

EYEWITNESS STATEMENT

ON 3 JUNE 1969, CAPT JOSEPH T. HERR, FV3056511; CAPT JAMES F. HINKLE, FR78711; SSGT HOWARD J. HOLLOWAY, AF11857531; AND SSGT CHARLES F. SODERBOOM, AF16697007, DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES IN ACTION WHILE ON A SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSION 10 MILES NE OF PLEIKU CITY.

AT APPROXIMATELY 1700 HOURS ON 3 JUNE 1969, I RECEIVED A CALL THAT AN O-1 OBSERVATION AIRCRAFT IN MY COMMAND HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN WHILE ON A VR MISSION. I FLEW ANOTHER O-1 AIRCRAFT TO THE REPORTED AREA TO ASSIST IN SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS. WHEN I ARRIVED OVER THE DOWNED AIRCRAFT I WAS INFORMED BY OTHER SEARCH AND RESCUE AIRCRAFT THAT THEY WERE STILL RECEIVING GROUND FIRE IN THE AREA.

A HH43F HELICOPTER, PILOTED BY CAPT HERR, ARRIVED AT THE SCENE, WAS BRIEFED ON THE SITUATION, AND BEGAN A LOW LEVEL SEARCH FOR THE AIRCRAFT AND CREW OF TWO. THE AREA OF SEARCH WAS ON A MOUNTAIN SIDE AND CONSISTED OF SINGLE TO TRIPLE JUNGLE CANOPY, MAKING IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO SEE BELOW THE TREES. SIGHTING SMOKE DRIFTING UP THROUGH THE CANOPY, CAPT HERR AND HINKLE HOVERED THEIR AIRCRAFT JUST ABOVE THE TREES, DISREGARDING THE REPORTS OF ENEMY GUNFIRE, AND USED THE DOWNWASH OF THE ROTOR TO OPEN HOLES IN THE CANOPY SO THEY COULD SEARCH THE GROUND. SSGT SODERBOOM, THE AIRCRAFT ENGINEER, FINALLY SIGHTED THE WRECKAGE AND CAPT HINKLE AND CAPT HERR TOOK THE HELICOPTER EVEN LOWER TO DETERMINE THE STATUS OF THE CREW, BUT WERE UNABLE TO DO SO. DISREGARDING THE FACT THAT ENEMY FORCES WERE KNOWN TO BE IN THE AREA, SSGT HOLLOWAY, THE PARA-MEDIC, VOLUNTEERED TO BE LOWERED TO THE AIRCRAFT TO RENDER MEDICAL ASSISTANCE. CAPT HERR AND CAPT HINKLE HOVERED OVERHEAD WHILE SSGT HOLLOWAY INSPECTED THE AIRCRAFT, DETERMINING THE PILOT WAS KIA AND THE OBSERVER WAS NOT IN THE AIRCRAFT. SSGT HOLLOWAY THEN SCOUTED OUT IN ALL DIRECTIONS FROM THE DOWNED AIRCRAFT, SEARCHING FOR THE OBSERVER. DURING THIS ENTIRE OPERATION THE ENTIRE CREW WERE VOLUNTARILY PLACING THEMSELVES IN A PRECARIOUS SITUATION, AS THE OBSERVER AIRCRAFT WAS BURNING AND COULD EXPLODE AT ANY SECOND. THERE WAS ALSO THE THREAT OF GROUND TO AIR ENEMY FIRE AND SSGT HOLLOWAY KNEW HIS GROUND SEARCH WAS IN ENEMY TERRITORY. ONCE SSGT HOLLOWAY WAS BACK IN THE AIRCRAFT AND REPORTED THAT THE OBSERVER WAS NOT IN THE DOWNED AIRCRAFT, THE SEARCH INTENSIFIED. A FEW MINUTES LATER THE OBSERVER WAS PICKED UP, UNINJURED, ABOUT 500 METERS DOWN HILL FROM THE CRASH SITE.

THE TEAMWORK, PROFESSIONALISM AND BRAVERY DISPLAYED BY THIS CREW WERE ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY, AND I THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT THEY BE OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR ACTIONS.



ROBERT H. STAFFORD
MAJ, IN
219th AVN CO (UTIL APLN)
COMMANDING

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THE TEAMWORK, PROFESSIONALISM AND BRAVERY DISPLAYED BY THIS CREW WERE
ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY, AND I THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT THEY
BE AWARDED THE Distinguished Flying Cross.

WAS Put in For Bronze Star by
US Army.

PAFFORD
X 3, 75
21912 A (PIL APLN)

Det 9, 38ARRSq Hist, Apr - Jun 69

9-6

On 3 Jun 69 Detachment 9 received word via Guard Channel that an Army O-1, Headhunter 12, had been shot down 9 NM Northeast of Pleiku City. Pedro 98 flew to the area, which was considered hostile since at least 60 NVA Soldiers were estimated to be in the area. Elliot 20, a USAF Forward Air Controller, cleared Pedro 98 into the site since 98 had a hoist and a PJ. The aircraft hovered over the dense jungle canopy as the PJ was lowered to the ground. The pilot was KIA and the observer was missing. The observer was later picked by an Army Huey with a rope. No save was recorded. Mission # 9-38-003 3 Jun 69.

On the night of 11 June, Detachment 9 received a call from Peacock (GCI) advising that an Army patrol was cutoff and surrounded by NVA regulars 47 NM Northeast of Pleiku AB. Pedro 98 and Pedro 83 launched and flew to the general area using flares in the area for enroute navigation. Since no ground fire was evident in the immediate area, both aircraft went in and six patrol members were hoisted up from the jungle. The soldiers rescued were Bill Wilkinson, Frank Kohari, James Gibson, Richard Horch, Arthur Woodley, and Reginald Salinas. Ranks were unknown and all were assigned to "C" Company, 13th Infantry division. Six combat saves were recorded. Mission # 9-38-004 11 Jun 69.

On 13 June Detachment 9 launched Pedro 98 to help the 225th Aviation Company locate a downed OV-1, Blackhawk 19. The downed aircraft was located ten miles Northeast of Dak To near the top of a 5000' peak. All crew members were presumed dead so an Army team of five was hoisted down into the jungle to check the wreckage. There were no survivors and no saves were recorded. Total saves for the quarter were seven.

Det 9, 38ARRSq Hist. Apr - Jun69

9-11

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT 2

EYEWITNESS STATEMENT 9-38-003, 3 June 69

1. On 3 June 1969, Capt Joseph T. Herr, Capt James F. Hinkel, SSgt Howard J. Holloway, and SSgt Charles F. Soderboom, distinguished themselves in action while on a search and rescue mission 10 miles NE of Pleiku City.

2. At approximately 1700 hours on 3 June 1969, I received a call that an O-1 observation aircraft in my command had been shot down while on a VR mission. I flew another O-1 aircraft to the reported area to assist in search and rescue operations. When I arrived over the downed aircraft I was informed by other search and rescue aircraft that they were still receiving ground fire in the area.

3. An HH43F helicopter, piloted by Capt Herr, arrived at the scene, was briefed on the situation, and began a low level search for the aircraft and crew of two. The area of search was on a mountainside and consisted of single to triple jungle canopy, making it almost impossible to see below the trees. Sighting smoke drifting up through the canopy, Capt Herr and Hinkel hovered their aircraft just above the trees, disregarding the reports of enemy gunfire, and used the downwash of the rotor to open holes in the canopy so they could search the ground. SSgt Soderboom, the aircraft engineer, finally sighted the wreckage and Capt Hinkel and Capt Herr took the helicopter even lower to determine the status of the crew, but were unable to do so. Disregarding the fact that enemy forces were known to be in the area, SSgt Holloway, the para-medic, volunteered to be lowered to the aircraft to render medical assistance. Capt Herr and Capt Hinkel hovered overhead while SSgt Holloway inspected the aircraft, determined the pilot was KIA and the observer was not in the aircraft. SSgt Holloway then scouted out in all directions from the downed aircraft, searching for the observer. During this entire operation the entire crew were voluntarily placing themselves in a precarious situation, as the aircraft was burning and could explode at any second. There was also the threat of ground to air enemy fire and SSgt Holloway knew his ground search was in enemy territory. Once SSgt Holloway was back in the aircraft and reported that the observer was not in the downed aircraft, the search was intensified. A few minutes later the observer was picked up, uninjured, about 500 meters downhill from the crash site.

4. The teamwork, professionalism and bravery displayed by this crew were above and beyond the call of duty, and I therefore recommend that they be officially recognized for their actions.

ROBERT H. STAFFORD, MAJ, IN
COMMANDER 219th Avn Co(Util ApIn)