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FROM: 40 ARRC2 (DO)

RCS: ARRS V-6 Report

TO: 3 ARRC2 (JRCC)

DATE: 10-11 December 1971

MISSION NUMBER: B-3-045

FLIGHT DESIGNATION: Jolly Green 52 (10 Dec), Jolly Green 30 (11 Dec) Flight
Jolly Green 53 Flight

MISSION OBJECTIVE: Ashcan 01A & B

LOCATION: 17° 24N - 105° 44E

SAVES: 1 Combat Save

1. SUMMARY OF SAR ACTION:

a. Jolly Green 52 (L) and Jolly Green 57 (H) (HH-53's) received word of a possible SAR at 1027L, 10 Dec 71. Jolly Green 52 flight was airborne, Channel 89 for the orbit point, 065°/50N, Channel 89, at 1035L and arrived at 1105L. By 1135L, neither the Nail PAC (OV-10) nor Sandy (A-1E) could see the survivor's position due to clouds and recommended that Jolly Green 52 descend below the clouds for a better look. Weather in the general area was 7500 MSL tops, with 7/8 to 8/8 coverage. Weather in the immediate area of the survivor was 8/8 with tops at 7500 MSL and bases to the ground, winds varied 020° to 060° at 30 plus kts. At this time, Jolly Green 52 flew over the survivor above the clouds with the Pave Nail aircraft (OV-10) and updated zero - zero on the doppler. Jolly Green 52 found a hole in the clouds about 3.5 miles southwest of the survivor at 1155L and Jolly Green 57 held high to cover. Due to the clouds, we could only get within 2.4 miles west of the survivor's position. The survivor was located 1/8 to 1/4 mile from a ridge edge that dropped down to the Mu Gia Pass in North Viet Nam. Jolly Green 52 made numerous attempts to follow the different valleys in the area to reach the survivor but met a solid wall of clouds at each attempt. The North attempts were barred by 6000 ft plus mountains and the west attempts by the ridge line that the survivor was on. The south attempts seemed to offer the best route. Jolly Green 52 went IFR on many occasions while looking for a clear route to the survivor and was forced to climb out through the clouds each time. Upon breaking out above the clouds after one of the climb outs, a SAM fired, from the east, passed 200 feet below the aircraft and then descended back into the clouds. During the attempts to hover north from the southern river valleys, we broke over Mu Gia Pass four times and received AX-47 hits (4) in an area 4 miles south of the survivors' general area. We also spotted a flare chute and sent Sgt Perry (PJ) down on the penetrator to confirm that it was not Ashcan 01E. Attempts to head north to the survivor were blocked by clouds a mile south of the survivors' general area and further movement to the east was not considered due to the Mu Gia

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Pass weather being clear below the cloud deck that butted the ridge line. Visibility while maneuvering below the clouds was 1/2 mile going to less than 50 ft while trying to hover penetrate the area on the trees. Jolly Green 52 with 57 left the area at 1350L due to low fuel and met King 23 for air refueling. (Approximately 1000 lbs of fuel was dumped for the original run in) Jolly Green 53 Flight, which departed Channel 89 at 1115L, replaced Jolly Green 52 Flight. While flying over the survivor above the clouds with the Pave Nail aircraft to update the doppler, two unguided missiles passed by Jolly Green 53. One exploded approximately 60 ft from the aircraft and the other passed approximately 50 ft over the rotor. The rockets were around 3 ft long, yellow, with white warheads. They trailed orange yellow flame and black smoke. Jolly Green 53 went down on the trees to search for the survivor, but after 30 minutes of hover penetrating, the pilot lost sight of the terrain and made an IFR climb to VFR on top. As the aircraft became VFR, another SAM was fired from the east and it also passed under the chopper. Jolly Green 53 made repeated attempts to locate the survivor but was blocked by weather each time. Jolly Green 53 flight left the area for King 23 and fuel at 1500L and Jolly Green 52 continued to try to penetrate the area till 1730L. Weather conditions grew worse as the afternoon passed and the Jolly Green Forces returned to base at 1730L and blocked in at 1755L with the survivor bedded down for the night. The Jolly Crews remained the same for the next day's first light effort except for the addition of an extra PJ on each low bird and an F3 on the primary low, Jolly Green 52, which received hits, was replaced by Jolly Green 30. The original Jolly Green 30 crew took Jolly Green 55. At 0300L, 11 Dec 71, the crews briefed for the first light effort and departed Channel 89 at 0515L. The Jollys and Sandys arrived at the orbit area around 0545L and waited for first light. The weather seemed to be about the same as the day before as Jolly Green 30 descended through a hole in the clouds west of the survivor to start searching at 0615L. Moving in from the southwest, we came to the ridge overlooking the trail and Mu Gia Pass about 2 1/2 miles south of the survivor. Jolly Green 30 started a tree to tree hover following the eastern edge of the ridge line with on and off reception from the survivor's radio, good ADF angle cuts from the Pave Nail and Sandy aircraft and doppler indications in Jolly Green 30. During the hover north, it became apparent that the pilot would not be able to keep the trees in sight at all times for a hover reference. When the pilot lost sight of the trees, the co-pilot and crew in the back gave directions for maintaining position until the pilot caught sight of another tree. Without this valuable help from the crew - I would have had to climb out IFR as we did the day before and start over again. Jolly Green 30 continued the hover north till the survivor and ADF cuts confirmed we were due east of his position. At this time we hovered sideways to keep the nose into the wind and moved west about 1/2 mile. We passed the survivor about 200 yards south of his position and accidentally found the chute of what we thought to be Ashcan OIB. On close inspection from the hover, I saw that the man was hanging limp from his chute, about 30-40 ft from the ground without signs of life. The Flight Surgeon on board confirmed my suspicion that the man was dead. With the poor visibility, 30 kts plus winds and associated turbulences, I decided not to lower a PJ and attempt to hover him next to the man while he tried to free the man from the chute

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harness. We left the body and with Ashcan O1A's directions, hovered about 200 yards to his position. The hoist operator lowered MSgt Fullwood (PJ) to the ground for the survivor at 0715 and the survivor was aboard at 0720L. Jolly Green 30 made an IFR climb west, joined with the Sandys and other Jolly Greens and returned to Channel 89. Blocked at 0750L - mission completed.

b. OTHER COMMENTS:

(1) Ashcan O1A stated that he was knocked unconscious when his aircraft was hit at 16,500 ft. by a SAM. He said he woke up with the aircraft in a spin and punched out. When he punched out, he automatically punched O1B also. He also said that he hit the trees with such force that he was torn loose from the chute when it caught in the trees and he fell to the ground.

(2) The modified doppler on the LMRS birds proved to be very accurate and should be installed on the day birds.

(3) An LMRS night pick up was considered but prevented by the weather in the area that night.

(4) The Pave Nail FAC's used on this mission proved that this aircraft can be a very important part of the rescue force.

(5) Four Jolly Greens and two Sandys were scrambled on the notification of the mission. Four Sandys should have scrambled initially and the second two Jollys should have been launched to arrive on station 1 hour prior to original Jolly Greens going out to refuel or RTB.

(6) Using the same Jolly crews for the continuation of the mission the next day worked very well. Recommend this be made standard procedure.

(7) The ADF Homing Device (ARD 25) on the HH-53C was ineffective in survivor location.

(8) Jolly Green 55 and 52 were repositioned from Channel 93 to 89 and assumed primary back up alert for airborne forces.

(9) Jolly Green 53 attempted to use LMRS hover coupler to terrain follow into survivors position. Hover coupler was engaged in 100 ft hover. Forward flight was impossible due to high winds, 30 kts plus, and turbulence.


KENNETH E. ERNEST, Major, USAF
Aircraft Commander

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List of Aircrews

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