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INDY 03/04 - WITC DOCTOR 05/6 Mar 71

Sandy 03 and 04 briefed at 0300 for a launch after Sandy 01 and 02. At approximately 0600 we were launched along with two Jolly Green helicopters for the November orbit. We were airborne at 0615.

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The four-ship force proceeded to the November orbit (about 120/65/89). After one orbit, Sandy 03, who was monitoring Guard, heard that Sandy 01 had been hit and had lost his hydraulic pressure. Sandy 03 and 04 were ordered to the SAR area. We proceeded directly to the crossing point (128/100/89) and then turned 072 degrees towards the area. Both aircraft did not have an operational YACAN at this time.

0715, Arrival in SAR area. We arrived in the target area, recognizing the area by smoke from striking aircraft and by getting DF steers from the PAC, Hammer 21. An ARC LITE was also hitting about 5 miles west of the area. Hammer 21 told us that it had been quiet in the survivor's area but that he would like a CSU pass south of the road. I took on-scene-commander and then Sandy 03 and 04 made the CSU pass as requested.

We made repeated passes up and down the valley along the road, mainly east of the survivors. Occasionally the survivor would report some small arms fire and the position. We made strafe and CSU passes to quiet this groundfire. Finally it appeared to all that the area was quiet.

The Jolly Green helicopters, out of Da Nang, were holding 40 miles west of channel 103. The survivors were at 46 miles so I requested the helicopters to move further west. I had everyone go to VHF and briefed everyone on the pickup attempt. The "IP" point would be approximately two miles east of the survivors and the helicopters would get to the "IP" from the ridge line, south of the survivors. After the briefing the helicopters headed west towards a rendezvous over the ridge. I flew over towards the ridge line to meet the Jolly Greens and brief them on the exact position of the survivors. Sandy 04 slipped into the valley to mark the "IP" point with a M47 and the "too far" smoke. He was unable to get a M47 to work so he used his smoke rockets.

0755, Sandy 04 Extracts. Sandy 04 put down smoke rockets for the IP point, then another, and then another for the "too far" smoke. Suddenly he said that he had been hit and his left wing was on fire. As I turned towards his position I observed his external ordnance being dropped and the fire on the wing. Sandy 04 continued in a shallow left turn towards the ridge line to the south of the valley. He made it to the ridge line and proceeded east; the hole in the wing, and the fire, continued. I was about 2000 feet above him and cannot recall the exact conversation but by this time I was advising him to extract. Sandy 04's parachute worked as advertised, and the east wind drifted him away from where the aircraft impacted. He was in the air approximately 30-45 seconds.

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0800, Jolly Green VI Helicopter Pickup. By this time Jolly Green VI was in the immediate area, and low. He had observed the parachute of Sandy 04. I made one low pass over Sandy 04 as the helicopter came in. The Jolly Green at his position. The immediate pickup presented itself as the only logical solution as the Jolly Green came in and dropped in the penetrator. He brought Sandy 04 up into the helicopter. The Jolly Green then exited the area north, into the valley, and then turned east. Later they reported that they had received hits from groundfire. The fast pickup probably prevented more battle damage as it did not allow the hostile forces time to organize any type of defense. They were not aware of the downed pilot's position. For the next hour and twenty minutes Hammer 21 and Sandy 03 shared the air over the survivors along with numerous shuttling "slick" helicopters of the Army. The "slicks" offered their services but I refused as I thought the area too non-permissive for them. "Snake", "Nape" and 20mm were ordered and received to hit around the area. Hammer 21 ran out of smoke rockets so I started to use my smoke rockets to mark the desired targets. Hammer 21 was able to visually observe the survivors with his binoculars.

As the fast mover flights continued Hammer 21 would frequently contact the survivors on guard frequency to check the accuracy of the ordnance. He suggested that I do the FACing since I had the rockets and he would take care of conversing since we were only two and would have to wait on other forces. We started this and I fumbled through a swift OJT FAC course with a Gunfighter flight.

The fast mover ordnance was very accurate. Sandy 05 and 06 arrived on scene and I started briefing them on the area and situation. After Sandy 05 took on-scene-command I rolled in for one last run using my mini-gun and LAU-3 rockets. The survivors reported that I had stopped some guns that were just north of them.

I returned to base. The landing, on the parallel taxiway, with a 10 knot tailwind and the whole Wing observing, was "undistinguished."

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SANDY 05/06 - WITCHDOCTOR 05/6 Mar 71

Sandy 05 and 06 launched at approximately 0630 and proceeded directly to the location of the survivors. Enroute King advised that Sandy 04 had been picked up and Sandy 03 was heading back to the ship. Upon arrival in the area, Sandy 03 briefed us on the location of the survivors. There was so much talking on VHF 127.7 that I instructed King to get all traffic off of that frequency. This was done and about half of the chatter was cut out. I asked King what kind of ordnance he had on the way up and it was all hand. I requested Nape and OBU. A Hammer FAC was on scene and he continued to put in hand ordnance northeast of the survivors. After about 20 minutes a flight of F-4's arrived with Nape. There was a small stream just east of the survivors that ran north and south. I instructed the FAC to put Nape just east of the stream and as close to it as possible. The Hammer FAC put down his smoke and the fast movers struck. The no. 2 man hit west of the stream, right on top of the survivors, but apparently none of them were hurt. They did have to move their location for a while because the Nape fires burned over their position.

An ARC light was due to go off right in the area, about a kilometer or two west. A fast mover strike was just pulling off as the first ARC light bombs were detonating. The fast movers pulled right up through the falling bombs and I don't see how they kept from being hit. The bomb string ran on about a heading of 250°. The last bomb of the first string detonated about 50 meters from the survivors. The second string of bombs in just about the same position. However, one bomb must have hung for a few seconds because it impacted southwest of the survivors.

Fast movers were put in on the road just south of the survivors where the night before a 23-man had been reported. After numerous air strikes, Sandy 05 and 06 made numerous trolling passes low over the survivors and along the ingress route of the Jolly Greens. No ground fire was reported by Sandy 06 or the survivors.

Smoke 41 and 42 had been dispatched to escort the Jolly Greens and I had them move to a forward area just south of the survivors.

Although numerous low slow passes had been made around the survivors, I did not feel that the area was safe. But what can you do after the area has been beaten to a pulp? Can you not make an attempt? A Huey click, Dolphin 40, came into the area and insisted that he be given a chance at a pickup. There was a small clearing very close to the survivors, where he could land and pickup all seven of the survivors at one time. Witchdoctor 05 could see the area and said that they could get to it. I advised Dolphin 40 that I didn't like the idea and told him that I didn't think he should try to make the pickup. He was very insistent and I told him to come in from the east and Sandy 06 and I would form a Daisy Chain around him.

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Let's stop now and get a little background on this decision. All morning choppers had been flying down the road that ran on the east side of the road. There was a friendly landing area along this road about 3-4 miles east of the survivors position. The Army choppers were from 200-500' along the road and hadn't been fired at. A group of choppers had turned east of the survivors and I figured if they started west and then Dolphin 40 just drop out of the flight and land the effort might be successful.

Sandy 05 & 06, the Hammer FAC, Dolphin 40 and the survivor were checked in on guard channel and I briefed Witehdcoeter 05 on our intentions. The choppers started west, Dolphin 40 spiraled down, and approached the HIZ. He began to call groundfire and Sandy 06 and I started dropping CBU-25 and shooting 20mm. Dolphin 40 called that the pilot was hit and they were going to crash. The co-pilot took the airplane and withdrew to the east. Sandy 06 and I then escorted them back to the friendly HIZ along the road. After Dolphin 40 had time to assess the situation he determined that things weren't as bad as he thought and they continued to Khe Sanh. Sandy 05 & 06 returned to the area of the survivors and continued to put fast mover strikes into the area. The Hammer FAC that was one scene ran out of WP rockets so I marked the target area and directed the fast mover strikes.

The Jolly Greens were forced to refuel so I directed Smoke 41 & 42 to go with them and hold them in the original holding area.

Sandy 11 & 12 arrived on scene and I briefed them on the survivors position. Sandy 06 and I again made several low passes with no ground fire. Sandy 06 and I then expended our remaining ordnance as close to the survivors as we could. After expenditure RTB was uneventful.

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SANDY 13/14 - WITCHDOCTOR 05/6 Mar 71

Sandy 13 was launched at 1355 local in support of Witchdoctor 05. Sandy 13 went out solo and Sandy 14 would join later.

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Arriving on scene at 1445 local, Sandy 13 received a quick briefing from Sandy 11 because they were in the final briefing stages for a pickup. When ground fire cancelled the pickup attempt, Sandy 11 showed Sandy 13 where the survivors were and had to RTB for fuel. Smoke 43 then took Sandy 13 down and gave him an exact pinpoint on the survivors. During this time Hammer 55 was working fast mover strikes against the ground fire. Another attempt was planned, however, it had to be cancelled because Queen had JG 72 RTB. Also Smoke 43/44 were below bingo fuel so we didn't have time to wait for the new set of Jolly Greens. The Smokes made a few strafing passes and RTB'd for fuel. Sandy 13 was now the only A-1 on scene. Sandy 13, during this time, worked fast movers in the general area of the survivors. At 1615 local, Serpent 20 (an Army chopper) informed Sandy 13 that at 1715 local the Army was taking over on scene command and that unless the Sandy forces had a pickup attempt planned they wouldn't be needed after 1715 local. Sandy 13 called King 24 to appraise him of the situation and asked him what the story was. King 24 started asking around to determine who was making all the decisions. As near as we could determine "Big Ben" (Army) was the controlling force of the Army's effort. Sandy 13 contacted Big Ben and was told the Army would be taking over, and if they failed in their try the SAR forces could make a last light effort.

Sandy 14 launched at 1600 local and joined Sandy 13 at 1645 local. He was briefed on the Army plan.

Sandy 13 in anticipation of a last light effort had King 26 refuel JG 64/71 and had Smoke 45/46 and Sandy 15/16 launched. They arrived on scene at 1730 local. Sandy 13 briefed all the forces for a possible last light effort and everybody stood by to watch the Army get shot up.

When Sandy 13 determined that the Army wasn't going to get the survivors out before dark, he dropped a survival package (2-IRC64's, 3 batteries, 3 flares and 4 water cans) to them. The packages were dropped and they recovered the first one for sure but we never determined if they got the second package.

A last light effort by the Sandys was not attempted because the Army had many friendly troops moving into the area and the Sandys couldn't expend any ordnance.

King 26 finally decided to have all the SAR forces RTB.

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Sandy 11 and 12/6 Mar 1971

I was originally launched to orbit with Jolly Greens 57 and 56 at the November orbit. We spent one orbit in the "IF" orbit. There is absolutely no reason to have it in orbit with the Jollys in this area. One hour of valuable station time on scene was used up doing absolutely nothing. I say this because the optimum conservation of A-1 reserves was needed. When Sandy 09 and 10 called for replacements we were sent to the scene by King. When we arrived on scene Sandy had just enough fuel to brief me, expend his ordnance, and then fly to channel 09. When I assumed on-scene command the survivors were in the process of moving to a stream east of their position to get some water and try and pinpoint a 12.7mm that had just shot up an arm click. I could not make contact with the survivors for approx. 30 minutes after I assumed command. The PIC, Hammer 55, had 2 flights of fast movers to expend that had very little station time. I told the PIC to expend the jets south of route 9 along the ingress route Sandy 09 had suggested. I did not want to expend any ordnance in the vicinity of the survivor until I had their position pinpointed. I marked the area south of the road for the PIC with "X". I then tried to contact Witch Doctor 05 on guard channel the only frequency he had on his type radio. When I finally made contact with him, he had started back from the stream and had found the 12.7mm. The gun, by good luck just happened to be positioned right beneath a white flare chute that was hanging in a tree. The survivors then moved back to the bomb crater they were using as a hiding place. My wingman and I each made one pass on the gun. Witch Doctor 05 reported that we had destroyed the gun and not to use any more of our ordnance. With the help of Hammer 55 we located the exact hole the survivors were in. We could see them so well from the air that we could count seven people sitting in the bomb crater. Now that the PIC, my wingman and myself knew the exact location of the survivors. I directed Hammer 55 to expend the fast movers along the east, west, and north side of the survivors. There were excellent natural land marks that I used as minimum distances for fast movers ordnance. All fast movers put their ordnance right on target.

In the interim between fast mover strikes I made several low passes over and near the survivors position to check for ground fire in the immediate area around them. They reported no ground fire. I instructed Hammer 55 to continue putting in air strikes around the survivor.

When I moved to the south of the survivor and started trolling for ground fire along the in and out route the Jolly would take. I pickled off small amounts of C36 25 all along the route to try and intimidate the bad guys to shoot at me. No ground fire was observed by me or my wingman who was just above me and to my rear. I also went up to the sideline further south to also check out that area. Everything at this time looked good for a pick-up.

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SA-0X 21 and 12/6 Nov 1971

I was originally launched to orbit with Jolly Greens 57 and 58 at the November orbit. We went on to the "D" orbit. There is absolutely no reason to have Jollys in this area. One hour of valuable station time on scene was used up doing absolutely nothing. I say this because the optimum conservation of A-1 reserves was needed. When Sandy 09 and 10 called for replacements we were sent to the scene by King. When we arrived on scene Sandy had just enough fuel to brief me, expend his ordnance, and then turn to channel 89. When I assumed on-scene command the survivors were in the process of moving to a stream east of their position to get some water and try and pinpoint a 12.7mm that had just shot up an tiny click. I could not make contact with the survivors for approx. 30 minutes after I assumed command. The PIC, Hammer 55, and 2 flights of fast movers to expend that had very little station time. I told the AS to expend the jets south of route 9 along the ingress route Sandy 09 had suggested. I did not want to expend any ordnance in the vicinity of the survivor until I had their position pinpointed. I marked the area south of the road for the PIC with 15 in. I then tried to contact Witch Doctor 05 on guard channel the only frequency he had on his type radio. When I finally did contact with him, he had started back from the stream and had found the 12.7mm. The gun, by good luck just happened to be positioned right beneath a white cloth cloth that was hanging in a tree. The survivors then moved back to the bomb crater they were using as a hiding place. My wingman and I each made one pass on the gun. Witch Doctor 05 reported that we had destroyed the gun and not to use any more of our ordnance. With the help of Hammer 55 we located the exact hole the survivors were in. We could see them so well from the air that we could count seven people sitting in the bomb crater. Now that the PIC, my wingman and myself knew the exact location of the survivors. I directed Hammer 55 to expend the fast movers along the east, west, and north side of the survivors. There were excellent natural land marks that I used as minimum distances for fast movers ordnance. All fast movers put their ordnance right on target.

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