

LAOS ANALYST LEAD SHEET

UPDATE

VIETNAM PRIORITY CASE: 1205

(LAST KNOWN ALIVE)

RANK & NAME(s): 1LT SCHMIDT, WALTER R. JR.

POSITION: -01 PILOT

VEHICLE/#: A-4E/151080

STATUS: INVESTIGATE

CALL SIGN: HELLBORNE 215

PROVINCE: SALAVAN

DATE/TIME: 9 JUN 68/0920G

DISTRICT: TA-OY

(SAR LOG) (UTM/ (GEO) : 48Q YD 23 03

(POSSIBLY) SAMOUAY

(161756N 1070514E)

(USSOCOM POINT 1) : 48Q YD 22275 03476

(161818N 1070435E)

(POINT 2) : 48Q YD 23464 03274

(161811N 1070515E)

UNIT: USMC, VMA-121, MAG-12,

1ST MAW, CHU LAI AB, RVN

MAPS: SERIES L7014, 6441-IV, 1:50,000, EDITION 3-TPC, A LOUI

SERIES L1501, NE 48-16, 1:250,000, EDITION 6, HUE

SOVIET SERIES E-48-143

J223 ANALYST: MR. BILL FORSYTH

ORDNANCE ONBOARD: UNKNOWN (STANDARD 2 X MK12 20MM GUNS OR 2 X 30MM DEFA 553
CANNON IN WING ROOTS)

AIRCRAFT IDENTIFICATION FEATURES: MCDONNELL DOUGLAS "SKYHAWK"; NICKNAME
"THE SCOOTER"; SINGLE-SEAT; 12.27M (LENGTH) X 8.38M (WINGSPAN); ENGINE 1 X
PRATT & WHITNEY J52-6 TWO-SHAFT TURBOJET.

OTHER IDENTIFICATION FEATURES: NONE.

BASIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

- ON 9 JUNE 1968, THE A-4E WAS THE LEAD AIRCRAFT IN A FLIGHT OF TWO ON A
COMBAT SUPPORT MISSION OVER THE NORTHERN ASHAU VALLEY. DURING A BOMBING
RUN, THE AIRCRAFT WAS HIT BY GROUND FIRE AND THE PILOT SUCCESSFULLY
EJECTED, LANDING IN TREES. RADIO CONTACT WAS ESTABLISHED AND A SEARCH AND
RESCUE EFFORT WAS INITIATED, WHICH RESULTED IN ONE OF THE RESCUE
HELICOPTERS BEING SHOT DOWN AND TWO OTHERS HEAVILY DAMAGED. HOSTILE FIRE
PREVENTED THE RESCUE FORCES FROM REACHING THE DOWNED PILOT AND THE EFFORT
WAS SUSPENDED AT DARK. RESCUE OPERATIONS RESUMED THE NEXT DAY, BUT THERE
WAS NO FURTHER CONTACT WITH THE PILOT.

(UPDATED 18 DECEMBER 1998)

DOCUMENTATION COMMENTS:

- JOINT TEAMS HAVE EXTENSIVELY INVESTIGATED THIS PCIT CASE AND CASE 1206 IN THE SRV IN THE AREA OF THE RECORD LOCATION WITH NEGATIVE RESULTS. AN ENTRY IN THE **SEARCH AND RESCUE LOG INDICATES THE "SURVIVOR" (CASE 1205 INDIVIDUAL) WAS AT 260 DEGREES, 36 NAUTICAL MILES, FROM TACAN CHANNEL 69 AT HUE-PHU BAI, WHICH PLOTS TO YD 23 03, WHICH IS IN LAOS, ACROSS THE BORDER FROM THE RECORD LOCATION. ANOTHER ENTRY IN THE SAR LOG FOR THE LOCATION OF THE CASE 1206 SHOT DOWN ALSO PLOTS TO THIS SAME AREA IN LAOS (REF: 3RD AEROSPACE RESCUE AND RECOVERY GROUP SEARCH AND RESCUE LOG, 9 JUNE 1968, ENTRY 00303Z)**

- **ANOTHER SAR LOG ENTRY (09/0237Z) READS "TERRAIN IS ROLLING LOW HILLS, SURVIVOR ON TOP OF HILL. . . . AREA IS RELATIVELY FLAT AND SURVIVOR IS HIDING UNDER BRUSH." THIS DESCRIPTION GENERALLY FITS THE AREA OF THE SAR LOG COORDINATES AND NOT THE RECORD LOCATION FOR CASE 1205.**

- THE GROUP 559 DOCUMENT HAS FIVE ENTRIES FOR THE UNIT WHICH APPEARS TO HAVE SHOT DOWN THE CASE 1205 AIRCRAFT. AN ENTRY (BOGUS CLAIM) FOR THE COMPANY ON THE DAY PRIOR TO THE 1205/1206 INCIDENT DATE HAS THE NOTATION "STOPPED TO FIGHT ENROUTE TO SOUTH VIETNAM". THE NEXT ENTRY AFTER THE 1205/1206 INCIDENT IS 19 DAYS LATER AND CORRELATES WELL WITH THE CASE 1218 SHOT DOWN, WHICH OCCURRED IN LAOS. BASED ON THIS INFORMATION, THERE IS A POSSIBILITY BOTH THE 1205 AND 1206 INCIDENTS TOOK PLACE IN LAOS RATHER THAN VIETNAM.

PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS:

- DURING THE SEVENTH ITERATION (31 JUL - 19 AUG 1989), THE FIELD TEAM INTERVIEWED FORMER NLF OFFICIALS WHO STATED THAT NO AIRCRAFT EVER CRASHED IN THE VICINITY OF WHERE U.S. RECORDS INDICATE CASE 1205 OCCURRED. THE TEAM TRAVELLED ON FOOT TO THE CRASH SITE AND PILOT'S LAST KNOWN LOCATION WITHOUT SUCCESS. **(REF JCRC LIAISON BANGKOK TH 230940Z AUG 89; SUBJ: DETAILED REPORT OF INVESTIGATION OF CASE 1205)**

- FROM 29 APRIL TO 3 MAY 92, DURING THE 17TH JFA IN THE SRV, THE TEAM INTERVIEWED TWO WITNESSES WHO PROVIDED INFORMATION INCONSISTENT WITH CASE 1205. THE TEAM TRAVELED TO THE AIRCRAFT CRASH SITE AND QUESTIONED TWO LONG-TERM LOCAL RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE CRASH OF A JET AIRCRAFT IN THE AREA. BOTH VILLAGERS STATED NO U.S. JET AIRCRAFT HAD EVER CRASHED NEAR THEIR HAMLET NOR HAD VILLAGERS EVER SCAVENGED JET AIRCRAFT WRECKAGE FROM THE AREA. THE TEAM CONDUCTED AN AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE OF THE ALLEGED CRASH SITE, BUT THICK VEGETATION PREVENTED A CLEAR VIEW OF THE VALLEY FLOOR. DURING THE INVESTIGATION, THE TEAM DID NOT OBTAIN INFORMATION RELATED TO THE INCIDENT. **(REF: CDR JTF-FA DET ONE BANGKOK TH 021038Z JUN 92; SUBJ: FIELD INVESTIGATION REPORT CONCERNING CASE 1205)**

- ON 17 NOV 93, THE PRIORITY CASE INVESTIGATION TEAM (PCIT) INVESTIGATED CASE 1205 IN THUA THIEN-HUE PROVINCE. THE TEAM INTERVIEWED ONE WITNESS WHO PROVIDED NO INFORMATION REGARDING THIS CASE. TWO OTHER WITNESSES WERE INTERVIEWED BY MEMBERS OF THE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM INTERVIEW TEAM. VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS IN THUA THIEN-HUE PROVINCE DENIED THE EXISTENCE OF ANY SUPPORTING ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTATION ASSOCIATED WITH CASE 1205. **(REF: CDR JTF-FA HONOLULU HI 170705Z FEB 94; SUBJ: PRIORITY CASE INVESTIGATION TEAM REPORT: CASE 1205)**

- 1205 CONTINUED

- ON 14 NOV 96, THE VNOSMP TURNED OVER A UNILATERAL INVESTIGATION REPORT OF CASE 1205. THE REPORT PROVIDED NO NEW INFORMATION AND DID NOT ADDRESS THE SPECIFIC INVESTIGATION REQUIREMENTS. (REF: CDR JTF-FA HONOLULU HI 140912Z OCT 97; SUBJ: TRANSLATION AND EVALUATION OF VIETNAMESE DOCUMENT; VIETNAM OFFICE SEEKING MISSING PERSONS (VNOSMP) UNILATERAL INVESTIGATION REPORT ON CASE 1205)

- IN SEPTEMBER 1998, THE U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AT HURLBURT FIELD, FLORIDA, PRODUCED A FLIGHT SIMULATION BASED ON THE EVENTS SURROUND CASE 1205 AND 1206. THREE WITNESS OF THE 1205 AND 1206 INCIDENTS WERE FLOW IN THE SIMULATOR AND PROVIDED THE THREE POSSIBLE COORDINATES OF THE LOSS LOCATION (YD 22275 03476; YD 23464 03274; YD 23132 00904). (REF: MEMO FROM USSOCOM)

- ON 15 THROUGH 18, 22, AND 23 OCTOBER 1998, DURING JFA 99-1L, THE INVESTIGATION ELEMENT (IE) CONDUCTED AN INVESTIGATION OF PRIORITY CASE 1205 IN SAMOUAY DISTRICT, SALAVAN PROVINCE, LPDR. THE IE INVESTIGATED AT ONE VILLAGE, INTERVIEWED THREE WITNESSES, AND SURVEYED ONE CRASH SITE IDENTIFIED BY THE VILLAGERS WHICH DID NOT CORRELATE TO CASE 1205. THE TEAM ALSO FOUND EVIDENCE OF A POSSIBLE GROUND LOSS NEAR THE CRASH SITE WHICH DOES NOT CORRELATE TO CASE 1205. ON 17 OCTOBER 1998, THE IE SEARCHED AN AREA IDENTIFIED BY A U.S. WITNESS (YD 232 009), BUT DID NOT FIND ANY EVIDENCE OF A CRASH SITE OR BURIAL SITE. THE TEAM POSTPONED THE REMAINDER OF THE INVESTIGATION UNTIL A FUTURE JFA. DUE TO THE RUGGED TERRAIN IN THE AREA AND ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS, TWO OF THE THREE SUSPECTED CRASH SITE LOCATIONS RECENTLY IDENTIFIED BY U.S. WITNESSES AND THE SEARCH AND RESCUE LOG LOCATION COULD NOT BE SEARCHED ON THIS JFA. (REF: CDR JTF-FA HONOLULU HI 241712Z NOV 98; SUBJ: DETAILED REPORT OF INVESTIGATION OF PRIORITY VIETNAM CASE 1205)

REMAINS:

- NONE.

POTENTIAL WITNESSES:

- NONE

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

- CONDUCT GROUND SEARCHES OF THE AREAS (YD 22275 03476 AND YD 23464 03274) IDENTIFIED BY U.S. WITNESSES DURING COMPUTER GENERATED FLIGHT SIMULATIONS CONDUCTED BY THE U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AT HURLBURT FIELD, FLORIDA, IN SEPTEMBER 1998.

- IN TA-OY AND POSSIBLY SAMOUAY DISTRICT, SALAVAN PROVINCE, INVESTIGATE THE CASE 1206 SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) LOG LOCATION (48Q YD 23 03). INVESTIGATE AT ANY VILLAGES IN THE AREA. A GROUND SEARCH IS NOT REQUIRED.

J223 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- SURVEY ANY CRASH SITES KNOWN TO VILLAGERS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN PREVIOUSLY VISITED BY JOINT TEAMS, UNLESS THEY CAN UNQUESTIONABLY BE CORRELATED TO A KNOWN OPERATIONAL LOSS.

- 1205 CONTINUED

COMMENTS:

- LAOS GROUND LOSSES 0598, 0608, 0763, 1191, ALONG WITH SRV GROUND LOSS CASES 1445 AND 1447, ALSO TOOK PLACE IN THIS AREA, BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR INFORMATION TO THESE INCIDENTS.

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(UPDATED 28 JULY 1998)

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- 1205 CONTINUED

REMAINS:

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POTENTIAL WITNESSES:

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SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

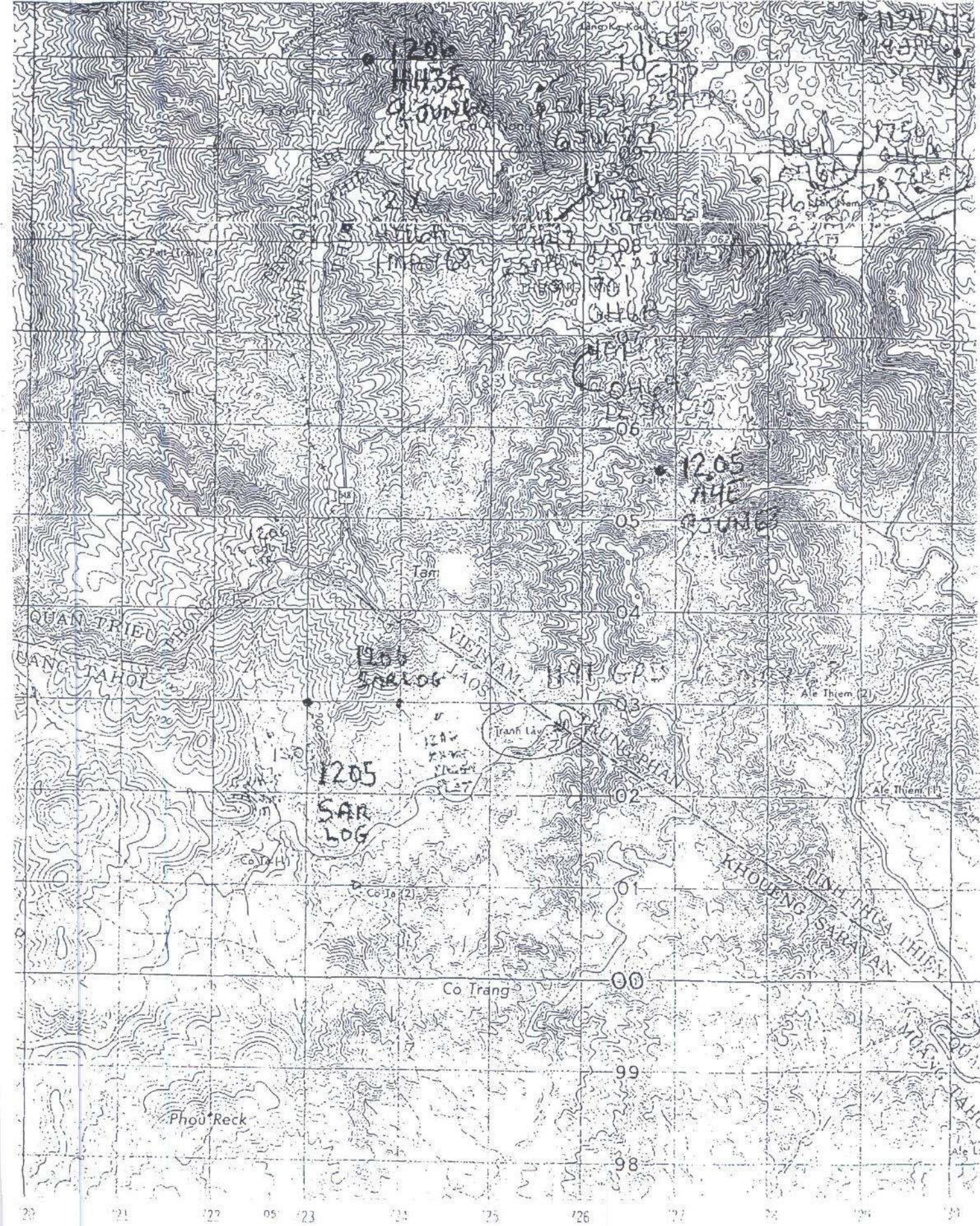
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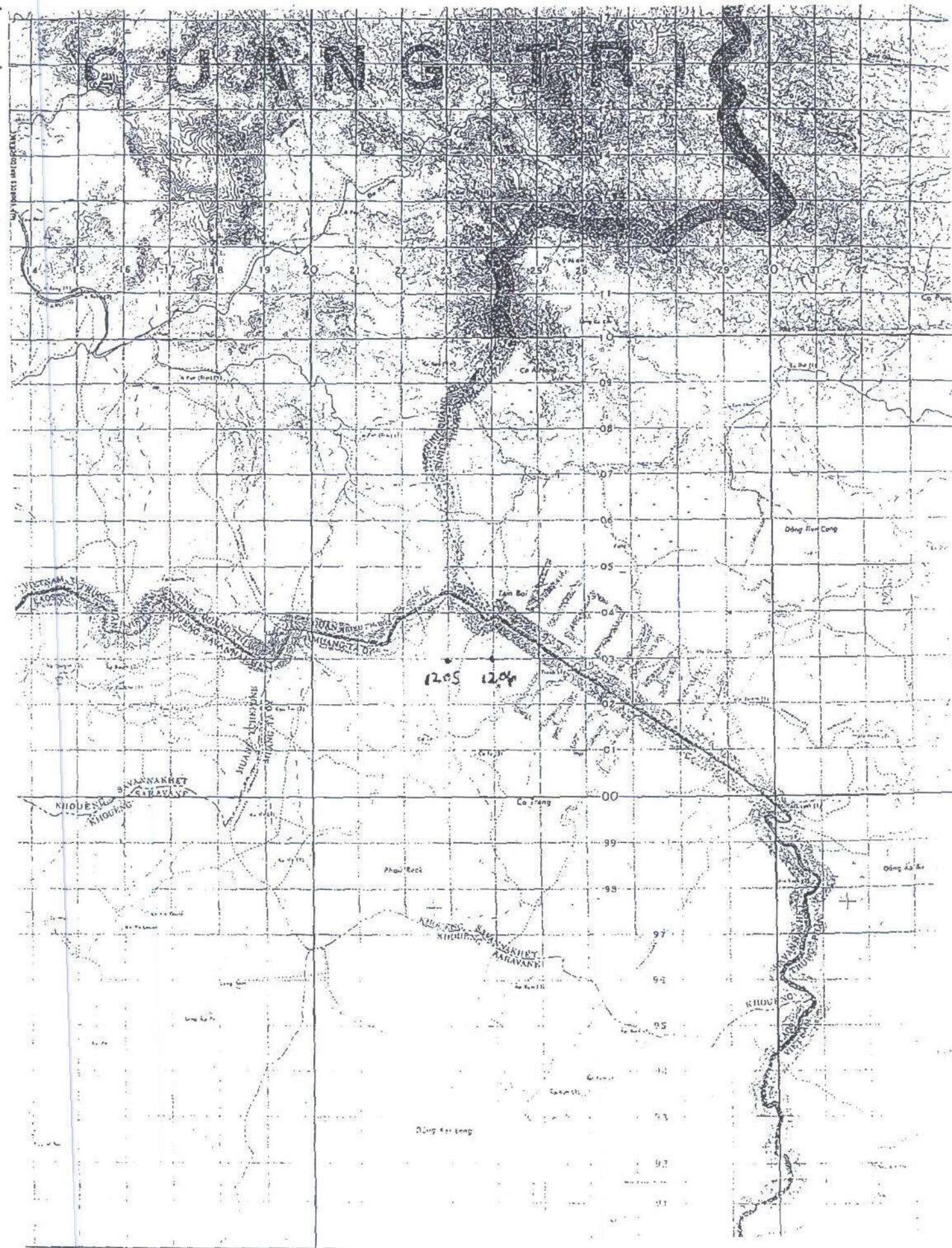
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COMMENTS:

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Refno	Mission Date	Service	Vehicle Type	Vehicle Number	Ctry	UTM
OPERA	69/07/14	USA	AH1G	6815075	VS	48Q YC155957
JOKER		700310	WRECKAGE	FUSELAGE?		48Q YC215955
				OLD??		
623019			AIRCRAFT	P RUWAI	LA	48P YC220984
OPERA	69/05/13	USA	OH6A	6716281	VS	48Q YC280958
JOKER	69/05/13	690513	LOH	BANSHEE 12		48Q YC287953
JSARC	67/05/10	ARMY	H34			48Q YC280980
JSARC	67/12/22	USMC	F4			48Q YD150010
COMPRE	68/12/18	681218	A6	MILESTONE		48Q YD157019
				405		
JSARC	68/12/18	NAVY	A6	MILESTONE		48Q YD157019
				405		
1447-0	69/05/23		GRND	\$	VS	48Q YD159039
OPERA	70/10/10	USA	AH1G	6815161	VS	48Q YD152052
OPERA	71/11/07	USA	OH6A	6607891	VS	48Q YD154067
OPERA	70/02/19	USA	AH1G	6815154	VS	48Q YD154086
0598-	95/01/26	95-3L	INVEST	B KOUTAI	LAO SL	48Q YD165027
0608-	95/01/26	95-3L	INVEST	B KOUTAI	LAO SL	48Q YD165027
0763-	95/01/26	95-3L	INVEST	B KOUTAI	LAO SL	48Q YD165027
1191-	95/01/26	95-3L	INVEST	B KOUTAI	LAO SL	48Q YD165027
0763-0	67/07/12		GRND	\$	LA	48Q YD177031
0763-	95/03/15	95-4L	SEARCH	RECORD	SL	48Q YD177031
				LOCATION		
0598-0	67/02/21		GRND	\$	LA	48Q YD188011
0598-	95/03/15	95-4L	SEARCH	RECORD	SL	48Q YD181024
				LOCATION		
0598-	95/03/15	95-4L	LZ	LZ USED BY	SL	48Q YD181024
				TEAM		
0608-0	67/03/06		GRND	\$	LA	48Q YD180036
0608-	95/03/09	95-4L	SEARCH	RECORD	SL	48Q YD180036
				LOCATION		
REFCON	0000000	K840323	GRAVE	SECOND HAND	VS	48Q YD2000000
OPERA	68/05/01	USA	OH6A	6607810	VS	48Q YD233082
1153-0	68/05/01		OH6A	7810	VS	48Q YD233082
1191-	95/03/14	95-4L	LZ	LZ USED BY	SL	48Q YD243021
				TEAM		
1191-0	68/05/23		GRND	\$	LA	48Q YD258028
1191-	95/03/14	95-4L	SEARCH	RECORD	SL	48Q YD258028
				LOCATION		
1701-0	71/02/10		OH6A	17765	VS	48Q YD257076
REFCON	7700000	M820141	GRAVE	FIRSTHAND	VS	48Q YD253090
REFCON	7700000	M820142	GRAVE	FIRSTHAND	VS	48Q YD253090
REFCON	7700000	M820143	GRAVE	FIRSTHAND	VS	48Q YD253090
REFCON	7700000	M820144	GRAVE	FIRSTHAND	VS	48Q YD253090
OPERA	67/07/06	USA	CH54	6414206	VS	48Q YD255095
1132-0	68/04/19		CH54	14205	VS	48Q YD255095
1145-0	68/04/25		GRND	\$	VS	48Q YD255097
1205-1	68/06/09		A4E	151080	VS	48Q YD255097

Page No. 2 SEARCH RESULTS; SEALOSS search of 7 kms
 around 48QYD230030
 07/28/98

Refno	Mission Date	Service	Vehicle Type	Vehicle Number	Ctry	UTM
OPERA	70/01/12	USA	OH6A	6716365	VS	48Q YD261068
OPERA	68/04/25	USA	CH47	6413152	VS	48Q YD261087
OPERA	67/06/25	USA	CH47	6413153	VS	48Q YD261087
OPERA	68/04/19	USA	UH1H	6616799	VS	48Q YD261087
1205-0	68/06/09		A4E	151080	VS	48Q YD273053
OPERA	70/12/16	USA	OH6A	6716594	VS	48Q YD279087
OPERA	68/04/23	USA	UH1H	6616555	VS	48Q YD279087
1750-0	71/05/28		OH6A	16670	VS	48Q YD284087
1135-0	68/04/19		CH47A	19063	VS	48Q YD291087
1135-1	68/04/19		CH47A	19063	VS	48Q YD292086
OPERA	68/04/23	USA	UH1H	6616567	VS	48Q YD296087
NAVY	68/07/14	USAF	F100C	542004	VS	48Q YD296087

SCHMIDT, WALTER ROY, JR.

Name: Walter Roy Schmidt, Jr.
 Rank/Branch: Captain/US Marine Corps
 Unit: VMA-121, Marine Air Group 12,
 1st Marine Air Wing
 Date of Birth: 18 November 1945 (St. Albans, NY)
 Home of Record: Nassau, NY
 Date of Loss: 09 June 1968
 Country of Loss: South Vietnam
 Loss Coordinates: 161919N 1070726E (YD273053)
[Click coordinates to view maps](#)
 Status in 1973: Prisoner of War
 Category: 1
 Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: A4E "Skyhawk"
 Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)

BASED OUT OF CHULAI
 NICKNAMED GREEN KNIGHT



VMA = MARINE ATTACK SQD.

REMARKS: LANDED ALIVE - NVA APPROACHING

SYNOPSIS: The Douglas A4 Skyhawk was a single-seat light attack jet flown by both land-based and carrier squadrons, and was the US Navy's standard light attack aircraft at the outset of the war. It was the only carrier-based aircraft that did not have folding wings as well as the only one that required a ladder for the pilot to enter/exit the cockpit. The Skyhawk was used to fly a wide range of missions throughout Southeast Asia including close air support to American troops on the ground in South Vietnam. Flying from a carrier was dangerous and as many aircraft were lost in "operational incidents" as in Combat.

On 9 June 1968, then 1st Lt. Walter R. Schmidt, Jr. was the pilot of an A4E Skyhawk on a mid-morning multiple aircraft direct combat support mission for US troops fighting in the infamous A Shau Valley, Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam. This area also included a primary gateway from the equally notorious Ho Chi Minh Trail into strategic sections of northern South Vietnam. When North Vietnam began to increase its military strength in South Vietnam, NVA and Viet Cong troops again intruded on neutral Laos for sanctuary, as the Viet Minh had done during the war with the French some years before. This border road was used by the Communists to transport weapons, supplies and troops from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, and was frequently no more than a path cut through the jungle covered mountains. US forces used all assets available to them to stop this flow of men and supplies from moving south into the war zone.

At 1020 hours, after making a bombing run on an enemy position, 1st Lt. Schmidt's aircraft was struck by ground fire. His aircraft continued to the northwest and crashed in the densely forested mountains approximately 5 miles northwest of the northern edge of the A Shau Valley, 2 miles northeast of the South Vietnamese/Lao border and the same distance southwest of a primary road leading from the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This road ran east/west from the border eastward to a point near the northern tip of the A Shau Valley. It then turned south-southeast running along the full length of the east side of the dense jungle covered valley.

Walter Schmidt was seen to eject from his crippled Skyhawk and descend safely to the ground. Other pilots saw his parachute caught in trees and were able to immediately establish voice contact with him. He reported to the other pilots that he sustained a broken leg while ejecting and was unable to move. Search and rescue (SAR) aircraft were immediately called to pick up the downed pilot, but before they arrived on site, NVA troops were observed approaching Walter Schmidt's position.

At first light the next morning a ground team was inserted into the area of loss. During their search in and around the area where Walter Schmidt landed, no trace of the wounded pilot or his parachute could be found. Further, all attempts to re-establish radio contact with him proved futile. Under the circumstances, at the time formal SAR

efforts were terminated, Walter R. Schmidt, Jr. was listed Prisoner of War.

In early 1973, 591 American Prisoners of War were released by the communists during Operation Homecoming. All returnees were debriefed by US intelligence to include any information each possessed about other Americans who were known or believed to be prisoners and who were not released from captivity. According to two returnees, one Navy jet pilot and one Army helicopter pilot, who were released from one of the camps in Hanoi, Walter Schmidt "had a difficult time adapting to capture. He was frequently sick and always gave the guards a hard time." The last time the Army pilot heard him was in July-August 1971. At that time, 1st Lt. Schmidt was heard screaming, "Do not push me." That was followed by a gunshot.

In conjunction with Operation Homecoming, the North Vietnamese released a list of American Prisoners of War who they state died in captivity. Walter Schmidt is not included in this list of Americans who died while under the control of the communists.

In April 1991 the US government released a list of Prisoners of War and Missing in Action who were known to be alive in enemy hands and for whom there is no evidence that he or she died in captivity. This list, commonly referred to today as the USG's "Last Known Alive" list, includes 1st Lt. Schmidt.

Whether the North Vietnamese murdered Walter Schmidt in 1971, or whether he survived this encounter with a guard is unknown. However, either way there is no question the Vietnamese could return him to his family, friends and country any time they had the desire to do so.

Since the end of the Vietnam 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 of War remaining captive throughout Southeast Asia TODAY.

Pilots in Vietnam were called upon to fight 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.

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Following info received from PARRC (Captain Furakawa), 10/0920Z

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The following info is contained on UNCLASSIFIED 366 CSG Casualty Report 09/1220Z.

JOLLY GREEN 23 ON A COMBAT MISSION 27 MILES SE OF KHE SANH WAS HIT WHILE ATTEMPTING RESCUE. ACFT WAS HIT BY AUTOMATIC GROUND FIRE AND CRASHED. ALL PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION. CREW LIST IS AS FOLLOWS.
(A RECORDS CHECK INDICATES THAT JG 23 is HH-3E #14710 FROM THE 37 ARRSQ AT DANANG).

6/10/74

RCC RITTICHER, JACK
LT. USCG 8148

CP YEEND, RICHARD C., JR.
CAPT.

FE HOLDEN, ELMER L.
SSG.

PJ LOCKER, JAMES D.
SGT.

Classified by _____
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED ON SL DEC 74

DOWNGRADED AT 2 YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS.
DOD DIR 5700 10

DECLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~