

25Oct69

F-4D s.n. 65-0751

Cpt Gray .D. Warren MIA

1LT Neil .S. Bynum MIA

1Lt Neil S. Bynum, AC and Capt. Gray D. Warren, PSO were flying an F-4D Phantom II on a mission near the Ban Karai pass (Delta 22 - HCM Trail) when the plane was shot down.

On 26 October 1969, Capt. Gray D. Warren, pilot and 1st Lt. Neil S. Bynum, co-pilot; comprised the crew of an F-4D, call sign "Wolf 05," that departed Ubon Airfield, Thailand on an armed Forward Air Controller (FAC) mission near the Ban Karai Pass. This area of eastern Laos was considered a major gateway into the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail. When North Vietnam began to increase its military strength in South Vietnam, NVA and Viet Cong troops again intruded on neutral Laos for sanctuary, as the Viet Minh had done during the war with the French some years before. This border road was used by the Communists to transport weapons, supplies and troops from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, and was frequently no more than a path cut through the jungle covered mountains. US forces used assets available to them to stop this flow of men and supplies from moving south into the war zone.

Approximately 35 minutes into the flight, they contacted another FAC, call sign "Nail 30," who was working a target along Route 912 on the side of a hill where the terrain rises south to north. Nail 30 was waiting for ordnance to arrive on station when Capt. Warren contacted him and requested permission to fire at a bulldozer. Permission was granted and the pilot of Stormy 01, a third aircraft from Da Nang operating under the overall control of Nail 30, marked the target, then gave Wolf 05 corrected coordinates from his mark to bulldozer. Capt. Warren acknowledged the new information and said he was "going in on the target." The other pilots observed Gray Warren and Neil Bynum rolling in on target from south to north on a run-in alignment along the rise in terrain, firing a pod of high incendiary rockets at the bulldozer and hitting it, then impacting the ground about 100 meters above it. The large fireball was easily seen as well as aircraft wreckage scattered as much as 300 meters from the first point of impact.

Search and Recovery (SAR) operations were initiated at 0630 hours. When no contact could be established with the downed aircrew, those efforts were terminated at 0745 due to no valid SAR objectives. The location of loss was in the rugged, jungle-covered mountains approximately 2 miles northeast of Ban Lobey and 4 miles southwest of the Laos/North Vietnamese border, Khammouan Province, Laos; and 33 miles southwest of the major port city of Dong Hoi, North Vietnam.

The weather was good, and up until Wolf 05 rolled in on the bulldozer, there had been no enemy ground fire directed at the various American aircraft. However, after the crash small arms fire was seen by Nail 30 and Stormy 01, and anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) fire was reported by the SAR aircraft. Both Gray Warren and Neil Bynum were immediately listed Missing in Action.

The National Security Agency (NSA) regularly monitored enemy communications throughout Southeast Asia. They intercepted a communiqué, which they correlated to Wolf 05. They stated one pilot parachuted from the aircraft and was probably captured.