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FROM: 602nd Special Operations Squadron

SUBJECT: SAR Report (Cobalt 01B)

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TO: 3AARS (3C)

1. An unsuccessful rescue was conducted on 17 May 1969 for Cobalt 01B. The aircraft, an F-4, was hit by ground fire at approximately 1050L on 17 May while flying a low level mission over Route 12 between Delta 29 and Delta 30. The backseat pilot either ejected or was inadvertently ejected from the airplane. This report covers those activities relating to the Sandys during the rescue effort.

2. The Sandys were scrambled at 1100L and airborne at 1115. Sandy 01/02 arrived on scene at 1150L and relieved Nail 17 as on scene commander.

3. The location of the downed pilot was on a karst about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile east and in plain view of Route 12. Route 12 runs roughly North-South and $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the west was a high, heavily wooded plateau and the terrain to the east was rough, wooded karst and mountains with several well used trails running up ravines into the rough ground. One of these was located at the northern base of the karst where the survivor was located. The area was known to be heavily defended with guns of all caliber and numerous ground troops. The weather in the area was scattered to broken clouds with bases at 7,000 feet.

4. Nail 17 was in the area prior to the arrival of the Sandys and had the survivor's location pinpointed. The survivor stated he had both legs broken, his left arm broken, and was bleeding. Crown had lined up resources and Sandy 01 asked Nail 17 to direct the jet strikes along the route structure.

5. Sandy 01 chose to hold the Jolly Greens over the rough ground to the east of the survivor. After Nail 17 had directed the air strikes along the route structure Sandy 01 went down to hose the area and troll for ground fire. Heavy small arms fire was encountered throughout the area and on a fire suppression pass up the ravine just north of the survivor the first ZPU was encountered. This gunner was very well emplaced in a cave and was very aggressive, returning fire on every pass. Since this gun covered only the northern area Sandy 01 decided to concentrate on suppressing the small arms and then bring the rescue helicopter in from the southeast. Sandy 01 and 02 delivered fire suppression ordnance around the survivor until no small arms fire was apparent. Four A-1's from the 1st SOS came in and dispensed CBU-19 and the four Sandys laid a smoke screen. Sandy 03 left the scene to bring in the helicopter while Sandy 01 trolled along the pre-planned entry route. Sandy 01 was almost over the survivor when heavy and accurate ZPU fire was encountered from a position north of the previous site. The rescue helicopter was held

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off while Sandy 01 directed air strikes against this new position. Ground fire at this time became very heavy. Sandy 01 and 02, while waiting for the jets, attacked the ZPU's. Sandy 01 put a rocket in the cave with one of the guns and this gun did not come up again. Numerous passes were made against these guns and heavy accurate ground fire was encountered on each pass. The jets arrived and the area was well covered with ordinance but ground fire remained heavy. Nail 113 arrived to replace Nail 17. Since the gun positions were not readily apparent Sandy 01 made another firing pass to give Nail 113 a definite fix on the guns. The gunners obliged and Nail 113 directed more air strikes. At 1415L Sandy 07/08/09/10 were airborne from channel 09; Sandy 07 and 08 arrived on scene at 1445L and were briefed on the situation including the fact that the survivor was badly injured, bleeding heavily and had not come up on voice for over an hour. Sandy 07 took over as on scene commander and Sandy 01 returned to base.

6. Time: 1500 hours local. Sandy 07 developed a dump light and started for home, leaving Sandy 03 and 04 as the low element. Sandy 09 and 10 arrived with Jolly Green 77 and established a holding pattern five miles northwest of the survivor's position. At 1505 hours, Sandy 04 took a 37mm hit and headed for channel 09. Sandy 07 joined with 04 and they RTB'd. Sandy 08 joined 03 as the low element wingman. During the next thirty minutes Sandys 03 and 08 and Wolf 06 (F-4 FAC) made multiple trolling passes to draw fire and position the threat. We positioned and killed a possible ZPU at the northwest corner of the burnt lamp the survivor was on. (Nail 139 put in fast movers) The only remaining threat was a possible ZPU one kilometer southwest of the survivor, on a bypass road. He would not fire every pass and never fired at fast movers so Sandy 03 made the decision to put multiple fast movers on that position, restricting them to north/south run-ins, west of the route. (Nail 139 handled this again). At 1545L Sandy 09 and 10 moved across the route structure with Jolly Green 76 in a holding pattern one mile east of the survivor's position. Sandy 03 briefed Sandy 09 that an attempt would be made to put in the Jolly Green, using jet strikes to suppress the ground fire from the western area. Before this could be done, Sandy 03 went Dingo fuel and RTB'd with a .50 cal. hole in the fuselage, leaving Sandy 09 as on scene commander.

7. Time: 1600 hours local. Sandy 09 decided to attempt a pickup, utilizing Nail 139 to put in jet strikes on the western side of the road, and using CBU-22 smoke to screen the survivor's position from the gun positions to the west. At this time Sandy 08 had joined 09 and 10 and the three Sandys put down smoke just west of the survivor's position. On the first smoke pass, ground fire from the west was noted, and Sandy 08 asked Nail 139 to increase the frequency of jet strikes on the gun positions. Sandy 09

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put down two M2s to mark the ingress and egress route for Jolly Green 76, and briefed the Jolly Green that the run-in heading would be 320°, egress heading 140°, and advised the Jolly Green to pull out immediately if any ground fire was encountered. As the Jolly Green left the holding area and headed for the smoke markers, the ROC called "survivor's parachute in sight". At this point Sandy 09 directed 08 and 10 to join in putting suppressive fire against the western gun positions. The Jolly Green hovered for approximately five minutes, then exited the area using the prescribed exit heading. No further ground fire was observed after the first smoke pass. Jolly Green 76 reported that a PJ had been lowered, and that the survivor had been found dead in his chute harness. Cause of death appeared to be massive injuries suffered during the explosive ejection and landing on the karst. The PJ reported the survivor had both legs broken, left arm broken, and had been bleeding heavily. The PJ reached the survivor at approximately 1600L, and estimated that death had occurred two hours earlier. Sandy 09, 10, and 08 escorted Jolly Green 76 and 77 back to base without further incident.

8. This SAR effort was unsuccessful due to the high ground fire encountered in the survivor's immediate position. This ground fire accounted for three A-1 aircraft having to RFB with battle damage, and prevented a pickup attempt being made until 1600 hours local, approximately five hours after the ejection. Although CEU-19 was used, it was not effective against the ZPU's located in caves due north of the survivor's position.

9. Nail 139 did an outstanding job in directing air strikes during the pickup attempt. This close co-ordination between FAS and Sandyn made it possible for Sandy low lead to concentrate on directing the helicopters to the survivor's location without having to worry about the jet strike aircraft.

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10. Sandy forces participating in this effort were as follows:

Sandy 01 - Major Thomas O. Hips
Sandy 02 - Major Edwin L. Weigol
Sandy 03 - Capt Richard M. Hall
Sandy 04 - Major Loren R. Alfred
Sandy 07 - 1/Lt Jon W. Ewing
Sandy 08 - Capt Robert W. Keith
Sandy 09 - Capt Jackson L. Hudson
Sandy 10 - Capt John L. Flinn

Frank J. Tomlinson
FRANK J. TOMLINSON, Lt Colonel, USAF
Operations Officer

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were picked up at 1414L and 1437L with Spad 11 as on-scene commander.

(S) On 4 May, Sandys 01, 02, 03 and 04 were scrambled on a partially successful SAR effort for Litter 22, an F-100. After arrival at the scene, a visual search was conducted but failed to locate the survivor. The position of the survivor was finally pinpointed by beeper. At this time, .50 caliber and small arms fire was directed against the SAR force. The Sandys quickly suppressed the ground fire and called in Jolly Green 71 to observe the chute of the survivor. A PJ was lowered who reported the survivor dead. The body was put aboard Jolly Green 71 and the SAR force returned to base.

(S) On 11 May, a successful SAR was conducted for Manual 42A, a downed F-4. Sandys 01, 02, 03 and 04 were scrambled at approximately 0820L. After arrival at the scene, the Sandys worked the Spads who dropped ordnance around the survivor. At 1009L, Sandy 01 called Hobos 40 and 41 in to expend around the survivor, who could be seen sitting on his parachute, because enemy forces were approaching that position. When the survivor lapsed into unconsciousness due to injuries he suffered while ejecting, Sandy 01 called Jolly Green in for the pickup. The survivor was picked up by the Jolly Green without encountering any problems. An electronic search was conducted by the Sandys for Manual 42B, but all efforts were unsuccessful.

(S) A partially successful rescue was conducted on 17 May

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for Cobalt 01B. The aircraft, an F-4, was hit by ground fire while flying a low level mission along Route 12 between Delta 29 and Delta 30. The backseat pilot either ejected or was inadvertently ejected from the aircraft.

(S) Sandys were scrambled at 1100L and Sandy 01/02 arrived on scene at 1150L. The location of the downed pilot was on a karst about one-half mile east and in plain view of Route 12. Route 12 runs roughly north-south and three-fourths mile to the west was a high, heavily wooded plateau.

(S) Nail 17 was in the area prior to the arrival of the Sandys and had the survivor's location pinpointed. The survivor stated he had both legs broken, his left arm broken and bleeding.

(S) Sandy 01 chose to hold the Jolly Greens over the rough ground to the east of the survivor. After Nail 17 had directed the air strikes along the route structure, Sandy 01 went down to strafe the area and troll for ground fire. Heavy small arms fire was encountered throughout the area. During a fire suppression pass up the ravine north of the survivor, the first ZPU was encountered. Since the gun covered only the northern area, Sandy 01 decided to concentrate on suppressing the small arms and then bring the rescue helicopter in from the southeast. Sandy 01 and 02 delivered fire suppression ordnance around the survivor until no small arms fire was apparent. Four A-1s from the 1st Special Operations Squadron dispensed CBU-19 and the four Sandys laid a smoke screen. Sandy 03 left the scene to bring in the helicopter

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while Sandy 01 trolled along the pre-planned entry route. Sandy 01 was almost over the survivor when heavy and accurate ZPU fire was encountered from a position north of the previous site. The rescue-helicopter was held off while Sandy 01 directed air strikes against this new position. Ground fire at this time became very heavy. Sandy 01 and 02, while waiting for jet resources, attacked the ZPUs. Sandy 01 put a rocket in the cave where one was located and this gun did not come up again. Numerous passes were made against the guns and heavy accurate ground fire was encountered on each pass. The jets arrived and the area was well covered with ordnance but ground fire remained heavy. Sandys 01 and 02 were then relieved by Sandy 07 and 08. Sandy 07 then developed problems and returned to base. Sandy 09 and 10 then arrived on scene.

(S) At 1600L, Sandy 09 decided to attempt a pickup, utilizing Nail 139, which had replaced Nail 113, to direct jet strikes on the western side of the road. Sandy 09 also decided to use CBU-22 smoke to screen the survivor's position from the gun positions to the west. At this time Sandy 08 had joined 09 and 10. The three Sandys put down smoke just west of the survivor's position. Jolly Greens were advised that the run-in heading would be 320 degrees, escape heading 140 degrees, and to pull out immediately if any ground fire was encountered. As the Jolly Green left the holding area and headed for the smoke markers, the pilot of the rescue helicopter radioed "survivor's parachute

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in sight." At this time Sandy 09 directed 08 and 10 to join in putting suppressive fire against the western gun positions.

(S) The Jolly Green hovered for approximately five minutes, then exited the area using the prebriefed exit heading. No further ground fire was observed after the first smoke pass. Jolly Green 76 reported that a PJ had been lowered, and that the survivor had been found dead in his chute harness. Cause of death appeared to be massive injuries suffered during the explosive ejection and landing on the karst. The PJ reached the survivor at approximately 1600L, and estimated that death had occurred two hours earlier.

(S) During this quarter, the Squadron lost two aircraft to ground fire. The first of these occurred 26 April when Sandy 06 was downed by suspected ZPU fire. Following completion of an uneventful Tango Orbit, Sandys 05 and 06 were released by Compress to strike with an indigenous ground FAC. During the attack, Sandy 06 failed to pullout and crashed straight in. Sandy 05 conducted an unsuccessful visual and electronic search in the area until his fuel status forced him to RTB. Zorro 30 and 31 were diverted to conduct a search. No evidence of a survivor was observed.

(S) On 13 June, Firefly 20 was downed by confirmed ZPU fire during a reconnaissance mission with Firefly 21 along Route 7. Firefly 20 located 15 trucks moving along the main route structure.

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SEA TEAM

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PROJECT

Contemporary
Historical
Evaluation of
Combat
Operations
REPORT

P.R.C.

USAF SEARCH AND RESCUE
November 1967-June 1969

SMC

30 July 1969

HQ PACAF

Directorate, Tactical Evaluation
CHECO Division

Prepared by: Major James B. Overton

Project CHECO 7th AF, DOAC

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There were many simple water pickups that merely involved the removal of sick and injured personnel. Figures 24 and 25 illustrate such a recovery from a River Patrol Boat by an HH-43 Pedro.

While every effort was always made to recover wounded and dying aircrew men, there were times when the decision had to be made to abandon the effort. The following account by Maj. Gerald A. Jones of the 40th ARRS demonstrates the decisions that a recovery pilot often must make. ^{15/}

"I was flying the high Jolly with Call Sign JG 76 on 17 May 1969 when we got the call for a downed pilot. JG 69, the low Jolly, had incurred some damage while refueling and had to return to base (RTFB), so I took over as low Jolly. JG 77 a back-up bird from Udorn had been alerted and was on its way to take over as high Jolly. The Sandy OSC put me in a position some distance away down in a sort of bowl of land. He held me there for over an hour while the area around the downed pilot was sanitized by 32 fast movers and 26 Sandys (A-1Es)--all over a period of several hours of course. I failed to mention that JG 69 had made one attempt to get into the hot area before the air refueling took place and had taken some hits. The Crown C-130 had flown all the way to the area. They had called in the fast movers and had also set up a MIGCAP of F-102 aircraft when some MIGs were sighted near the area. The OSC had contact for a while with the downed pilot, but said that his voice had gotten weaker, and that he had finally lost contact with him. The OSC finally decided to bring me in on a heading of 310°. At that moment the OSC was not completely sure of the pilot's position, but decided to bring me in to see if I could spot him. After arriving in the area we were unable to spot anything that looked like a chute. The marking smoke by the Sandy showed nothing. I decided to make a sharp turn and head out to let them vector me in again--we were receiving many hits at this time, and at that moment I spotted the chute. We had received an earlier report that

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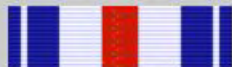
he was out of his harness, but I distinctly saw him wedged between some rocks, in harness with something wrapped around him. I hovered over the spot and the PJ went down the penetrator to the pilot, the PJ told me that he was obviously dead and had started to stiffen and that his wounds were numerous. His limbs were twisted and he was thoroughly ensnared in shroud lines, and in his tree lowering devise, plus being tightly wedged in between the rocks. In the PJ's judgment it would take a minimum of 15 minutes to get the body loose. Enemy fire was getting intense so he signaled to be pulled back up. We had been in a hover for 8 minutes. The engineer reported to me "we have him aboard". In my anxiety I reported to the OSC that we had the pilot, but quickly corrected myself when the engineer corrected me. We were vectored out of the hot area flying low and shortly thereafter returned to base. I feel that the decision to abandon the body under the circumstances was a wise one since the danger of getting the crewmembers wounded was imminent. The area was red hot and 15 more minutes could have been deadly. We were airborne a total of 5.8 hours."

There were many other stirring and dramatic SAR missions that are not related here, since the majority of them have been detailed in other published reports. Those presented here were chosen to provide a representative sampling from among the wide spectrum of Search and Rescue activity in SEA.

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Site Mission: Provide Pararescue and Air Rescue History

Silver Star Recipient



Attention to orders. Citation to accompany the award of the Silver Star to Airman First Class Robert L. Harris

Airman First Class Robert L. Harris distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as Pararescue/Recovery Specialist in Southeast Asia on 17 May 1969. On that date, Airman Harris participated in a gallant attempt to rescue a mortally wounded airman located in a highly fortified hostile mountain pass. After the injured airman reported he was getting weak and voice contact was lost, Airman Harris descended on the hoist while under hostile fire, and spent five minutes on the ground verifying the injuries as fatal. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Airman Harris has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.