a slight compression fracture of a vertebra and the doctors at Clark were going to send me stateside for a six month recovery. However, I convinced them that I must be sent back to Korat because there is still much work to be done up North. I think that from pride, as much as anything, I could not quit a loser.

Every fighter "jock" in my Squadron has asked that I forward their appreciation for your outstanding work and bravery. All the pilots in SEA agree that you dedicated men who fly the Jolly Green's, of necessity, have "balls made of brass." To me, there is no better phrase to express the courage you men must possess to continuously face the hazards of rescuing downed airmen.

If there is ever anything I can do for you or the members of your crew, please let me know. I will forever be indebted to you for there is no way possible that I could ever repay you for saving my life.

Your friend and fellow officer for life,

Jack C. Spillers
Major Jack C. Spillers
469 TFS Box 165
APO San Francisco 96288

To the Rescue

How Teams of Copters, Fighters Save Pilots Downed Over Vietnam

Many Fliers Snatched From
Enemy Territory; Job Is
Crucial as Air War Grows

Major Spillers Makes It Back

By FREDERICK TAYLOR

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

DANANG, South Vietnam—The communiqué was brief. It said an Air Force F-106 Thunderchief had been downed by enemy ground fire inside the Demilitarized Zone on the southern edge of North Vietnam; the pilot had been rescued.

But behind that terse announcement of another successful recovery of a U.S. pilot—in this case, 35-year-old Major Jack Spillers of Atlanta—from hostile territory lay a vast effort that has turned events of high human drama into routine performances.

Snatching a downed pilot from under the enemy's nose in Vietnam demands thorough, detailed preparation, with rescue helicopters and support planes kept ready to take off from nearby land bases or ships at sea. It takes quick, accurate communication and coordination to get rescuers to the proper spot. Most particularly, it requires resourceful, courageous action by the helicopter crews that must dart into danger and out. In all, hundreds of skilled men and dozens of specially equipped or selected aircraft take part in these life-saving missions.

More than 800 combat saves have been made by air rescue crews since the Vietnam air war began in 1964. Of these, at least 125 have been made in North Vietnam; the Defense Department doesn't give out exact figures for fear of aiding the enemy.

Rising Plane Losses

As the air war over North Vietnam continues to grow in intensity, the rescue effort becomes increasingly vital. At least 589 U.S. planes and six helicopters—the latter on air rescue missions—have been shot down over the north, and these losses have been climbing steadily; in May, a record 36 U.S. planes and one helicopter were knocked out of the air.

But rescue of pilots downed over North Vietnam is only part of the total air rescue job in the war zone, though understandably the most publicized. More than 184 planes and 340 helicopters have been shot down in South Vietnam, and some 1,200 other planes and helicopters have been lost in accidental crashes that frequently bring the Air Force, Navy or Marine Corps air rescuers into action. On top of that, the Army, with 1,500 helicopters in South Vietnam, regularly extracts from danger troops and civilians who might be captured or killed by the enemy. Thus, all the services are participating in air rescue efforts.

The Navy, for its part, keeps at least one destroyer constantly steaming about 20 miles off the port of Haiphong and another off the Demilitarized Zone, primarily for rescue missions. Each ship is equipped with a helicopter to pick up pilots who crash in the Gulf of Tonkin. There are also four to six helicopters aboard the two or three aircraft carriers regularly stationed in the gulf; these choppers, used mainly on "lifeguard" duty to pick up bomber pilots spilled into the sea in takeoff or landing accidents, have raced as far as 30 miles inland over North Vietnam to recover a downed pilot. And most of the time, the anti-submarine carrier Hornet is also in the gulf, equipped with 20 airplanes and 20 to 25 helicopters; many of these copters can be pressed into rescue work if the need arises.

Interservice Competition

"It's often a race to see whether a Navy chopper, an Air Force chopper, a patrol boat or a destroyer will pick up a man first," says a Navy rescue officer. "The guys who are shot down don't object to that kind of competition at all."

Many of the air rescues, like the pickup of Major Spillers, are accomplished by units of an Air Force outfit called the 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, which has its headquarters at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut air base. Its primary job is search and rescue support for the Seventh Air Force, and it's responsible for an area of more than 16,000 square miles, from Saigon to the Chinese border and from the Gulf of Tonkin to the western frontier of Burma. To handle the task, it has three squadrons of aircraft based at Danang, at Tan Son Nhut and at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base in Udorn, Thailand.

For major rescue missions, the group banks heavily on HH-3 helicopters that carry four-man crews, are built by Sikorsky division of United Aircraft Corp. and are known as Jolly Green Giants; the tag was hung on the craft originally by a rescued pilot who was impressed by its size and color. (The Green Giant Co., the Le Sueur, Minn., pea-packer whose symbol led to the chopper's nickname, happily provides the rescue squadrons with four-foot-high posters of its own Jolly Green Giant).

Also in the group are HU-16 Albatross amphibian planes built by Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corp. An Albatross, with twin engines and a top speed of about 175 miles an hour, hovers over the Gulf of Tonkin during bomber strikes on North Vietnam to pick up airmen downed in the sea. Last year more than 20 pickups were made by these planes; one was destroyed by enemy fire when it landed on the water, and two crewmen were killed.

Rescuing Major Spillers

It's the plucking of pilots like Major Jack Spillers from enemy territory that entails the greatest risks and may yield the greatest satisfactions. Here's that story in detail:

The Major took off one morning from Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base at Korat, Thailand, in an Air Force F-105 fighter-bomber for a strike against North Vietnamese anti-aircraft sites just north of the Demilitarized Zone. While bombing the targets, Major Spillers' plane was badly damaged by ground fire, and he ejected from his aircraft, landing in the portion of the DMZ controlled by the North Vietnamese.

Even before Major Spillers had touched the ground, the air rescue effort had begun. Another

To the Rescue: How Copters, Fighters Save Pilots Downed in War

Continued From First Page

er pilot on the same mission radioed that the major had bailed out, and that his parachute had opened. That message was picked up by a C-130 Hercules, a four-engine Lockheed Aircraft Corp. cargo plane that had been converted into a flying command post and was then circling at 30,000 feet over the Gulf of Tonkin, awaiting just such a message. A C-130, which can stay on station for more than 12 hours, is always positioned over the gulf; equipped with powerful radios, it is able to pick up broadcasts over a wide area.

The C-130 in turn radioed the rescue coordination center located high on Monkey Mountain, overlooking the Marine base here at Danang, in northern South Vietnam. This center, one of three in Southeast Asia, promptly flashed the word to an Air Force helicopter designated Jolly Green One Five that was sitting on a soccer field at Quang Tri, 90 miles north of Danang. The helicopter crew had been awaiting a rescue call for eight hours—since 6:45 a.m., when the craft had taken off from its home base at Danang and flown to Quang Tri to be nearer the action expected that day.

Normally two Jolly Greens would have made the trip to Quang Tri, since two choppers always take part in rescue missions; if the first chopper gets shot down, the second will be able to continue the mission. But that morning only one of the Jolly Greens at Danang was in flying condition; one other was being repaired after having been shot full of holes, and another was grounded by mechanical trouble.

So a Marine helicopter, a CH-46 Sea Knight, a twin turbine aircraft built by Vertol division of Boeing Co. and capable of lifting 17 to 25 troops, was assigned by the rescue center to go along.

The Mission Starts

Jolly Green One Five got off the ground at 2:48 p.m., six minutes after getting the alert. Its pilot was Capt. Robert Davis of St. Petersburg, Fla. The co-pilot was Capt. Robert N. Hillary of Clearwater, Fla. Airman First Class Rodney J. Bettevy of Marksville, La., was flight mechanic, and Airman Second Class John C. Jeffers of Blue Springs, Mo., was the "para-rescuman"—the crew member who drops into the jungle to pull out wounded pilots if they are unable to get aboard the helicopters unaided. Their craft headed for the supposed location of the downed pilot, which had been given by a fighter-bomber in the area as 300 degrees (roughly west-northwest) and 25 miles from Dong Ha in northern South Vietnam.

Meanwhile, two Air Force A-1 Skyraiders, propeller-driven fighters of post-World War II vintage that haven't been built since 1967, had been summoned from Udorn by the rescue center, and two Navy versions of the same plane were called in from the carrier Hancock in the Gulf of Tonkin. They're favorite rescue support planes because their slow speed (a top of about 225 miles an hour) permits them to circle around a downed pilot and spray the area accurately with machine-gun fire to keep the enemy pinned down.

Jolly Green One Five arrived over the original position given it at 3:05 p.m., while the Navy planes were estimating they would arrive at 3:35 p.m. and the Air Force A-1s at 3:50 p.m. When the chopper arrived, it found that a fighter-bomber pilot was talking to Major Spillers by radio and that he could receive voice transmissions over his pocket radio but could transmit only by beeper, an automatic signal that goes on when the radio's antenna is extended. The chopper also found that Major Spillers wasn't at the position given.

Crowded Airwaves

The chopper then homed on the beeper signal, meanwhile receiving estimates of Major Spillers' position that were relayed by the C-130 from other airmen. These included various fighter pilots and a forward air controller, flying a little single-engine 90-mile-an-hour Cessna Aircraft Co. O-1, who had been the spotter for another bombing mission. At one point, the airwaves became so crowded that the C-130, which was controlling the aircraft in the area, ordered radio silence.

Co-pilot Hillary recalls that "we had a long search because of all the bad positions we got." Finally, he remembers, "we worked south and got a swing on the beeper at 288 degrees, 14 miles from Dong Ha," or about 15 miles from the position originally reported. At 3:40 p.m., Airman Bettevy first spotted Major Spillers' parachute and then, through binoculars, the major himself.

Jolly Green One Five then began circling near, but not over, Major Spillers, to avoid giving away his position to the enemy until the Air Force fighters arrived ten minutes later. They circled the area and reported no ground fire, so the chopper descended to a lower altitude to pick up the pilot, while the two Navy planes flew high in reserve.

The helicopter then dropped down a 240-foot cable bearing a 35-pound "forest penetrator." This is a steel device with a folding seat plus straps to bind a downed man on so he won't fall off when hoisted.

Small Arms Fire

When the penetrator hit the ground, Major Spillers began picking up his equipment to take with him. About that time, the chopper's pilot, Capt. Davis, spotted small arms fire coming from a small knoll to the left of the helicopter. As it happened, the helicopter in commission that day was the only one without machine guns mounted on it; normally the Jolly Greens carry two or three machine guns that each fire 600 rounds a minute of 7.62 millimeter ammunition. So Airman Jeffers began blasting away with his M-16 rifle, while Airman Bettevy anxiously waited for Major Spillers to get aboard the penetrator, and Capt. Hillary called for the Air Force planes to come down and strafe the hill.

Finally, after the helicopter had been hovering in one spot for about four minutes, Major Spillers strapped himself to the penetrator and was pulled up. By this time ground fire was so intense that Capt. Davis started flying away even before the Major was aboard. "It's a miracle we weren't hit," says Capt. Davis. Major Spillers was picked up at 4 p.m.; he had been on the ground for one hour and 25 minutes.

(One U.S. jet went down over the North, but the pilot was saved, AP reported.)

(The Thunderchief was hit by ground fire just above the demilitarized zone, the Air Force said. It was the 497th U.S. plane reported lost over the North. Hanoi radio claimed three U.S. planes were downed Sunday.)

Escorted by the fighter craft, Jolly Green

One Five then flew back to Danang. It landed at 5:05 p.m., two hours and 23 minutes after the alert had been received.

When Major Spillers was examined at Danang, doctors found he had received a slight compression fracture of a vertebra. After four days at Danang, he was sent to a military hospital at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. Originally scheduled to be sent back home, he talked the doctors at Clark into returning him to Korat because "there's a lot of work still to be done." He's back flying again now.

'Jolly Green' Rescues F-105 Pilot In DMZ

28 APR 67 SAR

DA NANG—In a dramatic rescue recently, an Air Force HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew braved intense enemy ground fire to pick up an injured F-105 Thunderchief pilot 3 miles inside the Demilitarized Zone.

After ejecting from his battle-damaged Thunderchief, Maj. Jack C. Spillers, 35, of Atlanta, Ga., made a successful parachute landing in a small clearing surrounded by dense vegetation.

He spent one hour and 25 minutes in the hostile territory before being hoisted aboard the rescue chopper.

Major Spillers suffered painful but not serious injuries to his back and ankle and is now in the Da Nang AB hospital for observation and treatment.

ment.

Capt. Robert W. Davis, St. Petersburg, Fla., pilot of the Jolly Green, said, "We hovered over him for about four minutes before he got in the hoist. Then we started drawing ground fire and had to get out of the area before we could get him completely aboard. It's a miracle we weren't hit."

The ground fire was returned by the crew's pararescuer, A2C John C. Jeffers, Blue Springs, Mo. He fired 20 rounds from his M-16 rifle at the enemy positions. This was Airman Jeffers' fourth pickup since arriving in Vietnam.

"I couldn't hear the ground fire," he said, "but I could see puffs of smoke so I emptied a full clip at them."

A1C Rodney J. Bettevy, Marksville, La., the Jolly Green's flight mechanic, described the actual pickup.

"The area was out in the open, so I didn't have any trouble lowering the hoist to him. When we started picking up the ground fire he was still about 10 or 15 feet outside of the helicopter, but we got him aboard without any trouble as we were leaving," he said.

Capt. Robert N. Hillary, Clearwater, Fla., was the rescue helicopter's copilot. All of the crew members are with the 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group and are stationed at Da Nang AB.

A. U. S. Marine Corps CH-46 Sea Knight crew flew as back-up for the Jolly Green, while Air Force A-1E and Navy A-1H Skyraiders flew cover.

The Air Force A-1Es, based at Udorn RTAB, were piloted by Capt. Thomas W. Burdin, Alton, Ill., and Maj. Willard A. Dillon, Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

The Navy Skyraiders from the Carrier USS Hancock, were flown by Lieutenant Commander Arnold H. Henderson, Lemoore, Calif., and Lieutenant Norman L. Winningham, Hanford, Calif.

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