

VNAF take job of Quang Tri FACs

DA NANG Afd. - One of the most vital missions in Southeast Asia is no longer flown by American pilots.

On Dec. 1, the Air Force forward air controllers (FACs) in Quang Tri Province ceased operation and turned the responsibility for air power to FACs of the Republic of Vietnam Air Force (VNAF). Quang Tri Province borders the DMZ and North Vietnam.

The Quang Tri FACs, part of the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron (TASS) located here, operated with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam's (ARVN) crack First Infantry Division and, in this last month, with the Third Infantry Division.

Flying since 1967, the Quang Tri FACs directed the air support in all of the large battles and activity in the province. They were flying over Khe Sanh in 1968 when U.S. Marines held on to the fire support base. During Tet of 1968 they were in Hue.

During Lam Son 719 - the Vietnamese incursion into Laos - the USAF FACs had two jobs. They operated their normal mission of supplying air power to units operating in Quang Tri Province, and they flew as night FACs in Laos with ARVN ground troops.

In the attack on Firebase Fuller in June, Quang Tri's FACs were over-head. It was their alertness and quick reaction that saved many lives on the firebase. The Army ground adviser at Firebase Fuller

recommended two pilots for Silver Stars for their part in the action.

More recently, they helped the ARVN repel a large enemy attack on Firebase Nui Ba Ho, close to Firebase Fuller. According to Maj. Edward P. Schuster, leader of the FACs, "There is no way of knowing how many enemy were killed. At one time, Army ground forces and observation helicopters counted 220 bodies. We would put in air strikes, but an hour later, they'd start up again.

"I feel certain that in working around Nui Ba Ho before Lam Son 810, we probably killed a battalion of NVA soldiers," continued the major.

Lam Son 810, in September, was their last big operation. Major Schuster remembers this action, because of the cooperation between various air units. "I think it really says something about the Air Force when, on an operation that came up on such short notice, we were able to have two fighter aircraft over the target fully loaded every 15 minutes during daylight for a 10-day period. This was mainly Air Force, but also included VNAF and Navy aircraft. It was a tremendous feeling to see the cooperation to support ground troops."

The FACs have had one of the most difficult and demanding tasks in this war. Their area of operation covered an area from the DMZ to the edge of Quang Tri Province, and from the Gulf of Tonkin to the Laotian border.



U.S. Air Force

Backseater Lieutenant Murray (1.) gives a smiling thumbs-up rescue crewmembers A1C William T. Lyles and SSgt. William E. B

40th ARRS picks up pair of downed pilots

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

The pilot, Lt. Col. Arth Blissett, and the back seater, Michael H. Murray, were ejected from the stricken aircraft landed in dense mountainous terrain. Voice contact was established almost immediately with the downed aircrew by forward air controller operating in the area and an F-4 Kingbird maintained the contact throughout the night. The rescue team planned to launch for the pickup first light.

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

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Kudos for 600th Photo

Photogs nab PACAF, AF honors

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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 halanded 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.

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 crews of the HH-53 making the rescue were: Maj. Clyde E. Bennett, aircraft commander; Maj. Donald L. Roston, pilot; A1C William

Photo nab PACAF, AF honors

photographer, won first place in the "Children" category and second place in the "Military Life" category. He also received honorable mention in three other areas. All of his submissions were color transparencies.

The squadron commander, Col. Frank L. Cox Jr., won honorable mention in the Air Force contest in the "Military Life" class.

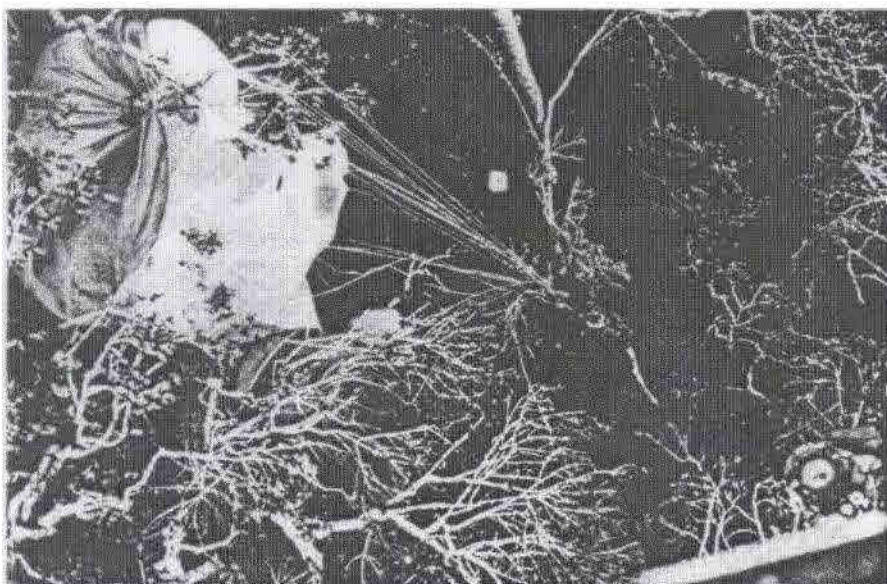
In the PACAF contest, Sergeant Seel almost swept the field, taking first place in the categories of "Children," "Military Life," and "Experimental." He also won second place awards in "Action" and "Military Life." The 23-year-old photographer also gained

four honorable mentions for a total of 11 awards. All submissions were color transparencies.

Colonel Cox took several awards in the PACAF contest. He was awarded second place in the area of "Military Life" and "Action" in monochrome competition and took third place in the area of "Children." The colonel also won honorable mention in the "Military Life" and "Action" categories. With the exception of "Military Life," all submissions were black and white.

The Air Force-wide contest was held at Luke AFB, Ariz., while the PACAF competition was conducted at Hickam AFB, Hawaii.





A PARARESQUEMAN IS LOWERED from an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant to help Lt. Col. Arthur S. Blissett in cutting the parachute lines and heavy foliage which he used to tie himself to the tree top. The colonel spent the night rather than risk a 70 foot drop to the ground. Colonel Blissett had been on a night reconnaissance escort mission over North Vietnam when his F-4 Phantom was struck by a surface to air missile. He went down in Laos.

40th ARRSq pulls two pilots from jungle

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They were flying a F-4 Phantom out of Da Nang Airfield on a night reconnaissance escort mission over North Vietnam when struck by the missile. They went down about five miles west of Mu Gia Pass in Laos.

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Both men reported that they were uninjured.

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

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

31st joins in test

HQ ARRS -- The 31st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron has joined with four other Military Airlift Command units at Clark AB, P.I., to form a single unit, the 1600th Support Group.

This consolidation is a one-year test, directed by USAF, to determine the feasibility of having the separate MAC functions at Clark under a single manager.

76th crew assists stricken Navy P-3 after midair crash

By Capt. Monroe S. Sams Jr.

HICKAM AFB, Hawaii -- Nothing can be more chilling to a rescue aircrew searching under a low, threatening overcast for the survivors of a sunken ship than a "Mayday" call from one of the other SAR aircraft.

Yet, the quick reaction to such a call by a 76th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron HC-130 crew may well have been the deciding factor in the saving of 10 lives aboard a Navy P-3.

The Navy aircraft had collided in midair with a Coast Guard C-130 during an extensive search operation.

In the confusion which followed the initial distress call from the Coast Guard C-130, which was only slightly damaged, no word was heard from the P-3 and it was presumed lost.

However, the instinctive effort by the ARRS HC-130 crew to contact the craft met with success.

The P-3 was still flying, although it was only a few feet above the water and virtually uncontrollable with almost 10 feet of its left wing chopped off.

Disorientated from the midair collision, which had sent them plummeting from 500 feet to just inches above the water and faced with almost total instrument weather conditions, the Navy crew was fighting a desperate battle just to keep their machine flying.

It was at this point that the calm, professional presence of Capt. Richard L. Cecil's crew helped make order out of chaos.

Reassuring the distressed crew that help was nearby if they could just hang on, Captain Cecil's crew began an immediate intercept of the P-3.

Fast work on the radar by Maj. Sada-yoshi Sakamoto, the navigator, pinpointed the P-3's position and vectors were given to Midway.

Following the calm, "common sense" advice of the rescue crew and displaying outstanding airmanship, the P-3 pilot was able to regain control of his aircraft and assess the damage.

While he was performing controllability checks on his battered craft, the loadmasters and PJ's aboard the rescue HC-130 completed preparations for MA-1 kit and pararescue deployment--just in case.

The copilot and radio operator coordinated instructions and clearance between the distressed aircraft and ground agencies.

Following instructions from the rescue HC-130, the crippled P-3 made its way through the weather and made a difficult landing under extreme crosswinds at Midway.

In the opinion of the Navy pilot, the immediate "helping hand" given him and his men by the 76th ARRSq crew was the decisive factor in the safe recovery of his aircraft and crew.

Gunfighter 82A/B

18 Dec 1971

(tape courtesy of Robert "Black Bart" Bartunek, Sandy pilot)

Gunfighter 82 was an F-4E crew assigned to the 366th TFW at DaNang AB, RVN. On the night of 17 December 1971, Gunfighter 82 was downed by a SAM near Mu Gia Pass about 65 nm east of Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand. Mu Gia Pass was a notoriously bad place situated along the Ho Chi Mihn trail. One week earlier, the crew of Ashcan 02, an F-105 Wild Weasel was downed and rescued in the same general vicinity.

Both 7th Air Force News and Pacific Stars and Stripes ran stories of the rescue.

Gunfighter 82A was Lt Col Arthur Blissett

Gunfighter 82B was Lt Michael Murray

There were two HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters from the 40th ARRS out of NKP Thailand, with Jolly Green 30 performing the actual pickup:

Jolly Green 30 was crewed by 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.

Four Sandy's were involved in the pickup of Gunfighter 82. Sandy 01 and 02 were working the survivor and Sandy 03 and 04 initially remained with the HH-53s west of the survivors location.

Sandy 01 was Capt Roger Youngblood

Sandy 02 was Capt Ron Smith

Sandy 03 was

Sandy 04 was

Nail 07 was on scene and assisted in putting in air strikes to suppress enemy activity.

Nail 07 was ??

Participant's Accounts

- Sandy 01 - **Capt. Roger Youngblood**
- Gunfighter 82A - **Lt Col. Art Blissett**
- Jolly Green 30 Aircraft Commander - **Maj Clyde Bennett** - Text and photos
- Jolly Green 30 Lead PJ - **SSgt. William E. Brown**

The tape is presented here in its entirety. It runs 24 minutes and 25 seconds and is in RealAudio format. You will need RealAudio on your computer system in order to access the tape.

The tape begins with Sandy 01 about to commit the SAR force to the pick-up of Gunfighter 82A. Up until this time, there was only one objective, the pilot (A) of Gunfighter 82. Gunfighter 82B (the WSO), was not in contact with the SAR pickup force up until this point in time. As Sandy 01 briefed the rescue forces on the forthcoming pick-up attempt, Gunfighter 82B suddenly came up on his survival radio. This forced a short "fall back and regroup" delay while Sandy 01 located the back seater (Bravo).

Soon all is sorted out and both survivors were ready for pick-up. The tape ends as Jolly 30 with both survivors on board exited the area to the northwest.

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To: Robert LaPointe, rlapointe
From: Bill Brown, INTERNET:nremtwebofc@attmail.com
Date: 6/21/99, 5:03 AM
Re: Re: Test of e-mail address

Bob,

Crew's Names

Maj. Clyde Bennett, AC
Maj. Dan Ruston, CP
Sgt. William Lyle, FE
SSgt William E. Brown, Jr, PJ
Sgt Dennis C. Williamson, PJ
MSgt Dan Schmidt, PJ

Have article from Stars and Strips newspaper. Do you have FAX number.

Author of article is me. Accepted for publication but not published to date in VIET NAM, a magazine. Don't know if and when they will publish it, but you can use it first. Do you want to contact Col. Blissett? I can find his phone number to get his account. I talked with him last year while passing through FL. Also, have you checked out the Sandy Web Page? Skyriaider Association will lead you there.

Bill Brown

LUNFIBER PJ

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Received: from lrau.lr.mt.np.els-gms.att.net (lrau.lr.mt.np.els-gms.att.net [199.191.144 by hil-img-5.compuserve.com (8.8.6/8.8.6/2.19) with SMTP id JAA11867 for <rlapointe@compuserve.com>; Mon, 21 Jun 1999 09:03:12 -0400 (EDT)
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12-18-21

The Combat Rescue of Gunfighter 82

We completed our 36 hours as "high bird" knowing that if a mission would be called we would be designated first-in, or "low bird" for any air rescue attempts that would be made over the Ho Chi Minh Trail, Laos or on the western side of North Viet Nam. The 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, the squadron of HH-53 "Super Jolly Greens" was on alert 24 hours a day throughout the year. Tomorrow would be December 19, 1971 and all was calm when the rescue crew went to bed.

We were awakened about mid-night and told to report to intelligence for a briefing. An American aircrew was shot-down, and we were to be "low-bird" on the mission. I immediately remembered that as we changed from high-bird to low-bird, I had changed positions from "Number 1" PJ (Pararescueman) to "Number 2" PJ, meaning if one of the PJ's was to go on the ground to rescue, provide medical care, or support a pilot, I would not be the one assigned. I was struck a blow of "hard luck" which affected many Pararescueman during Nam; I wouldn't be the primary PJ but would serve as a member of the team rather than the rescuer. We jumped out of bed, put on our clothes, hit the head, and waited only seconds for the truck to take us to intelligence for our rescue briefing.

After passing the security checks we entered the bowels of intelligence at Nakhon Phanom Air Base in Thailand where much of the intelligence gathering taking place along the Ho Chi Mien Trail was housed. The room was small without windows. Charts and maps were on every wall with lights shinning on them for better clarity. The room was dark, setup in theater style. In the front was an Air Force officer, behind him maps of the familiar geography of Laos. We knew this mission was not going to be easy. The

loses his life. The search and rescue task force flies 336 sorties and fifty-one hours in support. Although the F-4 pilot is never recovered, the navigator 1st Lt. Woodrow J. Bergeron is rescued. Nearly forty pararescumen participate in action against the enemy. Some are wounded in the foray. When it is over five of the ten helicopters involved never fly again because of battle damage. Five Sandy A-1's suffer heavy damage"¹. Although this account was written many years later, the members of the 40th ARRS were well aware of the history of Boxer-22.

Down at the flight line it was business as usual. A little joking to relieve the stress and a long preflight check to assure all systems were functioning properly. Our aircraft commander, Lt.Col. Clyde Bennett and co-pilot Major Don Roston were welcome additions. We knew if the going was getting rough these two helicopter pilots would not back down in the face of enemy fire. The flight engineer, William Lyles, was experienced and we had flown many alert missions together. My fellow Pararescueman, Dennis Williamson, was my "buddy" in SCUBA school, a fellow PJ classmate, and one I knew I could count on if the going got rough. Before take off, I asked Denny if he wanted to change positions, from "Number 1" PJ to "Number 2". He agreed, and 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, two one-pint water flasks, trauma bandages, pen flares, maps, and a Randal knife comprised the gear I would carry if it became necessary to ride the hoist into the jungle. All was in working order and I rechecked the knots on a ten foot section of rope I had concocted with a snap link tied to each end. One end would be snapped to the hoist support and the other free to snap onto a pilot's parachute harness should a quick retrieval become necessary.

After pre-flight checks we took off straight for Mu Gia Pass. It was about an 80 minute flight. We were to be supported by all the planes in the inventory of the Air Force in order to complete a successful recovery of the two American pilots. MIGCAP, F-4's would be circling the area to prevent a loss of any rescue forces similar to the January 1970 loss of a Jolly Green helicopter shot down by a MIG. We would have F-105's "Wild Weasels" to take care of SAM missile sites. The always supporting A-1E "Sandy" aircraft, loaded with anti-personnel bombs and other weapons would be on-scene, locating, circling and protecting the survivors. The OV-10 would also continue to circle the area talking with the survivors and rescue forces. The C-130 "King" birds would be present to keep in contact with headquarters MAC-V and to re-fill the gas tanks via air-to-air refueling with the Jolly Greens. In all, some 30-40 planes would begin this first light rescue attempt.

While en route we loaded our mini-guns. Each Jolly had three 7.62 cal mini-guns capable of firing 2,000 or 4,000 bullets per minute. The best venue for defense was the rear mounted gun, placed on the ramp of the helicopter. From there a PJ in a "gun-tub" could burst fire the mini-gun and serve as a stinger at the end of the tail of the helicopter. During the rescue attempt, we all knew we had to swing the mini-gun designed to fire out the rescue door away from its position and that it would serve no benefit for our defense. Loading the guns in the dark was a skill possessed by every PJ because most approaches to missions were accomplished in early morning as "first lighters". Once clearance was given we fired the guns into the blackness of the night. Jolly 36, serving as our high bird left a trail of red dots falling thousands of feet into the jungle below. We knew all was ready as we began a three mile circle in a "safe" area over Laos, where no

anti-aircraft guns or SAMs had been reported by intelligence. The helicopters were to remain in this pattern, circling at 10,000 feet until the survivors were found and the scene was determined by the Sandy pilots as "safe" for helicopters to enter.

As the search phase was conducted, we often took dives down to the jungle top, when altered first by "SAM Warning" later followed by "SAM Launch". The dives of the helicopter, spinning around in a tight circle, with each crew member looking for an upcoming SAM, occurred a number of times during the morning. On a half-dozen or so occasions we saw the "telephone pole size" missiles race past low flying aircraft and detonate high in the sky near an F-4 covering MIGCAP, or leaving the scene after dropping ordnance to keep the enemy busy while rescue forces attempted to locate the survivors. We knew the jungle canopy must have been thick because even though we could hear the Bravo Survivor on the radio, no one could place a visual on his position. The Alpha Survivor was easily located, hanging in a tree, unable to get out of his parachute harness and descend to the ground. His height above the ground was estimated at 250 feet and he possessed only 150 feet of let-down cord. We knew his rescue would be pretentious. Smoke from Bravo was difficult to see, dissipating as it drifted toward the sky. Both survivors had passed the identifier test used by the Air Force and had answered their personal questions correctly. With positive identity known, the exact location of the Alpha survivor and near location of Bravo, a rescue attempt was about ready. The final touch came when a Sandy overflew the area at a very slow speed and did not receive any ground fire. It seemed the troop concentrations we were alerted to by intelligence was a few miles away with thick jungle and mountainous terrain between the pilots and the

camp. However, the ARRS had been caught in traps laid by the enemy before, and this rescue would be accomplished like all others with full combat support.

We circled around as the sun rose high in the pass and mountains. It was a lovely sight, thick green trees, and mountains that would be excellent to sport climb. From the air it looked so peaceful even though the area was completely controlled by North Vietnamese regulars. Monitoring the radios we heard Sandy lead signal the forces it was time for a rescue attempt. We began the "run-in".

Run-ins begin with a fast helicopter dive from altitude to tree-top level. The drop is similar to ascending the longest roller-coaster ride in the world with a G-force ending that requires one to grunt and plant your feet in order to remain standing during the transition from vertical to horizontal. Two hundred miles an hour at tree top level. Doors on the helicopter are all open with wind whipping through the helicopter at breath-taking speeds. All equipment is tied down. Fingers on the triggers of mini-guns, pointing out toward the ground. Heads kept low, squinting through the sites. Noise so loud that you can not hear yourself yell at the top of your lungs. Radio blasting instructions to the pilot about distance to the survivors; 8 miles, 6 miles, 4 miles, closer and closer, jumping high trees causing every crewmember to leave their seats and bless the inventor of the safety tie down strap. Pulses pounding in the chest, sweating from both the heat of the jungle and nerves squeezing the sweat glands. Anxiety high, remembering training, remembering commands, watching other members, anticipating the slowing of the Jolly to hover when the danger increases ten fold. Will this be it? Will this be the pinnacle of a years 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? Or, will we be in the fight

of our lives, small rounds popping through the thin skin of the helicopter? Will all of us make it alive? Will we need our medic skills? Questions, questions, questions, eyes open wondering! Then the Sandy lead tells Col. Bennett straight ahead 3/4 quarter of a mile, a clump of higher trees at a one o'clock position, that is the position of the Bravo survivor. The Jolly begins to slow and flare toward a hover. The blurring trees come into focus. The canopy is thick. We listen, no small arms fire thus far, the Sandy's begin circling the Jolly, weaving around attempting to draw small arms fire upon themselves. Jolly 30 is in a hover, the Bravo survivor says over the radio he can hear the helicopter but can not see it. We hover around the general area until he tells us we are over his head and he can see the helicopter. We lower the jungle penetrator seat, 100 feet a minute, taking more than two minutes to reach the ground. Bravo says he can't see the penetrator, the canopy is too thick and the vines in the jungle prevent him from finding the penetrator. Col. Bennett tells Sgt Lyles to bring up the hoist and send down a PJ to attempt the rescue. I know it's me, my time has come, I am ready! As we wait for the hoist to return from earth, I recheck everything. Finally after what seems like eternity it is here. I quickly strap myself in and begin the descent. After exiting the helicopter I see how exposed we are, we are on a ridge above the trail, the sun is bright, thankfully there is no small arms fire. Sgt. Lyle lowers me into the jungle, the ride is much faster on the hoist, banging through the trees, pushing the jungle away from me and the gear. No slowing down, my weight brings me down fast, I crash onto the jungle floor. Standing, I see Lt. Murry, the Bravo survivor talking into his radio, looking up at the helicopter, he doesn't see me! I have come down through the trees and he can't see me! I am only 20-

30 yards away and he doesn't see me; how dumb can a pilot be? I jump up and down waving my arms. He continues to look up at the helicopter and doesn't look in any other direction. I make the decision, one I did not want to make, to leave the security of the hoist and approach the Bravo survivor. I run toward him as I get within 10 feet he sees me, his face is full of fright, he knows I am not the enemy. I signal him to follow and he does. We can not speak to each other, my helmet is on, I am monitoring the radios. We begin the ascent to the helicopter, still there is no small arms fire. I am confident we will complete one-half of the rescue attempt. We break the tree line and are exposed again to a 360 degree angle for small arms fire. No firing occurs. Sandy's continuing to circle the Jolly in close range. Any enemy on the ground would know where we were, the noise is unbelievable. Sgt. Lyle pulls us into the helicopter and Lt. Murry is as safe as we are. He takes a seat in one of the bunks while we attempt rescue of the Alpha survivor.

Alpha survivor, so named because he occupied the front seat of an F-4, remains suspended in a tree not far from the site of the successful recovery of his fellow crewmember. Jolly 30 hovers over in his direction. Sgt. Lyle and I look into the trees and see the pilot. His chute rests next to him in the tree. Shroud lines and silk enveloping him, the tree and nearby trees. He is 150 feet below the Jolly. I attached my snap linked rope to the penetrator thinking it may be difficult to get the pilot onto the hoist in mid-air about 250 feet above the ground. I can not talk to Lyle, my radio is set on the rescue frequency and Lyle is on the intercom of Jolly 30. He gives the hand signal to prepare to be lowered and I give him the thumbs up. He begins lowering me. Within seconds I am next to the pilot, he reaches for me and the penetrator. He fails. I oscillate below the chopper, feet apart yet so close to freedom. Lyle commands the helicopter to

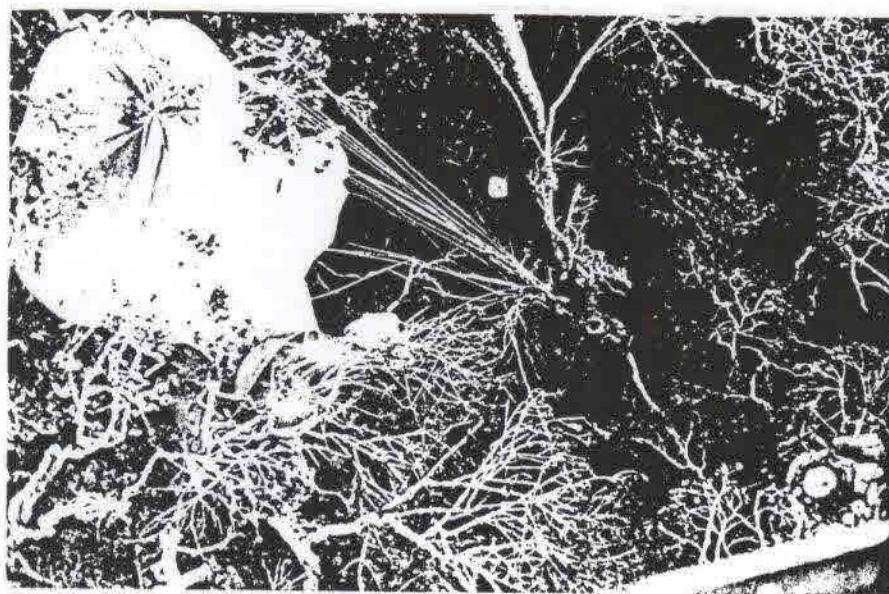
adjust position and I swing from side to side. Grabbing parachute lines I pull my way toward the pilot. I am near enough and quickly snap the link into his parachute harness. We will be together for the remainder of the rescue. Lyle moves the hoist in an attempt to get me closer to the pilot but now that I am hooked into him, I turn upside down, hanging by the hoist, wrapped in shroud lines, 250 feet above the ground. I radio the crew that I have the survivor on the hoist; a signal to begin lifting us upward. Then I feel the parachute lines which are tangled into my gear, around the hoist, the pilot and myself. They are preventing us from ascending to the safety of the helicopter. My knife is strapped to the calf of my leg. I have to reach it. With great strain I grab the knife as I feel the pressure of the parachute cord on my legs, pulling them with great force. I unsheathe the knife and only tap the lines, they spring apart like a broken string on a guitar. I have to cut perhaps ten lines as we ascend. I can not see the Alpha Survivor, he is below me attached to the hoist by my home-made rescue device. I only hope as I am cutting lines that the knots I have tied hold and he does not fall 250 feet to his death. We have been in a hover over the survivor for a three or four minute period, still there is no ground fire. For this I am thankful. Sgt. Lyle brings us to the helicopter and I am brought in the door, the alpha survivor is still attached to the rope below the helicopter. Lyle and Williamson reach below the helicopter and bring him into the Jolly. We quickly inform Col. Bennett the survivors are aboard and Jolly 30 begins the dangerous extraction from the scene. Slowly gaining speed, following a course behind three Sandy's flying ever so slowly to attract any ground fire before the Jolly passes over a site. Picking up speed, manning mini-guns, listening to F-4's draw anti-aircraft fire and attention away

from rescue forces. Gaining speed we stay on the tree tops, out of the immediate rescue area, following a course plotted by intelligence, we gain speed until Sandy lead tells us its time to go to altitude.

In the Jolly we begin to relax as we gain altitude. We know with each minute we are further from the Mu Gia Pass, further from immediate danger, further from the enemy. Lt. Murry needs wound care from an ejection injury and Sgt Williamson provides medical care. Col. Blissett rests on the cot, the crews voices are picking up, you can hear the excitement, the joy, the accomplishment, "Shit hot", is called out more than once by Sandy's, King, Phantom Pilots. The joy passes along airwaves throughout Laos, there will be celebrating tonight in rescue forces. We approach Thailand, unload the mini-guns and prepare for a "fly-by" of the flight line. We see NKP in the distance, and ready smoke grenades we will pop in celebration. Already 100-150 fellow rescueman, pilots, mechanics, avionics technicians, PJ's, medics, every type of specialist who supports these missions is there to participate in the joy of the rescue of American pilots. The fly-by smoke fills the chopper, everyone is smiling. We land and taxi to our spot on the tarmac, shutting down the engines. Col. Blissett is first out, he is sprayed with champagne, followed by Lt. Murry also a victim of rescue celebration champagne. Next comes Air Craft Commander Clyde Bennett, splashed with buckets of water, like the coach of a Super Bowl team. Col. Bennett held Jolly 30 in a hover over enemy held territory for between an eight and ten minute period in full exposure of any enemy on the ridge. Finally the remainder of the crew. We gather in front of Jolly 30 for a picture and everyone gives warm embraces and handshakes thanking each other for a mission well done. The survivors are lead off in a military ambulance to the hospital for a checkup,

the ground crews park the Jolly, maintenance men immediately begin checkups. The crew boards the transport trucks and heads back to the barracks. We are off alert for the rest of the day. Soon we will be asleep, resting for another mission, another opportunity to fulfill the air rescue motto, "These things we do, so that others may live".

Epilogue: Ssgt William Brown never had an opportunity to talk with the pilots he rescued from the jungles in North Viet Nam until years later. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his efforts in the rescue of Gunfighter 82 in the US mail after being discharged from the Air Force. His father, a member, and later Commander of the Ohio Department of AMVETs contacted the Air Force in 1975 and asked them to locate Col. Blissett, the Alpha survivor. During an Ohio AMVET convention in Columbus, Ohio, Col. Blissett, in a surprise ceremony, thanked and presented SSgt. Brown with his DFC in front of family and friends. Gunfighter 82 finally was a mission complete.



A PARARESCUEMAN IS LOWERED from an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant to help Lt. Col. Arthur S. Blissett in cutting the parachute lines and heavy foliage which he used to tie himself to the tree top. The colonel spent the night rather than risk a 70 foot drop to the ground. Colonel Blissett had been on a night reconnaissance escort mission over North Vietnam when his F-4 Phantom was struck by a surface to air missile. He went down in Laos.

40th ARRSq pulls two pilots from jungle

TAN SON NHUT AB, RVN -- Two Air Force air crew members were returned from the jungles of Laos by Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service rescue forces after their aircraft was hit by a surface to air missile (SAV).

They were flying a F-4 Phantom out of Da Nang Airfield on a night reconnaissance escort mission over North Vietnam 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, 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 Hercules maintained contact throughout the night.

The rescue force planned to launch for the pick up at first light.

Both men reported that they were uninjured.

To insure their safety during the night, Air Force fighters 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.

That morning an A-1 Skyraider spotted both parachutes and directed an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant to the area. After spotting the colonel safely tied to his tree top, the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron's helicopter went to look for Lieutenant Murray.

Radio contact with the lieutenant indicated that the helicopter was right above him but they could not see him.

Asked "where have you been" by one of the helicopter crew, Lieutenant Murray replied, "I've been right here all night." He was then 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 thought we brought half that tree up with us," was Colonel Blissett's remark following the successful rescue.

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

31st joins in test

HQ ARRS -- The 31st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron has joined with four other Military Airlift Command units at Clark AB, P.I., to form a single unit, the 1600th Support Group.

This consolidation is a one-year test, directed by USAF, to determine the feasibility of having the separate MAC functions at Clark under a single manager.

76th crew assists stricken Navy P-3 after midair crash

By Capt. Monroe S. Sams Jr.

HICKAM AFB, Hawaii -- Nothing can be more chilling to a rescue aircrew searching under a low, threatening overcast for the survivors of a sunken ship than a "Mayday" call from one of the other SAR aircraft.

Yet, the quick reaction to such a call by a 76th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron HC-130 crew may well have been the deciding factor in the saving of 10 lives aboard a Navy P-3.

The Navy aircraft had collided in midair with a Coast Guard C-130 during an extensive search operation.

In the confusion which followed the initial distress call from the Coast Guard C-130, which was only slightly damaged, no word was heard from the P-3 and it was presumed lost.

However, the instinctive effort by the ARRS HC-130 crew to contact the craft met with success.

The P-3 was still flying, although it was only a few feet above the water and virtually uncontrollable with almost 10 feet of its left wing chopped off.

Disorientated from the midair collision, which had sent them plummeting from 500 feet to just inches above the water and faced with almost total instrument weather conditions, the Navy crew was fighting a desperate battle just to keep their machine flying.

It was at this point that the calm, professional presense of Capt. Richard L. Cecil's crew helped make order out of chaos.

Reassuring the distressed crew that help was nearby if they could just hang on, Captain Cecil's crew began an immediate intercept of the P-3.

Fast work on the radar by Maj. Sada-yoshi Sakamoto, the navigator, pinpointed the P-3's position and vectors were given to Midway.

Following the calm, "common sense" advice of the rescue crew and displaying outstanding airmanship, the P-3 pilot was able to regain control of his aircraft and assess the damage.

While he was performing controllability checks on his battered craft, the loadmasters and PJ's aboard the rescue HC-130 completed preparations for MA-1 kit and pararescue deployment--just in case.

The copilot and radio operator coordinated instructions and clearance between the distressed aircraft and ground agencies.

Following instructions from the rescue HC-130, the crippled P-3 made its way through the weather and made a difficult landing under extreme crosswinds at Midway.

In the opinion of the Navy pilot, the immediate "helping hand" given him and his men by the 76th ARRSq crew was the decisive factor in the safe recovery of his aircraft and crew.

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