

DECLASSIFIED

DATE: 12 Dec 71

MISSION NUMBER: 1-3-046-27 Dec 71

AIRCRAFT DESIGNATION: King 27

MISSION OBJECTIVE: F-4 Gunfighter 82

LOCATION: 1728N 10941E

SAVES: 2 Combat Credited to Jolly Green 10

King 41 airborne 0870 1419Z to 0871. At 1437Z we were notified by JACK that Gunfighter 82 was downed in Mugia Pass. We received word that a Spectre aircraft was near that location. After contacting him we learned that he was 0871 for cattle damage and that Nail 13 was in contact with the survivors. We got Nail 13 up on 282.8 and he got the survivors up on that frequency. Nail 13 started getting DF cuts on A and B and passed position as 087/76/89 (area between passes in high karst). We requested MIG CAP border clearance, Ironhand and Elint. Nail 16 replaced Nail 13 as OSC and refined position in that general area and determined that A and B were in good condition. I alerted JACK to have Jollies stand by for possible NKS at 1518Z because of the relatively good position between the passes in the high karst. At approximately this same time our "package" aircraft started checking in on Invert's discrete frequency. Coach and Dollar flights (MIG CAP), Bison (Ironhand), Tailback (Elint). Nail 51 replaced Nail 61 as OSC and continued to refine position of A and B. He determined that A was in a tree facing east in the high karst and A did not know B's position but they could hear each other on the radio. Nail 18 replaced Nail 51 as OSC and changed position to 075/61/89 then 073/63/89; a position west of the pass, not between passes as previously given. WDM position was W472484895. Nail 18 determined that A and B had ample radios and batteries and reconfirmed good conditions. Nail 31 became OSC at 1834Z. By this time, Headshed had become convinced that A and B were in high ground away from Mugia several miles and wanted to close the pass with Jingle even though we disagreed that the position wasn't pinpointed well enough to drop anything. Headshed had Jingle holding high on Gunfighters with Owl 03 to fast PAC them into the pass. Headshed pressed us to okay Jingle in the pass and Nail 31 agreed finally that it would be okay. At 1912Z Owl 03 and Gunfighter put in Jingle on D-29 along the road to the south. Nail 31 was observing from the northwest and reported a SAM launch at him at 1916Z. His position was 3 miles NW of D-29 (Mugia). He described the projectile as having a red flame.

King 27 had arrived in the area to relieve King 41 and had received a partial briefing when we got a cargo compartment overheat at 1914Z. We descended because of loss of pressurization and briefed King 27 on what

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GROUP 4

Downgraded at 3 year intervals.
Declassified at or 12 yrs.

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was happening. At approximately 1730Z King 27 blocked at 1722 discovered a visible prop leak on #4 engine, returned to the PAD and discovered it was a sticky substance so the engines were started and takeoff accomplished at 1800Z. We started monitoring the SAR as soon as we got radio contact. We arrived on scene CH 89 at 1935Z. We assumed AMC duties at 1950Z. Nail 41 came into the area and was running strikes into the area while Nail 31 monitored the area around the survivors. Nail 41 started having trouble with his UHF radios and RTB'd. Headshed continued to supply the ordnance. The Ironhand, MIG CAP, and Clint aircraft checked in with King for instructions. We advised them to stay above 250 at the request of Nail 31 so they would not interfere with strikes in the pass. Nail 31 was on scene alone and we requested a replacement FAC for him. Nail 31 advised that Nail 25 was coming up to relieve him. I assume coordination was being completed thru secure radios between Headshed, the Nails and other secure radio equipped aircraft. We were provided the resources thru Headshed and passed them to the FAC in a smooth manner during the whole SAR. The double FAC concept works very well. We were obviously bypassed on some of the coordination between the strike FAC's requirements and Headshed. Here again secure UHF radios or secure FM radios were required. JG 32 and 30 departed 89 at 2040. 32 had maintenance problems and RTB'd to 89. JG 52 took 32's place. The Sandies did not launch until later since they don't have night capabilities. JG's reported in the holding pattern at 2150Z, the Sandies at 2240. Nail 31 had advised that the weather was closing in and would be good for about 1 1/2 hours. We requested second flight of JG be launched (JG 32 and 62). At 2311Z Sandy 02 went in for a look. Nail 25, a night FAC, assumed on scene from Nail 31. The Sandies sighted some chutes but decided they were not personnel chutes because the color was all white. Sandy 01 pinpointed the Alpha man and tried to get the Alpha man to lower himself off the tree. The 82A man could not lower himself so he was given instructions to pop the day end of his flare when Sandy 01 gave the instructions. The recovery phase was started and the Bravo man came up frequency. At 2339Z Sandy 01 cleared the area, got a definite position and decided to pick him, Bravo first. The same instructions were relayed to him and JG 30 was vectored into the 82B's area and the Bravo man was advised to pop his smoke. The smoke was sighted and Bravo man was picked up at approximately 2350Z. JG 30 was vectored to the 82A man and the A man was advised to pop the day end of his flare. The Alpha man was located but some difficulty was encountered with the parachute risers, cutting them free from the survivor. The Alpha man was on his way up the hoist at 2355Z. He was on board at 2357Z. The Jollys and Sandys RTB'd to 89. ETA to 89 was 0025Z. Refueling was not required so King 21, the tanker, was released. All forces were released at 17/2400Z except for MIG CAP which stayed with us until 0020Z and were released at that time.

King 27 was notified to launch at 1730Z. King 27 blocked at 1722 discovered a visible prop leak on #4 engine, returned to the PAD and discovered it was a sticky substance so the engines were started and takeoff accomplished at 1800Z. We started monitoring the SAR as soon as we got radio contact. We arrived on scene CH 89 at 1935Z. We assumed AMC duties at 1950Z. Nail 41 came into the area and was running strikes into the area while Nail 31 monitored the area around the survivors. Nail 41 started having trouble with his UHF radios and RTB'd. Headshed continued to supply the ordnance. The Ironhand, MIG CAP, and Clint aircraft checked in with King for instructions. We advised them to stay above 250 at the request of Nail 31 so they would not interfere with strikes in the pass. Nail 31 was on scene alone and we requested a replacement FAC for him. Nail 31 advised that Nail 25 was coming up to relieve him. I assume coordination was being completed thru secure radios between Headshed, the Nails and other secure radio equipped aircraft. We were provided the resources thru Headshed and passed them to the FAC in a smooth manner during the whole SAR. The double FAC concept works very well. We were obviously bypassed on some of the coordination between the strike FAC's requirements and Headshed. Here again secure UHF radios or secure FM radios were required. JG 32 and 30 departed 89 at 2040. 32 had maintenance problems and RTB'd to 89. JG 52 took 32's place. The Sandies did not launch until later since they don't have night capabilities. JG's reported in the holding pattern at 2150Z, the Sandies at 2240. Nail 31 had advised that the weather was closing in and would be good for about 1 1/2 hours. We requested second flight of JG be launched (JG 32 and 62). At 2311Z Sandy 02 went in for a look. Nail 25, a night FAC, assumed on scene from Nail 31. The Sandies sighted some chutes but decided they were not personnel chutes because the color was all white. Sandy 01 pinpointed the Alpha man and tried to get the Alpha man to lower himself off the tree. The 82A man could not lower himself so he was given instructions to pop the day end of his flare when Sandy 01 gave the instructions. The recovery phase was started and the Bravo man came up frequency. At 2339Z Sandy 01 cleared the area, got a definite position and decided to pick him, Bravo first. The same instructions were relayed to him and JG 30 was vectored into the 82B's area and the Bravo man was advised to pop his smoke. The smoke was sighted and Bravo man was picked up at approximately 2350Z. JG 30 was vectored to the 82A man and the A man was advised to pop the day end of his flare. The Alpha man was located but some difficulty was encountered with the parachute risers, cutting them free from the survivor. The Alpha man was on his way up the hoist at 2355Z. He was on board at 2357Z. The Jollys and Sandys RTB'd to 89. ETA to 89 was 0025Z. Refueling was not required so King 21, the tanker, was released. All forces were released at 17/2400Z except for MIG CAP which stayed with us until 0020Z and were released at that time.

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: The operation of coordinating the pick up with Sandy 01, 02, and 03 and JG 30. The operation was smoothly run and coordination was excellent between all parties during the entire operation. The need for secure radios was not as apparent on this mission as it would be on one where the Nails will not be able to contact Headshed and WKF direct. I strongly recommend we (King) be equipped with secure UHF and secure FM radios.

King 27 Crew Members

AMC Major Arthur T. Provencio
CP 1LT Thomas I. Parks
CP Capt Robert J. Hager
NAV Capt Dale M. Condie
RO TSgt Larry B. Alford
FE SSgt Raymond M. Siegler
FE SSgt Robert B. Underwood, Jr.
LM SSgt Charles S. Alexander

SAK Forces Used

Jolly Green 30, 52
Sandy 01, 02, 03, 04
Nail 13, 16, 18, 31, 25, 07, 49, 51
Invert
Headshed

Arthur T. Provencio
ARTHUR T. PROVENCIO, Major, USAF
Aircraft Commander/Airborne Mission Commander

King 41 Crew Members

AMC Capt David J. Preston
CP 1LT James F. May
NAV Capt Frank W. Young
RO SSgt Mosco Williams
RO TSgt Ruark, Lester L.
FE TSgt Harry E. Fielder
LM SSgt Rex D. Stephens

Sar Forces Not Used

King 21, 23
JG 32, 62

Moonteam

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17 DEC 71

1728 BR owc 02 DOWN CH-89 OKAY.
 1746 BR JG-57 ↓ CH 70 AT 1740 / ADVSD JACK & TEEPEE;
 1830 HY SSGT. HARDY ON DUTY SSGT. BECKER OFF DUTY
 1840 HY JG-57 ↓ CH 89 JACK/TP
 1850 HY JG-63 ↑ CH 70 TP
 1945 HY JG-63 ↓ CH 89 JACK/TP
 2145 HY Notified By JACK That Gunfighter 82/F4 WAS DOWN
 / GAVE location of 075/64 CH 89 Contact with both
 / A+B had been made
 2149 HY Alert Crews AND MX
 2150 HY Notified Col Moore + Lt Col McAllister
 2154 HY Alert Crews Arrived
 2200 HY Received WX in BAR AREA - 120 Below 0
 2359 HY Log Closed

18 Dec 71

0001 HY Log OPENED
 0340 HY JG-30 + 32 ↑ CH 89 JACK/TP
 0355 HY JG-30 + 32 ↓ CH 89 JACK/TP
 0425 HY JG-30 + 52 ↑ CH 89 JACK/TP
 0550 HY Carried Forstater to Comm center at 0400
 0620 HY Notified South crew to stand by. For launch
 0630 HY Notified South crew to Report to ACFT AND
 MONITOR H-A Radio
 0640 HY South Crews launched
 0635 HY JG-30 Started in for pick up.
 0652 HY JG-30 picked up - B proceeding to A
 0655 HY JG-30 NOW HAS A+B ON BOARD
 0700 HY MSGT FOR PICK-UP B-3-046
 0656 HY South launch CNX
 0730 HY JG 30 & 52 ↓ CH 89 JACK/TEEPEE
 0730 ZD SSGT HARDY OFF DUTY / SGT DAUNSON ON DUTY
 075 ZD NOTIFIED BY JACK THAT OUR SOUTH JG's WERE ON ACFT
 STAND-BY FOR POSSIBLE SAR
 1020 ZD JACK SAYS OUR TOLLIES WERE LAUNCHED / COORDINATES

071/70/85 / Col MOORE NX

1035 TO SOUTH JG'S RELEASED FROM SAR OBJECTIVE. ^{COORDINATES}

1400 TO JACK HAS PUT NORTH ALERT ON ACFT STAND-BY 045/102/108

1405 TO JACK SAID LAUNCH SAR ACFT / CREW NX / MX NX / ALSO

NEED B/UP ACFT / JG 52+56 BACK-UP

1415 TO JG 52/56 ↑ CH 89 / JACK-TIP / SOUTH JGS ON ACFT STAND-BY

Pacific Stars and Stripes

Monday Dec. 20, 1971

S&S Vietnam Bureau

GUNFIGHTER 82

SAIGON. A U.S. Air Force pilot dangled from a 70-foot-high tree in Laos for nine hours after he and his copilot parachuted from an F4 Phantom hit by a surface-to-air missile late Friday night, 7th Air Force spokesmen said Saturday.

Low cloud cover prevented rescue aircraft from reaching the men until Saturday morning when helicopter crewmen followed a fading radio signal to the copilot and plucked the pilot out of the tree a mile away, spokesmen said.

North Vietnamese soldiers fired another SAM at the rescue aircraft and rescuers reported small arms fire in the area, but there was no damage to the aircraft, spokesmen said.

The pilot, Lt. Col. Arthur S. Blissett, and copilot, 1st Lt. Michael H. Murray, were reported in excellent condition Saturday afternoon.

The men landed in heavily forested hills five miles west of the North Vietnamese-Laotian border after parachuting from the stricken F-4, spokesmen said.

They were escorting an Air Force RF-4 reconnaissance plane near North Vietnam's Mu Gia pass when the Soviet-made SAM ripped into the fighter-bomber, according to spokesmen.



Lt Murray receives medical treatment aboard the HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant following his rescue from the Laotian jungle.

"I thought I'd be left there because my radio was getting weak"

Blissett's parachute lines tangled in a tree, leaving him suspended 70 feet off the ground, and Murray landed on the ground a mile away, spokesmen said. An HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew from Thailand picked up Murray's faint radio signal and pinpointed his position about 8 a.m. Saturday.

"I thought I'd be left there because my radio was getting weak," Murray said after being picked up.

Minutes later the chopper hovered above Blissett and lowered a crewman who helped hoist the pilot into the helicopter. "I believe we lifted half that tree up with us," Blissett said.

The F-4 Phantom was the second U.S. warplane downed by a SAM over Laos in a week, spokesmen said.

An Air Force F-105 fighter bomber was hit by a SAM over Laos Dec. 10, and rescuers recovered only one of the two crewmen.

The two fighter-bombers are the only U.S. planes that have been shot down by SAMs over Laos, according to 7th Air Force spokesmen.

Blissett and Murray are members of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing in DaNang.

Seventh Air Force News

(undated)

40th ARRS Picks up pair of downed pilots

TAN SON NHUT Two Air Force aircrew members were returned from the jungles of Laos recently by American rescue forces after their aircraft was hit by a surface to air missile (SAM).

They were flying a F-4 Phantom from the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing, DaNang Aflld., on a reconnaissance escort mission over North Vietnam Dec. 17, when struck by the missile. They went down about five miles west of Mu Gia Pass in Laos.

The pilot, Lt. Col. Arthur S. Blissett, and the back seater, 1st Lt. Michael H. Murray, successfully ejected from the stricken aircraft and landed in dense mountainous jungle terrain. Voice contact was established almost immediately with the downed aircrew by forward air controllers operating in the area and an HC-130 Kingbird maintained the contact throughout the night. The rescue force planned to launch for the pick-up at first light.

Colonel Blissett and Lieutenant Murray both reported that they were uninjured.

To insure their safety during the night, U.S. fighter aircraft conducted bombing and strafing strikes on the area surrounding the men who had landed about 3,500 feet apart. Colonel Blissett landed in the tree tops and spent the night there rather than risk a drop of some 70 feet to the ground.

In the morning an A-1 Sandy aircraft spotted both parachutes and directed an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter to the area. After spotting Colonel Blissett safely tied to his tree top, the Super Jolly of the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron went to look for Lieutenant Murray.

Radio contact with the lieutenant indicated that the chopper was right above him but they could not see him. Asked, "Where have you been" by one of the Jolly Green crew, Lieutenant Murray replied, "I've been right here all night." He was then lifted to safety.



Lt Michael Murray pauses to reflect on his recent ordeal and on his rescue from the Mu Gia Pass area.

right here all night." He was then lifted to safety.

***"I think we
brought half that
tree up with us"***

Getting Colonel Blissett from atop the jungle canopy proved to be a bit more difficult. A pararescueman was lowered on the jungle penetrator and assisted him in cutting parachute lines that he had used in tying himself to the tree. After hacking through the lines and the heavy foliage to which the colonel had attached himself, the pair was hoisted from their tree top perch.

"I think we brought half that tree up with us" was Colonel Blissett's remark following the successful rescue.

Members of the crew of the HH-53 making the rescue were: Maj. Clyde E. Bennett, aircraft commander; Maj Donald L. Roston, pilot; AlC William T. Lyles, flight engineer; and pararescuemen MSgt Daniel L. Schmidt, SSgt William E. Brown and Sgt Dennis E. Williamson.

JULY A/C

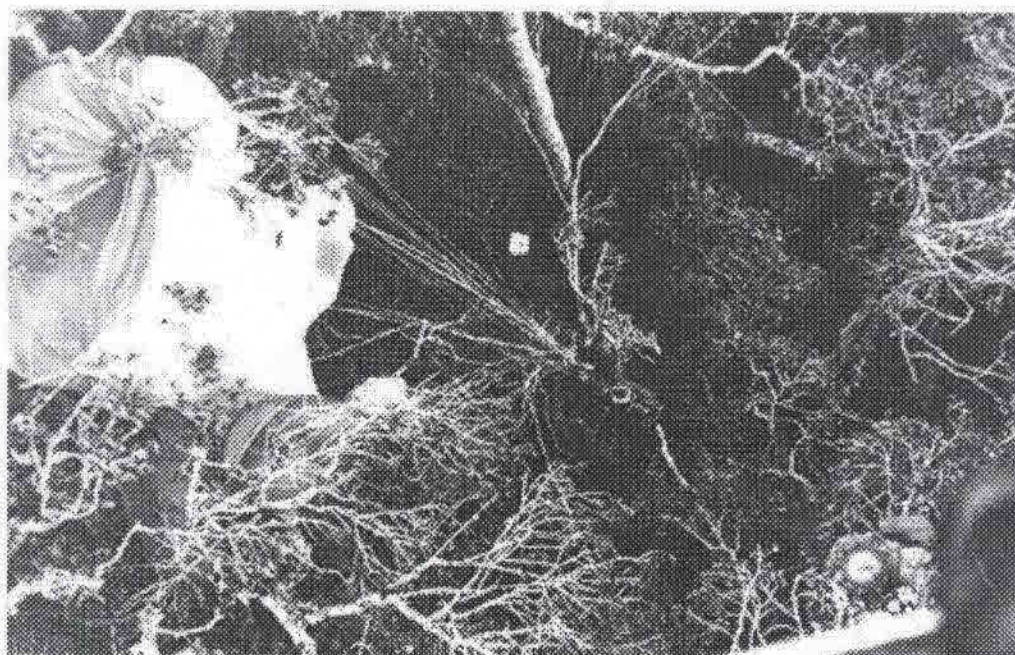
Clyde Bennett's Recollection of the Gunfighter 82 SAR

As I recall, we were alerted sometime after midnight. The Fast FACs and King had been talking to 82 Alpha and Bravo, but then Bravo went off the air.

The Sandys and Jollys launched at first light for the pickup attempt. We started in to get Alpha and when we were just about there, Bravo came up [on the radio] again. We backed off while Sandy low pinpointed Bravo, and since we knew where Blissett [Alpha] was and Bravo was on more danger, the decision was made to get Bravo first. He got [his] smoke popped and we got him and then proceeded up the hill to get Alpha. His tree [personnel] lowering device would not work so we decided to hook a metal snap ring [caribeener] into his harness so when he cut loose from his chute, we [would] have him secured. After [the PJ, SSgt] Brown got to him, some of the tree blew down and kind of entangled them in the shroud lines.

If you look at photo #3, it appears that Brown's right knee and left leg are higher than his head. As I recall he said that he was afraid that the lines across his legs might do some damage and I think he said he had his knife out and all he had to do was touch the lines and they would snap.

We finally got Alpha and the PJ on board and we got out of there, and RTBed to NKP.



Blissett in trees as we come over him. PJ's helmet in lower right corner on the way

down.



PJ, SSgt. William Brown on the way down to Gunfighter 82A



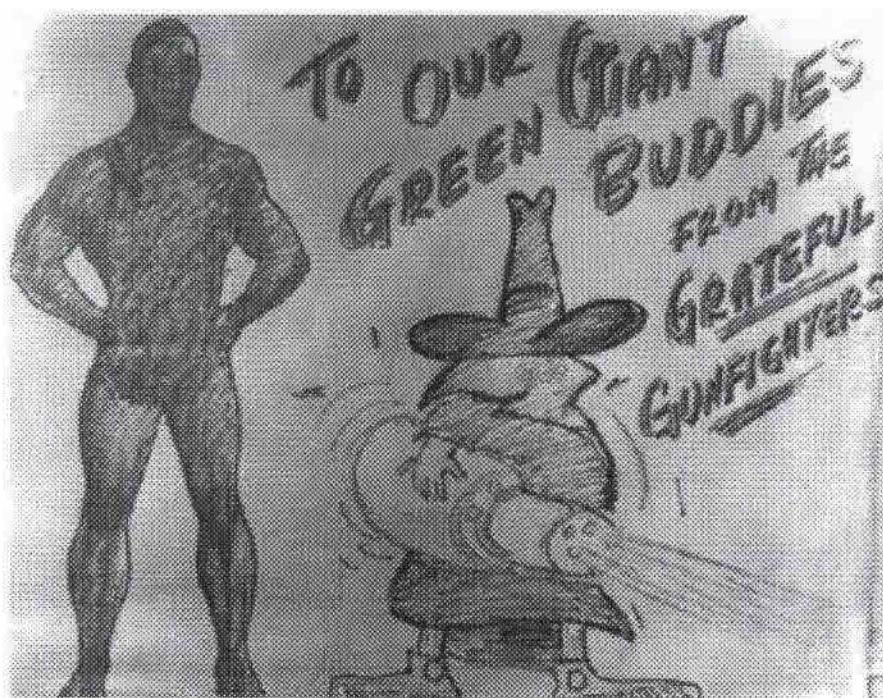
Brown entangled in shroud lines. Off to the left of his helmet (toward chute) you can make out his right knee bent and sticking up through the lines. His right leg and foot are further out to left. Back of Blissett's neck (shaped like 1/4 moon) can be seen just to the right of Brown's helmet.



Sandy 01, Roger Youngblood sips the fruits of his labors following the Gunfighter 82 SAR



(L to R) Rick Atcheson, Roger Youngblood, Glenn Priebe, and Rocky Smith



This poster along with a case of champagne (Corbel?) was left at Ops for the Jolly Greens



A joyous throng greets Art Blissett after his rescue from **Mu Gia Pass
(Blissett has his head down and his hand on Clyde Bennett's shoulder)**

(The guy with the blue Hobo cap on just to the left of the hoist hook is 1Lt Byron Hukee)

[Back to Gunfighter 82 Page](#)

The Rescue of Gunfighter 82

William E. Brown, Jr.

Abstract

When an aircraft went down in Southeast Asia, massive resources were mobilized to recover the aircrew. Often, it was a race between United States forces and the enemy to see who could get there first. Predictably, the US determination to rescue aircrew led to a target-rich environment for the enemy, with ambushes and antiaircraft traps. In the end, US efforts often depended upon a lone junior enlisted pararescueman going down a hoist to make someone else's problem his own.



The crews of the "Jolly 30" and the "Gunfighter 82" celebrate after the rescue in 1971. From left: Staff Sgt William Brown, Jr., Staff Sgt William Lyles, the pilot Lt Col Clyde Bennett, Lt Col Arthur Blissett, Lt Michael Murray, Sgt Dennis Williamson, and co-pilot Maj Don Roston.

Photo courtesy of William Brown, Jr.

The 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS), the squadron of Sikorsky HH-53 "Super Jolly Greens" in which I served as a pararescueman, was on alert 24 hours a day throughout the year. We had just completed a 36 hour stint as "high bird," knowing that if a mission were now called, we

immediately remembered that as we changed from high bird to low bird, I changed positions from No. 1 PJ (pararescueman) to No. 2 PJ. That meant if one of the PJs were needed on the ground to make a rescue, provide medical care or support a pilot, I would not be the one to go.

would be the first in, or "Bluebird," for any air rescue attempts made over the Ho Chi Minh Trail, Laos or the western side of North Vietnam. The next day would be December 19, 1971, and all was calm when our rescue crew went to bed at Nakhon Phanom Air Base, Thailand.

We were awakened about midnight and told to report to Intelligence for a briefing. An American aircrew had been shot down, and we were to serve as low bird on the rescue mission. I

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MAJ Robert Hutchinson Lutz, MC, FS, USA
Group Surgeon, 3^d Special Forces Group
(Airborne)
Fort Bragg, NC 28310

MAJ Lutz is currently assigned as the Group Surgeon, 3^d Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, NC. Prior to that he was staff emergency physician at Womack Army Medical Center and a physician augmentee for Joint Special Operations Command. MAJ Lutz is board certified in emergency medicine and is a 1993 graduate of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

MAJ Darrell Carlton, MC, FS, DMO, USA
Battalion Surgeon, 2nd Battalion, 3^d Special Forces
Group (Airborne)
Fort Bragg, NC 28310

MAJ Carlton is currently assigned as the 2nd Battalion Surgeon, 3^d Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, NC. MAJ Carlton is a family medicine trained physician and a 1998 graduate of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

CPT Shawn Frank Taylor, MC, FS, USA
Battalion Surgeon, 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces
Group (Airborne)
Fort Bragg, NC 28310

CPT Taylor is currently the Battalion Surgeon for the 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne). He is a 1998 graduate of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. His prior service includes time as a rifleman with the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. CPT Taylor will start an emergency medicine residency this summer at Brooke Army Medical Center.

**COMPLETE & MAIL TEST ON
 PAGE 46 FOR 1.5 CE/CME. SEND
 TEST ANSWERS TO
 JSOM@SOCOM.MIL OR PULL
 OUT & MAIL TO USSOCOM-SG
 ADDRESS ON BACK COVER OF
 JOURNAL**

We jumped out of bed, put on our clothes, and waited only seconds for the truck that took us to Intelligence for briefing. After passing the security checks, we entered the intelligence center at Nakhon Phanom Air Base, Thailand, where much of the intelligence gathered along the Ho Chi Minh Trail was processed. Charts and maps were on every wall. In the front was an Air Force officer, and behind him were some familiar maps of Laos. When we looked at them we realized that this mission was not going to be easy. The maps were covered with up to 100 green and red dots, with intersecting circles around each. The dots represented anti-aircraft guns and SAM sites. The intelligence officer told us we were to attempt the rescue of two F-4 Phantom pilots shot down by SAMs while bombing the Mu Gia Pass. The attempt would be at first light, and we would be approaching the area under cover of darkness. The pass, about four miles long, was a well-known target for U.S. fighter-bombers. It was a place where the trail became congested as it passed through the narrow valley with 1,500-foot cliffs on each side. These cliffs were pockmarked with caves that housed NVA radar-guided anti-aircraft guns. Mu Gia Pass was a test for the best of our pilots.

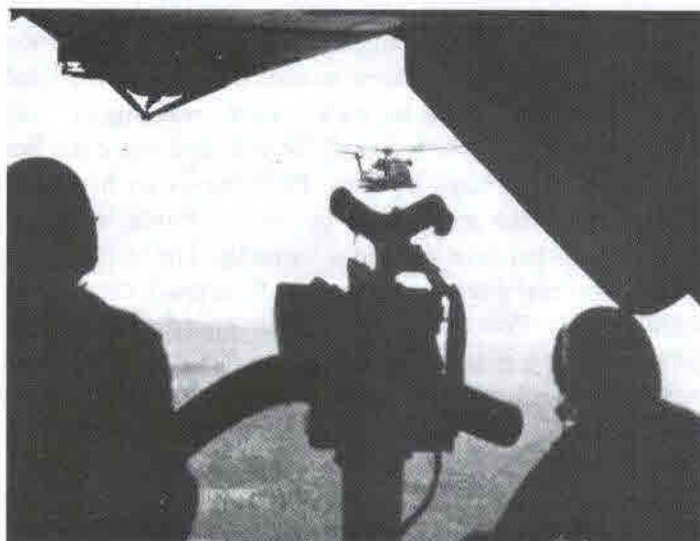
Intelligence did not know the exact location of the down pilots. The men had established radio contact with an OV-10 FAC that was circling over the area offering moral support and a link to safety. Intelligence also said the area contained enemy troop concentrations, multiple SAM sites and anti-aircraft guns. It was the same area where on December 1969, Boxer 22 had been rescued. Over a three-day period, 10 helicopters and nearly 40 pararescuemen attempted to recover the crew of that F-4C.

At the flight line it was business as usual – a little joking to relieve stress and a long preflight check to ensure all systems were functioning properly. We were glad to be flying with our aircraft commander, Lt Col Clyde Bennett, and co-pilot Major Don Roston. We knew if the going got rough, these two pilots would not back down in the face of enemy fire. The flight engineer, William Lyles also had flown many alert missions. My fellow pararescueman, Dennis “Denny” Williamson, was my buddy from scuba school and someone I knew I could count on.

Before takeoff, I asked Denny if he wanted to change positions, from No. 1 PJ to No. 2. He agreed, so

I prepared my gear to ride the hoist down into enemy territory. A CAR-15 with 200 rounds of ammo, two radios with six backup batteries, one quart of water in flasks, trauma bandages, pen flares, maps and a Randal knife made up the gear I would carry if I had to ride the hoist into the jungle. I made sure everything was in working order, and rechecked the knots on a 10-ft section of rope on which I had secured a snap link at each end. One end would be hooked into the hoist support with the other left free to snap onto a pilot's parachute harness should a quick retrieval become necessary.

After preflight checks, we took off straight for Mu Gia Pass, about an 80-minute flight. We were supported by more than 30 aircraft to assure a successful recovery. F-4s flying MiG combat air patrol would be circling the area to prevent a loss of any rescue unit, as had happened in January 1970 when a Jolly Green was shot down. We would have Republic F-105G “Wild Weasels” to take care of the SAM sites. The ever-reliable Douglas A-1E “Sandy” aircraft loaded with anti-per-



En route to the crash site, two of Jolly 30's crewman are positioned next to one of the chopper's three 7.62mm miniguns, which could fire up to 4,000 rounds per minute.

Photo courtesy of William Brown, Jr.

sonnel bombs and other weapons would be on the scene as well, locating, circling, and protecting the survivors. The OV-10 also would continue to circle the area, talking with the survivors and rescue forces. C-130 “King” birds would be present to maintain contact with MACV headquarters and refuel the Jolly Green's gas tanks.

While enroute, we loaded our miniguns. Each Jolly had three 7.62-millimeter miniguns capable of firing 2000 or 4000 rounds per minute. The best option for defense was the rear mounted gun, located on the ramp

of the helicopter. From there, a PJ in a gun tub could burst fire the minigun and serve as a stinger at the end of the helicopter. During the rescue attempt, however, we had to swing the minigun — designed to fire out the rescue door — away from its position, so we would not be able to use it for a time. Loading the guns in the dark was a skill acquired by every PJ, since most approaches to missions were before dawn.

Once clearance was given, we fired the guns into the blackness. Jolly 36, which was serving as our high bird, left a trail of red dots falling thousands of feet into the jungle below. We began a three-mile circle in a “safe” area over Laos, where no anti-aircraft guns or SAMs had been reported. The helicopters were to remain in this pattern, circling at 10,000 feet, until the survivors were located and the Sandy pilots determined it was safe to approach the rescue site.

We knew the jungle canopy must have been thick, because even though we could hear the “Bravo” (back seat) survivor on the radio, no one could get a visual fix on his position. The “Alpha” (front seat) survivor was easily located, hanging high in a tree, unable to get out of his parachute harness and climb down. We knew his rescue would be tricky. There was signal smoke from Bravo, but it was difficult to see, since it dissipated as it drifted upward. Both survivors had passed the identifier test used by the Air Force, answering their personal questions correctly. The rescue attempt was about ready to start. The final touch came when a Sandy flew over the area at low speed and did not receive any ground fire. It seemed the troop concentration intelligence had warned about were a few miles away, with thick jungle and mountainous terrain between the pilots and the enemy camp. However, the ARRS crews had been caught before in traps laid by the enemy, and this rescue would be accomplished like all others — with full combat support.

We circled as the sun rose high in the pass and mountains. It was a lovely site — thick green trees and mountains that would be excellent for sport climbing. From the air it looked peaceful, even though we knew the area was controlled by NVA regulars. Monitoring the radios, we heard the lead Sandy signal that it was time for the rescue. Run-ins began with a fast helicopter dive to treetop level. The drop is similar to the longest roller coaster ride in the world, with a G-force ending that requires you to plant your feet in order to remain standing during the transition from vertical to horizontal flight. We flew at 200 mile per hour at treetop level with the doors on the helicopter open, the wind whipping through the aircraft so loud that you could not

hear yourself yell. The radio blasted instructions to the pilot about distance to the survivors — eight miles, six miles, four miles, closer and closer. We had to jump high trees, causing every crewmember to leave his seat and bless the inventor of the safety tie-down strap.

Anxiety ran high. We were remembering our training, remembering commands, watching other crewmembers, anticipating the Jolly slowing to a hover, when the danger would increase tenfold. This would be the pinnacle of a year’s worth of training, the reason we served in the Air Force, the opportunity to bring home an American pilot, to snatch him from the hands of the enemy. Would we be in the fight of our lives, with small arms rounds popping through the thin skin of the helicopter? Would we make it back alive?

The Sandy lead told Colonel Bennett that straight-ahead, three-quarters of a mile, in a clump of higher trees at the one o’clock position, was the Bravo survivor. The Jolly began to slow and flare out toward a hover. As the trees came into focus, we saw that the canopy was thick. The Sandys began circling the Jolly, weaving around, attempting to draw small arms fire. Jolly 30 was in a hover by then. The Bravo survivor said over the radio he could hear the helicopter but could not see it. We hovered around the general area until he could see the helicopter over his head.

We lowered the jungle penetrator seat at 100 feet per minute. It took more than two minutes to reach the ground. Bravo radioed that he could not see it — the canopy and vines were too thick. Colonel Bennett told Sergeant Lyles to bring up the hoist and to send down a PJ to attempt the rescue. My time had come.

As we waited for the hoist to return to the chopper, I rechecked everything. Finally, it was back up. I quickly strapped myself in and began the descent. After exiting the helicopter I saw how exposed we were. Sergeant Lyles lowered me onto the jungle. I banged through the trees, pushing the jungle away from me. My weight brought me down fast, and I crashed into the jungle floor, stood up, and caught sight of Lieutenant Murray, the Bravo survivor. I had come down through the trees less than 30 yards away, but he still had not seen me. I jumped up and down, waving my arms but he continued to look only up at the helicopter. Leaving the security of the hoist, I ran toward him. Finally, when I got within ten feet, he saw me. His face was full of fright, but he realized I was not the enemy. I signaled for him to follow me. We could not speak to each other because my helmet was on and I was monitoring the radio.

Ascending to the helicopter, we broke through the tree-line and were exposed again. We were not fired on, and the Sandys continued to circle the Jolly at close range. If there were any enemy on the ground, they would surely know where we were because of the noise. Sergeant Lyles pulled us into the helicopter. Lieutenant Murray took a seat on one of the bunks while we switched our attention to the Alpha survivor.

The Alpha survivor remained suspended in a tree, not far from where we had recovered his rear-seater. When Jolly 30 hovered over in his direction, Sergeant Lyles and I peered into the trees and saw the pilot. He was 150 feet below the Jolly, with shroud lines and chute silk enveloping him, the tree and other nearby trees. I attached my snap link rope to the penetrator, thinking it would be difficult to get the pilot into the hoist in midair.

I could not talk to Lyles because my radio was set on the rescue frequency and Lyles was on the intercom of Jolly 30. He gave me the hand signal to prepare to be lowered, and I gave him the thumbs up. Within seconds I was next to Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Blissett, the pilot. He tried to reach for me and the penetrator, but failed. Lyles instructed the helicopter pilot to adjust position, and I swung from side to side. Grabbing the parachute lines, I pulled my weight toward the pilot. When I was near enough, I quickly snap-linked to his parachute harness.

Lyles moved the hoist in an attempt to get closer to the pilot. Now that I was hooked onto him, I turned upside down, hanging by the hoist and wrapped in shroud lines, I radioed the crew that I had the survivor on the hoist, which was a signal to begin lifting us upward — but the parachute lines were tangled in my gear, around the hoist, the pilot and me, keeping us from being pulled up. They sprang apart like guitar strings. I grabbed my knife strapped to my calf and began to cut the taut parachute lines.

I could not see Blissett; he was below me attached to the hoist by my homemade device. I hoped my knots would hold and he would not fall to his death. We were in a hover over the survivor for three or four minutes during that work, but still there was no ground fire. Sergeant Lyles drew us up and brought first me and then Blissett into the Jolly.

We informed Colonel Bennett that both survivors were safely on board, as Jolly 30 began the dangerous exit from the scene. We followed the course behind the three Sandys, that flew very slowly to attract any ground fire before the Jolly passed over. After that, we picked up speed, manned the miniguns and listen to the F-4s draw anti-aircraft fire and atten-

tion away from the rescue forces. We stayed on the tree-tops out of the immediate rescue area, following the course plotted by Intelligence, gaining speed until the Sandy lead told us to go to altitude.

In the Jolly we began to relax. With each minute we were farther from the Mu Gia Pass, farther from immediate danger and the enemy. Lieutenant Murray had an ejection injury, and was treated by Sergeant Williamson en route. As Colonel Blissett rested on a cot, we could hear the crew's voices, excited and joyful at the accomplishment. "Shit hot!" was called out more than once over the radio by Sandy, King, and Phantom pilots. The joy passed along the airwaves throughout Laos. There would be celebrating that night in the rescue forces. As we approached Thailand, we unloaded the miniguns and prepared for a flyby of the flight line. Already some 150 fellow rescue men, pilots, mechanics, avionics technicians, medics and other support specialists were there to celebrate the rescue. We landed and taxied to our spot on the tarmac, shutting down the engines. Colonel Blissett, then Lieutenant Murray, exited and got sprayed with champagne. Next came the rescue aircraft commander, Clyde Bennett, splashed with buckets of water like the coach of the Super Bowl scene. Bennett had held Jolly 30 in a hover over enemy territory for nearly 10 minutes in full exposure to any enemy on the ridge.

As the remainder of the crew emerged, we gathered in front of the Jolly 30 for a picture, handshakes and embraces. The survivors were then taken by ambulance to the hospital. The ground crew parked the Jolly, and the maintenance men immediately began running their checks.

I never had an opportunity to talk with the rescued pilots until years later. After being discharged from the Air Force, I received the Distinguish Flying Cross for my efforts in the rescue of Gunfighter 82. My father, a member and later commander of the Ohio department of AMVETS, contacted the Air Force in 1975 and asked them to locate Colonel Blissett. During a surprise ceremony at the Ohio AMVETS convention in Columbus, Ohio, Colonel Blissett thanked me and presented me with the Distinguished Flying Cross in front of my family and friends. Gunfighter 82 finally was a mission complete.

The author, Bill Brown, RN, MS, CEN, NREMT-P is now the Executive Director of the National Registry of EMTs. He began his EMS career as a USAF Pararescueman. After leaving the service he graduated from Youngstown State University with two Bachelors Degrees, one in Nursing the other in Law Enforcement. He received a Masters Degree in Health and Safety Education from Indiana University in 1979. He worked for over 10 years as an emergency department nurse and as a street level paramedic. Following graduation from Indiana University, Mr. Brown became the Paramedic Program Director at Youngstown State University in 1979. In 1985 he began working for the National Registry of EMTs as the Advanced Level Certification Coordinator. In 1989 he became the Executive Director of the National Registry. Since that time he has served on the writing committees for all four national DOT EMT education programs from First Responder through Paramedic. He was on the Task Force for the EMS Education and Practice Blueprint and the EMS Education Agenda for the Future. Mr. Brown has worked with the Special Forces Paramedic Course at Ft. Bragg and continues to support medical education standards for members of the Special Forces community. He is committed to holding the standards for SOF medics as equal to those of every Paramedic in the nation.



This photo shows an HC-130 in the background and an HH-53 in the foreground readying for a rescue mission

The OV-10A Bronco is a twin-turboprop short takeoff and landing aircraft conceived by the Marine Corps and developed under an Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps tri-service program. The first production OV-10A was ordered in 1966 and its initial flight took place in August 1967.

The Bronco's mission capabilities include observation, forward air control, helicopter escort, armed

reconnaissance, gunfire spotting, utility and limited ground attack. However, the USAF acquired the Bronco primarily as a forward air control (FAC) aircraft. Adding to its versatility is a rear fuselage compartment with a capacity of 3,200 pounds of cargo, five combat-equipped troops, or two litter patients and a medical attendant.

The first USAF OV-10As destined for combat arrived in Vietnam on July 31, 1968. A total of 157 OV-10As were delivered to the USAF before production ended in April 1969.

First flown in May 1958, the Phantom II originally was developed for U.S. Navy fleet defense and entered



service in 1961. The USAF evaluated it for close air support, interdiction, and counter-air operations and, in 1962, approved a USAF version. The USAF's Phantom II, designated F-4C, made its first flight on May 27, 1963. Production deliveries began in November 1963. In its air-to-ground role the F-4 could carry twice the normal bomb load of a WW II B-17. USAF F-4s also flew reconnaissance and "Wild Weasel" anti-aircraft missile suppression missions.

The HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant was the backbone of air rescue operations for downed pilots. It



was capable of air refueling from a tanker-modified C-130 to extend its mission time. It was large and heavy enough that it usually taxied to a runway (given that one was available) and did a rolling takeoff more reminiscent of a fixed wing aircraft than a helicopter.

Below are excerpts from articles out of the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* and *Seventh Air Force News*.

40th ARRS Picks up pair of downed pilots

Two Air Force aircrew members were returned from the jungles of Laos recently by American rescue forces after their aircraft was hit by a surface to air missile (SAM).

They were flying a F-4 Phantom from the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing, DaNang Airfield, on a reconnaissance escort mission over North Vietnam Dec. 17, when struck by the missile. They went down about five miles west of Mu Gia Pass in Laos.

The pilot, Lt. Col. Arthur S. Blissett, and the back seater, 1st Lt. Michael H. Murray, successfully ejected from the stricken aircraft and landed in dense mountainous jungle terrain. Voice contact was established almost immediately with the downed aircrew by forward air controllers operating in the area and an HC-130 Kingbird maintained the contact throughout the night. The rescue force planned to launch for the pick-up at first light.

Colonel Blissett and Lieutenant Murray both reported that they were uninjured.

To insure their safety during the night, U.S. fighter aircraft conducted bombing and strafing strikes on the area surrounding the men who had landed about 3,500 feet apart. Colonel Blissett landed in the tree tops and spent the night there rather than risk a drop of some 70 feet to the ground.

In the morning an A-1 Sandy aircraft spotted both parachutes and directed an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter to the area. After spotting Colonel Blissett safely tied to his tree top, 70-feet off the ground, the Super Jolly of the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron went to look for Lieutenant Murray.

Radio contact with the lieutenant indicated that the chopper was right above him but they could not see him. He was lifted to safety.

Getting Colonel Blissett from atop the jungle canopy proved to be a bit more difficult. A pararescueman was lowered on the jungle penetrator and assisted him in cutting parachute lines that he had used in tying himself to the tree. After hacking through the lines and the heavy foliage to which the colonel had attached himself, the pair was hoisted from their tree top perch.

"I think we brought half that tree up with us" was Colonel Blissett's remark following the successful rescue.

Members of the crew of the HH-53 making the rescue were: Maj. Clyde E. Bennett, aircraft commander; Maj. Donald L. Roston, pilot; A1C William T. Lyles, flight engineer; and pararescuemen MSgt Daniel L. Schmidt, SSgt William E. Brown and Sgt Dennis E. Williamson.



Lt Murray receives medical treatment aboard the HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant following his rescue from the Laotian jungle.