

9Jun68 JG23

On June 9th, 1968, a Marine A4E *Skyhawk*, callsign *Hellborn 215*, was shot down while bombing NVA forces in the heavily defended Base Area 611 at the north end of the [A Shau Valley](#) in South Vietnam.

A large SAR effort was mounted to rescue the pilot, [1st Lt. Walter R. Schmidt, Jr., USMC](#), who had landed along a major branch of the Ho Chi Minh Trail near the Laos-Vietnam border. After extensive bombing to silence the enemy ground fire, an [HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter](#) moved in to attempt a pickup. This helicopter, *Jolly Green 22*, made two attempts to reach the survivor but was driven off by heavy ground fire each time. After each attempt, more ordnance was expended on the surrounding areas in an effort to suppress this ground fire. *Jolly Green 22* finally was forced to abort its efforts due to low fuel.

Following additional suppression efforts, a second helicopter, *Jolly Green 23*, moved in to attempt a pickup. After entering a hover and beginning to lower a parajumper to assist the injured survivor, JG23 came under intense ground fire. [As related by the supporting FAC, Trail 33](#), the left engine of the helicopter erupted in flames, and the pilot reported he was pulling off and attempting to reach a clearing approximately one kilometer north of the rescue site. As JG23 approached the clearing, the rotor noticeably slowed and the helicopter impacted the ground. The aircraft was totally engulfed in flame. It was apparent there could be no survivors from this crash.

There were four men aboard *Jolly Green 23*:

[Lieutenant Jack C. Rittichier, USCG *](#)
[Captain Richard C. Yeend, USAF](#)
[Staff Sergeant Elmer L. Holden, USAF](#)
[Sergeant James D. Locker, USAF](#)

Their remains were not recovered.

[Click here for eyewitness narratives and declassified mission reports on this incident.](#)

[Click here for Part Two - The Search Rejoined](#)

* Lieutenant Rittichier was on an exchange tour with the USAF 37th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron. He was the first Coast Guardsman killed in action in Southeast Asia.

On 23 January 2003 [Joint Task Force-Full Accounting \(JTF-FA\)](#) in Hawaii announced that a [Joint Field Activity team](#) operating in Laos had discovered the wreckage of *Jolly Green 23*. The wreckage was found on 9 November 2002, but the announcement has been delayed pending

notification of the families of the four crew members.

Following is the text of the announcement pertaining to Jolly Green 23:

In November 2002, during the 76th Joint Field Activity in Laos, a Joint U.S. and Lao investigation team from Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA) located the crash sites of the last two Jolly Green helicopters in Southeast Asia with unaccounted-for personnel onboard that had not been previously located.

The first site found was Jolly Green 23, an HH-3E with a crew of four which was shot down on 9 June 1968 while attempting to rescue a downed Marine pilot. The crash site was found 600 meters inside Laos, 250 meters north of the former North Vietnamese Route 922, which ran into the Ashau Valley, 20 kilometers to the east. On 9 November 2002, while investigating the incident, an analyst from JTF-FA, an American-Lao service member who was acting as the Linguist, and a Lao official conducted an aerial reconnaissance in a helicopter of the suspected loss area in Laos, looking for signs of habitation, but none were found. On their return to the Base Camp, the analyst observed a small village six kilometers west of the suspected loss area and requested the team land and interview the villagers; however, the Lao official said a Joint Team had been to the village, Ban Koutai, on two previous Joint Field Activities and the villagers did not know anything. The analyst insisted they land at the village and the Lao official relented. Once in the village, the villagers told the two Americans they knew of two crash sites near the village they had not told the previous teams about because they were scared. After the six other team members flew to the village, the team searched for the crash site in the 12 foot deep elephant grass. Eventually, the villagers were able to relocate the crash site, with the HH-3 rotor head being the prominent feature. A search of the area found three boot soles and other evidence the crew was onboard the helicopter when it crashed. The crash site is currently being excavated on the 77th Joint Field Activity which began on 17 January 2003.

NEWS RELEASE



**JOINT TASK FORCE-FULL ACCOUNTING PUBLIC AFFAIRS
(808) 477-5301**

**RELEASE NO. #03-03
Feb. 11, 2003**

REPATRIATION CEREMONY

CAMP H.M. SMITH, Hawaii – Remains believed to be associated with two cases of unaccounted-for American servicemen in Southeast Asia will arrive home to American soil Friday, Feb. 14. A joint honor guard will commemorate their arrival in a ceremony at 9 a.m. at Hickam Air Force Base outside the 15th Air Base Wing base operations building. Numerous former Vietnam prisoners-of-war are scheduled to attend the ceremony and activities marking the 30-year anniversary of Operation Homecoming.

Following the arrival ceremony, the remains will be transported to the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) where the forensic identification process will begin.

Military and civilian members who recovered the remains during recent search and recovery missions include personnel from Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA) and the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory. Recent Joint Field Activities recovered the remains of individuals lost in Laos. The missions are part of an on-going effort to provide the fullest possible accounting for American service members still missing or unaccounted-for as a result of the Vietnam War.

There are currently 1,889 Americans still unaccounted-for in Southeast Asia – 1,444 in Vietnam, 381 in Laos, 56 in Cambodia, and eight in the territorial waters of China.

MEDIA NOTES:

- • For media access to Hickam
- • Call Hickam Media Relations at (808) 449-6367 before 4 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 12
- • Media escorts will depart from the Hickam front gate at 8:15 a.m., Friday, Feb. 14
- • JTF-FA Public Affairs contact is Captain Gina Jackson (808) 477-5301
- • CILHI Public Affairs contact is Ginger Couden or Staff Sgt. Sebastian Harris (808) 448-8903 x 109
- • For more information on the Full Accounting mission go to www.pacom.mil/jtffa.htm or www.cilhi.army.mil

WE NEED YOUR HELP: Today's technology allows us to identify some remains through mitochondrial DNA. If you know of a family member who is from the maternal bloodline of an unaccounted-for serviceperson, please ask them to contact the military services to provide a blood sample at U.S. Army: (800) 982-2490; U.S. Air Force: (800) 531-5510; U.S. Navy: (800) 443-9298; U.S. Marine Corps: (800) 847-1597.

JG 23 Crew Remains Return



A joint service honor guard carries the remains of the crew of Jolly Green 23 upon their arrival back on American soil on February 14, 2003 at Hickham AFB in Hawaii. The remains were transported to the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) where efforts will begin to identify them.

On 9 June 1968 US Coast Guard Lt. Jack C. Rittichier, pilot; and US Air Force Capt. Richard C. Yeend, Jr., Co-pilot; SSgt. Elmer L. Holden, flight engineer; and Sgt. James D. Locker, Pararescueman; comprised the crew of a HH3E helicopter (tail #67-14710), call sign "Jolly Green 23".

Jolly Green 23 was flying a SAR mission for HELLBORNE 215, a USMC A-4E piloted by 1Lt Walter R. Schmidt Jr. (MIA), who was downed northwest of the A Shau Valley, in the middle of a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) encampment, thirty seven miles west of Hue RVN. Voice contact was established with the survivor, who reported he possibly had a broken arm and leg. The enemy was using him as bait to lure SAR aircraft, especially the very vulnerable Jolly Green Giants, within killing range. Air strikes pounded the area and brutalized the enemy, but with little effect.

Three times the lead helicopter, Jolly Green 22, attempted to reach Schmidt, but they were unsuccessful due to the intense ground fire. When that Jolly was forced to depart because of low fuel, Jim's aircraft assumed the low bird role. After suppressive fire was put in, Jolly Green 23 moved in to attempt the pickup. The crew fought its way in but was forced to withdraw. Again it went in, this time surrounded by gun ships, but again the enemy met them head on.

As the Jolly Green Giant hovered over the rugged jungle covered mountains approximately 9 miles northwest of the A Shau Valley floor near the downed pilot, the helicopter was struck by heavy enemy ground fire. It was seen to fall to the ground in flames and disintegrate upon impact by the onsite Forward Air Controller (FAC) just to the west of a primary road used by the communists to infiltrate troops and supplies into South Vietnam from the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The location of loss was approximately 1300 meters northeast of the village of Ka Kou, 12 miles northwest of the village of A Luoi, 25 miles southeast of Khe Sanh and 29 miles west-southwest of Hue. This location was also 4 miles north of the South Vietnamese/Lao border, near the border between Thua Thien and Hue Provinces.

The pilot of Jolly Green 23 attempted to land in a small clearing, but the helicopter exploded when it hit the ground and burned intensely, killing Jim Locker and all the others on board. >Another aircraft flew over the wreckage, but its crew saw no survivors and heard no emergency beeper signals. Because of the intense enemy presence in the area, no ground search was possible. The pilot they were attempting to pick up was later rescued by another search and rescue (SAR) team. Jack Rittichier, Richard Yeend, Elmer Holden and James Locker were immediately listed Killed in Action/Body Not Recovered.

On 12 October 1991 a villager turned in to the "Office PA15 - Public Security", Dong Ngai Province, Vietnam, a dogtag and remains reportedly belonging to Lt. Rittichier. The information on the dogtag correlates with the correct data for Jack Rittichier. That information was provided to US personnel, however, the dogtag and remains were not turned over by the Vietnamese. There was no information provided by the villager as to the fate of Elmer Holden, James Locker or Richard Yeend.

While there is little doubt the crew of the Jolly Green Giant died when their helicopter crashed into the dense jungle covered mountains located at the northern edge of the A Shau Valley, each man has the right to have his remains returned to his family, friends and country if at all possible.

For other Americans who remain unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, their fate could be quite different. Since the end of the war well over 21,000 reports of American prisoners, missing and otherwise unaccounted for have been received by our government. Many of these reports document LIVE American Prisoners or War remaining throughout Southeast Asia TODAY. Rescue aircrews in Vietnam were called upon to fly in many dangerous circumstances, and they were prepared to be wounded, killed or captured. It probably never occurred to them that they could be abandoned by the country they so proudly served.

The Air Force has dedicated two buildings to the memory of Jim Locker, at Keesler AFB, Mississippi and at Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio.

 Lt. Jack C. Rittichier, USCG Pilot	Captain Richard C. Yeend Co-pilot



SSGT Elmer L. Holden
9-Jun-68 USAF



SGT James D. Locker
9-Jun-68 USAF

DECLASSIFIED

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



REPLY TO
ATTN OF: 370

SUBJECT: MISSION NARRATIVE REPORT (1-3-63, 9 June 68) (U) SUBJECT TO DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652

370 *HK*
TO: JSARC
IN TURN

Downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL

10 AUG 1971

IAW AFR 205-2

DECLASSIFIED ON 31 DEC 74

1. (U) This report is submitted in accordance with ARRSN 55-2/3 ARRGp
Sup 1, dated 15 Apr 1968.

2. (S) On Sunday, 9 June, at 0225Z Jolly Green 22 (Low Position) and JG 23
(High Position) were scrambled from Danang on rescue mission 1-3-63 which
involved a downed pilot, Hellborn 215, at 220/37/69. JG 22 took off at 0230Z
and made a spiraling climb north of CH 77 while obtaining artillery clear-
ance to fly west of CH 77 toward the reported rescue area. JG 23 was air-
borne 15 minutes after JG 22 due to a delay from a previous mission. JG 22
proceeded out the 265° radial of CH 77 and was followed by JG 23 a few
minutes later. After flying west for approximately 30 miles, JG 22 was able
to contact Trail 36 who was directing air strikes around the survivor. Trail
36 informed JG 22 that the rescue area was at 260/36/69. JG 22 immediately
turned northwest in order to intercept the 265° radial out of CH 69 to the
area. JG 23 had not heard the change in position, nor could 22 contact him
until later and by that time it was more feasible for JG 23 to route them-
selves south of the A Chau Valley and up the west side.

3. (S) JG 22 arrived at the rescue area at approximately 0335Z and orbited
with two Scarface helicopter gunships until JG 23 arrived on scene at 0355Z.
The downed pilot was located under his parachute a few yards from a road
that ran approximately east - west at an altitude of about 3200'. A steep
hill overlooked his position to the south and a ravine was below his locat-
ion to the north with a steep ridge line running parallel to the ravine.
The entire area was reported to be extremely hostile with automatic and anti-
aircraft weapons. One 37AAA site was neutralized just prior to JG 23's
arrival. Trail 36, who had been in contact with the downed pilot, reported
that the pilot had a broken leg and a possible broken arm and would probably
require a PJ to assist him. Numerous suppression strikes by Gunfighter,
Spads and A-4 aircraft had been directed into the area. As no ground fire
had been observed during the last several passes by the Spads, Trail 36 re-
quested a rescue attempt. With JG 23 as high bird, JG 22 descended into
the area in a spiraling right turn, tip tanks were jettisoned and fuel dump-
ed for a high altitude recovery. JG 22 joined with two Scarface gunships
and initiated a rapid descending 270° overhead approach. After 90° of turn
JG 22 received heavy ground fire from the valley floor and surrounding rid-
ges. It was felt at this time that the aircraft had been hit. The approach
was terminated with a pullup and a steep left turn. After determining that
all aircraft systems were operational JG 22 again joined with the gunships
and initiated a straight in approach from the Northwest to avoid the area
previously flown over. As airspeed was reduced to establish a hover, extre-
mely heavy ground fire was directed at JG 22, most of which was coming from
GROUND.

"Reproduced on 14 Feb 64 by LAR (D) 114
by authority of ARDC. Reproduced
Dep't # 1 of 1 OY(SL) 11"

ARDC # 68/201

68-40-1652

68-40-1656

Downgraded at 3 year
intervals; declassified
after 10 years

Downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL

10 AUG 1971 IAW AFR 205-2

DECLASSIFIED

the ridge line to the left of the helicopter. The RS and FE returned fire with the aircrafts M-60 machine guns and an immediate pullout was initiated. JG 22 returned to a orbit position while Trail 36 directed suppression strikes into the area. After approximately 20 minutes of intense fire suppression activity JG 22 joined with two Scarface gunships and two Spads, 01 and 02, for another rescue attempt. Again, just short of the downed pilot heavy automatic weapons and small arms fire was directed at the Jolly Green from all quadrants. Tracers were seen coming up at us from the ravine, from the ridge line to the left and from the hillside above and in front of us. The FE and RS returned fire immediately. A sharp right turn and go around was executed. JG 22 returned to the previous orbit position. At this time JG 22 was near bingo fuel. Trail 36 and Crown 2 were advised that by the time further suppression strikes could be completed JG 22 would have to depart the area. Trail 36 then asked JG 23 if he would be able to make a rescue attempt. JG 23 replied that he would and that he would use the Scarface helicopter gunships for high cover. JG 22 stayed in the area until critical low fuel forced departure. Shortly after JG 22 left the SAR area JG 23 began his approach to the survivor with gunships and A-1's for suppression. All during his approach JG 22 heard JG 23 calling heavy gunfire and relaying the direction of incoming fire to the Spads and gunships. JG 23 continued his approach under fire until initiating a hover over the survivor at which time he decided the attempt to hover would be futile. At this time JG 22 lost radio contact with the SAR effort. JG 22 landed at CH 69 after both "low fuel warning lights" had been on for 10 minutes.

4. (S) After refueling and a quick check for battle damage at CH 69. (One hit had been taken in a non critical area.) JG 22 returned to the SAR area. Enroute, Crown was asked about the status of the mission and JG 22 was informed that JG 23 had crashed after his second approach and there was no sign of survivors. According to the statement of Trail 33, JG 23 was led in for his second attempt by Trail 33 along with 2 gunships and 2 Spads for cover. JG 23 made an approach and upon entering a hover over the downed pilot and making a slow turn clockwise over the site, he reported he was receiving ground fire. Trail 33 observed that JG 23 was burning on the left side just above and aft of the cockpit. Trail 33 informed JG 23 that his left side was on fire at which time he started moving out toward the west. After traveling about 1200 meters the fire went out and Trail 33 was about to advise JG 23 of this when JG 23 suddenly crashed. Trail 33 said that at an altitude of approximately 50' JG 23's rotor very noticeably slowed down and it looked like he was attempting to set the helicopter down on a small knoll. Upon crashing the entire aircraft burst into a fire ball and within 30 seconds the entire structure was nothing but smoking ashes. The aircraft had melted out of sight. Trail 33 felt there was nothing anyone could do to help JG 23 and that the crash was a direct result of hostile ground fire.

5. (S) JG 28 arrived in the rescue area at 0520Z and orbited for 1 hour before being cleared in to pickup Hellborn 215. JG 22 & 24 provided high cover for the attempt. The approach was made with 2 Huey gunships, Sandy 09 & 10, and Seaworthy 4-1 & 4-2 for cover. JG 28 came to a hover and was maneuvering for the pickup when extremely severe ground fire from all directions opened up on them. The FE & RS on JG 28 returned fire immediately and a diving exit was made around a mountain and over a ridge line to the southwest.

GROUP 4

Downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL

1 0 AUG 1971

DAWATP002-8

CONFIDENTIAL

Downgraded at 3 year intervals; declassified after 12 years

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

6. (S) Number 2 engine was cut off immediately after initiating the pullout because of a fire warning light and a drop in torque. The FE in JG 28 and other aircraft reported smoke coming out of #2 engine so both fire bottles were used to extinguish the fire. The maximum altitude that could be maintained with one engine was 3500', making it impossible to clear the mountains in the area. JG 24 came down from orbit position to escort JG 28 by following in trail. The 2 JG's were then led out of the area by Trail 36 and escorted by Sandy 9 & 10. The fact that JG 28 could only maintain 3500' and continued drawing intermittent heavy ground fire made it necessary to consider a forced landing. Trail 36 advised that he could get JG 28 into Khe Sanh, which was due north, if enough altitude could be gained to cross a ridge line north of the valley in which JG 28 was flying. Everything possible was thrown out to gain altitude, as the ridge was approximately 3700' elevation. JG 28 and 24 drew heavy ground fire crossing the valley and JG 28 lost altitude maneuvering to avoid ground fire. JG 28 regained altitude, crossed the ridge to a safe area, and landed at Khe Sanh with no further difficulties.

7. (S) After escorting JG 28 into Khe Sanh, JG 24 refueled at Landing Zone Stud, 070/7/85 and then returned to the rescue area. After the area had been worked over, Crown 2 and Trail 33, advised that 2 Sandy's would go across and evaluate the site prior to the next attempt. The Sandy aircraft did this and advised that there was no ground fire. JG 22 had lost UHF contact and was bingo fuel so Crown 2 suggested JG 24 make the approach. While JG 22 was still in the area JG 24 initiated the approach, dropped tip tanks, and continued in with Sandy's as cover on either side and Spads behind. Just as JG 24 transitioned to a hover, the FE called "pull off, Ground fire" and began returning fire himself. JG 24 began to exit on a pre-selected heading of 210° when the RCC observed ground fire coming from in front and above, apparently 50 caliber. JG 24 immediately turned right to 160° and dove down a ridge line only to find ground fire from below. Upon attaining climb speed, JG 24 exited the area to the north. At this time JG 22 was critically low on fuel and had to leave the area to refuel at CH 69. JG 24 advised Trail 33 and Crown 2 that the fire was coming from the ridge to the right of Hellborn 215 and from "spider" holes immediately below the road. Crown 2 advised JG 24 to go to CH 69 for fuel. JG 24 RTB'd to CH 69 for fuel after advising Crown that the area was still hot.

8. (S) JG 27 contacted JG 24 for an evaluation and JG 24 advised that the area was hot. Automatic weapons fire was located 20 to 30 yards south & north of the survivor and that the survivor was below his parachute, not moving or in radio contact. JG 24 further advised that more attempts were ill advised. JG 24 refueled at CH 69 after JG 22 had left and was returning to the rescue area. After refueling JG 24 was RTB'd to CH 77, arriving at 1010Z. The RCC of JG 24 contacted Queen by landline and passed his evaluation and recommendations. Queen called back with JSARC and the RCC of JG 24 passed the same information and recommendations to JSARC.

9. (S) JG 27 (low position) and JG 23 (high position) arrived in the rescue area at 0845Z, followed shortly by JG 22 who had returned from CH 69. All 3 JG's orbited high awaiting instructions while more CBU and napalm were dropped around the area. At 0945Z it was decided to use CBU 19's in an attempt to rescue the survivor, as all other means had failed. The crews of JG 22, 27 and 33 were instructed to put their gas masks on in preparation for the CBU 19 and all three crews experienced the same problem. The microphone fittings in the gas masks were not compatible with the crew members helmets. No voice communications were possible either inside or outside the helicopters with the masks on. A rescue attempt using CBU 19 under

GROUP 4

Downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL

8 0 AUG 1977

REF ID: A68305-2

Downgraded at 3 year
intervals; declassified
after 12 years

DECLASSIFIED

these circumstances was impossible. In an attempt to find some workable arrangement, the FE on JG 33 volunteered to remove his helmet and use a headset, with which the gas mask was compatible. The pararescueman used an older type gas mask, which was compatible with his helmet and the RCCP devised a method of transmitting by putting his boom mike on his larynx. The RCC of JG 33 had a different type boom mike and was unable to transmit. Although the communications arrangement was minimum satisfactory the crew of JG 33 felt that an attempt could be made using the system.

10. (S) JG 33 started an approach to the area after the CBU 19 had been dropped on both sides of the survivor. JG 33 entered a hover and stayed there until being driven off by ground fire approximately 30 seconds later. While in the hover, the FE observed the body of the survivor partially covered by the parachute. He was lying on his back with one leg, which appeared broken, folded back under him. He was wearing a gray flying suit. No movement was observed. JG 33 left the area to refuel and landed at CH 103. While refueling, JG 33, 27 and 22 received word from Crown to RTB. The mission had been cancelled at 1030Z.

11. (S) Weather was not a factor until late in the mission when a broken cloud layer formed at 4500' MSL. Visibility was very good throughout the day. Crew coordination aboard all Jolly Greens was excellent. Extremely heavy ground fire including automatic weapons of 30 and 50 caliber and 37AAA were encountered in the SAR area. The weapons were obviously positioned to protect the road which serves as a main supply route from Laos to the northern A Shau Valley. Numerous caves, bunkers and foxholes were observed in the immediate area around the downed pilot. This, combined with the terrain features, made sterilization of the area impossible.

12. (U) Crewmembers of the Jolly Greens were:

Jolly Green 22

RCC ANDERSON, ARTHUR J. MAJ
RCCP DILLON, JOSEPH J. CAPT
FE MALONE, ALVIN A. SGT
RS HINDMAN, RICKY D. A1C
AF HAGERTY, P.E. SSGT

Jolly Green 23

RCC RITTICHER, JACK C. LT USCG
RCCP YEEND, RICHARD C. CAPT
FE HOLDEN, ELMER L. SSGT
RS LOCKER, JAMES D. SGT

Jolly Green 26

RCC GRIGGS, JERRY M. CAPT
RCCP HAGEN, HARRY W. JR. CAPT
FE CARTER, ODELL SGT
RS CASSIDY, ROBERT K. A1C

Jolly Green 24

RCC STRINGER, HARVIE L. MAJ
RCCP WIEGARD, DON W. CAPT
FE BALDWIN, ROBERT H. SSGT
RS NORTHERN, STEVE M. SGT

Jolly Green 27

RCC HOAG, STUART H. MAJ
RCCP BYRD, WILLIAM B. JR. CAPT
FE STURBAUGH, WINDELL L. SSGT
RS CLAUDIUS, DONALD K. JR. SGT

Jolly Green 33

RCC BRENNAN, WILLIAM E. CAPT
RCCP ASHLEY, PAUL D. CAPT
FE RODRIQUEZ, DAVID SGT
RS CASBEER, ERNEST D. SGT

Arthur J. Anderson
ARTHUR J. ANDERSON, MAJ, USAF
Rescue Crew Commander

GROUP 4

Downgraded at 3 year
intervals; declassified
after 12 years

Downgraded to CONFIDENTIAL

10 AUG 1971

IAW AFR 205-2

(Date) u.s.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

RESCUE MISSION NARRATIVE

HELL BORNE 215 MISSION NUMBER 1-3-63

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED 347
95

Crown 01 was on orbit for air refueling of Jolly Green at Tango orbit when word was received from Cricket control at 0226Z that Hellborne 215 A-4 was downed by ground fire. His position was recorded as 220/27/69 SAR forces were scramble at 0230Z and due to Mission 1-3-61 Freq 271.9/142.7 was assigned as SAR primary. SAR forces consisted of: Crown 01, Jolly Green 23 low/22 Spad 01/02 escort. Additional forces consisted of gunships call sign Scarface 6-1 6-2, FACs Covey 265 Trail 35, 33, 36. Position updated at 0248 to 260/36/69 by Covey 265. Highest elevation in area 4000ft. Crash site wx 5000 sc to broken. 3100 - 3200 feet. Au Chau valley. Chute spotted by FAC survivor under chute with broken right leg and left arm. Voice contact excellent with survivor. Survivor requested immediate medical aid unable to board penetrator without help. Ground fire in area was reported to be 50 cal small arms and AAA. Bunkers and trucks spotted in the immediate area. by FAC Trail 35. On scene control Covey 265 Crown 01 airborne mission control. Jolly Green and Spads held northwest of site until suppressed ground fire in the area and safe for entry. Hellborne flight 522 Ring Neck 528 and Gun-fighter flight 7 & 8 sullivan flt expend ordinance CBU, napalm under FAC direction. 0340Z Jollys and Spads in area. Covey 265 reported no ground fire. 0350Z 0400Z survivor getting smoke ready for use in pickup. Planned drop of PJ to aid pilot. First attempt draws ground fire on Jolly 22 and Jollys Spads and gunships egress from scene. Site where ground fire was observed is strafed and bombed. Second attempt made after reorganization at 0425Z with Jolly Green 23L/22 preceded by Spad 01/02 and flanked by Scarface 6-1/6-2 at 0426A, Jolly Green 23L reported hit by ground fire and verified by Spad 01 as on fire. JG 23 crashed and burned immediately. Observed by Spad 01 with no survivors - no beepers. SAR forces directed to egress and hold. to NW. Jolly Green 22 low on fuel RTB Jolly 24 enters area and is joined by Jolly Green 28 Spad 02 is also hit at 0445Z and is RTB to Channel 77. with Spad 01. More strikes are directed in by FAC and Crown 01 coordinates ingress and egress routes with Jollys 28/24 gunships Seaworthy 4-1, 4-2 Sandy 9,10 arrived area at 0540Z and orbit with Jolly and gunships. Sent to guard freq and told to work with Trail 33 to familiarize themselves with area. After repeated strikes forces are committed to SAR attempt at 0545Z. Jolly 28L/24 High 22 backup holding Seaworthy 4-1 left of Jolly 28 and Seaworthy 4-2 right side Sandy 9,10 to lead in just ahead of force and arrive over scene just prior to Jollys. Headings into and out of area not concurred in. Crown 01 coordinates with all FAC's and decide on 150° in/220° out. Fast movers Cheetah and Chippie strike gun emplacement discovered earlier by Jolly 22. Forces enter 0607Z make pass into area Jolly 28 receives fire as Trail 36 lays smoke on ridges. Forces are directed by Crown to egress immediately. Jolly 28 lose 1 engine and is vectored out of area by Trail 33 to Khe Sahn with Sandy 9 & 10 Seaworthy 4-1, 4-2 in escort. Voice contact with survivor is lost at this time and not regained. False smoke signal was spotted on ridge during rescue attempt. Crown 01 request additional gunships, continues use of fighter strikes, holds SAR force high. 0657Z mission control is coordinated with Crown 02 and relinquished. Crown 01 remains until 0715Z for any assistance RTB's at that time. Mission narrative continues with Crown 02.

DATE? 9 JUNE 1968

AUTHOR?

MAJOR CARUANA
LT. COL KNUDSON
MAJ. PARTEN

RO. SSGT DAVIS
FG TSGT CEE / ELLER
LM SSGT TAYLOR

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
~~SECRET~~

39ARRS/C
68-6-002

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

9 Jun 68

Crown 2, relieved Crown 1 at 0715Z in attempted recovery of Hell Borne 215. Jolly Green 28 was successfully escorted to LZ Stud. Numerous more high performance strikes were put into the area with little or no success. The area seemed to be a strong hold with ample defensive positions for the enemy. CBU-24, MK 82 and CBU 25 were employed to suppress ground fire, however, when Spads and Sandys made passes there was little ground fire, but when JG 31L and 22 made another attempt, heavy ground fire was encountered. The on scene command was passed to Covey 265 while Trail 33 returned for refueling. (0830) Word was received from King that two flights of Marine fighters with napalm and Sandys 5 and 6 with CS were being sent to the scene. A great deal of confusion arose over who was equipped to be in the area if this was employed. Since a pararescueman was required on the ground to assist the unconscious pilot, JG 31, 22 and 24 advised that due to their equipment they would be unable to talk with the PJ. The confusion was finally resolved at 0900 and the plan of attack formulated. The Jolly would approach with Spads and Sandys front and rear, after the gas had been employed along the ridge line. It was decided among the Spads, Sandys and Covey 265 not to follow the gas with the napalm, as planned by King. The gas was laid down and the JGs immediately went in. They took ground fire and egressed the area. At 0925 Queen advised to expend the remaining ordnance and RTB the forces. Sandy 5 was not happy with this decision, nor was Crown. During the passes used in expending Spad reported that he got "a good whiff of the stuff". This possibly indicated that ample time had not been allowed for the gas to take effect or spread sufficiently. It was Crown's opinion that King's idea was to use the gas to drive the enemy from their defenses and the napalm to kill them. Later investigation revealed that in high temperatures this gas changes its chemical compounds and becomes lethal. All forces were RTB at 2000.

[illegible]

- b. Ground fire in area surrounding 260/36/69.
 - c. Weather no factor.
 - d. Excellent
 - e. Good
 - f. See narrative
 - g. See narrative
 - h. Individual helped until he apparently lost consciousness from his injuries.
 - i. N/A
 - j. N/A
 - k. Returned to orbit
 - l. Unknown, see Jolly Green record of mission.
 - m. Cs and JG protective equipment (masks), poor knowledge of equipment.
 - n. Not employed
 - o. See item m and narrative.
- GROUP-
Downer died at 3 ye

Crew list See item 3 attached

Downer died at 3 year intervals.

~~SECRET~~

39 ARRIS/C

68-7-0014

William E. Fuppe III