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REF TO  
ATTN: MAJ WOLCOTT

SUBJECT: SAR FOR BIGOT 02 BRAVO

TO: SARGO

Sir:

I would like to preface my report with a brief remark or two.

This was the most frustrating, disappointing, and saddening SAR I have been on. Sandy pilots have written a long, proud, and gallant history of rescue in Southeast Asia, but this unsuccessful SAR for Bigot 02 Bravo unfortunately does not belong to this proud heritage. The mission of the Sandy/Jolly team is to extract downed airmen from the very clutches of the enemy. We have been reasonably successful in the past. Our proven capability to accomplish this mission has made a significant contribution to the high morale of combat pilots in Southeast Asia.

But we didn't accomplish this mission on the 4th of February - we didn't save 02 Bravo. I personally receive very little consolation from hearing: "Well, one has to expect to lose one every now and then," or "Well, the weather and existing defenses just didn't permit an attempt," or even worse "We did all we could." After talking with 02 Bravo for two days, listening to undaunted courage and appreciating his cool professionalism, I grew to respect him and to become emotionally attached to him. I am damned sorry that we couldn't rescue him. I shall always remember February 4th, 1971, as a very sad day in my life.

What follows is a narrative description of my part in the SAR for Bigot 02 Bravo:

My call sign was Sandy 11. I launched on 4 February about noon to replace the present On-Scene-Commander, Sandy 05. Captain Rentz, Sandy 12, was my wingman. He was also Low Lead qualified and was a tremendous asset.

When we assumed OSC, the weather and poor voice contact with the survivor were the two primary obstacles to a successful SAR. Overcast skies which were reported to be only about 300 feet over the survivor had forced the abandonment of all previous attempts to visually acquire 02 Bravo. About 30 minutes after my arrival the weather began to improve somewhat; some holes began to develop to the south and west, and we could see the ground in several places.

Poor and irregular contact with 02 Bravo made effective communication with him very difficult. When we did hear him, he sounded as though he was in the bottom of a barrel. We asked him to remove the acoustical coupler, but I did not hear his response. He still sounded the same when I did hear him again.

Apparently 02 Bravo could hear me clearly all the time. Wolf 04, who happened to be a classmate of 02 Bravo, stated that he was

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answering all of my transmissions. The Wolf relayed all calls to me. He then began an electronic search for O2 Bravo. When he got station passage, he lit his AD's and asked O2 Bravo if he "could hear the Wolf." O2 Bravo responded that he could and that he had seen the Wolf through a thin hole. Wolf O4 brought me over to the area and pointed out the hole, an elongated trough through which the ground was clearly visible.

I asked O2 Bravo if he could hear my aircraft, and he responded that he could, though he couldn't see me. I asked him for a hold-down, proceeded to the trough in the clouds and let down. The hole disappeared just before I got under the overcast, but Bravo said he had about 300 feet, so I continued IFR a couple of seconds more before breaking out. I lost contact with O2 Bravo during the descent, so I turned around and again asked for a hold-down. After several moments of getting no response, I finally got a solid DF indication, followed it until getting station passage, and then reversed course. After several such passes I felt that I had a general idea of his location. Terrain in his vicinity consisted of rolling hills with karst formations to the north and east, flatter country with good roads to the south, and rugged mountainous terrain to the West. There were definite signs of human life to the east and south, but none to the west, so I decided that the west would be safe for bailout.

The weather was a severely limiting factor. The visibility was probably no more than three miles in haze, and the ceiling varied from about 300 feet over the tops of the hills to about 900 feet over the valley floors. I didn't see any karsts or mountains touching the clouds.

O2 Bravo was in good spirits. He was in good condition and seemed to be relieved to have an aircraft in sight overhead.

I spent some time trying to fix his exact location. He was extremely difficult to understand, and I lost contact with him when I would fly on the back side of the hill upon which he was situated. Because of the difficulty I had understanding him, I finally had to resort to questions which he could answer with a "Roger" or "Negative."

I finally narrowed his location down to one brown area on a particular hill. It matched his description of a clearing with a standing dead tree. I got station passage every time I passed it, and he told me that he was at my 9 o'clock several times when I passed it to the right. I felt that I had pin-pointed his position to within about 50 meters and that it would be safe to expend ordnance around him if needed. I did not locate his parachute, though I saw several flare parachutes in the area. I believe he stated that "they" had pulled his parachute down from the trees.

When I asked about ground fire, he said that I hadn't taken any on the first 4-5 passes, but that I was taking small arms and automatic weapons on every pass south of his position. This made sense because

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there was a small road south of him which ended up in the trees. There were several bunkers and gun pits around the road, but I didn't see any guns or any ground fire.

I told him to turn off his radio unless I took ground fire, in which case I wanted him to tell me immediately with a "Roger, Roger, Roger." When he would indicate that I was taking ground fire, I would query him about its location and type. He told me of a ZPU to the southwest and "something bigger" to the east. I finally saw the ZPU (or at least the tracers) on one pass to the south. He was behind the aircraft and didn't seem to be very accurate. I then began to see the "something bigger" in the form of several 23mm airbursts. They were generally out in front of the aircraft or off to the left as I made a left turn. I can only speculate that the gunner was used to fast movers and led me too much.

I pickled off some CRU on the road south of 02 Bravo. I then covered the bunkers and a trail network as well as I could with two cans of CRU. 02 Bravo reported that the SA/AW continued, though it was considerably reduced in volume.

On one pass when I had a LAU 3 pod set up to hit this area again, I looked off to the east just in time to see a 23mm muzzle flash. Prior to this time he had only shot at me from behind. I emptied out the pod in the direction of the cave which was producing the flashes. The first couple of rockets missed badly because I had "G"s on the aircraft, but I'm fairly certain that the last two or three were within several meters. The gun must've been well protected, because it continued firing. I broke off and returned to 02 Bravo, deciding to avoid the area to the east as much as possible.

I was now getting 23mm fire on almost every pass near the survivor, generally as I turned to the north. The fire usually consisted of about three airbursts several hundred meters off my left wing or off the nose.

I then called Captain Rentz down for assistance. He found a hole and did a fine job of locating me with DF steers. I tried to show him the approximate location of the survivor. As he made his first pass over the position, I saw the ZPU send tracers behind him. They were very low trajectory, and I could not determine their source, though I suspect they came from a road to the southwest.

Captain Rentz also took some 23mm airbursts off his left wing. The airbursts continued, but we did not see the ZPU again.

I had tried earlier to mark a hill with a dud WP bomb. This was to be both an IP for the Jolly Greens and a reference point for the next OSC in the event we had to depart. I couldn't get mine to break

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apart, but Capt Rents laid a perfect mark right on top of the hill. It stayed there as long as we were on-scene. I then called King and asked that the Jollies and Smokes come to a forward holding point.

By this time we had two 23's firing on us. 02 Bravo continued to call ground fire on every circuit around his position. I picked up a couple of small hits in the left and right wing and asked Sandy 12 to look me over. He didn't see any fuel or oil leak so we continued.

My initial plan was to use the Smoke aircraft to screen off the 23's to the east and southeast with one line and the ZPU to the southwest with another line. After thinking about it for a minute or two, however, I changed my mind about the Smoke aircraft. The following factors entered into this decision:

(1) There was very little working room under the cloud deck and it would have been impossible to work more than 2 aircraft and helicopter.

(2) I didn't want to have the Smokes shot down in their straight and level delivery run (one was an E with no visibility out the right side).

(3) I believed I could put down an adequate screen with my CBU-22.

About this time the accuracy of the 23mm gunners seemed to improve. They didn't lead so much anymore and I found myself dodging their airbursts from time to time. I went to max power somewhere in here and concentrated more on moving the aircraft. I also saw my first RPG's about then - two of them about a mile north of the survivor. They were well below me and off to the side.

I sent Sandy 12 to pick up the Jolly Green and bring him under the clouds. I wanted the other Jolly to stay above the clouds and wanted Sandy 09 and 10 to remain with the high Jolly in the event we got a MIG warning. I expended the rest of my CBU-25 and rockets near the road to the south of the survivor while Capt Rents escorted the Jolly down through a hole.

I briefed the survivor on how to use his smokes and how to get on the penetrator. I planned my smoke screen to the east and south and was about to execute this and give the Jolly a briefing when I looked in my rear view mirror and saw fuel streaming (probably from the stub tank). About that time several 23 airbursts went off in front of me and I flew through their little puffs. The shrapnel had already fallen as I hit the smoke. I guess I panicked at the acrid smell I got and told King I had fuel streaming and smoke in the cockpit. He told me to "get out of there" and I concurred. I didn't know whether I'd taken damage, and I didn't like the smell, so

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I pulled off my ordnance and climbed through the clouds, returning to NKP without incident. Captain Kentz remained behind and became the new OSC.

*John J. Wolcott*

JOHN J. WOLCOTT, Major, USAF

Sandy 11

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STATEMENT

NARRATIVE FOR BIGOT 02A & 02B

Bigot 02 A&B (First Day) Sandy 01/02 Lyon/Miller

We received the word to scramble for the SAR at approximately 1130. I arrived on scene at around 1230 and immediately was appointed on - scene-commander by King 21.

I contacted 02 A&B and found out they were in good shape but had movers around them. The weather was completely overcast to 6500ft. I made an attempt to get under the overcast but failed. I had been talking to the survivors for about 30 minutes when Alpha called and said the activity was increasing around him. About 5 minutes later he said they were coming up the hill, "They are shooting at me. I'm hit, I'm hit. Help me. Help." That was the last contact I had with him. We tried to no avail to get under the weather but the clouds were laying on the Karst Tops. For the rest of the afternoon we kept tabs on Bigot 02 Bravo, just hoping for a break in the cloud deck.

Nail 59, 23 and 41 worked with us throughout the afternoon. They did an outstanding job of coordination between King and Hillsboro on the fragging of aircraft to the scene as well as ordering the ordnance they thought might be needed if the weather broke.

At approximately 1530 I called Sandy 03, who was holding with the Jolly Greens, to brief him on the situation. Lt Miller and I then RTB'd because of low fuel.

THOMAS J. LYON, 1LT, USAF  
SANDY 01

JOHN H. MILLER, 1LT, USAF  
SANDY 02

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S T A T E M E N T

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THOMAS J. LYON, 1LT, USAF  
SANDY 01

JOHN H. MILLER, 1LT, USAF  
SANDY 02

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NARRATIVE

FROM: 23TASS, 1st Lt David W. Jensen/3205

3 Feb 71

SUBJECT: SAR for Biget 02

TO: 1st SOS (LtCol Herbert Stone)

When I arrived on scene at 0445Z Nail 59 and Wolf 04 were looking for Biget 02. Wolf 04 located his position by flying over the survivor and asking him when he was overhead since the weather was completely undercast. I contacted Biget 02 Alpha also by flying over his position. The position was fixed on the 092° radial at 86 DME off of channel 89. The Sandys and Nails both took a few rounds of AAA but nothing close since they were shooting up through the clouds. Biget 02 Alpha said he could hear small arms firing, then while I was talking to him he said, "I'm taking fire, I'm hit, help! help! I give up, I give up, I give up!". This was the last transmission from Alpha. I assumed by the sound of his voice that he was surrounded completely and that they had him.

Biget 02 Bravo said he was on a hill side about 50 meters up from his parachute. He said he could hear voices at what he thought was about 100 meters away. I was relieved by Nail 63 at 0850Z and RTB to channel 89. The TACAN position plotted in the Karst off of the route segment, however I believe they were relatively close to the lines of communication since they got to Biget 02 Alpha so quickly.

*David W. Jensen*

DAVID W. JENSEN, 1st Lt, USAF  
23rd TASS/Nail 62

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STATEMENT

SAR REPORT SANDY 05 Lt WILSON  
Bigot 02 3 Feb 71

Launched from Ubon at 1530 & arrived on scene at approximately 1630. Nail 41 was in the area but was just about to RTB. N-41 briefed me & Nail 63 who had also just arrived in the area.

N-63 was first to have contact with 02Bravo & relayed his transmissions to me. The few times I was in contact with Bravo he came in very broken & N-63 relayed for me.

The weather in the area was overcast with approximately a 300' - 500' ceiling. At one time I managed to get down through a hole in the cloud cover only to find no place to go underneath.

Coordinating with N-63 and Wolf 04 (an F-4 FAC) we "pinpointed" Bravos's position using the sound of our aircraft as we correlated with Bravo on the radio. In this way we determined a Tacan radial & DME.

At approximately 1830 I made a last transmission to Bravo to dig in for the night & assured him we'd be back at first light. We RTB'd 89 upon instruction from King.

ROBERT L. WILSON, 1LT, USAF  
SANDY.05

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FLYING SCHEDULE

3 Feb 1971

| <u>PILOT</u>  | <u>CANDY</u> | <u>TAKOFF</u> | <u>TIME</u> | <u>REMARKS</u>     |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Lyon          | 01           | 1145          | 4.7         | On Scene Commander |
| Miller        | 02           | 1145          | 4.7         |                    |
| Paino         | 03           | 1145          | 5.2         | On Scene Commander |
| De Felice     | 04           | 1145          | 5.2         |                    |
| Wilson        | 05           | 1530          | 3.7         | On Scene Commander |
| Oberlin       | 06           | 1530          | 3.7         |                    |
| Roberts, P.   | 07           | 1443          | 3.8         |                    |
| Lorenzen      | 08           | 1443          | 3.8         |                    |
| Adams         | Smoke 41     | 1520          | 2.6         |                    |
| Lewo          | 42           | 1520          | 2.6         |                    |
| Belt          | 43           | 1520          | 2.6         |                    |
| Witte         | 44           | 1520          | 2.6         |                    |
| McCaslin Mail | 41           | 1240          | 5.3         |                    |
| Musiek        | 63           | 1528          | 3.7         |                    |
| Applegate     | 59           | 0850          | 5.1         | On Scene Commander |
| Jensen        | 62           | 1115          | 5.2         | On Scene Commander |
| Dunwoody Hobo | 30           | 1150          | 5.9         |                    |
| Phillips      | 31           | 1150          | 5.9         |                    |
| Tipton        | 22           | 1305          | 4.2         |                    |
| Carmichael    | 23           | 1305          | 4.2         |                    |

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STATEMENT

SANDY 07 & 08 - MAJ DONALDSON/Lt Col Hagan - 5 Feb 71

Sandy 07 & 08 were launched at 0950 local to assume on scene command of the SAR. We replaced Sandy 01 and 02. Wolf 04 and Nail 43 were the FACS. Weather in the area was undercast from 10 miles west of the survivor's position all the way to the east and north. Tops at 4500' to 5000' and the bottoms at 2200' to 2400'. Contact with the survivor had been established by Sandy 01 and he stated he was in good spirits. Only hourly contact was being used to conserve Bravo's batteries.

Soon after arriving in the area we began looking for holes in the undercast in which to go underneath to search for a route whereby we could find the survivor and begin to suppress the heavy groundfire of the previous day. Several bursts of 23mm were noted north of Bravo's position. We stationed the Nail right over the survivor's position, backed off to the northwest about five miles and had the Nail give us hold-downs on UHF in order to get a DF to the survivor. We found several thin spots in the undercast and let down to 3000' indicated, hoping to break out in one of the valleys. The highest marked terrain in the area was 2800'. This procedure was unsuccessful due to low weather. Next we went down near the route structure where it was beginning to break up, let down VFR to the valley floor and proceeded back north in hopes of finding a usable route. This too was unsuccessful because the bottoms of the clouds at 2200' to 2400' met the rising terrain approximately two clicks from Bravo's position. We again placed the Nail over Bravo's position and attempted the DF steer technique from the southeast and the north. We could never break out of the weather even though we descended to 3000' indicated.

Much of the route structure was now visible to the south and we requested the Wolf FAC to get some paveways to cut the road north of Ban Karai Pass. This ordnance was requested about 1030 local but to my knowledge was not on scene until about 1300 local. At 1100 local the survivor checked in as briefed and we continued to look for a route to his location. Sometime after local 1100, the Nail said he heard Bravo come up on the radio three times in about five minutes. Sandy 07 heard the last two of these transmissions and it sounded as if Bravo was excited and was whispering into the microphone. This was the last known voice contact with Bravo.

We again left the Nail holding high so he could listen for Bravo's transmissions and also give us DF steers while we were underneath the overcast.

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STATEMENT

SANDY 07 & 08 (CONT'D)

At approximately 1230 local we decided to fly east under the weather until we came to a segment of the route structure that was south of Bravo's position and led directly north to the small trail he was thought to be on. At a point about two clicks south of Bravo we found a large IDP where the road went through a narrow valley. We attempted to turn north just short of the IDP but the weather came down to the top of the karst at 2200' indicated.

Sandy 07 then flew over toward the IDP with the intentions of perhaps flying right up the road. He noted a truck on the road in the IDP and about that time Sandy 08 called out airbursts right off 07's tail. The truck in the IDP was noted to also be firing some type of automatic weapon. Sandy 07 shot both Lau 3 pods into the IDP and strafed the truck with 20mm. As he neared the pass he could look to the north and see that the clouds again met the valley floor about 500 meters north of the pass. This final bit of discovery prove that the weather in the survivor's area was unworkable.

At 1300 local, Sandy 07 & 08 had to climb back on top and go to loiter power due to low fuel. They were relieved at approximately 1325 local by Sandy 09 & 10.

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STATEMENT

NARRATIVE FROM SANDY 09 & 10  
SAR for BIGOT 02B

I was scrambled from Da Nang at 1330 local NKP time. I proceeded to the Jolly holding point and took the Jolly escort from Sandy 07 at 1440. Approximately ten minutes later Sandy 11 sent his wingman up to take Jolly Green 57 down to the area to attempt a pickup. Sandy 11 said the weather was too low for all four Sandys to work with the Jolly during the pickup; so myself and my wingman (Sandy 10, Capt Hawes) stayed with the high Jolly in the holding area. As Sandy 12 took the Jolly down, Sandy 11 stated a 23mm had just opened up on him and he had taken a hit. Sandy 12 gave the Jolly to Snake 41 & 42 to escort back to the holding area. Sandy 12 then went to escort his leader back. Sandy 11 had not briefed the next low Sandy yet, and after stating he could RTB alone he sent Sandy 12 back to show me the area. The next scheduled Sandy low was not in the area yet, so I left Snake 41 & 42 to escort the Jollys and I went down with 12 to look over the area and get briefed. My wingman held above the low ceiling until I was ready for him to come down. As we approached the survivors area Sandy 12 had an airburst go off very close to him and he thought he had damage. We left the immediate area and I checked him over. He appeared to be ok but was low on fuel. We attempted to relocate the survivors area but due to the low ceiling we could not. At this point Sandy 12 RTB'd because of low fuel and I became the on-scene commander. The weather at this time was minimum workable but I had to go through the process of relocating the survivor. I conducted an electronic search above the clouds, then dropped down underneath for a visual fix. After approximately 30 minutes I located the survivor. During this time I had relocated a 37mm and also took fire from a ZPU approximately 400 meters south of the survivor. The 37mm could not depress his fire enough to be a real threat since he was almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile east of the area. After trolling for ground fire and checking an ingress/egress route, I determined that the ZPU could be avoided using terrain masking. No ground fire was observed along the selected route. I attempted to mark an IP, but M-47 did break open. My second WP bomb would not release. At this point I went back on top to pick up my wingman and have him mark with his M-47's. The weather had gone overcast and I had to rely on my knowledge of the terrain to make an IPN letdown. Once under the weather I showed my wingman the area and route and we were preparing to mark the IP. My wingman made a turn south of the survivor, near the road, and took a 23mm hit in the wing. He jettisoned his load and headed west toward NKP with me in trail. After determining he was able to RTB alone, I took Sandy 15 (Maj Keeler) down and showed him the area and briefed him. I then had to RTB due to low fuel. It was about 1700 local at that time. Enroute to NKP I discovered I had taken some hits from the ZPU. No major damage and RTB was uneventful.

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S T A T E M E N T

NARRATIVE FROM SANDY 09 & 10  
SAR for BIGOT 02B (CONT'D)

During the time I worked with Bigot 02B he sounded fit and in reasonable spirits with no bad guys in his immediate area.

MICHAEL W. SMITH, Captain, USAF  
SANDY 09

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STATEMENT

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