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NAIL 83 ALPHA AND BRAVO

(C) On 27 April, Nail 83 Alpha and Bravo were assigned to Sector 4, Steel Tiger, and were accomplishing VR (visual reconnaissance) in the vicinity of Alpha Box* in search of fleeting targets. At 2300L (approximate), Bravo remarked that he saw what appeared to be two flares in the sky to the rear of the aircraft. Since Nail 83 was in charge of controlling the air space in Sector 4, the pilot turned to observe the flares and the aircraft that dropped them. The action was taken in the interest of avoiding a mid-air collision and in an effort to determine who had entered the area without proper clearance. As the aircraft rolled over Alpha could see what resembled two bright flares except they were moving very rapidly and headed directly for the aircraft. It didn't take long to realize that what appeared to be flares were really two missiles coming down from Mugia Pass about 500 yards apart and flying at about 1,000 feet above the ground. The missiles were approaching rapidly and Nail 83 broke left to avoid collision. In less than three seconds after the pilot first observed the missiles there was an explosion, an impact with the aircraft and Nail 83 was flying inverted. #93

(C) When Nail 83 broke left his air speed was approximately 80 knots and time did not allow for much lateral displacement. Fortunately, however, the turn did put the rear engine of the O-2 aircraft between the crew and the missile and protected the pilots

* Alpha Box was a group of interdiction points on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The targets were concentrated in a small area which normally supported heavy truck traffic.

93 Intvw, Maj R Tice, 56th SPOWPG Historian with 1Lt G Miller, Nail 83 Alpha, 9 June 71. Final copy was edited by Lt Miller for accuracy and completeness.

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from much of the blast when the projectile exploded. Parts of the missile impacted on the right and rear sides of the aircraft and shrapnel penetrated the cockpit causing major structural damage. Nail 83 Alpha was not injured but Bravo was hit in the face by shrapnel and he sustained other cuts and bruises which left him unconscious. The aircraft was flipped over during the incident and, not knowing the extent of damage, the Aircraft Commander considered immediate bailout. However he noticed that Bravo was injured and unconscious (if not dead) and that he was lying prone since his seat had broken after impact. First, Alpha did not want to leave Bravo in that condition and secondly, if he chose to bail out Bravo would have to go first since it was necessary to egress from the right side of O-2 type aircraft. He fought to regain control of the aircraft and was pleased to discover that damage was not as extensive as he anticipated. Control was recovered and the aircraft rolled out straight and level. Much to the pilot's surprise the entire maneuver had lost only 500 feet and left the aircraft at 6,500 feet MSL. #94

(C) Nail 83 headed west and within 15 seconds the rear engine began to fail. Alpha initiated his single engine emergency procedures and in the process was pleased to observe that Bravo was regaining consciousness. While Bravo checked his wounds Alpha fought to control the aircraft. It took full left aileron to keep the wings level and after the rear engine failed it was impossible to maintain altitude. Next Alpha made a quick check of the communications equipment and discovered most of it was inoperative. The radio rack

94 Ibid.

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was located in the rear of the aircraft and many of the components were damaged by the missile explosion. Guard channel was completely inoperative and other UHF frequencies could receive but not transmit. The only completely operational radio was VHF and the pilot contacted Moonbeam (Airborne Command and Control Center) on that equipment. Another FAC, Nail 72, had been working in the adjacent area to the south and was also monitoring Moonbeam's frequency. He had observed the entire incident, knew that Nail 83 had been hit and arranged to attempt a rendezvous with the damaged aircraft. #95

(C) Meanwhile Nail 83 Alpha was pleased with the condition of the aircraft and was convinced that once he reached a lower altitude the aircraft would sustain flight long enough to reach Thailand prior to bailing out. However Bravo examined the aircraft and by the time Nail 83 reached 4,000 feet it was apparent that they would never be able to maintain altitude due to extensive structural damage and the loss of one engine. Part of the right wing and much of the air frame's aft section was missing. The Aircraft Commander made a quick check of Bravo's condition and determined that his most serious wound was under the right eye where a piece of shrapnel had hit. Noting that the wound had already stopped bleeding, Alpha gave the command to jettison the right door and prepare for bailout. All radio navigation aids were inoperative and the crew was unsure of their exact position. A decision was made to fly generally west toward safer grounds until they reached minimum bailout altitude. #96

95 Ibid.

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(C) Before Nail 72 could complete a rendezvous, Nail 83 announced they were turning south to avoid high terrain and that they were not capable of maintaining altitude. At this point Candlestick 21, a C-123 FAC who had been working in an area further to the south had monitored the entire incident, requested permission to proceed to Nail 83's position and estimated it would take 50 minutes to reach the area. During this time Nail 83 elected to bail out and by the time Candlestick 21 arrived both pilots had landed safely. Nail 72 had assumed on-scene command, radio contact with Nail 83 Bravo had been established and Papa 03, an F-4 aircraft, was busy identifying Bravo's position. #97

(C) At approximately 3,000 feet MSL, Alpha gave the command to bail out. After a few seconds delay Bravo jumped and was followed immediately by Alpha who had successfully parachuted 13 times before but never under combat conditions. Both pilots had good parachutes and Bravo landed in a tree located on the side of a karst mountain. Remembering his survival training he elected to tie himself to the tree rather than use his personnel lowering equipment. It was very dark and the dense jungle canopy prevented him from seeing the ground. The survival training advice proved to be sound. The personnel lowering device was capable of lowering a person as much as 200 feet. When daylight came Bravo estimated that he would have missed the ground by more than 50 feet. Bravo sustained a few more scratches and bruises during the contact phase and suffered a loss of feeling in both legs after being suspended in the tree for a long period.

97 Observation, Maj R Tice, 56th SPOFWG Historian. Maj Tice monitored the entire incident as Navigator on Candlestick 21.

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He was able to make immediate contact with aircraft and helped them determine his position. He had no contact with Alpha and was not to learn of Alpha's fate until the following morning. #98

(C) By the time Alpha bailed out the aircraft was at an extremely low altitude. His parachute oscillated one and a half times and Alpha touched down in tall elephant grass and on level ground near the base of the karst. He took the prescribed drink of water and determined that he was uninjured. Although complete darkness prevented him from seeing more than three or four feet, Alpha decided that it would be wise to move about 50 meters from the parachute in case there were enemy troops in the area. He checked the stars for direction and determined that the O-2 had turned back to the east prior to impacting. The position of the aircraft and the location of his parachute would be useful for the SAR forces in the morning. He decided to move south toward the high karst but first tramped out a path for about 50 meters to the north and another east toward the burning aircraft. This would serve to delay the enemy should they start looking for him in the morning. Next Nail 83 Alpha started moving very cautiously toward the south and very carefully so as not to leave a trail. He discovered the terrain was much more rugged than it appeared from altitude and that total darkness made traveling more difficult than anyone would ever expect. After traveling for about 20 meters in the darkness, Alpha stumbled into a deep ravine. He tumbled and rolled and was happy to reach bottom without injury. Considering

98 Intvw, Maj R Tice, 56th SPOPWG Historian with 1Lt G Miller, Nail 83 Alpha, 9 June 71.

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darkness and other hazards of travel the survivor decided to remain right there and dig in. He broke out his survival radio and was able to hear Bravo talking to aircraft in the area. However when he tried to transmit there was no response. Alpha didn't realize it but his position in the deep ravine prevented transmissions from reaching the aircraft. It was going to be a long night. #99

(C) Nail 83 Alpha followed his training instructions by monitoring his radio and attempting to transmit once every hour. At one point he heard an aircraft acknowledge a second beeper. He was satisfied that people knew he was down there even if they could not converse and determine his condition or position. Knowing that he had at least six more hours on the ground, he decided to spend a quiet evening and perhaps even take a nap. He relaxed and attempted to mentally reconstruct everything that had happened and reviewed everything that might take place in the morning. He examined equipment to be used and reviewed all other operating procedures. The nap never came. #100

(C) Nail 83 Alpha remembered no periods of loneliness throughout the night because he could continuously hear the chatter of air crews directly over him. Maintaining emotional control was probably the most significant factor in survival. Fear was completely suppressed because the pilot knew SAR forces would arrive at first light and he remembered his excellent training which completely prepared him for everything he was to accomplish. As first light approached Alpha decided to climb out of the ravine and head for safer grounds toward the high karst. He could hear roosters

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

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crowding in the immediate area but there were no signs of other activity. From his position high in the tree, Bravo reported hearing chickens, dogs barking and the chatter of people in the near-by village. Upon reaching higher ground Alpha was elated when he made his first radio contact with SAR forces arriving in the area. The crewmembers were down near a village and between improved roads. All personnel involved expected a long day and anticipated the enemy would contest the SAR. #101

(C) At Nakhon Phanom RTAFB planning progressed throughout the night and SAR forces started receiving briefings at 0300L. The expected objective position was identified and tentative initial points (IP's), run-in headings and bailout areas were established. All available intelligence data were reviewed by participating crewmembers. Additional Jolly Green helicopters were ordered to be in place at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB and King 21, the Airborne SAR Controller, stopped for a local update briefing. So as to be in the objective area at first light, the SAR forces started launching at 0500L. #102

(C) Sandy 01 took off as scheduled but Sandy 02 aborted on the ground. Sandy 03/04 took off as scheduled but Sandy 03 was forced to abort after becoming airborne. Sandy 07/08 were standing by and took off immediately to become the new "Sandy Low Element". They proceeded directly to the objective area while Sandy 01/04 re-grouped to escort Jolly Green 63/61 to the planned holding point. Two A-1's equipped with Mk-47 smoke bombs and CBU-30 remained on ground alert to furnish a smoke screen and provide additional close

101 Ibid.

102 SARCO Report, Nail 83 A/B, 27 Apr, Document #2.

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tactical air support when requested by the On-Scene commander. #103

(C) Sandy 07/08, who had taken off at 0500L, arrived in the search area just after first light and immediately identified the prominent landmarks pointed out in the earlier intelligence briefings. Nail 53 was already present and had contacted both survivors and pinpointed their positions. He briefed the Sandy pilots and pointed out Nail 83 Alpha's position on level ground amongst tall trees just southeast of his parachute. Bravo's position in the tree was identified about 100 meters due south. A small river and truck-sized trails passed to the north and there were small active villages scattered throughout the area. #104

(C) Sandy 07 took charge as On-Scene Commander and started planning the pick-up. The apparent enemy activity in the area posed a threat to the operation and two additional A-1's, Smoke 41/42, were ordered to the scene. Nail 99 arrived and both Nail FAC's, who were quite familiar with the area, assisted the On-Scene Commander in determining conditions in the general area. In an effort to locate resistance Sandy 07 started trolling for ground fire. He particularly checked the river and trails and the wooded area to the north and east. Sandy 08 and both Nail FAC's observed from overhead while the survivors maintained a vigil from the ground. All sources reported negative activity in the form of resistance. Sandy 07 ascertained that picking up Bravo would be difficult since he was tangled in the tree and would require the assistance of a PJ (para-medical). Recovery of Alpha would be

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

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simple. Bravo would require the Jolly Green to hover for an extensive period so the On-Scene Commander wanted to make certain the area was permissive. While the other forces were preparing to pick up Nail 83 Alpha and Bravo, Sandy 07 dispensed CBU on the road leading west and in the area approximately 100 meters from the nearest village. #105 People in the village could be seen scrambling for cover and, although they were in an area completely controlled by the enemy, they showed no sign of interfering with the rescue. #106

(C) The IP and other positions were marked by dud white phosphorous bombs and Jolly Green 63 was brought to a position near the IP. Smoke 41/42 arrived and Sandy 07 directed them to follow him in a trail position. He dropped CBU on the path he wanted marked off and directed the smoke aircraft to cover his CBU with smoke. The survivors received a final short briefing on flare and radio procedures and the pick-up was executed. Sandy 07 led Jolly Green 63 in and everything went as planned. Alpha dispensed his marking flare and the smoke came up behind a tree. The helicopter pilot saw it immediately and proceeded to that position and experienced no difficulty in picking up Alpha. Next Jolly Green 63 went to Bravo's position. As the helicopter approached and went into a hover, Bravo was blown from the tree and landed on a ledge. The PJ was lowered and, although he was unable to converse with the survivor, he was able to help Bravo get untangled and climb on the jungle penetrator. It was necessary for the helicopter to maintain a hover for a long period but, fortunately, the effort was

105 Ibid.

106 Intvw, Maj R Tice, 56th SPOFWG Historian with 1Lt G Miller, Nail 83 Alpha, 9 Jun 71.

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uncontested by the enemy. #107

(C) After the survivors were safely picked up all forces returned to Nakhon Phanom RTAFB for a happy reunion. In a second consecutive SAR, with the survivors down in positions well controlled by enemy forces, the actual recovery was uncontested. Seven A-1's, two Jolly Green helicopters and numerous other aircraft participated in the rescue of Nail 83 Alpha and Bravo. #108

107 SARCO Report for Nail 83 A/B, 27 Apr 71, Document #2.

108 SARCO Report for Nail 83 A/B, 27 Apr 71, Document #2, with observation by 56th SPOFWG Historian.

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RCS ARMS V-6 Report

3 AUGCP (JRCG)
APO 96207

DATE: 27 Apr 71

MISSION NUMBER: B-3-015

FLIGHT DESIGNATION: Jolly Green 63

MISSION OBJECTIVE: Nail 83 AND

LOCATION: 1723N-10537E

SAVES: 2 Combat Saves

SUMMARY OF SAR ACTION:

1. (C) Jolly Green 63(L) and Jolly Green 61(H) were launched from Ch 89 at 08/0445L after being notified of a first light objective the previous evening. We proceeded out to the initial holding area at 085/40-50/89, and held at 8000. The Sandy aircraft had difficulty launching from Ch 89 - six aborted - but we were finally joined by our escorts - Sandy 1 and Sandy 4. Sandy low lead (Sandy 7) and his wingman proceeded to the objective area. Initial contact had been made immediately after bailout with Nail 83B by beeper and voice. He related that he was hanging in a tree on the side of a steep karst. We were told that he had received burn injuries from his waist down but that was later corrected to injuries to his face. Another beeper was heard during the night and this was thought to be Alpha but was not confirmed. At approximately 0600 Nail 83 Alpha came up loud and clear on voice and considerable jubilation was expressed by everyone in the area. At approx 0615, we were moved to the forward holding point about 4 mi N.E. of the survivors at 2500, over a rugged karst formation. Nail 83A was located at the bottom of a flat area approx 10 mi in diameter. Nail 83 bravo was located halfway up the northern side. An initial briefing was conducted at 0630 by Sandy 7 and it was decided to wait an extra 15 min before attempting a pickup for the smoke A-1's to arrive on scene. No ground fire had been reported but a village was located about a mile and half to the west of the survivors and also a village and route structure to the south. A final briefing was conducted at 0645 and the smoke aircraft laid their screen in two perpendicular lines (like two sides of a square) effectively blocking off both villages and the route structure. A willow pete rocket was put down on the side of a karst near us to mark the IP and three more in a line to lead straight to the Alpha man. A few seconds after the last W-P marker was laid, Sandy 7 gave the order to execute. Our runin course was 230. No ground fire was received on the runin and Alphaman was told to pop his smoke when we were about 1/4 of a mile from him. The trees were about 150' high and a hover was established over the survivors who was in a small open space between trees at the base of the "volcano". Our flight engineer directed the penetrator to the survivor and he was on, up, and in the helicopter in 1 1/2 min time. We then hover taxi'd up the side of the karst. Bravo's chute was on the co-polit side and he directed the helicopter to it until the FE saw it. The force of our rotor blunt

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GROUP 4
Downgraded at 3 year
intervals; declassified
after 12 years

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blew brave out of the tree - against the side of the karst into a small crevice. The wall of the karst was extremely steep and covered with thick vegetation and high trees. Because the extent of bravos injuries were relatively unknown and his confined area and lack of mobility, it was decided to put a PJ down to assist him. We were in a hover for approx 8½ min while the FE directed the helicopter so the PJ on the ground could make his way to the survivor. For the last 3 min the PJ and survivor were out of sight of the FE. When the FE finally felt that enough time had elapsed, he slowly started easing the penetrator up, and both the PJ and the survivor appeared together through the foliage. As soon as the PJ and survivor were on board a rapid exit out the same way we had come in was established. Possible small arms ground fire was observed coming out, and our mini guns were used as well as fire support from the Sandies. A direct course to Ch 89 was begun and after a symbolic fly by, we landed and all crew members enjoyed humbly the role of heroes and also a little bubbly.

2. Crew Compositions:

JG 63

AC Capt William M. McGeorge,
CP Capt Carl Kaufhold,
FE SSgt Wayne Estry,
RS SSgt Gary Bryant,
RS TSgt Stu Stanland,
AP SSgt Rooney L. Olson,

JG 61

AC Maj George MacDonald,
CP Capt Robert Paul,
FE AIC Michael Stagliano,
RS TSgt Billy R. Davidson,
RS AIC John S. Luokeda,
RS AIC Jack Crow,

3. Survivors:

1Lt Guy L. Moller, 23TASS, NKP
1Lt Len J. Fleming, 23TASS, NKP

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

William M. McGeorge

WILLIAM M. MCGEORGE, Captain, USAF
Aircraft Commander

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GROUP 4

Declassified at 3 year
intervals; declassified
after 12 years

Mission B-3-015, 27 Apr 71, Pick-up.

Top, left to right: TSgt Stu Stanaland, Pararescueman; SSgt Wayne Estry, Flight Engineer; SSgt Rooney L. Olson, Combat Photographer; SSgt Gary Bryant, Pararescueman; Lt Col Phillip R. Gonzales, Commander 40th ARRSq.
Bottom, left to right: Captain William McGeorge, Aircraft Commander; Captain Carl Kaufhold, Co-pilot; Colonel George C. Pinyerd, Commander 3rd ARRGp.

FILE NAME

27APR71

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF

THE AIR MEDAL
(FOURTH OAK CLUSTER)

TO

JOSEPH S. STANALAND

Staff Sergeant Joseph S. Stanaland distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight as an HH-53 rescue helicopter Pararescue and Recovery Specialist in Southeast Asia on 27 April 1971. On that date Sergeant Stanaland took part in the rescue of two American airman whose aircraft had been shot down by a surface to air missile deep within hostile territory. Sergeant Stanaland manned his machine gun position and defended the helicopter throughout the entire rescue mission. At one point Sergeant Stanaland observed small arms fire and at which time quickly returned the fire with his machine gun. The professional skill and airmanship displayed by Sergeant Stanaland reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

MAIL 83 COL PINYERD

26 APR 71

PJ MUSEUM PHOTO



Mission B-3-015, 27 Apr 71, Pick-up.

Top, left to right: TSgt Stu Stanaland, Pararescueman; SSgt Wayne Estry, Flight Engineer; SSgt Rooney L. Olson, Combat Photographer; SSgt Gary Bryant, Pararescueman; Lt Col Phillip R. Gonzales, Commander 40th ARRSq. Bottom, left to right: Captain William McGeorge, Aircraft Commander; Captain Carl Kaufhold, Co-pilot; Colonel George C. Pinyerd, Commander 3rd ARRGp.

FILE# AFTRA 02 / 27 APR 71

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CHRONOLOGY OF RECENT MISSIONS

~~SECRET~~

<u>DATE</u>	<u>CLASSIFICATION</u>	<u>MISSIONS</u>	<u>SAVES</u>
1 Apr	Unclassified	Tiger 110	1 Non-Combat
9 Apr	Secret	Vietnamese Gnd Team	4 Combat
13 Apr	Secret	Raven 52	2 Combat
13 Apr	Secret	Blade 57	1 Combat
17 Apr	Secret	Battlecry 305	None
18 Apr	Secret	Battlecry 305	1 Combat
22 Apr	Confidential	Wolf 07	2 Combat
26 Apr	Confidential	Tiger 60	2 Combat
27 Apr	Confidential	Nail 83	2 Combat
29 Apr	Unclassified	Cat Killer 676	2 Non-Combat
2 May	Confidential	Eagle Green 02	1 Combat
6 May	Confidential	Gunfighter 01	2 Combat
12 May	Confidential	Charlie Horse 828	3 Combat
14 May	Secret	Cobra Red One	1 Combat
2 Jun	Secret	PFL	2 Combat
4 Jun	Secret	Covey 504	2 Combat
17 Jun	Unclassified	King Star 11	None
20 Jun	Confidential	Covey 504	2 Combat
20 Jun	Confidential	Wolf 02	None

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40th ARRSq. History, 1 Apr - 30 Jun 71

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27 APR 71

(S) Nail 83: While flying a mission near MuGia Pass, an O-2 aircraft⁵
(Nail 83) was shot down by SAM late at night.⁶ A first light effort was organized. The first crewmember was picked up with little difficulty. However, the second crewmember, who had spent the night hanging in a tree, was blown from the tree into a crevice in the karst by the rotor wash.⁷ A PJ was sent down to assist him and he was also recovered successfully. Both pilots were returned to their home base at NKP.

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GROUP 4
Downgraded at 3 year
intervals: 2011/01/01