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MISSION NARRATIVE REPORT

DATE: 5 May 76
DECLASSIFIED

MISSION NUMBER: 1-3-038

FLIGHT DESIGNATION: Jolly Green 65 and 64

MISSION OBJECTIVE: Search and Rescue Strobe 52 (REF)

LOCATION: 16°14'N, 107°29'E

Saves: 2 Combat Saves

Classified by _____
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED ON 31 Dec 78

1. (C) SUMMARY OF SAR ACTIONS: Jolly Green 65 (Low) and 64 (High) were scrambled from Da Nang AB, RVN (Channel 77) at 0725Z by Queen, upon notification that Strobe 52 A and B were ejecting. We were airborne at 0735Z. Since the initial position reported by King placed the survivors West of Channel 77, we made a climbing turn, crossed the field at 2500 ft and proceeded west. Immediate contact was established with King 36 and he gave us a holding position of 270/50/77. A "clear radial" was obtained from Da Nang DASC and we proceeded directly to that position, climbing to 11,500 ft MSL. We reached the holding area at 0810Z and set up a holding pattern slightly to the south of 270/50/77 due to weather. Channel 77 and the first 25 miles of our route was VFR with a high thin cloud layer. As we reached the mountains, clouds had formed to establish a 6 to 7 thousand ft MSL ceiling, with the top of the prevailing cloud deck at 10,000 MSL. The deck was broken to overcast with isolated thunderstorm buildups from the ground to 20,000 ft MSL (EST). While we were enroute, the aircraft wreckage was reported to have been found at 212/35/69 and the search was centered in that area. King 36 was the only aircraft in contact with the survivors. Strobe 52 A reported that he was in good condition, on the side of a mountain near the top and that there was no movement in his area. Strobe 52 B did not establish radio contact. For over an hour an electronic search by King 36 and Jolly Green 65 and 64, and a visual search by numerous Spad and Covey aircraft produced negative results. At approximately 0915Z Spad 12, who had moved his area of search to the north, visually located Strobe 52 A and established radio contact with 52 B. He assumed on scene command, moved the SAR forces to the new area and obtained the assistance of two Army Huey Cobra Gunships who were familiar with the area. The Spad's and Cobra's determined that the area was permissive and proceeded to set up for an immediate pickup. Jolly Green 65 and 64 were told to move to 225/15/69 and Spad 03 and 04 were sent from the survivor's position to that point to escort them. Spad 12 briefed the SAR Forces on his plan of action and at 0940Z the pickup

COPY 1 OF 10 COPIES

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GROUP 4
Downgraded at 8 year
intervals, declassified
after 12 years
at 1

DECLASSIFIED

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attempt was started. All SAR forces were instructed not to fire unless fired upon as there were friendly troops in the area. Jolly Green 64 was left to hold high in a safe area at 225/17/69, about 3 miles south of the survivor's position. Spad 03 vectored Jolly Green 65 into the general area. Spad 12 then led Jolly Green 65 to a point just short of the survivor's position at which time one of the Cobras provided the final vector to Strobe 52 B. As Jolly Green 65 came to a hover over 52 B the Spads laid a smoke screen north and south down the ridge to the west. No ground fire was sighted and Strobe 52 B was picked up by hoist at approximately 0945Z. As the smoke screen had blown eastward and now covered the entire valley, Jolly Green 65 hover taxied up the mountain side to the east in the only clear direction, escorted by the Cobras. As it happened, this was the route directly to Strobe 52 A. On the direction of the Cobras Jolly Green 65 came into a second hover and after a minute of searching and a final vector from the Cobra, 52 A was spotted and retrieved by hoist at 0952Z. Jolly Green 65 immediately egressed the area over the same route as ingress and was joined by Jolly Green 64 and all Spads. The Flight then proceeded due east to feet wet at 8000 MSL and recovered at Channel 77 at 1025Z. No hostile fire was received or sighted by either Jolly Green 65 or 64. Air refueling before or after the rescue was not required.

2. 2 Sorties/5.6hrs/HH-53/37 ARRS; 2 Sorties/3.6hrs/HH-3E/37 ARRS; 2 Sorties/5.6hrs/HC-130P/39ARRS; 2 Sorties/6.5hrs/HH-53/40 ARRS; 4 Sorties/9.5hrs/A-1E/OLAA, 56 SOW; 6 Sorties/19.6hrs/A-1E/56SOW.

3. None

4. None

5. Both survivors were recovered in good condition. Neither of the two pararescue-men on board were deployed, they did however treat Strobe 52 B for a minor cut on his neck. Both survivors were turned over to the Air Force Flight Surgeon at Da Nang and both were subsequently released within an hour.

6. Jolly Green Crews:

Jolly Green 65 (Low)

AC Capt Donald Y. Thompson
CP Capt John O. Lindgren, Jr.
FE SSgt Edward J. Koebernik
RS SSgt Dennis T. Duffy
RS TSgt John F. Heitsch

Jolly Green 64 (High)

AC Capt Jerald A. Brown
CP Capt Aaron T. Stacey
FE SSgt William Johnson
RS MSgt Harold W. Harvey
RS SSgt Michael K. Van Brunt
AP Sgt Micael H. Enos

Donald Y. Thompson

DONALD Y. THOMPSON, Captain, USAF
Aircraft Commander

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DATE: 5 MAY 70

7 May 1970

MISSION NUMBER: 1-3-038-5 MAY 70

AIRCRAFT DESIGNATION: KING 36

LOCATION: 235/18/69

DISTRESSED AIRCRAFT: STROBE 52 (RF-4)

SAVES: 2 Combat

Classified by
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED ON 31 Dec 76

1. (U) At 0718Z King 36 picked up a beeper signal and about the same time a garbled Mayday call was heard. King 36 got a good bearing and headed in the direction of the signal. Cap 13 and Speedy 15 were already in the area and copied the Mayday as being a Strobe 52, down somewhere in the A Shau Valley. Speedy 15 could stay in the area so he was appointed On-Scene Commander and was asked to make a communications search when and if the beepers stopped.
2. (U) SAR forces were requested at 0725Z after King 36 arrived in the area and made voice contact with Strobe 52-A. He said he was in a tree top 75' from the ground. He was in good condition and said he was going to get to the ground and move up a ridge. He was informed of the presence of bad guys in the area and confirmed everything around his position was quiet. When asked about his Bravo man he stated he had not seen his chute on the way down.
3. (C) Covey 259 came on the scene and stated he was familiar with the terrain and he was also a Prairie Fire FAC. He was appointed On-Scene Commander at 0750Z and Speedy 15 left the area for fuel. The exact position of the survivors had not been pinpointed and King 36 was the only one who could talk to Alfa. Slow movers were requested in case they were needed and Covey ordered four Cobra gunships from Bilk control which King 36 coordinated with Queen.
4. (C) By 0810Z Spads 11 & 12 were on scene and were briefed by Covey 259. 0815Z Spad 11 was appointed On-Scene Commander and began searching the area. King 36 was talking to Strobe 52-A and receiving his beeper. Also we were getting a DF station passage on Alfa at 225/28/69 so we set up an orbit directly over him. None of the other aircraft could copy his transmissions.
5. (C) At 0905Z King 36 moved about 5 miles north of the position and had Alfa change freq to 282.8 to get off primary guard due to increasing traffic on that freq. At 0910Z voice contact was made with Strobe 52-B and it was determined they were both in same area and both in good condition.

~~GROUP 4~~

~~Downgraded at 3 year intervals.~~
~~Declassified at or 12 yr 15.~~

atd4

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6. (C) Spad 12 got voice contact with both survivors at 0915Z and pinpointed their position at 235/18/69 and began to VR the area. Spad 12 took the initiative on the SAR effort without comment from Spad 11 who was not in the immediate area so King 36 appointed Spad 12 On-Scene Commander at 0920Z. Spad 12 briefed the SAR forces to include effective use of the Cobra gunships as escorts at 0930Z.

7. (C) Jolly Green 65 & 64 began to move in for the pick up escorted by Spad 03 & 04. The four Spads formed a daisy chain around the Jolly Greens and put down smoke for cover. Bravo popped his smoke at 0945Z and Jolly Green 65 picked him up at 0947Z. Alfa popped his smoke at 0948Z and was picked up at 0950Z.

8. (U) Ground fire was reported coming from the northeast as the forces were egressing out of the area and was immediately suppressed by the Spads. All forces RTB'd at 0955Z.

9. (U) Air Refueling: King 37 was on scene but was not used. King 32 refueled Jolly Green 60 & 57 after the SAR effort.

10. (C) Comments: From 0725Z to 0915Z none of the SAR forces could copy transmissions of voice or beeper signals from the survivors except King 36. I believe this was due to the terrain features and the fact that King remained at a high altitude almost directly over the survivors. I also believe these facts further substantiate the contention that SAR operations can not be controlled from aircraft on a fixed orbit.

11. (C) SAR Forces:

Speedy 15	Dragon Fly 1, 2, 3, & 4 (Cobra gunships)
Covey 259	Jolly Green 24 & 27 (RTB for hydraulic leak)
Spad 11 & 12	Sandy 5 & 6 (Nov Orbit - not used)
Jolly Green 65 & 64	Jolly Green 60 & 57 (Nov Orbit - not used)
Sandy 22 & 23, 42 & 43	King 37 (Not used - held for possible secondary SAR)
	King 32 (Nov force refueler)

12. (U) King 36 Crewmembers

AMC/AC MAJ KIMMEL	RO SSG HOLLUMS
CP 1LT HEINING	FE SSG SHOREY
N CPT SELLERS	FE TSG SUMNER
RO SSG FREBURGER	LM SSG ROSS

Billy B. Kimmel

BILLY B. KIMMEL, Major, USAF
Airborne Mission Commander/Aircraft Commander

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

GROUP-4
Downgraded at 8 year intervals.
Declassified after 12 years.

DATE	CREW	J-G CALL S	SAVE NUMB	RANK SERIAL NUMBER ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	MAY 1970
						UNDER-FIRE
2 MAY H3	TOBIN	35	556	CAPT. BOBIE BADENHEIM	308/35/103	YES
	CLARK		557	LT GARY JACKSON		
	VAI			13 TFS-UDORN		
	SMITH, J.					
5 MAY 53C	THOMPSON	65	558	RICHARD E. MOFFITT	285/43/77	NO
	LINDGREN		559	MAJ- XXXXXXXXXX	RF-4C	
	KOEBERNIK			DONALD A. KELLUM		
	DUFFY			LT/Col- XXXXXXXXXX		
	HEITSCH			12 TRS-TSNHUT		
15 MAY H3	BOND	23	560	GARY M. RUBES	120/13/77	NO
	FETIE			1/LT-		
	BLACKWOOD			433 TFS-UBON		
	TATLEY					
	SMITH, J.					
	CLARK	27	561	JOHN T. SORNBERGER	120/13/77	NO
	TERRELL			1/LT-		
	CLOYES			433 TFS-UBON		
	SAMO					

NOTE: This is a verbatim transcript of a very poor quality primary source document. The original document is a press release. It and the photograph were provided to me by Ed Koebernik. Ed was a flight engineer at the 37th ARRS and he flew on this mission on 5 May 1970

“BUFF MAKES FIRST SAVE”

DM05-70-6

by Capt. Mike Fresl

DA NANG AB, Republic of Vietnam (7AF) – An HH-53 Rescue Helicopter from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS), stationed here, has recently chalked up its first rescue.

Prior to the arrival of the “Buffs” (Big Ugly Friendly Fellows) as they are called by Southeast Asia aircrews, all search and rescue (SAR) operations originating from the Republic of South Vietnam had been conducted with the HH-3E helicopter, commonly called the “Jolly Green Giant.” The Buffs at Da Nang AB are the first and only HH-53s flying SAR missions from the Republic of South Vietnam.

The “Buffs” have now augmented the “Jolly Green’s” at Da Nang AB. The 37th ARRS had up to the Buff save compiled a record of 557 individual saves since becoming operational in 1965.

The credit for the first rescue with the newly arrived “Buff” went to Captain Donald T. Thompson, aircraft commander, and his crew Captain John T. Lindgren, copilot, Staff Sergeant Edward J. Koebernik, flight engineer; Technical Sergeant John F. Heitch and Staff Sergeant Dennis T. Duffy, both rescue specialists.

“Actually, the rescue was a double save,” stated Capt. Thompson, “as the downed aircraft was an RF-4 south of here. We picked both crew members out of very thick jungle east of the A Shau valley. They were saves 558 and 559 for the 37th, but the first rescue with our recently arrived “Buffs.”

“When we landed back at Da Nang our crew chief Staff Sergeant Billie J. Barnes had his paint brush handy and stenciled the “Buff” with its first save,” concluded Capt. Thompson.

“This is the beginning of a new era for the 37th here at Da Nang Air Base,” stated Lieutenant Colonel Albert L. Holcomb, 37th ARRS Commander. “That Others May Live,” is the motto of the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, and we are happy that the “Buff” has chalked up its first satisfied customers,” concluded Lt. Col. Holcomb.

SMAY 70 = FILE NAME

CAPT JOHN
LINDGREN
CO-PILOT

MAJ RICHARD
MOFFITT
SURVIVOR

CAPT DONALD
THOMPSON
PILOT

SSGT EDWARD
KOEERNIK FE



SSGT DENNIS DUFFY (RT)

TSAT JOHN HEITCH (PS)

SSGT RILLIE BARNES
CREW CHIEF

1ST HIT-53 SAVE AT DANANG 37th APR 53

BUFFS CHALK UP NO. 1 AT DA NANG

COMMANDER PREDICTS HH-53s WILL BRING 'NEW ERA FOR 37th'

DA NANG—An Air Force HH-53 Buff rescue helicopter from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron here recently chalked up its first rescue.

Prior to the arrival of the Buffs (Big Ugly Friendly Fellows), as they are called by Southeast Asia aircrews, all search and rescue (SAR) operations originating from the Republic of Vietnam had been conducted with the HH-3 helicopter, commonly called the Jolly Green Giant. The Buffs here are the first and only HH-53s flying SAR missions from Vietnam. They will augment the Jolly Green Giants. The 37th ARRS has compiled a record of 559 individual saves since becoming operational in 1965.

(Editor's Note: The HH-53 helicopter has been operating out of the 40th ARRSq, Udorn RTAFB, Thailand, since the fall of 1968.)

FIRST RESCUE CREDIT

Credit for the first rescue with the newly arrived Buff went to Capt. Donald Thompson, aircraft commander, and his crew: Capt. John Lindgren, co-pilot; SSgt. Edward J. Koebornik, flight engineer; and TSgt. John F. Heitch and SSgt. Dennis T. Duffy, both rescue specialists.

"Actually the rescue was a double save," Captain Thompson said. "The downed aircraft was an RF-4 with two crewmen. We picked both crew members out of very thick jungle east of the A Shau Valley. They were the first saves made by the recently arrived Buffs.

CHALKING IT UP

"When we landed here our crew chief, SSgt. Billie J. Barnes, had his paint brush handy and stenciled the Buff with its first save," Captain Thompson said.

"This is the beginning of a new era for the 37th ARRS," Lt. Col. Albert L. Holcomb, 37th ARRS commander, said. "That Others May Live is the motto of the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, and we are happy the Buff has chalked up its first satisfied customers."

FROM THE COMBAT ZONE



FIRST FOR 37TH "BUFF"—All smiles after completion of the first search and rescue mission flown in one of the newly arrived HH-53 helicopters is the crew and the two rescued pilots. Standing, left to right, are Capt. John R. Lindgren, co-pilot; Maj. R. E. Moffitt and Lt. Col. Don Kellum, the rescued airmen; and Capt. Donald Y. Thompson, aircraft commander. Kneeling, left to right, are SSgt. Billie J. Barnes, crew chief; John F. Heitsch, rescue specialist; and Edward J. Koebornik, flight engineer. Missing from the photo is Dennis T. Duffy, rescue specialist.

SQUADRON SAVES 45 SERVICEMEN IN ACTIVE TWO MONTHS PERIOD

DA NANG—For the Air Force members of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron stationed here March and April will be remembered for

the 45 servicemen saved during the two-month period.

SAR ACTION BEGINS

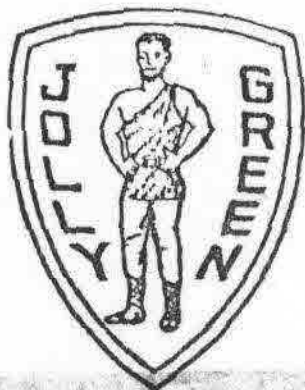
The action began March 9, when a downed F-100 Supersabre pilot was picked up by an HH-3 Jolly Green piloted by Maj. Lewis E. Garrett.

"I remember the day well," explained Lt. Col. Albert L. Holcomb, 37th ARRS commander, "as this particular search and rescue (SAR) operation took place three days after I became commander of the 37th ARRS."

SEVEN MORE MISSIONS

The remainder of March saw seven more SAR missions flown for a total of 15 saves for the month.

The pace continued throughout April with a total of 30 crewmembers being lifted from the jungle.



New 'Buff' Copters Record 1st Rescue

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HH-53 Plucks Men From Enemy Hands

TAN SON NHUT — The first newly arrived HH-53 "Buff" helicopter from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang Airfield recently rescued two RF-4 Phantom crewmembers from enemy territory in Thua Thien Province.

Lt. Col. Donald A. Kellum, navigator, and Maj. Richard E. Moffitt, aircraft commander, from the 12th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron of the 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing here, had to eject from their battle damaged aircraft. They landed in dense, enemy infested jungle.

The crewmen had been flying a tactical reconnaissance mission in the vicinity of the A Shau Valley when they received heavy anti-aircraft ground fire.

"The events which followed our bail out were just tremendous," commented Major Moffitt. "I made contact with some aircraft in the area, and I gave them our approximate positions. I could not contact Colo-

nel Kellum because his radio was out. About one and a half hours later I spotted and made contact with several AH-1 Cobra helicopter gunships and A-1 Sky-raidiers in the area. I could hear enemy ground fire as the helicopters neared our positions, and I must say it was very close.

"Providing cover for the rescue helicopter, the gunships and the A-1's continued to make passes at the enemy positions until they were silenced. The rescue took place about two hours after we went down, but it seemed much longer."

Colonel Kellum added, "The weather was bad, the terrain was rough, and the cramped conditions for the number of aircraft involved in the rescue worked against us. The heavy antiaircraft fire didn't help matters either. I will say, and I know Major Moffitt agrees, that those involved in the rescue displayed the highest degree of seamanship possible. Through their efforts, Major Moffitt and I were surely plucked from the hands of the enemy."

BOB

SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG TO GET THIS TO YOU,
A LOT HAS HAPPENED, GOT MARRIED, BOUGHT A NEW
HOUSE AND A WHOLE LOT OF MOVING GOT DONE.

THE NARRATIVE IS A COPY OFF OF ONION SKIN
SO THE QUALITY IS POOR, BUT ALMOST READABLE.
ALSO NOTE OF MY ADDRESS CHANGE.

GOOD LUCK ON VOLUME 2.

RESPECTFULLY

El Kesh

Robert LaPointe

From: Ron Thurlow [tlow52@hotmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, February 21, 2004 8:25 AM
To: rlapoint@comclark.com
Cc: rlapointe@gci.net
Subject: FW: HH-53 Information

2 PHOTOS ATTACHED FOR STROBE 52 SAR
 FILE NAME 70-5-5 STROBE 52

Hello Bob

I got the attached message from John Lindgren a couple of nights ago, and have had a nice follow-up note from him as well. When I saw how good the photo was, I immediately thought of your book project. I don't know how much PJ action was involved in the Strobe 52 event, but it might be worthwhile to use if only for the good shot of the people involved. I see the name "Barnes" on one name tag - I think he was an FE. Anyway, I asked John if I could forward his note and photo your way and he said ok. You can do whatever you want from here.

I learned another tidbit in the course of my review. When I ran the queries to make paper copies of all the 68-73 rescues, I put a date criteria for both the shoot down date and the pickup date (don't ask me why, I guess I just thought that was what I had to do). Now I have discovered that I am missing SAR events - they are on the computer screen, but not on the paper list I printed. I have finally figured out that the difference lies in the fact that you entered no date for those events where a save was not accomplished - they were KIA or POW etc. So, I have learned two lessons - first, that I should enter only one set of "criteria dates" when I make a query, and that should be the shootdown date. Second, we need to enter a fictitious date into those empty columns where the pickup dates are recorded. I am recommending we use a date such as 1/1/1111. That way, if you ever want to run a query to ask for just those missions where the survivors were KIA or MIA or POW, all you have to do is ask for the 1/1/1111 dates, and ACCESS will pull just those. In the meantime, I now must go back and run all the years 1969 through 1973 again to see if I can capture on paper all of the events I see on the screen.

As a status report, I finished the MISREP reviews for the first six months of 1968, then decided to go back and enter the changes into the actual Master Data Base, just for a change of pace. That's where I discovered my query criteria misque. I'm finding it to be a long, slow process, just as you predicted. On the other hand, the data base is really getting filled in, so that is good. Plus, 1968 is the biggest year of all for CSAR, and the rest of the years shouldn't be quite so bad. I'll just keep plugging away.

This is Friday evening in Ohio. FedEx tried to deliver your package today and unfortunately it was during the 15 minutes I was gone to take my car for some tire service. They will try again on Monday. I'll let you know when I have it.

That's it from the Midwest, hope you're making massive progress on Volume II.

T-Low

>From: John Lindgren
 >To:
 >Subject: HH-53 Information
 >Date: Thu, 19 Feb 2004 14:13:43 -0800
 >

2/23/2004

>I saw your listing of HH-53's on the Jolly Green Association web site and
 >thought that I'd drop you a line. I think that I can dig up some of the
 >missing information on your list. I was an HH-53 pilot in the 40th ARRS (at
 >Udon at that time) from Feb 70 until May 70, when I was transferred to the
 >37th ARRS at Danang. I was wounded in the Wolf 06 SAR in March of 70 and
 >was sent down to Sattahip, Thailand with another pilot, Jerry Brown, and a
 >crew of maintenance folks to unload three new HH-53's from a SeaTrain Lines
 >container ship in the port of Sattahip. After putting these three aircraft
 >together and doing test flights to Utapao RTAFB, Jerry and I flew them, one
 >at a time, over to Danang. These were the first three HH-53's at Danang.
 >In May, both Jerry and I were transferred to Danang to form the initial
 >cadre of HH-53 pilots at Danang. The only other HH-53 qualified pilot at
 >Danang was LCol Holcomb, the new squadron commander. Three pilots, three
 >aircraft! The rest of the 37th at that time were all HH-3E crewmembers and
 >none of them were interested in cross training to the HH-53. Your listing
 >of tail numbers shows the first HH-53 rescue for a Danang aircraft is
 >correct. Capt Thompson was the AC and I was the co-pilot. The rescue was
 >made at the South end of the A Shau Valley and the downed aircraft was a
 >RF-4C from TanSonNhut, callsign STROBE 52. We picked up both the front and
 >back seaters, two LCol's. Capt Thompson was TDY to Danang from Udon to
 >assist in our severe shortage of HH-53 pilots at that time. I am attaching
 >a black and white photo of our crew and the two survivors, taken after our
 >arrival back in Danang. I need to dig into some of the paperwork I have in
 >the attic to see if I can arrive at the date of the rescue and see if I have
 >any photos of the HH-53's on the dock at Sattahip that might show the tail
 >numbers. I seem to recall that they were 362, 363, and 364 but I'm not sure
 >at this point 34 years later.
 >Regards,
 >John Lindgren, LCol USAF, Ret.
 >falcon62@adelphia.net

STROBE 52 SAR

RF4-C

MAY 5 1970

Store more e-mails with MSN Hotmail Extra Storage – 4 plans to choose from!

2/23/2004

