

17Jan69 CH-3 down

62-12582	CH-3C	17 Jan 69	20th SOS	Laos	Pony Express 20	Walter W. Martin
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Helo was hit by small arms fire while hovering, no further information on this loss; mission was TACAN site support, loss coord 2002N10328E.

The mission that these pictures involved was our recovery of the 4 survivors/patients of a Special Ops (Pony Express) CH-3 crash in Northern Laos which occurred while they were trying to insert a TACAN maintenance/repair team. As I recall, there were 9 souls on board and 5 of them were determined to be deceased and not immediately recovered because of the ensuing burning of the helicopter, and threat of enemy contact.

The PJs pictured are; Don Faber, in helo passing litter to Lenny Fullwood; Dee Nelson talking to me (Dan Galde); and Robert (Bob) Koecher. The picture of the facility was the "Tom Dooley Hospital" in Laos.

We delivered all of the patients to the French Doctors for more definitive treatment than we were able to provide on the helicopter. After a delay of about an hour, we reloaded three of the patients and flew them to NKP.

When you review the film, you'll see three survivors/patients that were sitting on troop seats and one patient on a litter on the floor. The patient on the litter was Bob Wingate, who I seem to recall was the Flight Engineer on the downed CH-3. The "heavy set" individual sitting on a troop seat in the rear of our aircraft was reportedly a civilian contractor who required a femoral cut-down at the TD Hospital. All of the patients were pretty much covered with phosphorous burns and succumbed to severe shock.

The footage you are in possession of was made available to me by a Combat Photog named Steve Nagroki (SP). The package containing that film, also contained an additional eight to ten cans of combat footage which Steve shot during combat missions that he flew on. If you are in possession of the additional footage, I would appreciate knowing about it.

I believe this mission was executed in late 67 or early 68. I'm surprised Bob doesn't have record of it.

Don Deidrich's account on the loss of CH-3, 62-12582

In Jan 1969, 3 men were sent from the 1st Mobil Communications Group (1st Mob) in the Philippines to Udorn AB Thailand, Tsgt Juan A. Maldonado (team chief), Sgt Bill Chambers

III, and myself, Sgt Donald Deidrich (I was chosen as I had been on the team that had installed the TACAN there 6 months before). We were to repair the TACAN at LS-36 and train some personnel at the 1973 Comm sq at Udorn. When we arrived at Udorn we found that another man, in country, from the 1st Mob, that had been re-directed, had repaired the TACAN at LS-36 and then went to PS-21 (20-30 mi south west of Saravan) to repair that TACAN, it was decided to send two of us to Ubon to repair it, Bill and I departed for Ubon. There we were supported by the 20th SOS Pony Express, about the 17th of Jan we heard about the accident at LS-36 TACAN site. I heard from numerous people, My Commander, Pony Express , and 1973 comm personnel that I knew, and the accounts are very much in agreement. The CH3 Pony Express left Udorn with 8 people (5 air crew, 3 passengers, Col Bolant (?) Juan and the new TACAN maintenance man) and 10 barrels of diesel fuel, They arrived at LS-36 and found that the Air America Hughey was on a mission and they would have to wait. It was decided to fly the CH-3 to the TACAN site. There was a restriction on the landing anything bigger than a UH-1 at the site as the pad was very small and the winds were unpredictable. During the landing one of the air crew heard something about the "emergency brake" over the intercom, the chopper rolled forward and went over the edge of the hill (almost a cliff) tipped over and exploded. Three people were thrown / jumped clear, they were the crew chief (I think), a door gunner, and the 1973 Comm sq TACAN man. All three were injured and evacuated back to Udorn and then to the Philippines. I don't remember any names other than those I mentioned. LS-36 was lost to the enemy on the 1st of march 1969, the TACAN site was destroyed by air strikes. An account that mentions the loss of this chopper can be found on the Air Commando web site, under the 20th SOS. Thank you very much for listening to me, and if I can be of any assistance help please let me know.