

FROM: Det 12, 38 ARRS

23 Jan 69

SUBJECT: Mission Narrative Report (12-38-001-9021) (U)

TO: 3ARRGp (JSARC)

THRU: 38 ARRS (38C)

1. (U) This report is submitted IAW ARRS 55-2, 3ARRGp Sup 1, dated 15 Apr 69.

2. At 1729L Nha Trang Tower notified Detachment 12 that a man was bleeding to death two miles SE of Nha Trang AB. No further information was available at the time. Tower said that a forest penetrator would be required and further information would be available from a FAC flying over the injured man, and requested that the alert aircraft scramble immediately. Pedro 20 scrambled at 1733L. Enroute contact was made on UHF with Walt 30, a FAC orbiting the site. He gave Pedro a heading of 230 degrees and told us to climb to 3,000 or 4,000 feet, stating he was at 4,000 feet. He continued, stating that two helicopters had been shot out of the valley earlier that day. Pedro 20 RCC inquired if area was hostile. When advised affirmative, the crew donned flak vests. At 1740L Pedro arrived on scene at 3,000 feet. Walt 30 advised Pedro to orbit until arrival of gunships and requested endurance. Pedro had two hours fuel remaining. The crew briefed emergency procedures in preparation for hostile fire and possible casualties during this time.

3. At 1745L Wolfpack 30, a flight of three UH-1D gunships arrived. They visually located the ground party, five Recondo School students and their advisor, by their smoke signal and pen gun flares and began making repeated passes over the team firing rockets and miniguns to suppress the enemy. The Recondo team was pinned down at the 1500 foot level on a small ridge on the side of a steep-walled, densely jungled canyon which rose rapidly from the valley below. At 1758L Pedro 20 was notified by the gunships and Walt 30 that the area was ready for the pickup. We descended to 2,000 feet and entered the canyon, remaining on the SW side opposite the pickup site. As a left descending 180 degree turn to the site was being completed, the helicopter was rocked by the explosion of a closely placed suppressive rocket. At this point, with the gunships firing rockets and miniguns to impact in the area of the approach, A1C Reynolds and Sgt Capper observed enemy tracer fire. They later stated bullets were going in all directions, in addition to those from the gunship miniguns. Branches were falling and whole tops of trees were being blown apart within 100 feet of Pedro 20. I brought the helicopter to a hover 10 feet above the trees directly over the yellow smoke signal from the ground party with the canyon wall rising to our right side. As the smoke was dissipated by the rotor blast, Sgt Capper, who was sitting in the rear of the cabin, sighted the team 150 feet to the rear. We hovered backward, climbing to avoid trees higher up the ridge to the rear. Major Kazmerchak monitored the hover, instruments, and gunship activity and remained prepared to assume control of the helicopter if the RCC was hit by fire during the recovery. Airman Reynolds assumed the direction of the hover and began lowering the forest penetrator through a ten foot hole in the tree canopy. The eighty foot trees formed a double canopy

jungle. The Recondo team was pinned down by enemy and suppressive fire, and all members were lying flat on the ground to avoid being hit. During the hover which lasted ten minutes, the intensity of both the ground fire and suppressive fire increased greatly. At one time the rocket and minigun fire was impacting so close to the hovering helicopter and Recondo team that the team, fearing their safety, requested the gunships not to fire so close. However when assured the gunships knew where all parties were, the accelerated suppressive fire continued. Approximately five minutes was required to fasten the injured man to the forest penetrator. During the hover the helicopter began receiving ground fire. Sergeant Capper, sitting in the rear of the cabin and guarding the rear approach, began returning fire with his M-16 rifle. As the injured man was raised to the lower tree canopy, he became entangled in the tree branches. A1C Reynolds, remaining exposed in the doorway of the helicopter, was required to raise and lower the hoist several times and manually manipulate the cable to free the injured Marine dangling 50 feet below. Once freed, he was raised to the cabin door, where A1C Reynolds brought him inside. At this time a bullet entered the pilot's door, passing through the cockpit ceiling behind the pilot and rupturing the engine oil cooler. Hot engine oil began spewing out of the top rear of the cockpit, covering both pilots, the entire cockpit, and nose bubble with oil. Engine oil pressure immediately went to zero and the "engine oil low" and "master caution lights" illuminated. Major Kazmerchak, monitoring the instruments, quickly assessed the damage while Capt Nicholson maintained a steady hover on the swaying tree tops.

4. Airman Reynolds laid the survivor down in the cabin, with the forest penetrator attached, and advised the pilot it was clear to take off. At that time a bullet hit the communication junction box, knocking out the hoist operator's interphone. Pedro 20, facing the mouth of the canyon, gained forward speed, maintaining level flight. Ahead one quarter mile and level with Pedro 20 was a gunship on a strafing and rocket pass, approaching head-on. The departure of Pedro 20 was slowed considerable for fear of being hit by the ordnance or possible collision. It veered to Pedro's left, allowing Pedro to accelerate by making a descent down the canyon. Extremely dense grey-brown smoke obscured the upper half of the tail fins. Sergeant Capper and Airman Reynolds began to untie Marine PFC Thomas Teague, the injured man. He had been attached to the forest penetrator by two straps and tied on with a rope harness similar to that used in the McGuire recovery. This second strap and rope were unnecessary and only delayed the recovery and departure of the rescue helicopter. We maintained approximately 500 feet above the terrain while flying approximately one and a half miles to the mouth of the canyon and turning into the next valley toward Nha Trang. We were looking for the first clear area to land in, the entire valley being covered with dense foliage. Five miles from the recovery site we landed in a clearing approximately 200 feet in diameter, and immediately shut the engine down. The rotor brake was inoperative. Sergeant Capper and Airman Reynolds had been occupied during this time attempting to untie the Marine's rope harness and place him on the litter. Upon landing they evacuated the survivor beneath the decelerating rotor blades and began to examine his wounds. An escorting Army UH-1 helicopter with a medic aboard, landed alongside and the patient was transferred to it for transportation to the 8th Army Field Hospital at Nha Trang. The crew of Pedro 20 immediately established a defensive perimeter and began removing all equipment from the helicopter, as it was dusk and there would be little likelihood of recovering the

helicopter that night. At this time Pedro 21 was seen passing overhead enroute to the rescue location. Contact with the RT-10 survival radio was unsuccessful. Nha Trang Tower advised Pedro 21 that an O-1 was circling the downed helicopter. Pedro 21 located the site and landed. Airman Reynolds and three members of Pedro 21's crew remained to guard the scene while the rest of Pedro 20's crew was returned to Detachment 12. (See Det 12, 38 ARRS Mission Number 12-38-002-9021).

Crewmembers were:

Pedro 20

Capt Daniel A. Nicholson (RCC)
Maj Robert J. Kazmerchak (RCCP)
Sgt Joseph R. Capper (RS)
A1C Timothy M. Reynolds (PJ)

Pedro 21

1st Lt Willis J. Thayer (RCC)
Maj Richard G. Lauderdale, Jr. (RCCP)
Sgt John M. Dunbar, Jr. (FE)
Sgt James R. Pospichel (RS)

Daniel A. Nicholson

DANIEL A. NICHOLSON, Captain, USAF
Rescue Crew Commander

APPROVED:

Robert J. Kazmerchak

ROBERT J. KAZMERCHAK, Major, USAF
Commander