

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

MISSION NARRATIVE JOLLY GREEN 37,09 and 53 - 2 - 3 JULY 67

(S)(GP-4) Jolly Green 37 and 53 on alert at Ch 89. Compress notified at 0927Z 2 July 67 that Pintail 2 was down 0600/77 Ch 89, good chute and beeper. At 0940Z Crown 2 scrambled JG 37 and 53. JG 37 and 53 airborne at 0943Z. Sandy 5, 6, 7, and 8 scrambled from Ch 86 at 1000Z. JG 37 established orbit at 060/60 Ch 89 to wait for Sandys'. Observed AW fire and moved orbit to 050/60 Ch 89. Rendvous was made with Sandy 5 and 6 at 1045Z, JG 53 reported fluctuating main transmission oil pressure, and elected to RTB. After discussing the situation, JG 37 directed JG 53 to jettison his tips, reduce power to minimum as a precaution and notify JG 37 immediately if any further complications arose. JG 53 safely landed Ch 89. Meanwhile JG 37 and Sandy 5 and 6 moved closer to target area and re-established orbit, awaiting the results of Sandy 7 and 8 in locating survivors.

(S)(GP-4) Sandy 7 and 8 were unable to contact Pintail 2, but were directed to immediate area by Pintail flight, who had been in contact with him 15 minutes earlier. Sandy 7 and 8 suppressed what ground fire they encountered, then Sandy 7 reported seeing what looked like panels from a parachute and requested JG 37 to check it over.

(S)(GP-4) JG 37 arrived over target area 1130Z. By this time daylight was rapidly fading and the bottom of the valleys were in shadows. Sandy 7 attempted to point out the parachute panels to JG 37 but to no avail. At 1132Z JG 37 established voice and beeper contact with the survivor. Electronic search was initiated by JG 37 homing on beeper.

(S)(GP-4) The area was on a long low ridge running NW-SE, with flat valleys on either side, roads and railroads in the valleys and roads and footpaths along the ridge, as well as what looked like unoccupied gun emplacements in little clearings along the ridgetop.

(S)(GP-4) JG 37 followed the ridgeline NW, as indicated by the UHF/DF from a clearing ahead 5 or 6 AW's opened up. JG 37 broke left over the top of the ridge and headed SW. Received AW fire/tracers from the valley to the west. The PJ shot back 2 full magazines of M-16 tracer at this position on full automatic, and that position was not observed to fire again. JG 37 attempted to use terrain masking to avoid fire while continuing the electronic search. Suspected a trap after several encounters with AW/Tracer fire and asked Crown 2 to supply us with personal identifier question. ✓ Pintail 2 answered the question correctly.

(S)(GP-4) We determined that the survivor was down in a hole or steep ravine along the north east side of the ridge by interpretation of UHF/DF bearing information and signal characteristics. Each time JG 37 attempted to approach the survivor the ground fire got worse, until the last time when JG 37 received an intense barrage from directly below. From numerous positions along the valley floor on the eastern side of the ridge.

DECLASSIFIED AND DOWNGRADED TO CONFIDENTIAL

70

IAW AFR 205-2

(Date)

67S-0119

DECLASSIFIED

GROUP 4

DOWNGRADE AT 3 YEAR INTERVAL
DECLASSIFY AFTER 12 YEARS

67-AD-3365

Classified by
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS.

DECLASSIFIED AND DOWNGRADED TO CONFIDENTIAL

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

(S)(GP-4) By now it was so dark that the top of the ridgeline was discernable only when silouetted against the sky. The hostiles were waiting longer and longer to open fire, but because of the terrain masking and the dark color of JG 37 their fire was primarily directed at the sound of the rotors. Whenever tracers came close to JG 37 the PJ and FE would return the fire with M-16's as long as they could keep the origin of the fire in sight. Due to the evasive maneuvers being made they were usually limited to expending one magazine at a time. The Sandys' were unable to assist in supressing this ground fire because of darkness, being unable to see each other, JG 37 or the terrain.

(S)(GP-4) At 1223 after about 40 minutes, JG 37 elected to RTB, notified the Sandys' and climbed out of the area. Pintail 2 was contacted, advised to climb up the ridge as high as possible, and told that we would be back the next day. Pintail 2 reported that as we progressed further and further up the ridge, he was finally able to hear JG 37 and the ground fire.

(S)(GP-4) JG 37 landed Ch 89 at 1318Z, and was out of commission due to battle damage to a main rotor blade.

(S)(GP-4) JG 09 was positioned at Ch 89 early the next morning to replace JG 37. JG 53 had been repaired during the night.

(S)(GP-4) At 2230Z 2 July (0530L 3 July) JG 09 and 53 launched from Ch 89. Reached orbit with Sandy's 3 and 4 at 2320Z with bingo time of 0240Z. Sandy 1 was in voice contact with Pintail 2, and was "FACING" the RESCAP aircraft. Sandy 1 had received ground fire as soon as he arrived on scene. By 0050Z RESCAP and Sandy 1, 2, and 3 had sterilized the area enough for Sandy 1 to call in JG 09 and 53. JG 09 and 53 arrived over survivor 0055Z, JG 53 remained high while JG 09 went down to about 2000' over the terrain and had immediate voice contact with Pintail 2. Sandy 1 made a low pass and verbally indicated his position over the survivor. Pintail 2 confirmed this also. JG 09 commenced the approach at 0056Z. Using the FE's precise directions, JG 09 established hover over the survivor's red smoke at 0057Z.

(S)(GP-4) The survivor was located deep in a steep closed ravine, so it was necessary to hover below the crest of the hills. The only open area for rapid departure was directly NE, toward the valley. Smoke from the Willie Pete Bombs, the Sandys' used to create a smoke screen, was partially obscuring the hilltops and ravine walls. Elevation 500' Temp 32° No Wind

(S)(GP-4) The survivor was on the forest penetrator at 0058Z and JG 09 started getting ground fire from above and behind at this time. The PJ reported seeing troops in dark uniforms with helmets about 50 yards away coming over the crest of the hill through the smoke. He fired at them. As soon as the FE announced that the survivor was clear of the trees JG 09 broke immediately down the ravine, turned left around the end of the ridge and climbed out behind the ridge in the smoke screen. The survivor was gotten on board at 0100Z by the FE and PJ.

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

Downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL

Classified by
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO-
YEAR INTERVALS. 7 FEB 1977
DECLASSIFIED ON

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

(S)(GP-4) The survivor Capt Dale M. Pichard, FV3145334, was in fine shape, he even pulled out his .38 to help in shooting back as soon as he was aboard, since he heard the shooting as he was getting on the forest penetrator.

(S)(GP-4) During climbout of JG 09, the Sandys' flew racetrack patterns on either side to suppress ground fire. As soon as JG 09 was in a safe area Sandy 1 declared emergency fuel and proceeded directly to Ch 89. JG 09 and 53 flew along the track of Sandy 1 to render assistance. Sandy 1 landed safely Ch 89, 0135Z JG 09 and 53 landed Ch 89 0150Z. JG 09 out of commission, battle damaged main rotor blade.

(S)(GP-4) Pickup made at 1807N 10544E, North Vietnam, weather and communications no problem.

(U) The Sandys', particularly Sandy 1 did an outstanding job facing the RESCAP aircraft to sterilize the area, in fact even getting some secondary explosions. From my viewpoint the cooperation and mutual support between the Sandys', Crown and the RESCORT aircraft made this successful mission a textbook operation.

(U) I recommend that Capt Bradley (RCCP), A1C Cotter (FE), A2C Pighini (PJ), of JG 09 and the Sandy pilots' particularly Major Mehr (Sandy 1) be recognized for their outstanding teamwork and exceptional professional flying skills in the face of hostile fire without which the mission would most probably have ended in failure.

JG 37/09 Low Bird

RCC Capt Etzel
RCCP Capt Bradley
FE A1C Cotter
PJ A2C Pighini

JG 53 High Bird

RCC Capt May
RCCP Capt Hall
FE A1C Whisenhunt
PJ A2C McComb

Gregory A. M. Etzel
GREGORY A. M. ETZEL, Capt, USAF
RCC

Downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL
1 JAN 20 1970
(1970)

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

Classified by
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS. 7 FEB 1977
DECLASSIFIED ON

DECLASSIFIED

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
37th AEROSPACE RESCUE AND RECOVERY SQUADRON (MAC)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96337

4 July 1967



Ops/6104

Mission Narrative Report (1-3-97 2Jul67) (U)

3rd ARRGp (RCRC) AFO 96307

1. (U) This report is submitted to provide your office information required by 3rd ARRGp Supplement 1 to ARRS 55-1, 27 April 1967.
2. (C) At 0705Z on 2 July 1967, Jolly Green 26 (Low) and Jolly Green 25 (High) were scrambled from Quang Tri, by Queen Control, in response to a report an aircraft has been sighted going into the water at 090°/141M/Ch 109. Both aircraft were airborne at 0710Z and on the scene at 0715Z.
3. (U) Weather in the area was clear. The water was relatively calm.
4. (C) Contact was made with Crown 5 who could give us no further information on the downed aircraft. There were several Army helicopters in the area but no contact could be established with these aircraft. Jolly Green 26 and Jolly Green 25 set up search patterns but were unable to locate any survivors. At 0720Z Lo Cap 31 transmitted on guard that his aircraft was on fire and he was bailing out. He gave his position as 100°/201M/Ch 109.
5. (C) Jolly Green 26 immediately proceeded to the area where Lo Cap 31 bailed out and Jolly Green 25 remained in the area to search for the first aircraft. Jolly Green 26 located the survivor at 0725Z and at 0730Z completed the rescue without any difficulty. Jolly Green 26 then proceeded to Ch 37 and Jolly Green 25 returned to strip alert at Quang Tri as directed by Queen Control. No trace of the aircraft that went into the water at 090°/141M/Ch 109 or its crew was found.
6. (U) Jolly Green 26 refueled at Ch 37 and remained on alert at Ch 37.
7. (C) Crew coordination was excellent throughout the mission and Sgt Epps, the Flight Engineer, did a fine job of directing me over the survivor.
8. (C) The rescued survivor was Major Bruce A. Martin USMC
VH 232 DaNang AB, RVN
9. (U) Crew: Jolly Green 26 Jolly Green 25
Maj Herbert D. Kalen RCC Capt Robert E. Prince
Capt John I. Patterson CP Capt Jerrold D. Ward
SSgt Albert D. Epps FE ALC Frances E. Grenier
SSgt John H. Stemple RS A2C Richard D. Garlie

HERBERT D. KALEN, MAJOR, USAF
Rescue Crew Commander

DECLASSIFIED

Classified by
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS. FEB 1977
DECLASSIFIED ON



EtzelAFCrossSurvivor.jpg

AF Museum Photo



PICARD 1A.JPG

"As we got him on the hoist," Capt. Etzel explained, "we started getting more ground fire, so we started our pull off with him on the hoist below us."

"We swung around a ridge and into the smoke screen before we finally lifted him up in the chopper," Capt. Etzel said.

"After looking at the area last night," Capt. Harold W. Bradley, Jr., of Tampa, Fla., said, "I didn't think we had a chance, but the Sandies did a great job."

This was Bradley's 5th pickup.

"He didn't mind riding the hoist, I't just good to be here," Bradley continued.

Along with Major Mehr, the other A-1E "Sandies" who were credited with tranquilizing the area so the rescue could be made were: Capt. Henry Cochran, 28, of Atlanta, Ga; Capt. Paul F. Kinninar, 31, of Wichita, Kans., and Capt. Donald F. Miles.

"One of the funny things about the mission" said pararescue man A2C John Pighini, 22, of Levittown, Pa., was, "As we were bringing him into the chopper he pulled out his .38 pistol and said he'd help us out."

"He was in good condition," Pighini continued.

"Yesterday was worse than today," A1C Robert J. Cotter, 20, of Palmyra, N. J., the flight engineer said.

more

"I was ready to cash in last night. I didn't figure I'd be here today."

DECLASSIFIED

"You just can't say too much for them," the rescued pilot continued. Major Richard Mehr, the lead A-1H was afraid he could not find the Thud pilot this morning.

"Right about daylight I started moving around and heard the Sandies coming over head," Capt. Pichard said.

"I was laying under some brush. The bad guys were about 20 feet away."

"They were on top of my chute right away," he said when Maj. Mehr commented he never saw his parachute.

Capt. Pichard went about 50 yards from his chute. "That was as far as I could get because they were all up along the hill."

"There were trails leading all around where the pickup point was," Mehr said.

"My chute was on a trail," Pichard continued.

Capt. Etzel explained: "We had to ride across the Atlantic to Paris for more than 30 straight hours, but the nervous strain of this SAR was about equal to that flight."

"We were apprehensive about the mission because of last night," he continued. "However, the Sandies and jets really did a great job this morning."

"They cleared out the area and layed a perfect smoke screen for us to go into."

Dispite all the fire power the North Vietnamese were not giving up. When Jolly Green 09 dropped its tip tanks, ground fire started again.

~~the jolly green took the hit, but according to better, "The~~

"Sandies" did great in suppressing the fire around us," he continued.

Airman Pighini praised Capt. Etzel: "He's a great pilot. He flew us at tree top level, then kept us out of most of the

ground fire by going between the forest and into the "Sandy"

Smoke Screens."

DECLASSIFIED

PICTURE - OVER

WELCOME BACK



Welcome Back
AF Museum Photo

Directorate of Information
56th Air Commando Wing
Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand (PACAF)

RELEASE NO. 958-67

F-105 Pilot
Rescued

NAKHON PHANOM ROYAL THAI AFB, THAILAND—Neither spending the night in communist infested North Vietnam nor going for a ride on a the hoist of "Jolly Green Giant" effected Capt. Dale M. Pichard, of Tallahassee Fla, a F-105 fighter pilot who was downed by enemy ground fire late Sunday afternoon 25 miles South-Southwest of Vinh.

"You can't say enough for the rescue effort," Capt. Pichard said just after he touched down.

Because of heavy ground fire at the A-1E "Sandies" of the 56th Air Commando Wing and HH-3E "Jolly Green Giants" of the 38th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron, and darkness, the Sunday night SAR effort was called off.

At first light this morning the "Sandies" went in to drop their ordnance all around the pilot, then despite continuing ground fire the rescue was made.

Piloting the Jelly Green was Capt. Gregory Etzel of Albany, Ga. It was his first pickup since coming to SEA after flying the first non-stop helicopter flight across the Atlantic to the Paris Air Show in May.

"Sandy 1, I certainly appreciate your help," the pilot said when the A-1E lead pilot went to see how Capt. P. was when he got off the chopper.

~~More~~

F8E Pilot Ejects,

Stars and Stripes 22 July 1967

And Just in Time

DA NANG, Vietnam (ISO)—“Get out quick!”

This was the call Maj. Bruce A. Martin, 33, of Marine All-Weather Fighter Sq.-232 received when his F8E Crusader was hit by enemy ground fire just south of the demilitarized zone and he was forced to eject.

Martin's flight had begun badly that afternoon when the wingman for the mission developed mechanical difficulties and was unable to take off.

Continuing alone, he reached the strike zone and contacted the forward air controller. The controller told him of the possibility of ground fire over the target area; and to follow two A4E Skyhawk jets of Marine Aircraft Group-12 in on the target.

As he pulled out of the second pass, the fire warning light went on. Martin radioed the controller and told him that he was heading out to sea.

Martin was being escorted by two Skyhawks when his instruments began registering hydraulic and power failures. One of the Skyhawk pilots radioed that a fire was burning at the jet's tail.

“I was just getting ready to punch out (eject) when the other Skyhawk piloted yelled ‘get out quick’ over the radio,” Martin said.

“I didn't see my aircraft after that. I no sooner hit the water and climbed into my life raft, when there right over me was an Air Force HH3 ‘Jolly Green Giant’ helicopter lowering his rescue harness.”

He received only minor scratches.

Martin called one of the Skyhawk pilots later that evening and was told the jet blew up a few seconds after he had ejected.

RESCUED

An Air Force F-105 pilot was rescued from the sea Sunday by an HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron from Da Nang AB.

The pickup was made approximately two miles at sea, directly off the coast of Dong Hoi.

Members of the rescue helicopter were: Lt. Col. Victor Goudey, pilot; Capt. John I. Patterson, co-pilot; SSgt. Billy Willingham, flight engineer and A2C David A. Carl, pararescueman.

HUGE RESCUE EFFORT

Thirty-two aircraft were involved in one of the biggest rescue efforts of the Vietnam war recently after an Air Force F-105 Thunderchief pilot spent a night on the ground in North Vietnam.

Captain Dale M. Pichard, 27, of Llano, Tex., was picked up at 9 p.m. from a heavily defended area, 28 miles north of Mu Gia Pass, by an HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew from the 37th ARRS.

"I was ready to cash it all in last night," Pichard said this morning. "I didn't figure I would be here today."

Enemy ground fire brought Pichard's F-105 down July 3. Darkness and heavy ground fire forced the SAR effort to be called off Sunday night after A-1E Sandys had dropped ordnance in the area.

A-1E pilot Captain Do-

nald F. Miles, assigned to the 602nd FS of Cleburne, Tex., said "It was getting dark and we couldn't keep everyone in sight. As soon as we flashed on our lights they would shoot the heck out of us."

Major Richard L. Mehr, also from the 602nd of Jefferson town, Ky., lead Sandy pilot and the on-scene rescue director of the SAR effort that night and morning told the downed pilot to go to higher ground.

Pichard narrowly escaped capture during his 15 hours on the ground. Enemy troops were on top of his chute soon after he landed. "I went about 50 yards away from the chute and it was as far as I could get, because they were all up along a hill."

There were trails all around the heavily wooded pickup area. He spent the

night lying under a tree and enemy troops got as close as 20 feet to his position.

Twenty-three Thunderchief pilots were in to suppress enemy ground fire around the area that morning before the pickup was made. Sandys also dropped a smoke screen around the area before a Jolly Green, piloted by Captain Gregory Etzel, of Albany, Ga., went into the area.

"The Sandys did a great job in laying down a perfect smoke screen," Etzel said.

"As we got him on the hoist, we started getting more ground fire, so we started our pull-out with him on the hoist below us. We swung around a ridge and into the smoke screen before we finally lifted Pichard into the chopper."

Co-pilot of the rescue Jolly Green Giant was Captain Harold W. Bradley, Jr., of Tampa, Fla. Flight engineer was Air-

man First Class Robert J. Cotter, 20, of Palmyra N.Y., and Airman Second Class John Pighini, 22, of Levittown, Pa., was the paramedic.

Other Sandy pilots from the 602nd FS participating in the strike were Captains Paul F. Kimminau, of Wichita, Kan., and Jack Cochran, of Atlanta, Ga.

It was the first pickup for Etzel since coming to Southeast Asia. He is the pilot who flew the first nonstop helicopter flight in a Jolly Green across the Atlantic to the Paris Air Show in June.

"We had to ride across the Atlantic to Paris for more than 30 straight hours, but the nervous strain of this SAR was equal to that flight," Etzel said.

"You can't say enough for the entire rescue effort," Pichard, a member of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing said. "They were all wonderful."

Det 1, 37th ARRS, History, Jul - Sep 67.

~~SECRET~~

TSgt R. V. Burton,

TSgt Darrell G. Shierry,

TSgt John H. Stiegert,

TSgt Thomas G. Wyatt,

SSgt Harold Brock,

(SSgt Bobbie E. Heustess,

SSgt Eugene R. Morgan,

(SSgt Donald D. Ward,

A2C Johnnie C. Burden,

A2C Thomas S. Gittemeir,

A2C Richard W. Hussman,

On the 19th of September the engine, rotor blades, and transmission were removed and on the 25th of September a Marine CH-53A carried the airframe back to Udorn where it is presently being repaired by a RAM team.

10. ADDITIONAL DATA

(c) From 1 July to 30 September the personnel in this detachment were recommended for 1 Bronze Star, 1 Air Force Commendation Medal, 29 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 8 Silver Stars, and 2 Air Force Crosses. During that period they received 24 Air Medals, 23 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 3 Silver Stars.

<u>(D) MAINTENANCE TABLE</u>	<u>JULY</u>	<u>AUGUST</u>	<u>SEPTEMBER</u>
IN COMMISSION RATE	77.1	75.1	74.1
HOURS	13.3	16.2	17.0
FLYING TIME	364	368	270

11. SUMMARY OF MISSIONS

(S)(CP 4) On 3 July Capt Gregory Etzel, Capt Harold Bradley, 1st Lt Robert Cotter, and A2C John Pighini picked up Capt Dale Pichard, an Air Force F-105 pilot, in North Vietnam under fire.

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

398

Det 1, 37th ARRS, History, Jul-Sep 67.

CHRONOLOGY

- 3 Jul 67 - Capt Etzel, Capt Bradley, A1C Cotter and A2C Pighini made pickup number 182.
- 6 Jul 67 - Maj Lloyd, Lt Gonos, A1C Malone and A2C Davis made pickup number 183.
- 7 Jul 67 - Capt Svobada, Capt Orsini, SSgt Johnson, and A2C Allaire made pickups numbers 184, 185 and 186.
General Benjamin Davis visited Jolly Greens.
- 10 Jul 67 - Capt Firse, Capt Fechser, SSgt Watson and A2C Fraboni made pickup number 187.
- 18 Jul 67 - Maj York, Lt Privette, SSgt Zerbe and A2C McCombe made pickup number 188.
- 20 Jul 67 - Capt Thompson and Capt Walker set up a static display for the Air America Wives.
- 21 Jul 67 - Lt Col Britton, Capt Bradley, SSgt Watson, SSgt Keyes and A2C Davis made pickups 189 and 190.
- 27 Jul 67 - Capt Thompson and Lt Sichterman set up a static display at Nakhon Phanom for Thai Intelligence Officers.
- 28 Jul 67 - Capt Thompson and Lt Sichterman, SSgt Watson and TSgt Smith made pickup number 191.
- 3 Aug 67 - Capt Dowdy, Maj Russell, SSgt Androwsky and A2C Sliger made pickup number 192.
- 7 Aug 67 - Capt Orsini, Maj Moore, SSgt Quinn and A2C Sliger made pickups numbers 193 and 194.
- 18 Aug 67 - Col Lovelady, ComMander, 3d ARRGp and Maj Ewing of PACAF Jungle Survival School arrived at Udorn.
- 20 Aug 67 - Col Lovelady presented DFC's to Maj Moore, Lt James, A2C Pighini, A1C Malone(Basic & 1st OLC), Capt Orsini (1st OLC) and A1C Benno(1st OLC).
- 23 Aug 67 - Capt Greer, Lt Gonos, A1C Graham and MSgt Hawkins made pickups numbers 195 and 196.

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

Jolly Green Pilot Wings AF Cross

Air Force Capt. Gregory A.M. Etzel, a co-pilot of one of two HH-3E helicopters to make the first nonstop transatlantic crossing in aviation history, has been awarded the Air Force Cross, the nation's second highest military honor.

Capt. Etzel, a pilot of HH-3E Jolly Green Giants assigned to Det. 1, 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service in Southeast Asia, received the award for his heroism during a rescue mission over North Vietnam.

The rescue occurred on July 2, within two weeks of his arrival in SEA and almost a month to the day after he and nine other Air Force officers and enlisted men completed the historic nonstop transatlantic flight.

The ocean-hopping HH-3Es set world helicopter speed records from New York to Paris of 30 hours, 46 minutes and New York to London, 29 hours, 13 minutes. Etzel and Capt. Charles P. Dunn, a co-pilot on the other transatlantic helicopter, remained with the HH-3Es through their deployment to SEA.

Etzel received the Air Force Cross recently from General John P. McConnell, Air Force chief of staff.

On July 2, Etzel was standing alert duty, when the rescue call sounded. Within minutes two HH-3Es were airborne, heading for North Vietnam. As they approached the rescue scene, the helicopters

were joined by several A-1E "Sandy" aircraft.

The other HH-3E developed transmission trouble and the pilot elected to return to home base. Etzel and his crew continued their flight. The Sandies were making a search of the area, trying to pinpoint the survivor's position.

Within minutes the Sandies made radio contact with the downed F-105 Thunderchief pilot. Spotting what appeared to be parachute panels, the Sandies directed Etzel and his crew into the area. Light ground fire from enemy positions convinced the rescue crew they were close.

Etzel's ship was driven back repeatedly by automatic weapons fire. At one point, he barely had time to retrace his path as six automatic weapons opened up on the Jolly Green.

As the ground fire increased, Etzel's crew members — Sgt. John L. Pikhini, engineer and Sgt. Robert C. Cotter, pararescueman, opened up with return fire. Etzel recalled seeing full clips of tracers coming from his helicopter and "... then noticed many ground positions stopped shooting after return fire from the Jolly Green crew."

During that night the heavy ground fire increased and the possibility of a successful rescue decreased. Deciding to return to home base for the night, Etzel advised the F-105 pilot to hide as best he could until rescue

attempts could be resumed the following morning.

Inspection of the HH-3E back at the base revealed the helicopter had been riddled. Both Jolly Greens were repaired that night and were ready for early morning take-off.

When the Jolly Greens reached the rescue site the next morning, the Sandies had the downed pilot pinpointed. Etzel recalled "We stayed in orbit and watched a very interesting air show." He referred to 16 high performance aircraft that were trying to eliminate as much of the opposition as they could, before the actual rescue attempt was made.

After the "air show" had cleared most of the ground fire, Sandies came in and laid down a smoke screen providing cover for the Jolly Green and the downed pilot. Etzel went in and down through the smoke, spotting the survivor, who was wearing a big grin and waving.

The pilot had strapped himself in a forest penetrator and was ready to be lifted up into the helicopter, when Cotter spotted enemy troops coming at them through the smoke screen.

With the pilot dangling on the forest penetrator, Etzel maneuvered his HH-3E out of the danger zone and the pilot was pulled safely into the helicopter. Sandies provided close support, suppressing the remaining ground fire.



Capt. Gregory A.M. Etzel, receives the Air Force Cross from Gen. John P. McConnell, Air Force chief of staff, during recent ceremonies in Southeast Asia. The Air Force Cross is the nation's second highest military award.



FEBRUARY 1968

THE AIRMAN

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. AIR FORCE



Routine Strike Mission • Page 4

Rescue at Do Khe • Page 38

"No," I told him. "Those are muzzle flashes!" I kept thinking, "It would be a real disaster if that chopper went down."

RESCUE AT DO KHE

by Capt. ROBERT P. EVERETT

(Editor's Note: At about 4:15 pm July 2, 1967, Capt. Dale M. Pichard of the 44th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Korat Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand, was shot down about 20 miles northeast of Mu Gia Pass. The story of his overnight stay in North Vietnam and subsequent pickup by the Jolly Greens is a classic in the annals of air rescue.)

It was a single round . . . 57 millimeter, probably. It hit the diving F-105 with a soft, almost gentle thud. But it was lethal. Within a few seconds the cockpit filled with smoke and the controls ceased to respond. Dale Pichard knew he had to get out—now.

Now turned out to be a bad place to eject from a stricken airplane. Pichard was about 20 miles northeast of Mu Gia Pass, a scant mile and a half from the village of Do Khe, in a heavily defended area of North Vietnam. His chances of being "scarfed up" (picked up by the North Vietnamese) were excellent; his chances of being rescued were not so hot.

Pichard had a second or two of apprehension about the effects of punching out. He figured it might be rough, but he had no choice. He slowly squeezed the handles.

The sudden impact of 12 Gs startled him, but the expected pain did not materialize. The only discomfort was the windblast in his face. Pichard's chute was good and everything functioned normally. He floated slowly toward a small clearing in the dense foliage below, wishing only that he could get down faster.

Dale Pichard's route to his predicament was a roundabout one. He had taken off in a flight of four to hit a target near Vinh, not far above the demilitarized zone that divides Vietnam. In his flight was the late Lt. Karl Richter, working on his second hundred missions. The four planes had successfully hit their target and had moved on to an armed reconnaissance mission on their route home. Pichard was strafing a gun position when his plane was hit.

When I hit the ground, I could hear gunshots all around me. I landed in a clear spot almost on a trail and knew I had to get away from my chute. It took me a few seconds to scramble out of the chute harness, grab the beeper radio and start running for the woods. I didn't run far—50 yards maybe—when I realized that I had to hide, right then, or be captured. I lay down under some low bushes and almost stopped breathing.

My hiding spot was between two paths and people were shouting and running along both of them. They tramped through the woods, coming within 20 feet of me. I just lay there in the underbrush feeling kind of exhausted. But the adrenalin was flowing so fast that it seemed everything was happening in slow motion. My pistol was still in its holster. I had decided that with so many people around it would be stupid to try to shoot my way out.

The 105s in my flight circled and strafed for a while, and I knew they would be picking out landmarks to give my position to the rescue force. Then they ran low on fuel and headed home.

I lay perfectly still, hardly daring to breathe, for the better part of an hour.

The North Vietnamese kept searching and shouting to each other and occasionally firing their weapons . . . I don't know at what, but they somehow didn't find me.

Pichard's chute had hardly blossomed before his flight members radioed the circumstances and location of his downing to *Crown*, an HC-130P aircraft which coordinates air rescue efforts. *Crown* immediately notified the A-1E "Sandys" on alert at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base and the Jolly Greens at Nakhon Phanom. Within minutes, four A-1Es and two HH-3E helicopters are airborne and headed toward the downed pilot. Two of the Sandys, the "lead" (who will be the on-scene rescue commander) and his wingman fly on ahead to try to "clean up" the area so that the helicopters can get in safely. The other Sandys escort the two choppers.

Lead Sandy is Maj. Richard L. (Larry) Mehr. His A-1E wide open, he reaches the area shortly after the departure of the F-105 flight. He sights the parachute, but strangely, cannot make voice or beeper contact. At treetop level Mehr flies over the chute and draws heavy automatic weapons fire. He suspects Pichard has already been scarfed up and the North Vietnamese are setting a trap for the Jolly Greens.

Then finally the radio silence is broken and a muffled voice comes through. Mehr tells the pilot to change radios, thinking he must have a bad one. He doesn't know that Pichard has to turn on his radio, whisper into it, then quickly shut it off so the searchers—still within a few feet of him—will not hear the receiver hiss nor the answering call.

Meanwhile the choppers and their escorting Sandys are having a little problem. The second HH-3E, designated as *high bird*, has mechanical difficulties and is forced to return to Nakhon Phanom. In the lead or "low" helicopter, Capt. Gregory A. M. Etzel, flying his first rescue mission, knows it will be hairy without the high bird there to back him up, and to pick up his crew in case his chopper takes a hit and "goes in." But Etzel's no new hand at flying this bird. He was copilot on a record-breaking transatlantic helicopter



Several photos were taken by the pararescuer and the flight engineer during the actual mission to recover Pichard. Here Sgt. Pighini stands ready to jump if Pichard needs medical care.

flight shortly before coming to Southeast Asia. He knows Pichard's chances are slim enough as it is. Darkness is coming on fast. The rescue attempt must be made soon. He elects to go on alone rather than accompany the stricken bird back.

Now Larry Mehr in the lead Sandy tries to "clean up" the area for the Jollys. The four Sandys begin bombing and strafing.

Even after the softening up by the A-1Es, Mehr still isn't satisfied that the area is really safe, but it's after 7 p.m. and the valley is already deep in shadow. The hills are dusky. Mehr calls in the Jolly Green.

Now it's Etzel's show. He makes voice contact with Pichard, but only briefly. He moves down the valley to a point about a half mile from the pilot when suddenly he draws fire from two areas set in a sort of horseshoe position. Inside the helicopter pararescuer Sgt. John L. Pighini grabs one of several M-16s on board and fires back, aiming at the flashes. Like Mehr, Etzel too suspects a trap so he climbs to a relatively safe position and begins to fire personal questions at Pichard. Pichard answers correctly.

For the next 40 minutes, Etzel makes a whole series of attempts to reach the downed pilot. In seven or

eight tries he succeeds in getting closer each time, but heavy fire drives him back. The helicopter takes a hit in the main rotor blade. Darkness descends and Etzel can no longer see the ridgeline of the mountains. He knows he must call it off.

Mehr, Etzel and Pichard each claim to be the one who first said "let's call it off." The thought perhaps hit simultaneously. For Mehr and Etzel, the darkness and heavy fire together present too great a risk. For Pichard, it was the thought of a real disaster in the form of the rescue chopper being shot down that caused him to get on his radio and tell the rescuers he'd try to hide until morning. Mehr promised him they'd be back at first light.

I realized it would be a long night—probably the longest I had ever spent. I knew that Jolly Green had to leave, but when it moved off it was the most lonesome sight I had ever seen. I remembered that at one point the Jolly Green pilot asked me if I was flashing him with a light. I had told him no, those were muzzle flashes. I kept thinking there would be a real disaster if that chopper went down. That's why I finally told them to go back—that I thought I could hide overnight.

I stayed in the same spot and per-

fectly still until late—about midnight, I guess—when a breeze came up. It rustled the branches and made noise so I felt safe enough to stretch out and get the cramps out of my legs. They kept looking for me until around midnight. Then they left.

I wasn't exactly praying while I was lying there, but I kept repeating to myself, "Let me see my child, let me see my child." My wife had given birth to a little girl two weeks before and I hadn't even seen her. That made me all the more determined to get out of there alive.

Col. Howard C. (Scrappy) Johnson, Director of Operations for the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing, Pichard's parent organization, was sure they could get the pilot out if enough ordnance could be put into the area to suppress the ground fire. This coincided pretty well with the estimate of the Sandys, who had already requested a rescap strike force of 10 F-105s for next morning.

When Maj. Dalton L. Leftwich reported for an 0200 briefing on the morning of July 3—a briefing that otherwise would have been for a target near Hanoi—he learned that the entire strike force, 20 F-105s, were being diverted in an effort to get Pichard out of his predicament. Leftwich was assigned as number four man in *Warhawk Flight*, the first flight in. *Warhawk Flight* was led by Lt. Karl Richter, always ready to go and particularly anxious

Pichard is not injured, so Pighini prepares to fire at enemy approaching pilot's position.





Minutes after the pickup, a smiling Captain Pichard relaxes inside the Jolly Green helicopter. Flight engineer Sgt. Robert Cotter operated hoist to make the actual pickup.

to get Pichard—one of his flight members from the previous day—back to safety.

Right after daybreak I heard bombs exploding a few miles away. Then two 105s came over my position to let me know they were back. Later, those two guys told me they came over to make sure I was awake! Some joke! I hadn't closed my eyes all night!

The Sandys came in about a half hour later with more 105s . . . a bunch of them. The lead Sandy came in on the radio and told me to move to higher ground, but from where I was I couldn't find any higher ground. I did find another clearing though, big enough for the chopper, so I hid in the woods next to it. I radioed the Sandy my new position.

The lead Sandy stuck his neck 'way out by flying back and forth at treetop level looking for me. He was drawing heavy fire all the time. They were shooting at him with automatic weapons, rifles and even shotguns. Finally, he came right over me

and I yelled into my radio, "Now!"

Larry Mehr never saw Pichard. But he did pick up a landmark from which he could plan and mark targets for the jet force. Still under intense small arms fire, Mehr began to fire smoke rockets to show the 105s where to put their bombs and rockets. Dalton Leftwich, in one of the rescap 105s will later term the Sandys' efforts in marking the unfriendlies as "extraordinary. Every pass was under direct control of the Sandys and they did a magnificent job under heavy fire."

Then the bombing started. It went on for quite a while, I don't know exactly how long, but it seemed like a year at the time. I was in a position where I could use my radio so I tried to let the Sandys know where they were drawing fire from. The Sandys kept marking targets and the 105s kept dropping bombs. It was quite a firepower demonstration!

It was indeed quite a firepower demonstration. With pinpoint target marking by the Sandys, the heavily loaded F-105s dropped more than

120 bombs and fired over 20,000 rounds of 20mm cannon into the area. The fighters recycled on a KC-135 *Stratotanker* orbiting not far away, then came back to continue the strikes. While Pichard watched, the jets hit enemy defenses and gun positions, some of them a mere 100 yards from his hiding place.

The Jolly Green helicopters, two of them this time, had arrived in the area with the strike force and spent an hour and a half orbiting in a relatively safe position while the 105s "cleaned up" the area.

When the jets had finished their job, Larry Mehr flew over the area at low level to see if he would still draw ground fire. He picked up some, and asked Pichard if it seemed to be heavy. Pichard answered, "Not nearly as much as you were getting last night."

All the time the bombing and strafing was going on, I kept looking and listening for the Jollys. But I didn't see or hear them. So finally I asked the lead Sandy, "Where are the Jollys?" The Sandy asked me to hang on for about 15 minutes more. He kept flying back and forth trying to pinpoint my position. I guess he had it down pretty good because after a while he told me to look to the west and I would see the Jolly Green. And sure enough I did. He was in a turn away from me, but I watched him do a 180 and head toward me. About that time Sandy

Major Mehr nursed his A-1E to closest base. Airman points to bullet hole in fuel tank.



was almost directly over me and he told the Jolly to come in on the same flight path he had just taken. That's because the ground fire wasn't too heavy in that area. Then the Sandys dropped a bunch of smoke bombs to set up a smoke screen for the Jolly.

The Jolly descended below the treeline and I couldn't see him. I kept telling him "Keep coming, keep coming" because I could hear him approaching me. He got almost directly over me and I popped a flare. For a minute I thought he hadn't seen me because he went right past me a little ways. Then he came back and went into a hover at maybe 75 feet up and 20 feet to the side of me. I saw him start to lower the penetrator. By this time there was lots of ground fire again. I guess they were waiting for the Jolly. One of the crewmen was firing out the door of the Jolly with an M-16. I didn't have any trouble at all getting on the penetrator. No sir, no trouble a-tall!

Greg Etzel and copilot Capt. Harold W. Bradley had waited somewhat impatiently in safe orbit while the jets did their work. Then Etzel watched as the lead Sandy showed him the flight path to follow and laid down the smoke screen. Etzel went in fairly high, but he spotted Pichard without difficulty. "First thing I saw was his hands, then his face and moustache." Because he was high, he had to go into a diving turn to get down. Getting low in the hover position makes the big chopper especially vulnerable to ground fire, so he wanted to get as low as possible before hovering.

Back in the rear of the chopper, pararescueman Pighini and flight engineer Sgt. Robert Cotter were busy. Because Pichard was not injured and able to get on the penetrator alone, there was no need to send Pighini down the hoist. So he had grabbed one of the M-16s and was firing out the door at the enemy. As the hoist was going down he saw soldiers com-

ing over a hill toward Pichard and opened up on them, stopping their advance.

Cotter meanwhile had taken command of the rescue. From the time the chopper goes into the hover until the survivor is in the door, he's boss. He guided the penetrator down through the trees and watched as Pichard opened the petals and strapped himself in. Then he told Etzel he was ready for climb out.

The Jolly Green started climbing out of the dangerous area long before Pichard was inside the chopper. The helicopter was at 1,000 feet or more before Pichard got to the door, where Pighini was still busy with his M-16. For some reason, Cotter and Pighini couldn't get him through the door on the first try and they had to lower the hoist slightly, then raise it again to get him in position. Then they pulled the pilot through the chopper door.

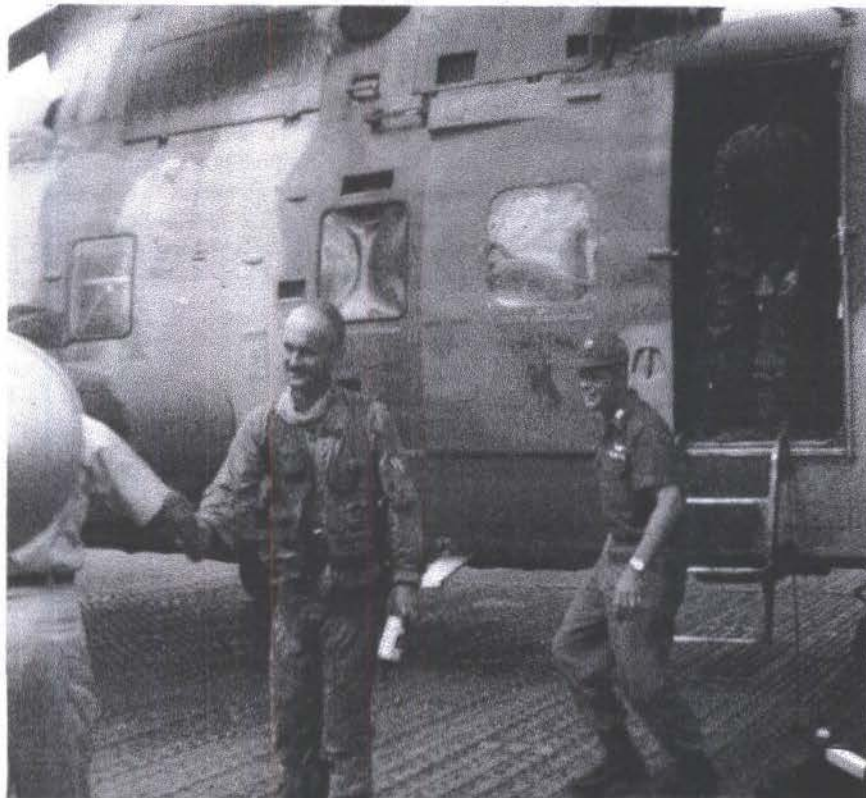
I can't really remember what I did when I got into the chopper. I think I hugged the pararescueman. Then I remember just stretching out on the floor savoring the pleasure of it all.

Pighini remembers that when they got Pichard into the helicopter, he had his pistol drawn. Pighini asked him what he was going to do with that and Pichard replied, "I'm going to help you shoot the gooks!"

Pichard doesn't know for sure whether or not he was shot at going up the hoist, but he does remember gunfire as he was going up. In any case, the Jolly Green took a hit during the rescue, again in the main rotor. In the case of both hits—the one the previous evening and the one that morning—only inches prevented it from bringing the chopper down.

Larry Mehr meanwhile had taken hits too. He was running very low on fuel and figured one hit must have gotten a fuel cell. He and his wingman headed for the closest recovery base. Mehr's estimate was

Safely on the ground, Pichard is greeted with a friendly handshake and a can of refreshment. Rescue was Capt. Greg Etzel's first in SEA. His efforts earned him the Air Force Cross.





Thumbs-up for a successful rescue. Pighini, Bradley, Etzel and Cotter flew the mission. Captain Pichard, center, adds enthusiastic approval.

correct. He had taken a fuel-cell hit. He landed with less than 10 gallons of fuel remaining. (In an A-1E, that's no more than two or three minutes—maybe one circuit of the landing field.)

Dale Pichard's ordeal was over. The Jolly Green helicopter carried him to Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Base where an Air Force doctor gave him a thorough medical check. "They tried to find something wrong with me," says Pichard, "but all they could find was a few scratches."

When rescap pilot Maj. Dalton Leftwich set his F-105 down at Korat after the rescue of Pichard, his guns were dry. And he discovered that every one of the 20 *Thunderchiefs* had also used every last round of 20mm. Later, as he approached the last of the hundred missions he would fly over North Vietnam, Leftwich would remember the rescue of Dale Pichard as "the most satisfy-

ing in terms of seeing directly the results of the team effort that is a part of the daily activity here in Southeast Asia."

For Greg Etzel it was the first of many such rescues. He would again be over the hills of North Vietnam within a few days.

Within a week Larry Mehr would be directing another rescue attempt. He would be in a tight canyon and faced with the choice of jettisoning ordnance or "going in" on the face of a mountain. Again his superb airmanship would get him out safely.

For their major roles in the rescue of Dale Pichard, Larry Mehr and Greg Etzel would be awarded the Air Force Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor among awards military men can win. The other rescuers would also win major awards.

Lt. Col. Eddie E. Skelton, commander of Mehr's 602d Fighter Squadron (Commando), summed it

up when he said, "The rescue of Captain Pichard was a classic. Everybody involved performed magnificently. But even more important to remember is the fact that our country isn't stingy when it comes to expending resources to get one of our men back from the jaws of death or imprisonment. In this case it was the whole strike force that was required. It was successful and that's what really counts with us."

Most rescue attempts are. In fact, the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, for whom the Jolly Greens of Detachment 1, 37th ARR Squadron fly, has brought back enough fliers to staff five full wings with aircrew members.

Dale Pichard may not have known it, but his chances were pretty good from the moment he hit the ground safely. A lot of men in big, lumbering helicopters and sturdy A-1Es and fast, devastating jets made it so!

AIR FORCE

May 1995, Vol. 78, No. 5

PUBLISHED BY THE AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION

MAGAZINE

Valor

By John L. Frisbee, Contributing Editor

On-Scene Commander

Near Mu Gia Pass, Maj. Larry Mehr directed a rescue that old hands called "a classic."

There were few safe or simple missions in the air war over Southeast Asia. Many who were there will tell you that at the top of the difficulty scale was the job of on-scene commander in a large rescue operation. That job demanded extraordinary concentration and ability to divide one's attention among many demands: locating the downed airman, deliberately exposing oneself to ground fire to locate enemy guns, controlling all the participants in the rescue effort (the helicopters and their A-1 Sandy escorts as well as the supporting jet fighters), acting as a forward air controller, and making the crucial judgment when to call in the choppers.

One of the best at this task was Maj. Richard L. "Larry" Mehr, a one-time F-100 pilot who volunteered to fly A-1s with the 602d Fighter Squadron (Commando), based at Udorn RTAFB, Thailand. The rescue operation on July 2-3, 1967, for which he was on-scene commander, has been called a classic among the hundreds of such missions in southeast Asia.

It all began on July 2 at 4:45 p.m. when Capt. Dale Pichard, call sign "Pintail 2," bailed out of his damaged F-105 about 20 miles northeast of Mu Gia Pass, near the Laotian border. Pichard's flight reported his approximate location to Crown, the HC-130 that coordinated rescue operations. Crown, in turn, passed the word to the alert force of A-1 Sandys at Udorn and the HH-3E Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB.

At 5 p.m., four Sandys took off from Udorn, led by Major Mehr. He and his wingman, Capt. P. K. Kimminau, went directly to the reported location of the downed pilot while the other two Sandys escorted two Jolly Greens to a relatively safe area nearby. One of the helicopters turned back with mechanical problems, leaving the HH-3E flown by Capt. Gregory Etzel without a backup in the event he was shot down. Etzel was on his first rescue mission but elected to stay with the team.

The rescue scene was a ridge line between two heavily populated valleys. The initial search for Pichard by Mehr and Kimminau was not successful. Under sporadic ground fire, Mehr saw a chute on the ground but could not make radio contact with Pichard, who was hiding in heavy undergrowth.

As darkness approached, Mehr called in Etzel to look over the chute. The Jolly Green made voice contact with Pichard. Major Mehr and the other Sandys covered Etzel as they flew north toward

Pichard's apparent position. Ground fire now was the heaviest Mehr had seen in his 180 missions, 82 of them over the North. Darkness forced them to suspend the mission until first light the next day.

Back at Udorn, Larry Mehr laid out the next day's rescue mission and coordinated these plans with the Tactical Air Support Center. The Sandys and HH-3Es would be supported by 20 F-105s from Pichard's wing, the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing at Korat RTAFB. The plan was completed near midnight, with takeoff set for 3 a.m.

Arriving at the rescue area at first light, Mehr instructed the jet fighters to hold "high and dry" while he verified Pichard's position, assessed the intensity of ground fire, and silenced some of the most menacing guns. When he had Pichard pinpointed, he began marking targets with white phosphorus rockets. As soon as the F-105s had expended their general-purpose and cluster bombs on these targets, he directed them to refuel at an orbiting tanker and return to strafe the area. Satisfied that ground fire had been contained, Mehr told two of his Sandys to use their rockets on trails leading to Pichard's position and his wingman to escort Etzel's Jolly Green into position for a pickup. After a high-speed approach through continuing ground fire, the HH-3E, hovering at 75 feet, picked up the downed pilot.

Major Mehr's fuel was getting dangerously low, probably from a hit in one of his tanks. Nevertheless, he decided to stay with the mission as long as possible. He directed the Sandys to strafe on both sides of the HH-3E's exit route. When the rescue helicopter was over reasonably safe terrain, Mehr declared a fuel emergency, turned over control of the search-and-rescue force to Sandy 3, and headed for Nakhon Phanom. Thirty miles east of that base, his fuel gauge showed zero pounds remaining. With his engine running on fumes, he penetrated an undercast and landed safely, exactly four hours after taking off from Udorn. Both his centerline external and internal tanks had been punctured by flak.

For his extraordinary performance directing these two missions in a high-threat area and with no losses, Maj. Larry Mehr was awarded the Air Force Cross, as was Capt. Greg Etzel. Before completing his southeast Asia tour in August 1967, Major Mehr also was awarded the Silver Star. He retired as a colonel in 1972, and now lives in Oregon, Ill. Nothing in his Air Force career is more satisfying to him than having been a key player in several successful rescue operations.

Published May 1995. For presentation on this web site, some Valor articles have been amended for accuracy.

[Return to Valor](#)

[Return to AIR FORCE Magazine](#)

HUGE RESCUE EFFORT

DECLASSIFIED

Thirty-two aircraft were involved in one of the biggest rescue efforts of the Vietnam war recently after an Air Force F-105 Thunderchief pilot spent a night on the ground in North Vietnam.

Captain Dale M. Pichard, 27, of Llano, Tex., was picked up at 9 p.m. from a heavily defended area, 28 miles north of Mu Gia Pass, by an HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew from the 37th ARRS.

"I was ready to cash it all in last night," Pichard said this morning. "I didn't figure I would be here today."

Enemy ground fire brought Pichard's F-105 down July 3. Darkness and heavy ground fire forced the SAR effort to be called off Sunday night after A-1E Sandys had dropped ordnance in the area.

A-1E pilot Captain Do-

nald F. Miles, assigned to the 602nd FS of Cleburne, Tex., said "It was getting dark and we couldn't keep everyone in sight. As soon as we flashed on our lights they would shoot the heck out of us."

Major Richard L. Mehr, also from the 602nd of Jefferson town, Ky., lead Sandy pilot and the on-scene rescue director of the S R effort that night and morning told the downed pilot to go to higher ground.

Pichard narrowly escaped capture during his 15 hours on the ground. Enemy troops were on top of his chute soon after he landed. "I went about 50 yards away from the chute and it was as far as I could get, because they were all up along a hill."

There were trails all around the heavily wooded pickup area. He spent the

night lying under brush and enemy troops got as close as 20 feet to his position.

Twenty-three Thunderchief pilots were in to suppress enemy ground fire around the area that morning before the pickup was made. Sandys also dropped a smoke screen around the area before a Jolly Green, piloted by Captain Gregory Etzel, of Albany, Ga., went into the area.

"The Sandys did a great job in laying down a perfect smoke screen," Etzel said.

"As we got him on the hoist, we started getting more ground fire, so we started our pull-out with him on the hoist below us. We swung around a ridge and into the smoke screen before we finally lifted Pichard into the chopper."

Co-pilot of the rescue Jolly Green Giant was Captain Harold W. Bradley, Jr., of Tampa, Fla. Flight engineer was Air-

man First Class Robert J. Cotter, 20, of Palmyra N.Y., and Airman Second Class John Pighini, 22, of Levittown, Pa., was the parascue man.

Other Sandy pilots from the 602nd FS participating in the strike were Captains Paul F. Kimminau, of Wichita, Kan., and Jack Cochran, of Atlanta, Ga.

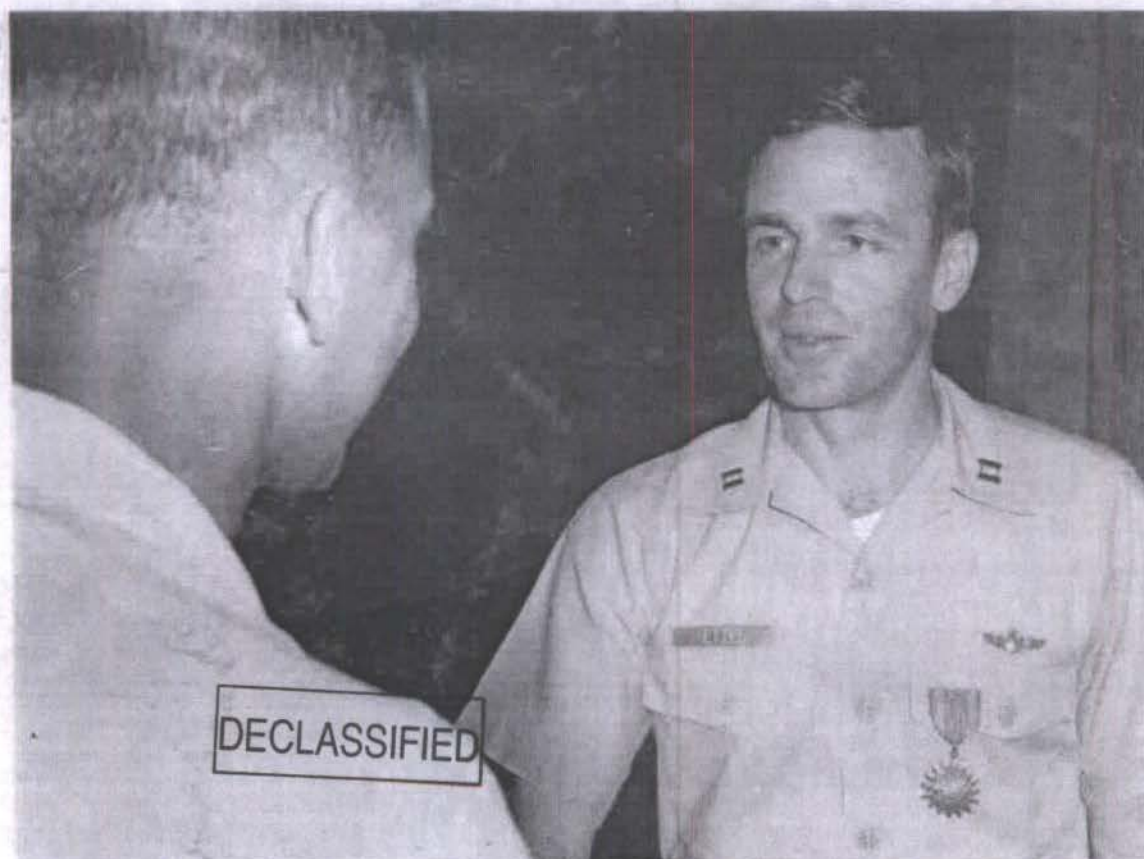
It was the first pickup for Etzel since coming to Southeast Asia. He is the pilot who flew the first nonstop helicopter flight in a Jolly Green across the Atlantic to the Paris Air Show in June.

"We had to ride across the Atlantic to Paris for more than 30 straight hours, but the nervous strain of this SAR was equal to that flight," Etzel said.

"You can't say enough for the entire rescue effort," Pichard, a member of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing said. "They were all wonderful."

PICHARD SAR, JP/L

2 JUL 67



4/c BRITTON

CAPT ETZEL

By John L. Frisbee, Contributing Editor

On-Scene Commander

Near Mu Gia Pass, Maj. Larry Mehr directed a rescue that old hands called "a classic."

THERE were few safe or simple missions in the air war over southeast Asia. Many who were there will tell you that at the top of the difficulty scale was the job of on-scene commander in a large rescue operation. That job demanded extraordinary concentration and ability to divide one's attention among many demands: locating the downed airman, deliberately exposing oneself to ground fire to locate enemy guns, controlling all the participants in the rescue effort (the helicopters and their A-1 Sandy escorts as well as the supporting jet fighters), acting as a forward air controller, and making the crucial judgment when to call in the choppers.

One of the best at this task was Maj. Richard L. "Larry" Mehr, a one-time F-100 pilot who volunteered to fly A-1s with the 602d Fighter Squadron (Commando), based at Udorn RTAFB, Thailand. The rescue operation on July 2-3, 1967, for which he was on-scene commander, has been called a classic among the hundreds of such missions in southeast Asia.

It all began on July 2 at 4:45 p.m. when Capt. Dale Pichard, call sign "Pintail 2," bailed out of his damaged F-105 about twenty miles northeast of Mu Gia Pass, near the Laotian border. Pichard's flight reported his approximate location to *Crown*, the HC-130 that coordinated rescue operations. *Crown*, in turn, passed the word to the alert force of A-1 Sandys at Udorn and the HH-3E Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB.

At 5:00 p.m., four Sandys took off from Udorn, led by Major Mehr. He and his wingman, Capt. P. K. Kimminau, went directly to the reported location of the downed pilot while the other two Sandys escorted two Jolly Greens to a relatively safe area nearby. One of the helicopters turned back with mechanical problems, leav-

ing the HH-3E flown by Capt. Gregory Etzel without a backup in the event he was shot down. Etzel was on his first rescue mission but elected to stay with the team.

The rescue scene was a ridge line between two heavily populated valleys. The initial search for Pichard by Mehr and Kimminau was not successful. Under sporadic ground fire, Mehr saw a chute on the ground but could not make radio contact with Pichard, who was hiding in heavy undergrowth.

As darkness approached, Mehr called in Etzel to look over the chute. The Jolly Green made voice contact with Pichard. Major Mehr and the other Sandys covered Etzel as they flew north toward Pichard's apparent position. Ground fire now was the heaviest Mehr had seen in his 180 missions, eighty-two of them over the North. Darkness forced them to suspend the mission until first light the next day.

Back at Udorn, Larry Mehr laid out the next day's rescue mission and coordinated these plans with the Tactical Air Support Center. The Sandys and HH-3Es would be supported by twenty F-105s from Pichard's wing, the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing at Korat RTAFB. The plan was completed near midnight, with takeoff set for 3:00 a.m.



A-1 Sandy pilot Maj. Larry Mehr

Arriving at the rescue area at first light, Mehr instructed the jet fighters to hold "high and dry" while he verified Pichard's position, assessed the intensity of ground fire, and silenced some of the most menacing guns. When he had Pichard pinpointed, he began marking targets with white phosphorus rockets. As soon as the F-105s had expended their general-purpose and cluster bombs on these targets, he directed them to refuel at an orbiting tanker and return to strafe the area. Satisfied that ground fire had been contained, Mehr told two of his Sandys to use their rockets on trails leading to Pichard's position and his wingman to escort Etzel's Jolly Green into position for a pickup. After a high-speed approach through continuing ground fire, the HH-3E, hovering at seventy-five feet, picked up the downed pilot.

Major Mehr's fuel was getting dangerously low, probably from a hit in one of his tanks. Nevertheless, he decided to stay with the mission as long as possible. He directed the Sandys to strafe on both sides of the HH-3E's exit route. When the rescue helicopter was over reasonably safe terrain, Mehr declared a fuel emergency, turned over control of the search-and-rescue force to Sandy 3, and headed for Nakhon Phanom. Thirty miles east of that base, his fuel gauge showed zero pounds remaining. With his engine running on fumes, he penetrated an undercast and landed safely, exactly four hours after taking off from Udorn. Both his centerline external and internal tanks had been punctured by flak.

For his extraordinary performance directing these two missions in a high-threat area and with no losses, Maj. Larry Mehr was awarded the Air Force Cross, as was Capt. Greg Etzel. Before completing his southeast Asia tour in August 1967, Major Mehr also was awarded the Silver Star. He retired as a colonel in 1972 and now lives in Oregon, Ill. Nothing in his Air Force career is more satisfying to him than having been a key player in several successful rescue operations. ■

Reco

Abs

The de-
cedure to
ognized e
ered flight
of Belgium
Britain, F
Switzerland
Fédération
ale (FAI),
aeronauti

Record

Speed aro
nonstop, n
115.65 mp

Great circl
without lar
24,986.72
(40,212.13)

Distance i
circuit with
24,986.72
(40,212.13)

Altitude: 1
(37,650.01)

Altitude in
launched
airplane: 1
(95,935.91)

Altitude ir
flight: 85,
(25,929.0)

Speed ov
course: 2,
(3,529.56)

Speed ov
circuit: 2,
(3,367.22)

Jolly Green Pilot Wings AF Cross

Air Force Capt. Gregory A.M. Etzel, a co-pilot of one of two HH-3E helicopters to make the first nonstop transatlantic crossing in aviation history, has been awarded the Air Force Cross, the nation's second highest military honor.

Capt. Etzel, a pilot of HH-3E Jolly Green Giants assigned to Det. 1, 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service in Southeast Asia, received the award for his heroism during a rescue mission over North Vietnam.

The rescue occurred on July 2, within two weeks of his arrival in SEA and almost a month to the day after he and nine other Air Force officers and enlisted men completed the historic nonstop transatlantic flight.

The ocean-hopping HH-3Es set world helicopter speed records from New York to Paris of 30 hours, 46 minutes and New York to London, 29 hours, 13 minutes. Etzel and Capt. Charles P. Dunn, a co-pilot on the other transatlantic helicopter, remained with the HH-3Es through their deployment to SEA.

Etzel received the Air Force Cross recently from General John P. McConnell, Air Force chief of staff.

On July 2, Etzel was standing alert duty, when the rescue call sounded. Within minutes two HH-3Es were airborne, heading for North Vietnam. As they approached the rescue scene, the helicopters

were joined by several A-1E "Sandy" aircraft.

The other HH-3E developed transmission trouble and the pilot elected to return to home base. Etzel and his crew continued their flight. The Sandies were making a search of the area, trying to pinpoint the survivor's position.

Within minutes the Sandies made radio contact with the downed F-105 Thunderchief pilot. Spotting what appeared to be parachute panels, the Sandies directed Etzel and his crew into the area. Light ground fire from enemy positions convinced the rescue crew they were close.

Etzel's ship was driven back repeatedly by automatic weapons fire. At one point, he barely had time to retrace his path as six automatic weapons opened up on the Jolly Green.

As the ground fire increased, Etzel's crew members — Sgt. John L. Pikhini, engineer and Sgt. Robert C. Cotter, pararescueman, opened up with return fire. Etzel recalled seeing full clips of tracers coming from his helicopter and "... then noticed many ground positions stopped shooting after return fire from the Jolly Green crew."

During that night the heavy ground fire increased and the possibility of a successful rescue decreased. Deciding to return to home base for the night, Etzel advised the F-105 pilot to hide as best he could until rescue

attempts could be resumed the following morning.

Inspection of the HH-3E back at the base revealed the helicopter had been riddled. Both Jolly Greens were repaired that night and were ready for early morning take-off.

When the Jolly Greens reached the rescue site the next morning, the Sandies had the downed pilot pinpointed. Etzel recalled "We stayed in orbit and watched a very interesting air show." He referred to 16 high performance aircraft that were trying to eliminate as much of the opposition as they could, before the actual rescue attempt was made.

After the "air show" had cleared most of the ground fire, Sandies came in and laid down a smoke screen providing cover for the Jolly Green and the downed pilot. Etzel went in and down through the smoke, spotting the survivor, who was wearing a big grin and waving.

The pilot had strapped himself in a forest penetrator and was ready to be lifted up into the helicopter, when Cotter spotted enemy troops coming at them through the smoke screen.

With the pilot dangling on the forest penetrator, Etzel maneuvered his HH-3E out of the danger zone and the pilot was pulled safely into the helicopter. Sandies provided close support, suppressing the remaining ground fire.



Capt. Gregory A.M. Etzel, receives the Air Force Cross from Gen. John P. McConnell, Air Force chief of staff, during recent ceremonies in Southeast Asia. The Air Force Cross is the nation's second highest military award.

Jolly Green Pilot Wings AF Cross

Air Force Capt. Gregory A.M. Etzel, a co-pilot of one of two HH-3E helicopters to make the first nonstop transatlantic crossing in aviation history, has been awarded the Air Force Cross, the nation's second highest military honor.

Capt. Etzel, a pilot of HH-3E Jolly Green Giants assigned to Det. 1, 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service in Southeast Asia, received the award for his heroism during a rescue mission over North Vietnam.

The rescue occurred on July 2, within two weeks of his arrival in SEA and almost a month to the day after he and nine other Air Force officers and enlisted men completed the historic nonstop transatlantic flight.

The ocean-hopping HH-3Es set world helicopter speed records from New York to Paris of 30 hours, 46 minutes and New York to London, 29 hours, 13 minutes. Etzel and Capt. Charles P. Dunn, a co-pilot on the other transatlantic helicopter, remained with the HH-3Es through their deployment to SEA.

Etzel received the Air Force Cross recently from General John P. McConnell, Air Force chief of staff.

On July 2, Etzel was standing alert duty, when the rescue call sounded. Within minutes two HH-3Es were airborne, heading for North Vietnam. As they approached the rescue scene, the helicopters

were joined by several A-1E "Sandy" aircraft.

The other HH-3E developed transmission trouble and the pilot elected to return to home base. Etzel and his crew continued their flight. The Sandies were making a search of the area, trying to pinpoint the survivor's position.

Within minutes the Sandies made radio contact with the downed F-105 Thunderchief pilot. Spotting what appeared to be parachute panels, the Sandies directed Etzel and his crew into the area. Light ground fire from enemy positions convinced the rescue crew they were close.

Etzel's ship was driven back repeatedly by automatic weapons fire. At one point, he barely had time to retrace his path as six automatic weapons opened up on the Jolly Green.

As the ground fire increased, Etzel's crew members — Sgt. John L. Pikhini, engineer and Sgt. Robert C. Cotter, pararescueman, opened up with return fire. Etzel recalled seeing full clips of tracers coming from his helicopter and "... then noticed many ground positions stopped shooting after return fire from the Jolly Green crew."

During that night the heavy ground fire increased and the possibility of a successful rescue decreased. Deciding to return to home base for the night, Etzel advised the F-105 pilot to hide as best he could until rescue

attempts could be resumed the following morning.

Inspection of the HH-3E back at the base revealed the helicopter had been riddled. Both Jolly Greens were repaired that night and were ready for early morning take-off.

When the Jolly Greens reached the rescue site the next morning, the Sandies had the downed pilot pinpointed. Etzel recalled "We stayed in orbit and watched a very interesting air show." He referred to 16 high performance aircraft that were trying to eliminate as much of the opposition as they could, before the actual rescue attempt was made.

After the "air show" had cleared most of the ground fire, Sandies came in and laid down a smoke screen providing cover for the Jolly Green and the downed pilot. Etzel went in and down through the smoke, spotting the survivor, who was wearing a big grin and waving.

The pilot had strapped himself in a forest penetrator and was ready to be lifted up into the helicopter, when Cotter spotted enemy troops coming at them through the smoke screen.

With the pilot dangling on the forest penetrator, Etzel maneuvered his HH-3E out of the danger zone and the pilot was pulled safely into the helicopter. Sandies provided close support, suppressing the remaining ground fire.



Capt. Gregory A.M. Etzel, receives the Air Force Cross from Gen. John P. McConnell, Air Force chief of staff, during recent ceremonies in Southeast Asia. The Air Force Cross is the nation's second highest military award.

DECLASSIFIED



SURVIVOR WHO 4 JPL

3 JUL 67

HUGE RESCUE EFFORT

Thirty-two aircraft were involved in one of the biggest rescue efforts of the Vietnam war recently after an Air Force F-105 Thunderchief pilot spent a night on the ground in North Vietnam.

Captain Dale M. Pichard, 27, of Llano, Tex., was picked up at 9 p.m. from a heavily defended area, 28 miles north of Mu Gia Pass, by an HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew from the 37th ARRS.

"I was ready to cash it all in last night," Pichard said this morning. "I didn't figure I would be here today."

Enemy ground fire brought Pichard's F-105 down July 3. Darkness and heavy ground fire forced the SAR effort to be called off Sunday night after A-1E Sandys had dropped ordnance in the area.

Nald F. Miles, assigned to the 602nd FS of Cleburne, Tex., said "It was getting dark and we couldn't keep everyone in sight. As soon as we flashed on our lights they would shoot the heck out of us."

Major Richard L. Mehr, also from the 602nd of Jefferson town, Ky., lead Sandy pilot and the on-scene rescue director of the SAR effort that night and morning told the downed pilot to go to higher ground.

Pichard narrowly escaped capture during his 15 hours on the ground. Enemy troops were on top of his chute soon after he landed. "I went about 50 yards away from the chute and it was as far as I could get, because they were all up along a hill."

There were trails all around the heavily wooded pickup area. He spent the

and enemy troops got as close as 20 feet to his position.

Twenty-three Thunderchief pilots were in to suppress enemy ground fire around the area that morning before the pickup was made. Sandys also dropped a smoke screen around the area before a Jolly Green, piloted by Captain Gregory Etzel, of Albany, Ga., went into the area.

"The Sandys did a great job in laying down a perfect smoke screen," Etzel said.

"As we got him on the hoist, we started getting more ground fire, so we started our pull-out with him on the hoist below us. We swung around a ridge and into the smoke screen before we finally lifted Pichard into the chopper."

Co-pilot of the rescue Jolly Green Giant was Captain Harold W. Bradley, Jr., of Tampa, Fla. Flight engineer was Air.

Cotter, 20, of Palmyra N.Y., and Airman Second Class John Pighini, 22, of Levittown, Pa., was the pararescueman.

Other Sandy pilots from the 602nd FS participating in the strike were Captains Paul F. Kimminau, of Wichita, Kan., and Jack Cochran, of Atlanta, Ga.

It was the first pickup for Etzel since coming to Southeast Asia. He is the pilot who flew the first nonstop helicopter flight in a Jolly Green across the Atlantic to the Paris Air Show in June.

"We had to ride across the Atlantic to Paris for more than 30 straight hours, but the nervous strain of this SAR was equal to that flight," Etzel said.

"You can't say enough for the entire rescue effort," Pichard, a member of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing said. "They were all wonderful."



PRICHARD, JPC

3 JUL 67

threat necessitated providing Capt Pichard a very harrowing hoist ride.

The A-1's had been providing cover fire while the chopper was in the hover. They radioed they were Winchester and got out of the way of the F-105's. The Thuds began staffing passes and dropping bombs. In the ensuing bombardment, the Jolly Green escaped and got the survivor inside the helicopter. During the mission the Jolly took battle damage to the main rotor system. A few more inches closer to the rotors hub and the Jolly probably would have crashed. Sandy Lead had also take hits. Major Mehr's noticed he was loosing fuel fast. He had been hit in his fuel cell. He made it back to base with less than a couple minutes fuel left. When the Thud pilots all landed back at Korat, the maintenance men reported that all 20 planes had returned without any bombs and without a single 20mm cannon round. They had expended 100% of all their ordnance. Warhawk 01 wrote in his mission report that *"this mission was my most satisfying flight in the war, in terms of seeing a direct result for the efforts we undertake every day we fly in the war."* The F-105 pilots were ecstatic and beating each other on the back. Their teammate was safe. They had help save him from certain capture

and probable death. For these brief moments, they felt the same rush that the Rescuemen felt every time that brought a pilot back from the jaws of death. Saving lives and getting this rush is what made air rescue the best mission to fly in this crazy war. The Rescuemen may not have understood the wars politics, but they did not need a translator to understand the smile on the face of a survivor and the look in his eyes. For action on 3 July 1967, Major Mehr and Capt Etzel were awarded the Air Force Cross. Captain Bradley, A1C Bradley and A2C Pighini were all awarded the Silver Star.²⁶



USAF Museum Photograph

Pintail 02 SAR. Safely on the ground at NKP, Capt Dale Pichard (front left) and Jolly pilot Capt Greg Etzel (front 2nd from left) being interviewed after

HUGE RESCUE EFFORT

DECLASSIFIED

Thirty-two aircraft were involved in one of the biggest rescue efforts of the Vietnam war recently after an Air Force F-105 Thunderchief pilot spent a night on the ground in North Vietnam.

Captain Dale M. Pichard, 27, of Llano, Tex., was picked up at 9 p.m. from a heavily defended area, 28 miles north of Mu Gia Pass, by an HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew from the 37th ARRS.

"I was ready to cash it all in last night," Pichard said this morning. "I didn't figure I would be here today."

Enemy ground fire brought Pichard's F-105 down July 3. Darkness and heavy ground fire forced the SAR effort to be called off Sunday night after A-1E Sandys had dropped ordnance in the area.

A-1E pilot Captain Do-

nald F. Miles, assigned to the 602nd FS of Cleburne, Tex., said "It was getting dark and we couldn't keep everyone in sight. As soon as we flashed on our lights they would shoot the heck out of us."

Major Richard L. Mehr, also from the 602nd of Jefferson town, Ky., lead Sandy pilot and the on-scene rescue director of the S R effort that night and morning told the downed pilot to go to higher ground.

Pichard narrowly escaped capture during his 15 hours on the ground. Enemy troops were on top of his chute soon after he landed. "I went about 50 yards away from the chute and it was as far as I could get, because they were all up along a hill."

There were trails all around the heavily wooded pickup area. He spent the

night lying under brush and enemy troops got as close as 20 feet to his position.

Twenty-three Thunderchief pilots were in to suppress enemy ground fire around the area that morning before the pickup was made. Sandys also dropped a smoke screen around the area before a Jolly Green, piloted by Captain Gregory Etzel, of Albany, Ga., went into the area.

"The Sandys did a great job in laying down a perfect smoke screen," Etzel said.

"As we got him on the hoist, we started getting more ground fire, so we started our pull-out with him on the hoist below us. We swung around a ridge and into the smoke screen before we finally lifted Pichard into the chopper."

Co-pilot of the rescue Jolly Green Giant was Captain Harold W. Bradley, Jr., of Tampa, Fla. Flight engineer was Air-

man First Class Robert J. Cotter, 20, of Palmyra N.Y., and Airman Second Class John Pighini, 22, of Levittown, Pa., was the pararescuer.

Other Sandy pilots from the 602nd FS participating in the strike were Captains Paul F. Kimminau, of Wichita, Kan., and Jack Cochran, of Atlanta, Ga.

It was the first pickup for Etzel since coming to Southeast Asia. He is the pilot who flew the first nonstop helicopter flight in a Jolly Green across the Atlantic to the Paris Air Show in June.

"We had to ride across the Atlantic to Paris for more than 30 straight hours, but the nervous strain of this SAR was equal to that flight," Etzel said.

"You can't say enough for the entire rescue effort," Pichard, a member of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing said. "They were all wonderful."

PICHARD SAR, JPK



L/C BRITTON

CAPT ETZEL

Directorate of Information
56th Air Commando Wing
Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand (PACAF)

3 JULY 67 SAR

3

RELEASE NO. 958-67

F-105 Pilot
Rescued

NAKHON PHANOM ROYAL THAI AFB, THAILAND—Neither spending the night in communist infested North Vietnam nor going for a ride on a the hoist of "Jolly Green Giant" effected Capt. Dale M. Pichard, of Tallahassee Fla, a F-105 fighter pilot who was downed by enemy ground fire late Sunday afternoon 25 miles South-Southwest of Vinh.

"You can't say enough for the rescue effort," Capt. Pichard said just after he touched down.

Because of heavy ground fire at the A-1E "Sandies" of the 56th Air Commando Wing and HH-3E "Jolly Green Giants" of the 38th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron, and darkness, the Sunday night SAR effort was called off.

At first light this morning the "Sandies" went in to drop their ordnance all around the pilot, then despite continuing ground fire the rescue was made.

Piloting the Jolly Green was Capt. Gregory Etzel of Albany, Ga. It was his first pickup since coming to SEA after flying the first non-stop helicopter flight across the Atlantic to the Paris Air Show in May.

"Gandy 1, I certainly appreciate your help," the pilot said when the A-1E lead pilot went to see how Capt. P. was when he got off the chopper.

-more

1967 (cont)

11 Jun 67 (cont) wounded and the helicopter was heavily damaged before departure. Captain Firse later received the Air Force Cross.

2 Jul-
3 Jul 67 Captain Gregory A.M. Etzel, an HH-3 pilot from the 37th ARR Squadron, rescued a downed F-105 pilot from a heavily defended area in North Vietnam. Captain Etzel located the survivor on 2 July, but darkness prevented a rescue attempt. On 3 July Captain Etzel returned with a rescue task force. After enemy ground fire had been silenced, Captain Etzel went down and hoisted the survivor aboard. Later Captain Etzel received the Air Force Cross.

18 Jul 67 Two HH-3s assigned to the 37th ARR Squadron searched for two downed Navy pilots located about 38 miles south of Hanoi. The SAR task force, consisting of both Navy and Air Force aircraft, located the survivors. A Navy H-3 suffered damage and was forced to exit the area. Major Glen P. York and his HH-3 crew went down through the enemy fire and hoisted one of the Navy pilots aboard. Major York also contacted the second survivor, but fuel approached a critical point and he was forced to leave. The second ARRS HH-3, piloted by Captain Gregory Etzel, went down but failed to locate the second survivor. Major York received the Air Force Cross as a result of this mission.

8 Nov-
9 Nov 67 Captain Gerald O. Young, an HH-3 pilot assigned to the 37th ARR Squadron, won the Medal of Honor while participating in a combat rescue mission to recover a group of United States soldiers surrounded by enemy forces near Khe Sanh, Vietnam. Other members of Captain Young's crew were posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross. They were: Captain Ralph W. Brower, co-pilot; Staff Sergeant Eugene L. Clay, flight engineer; and Sergeant Larry W. Maysay,



Captain Gerald O. Young was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

HUGE RESCUE EFFORT

Thirty-two aircraft were involved in one of the biggest rescue efforts of the Vietnam war recently after an Air Force F-105 Thunderchief pilot spent a night on the ground in North Vietnam.

Captain Dale M. Pichard, 27, of Llano, Tex., was picked up at 9 p.m. from a heavily defended area, 28 miles north of Mu Gia Pass, by an HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew from the 37th ARRS.

"I was ready to cash it all in last night," Pichard said this morning. "I didn't figure I would be here today."

Enemy ground fire brought Pichard's F-105 down July 3. Darkness and heavy ground fire forced the SAR effort to be called off Sunday night after A-1E Sandys had dropped ordnance in the area.

A-1E pilot Captain Do-

nauld F. Miles, assigned to the 602nd FS of Cleburne, Tex., said "It was getting dark and we couldn't keep everyone in sight. As soon as we flashed on our lights they would shoot the heck out of us."

Major Richard L. Mehr, also from the 602nd of Jefferson town, Ky., lead Sandy pilot and the on-scene rescue director of the S. R. effort that night and morning told the downed pilot to go to higher ground.

Pichard narrowly escaped capture during his 15 hours on the ground. Enemy troops were on top of his chute soon after he landed. "I went about 50 yards away from the chute and it was as far as I could get, because they were all up along a hill."

There were trails all around the heavily wooded pickup area. He spent the

night lying under brush and enemy troops got as close as 20 feet to his position.

Twenty-three Thunderchief pilots were in to suppress enemy ground fire around the area that morning before the pickup was made. Sandys also dropped a smoke screen around the area before a Jolly Green, piloted by Captain Gregory Etzel, of Albany, Ga., went into the area.

"The Sandys did a great job in laying down a perfect smoke screen," Etzel said.

"As we got him on the hoist, we started getting more ground fire, so we started our pull-out with him on the hoist below us. We swung around a ridge and into the smoke screen before we finally lifted Pichard into the chopper."

Co. pilot of the rescue Jolly Green Giant was Captain Harold W. Bradley, Jr., of Tampa, Fla. Flight engineer was Air-

man First Class Robert J. Cotter, 20, of Palmyra N.Y., and Airman Second Class John Pighini, 22, of Levittown, Pa., was the pararescueman.

Other Sandy pilots from the 602nd FS participating in the strike were Captains Paul F. Kimminau, of Wichita, Kan., and Jack Cochran, of Atlanta, Ga.

It was the first pickup for Etzel since coming to Southeast Asia. He is the pilot who flew the first nonstop helicopter flight in a Jolly Green across the Atlantic to the Paris Air Show in June.

"We had to ride across the Atlantic to Paris for more than 30 straight hours, but the nervous strain of this SAR was equal to that flight," Etzel said.

"You can't say enough for the entire rescue effort," Pichard, a member of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing said. "They were all wonderful."



L/C BRITTON

CAPT ETZEL

THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE

Often operating behind enemy lines, the Air Force's Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service saved 2,807 military men from death or capture.

By Richard Eichenlaub

Captain Dale M. Prichard's only hope for escape from capture would be a successful recovery by aerial search-and-rescue forces. Hit while making gun runs at a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft position, Prichard was forced to bail out of his F-105 Thunderchief. Other members of the mission immediately radioed Prichard's predicament along with his location to the HC-130P "Crown" aircraft circling nearby. The information was passed along to Thailand's Nakhon Phanom, where HH-53E "Super Jolly Green Giant" rescue helicopters waited, and to Udorn, where A-1E Skyraiders sat ready for escort. Major Richard L. Mehr and his wingman jumped into their A-1Es and were the first into the air. They became the Sandy Low element with Mehr taking the lead role of on-scene commander.

The group of rescue craft raced to the vicinity of the downed airman. Mehr dropped down low to ascertain if any enemy forces were nearby. Triggering no hostile response, he ordered one of the Jolly Green Giants to move in and check out a parachute. Although voice contact was established with the downed pilot, the rescue attempt was delayed due to oncoming darkness.

That night Mehr and his fellow Sandy pilots planned the next day's rescue. The aerial task force would take off at first light. Plenty of air support would be on hand, with airborne tankers to ensure a sustained effort. The fact that the pilot was on the ground for such an extended period of time increased the chance that the enemy had established a flak trap in the area.

With the sun just visible over the eastern horizon, the rescue task force took off and arrived over the area where con-





A parajumper, or PJ, and a crewman bring a downed pilot aboard their helicopter. In addition to jump training, PJs had to be certified in scuba, first aid and survival.

tact had been established the previous day. Mehr, once again as Sandy Low Lead, flew over the area at altitudes as low as 100 feet until he successfully located Prichard. He coordinated jet airstrikes on the surrounding area with a Forward Air Controller (FAC) aircraft. Then he ordered the A-1E Skyraiders in to lay down a V-shaped pattern of white-phosphorous bombs around the downed airman. Finally, he ordered Jolly Green 9 into the white haze for the pickup. While pararescue men on board fired at enemy troops, Prichard was hoisted safely into the helicopter. The Sandys quickly moved in to blast the exit routes and suppress the enemy gunners. In the process, Mehr's plane was hit in both the external and internal fuel tanks. Unable to reach his home base of Udorn, Thailand, he literally coasted into Nakhon Phanom. Both Mehr and the pilot of the Jolly Green Giant helicopter received the Air Force Cross (the nation's second highest combat decoration) for the rescue.

By the time of Prichard's rescue, July 2, 1967, such operations had been fine-tuned. But it had taken several years for the procedures and equipment to evolve to the level that such a well-executed recovery was possible. Airborne search and rescue began in World War II with the Germans pulling downed

fliers from the English Channel during the Battle of Britain. It improved little between then and Vietnam, although the motto of search-and-rescue (SAR) personnel, "That Others May Live," was coined by Brig. Gen. Richard T. Knight during the Korean War. By far the greatest evolution in procedure and equipment occurred during operations in Southeast Asia. Other than improvements in equipment, the state of search and rescue has remained little changed since the closing days of that conflict.

Three officers and two enlisted men in December 1961 established the Air Rescue Service (ARS) in the Air Operations Center at Tan Son Nhut Air Base outside Saigon. These five individuals had little to work with since U.S. involvement was small in Southeast Asia and it was assumed that too large a rescue effort would signify more involvement than was then internationally acceptable. They lacked suitable communications equipment and used messengers on bicycles rather than trust the unreliable Vietnamese telephone network.

There were no rescue helicopters. When an aircraft was reported as overdue, ARS personnel requested available resources from nearby Army or Marine units and flew to the vicinity. They would search for the wreckage and, if located, remove any bodies. In cases where rescue of survivors was attempted, inadequate training and improper equipment often led to disaster. In one case, two Marine helicopters crashed while recovering an OV-10 Bronco observation aircraft pilot on the top of a rocky hill. In another instance, a flier stranded in a river was drowned by the rotor wash when the rescuing crewmen tried to pull him directly into a hovering helicopter.

The Air Rescue Service received the official designation of Detachment 3, Pacific Air Rescue Center on April 1,

1962. When Major Alan Saunders took command of the unit in June 1963, he quickly recognized the woeful situation. Saunders prepared a scathing report requesting equipment specifically engineered for airborne search-and-rescue operations. He also advocated the creation of a cadre of trained individuals, both fliers and pararescue men, whose sole responsibility would be the recovery of downed aircrews. Unfortunately, the report stalled when it was routed to the Army-dominated U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) headquarters for endorsement. Eventually, in May 1964, it was brought to the attention of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who made the Air Rescue Service part of the Air Force.

At about the same time, due to activity resulting from the Gulf of Tonkin incident, U.S. involvement became more overt. As the commitment of air units increased, the demands on the ARS also grew. Although the rescue forces operated from six separate bases, there was a heavy reliance on non-military assets, like the CIA-proprietary Air America, to reach the more remote locations. In fact, many of the early large-scale rescue operations in Southeast Asia were conducted by Air America helicopters with their more-experienced crews.

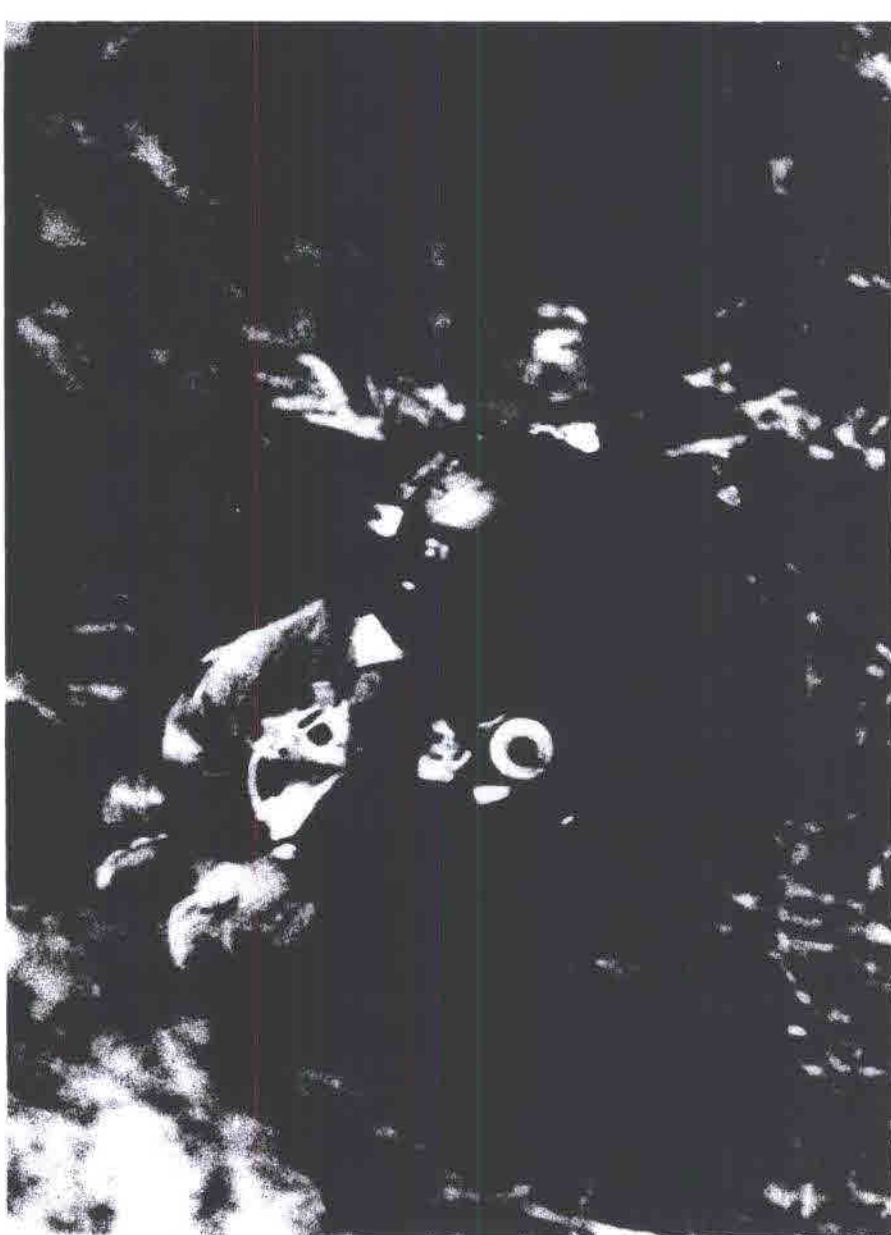
To support the stepped-up activity, the ARS began receiving its own equipment for rescue operations. The first helicopters outfitted solely for rescue, the Kaman HH-43B Huskie (later improved to the HH-43F), were delivered on October 20, 1964. Originally designed for base rescue and firefighting, it was completely inadequate for long-range recovery, having a maximum range of only about 140 miles. It used two, intermeshing "egg beater" rotors and an engine mounted over the cabin next to the gearbox for improved capacity. Escort was provided by aging North American T-28D Nomad modified trainers. Armed with twin .50-caliber machine guns and capable of carrying 1,800 pounds of rockets and bombs, the Nomad was able to provide only limited support. It was also highly susceptible to the increasingly accurate enemy anti-aircraft fire. Command and control was done in Grumman HU-16 Albatross aircraft. These were normally amphibious rescue planes, able to splash-land and pick up downed aircrews in the water. By adding communications equipment, they served in the rescue control role. But they were cramped, unpressurized and unheated.

Successful rescues took place despite the poor equipment. The procedures of this time were the forerunners to the refined and highly successful methods that would evolve in the coming years. Unfortunately, the enemy also learned the routine and began establishing "flak traps." They would quickly surround the aircrew and quietly await the arrival of the rescue forces. Then when the slow helicopters were at their most vulnerable, the enemy ground forces would pour fire into the sky. In some cases, enemy forces would capture a survival radio and establish a trap when there was nobody to recover. It became clear that better escort forces were needed and more offensive capability had to be placed on the rescue helicopters themselves.

The commitment to aerial search and rescue was increased starting in the year 1965. Major improvements to equipment were made in the three critical success areas: rescue, escort and command/control.

The first was the arrival of improved helicopters. The CH-3C helicopter was acquired and quickly upgraded for rescue operations and dubbed the HH-3E Jolly Green Giant. The CH-3C was originally commissioned by the Marines from Sikorsky in the early 1960s. It was unique in being the first to have twin engines mounted entirely above the cabin and to utilize a five-blade rotor. The Air Force acquired some, optimized them further for transport, and upgraded their power and protection for use in airborne search and recovery. The first HH-3E was stationed at Nakhon Phanom on July 6, 1965.

On September 14, 1967, the first HH-53B Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter arrived in Vietnam. Sikorsky had speeded development of it by utilizing the rotors and transmission from the company's CH-54 Tarhe sky crane. The HH-53B was a more powerful chopper that could, for example, carry a 12,000-pound A-1E for 56 miles. It had an enlarged capacity and improved armament with the addition of three 7.62mm

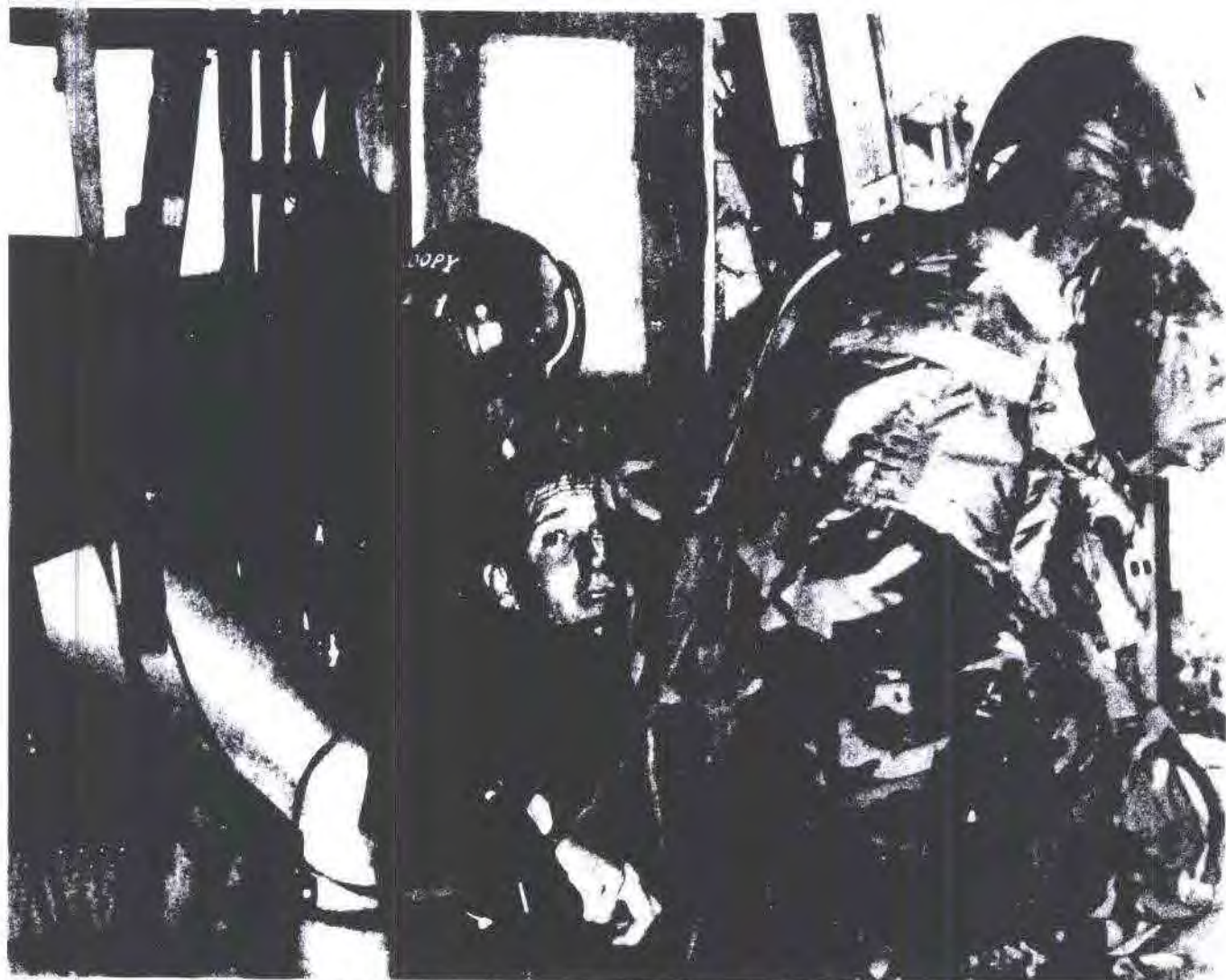


A PJ goes down after an airman unable to secure himself to the hoist. Often, if only one of them could be lifted at a time, a PJ would remain behind, hoping to be picked up later.

Gatling guns, though it suffered some drawbacks due to its size. It was difficult to maneuver in tight spaces and the pilots suffered from a limited field of view forcing them to maintain a dangerous, nose-high hover. But overall, it was a useful addition to the search-and-rescue inventory.

The new Jolly Green Giant helicopters also carried a variable speed, external hoist with a 250-foot cable. This greatly facilitated pickups in the dense rain forests of the region. At the end of the cable was a newly devised jungle penetrator, created by the Kaman engineers. It utilized a set of spring-loaded arms on the bottom to get it down through the jungle canopy. The downed airman strapped himself into the penetrator, and then released over his head a similar set of arms that separated the foliage when lifted out. The device was very successful and was widely used throughout the war.

Second, the perfect escort aircraft was located in August of 1965. The Air Force had acquired some surplus World War II-vintage Douglas A-1E Skyraiders from the Navy and deployed them with the Air Commandos. The A-1E proved to be a tremendously durable aircraft. Its very low airspeed made it well-suited to escorting the slow-flying helicopters. It was also able to carry a significant payload of 8,000 pounds



Another flier gets pulled from the drink by a search-and-rescue crew. Whenever possible, airmen whose aircraft were in trouble tried to get out to sea before ejecting, since having to bail out over enemy territory required extraordinary rescue measures.

on external hard points. In a typical SAR mission, the A-1E was armed with six pods of seven 2.75-inch white-phosphorous rockets, six 100-pound white-phosphorous bombs, one 7.62mm gun pod with 1,500 rounds of ammunition, and 20mm wing-mounted cannon. Sometimes high-explosive rocket pods replaced some of the white-phosphorous loads to provide added punch. In addition, it carried a 150-gallon external fuel tank on the right hard point and a 300-gallon tank on the centerline for extended range and linger time. The A-1E Skyraiders, call sign Sandy, would provide SAR escort for nearly the entire war.

Third, in June 1965, the command and control Albatrosses were replaced by converted C-54s, designated PC-54 Rescue-masters. This aircraft was more comfortable but still lacked advanced communications equipment. Then, on July 26, 1965, the definitive command and control aircraft was provided to rescue forces in Southeast Asia. It was the Lockheed HC-130H, a modified Hercules C-130 fixed-wing transport, later designated the HC-130P when the capability for providing aerial refueling was added. Its call sign was Crown, later changed to King. The HC-130 series contained sophisticated locator equipment originally designed for recovering space capsules. The aircraft also had enough communications gear to provide backup in case of failure.

Early in the conflict the Air Force determined that nearly 50 percent of unsuccessful pickups were caused by delays in reaching the downed airmen. Rescue forces had to reach the

area in less than 14 minutes or risk a considerable drop in the success rate. The SAR team unfortunately was unable to loiter for extended periods of time prior to a pickup. Initially, they used Lima sites (landing sites, often unimproved dirt strips) in Laos and northern South Vietnam to stage aircraft close to enemy targets. This required a grueling schedule for the men. They would fly into the forward Lima sites at dawn, before the bombing operations were underway. If any planes went down, they immediately launched and executed the rescue operation. Otherwise they would anxiously await the safe return of the last attack aircraft, usually at dusk, before flying back to base. After catching a few hours rest, they would repeat the process again the next day.

The single most important discovery, and one which eliminated the need for such an exhausting schedule, was aerial refueling of rescue helicopters. It was first operationally accomplished over the Gulf of Tonkin on June 21, 1967, using a modified C-130, which became the HC-130P combined command/control and refueling aircraft, and an HH-3E with an extendible refueling probe attached. It was discovered that the helicopter could "float" on the slipstream from the larger aircraft's propeller wash.

On January 8, 1966, the ARS was redesignated the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS). This allowed the inclusion of space capsule recovery in the same military organization. Of course this had little to do with the learning process occurring in the combat zones of Southeast Asia.

Three ARRS rescue squadrons were organized: the 37th at Da Nang, the 38th at Tan Son Nhut and the 39th at Tuy Hoa. Detachments of these squadrons operated from airfields at Bien Hoa, Da Nang and Pleiku in South Vietnam and Nakhon Phanom, Takhli and Korat in Thailand.

With improved equipment and better training, in 1967 aerial search and recovery was moving into a new, highly successful era. The dismal dark days were past and now a downed airman had a one in three chance of being rescued. Up to December 1967, the ARRS had saved 647 lives, of which 222 were combat personnel.

The standard aerial search-and-rescue operation was complex and required close coordination of a multitude of roles and people. The Joint Search and Rescue Center (JSARC), located at Tan Son Nhut, controlled the rescue operations for the entire Southeast Asia theater of operations, including the U.S. Seventh Fleet offshore. Late each afternoon, the next day's air missions would be provided to JSARC. The SAR forces would be allocated to specific orbit locations with supporting reserves identified at each airfield.

Early in the morning, HC-130P Crown aircraft would accompany the rescue helicopters to one of four predefined orbit points. Two were located on the border between Laos and North Vietnam; one parallel to Hanoi and one located over central Laos. The third orbit point was located near the DMZ and the fourth was over the Gulf of Tonkin.

When an aircraft went down, the crew would notify the Crown aircraft of the situation if at all possible. Otherwise, the airplane's wingman would report his fellow airman's location and any significant terrain features nearby to assist in finding the unfortunate flier. The Crown would immediately radio nearby air bases and four A-1E Skyraiders would be launched. When they arrived, the standard SAR Task Force (SARTAF) would be formed with a High element and a Low element. Each element consisted of two A-1Es, call sign Sandy, and a helicopter, call sign Jolly. The Low element would make the first pickup attempt, with the High element circling nearby as an on-site reserve.

The Sandy Low Lead was the airplane in charge. He would fly over the area attempting to locate the downed crewmen. Often the Sandy would fly over the man on the ground and ask him to sing out over his survival radio when the plane was directly overhead to pinpoint his location. Once his position was known, the Sandy Low Lead would "troll for fire." Using himself as bait, the pilot hoped enemy forces in the vicinity would reveal themselves by firing on his aircraft. If they did, he would call in the other Sandy to suppress the fire or, if available, work with an orbiting FAC plane to bring down airstrikes.

Once the Sandy Low Lead pilot was satisfied that enemy fire was sufficiently suppressed, he would call in the Jolly for a pickup attempt. Usually the Sandys would surround the site with generous amounts of white phosphorus to mask its approach. When the helicopter was

positioned over the downed aircrew, the on-board pararescue men would attempt to rescue them.

Most of the elite forces deployed in Vietnam were noted for their ability to eliminate enemy forces. But one elite group of men were highly respected even though their main responsibility was one of rescue. These were the pararescue men, otherwise known as parajumpers or PJs. They were scuba-certified by the Navy, had medical technician level first-aid training, were expert parachutists, adept at survival in any climate and expert in small arms and hand-to-hand combat. The PJs earned more combat decorations than any other group of men in the U.S. Air Force in Indochina.

If the downed man was injured, threatened or otherwise unable to secure himself to the hoist, the parajumper would go down the cable and do whatever was necessary to save the airman. Often, if only one man could get out, the parajumper stayed behind. In many cases he kept the enemy away while the rescue was completed. If necessary, he would remain on the ground and prepare himself for a future rescue attempt. The HH-3E Jolly Green Giant typically carried one pararescue man while the HH-53B carried two.

Once the downed man was safely aboard the Jolly helicopter, any necessary first aid was administered as the chopper

A SPECIAL SORT OF MAN

As the Vietnam conflict progressed, improvements in equipment made aerial search and rescue (SAR) more successful. But an even more critical component was the pararescue specialist otherwise known as the parajumper, or PJ.

These highly trained individuals provided a variety of services while on a SAR mission, ultimately being responsible for the successful recovery of the man on the ground. They would fire the primary armament on the rescue helicopters. This usually consisted of 7.62mm six-barrel miniguns. In the first helicopters used for SAR missions, the miniguns fired out the side doors; in later models, they fired out the rear of the rescue aircraft as well. This was the last available fire capability to keep enemy forces away during a pickup and to cover the helicopter's exit from the area.

More significantly, the helicopters would descend to the ground on the jungle penetrator to locate and assist a wounded airman. Sometimes the injuries were severe enough to necessitate securing the man to a Stokes litter before hoisting him up. Usually the PJ would accompany the litter back up to the hovering helicopter. Often this ascent was through considerable hostile fire.

After the recovery, the PJ was also the first to provide trained medical assistance to the rescued airman. Any treatment would be applied during the helicopter's return to a friendly air base in Thailand or South Vietnam or to a ship in the Tonkin Gulf.

Their bravery was legendary. Sergeant Chuck Morrow spent two tours in Southeast Asia as a PJ on combat rescue missions in North Vietnam. He was awarded three Silver Stars, five Distinguished Flying Crosses and numerous Air Medals.

Airman First Class Duane D. Hackney established a typically amazing combat save record. During one mission he was literally blown off the Stokes litter he was accompanying when the helicopter above him caught fire and exploded. Dazed but uninjured, he was recovered by the "high bird" soon afterward.

On another mission, Hackney rode a litter to the ground and assisted in the recovery of numerous Marines whose chopper had been shot down while attempting another rescue. Just after recovering the last Marine, enemy fire slammed into the helicopter, forcing it to depart hastily. While tending the wounded, Hackney passed out when an enemy bullet grazed his helmet. Moments later he regained consciousness and continued to set fractures and apply tourniquets. He later added the Air Force Cross to his collection of decorations for his actions that day.

The elite PJs were highly respected throughout the Southeast Asian theater. They were even issued a special uniform consisting of bloused trousers and a distinctive maroon beret. Many American servicemen owe their lives to the special men who wore that unique uniform.

R.E.



Having seen the downed pilot safely out of the Lima site, a pararescue man uses a colored smoke grenade to attract another helicopter. The PJs earned more decorations than any single group within the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War.

departed the area. The Sandys would move in to cover the exit routes using their cannon, machine guns or any leftover rockets to keep the enemy gunners from firing.

If the Low element exhausted its fuel or suffered enough damage to force it to abort the operation, the High element immediately took its place. In addition, two more Sandys were kept armed and fueled on nearby airfields. These could be called upon to provide added fire if the pickup zone was too hot for the on-site forces to handle. These additional Sandys typically carried normal high-explosive munitions in place of the white phosphorus. Airstrikes scheduled for nearby targets could be diverted to support the rescue effort. These were directed by FACs flying O-1, O-2 or OV-10 aircraft and attached to the SARTAF.

The search-and-rescue function was viewed as very important for the morale of the men. But a controversy erupted when the lack of guidelines resulted in the cost of operations being greater than the perceived benefits.

Two incidents showed the extent of the problem. In December 1969, Lieutenant Woodrow Bergeron, Jr., went down near Tchepone, Laos. He was successfully recovered. But in the process 336 airstrike sorties had flown or been diverted to support his rescue. The SAR forces had five Sandys badly damaged, five of ten Jollys damaged beyond repair, a parajumper killed and several others severely injured. The operation had dropped so much white phosphorus that the cloud was clearly visible in television transmissions from weather satellites.

Even more famous was the incident of BAT-21. On April 2, 1972, Lt. Col. Icael Hambleton was blown out of his electronic warfare plane by an enemy SAM. Since he was a high-

ranking officer and had extensive knowledge of U.S. strategic missile systems, a massive effort was launched to recover him. (See "SEALs Shadowy Rescue," by Dale Andradé in the December 1990 issue of *Vietnam*.) An unauthorized attempt by two UH-1H Hueys escorted by two Cobra gunships of F Troop, 8th Cavalry, ended in disaster. One Huey crashed with the loss of all aboard and a Cobra was damaged and subsequently forced to crash-land.

Despite the fact that nearby ARVN troops were in a desperate battle against NVA regulars as part of the Eastertide Offensive, a 17-mile no-fire zone was declared around Hambleton to avoid interference in rescue attempts. Meanwhile, further attempts to recover the downed officer continued to run into heavy enemy fire. An OV-10 Bronco was shot down by a SAM. The pilot survived and joined Hambleton on the ground. An HH-53B attempted to pick up the downed fliers but took heavy fire from nearby. When it inadvertently veered away over a village, it took more damage and crashed, killing all aboard. Subsequently, another OV-10 was shot down with the loss of its crew.

Eventually, Hambleton floated down a stream on a log and was recovered by a Navy SEAL team that had been sent out to find him. The cost had been tremendous. In addition to the equipment losses and death of 11 American crewmen, the no-fire zone had been enforced over a critical 11-day period while the NVA assault was underway. The 3rd ARVN Division had been nearly overrun with tremendous casualties primarily because they were unable to call in supporting artillery or airstrikes. Serious questions were raised about whether the cost had been worth the life of a single individual.

In addition to their normal aerial search-and-rescue operations, ARRS equipment and personnel also contributed to other missions. In November 1970, ARRS forces were used in an attempt to rescue Americans held in the Son Tay prisoner-of-war camp. Five HH-53B helicopters from Udorn and one HH-3E from Da Nang flew the mission. Unfortunately, the POWs had been moved and the rescue forces came away empty-handed. Another more successful mission occurred on May 1, 1972, when four HH-53B Super Jolly Green Giants from Da Nang boldly flew in to rescue 132 friendly personnel trapped in Quan Tri City by the flow of the Eastertide Offensive.

During the later stages of the war, the ARRS attempted further enhancements to improve success probability. Many of the technical advancements added weight that was ill-afforded. One attempt was infrared locating equipment for night pickups. But this required the man on the ground to be in the open with an infrared strobe. Another device, the Electronic Location Finder, successfully led to the rescue of Captain Roger C. Locher from North Vietnam. As the war progressed, advances in surface-to-air missile systems introduced a new vulnerability. The newly issued SA-7 hand-held SAM increased the threat from the ground even away from established installations. Attempts at jamming equipment and other countermeasures failed and therefore were not widely provided by the end of U.S. involvement.

As part of the Vietnamization effort, the air rescue function was turned over to the South Vietnamese. Unfortunately, the SAR effort proved to be less effective due to two factors. Proper search and rescue required enormous amounts of support capable of being applied to the pickup operation on short notice. The support that the Americans enjoyed was not available to the South Vietnamese forces. Second, there was a fundamental philosophical difference between the two nations. The United States felt the rescue of aircrews, even a single man, was vitally important to morale and effectiveness. On the other hand, the Vietnamese did not hold the single life in as high regard and were not willing to dedicate the equipment to air rescue.

The highly successful A-1E Skyraiders were turned over to the South Vietnamese Air Force for combat operations. The Skyraider flew its last SAR mission on November 7, 1972, before being replaced by the A-7D Corsair. This change had a major impact on SAR operations. The jet-powered A-7D was much faster than the Skyraider. This meant it had to fly a racetrack pattern around the helicopters it was escorting. It also used fuel at a much higher rate than the old prop-driven planes. But there were also advantages. Because it was much faster, it arrived at the pickup point soon after the pilot went down. This allowed immediate air support within the critical 15 minute period. Also, the A-7D had an advanced computerized navigation system. It was capable of locking onto a crewman's location and getting to him even in foul weather.



First arriving in Vietnam on October 20, 1964, the Kaman HH-43 Huskie was the first helicopter designed specifically for rescue, but its 140-mile range was inadequate.

In January 1973, the last ARRS force in South Vietnam was transferred from Tan Son Nhut to Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. The legacy of aerial search and rescue in the Vietnam War was essentially over. During that time, the ARRS forces saved 3,883 lives, of which 2,807 were military men. In the process, 71 U.S. rescuers were killed and 45 ARRS aircraft were destroyed. More important than the heroic efforts of the ARRS forces was the refinement of procedures that will be practiced in any similar conventional conflict in the future. During the course of the Vietnam War, the desire to save lives brought aerial search and rescue from chance to a highly refined, extremely successful method for recovering downed aircrews. □

Minnesota author Richard Eichenlaub, a computer analyst and military historian, previously has written for America's Civil War Magazine. For further reading, he recommends: Earl H. Tilford's *Search and Rescue in Southeast Asia 1961-1975* (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1980).