

38 ARRSq Hist, Oct - Dec 68

CHAPTER III

OPERATIONS

Mission/Saves

Again this quarter "Pedro" (the call sign for the HH-43) crews contributed greatly to the Rescue story in the Vietnam conflict. Corrected figures for the preceeding quarter raise the total combat saves to 103. During the period 1 Oct - 31 Dec the 38ARRSq recorded 71 combat saves and 87 non-combat saves. Total saves for 1968 number 435.¹

Combat Losses

There were no combat losses incurred during this period.

Safety of Operations

A tragic major aircraft accident on 10 October 1968 at Phan Rang Air Base resulted in the total destruction of HH-43B 58-1845 and the death of the following five crewmembers:

Capt Von M. Liebernecht,	Det 1 38ARRSq
Major Donald R. Brooks,	Det 1 38ARRSq
SSgt Angel Luna,	35th USAF Disp
SSgt Millard L. Bledsoe,	35th CES
SSgt Emmet S. Orr,	35th CES

1. See 3rd ARRGp JSARC Saves Log.

Fail No.: 58-1845 Model: HH-43B Date of Loss: 10 Oct 68 Unit: 38th ARRS, Phan Rang
Country of Loss: SVN Call Sign: Pedro 44

Pilot: Von M. Liedernecht (41W-40)
Co-Pilot: Donald Brooks (41W-38)
Flight Engineer: Millard Bledsoe (41W-38)
Flight Engineer: Emmett Orr (41W-42)
Other: Angel Luna (41W-41)

Notes: crashed at Phan Rang AB as a result of control problems, control surface hit blades, which caused blades to separate.

Additional Notes: On 10 October 1968, at approximately 2037 hours an HH-43B helicopter (Call Sign Pedro 44) SN 58-1845, assigned to Detachment 1, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Phan Rang AB, Republic of Vietnam, crashed and burned while on an emergency intercept mission. A B-57 aircraft had declared an in-flight emergency and Pedro 44 was scrambled with the fire suppression kit (FSK) to standby for the emergency landing. During the landing roll out of the B-57, Pedro 44 entered a left hand climbing turn as if departing the area for return to the alert pad. Almost simultaneously, and without any radio transmission, the helicopter crashed and burned inflicting fatal injuries to all five aircrew members. Firefighting equipment and medical assistance, already on hand for the B-57 emergency, responded immediately to the scene,

extinguishing the fire within 15 seconds and immediately removed the crewmembers from the aircraft.
(TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM THE ACCIDENT REPORT DATED 18 OCTOBER 1968 BY LT. COL.
ROBERT M. FOSTER)

WHAT HAPPENED : The primary cause of this major aircraft accident was material failure of the azimuth bar to "L" crank rod. This caused an in-flight disintegration of the rotor system and loss of aircraft control.

THE PEDRO 44 CREW

MAJOR DONALD RAY BROOKS OF DECATUR, GA
ACFT CMDR/ CO-PILOT

DOB.- 09/30/31.

ARRIVED IN COUNTRY- 01/05/68

PANEL 41W ROW 042

CAPTAIN VON MILES LIEBERNECHT OF BURBANK, CA.
PILOT

DOB.- 06/21/34

ARRIVED IN COUNTRY- 06/23/68

PANEL 41W ROW 040

TSGT EMMETT SOMERS ORR OF ASHLAND, KY.
FIREFIGHTER

DOB.- 02/19/31

ARRIVED IN COUNTRY- 01/22/68

PANEL 41W ROW 042

TSGT ANGEL LUNA OF SAN ANTONIO, TX.
MEDIC

DOB.- 07/19/32

ARRIVED IN COUNTRY- 01/23/68

PANEL 41W ROW 041

SSGT MILLARD LUTHER BLEDSOE OF ATHENS, TN.
FIREFIGHTER

DOB.- 01/10/38

ARRIVED IN COUNTRY- 01/04/68

PANEL 41W ROW 038

Detachment 1, 38 ARRSQ Mission at Phan Rang AB, RVN

Detachment One is a Local Base Rescue unit, equipped with two Kaman HH-43B helicopters. The mission of the unit is fourfold: Local Base Rescue and Fire Suppression, Air Crew Recovery, Base Support, and Training. We serve four F-100 Fighter Squadrons under the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing; three squadrons of C-123 "Providers" under the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing; the Canberra Bombers of Number Two Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force; the AC-119's (Shadow) of "B" Flight, 17th Special Operations Squadron, and the AC-119K's of "A" Flight, 18th Special Operations Squadron. Because of our proximity to other bases, detachment one stands ready to assist Detachment eight of Cam Ranh Bay in any mission, when we might be required. The area covered is roughly a seventy mile radius from Phan Rang Air Base, north of Nha Trang, east almost to the Cambodian border, and south, halfway to Ben Hoa.

FIRE SUPPRESSION KIT

There were two types of FSK's used. The soft hose kit shown in the photo above and the later design hard hose FSK.

Both kits carried the same amount of foam and water, (83 gallons of mixture, yielding 690 gallons of expanding foam.) Had 50 seconds of continued use and could reach up to 50 feet on full stream. This proved to be ample time because of the "rotor wash" behind us. Our objective was not to extinguish the fire but to cut a path to the burning aircraft and hold the path til the other fireman could accomplish the rescue.

The soft hose FSK weighed approx. 1000 lbs. full and approx. 5 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 3 1/2 feet high. The hard hose FSK weighed approx. 1250 lbs full and approx. 9 feet long, 4 1/2 feet wide and 4 feet high.

HH-43 ARRS DETACHMENTS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

- Det. 1, 38th ARRS Phan Rang AB, RVN
- Det. 6, 38th ARRS Bien Hoa AB, RVN
- Det. 7, 38th ARRS DaNang AB, RVN
- Det. 8, 38th ARRS Cam Ranh Bay AB, RVN
- Det. 9, 38th ARRS Pleiku AB, RVN
- Det. 10, 38th ARRS Bien Thuy AB, RVN
- Det. 11, 38th ARRS Tuy Hoa AB, RVN
- Det. 13, 38th ARRS Phu Cat AB, RVN
- Det. 14, 38th ARRS Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN

Det. 1, Provisional NKP AB, RTAFB, Thailand
Det. 3, 38th ARRS Ubon RTAFB, Thailand
Det. 4, 38th ARRS Korat RTAFB, Thailand
Det. 5, 38th ARRS Udon RTAFB, Thailand
Det. 9, 38th ARRS NKP RTAFB, Thailand
Det. 12, 38th ARRS U Tapao RTAFB, Thailand

Country of Loss: SVN

Call Sign:

Pilot: David H. Pittard (42W-32)

Notes: Killed by hostile ground fire.

Tail No: 65-12782 Model: HH-3E Date of Loss: 5 Oct 68 Unit: 37th ARRS
Country of Loss: Laos Call Sign: Jolly Green 10

Co-Pilot: Albert D. Wester (41W-16)

Flight Engineer: Gregory P. Lawrence (41W-13)

Notes: While attempting to extract a Special Forces team in contact with the enemy, the aircraft received intensive ground fire which damaged aircraft, followed by a fire.

Additional Information: On October 5, 1968 the Jolly Greens were called upon by the Army to extract a special forces team, call sign "Carrot Top", from the A Shau Valley in Laos. Two Jolly Green helicopters were sent out along with a team of Sky Raiders to rescue the team. The first JG went in under heavy ground fire attack and received damage to their fuel lines and had to abort the mission and return to the base. The second helicopter was JG10. The 4 crew members of JG10 were Dwayne Wester; Co-Pilot, Vernon Granier; Pilot, Dean Casbeer; PJ and Greg Lawrence; FE. These 4 men braved enemy fire to try to rescue the team on the ground but it proved to be too much for them. The JG10 was shot down about 500 meters from the pick up point. The PJ was able to pull the pilot from the burning helicopter but before he could return the JG10 exploded, claiming the lives of the 2 trapped inside. Another JG was sent out to rescue the Special Forces team and the 2 survivors from JG10. The mission was completed and they returned back to DaNang with their helicopter full and their hearts saddened. They had lost 2 Jolly Greens that day, their friends, and their brothers of war.

Tail No.: 58-1845 Model: HH-43B Date of Loss: 10 Oct 68 Unit: 38th ARRS, Phan Rang
Country of Loss: SVN Call Sign: Pedro 44

Pilot: Von M. Liedernecht (41W-40)

Co-Pilot: Donald Brooks (41W-38)

Flight Engineer: Millard Bledsoe (41W-38)

Flight Engineer: Emmett Orr (41W-42)

Other: Angel Luna (41W-41)

Notes: crashed at Phan Rang AB as a result of control problems, control surface hit blades, which caused blades to separate.

Additional Notes: On 10 October 1968, at approximately 2037 hours an HH-43B helicopter (Call Sign Pedro 44) SN 58-1845, assigned to Detachment 1, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Phan Rang AB, Republic of Vietnam, crashed and burned while on an emergency intercept mission. A B-57 aircraft had declared an in-flight emergency and Pedro 44 was scrambled with the fire suppression kit (FSK) to standby for the emergency landing. During the landing roll out of the B-57, Pedro 44 entered a left hand climbing turn as if departing the area for return to the alert pad. Almost simultaneously, and without any radio transmission, the helicopter crashed and burned inflicting fatal injuries to all five aircrew members. Firefighting equipment and medical assistance, already on hand for the B-57 emergency, responded immediately to the scene,

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ROBERT M. FOSTER)

WHAT HAPPENED : The primary cause of this major aircraft accident was material failure of the azimuth bar to "L" crank rod. This caused an in-flight disintegration of the rotor system and loss of aircraft control.

Tail No.: 65-07942 Model: UH-1F Date of Loss: 27 Nov 68 Unit: 20th SOS, Ban Me Thuot
Country of Loss: Cambodia Call Sign: Green Hornet

Crew Chief: Gene P. Stuifbergen (38W-79)

Notes: On 27 November 1968 SSGT Gene P. Stuifbergen, Flight Engineer, and a native of Augusta, Michigan, was aboard a UH-1F slick on a combat mission over Phu Nhai Village; Rotanokiri Prov., Cambodia, 10 miles west of Duc Lo, SVN. On this mission, his crew attempted to infiltrate a combined 6-man U.S. Army Special Forces and South Vietnamese Forces Team into an enemy bivouac area situated in a deep ravine and surrounded by heavy jungle. As the heavily laden Huey began its steep approach into a ten foot hover, it immediately came under a fusillade of enemy anti-aircraft and small arms fire. During the melee, an enemy round ripped through the flight controls, causing the aircraft to crash into the landing zone and burst into flames. The pilots, a gunner, and two American team members escaped the inferno, but SSGT Stuifbergen and the remainder of the team were hopelessly trapped; apparently dying underneath the burning wreckage. Only five of the ten onboard were rescued. Several desperate attempts were made to rescue and recover SSGT Stuifbergen and the remainder of the team but became futile due to stiff enemy resistance. SSGT Stuifbergen is presently listed officially in the "Presumptive status of Dead, Body not recovered," and is the first 20th SOS enlisted crewmember to perish in combat operations.

Tail No.: Model: HH-3E Date of Loss: 25Dec 67 Unit: 40th ARRS, NKP, THA
Country of Loss: Laos Call Sign: Jolly Green 17

PJ: Charles D. King (36W-76)

Location of Loss: 170600N 1055600E (WD980925)

Notes: On Christmas Eve, 1968, an F-105, call sign "Panda 0 I", was shot down over Laos between the city of Ban Phaphilang and the Ban Karai Pass. Its pilot, Major Charles R. Brownlee, successfully ejected and his parachute drifted into an area known to be occupied by enemy troops. These troops had in the past aggressively pursued downed pilots and contested SAR efforts. Two HH-3E's, Jolly Green's 15 and 17, on airborne alert immediately proceeded to the incident site. Upon arrival, the Sandy's placed them in a high orbit. The on-scene commander discovered a parachute in the trees. Numerous attempts were made to raise Major Brownlee on his survival radio. It was late in the day and darkness quickly covered the jungle. There was no survival radio contact from Major Brownlee. The rescue helicopters did not have a night combat rescue capability and were ordered to return to NKP.

A first light SAR was organized to return to the area on Christmas Day. The crew of Jolly low were all volunteers: Major Reinhart, aircraft commander, Captain Gibson, co-pilot, Sergeant Gallagher, flight engineer, and A1C Charles D. King, pararescueman. Once again the Jolly's were placed in a high orbit and the Sandy's began trolling for ground fire. Enemy troops did not take the bait. Not drawing any ground fire Sandy lead told

SPECIFICATIONS OF THE HH-43B

Rotor diameter: 47 ft. 0 in.

Fuselage: 25 feet

Height: 17 ft. 2 in.

Weight: 9,150 lbs. max.

Engine: Lycoming T-53-L-1B turbo shaft engine of 860 hp.

Cost: \$304,000

PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed: 120 mph.

Crusing speed: 105 mph.

Range: 185 miles

Ceiling: 25,000 ft.

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HISTORY OF THE FINAL FLIGHT

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THE PEDRO 44 CREW

MAJOR DONALD RAY BROOKS OF DECATUR, GA ACFT CMDR/ CO-PILOT	DOB.- 09/30/31.	ARRIVED IN COUNTRY- 01/05/68	PANEL 41W ROW 042
CAPTAIN VON MILES LIEBERNECHT OF BURBANK, CA. PILOT	DOB.- 06/21/34	ARRIVED IN COUNTRY- 06/23/68	PANEL 41W ROW 040
TSGT EMMETT SOMERS ORR OF ASHLAND, KY. FIREFIGHTER	DOB.- 02/19/31	ARRIVED IN COUNTRY- 01/22/68	PANEL 41W ROW 042
TSGT ANGEL LUNA OF SAN ANTONIO, TX. MEDIC	DOB.- 07/19/32	ARRIVED IN COUNTRY- 01/23/68	PANEL 41W ROW 041
SSGT MILLARD LUTHER BLED SOE OF ATHENS, TN. FIREFIGHTER	DOB.- 01/10/38	ARRIVED IN COUNTRY- 01/04/68	PANEL 41W ROW 038