

FROM: RCC

3 February 1968

SUBJECT: Mission Narrative Report (6-38-6-1 Feb 68)

TO: Det C  
3rd ARRGp (JSARC)  
IN TURN

*cut 1/24*

*very EXCITING!!*  
*on 49*

1. This report is submitted in accordance with ARRSM 55-2/3rd ARRGp Sup 1, dated 15 June 67.

2. At 1023Z (1823L), the alert crew was notified by Bien Hoa tower that an Army UH-1 (Call Sign Silver Spur 16) was requesting assistance. Two men were wounded, one critically, at a position 4 miles east north east of Bien Hoa. Silver Spur 16 stated the area was secured by a mechanized ground party and his three Light Fire Team ships would provide additional cover. As darkness was nearly upon us, I immediately scrambled in Pedro 97. Take-off time was 1025Z. Immediate contact was established with Silver Spur 16, and he directed me to his position. Contact with the ground party was provided on FM. The position was being marked by smoke. The terrain consisted of rolling hills covered by generally thick brush, 8 to 12 feet high. A large Army ground force was evident throughout the immediate area. Armored Personnel Carriers were to the south and west of the position marked by a smoke. Silver Spur 16 reported negative enemy action recently. The flight engineer and rescue specialist were instructed to prepare for a litter pickup, and the ground party was advised that we would lower a litter. Eight to twelve men were in a small cluster around the injured men as I entered a hover 15 to 20 feet above. I was positioned into the wind on a southerly heading. The ground sloped uphill ahead of me. A UH-1 established a hover crosswind, 20 to 30 yards behind me; two others flew a circular pattern low overhead. The semi-rigid litter was lowered and the Army men took what seemed like an extensively long period getting the man loaded. TSgt Kearton, the FE, states they appeared to have trouble deciding how it should be used. When the men on the ground signaled that the man was ready for hoisting, the hoist operator advised me he was coming up, and I felt the additional weight and lateral load on the helicopter. As soon as the man and litter cleared the ground, the litter rolled 180 degrees. The hoist operator immediately relowered the litter. At that same instant, automatic weapons fire was heard and felt. The rate of fire was about one round per second; eight to twelve shots were heard. It severely jolted the helicopter and controls. The shots were coming from my left rear at extremely close range. The UH-1 behind me transmitted, "He's taking fire! He's taking fire!", and there was much other radio chatter. Men on the APC's immediately ahead of my position all ducked for cover. I expected to be hit momentarily and for the helicopter to be disabled immediately. My concern was directed to the 8 to 12 men beneath the helicopter, and I hovered forward, not really expecting the controls to work or the engine to continue in operation. I did not know the man in the litter had been relowered to the ground and felt he would be up to the door by this time. My concern was not directed towards him at this time. After maneuvering forward, the shooting stopped and the helicopter continued to operate, two completely surprising developments. I believe now that my forward movement took the helicopter out of the view of whoever was shooting. The shots apparently came from a concealed tunnel entrance very close to where the party of men were immediately beneath the helicopter. Because of some transmission received,

I understood that one of my crew members was hit. Sgt Salome did have his AR-15, which was over his shoulder, hit. When he heard the shots, he turned from the side cabin door towards the rear door instinctively. He observed muzzle blasts and smoke down and to the rear of the helicopter at a 45 degree angle. He then attempted to return fire and discovered his weapon was inoperative. Still expecting the engine or controls to fail, and not knowing the man on the litter was not completely raised, I slowly began additional forward movement and a gradual climb. The wounded man in the litter was dragged for a short distance along the ground and through the tops of the brush. I first became aware of this after gaining altitude when the hoist operator advised me the man was still outside the helicopter and that he could not get him in. When the Army men had loaded him onto the litter, they had failed to secure the chest straps. It is not known why the litter rolled. This combination caused the attachment straps at the head end to pull loose from along the sides to nearly the mid-point; this made the litter hang low and at an angle, preventing the hoist operator from bringing the man aboard. I brought the helicopter to a hover at altitude, and then TSgt Kearton and Sgt Salome were able to maneuver the litter, so that the head end rested on the front of the right rear bear paw. The hoist was then lowered slightly and the man rested level. The short flight to the 93rd US Army Hospital, 3 miles away, was uneventful. I still expected a mechanical failure momentarily, but none occurred. No intermediate secure area was available. We arrived at the hospital at 1036Z. As planned enroute, Sgt Salome exited the rear of the helicopter as I hovered low over the hospital pad and with assistance from the hospital staff the litter patient was off-loaded as I hovered. I then landed a short ways away on another pad, and we inspected the helicopter for damage. This inspection revealed two bullet holes in the cabin safety net webbing, shell fragment holes in the co-pilots wind screen, and a ricochet mark on the cabin ceiling door. Oil levels were normal and no fuel leaks could be detected. I decided to return to Bien Hoa and not undertake the recovery of the second not-so-seriously injured man. The flight to Bien Hoa was routine with the landing accomplished at 1045Z, terminating the mission. Further inspection revealed one round (.30 caliber) had hit the left forward fuel sump armor plating, causing no damage. A second round pierced the center flood light and still another round entered one foot aft of the left forward fuel sumps and exited through the ARN/59 radio antenna. No major systems or components were damaged. After a complete inspection of the flight controls and engine, the aircraft was returned to alert. Repairs will not be extensive or immediately necessary. Sgt Salome's AR-15 is repairable, though the breech, charging handle and bolt were shattered. None of my crew members nor myself were injured. Sgt Salome had shell fragments pierce his ballistic helmet and strike his neck. The ballistic helmet and the HH-43F armor appear to have been extremely beneficial. The left forward fuel sumps would have doubtlessly been damaged had it not been protected by armor plating. I recommend the semi-rigid litter be used only when an ARRS crew member is on the ground to accomplish the loading.

3. The name of the survivor is unknown.

4. Crew members of Pedro 97.

RCC Major James F. Okonek  
RCCP Major John V. Lepko  
FE TSgt Donald S. Kearton II  
RS Sgt Charles F. Salome

*James F. Okonek*  
JAMES F. OKONEK, Major, USAF  
Rescue Crew Commander

Approved.

*Robert J. Kazanagh*  
ROBERT J. KAZANAGH, Lt Col, USAF  
Commander

Det 6, 38 ARRSq, hist, Jan - Mar 1968

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CREWMEMBERS

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Captain Charles W. Burridge | RCC |
| Lt Col Robert J. Kavanagh   | CP  |
| AlC Glen N. Chafey          | FE  |
| Sgt Roland C. Schmidt       | RS  |

PJ

Mission 6-38-6-1 February 68

At 1823 hours on 1 February, the alert crew was notified by Bien Hoa tower that an Army UH-1 gunship, call sign Silver Spur 16, was requesting assistance. Two men were wounded, one critically, at a position four miles east north east of Bien Hoa. Silver Spur 16 stated the area was secured by a mechanized ground party and his three Light Fire Team ships would provide additional cover. Pedro 97 was scrambled for the pick-up at 1825 hours. Immediate contact was established with Silver Spur 16, and he directed Pedro 97 to his position. Contact with the ground party was provided on FM radio. The position was also being marked with smoke. The terrain consisted of rolling hills covered by generally thick brush, eight to twelve feet high. A large US Army ground force was evident throughout the immediate area. Armored Personnel Carriers were to the south and west of the position marked by smoke. Silver Spur 16 reported negative hostile action recently. The flight engineer and pararescueman were instructed to prepare for a litter pick-up, and the ground party was advised that a litter would be lowered. Eight to twelve men were in a small cluster around the injured men as a hover was established

fifteen to twenty feet above them. A UH-1 hovered twenty to thirty yards behind Pedro 97 while two others flew a circular pattern low overhead. The semi-rigid litter was lowered and the Army men took what seemed like an extensively long period getting the man loaded. TSgt Kearton, the FE, stated they appeared to be having difficulty deciding how it should be used. When the men on the ground signalled that the man was ready for hoisting, Sgt Kearton advised he was coming up, and the additional weight and lateral load on the helicopter was noted. As soon as the litter cleared the ground, the litter rolled 180 degrees. The hoist operator immediately began to relower the litter. At the same instant, automatic weapons fire was heard and felt. The rate of fire was approximately one round per second; eight to ten shots were heard. It severely jolted the helicopter and flight controls. The shots came from the left rear at extremely close range. The UH-1 hovering behind Pedro 97 transmitted, "He's taking fire! He's taking fire!", and there was much other radio chatter. Men on the APC's immediately in front of the helicopter ducked for cover. The RCC expected to be hit momentarily or for the helicopter to be disabled immediately. The RCC's concern was directed to the men beneath the aircraft, and he hovered forward in an attempt to avoid crashing onto them, but not really expecting the controls to respond or the engine to continue in operation. He did not know the litter had been relowered to the ground and thought it would be up to the door by this time. After maneuvering forward

enough to clear the men beneath the helicopter, the shooting stopped. The RCC believes the forward movement took the helicopter out of view of whoever was shooting. The shots apparently came from a concealed tunnel entrance very close to the party of men beneath the helicopter. Because of a transmission received, the RCC believed one of the crewmembers was hit. One round did strike the pararescueman's rifle, which he was holding in his hand. When he heard the shots, he turned from the side cabin door towards the rear door instinctively. He observed muzzle blasts and smoke to the rear of the helicopter. He attempted to return the fire and discovered his weapon was inoperative. Still expecting the engine or controls to fail, and not knowing the litter was not completely raised, the RCC slowly began additional forward movement and a gradual climb. He was then advised by the hoist operator that the man was still outside the helicopter and due to improper loading, he could not get him in. The litter hung low and at an angle which prevented the hoist operator from bringing the man aboard. The helicopter was brought to a hover at altitude and the litter was maneuvered so the head end rested on the right rear bear paw. The hoist was then lowered slightly and the man rested level. Within a few minutes the helicopter was over the landing pad at the 93rd Evacuation Hospital. As planned enroute, the pararescueman exited the rear of the aircraft from a low hover, and with the assistance of the hospital staff the litter patient was off-loaded from the hover. The helicopter landed on a nearby pad and was

inspected for damage. The inspection revealed two bullet holes in the cabin safety net webbing, shell fragment holes in the co-pilot's wind screen, a ricochet mark on the cabin door, and a bullet hole in the center floodlight. Oil levels were normal and no fuel leaks were detected. It was decided to return to Bien Hoa and not to attempt the recovery of the second man, who was not seriously wounded. The flight to Bien Hoa was routine and the mission was terminated upon landing at 1845 hours. None of the crewmembers were injured, although shell fragments did pierce the pararescueman's ballistic helmet and strike his neck. It is recommended that the semi-rigid litter be used only when an ARRS crewmember is on the ground to accomplish the loading.

#### CREWMEMBERS

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Major James F. Okonek  | RCC |
| Major John V. Lepko    | CP  |
| TSgt Donald S. Kearton | FE  |
| Sgt Charles F. Salome  | RS  |

PJ

Mission 6-38-7-3 February 68

At 1225 hours on 3 February, Pedro 95 responded to a request to evacuate an injured man from the east perimeter of Bien Hoa Air Base. Upon arrival at the injured man's location, it was discovered he had stepped on a mine and had suffered a serious leg wound. An Army officer among those with the injured man indicated it was safe to land and directed the pilot to a specific location about twenty yards away. He then guided the flight engineer and

Det 6 38 ARRS PJ Daily Log  
June 1967 - March 1971

Rocket Attack

1 FEB 68



SALOMB on 1ST ALERT. ALL GEAR  
CHECKED. PICKED UP APPROX. 8-10 Rounds  
in Helicopter, while making a med-evac of  
2 Army Troop 4<sup>th</sup> 5 miles southeast of Bien Hoa.  
Hotest Pickup with litter. 1 Round saw in Cabin  
struck PS's rifle. Took wounded patient to 93<sup>rd</sup>.  
1 Combat Save credited.

# Airmen Prove Themselves

## Ftr. Pilot Garners Honors

**SOUTHEAST ASIA** — A veteran of 90 combat missions over North Vietnam has received the Nation's third highest award for gallantry, the Silver Star.

Capt. John A. Stetson, Whitham, Mass., a crew member of a two-seat F-105F Thunderchief, was presented the medal recently by Brig. Gen. Louis T. Seith, new deputy commander of 7th Air Force 13th Air Force.

"On Dec. 16, 1967," the citation stated, "Captain Stetson... pressed repeated attacks that destroyed one hostile missile site and damaged at least one additional missile radar van."

"As a result of his actions, the strike force that he was assigned to protect suffered no losses and succeeded in its mission in the face of determined defenses."

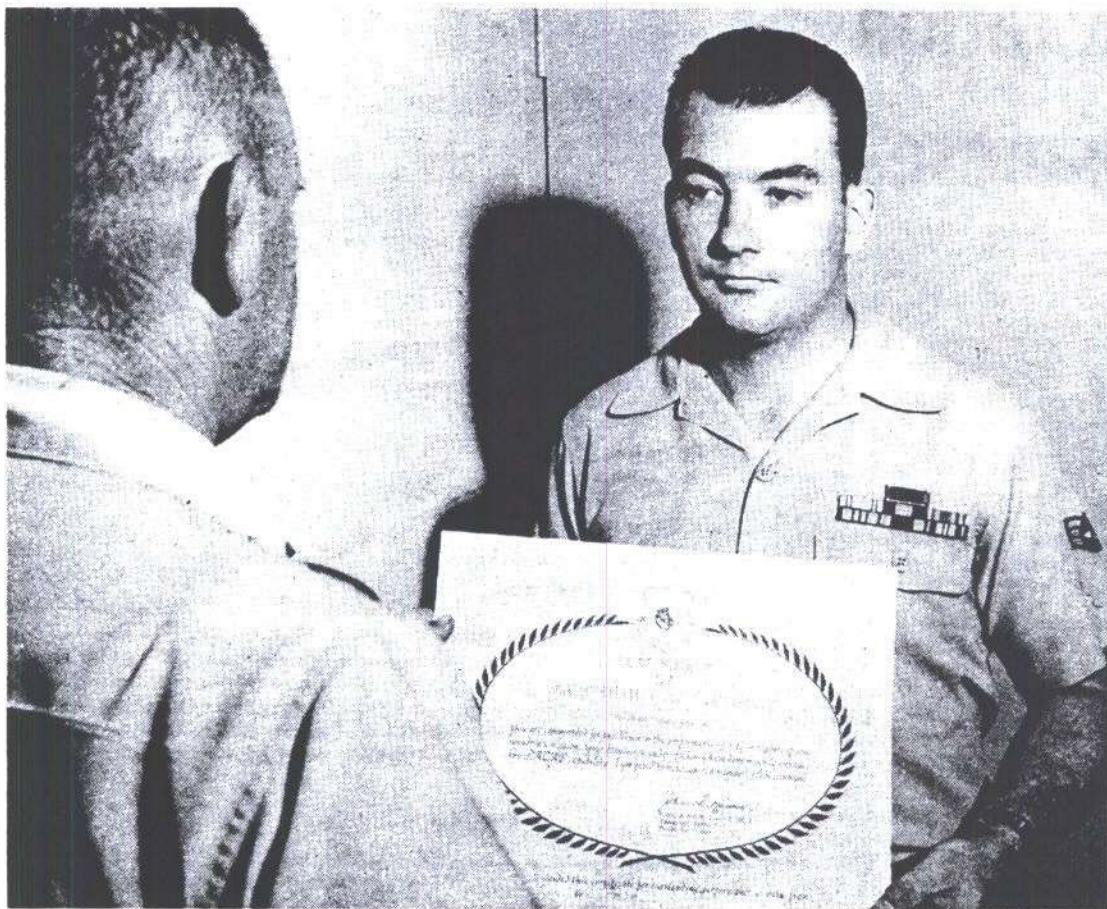
## Maj. Okonek Garners DFC

**BINH THUY** — Maj. James F. Okonek, Spooner, Wis., was recently presented the Distinguished Flying Cross at Binh Thuy AB.

On Feb. 1, 1968, his HH-43 Huskie crew was scrambled to pick up a seriously wounded soldier near Bien Hoa AB.

Major Okonek hovered over the soldier and lowered the litter. Meanwhile six enemy bullets ripped into vital parts of his aircraft.

Even with serious damage to the helicopter, the major completed the rescue and delivered the injured soldier to a nearby hospital.



**MAINTENANCE MAN**—The 553rd Field Maintenance Squadron has chosen Sgt. Kenneth W. Daubert, Milwaukee, as one of its outstanding workers. He is responsible for insuring that all personal and cargo parachutes assigned to the 553rd Reconnaissance Wing are completely inspected, repaired and repacked. "His thoroughness of inspection and strict adherence of technical orders coupled with his ability insures that his work is always perfect," Sergeant Daubert's supervisors said. He was given an achievement certificate by Maj. Keith Dills, San Leandro, Calif., 553rd FMS commander.

(U.S. Air Force Photo)

## Three 460th TRW Pilots Receive Silver Star Medals

**TAN SON NHUT** — Amidst a display of tactical reconnaissance aircraft, Gen. William W. Momyer, Seventh Air Force

commander, presented Silver Stars to three members of the 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing at Tan Son Nhut AB.

Col. William H. Laseter, Fort Worth, Tex., wing deputy commander for operations, was cited for gallantry as an aircraft commander on Feb. 16, 1968. On that date, he flew an unarmed RF-4C Phantom aircraft on a low level day reconnaissance mission directed to locate and photograph surface-to-air missile sites and defense positions in North Vietnam.

After malfunctioning aircraft

lin, Winston-Salem, N.C. While flying an unarmed and uncorted reconnaissance mission deep into hostile territory, he made two passes over his target to draw hostile reaction and enable the combat support aircraft to locate enemy gun positions. By his actions, he successfully photographed his assigned target and two enemy gun positions were destroyed.

