

Det 9, 38ARRS Hist, Jan - Mar 68

CHAPTER III

OPERATIONS

MISSIONS

During this reporting period Detachment 9 flew 160 sorties of which 78 were in support of aircraft or personnel in distress. The remainder were base support and training missions.

COMBAT LOSSES

On 7 February 1968, aircraft HH-43F, serial number 59-4525, was shot down. Sergeant Jose G. Abara, was killed in the crash. At approximately 1940 hours 7 February, the detachment received a call for assistance from the Army (283rd Medical Detachment - Hospital Ambulance). The mission involved a night hoist pickup of Army wounded from a secure perimeter location 10 miles northeast of Kontum, Republic of Vietnam. Pedro 56 and Pedro 74 launched at 1955 and arrived at the evacuation site at 2025. Pedro 56 commanded by Captain Francis B. Gilligan made an approach to the pickup site, and as the aircraft entered a hover, it came under heavy automatic weapons fire, burst into flames and crashed about 10 seconds later. Approximately 30 seconds after the crash, the aircraft exploded. Due to heavy ground fire and lack of communication with survivors, the supporting aircraft withdrew. Approximately three hours later, Army gunships escorted an Army Medical Evacuation helicopter into the area, since a light on the ground

HEADQUARTERS 3RD AEROSPACE RESCUE & RECOVERY GROUP (MAC)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307



REPLY TO
ATTN OF: 3C

7 March 1968

SUBJECT: Commander's Letter for February 1968

6 ADM-9

TO: All Squadrons & Detachments, 3ARRGp

1. On 28 February, Major Dale Oderrman and his Jolly Green crew of Det 1, 37ARRS, at Nakhon Phanom made the 1000th combat save since rescue operations started in SEASIA in 1964. The recovery was up near the Mu Ghia pass and had all the ingredients of a good story; an F-105 pilot with 79 missions completed; two broken legs; a first save for the RCC; a descent into the jungle by the PJ; the 21st save for the PJ; Sgt Joe Duffy, on a 6 month tour extension; and a bit of hostile action in the neighborhood. We brought the crew to TSN and did a TV panel type discussion film at AFVN studios. All the major networks had camera coverage; NBC, ABC, CBS, BBC, and AFN. Without many preliminaries, the cameras started grinding and the crew told the story of their individual participation in the mission (without a note). Following about a half hour stint in front of the cameras, we went down to the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) for a "Show and Tell" session before 60 to 70 press representatives from all over the world. Luckily, there had been a combat photographer on board the HH-3E during the mission and the film was shown followed by essentially a repeat of the TV presentation and a question and answer session. According to the 7AF Director of Information, we got a lot of mileage out of the 1000th save. Evidently Saigon must be pretty rough out because the crew members told me later that they'd prefer to go to North Vietnam anytime rather than go through that routine again.

7 FEB 68

2. In early February an HH-43 engaged in a night recovery mission was shot down. The debriefs of the crew members and the Army Distaff pilot revealed facts which should be considered in the "Lessons Learned" category and which may be applicable to your unit. The two pilots were not wearing their survival vests at the time they were hit but had placed them on the floor of the cockpit next to the seat. During the crash, the pilot's vest and M-16 rifle were pulled from the aircraft by the branches of the trees through which they were descending. The co-pilot's vest was to his left rear next to the seat and when he reached for it he found it was already in flames. Although the pararescueman was wearing his vest properly, when he

I.O.
100th save
Publicity

ARDC
HH-43
lessons
learned +
new procedures

PROJECT CORONA HARVEST

DO NOT DESTROY

CLASSIFIED

No

0017507

Cont. 1
was exiting the aircraft exploded and his clothing caught fire. Because he had to strip off his clothing, the survival gear was destroyed by fire. Once on the ground, the three surviving crewmembers were without signaling devices except for a flashlight which one of them had in his pocket. The loss of the survival radio by all the crewmembers was a critical factor which could have been disastrous according to the pilot of the Army helicopter which picked them up sometime later. He stated that had the downed crewmen attempted to signal their location by using tracer ammunition or penguin flares, the accompanying gunships would have immediately torn up the area on the assumption that the tracers were from unfriendly forces. Another item of considerable interest mentioned by the pilot of the recovery aircraft is that Army ground personnel may consider an area secure when the necessary approach routes for a helicopter are extremely hot. He further stated that he does not consider any area secure for a hoist mission. The commander of the unit that lost the aircraft also considers that a number of valuable lessons were learned. He promptly established the following guidelines within his unit:

a. Survival and life support equipment will be worn by all crewmembers on all missions.

b. Each crewmember will carry on his person a small flashlight and/or cigarette lighter for use as a signaling device if all other means fail.

Cont. 2
c. All areas will be treated as insecure if the rescue is required as a direct result of enemy action. If the cause is doubtful, the area will be considered insecure.

d. No pickups will be made in any area unless gunships or other similar support is actually in close proximity to provide psychological suppression to enemy ground fire. A Spooky at 3000 ft, while extremely effective in destroying ground emplacements, does not provide this suppression, nor does the fact that gunships are in the general area. The enemy troops may not be aware that they are there.

e. Tracer ammo and penguin flares will be used as signaling devices only if in positive radio contact with the rescue aircraft.

f. No pickups will be attempted unless the aircraft making the pickup is in direct contact with the ground controlling agency or an airborne control element that is aware of all facts of the rescue requirement.

The Distinguished Flying Cross to Captain Francis Gilligan, FM70023,
for heroism during an attempted night medical evacuation mission on

(7AF S.O. G-975,

JLTNC

ame

Tail Number	Date	Unit	Location	Call Sign	Pilot	CoPilot	Flight Engineer	Pararesc	recei-
58-1845	10 Oct 68	38th ARRS Phan Rang	SVN	Pedro 44	Von M. Liedernecht	Donald Brooks	Milard Bledsoe	Emmett	68,
59-1562	19 Jul 69	14th Utapao	Thailand	MAPLE 02	Warren K. Davis			Harry	erial
59-1587	8 Jul 66	38th ARRS Tan Son Nhut	SVN	unknown					57)
59-1590	27 Jun 69	41st ARRS Phan Rang	SVN	Pedro 92	J. Gammon	W. Mcoll	Pomerpleu	H. Jones	63)
60-0278	10 Jul 69	38th ARRS Utapao	unknown	unknown					68)
60-0282	7 Aug 69	38th ARRS Tuy Hoa	SVN	Pedro 24	Wohnick	Brittingh			63)
									r 63)
62-4510	20 Sep 65	Det 1, 38th ARRS, NKP	NVN	DUTCHY 41	Thomas J. Curtis	Duane W. Martin	William A. Robinson	Arthur N	
62-4511	28 Oct 66	38th ARRS Pleiku	SVN	Pedro 42	C. Vermeys	George H. Spike Bonnell	Frances D. Rice (unknown position)		
62-4525	7 Feb 68	Det 9, 38th ARRS Pleiku	SVN	Pedro 56	Francis B. Gilligan	Lester M. Jiggins	Jose G. Abara	Davis R	

KIA

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had been observed. The light proved to be the paramedic's penlite, the only signalling device recovered from the aircraft. The Army Medical Evacuation aircraft picked up the crew commander, Captain Francis B. Gilligan, the copilot, Major Lester M. Jiggins and the paramedic, Sergeant David R. Berrio. Several days later an Army ground recovery team went into the area and found the body of the flight engineer, Sergeant Jose G. Abara, in the wreckage. The aircraft was completely destroyed by the crash and fire.

THE TET OFFENSIVE

Starting on 19 January enemy ground activity picked up steadily until early on the morning of 30 January when the TET Offensive started in earnest. At Pleiku Air Base the offensive was initiated by a rocket and mortar attack, during which aircraft HH-43F serial number 63-9712 took shrapnel from a 122mm rocket near-miss. The damage consisted of 207 holes in the primary structure and necessitated replacement of many components including the rotor blades and tail assembly. The aircraft was unserviceable for 23 days while awaiting parts. Ground fighting was intense in the vicinity of Pleiku Air Base, however the base itself received only nightly mortar attacks. These attacks, while causing concern and disrupting sleep, did very little damage on the base and no further damage to Detachment 9 personnel or property.

--- General / Personal ---

Last name: ABARA
First name: JOSE GENE
Home of Record (official): LONG BRANCH
State (official): NJ
Date of Birth: Tuesday, May 15, 1945
Sex: Male
Race: Caucasian
Marital Status: Single

--- Military ---

Branch: Air Force
Rank: SGT
Serial Number: 12719203
Component: Regular
Pay grade: E4
MOS (Military Occupational Specialty code): Unknown/Not reported

--- Action ---

Start of Tour: Thursday, December 8, 1966
Date of Casualty: Wednesday, February 7, 1968
Age at time of loss: 22
Casualty type: (A3) Hostile, died while missing
Reason: Air loss - Crashed on land (Crew member - Helicopter)
Country: South VietNam
Province: Kontum
The Wall: Panel 37E - Row 076

Operation Smoking Gun has detailed information on several thousand vets listed on the Wall who at one time were listed as MIA or POW.
[Click here to perform an Automated Search](#) of their files.

Jolly Green 26, flown by CAPT Gerald Young, with flight crew consisting of CAPT Ralph Brower, co-pilot; SSGT Eugene Clay, flight engineer; and SGT Larry Maysey, rescue specialist; braved the ground fire to pick up Special Forces SP4 Joseph G. Kusick and MSGT Bruce R. Baxter, both wounded. The helicopter was hit by automatic weapons fire, crashed and burst into flames.

By the afternoon of November 9, a recovery team was inserted into the area and reached the crash site of the burned HH3. Because of fading light, it was impossible to inspect the wreckage at that time.

On 10 November, the wreckage was searched and 3 charred remains were found. Two of the remains had identification tags which identified them as members of the crew. The third remains had no tags, but were identified as SP4 Kusick, radio operator of the reconnaissance team, as the long antenna from his PRC-25 radio were found on his body. Capt. Young had survived and was rescued 17 hours after the crash of the aircraft. About 34 meters downhill from the wreckage, another set of remains was found which were readily identified as MSgt. Baxter from the facial features. No trace was found of the third crew member. The remains of the two crewmen and Kusick were removed from the aircraft and placed with MSgt Baxter's remains so they could be hoisted as one lift into a hovering helicopter. The identification tags of the crewmembers were placed with the remains. Weather conditions and enemy action would not permit helicopters to make the extraction either that day or the day following.

The remains of the crew and passengers aboard Jolly Green 26 were never recovered. Although the location of the crash is known, the bodies of the crew and recon team who died still lie on foreign soil. The five are among nearly 600 Americans lost in Laos.

The Air Force has dedicated three buildings to the memory of Larry Maysey, at Los Angeles AFB, California, at Randolph AFB, Texas, and at Hickam AFB, Hawaii.

Tail No: 62-4525 Model: HH-43 Date of Loss: 7 Feb 68 Unit: Det 9, 38th ARRS, Pleiku
Country of Loss: Kontum, SVN Call Sign: Pedro 56

Flight Engineer: Jose G. Abara (37E-76) KIA

Notes: Assisting in the recovery of the crew of a downed Army helicopter, helicopter hit by ground fire near Kontum, caught fire, crashed ten seconds later; three of the four crewmembers survived the crash.

Tail No.: 66-13295 Model: CH-3E Date of Loss: 23 May 68 Unit: 21st Helicopter Sq., 56th ACW
Country of Loss: SVN Call Sign: Dusty 51

Pilot: James P. McCollum (66E-12)
Co-Pilot: William H. Taylor (67E-03)
Flight Engineer: John L. Coon (66E-05)
Flight Engineer: John E. Albanese (66E-07)
Crew Chief: Robert A. Fink (66E-09)

Notes: Helicopter was lost to unknown causes while flying a sensor delivery mission, crash site could not be reached due to heavy enemy activity. This was the first combat loss for the 21st SOS.

Wounded South Yarmouth Airmar

By STEPHEN B. YOUNG

CHELSEA —A South Yarmouth airman, badly burned while on a rescue mission in Vietnam, is currently recuperating from his injuries at the Chelsea Naval Hospital here.

Sgt. David R. Berrio, 21, USAF, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest A. Berrio, 51 Antlers Road, So. Yarmouth, crashed into the jungle south of Dak To when his helicopter was shot down by the enemy on Feb. 7. Berrio, a pararescue man, had just extended for another tour of duty in Vietnam, and ironically was wounded about two hours after he was supposed to have gone home if he had not volunteered to stay another hitch.

The 1965 graduate of Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High school,

enlisted in the Air Force in January, 1966, and went overseas in February, 1967. Berrio, who also has a brother, Robert, and a sister, Janet, at home besides his parents, got back to Chelsea Naval on Feb. 23 and is recovering in the hospital's Ward D.

He is one of the few Air Force men at Chelsea whose wards are filled mostly with wounded Marines and some Army men. The armed services try to send their wounded and injured to a military hospital close to home.

He Saves Lives

Sgt. Berrio, one of a highly-trained and dedicated group of airmen, has a job which calls for the saving of lives. It is dangerous; it calls for evacuating wounded men from usually otherwise inaccessible areas in jungle or mountain terrain.

A pararescue man like Berrio goes in with his helicopter and may do one or any number of things to make the rescue. He might lower a hoist which a man could grab and be pulled up to the helicopter. That is, if the "chopper" can get in close enough to do it that way and if the terrain and enemy fire permits it.

Or, he may be called upon to go down on the ground to give a man medical attention and assist him in getting aboard the helicopter via the lowered hoist. Perhaps this means fighting off the enemy while the rescue is attempted; it could mean staying in unfriendly areas to assist a man out by other means.

Sgt. Berrio helped save 18 lives, altogether. On three of the missions he landed and made his "saves" on the ground.

It seemed only right that he made it out the same way, with the help of another rescue man.

Events Recapped

This is the way it happened: The rescue chopper with Berrio aboard was sent out to pick up a wounded soldier who had been shot in the chest.

It was dark, about 7:30 p.m. They spotted the strobe light on the ground, signalling to them. The helicopter came around; Berrio got ready to go down in the hoist and was strapping on his gear.

Suddenly, they got hit with enemy ground fire. The chopper burst into flames. The pilot tried to get away, but the chopper lost power. He "flared up," the helicopter rising slightly, losing its forward motion.

Crashed Through Trees

Then they crashed, down

Relates Experiences in Vietnam

through the trees, and on the ground. Berrio tried to get out of the burning plane; things were happening fast. He thought he saw the pilot, Capt. Gilligan, and the co-pilot, Maj. Jennings, jump out, but it was just an impression.

Berrio couldn't move, he had to act. He took off his gear and jumped out. The chopper exploded behind him as, Berrio, on fire, rolled down a hill. It put out the flames, but he had burns on his legs and arms, his face.

Berrio rolled to the bottom of the hill. A protecting gunship shot up the area, in case the V.C. were thinking of moving in to the immediate vicinity. Artillery started to come in for the same reason.

The Sgt. crawled into the bushes and waited. Was anyone coming? Enemy troops were all

around.

Tried to Sleep

What happened to the others in the crew? He waited. He tried signalling with his flashlight but the choppers up above didn't see him and eventually they left. A few hours went by and he tried to sleep; his burns were paining him. Would they come for him?

As a rescue man himself, he knew they'd try and he propped himself up so that he could remain conscious and the danger of going into shock would not be so great.

He woke up, finally, and heard the helicopters above him again. Berrio flashed the light. The chopper circled; he flashed again, and it circled lower; then again, and he was seen, and pretty soon there were eight or nine choppers in the area, one low to make the

rescue.

The chopper put its spot light on, lowered the hoist and Berrio hobbled over to get aboard. Suddenly, the pilot and co-pilot appeared out of the bushes, the first he'd known they'd made it.

The co-pilot and the Sgt. rode together. Then, the hoist was lowered again and the pilot came up.

Sgt. Abarra, the flight mechanic, didn't make it.

They got Sgt. Berrio back to the emergency room in the field hospital.

A soldier there, said "Hey, you with that rescue chopper? I'm the one you came in to pick up. Glad to see you made it."

Berrio gave out with a weak smile. It had been a long few hours and his burns hurt.



SGT. DAVID R. BERRIO

CO-PILOT HAS BROKEN ELBOW AND WILL

P. J. is in THE HOSPITAL WITH TWO

DEGREE BURNS, WILL BE OK

IN TWO TO THREE WEEKS.

F.E. is MIA

PLAN ON FIRST LIGHT SEARCH

АКТ Фм Рубик #525.

VALUES UNKNOWN AT THIS TIME.

PASSED TO CAPT BLANKENSHIP AT MAC CP
AT 2158Z. NOCCON-

()

17 AUG 1971

IAW AFR 205-2

(Date)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Revised 8 Feb 68

+14-43 F Combat Loss

At approximately 1220Z yesterday
Pedro 56, an UH-43E ^(W) 4 crewmembers on board,
from Det 9 at
Pleiku AB was hit by ground fire
approx 28 miles NNE of Pleiku while
on a med evac mission for USA
wounded personnel. Pedro 56 had
dropped flares and was on his approach
for the pickup when the a/c was
hit and burst into flames. About ten
seconds later the aircraft crashed into
a heavily wooded area and exploded
a few seconds after impact. 3 of the
crew members were able to escape the
burning wreckage and were picked up
about 4 hrs. later by an army
helicopter.. The flight mechanic has not
been recovered and is missing in action.
A ground team attempted to reach the
area but were halted by a clash with
hostile forces. Interrogated ^{17 AUG 1971} the crew
revealed that ^(Date) the a/c exploded almost
immediately after impact and the FM
was not seen after the crash.

DOWNGRADED AT 8 YEAR INTERVAL
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS
DOD DER 5000.10

Downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL

17 AUG 1971

IAW AFR 205-2

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

AFUDC 12 680 374

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

07/2125Z/CEM

FROM: CAPT BURNS, PARRE:

PEDRO 56 WAS ON A MED EVAC MISSION FOR USA.

PEDRO 56 WAS LOW BIRD 62-4525 F Model

PEDRO 98 WAS HIGH BIRD 59-1569 B Model

USA GUNSHIP WAS ALONG FOR COVER.

THE AREA WAS REPORTED SECURE,

PEDRO 56 DROPPED FLARES AND WENT IN FOR THE PICK UP. AT 200 FT

ACFT TOOK 50 CAL HITS AND BURST INTO FLAMES AND HIT GROUND AT HIGH SPEED. THERE WERE 4 P.O.B.

ATTEMPTED TO SEND GROUND TEAM IN BUT THEY EXPERIENCED FIGHTING EN ROUTE. ACFT CRASHED 10 NM NE QCM TUM 07 2028H.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

ADDITIONAL INFO: ARMY HELIO PICKED UP PILOT, CO-PILOT AND P.J.; TOOK THEM TO DAK TOX AND ON TO PLEIKU.

Downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL

17 AUG 1971
(Date)

IAW AFR 205-2

DOWNGRADED AT 5 YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 15 YEARS
DDO DPM 2000-10