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MSN # 2-3 4-511107
SUSPENDED

MISSION NARRATIVE - JOLLY GREEN'S 53 AND 55 - 5 MAY 1967

(S) (GP-4) At 1645, 5 May 1967, an F-105 was reported down at coordinates 20° 50' N, 105° 12' E. Jolly Green's 53 and 55 were launched from Lima Site 36 at 1700 hours and cleared to a safe area short of the North Vietnamese border. Sandy's 5 and 6 joined with Jolly Green's 53 and 55 enroute to the orbit point and Sandy's 1 and 2 proceeded enroute to the recovery area. Thunderstorms were developing in all quadrants and dense haze, and smoke drastically reduced inflight visibility. The weather was such that Sandy's 5 and 6 had considerable difficulty maintaining visual contact with Jolly Green's 53 and 55. Sandy's 1 and 2 were unable to effectively join with their MIG cover until well into the hostile area. Shortly after arriving the orbit point Jolly Green 53 advised Crown 2 and Compress the time enroute to the area would be 1 hour. At 1745 compress cleared Jolly Green's 53 and 55 to proceed to the recovery scene. Compress was again advised that Jolly Green's 53 and 55 would not arrive until 15 minutes after sunset. After a few moments of confusion and indecision Compress finally advised Jolly Green's 53 and 55 to resume their orbit. Shortly thereafter reports were received from Sandy's 1 and 2, their MIG cover, and another jet flight intent in for an electronic search, that a beeper was heard but no voice contact was established. These aircraft also reported intense flak throughout the area plus indications of SAM firings and MIG activity and advised that Jolly Green could not survive in that environment. Compress then advised all SAR forces to withdraw with the Sandy's recovering to Channel 86 and Jolly Green's 53 and 55 to Lima Site 98. The orbit was maintained, however, until Sandy's 1 and 2 were safely out of North Vietnam. After arriving at Lima Site 98 the portable runway lights were visible but the surrounding hills and ridge lines were not. Because an approach to 98 would have been extremely hazardous Jolly Green's 53 and 55 proceeded direct to Channel 86.

(S) (GP-4) On this mission coordination between ground controlling agencies was inadequate. After receiving specific jet flights for MIG CAP, Crown 2 found that the aircraft assigned had been cleared to RTB to their respective bases. Compress reconfirmed the flights assigned yet these flights again advised they were directed to RTB. This led to unnecessary confusion in establishing adequate MIG CAP and could have resulted in the SAR force being unduly exposed to the MIGS reported to be in the area at the time. In addition close scrutiny should be given to the advisability of dispatching SAR forces into an area heavily defended by SAM and radar controlled anti-aircraft sites. Denied the benefits of speed and maneuverability and lacking adequate electronic warning devices, the SAR forces are easy prey to the sophisticated defenses that ring the major target areas in North Vietnam. Although our prime purpose in being is the recovery of downed aircrews, the slim possibilities of completing such a recovery are greatly outweighed by the possibility of losing additional SAR aircraft and personnel.

JOLLY GREEN 53 (LOW BIRD)

JOLLY GREEN 55 (HIGH BIRD)

RCC, Major Kenneth E. Kittleson
RCCP, Captain Evan G. Thompson
FE, TSgt Howard E. Massengale
RS, A2C Roger A. Klenovich

RCC, Captain James A. Hartwig
RCCP, Captain Douglas L. May
FE, A1C John W. Whisenhunt
RS, A1C Robert D. Bowers

Kenneth E. Kittleson
KENNETH E. KITTLESON, Major
Rescue Crew Commander

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