

On Sunday, 9 June 1968, 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 down pilot, Hellborne 215, at 220/37/69. JG 22 took off at 0230Z and made a spiraling climb north of CH 77 while obtaining artillery clearance to fly west of CH 77 toward the reported rescue area. JG 23 was airborne 15 minutes after JG 22 due to a delay from a previous mission. JG 22 proceeded out the 2650 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 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 2650 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 themselves south of the A Shau Valley and up the west side.

JG 22 arrived at the rescue area at approximately 0335Z and orbited with two Scarface helicopter gunships until JG 23 arrived on scene at 0335Z. 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 location 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 requested 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 dumped for a high altitude recovery. JG 22 joined with two Scarface gunships and initiated a rapid descending 2700 overhead approach. After 900 of turn JG 22 received heavy ground fire from the valley floor and surrounding ridges. 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, extremely heavy ground fire was directed at JG 22, most of which was coming from 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 are. After approximately 20 minutes of intense fire suspension 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 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.

After refueling and 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. En-route, Crown was asked about the status of the mission and JG 22 was informed the JG23 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. JG23 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 said 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.

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 Sea-worthy 4-1 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.

A number 2 engine was cut off immediately after initiating the pullout because of a fire warning light and 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 by Sandy 9 & 10. The fact that JG 28 could only maintain 3500' and continued 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 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.

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 24f 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 2100 when the RCC observed ground fire coming from in front and above, apparently 50 calibers. JG 24 immediately turned right to 1600 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 RTB'd to CH 69 for fuel after advising Crown that the area was still hot.

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 BTB'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 recommendation to JSARC.

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 the same problem. The microphone fittings in the gas masks were not compatible with the crewmembers helmets. No voice communications were possible either inside or outside the helicopters with the masks on. A rescue attempt using CBU 19 under 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 22 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.

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 left the area from Crown to RTB. The mission had been cancelled at 1030Z.

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 37^{AAA} 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.