

Airman First Class Joel E. Talley

Incident date: 2 July 1968

Aircraft position: Pararescue Technician

Place of incident: Dong Hoi, North Vietnam

Unit: 37 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron

Location of unit: Da Nang AB, Republic of Vietnam

Synopsis: On 1 July 1968, "Jolly Green 27" and "Jolly Green 31" were dispatched to intercept an F-105 aircraft which had received battle damage and was enroute to Gulf of Tonkin. The aircraft didn't make it to the coast and the pilot ejected. "Jolly 27" attempted to rescue the pilot but was driven off by ground fire. Both "Jollys" had to depart the area because "Jolly 27" had jettisoned his external fuel tanks and was running low on fuel. Back up forces, "Jolly Green 29" and "22"

arrived on scene. "Jolly 29" approached the area of the downed crewman and had to withdraw due to battle damage received. "Jolly 29" made another attempt but was again driven off by ground fire. Because of darkness the rescue was postponed until the next day. The next day, 2 July 68, one "Jolly" received battle damage attempting the rescue and had to return to base. An A1E aircraft, "Spads 11," was shot down. The pilot wasn't able to eject. Finally, "Jolly 21" was able to penetrate the heavily defended survivors location to put the PJ (A1C Talley) on the ground. The F-105 pilot had been badly injured during the ejection and landing. Airman Talley was lowered to the ground. It took awhile to locate Lieutenant Colonel Jack Modica, the survivor. Eventually, Airman Talley located the badly injured airman. Colonel Modica had a fractured pelvis and could not be moved. Using his radio, Airman Talley vectored the helicopter overhead to lower the penetrator. Airman Talley placed Colonel Modica on the forest penetrator. Then he climbed on top, providing protection to the survivor and limiting the vulnerable time of helicopter hover. As soon as they were lifted off the ground a hail of gun fire encircled the helicopter. When the hoist had cleared the tree tops the aircraft commander, Lieutenant Lance A. Eagan (USCG), immediately exited the area with both Colonel Modica and Airman Talley still dangling outside. Eventually, they were reeled on board the aircraft. Airman Talley administered emergency medical treatment to Colonel Modica during the return trip.

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I was able to conduct an oral interview with Chief Master Sergeant Joel E. Talley. Chief Talley is the Senior Enlisted Advisor for the 39 Special Operations Wing at Alconbury Royal Air Force Base, England. Chief Talley told me that the mission had been a classic SAR trap. He said that the practice missions he'd accomplished in school had really paid off. (11:--) He was awarded the Air Force Cross for heroism. (13:348,349)

See TABs F, K, and L for reference material

STEVENS, DONALD D.

"Captain Donald D. Stevens distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as a Forward Air Controller in Southeast Asia on 19 August 1967. On that date, Captain Stevens braved continuous hostile automatic weapons and anti-aircraft fire for more than eight hours to rescue a wounded American soldier. Captain Stevens made repeated low passes directly into the heavy hostile fire to locate the wounded man and to direct medical evacuation helicopters to the area. Despite sustaining a hit in his unarmed observation aircraft, Captain Stevens persevered in his rescue attempt and finally succeeded in securing the safe extraction of the wounded soldier and the reaction team that had gone to help him...."

STOCKS, BRUCE D.

"Major Bruce D. Stocks distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as the pilot of an F-105 Thunderchief near Hanoi, North Vietnam, on 19 November 1967. On that date, Major Stocks led a flight assigned to suppress the, surface-to-air missile threat for a twenty-ship strike force that had been directed to attack a strategic rail yard at the edge of Hanoi. He delivered his ordnance on the most threatening site and warned the strike force of imminent SAM attack. Due to his timely warning they were able to evade a salvo of missiles and depart the target area without battle damage. As Major Stocks turned to follow them out, shrapnel from an exploding surface-to-air missile hit his aircraft, wounding him in the chest and shoulder. When his wingman was hit seconds later, Major Stocks, in spite of his wounds, turned back toward the heavily defended target to successfully escort the damaged aircraft to a safe bailout area...."

TALLEY, JOEL E.

"The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, awards the Air Force Cross to Airman First Class Joel E. Talley for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force as Rescue Specialist on an HH-3E helicopter in Southeast Asia on 2 July 1968. On that date, Airman Talley volunteered to be lowered to the ground from a hovering helicopter into the jungle of North Vietnam to rescue an injured pilot, who had ejected the previous day. The downed pilot had parachuted into a concentration of North Vietnamese Army regulars who immediately surrounded him and set up gun positions to trap the forthcoming rescue helicopters. Four rescue attempts were driven off, and a supporting fighter aircraft was shot down by the devastating ground fire which encircled the survivor's position. Despite full knowledge of the well laid trap, Airman Talley voluntarily descended to search the jungle floor. After an extensive search he found the helpless survivor, carried him to the rescue device, and signaled the helicopter to commence extraction. While Airman Talley and the survivor were being hoisted, a fusillade of fire raked the helicopter scoring more than forty hits, forcing the helicopter to exit the area, exposing both airmen to hostile fire. The rescue was successfully accomplished...."

TITUS, ROBERT F.

"Lieutenant Colonel Robert F. Titus distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as an F-4C Mission Commander near Hanoi, North Vietnam, on 22 May 1967. On that date, Colonel Titus led his flight into one of the most heavily defended areas of North Vietnam in direct support of F-105 strike aircraft operations. Undaunted by accurate flak and five surface-to-air missiles that were launched at his aircraft, he repeatedly and unhesitatingly engaged numerous MIG-21s in defense of the friendly aircraft. During these aggressive and courageous aerial encounters, Colonel Titus destroyed two MIG-21 aircraft. As a direct result of his tenacity and extreme bravery in the face of great danger, the F-105 force was able to accomplish its assigned mission...."