

FROM: Lt Col. Kilbride

31 December 1970

SUBJECT: SARCO Report Canasta 406

TO: DO

1. At approximately 1725, 29 Dec 1970, I was notified that Canasta 406 had bailed out due to engine failure. Canasta 406/412 were Navy A-7s from the USS Ranger.
2. I repaired to the Command Post to discover that Pedro 46, who was alerted because of Canasta 406 was diverting to NKP with engine problems, was on the way to the scene to make a pickup. Spad 11 and 12, who were returning from Da Nang, were also directed to the scene and upon arrival Spad 11 assumed on-scene command. The chute had been sighted at 120/16/89 and the aircraft impacted at 107/14/89. The original positions were passed by Canasta 412 who was orbiting the area. Skycap 34 (CH-3) was on an FCF mission and upon notification of the SAR effort he went along to act as high bird for Pedro 46.
3. Because of rapidly fading daylight, the decision was made to use this mixed force rather than wait for the Sandy on orbit to reach the scene and it would have been impossible for the Jolly Greens to make it before dark. Spad 11 trolled for guns and checked the area for enemy movement. The area seemed to be sufficiently permissive to commit Pedro 46 to the pickup. He briefed the Pedro while marking the position. He called Pedro 46 in for phase Bravo and the pickup was made at 1745. Spad 11 and 12 returned to base and Skycap 34 escorted Pedro 46 to NKP. (See attached report by Spad 11).
4. Resources from NKP that were involved in the SAR were:

<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Name</u>
Spad 11	Lt Schaffert
Spad 12	Capt Taylor
Pedro 46	Maj May
Skycap 34	Maj Weatherford
5. A chronological list of events follows:
 - 1719 - Teepee alert on HF SAR frequency and on guard that Canasta 406 was directing to Ch 89 with engine trouble. Secondary crash alarm activated.
 - 1724 - Canasta 406 ejects because of frozen engine.
 - 1725 - Pedro 46 launches. Skycap 34 on FCF.

- 1729 - Col Weber directs Spad 11/12 to scene to take command. This information passed to Jack for relay to King 23.
- 1730 - Canasta 412 passes information on location of chute and impact area.
- 1735 - Skycap 34 joins Pedro 46 as high bird
- 1745 - Pickup completed by Pedro 46 - RTB with Skycap 34 as escort

Wade R. Kilbride

WADE R. KILBRIDE, Lt Colonel, USAF
SAR Coordinator

FROM: Lt Schaffer

31 Dec 70

SUBJECT: Canasta 406 SAR

TO: SARCO (Lt Col Kilbride)

On 28 Dec 70, Spad 11, Lt Schaffer and Spad 12, Capt Taylor were returning to NKP after standing a normal alert posture at Da Nang. We arrived over the terminal area with an excess of fuel and remained airborne to burn out all external fuel before landing. We were approximately 9 miles south of CH 89 when we heard Canasta 406 report a rough engine to King over Invert primary uniform freq. I immediately turned to a 090° head to set up an intercept. Canasta 406 was at 105 for 48 DME and heading for CH 89 when he developed a severe vibration. Spad 11 reported in to King that we were intercepting Canasta 406. The vibration continued and eventually became worse. The wingman of 406 reported a fire in the aft section, resulting in 406 shutting down the engine. This happened at about 28 DME. Altitude was 14M'. We made visual contact with Canasta 406 when he was passing through 5000'. At 3500', the time was 1723, he punched out. We were about 200 meters in trail during the ejection sequence. I reported to King that I had a visual on the chute and was arriving the on-scene. Capt Taylor and I circled the survivor while he descended. The aircraft started a wide right hand turn and crashed on the 106° radio at 14 DME. The survivor was located at 120 for 16 DME. Immediate voice contact was established. Pedro 46 had already been scrambled and was just becoming airborne. The survivor's condition was excellent and he sounded extremely calm on the radio. There was no movement around him. I made many low passes to visually inspect the area and insure that there was no opposition to a quick pickup by the Pedro. After I was certain the area was secure I sent Capt Taylor to rendezvous with Pedro 46 and lead him into the area. I then briefed Canasta 406 on preparing a flare to signal the Pedro and suggested he move a short distance on a heading of 165° from his chute. Pedro arrived on scene and I showed him where the survivor was located. I had the survivor pop the night end of the flare - Pedro saw it and went into a hoover. A successful pickup was accomplished with no opposition. Capt Taylor and I didn't expend in the area because of the obvious security of the area. All forces RTB.

GARY W. SCHAEFFER, 1st Lt, USAF
On-Scene Commander

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CANASTA 406 SEARCH AND RECOVERY

(C) A successful, routine and very quick SAR was conducted on 28 December 1970 for Canasta 406. The aircraft, a Navy A-7 off the carrier USS Ranger, was flying a combat mission in Steel Tiger with Canasta 412 when he developed engine trouble and diverted toward Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base. Enroute his engine caught fire and Canasta 406 ejected passing through 3,500 feet and landed on the 120 degree radial 16 miles from Channel 89 (Tacan Station at Nakhon Phanom). The pilot egressed at 1724L and was picked up uninjured 21 minutes later at 1745L.¹⁶⁴

(C) No SAR sorties were generated by the 56th Special Operations Wing but two A-1's and two helicopters participated in the effort. At 1719L TeePee was alerted on HF SAR frequency and on guard the Canasta 406 was enroute with an engine problem. The secondary crash alarm was activated at this time. Spad 11/12 (A-1 aircraft) were enroute to Nakhon Phanom following a routine alert tour at DaNang Air Base, RVN and were in the holding pattern with an excess of fuel. They heard the emergency broadcast and diverted immediately to intercept the troubled A-7. Pedro 46, a CH-3 helicopter, heard the conversation and was immediately airborne. Skycap 34, a CH-3 helicopter was launched on an FCF (Functional Check Flight) coincident with Canasta 406's egress. He immediately diverted to the scene to act as "high bird".¹⁶⁵

164. SARCO Report Canasta 406, 31 Dec 1970, Document #17.

165. Ibid.

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(C) Spad 11/12 intercepted Canasta 406 and made visual contact with the aircraft as it was passing through 5,000 feet. Just prior to that time they heard Canasta 412 report a fire in the aft section of Canasta 406 and heard the pilot state his intention to shut the engine down and perform egress procedures. Spad 11/12 observed the ejection sequence, circled the descending parachute and identified the exact position of the survivor when he touched down. Spad 11 took charge as On-Scene Commander and established radio contact with Canasta 406. He ascertained that the survivors physical condition was excellent and that his manner was extremely calm. Although the area was expected to be completely permissive, Spad 11/12 made several low passes to visually inspect the area and insure that there was no opposition.¹⁶⁶

(C) At this point the SARCO decided to use the available mixed airborne resources for the effort rather than generate the normal SAR forces. The area was safe and darkness was approaching. It would take too long to generate Sandies or to return Sandies from their airborne orbit point. In addition, the Jolly Greens would not be able to reach the objective point during the remaining day light minutes.¹⁶⁷

(C) Spad 11 directed Canasta 406 to move a short distance south-east of his parachute and to prepare a signal flare to mark his position. Pedro 46 arrived and was directed in by Spad 11. Canasta 406 popped the night end of his signal flare and Pedro 46 went into

166. Ibid.
167. Ibid.

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a hover above the survivor's position. The pick up was made without incident and all forces returned to Nakhon Phanom. The only ordnance expended was the night end of Canasta 406's signal flare.¹⁶⁸

168. Ibid.

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K-WG-56-HI
Oct-Dec 1970
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**RECORD OF SAVES FOR THE HH-43 UNIT OF THE 40th ARRS SINCE THE
ORGANIZATION OF THE DETACHMENT 9, 38th ARRS 1964**

	<u>COMBAT</u>	<u>NON COMBAT</u>	<u>MED EVAC</u>
SAVE NUMBER 100 on 21 September 68 (EST)*	63	37	
Remainder of 1968	10	4	2
1969	-	12	4
1970	4	5	1
1971	8	3	0
1972			
1968			
23 Sep		1	
5 Oct		2	
15 Oct			2
30 Oct	1		
12 Nov	9		
1969			
11 Jun Troop Evacuation		6	
26 Jan Sick Troopers	0	0	0
14 Jul Huey Gunship Crash		3	
8 Apr Troop caught on aircraft during parachute jump.			1
15 Apr Wounded Army Patient Transfer			2
16 Apr Wounded Vietnamese Troop			1
26 May Malaria		1	
8 Aug Downed LOH Crew		2	
1970			
14 Mar A-1 Crash on Takeoff	0	0	0
19 Mar A-1 Crash		1	
30 Mar F-4 Bailout	1	2	1
8 Apr Snake Bite at Camp Hunkey		1	
15 Nov F105 Bailout	2		
4 Dec Snake Bite		1	
28 Dec A-7 Bailout	1		
1971			
19 Jan Med Evac (Patient Stopped Breathing)		1	
5 Mar C-119 Bailout	8		
18 May Med Evac (Infant)		1	
2 Aug QU 22 Crash Landed		1	
17 Aug QU 22 Engine Failure on Short Final	0	0	0

PERCENT COMBAT VS. NON COMBAT SAVES ESTIMATED FROM RANDOM
SAMPLING OF RECORDS AVAILABLE AT THIS UNIT NOV 71.

LCDR Castle Rescue in Laos by Nail, Sandy & Pedro 28 Dec., 1970



LCdr Castle with the Pedro crew and Capt Lay, the pilot, who rescued him. Capt Lay is in front and just behind him is LCdr Castle. The dog was the beloved base mascot and according to Bobby Lay he had more rescue and flying time than any Pedro crew in SEA. When a security guard accidentally shot him the base mourned one of the most loved animal in Thailand.

LCdr Castle & Capt Lay were reunited on 2 July, 1996 through the help of the ACA organization, the Internet & the Air Force. Bob Castle is looking in all his storages to retrieve the Ranger Plaque and Bobby Lay is looking for the tree branch which was on Bob Castle's flying suit the day they rescued him. Bob Castle is in California and Bobby Lay is in S. Carolina. Thanks for all the help.

The Following is an e-mail from Bobby Lay on the rescue.

From: creeves@ces.clemson.edu
Date: Fri, 5 Jul 1996 14:58:21 -0400
To: aircommando1@earthlink.net
Subject: LCDR Castle Rescue in Laos

Gene, 7-5-96

Thanks for your phone call concerning the recovery of LCDR Castle.

I don't recall who was flying with me when we picked up LCDR Castle. We flew with different crew compositions on each day of "alert duty." I would appreciate the plaque. It would remind me of a very slick, quick, and dirty rescue. LCDR Castle was only on the ground 19 minutes - probably seemed like an eternity to him.

He was very calm - at least his voice was not an octave above normal conversation. Our only conversation was "Pedro, do you want me to pop smoke?" My reply was, "negative." I believe that was our only conversation. He had a large group of Air Force people welcoming him to NKP. I dropped him off at base operations and re-established my alert status.

I kept a small twig from a tree his parachute harness snapped off. Today, I can't find it - expect to find later and will send it to him.

I am a 1954 graduate of Annapolis. It was a most pleasurable event to rescue a Navy pilot.

Please extend my warmest regards to Capt. Castle.

Sincerely,

Bobby S. Lay

>

Capt Robert N Castle, Jr USN retired was shot down in Laos about 17 NM from NKP on 28 Dec., 1970, while flying an A-7E from the Carrier Ranger. He was rescued by a HH-43 Pedro Helicopter, flown by Capt Bobby S. Lay and his crew, of Det 9, 38ARRSq from NKP. He was preceded to the rescue by four Sandys' A-1 and a Nail FAC. The Pedro helicopter normally didn't perform SAR but it was the only helo available that day. This is LCDR Castle debriefing and praise for his AF rescuers. He has a plaque for the Pedro crew which he never was able to give to and would like to do it if he could find them as well as treat them to fine wine, liquor and a meal. If any of the other rescuers are around from Sandy & Nail FAC they are also welcomed to participate. Please e-mail me at aircommando1@earthlink.com any information available to locate the aircrew who saved him that day.

SAR Debriefing

- a. Name Castle, Robert N. Jr., LCDR, 580429/1310
- b. Date 28 Dec., 1970
- c. Acft/Unit A7E, VA-25 Ranger
- d. Rescue Acft HH-43 Helicopter(Pedro)
- e. Zone Land/Combat
- f. Recovery Operation:

SAR procedures were initiated by Nail 46, the FAC with whom NE 406 and flight were operating. He notified Invert and King while we remained on the FAC tactical frequency. When he notified NE 406 & 412 to switch to Invert frequency for flight-following we did so. Two Sandy A-1's from NKP who were RTB from Danang were vectored to our position inbound to NKP. Ejection occurred at about 1820 on the 120/16 from NKP with my wingman NE 412 and two A-1's observing the ejection. Once on the ground contact was established with the PRC-90 on 243.00 with Sandy 11. My position on the ground was established within one minute after radio contact. I was briefed to remain in that position and that the helo was on its way. Although I was not aware of it there were two additional Sandys who vectored to the SAR site when they heard the transmission on Invert frequency.

g. The AF has a PRC-64 with 3 or 4 channels. Why doesn't the Navy use the same one?

Recommendations. a. Although the possibility of sea survival for a Navy pilot is obviously more probable than a land survival situation, the land survival situation is currently the more potentially hazardous. The SAR experts at NKP advised me that pilots/downed crewmen if not rescued immediately are not currently being taken prisoner. I would like more substantiating statistics on the subject. Nevertheless, any decorated hardhat was the subject of considerable discussion, since it has quite a bit of reflective tape on it. I agree that for in-country SERE/SAR it is mandatory to be as inconspicuous as possible and I feel that I was just waiting to be seen. b. The question of whether to carry none, one or more radio/gun was discussed, and I feel that if capture is in fact not realistic that the guns might be an excellent idea. VA-25 carries 3 survival radios; a PRC-63 on the pilot, a Prego on the pilot, and a URT-33 in the seat pin.

g.3. I have been briefed that the A-1's of the 1st SOS(Special Operations Squadron) are to be turned over to SVN around 1 July, 1971. I wish to state empathetically that the primary factor in my rapid and seemingly easy rescue was the professional and thoroughly knowledgeable approach that the Sandys were observed to have. The 1840 recovery time did not leave much time to play around locating my position or in communicating with me, and it was very obvious that the Sandys knew what to do and how to do it expeditiously. I have also heard that the OV-10s' may take over the SAR requirements, and it certainly is required that the air wing personnel be briefed by the pilots flying the SAR aircraft whether it be an A-1 or an OV-10. I am quite interested in what capability the OV-10 has as a SAR aircraft. I realize the A-1's are in very obviously short supply; nevertheless, it is also the proper aircraft for SAR in terms of on station time and ordnance load capability.

h. Problem areas have been discussed in items f.9. No major problems areas were encountered, but there are several items that need be improved upon. One item I did not mention was the swaplink that Jest recommends. I concur absolutely! When I mounted the jungle penetrator it was difficult to stay seated on the small seat. I felt confident that the strap under my arms would hold me, but the additional snaplink would have been more expeditious and could have been used without impacting my of the penetrator.

I might mention that I had just been to JEST on 22 December, 1970. Thank God! The review was excellent in all respects except possibly a quick and dirty helo capability. Those pilots who for one reason or another "missed" school should go, and it should be made mandatory school. It is one of the truly few "No BS, only good info" schools' available today!

The URT-33 is presently not connected to the aircraft because the kits required for the installation are not available, but VA-L5 will not connect them up automatically anymore. Since we feel that the VC have a sufficient number of radios that they can use to home on the beacon. Additionally the beacon virtually eliminates use of 243.0 until it is shut off, and if evasion is immediate the URT-33 might not be deactivated, and this could easily reduce or eliminate the possibility of radio contact.

The PRC-63 was in my G-suit pocket (I have an old G-suit!) but I removed it because I was concerned that it could break my leg/ankle if I didn't clear the leg under the instrument panel. My present survival vest is quite full and I have considered eliminating some of the 2 or 3 day survival equipment to ensure that I have proper 24 hour survival gear. I feel that if I can't get picked up in 24 hours I may not be picked up at all under the current situation.

Ref CASTLEM6.SAR