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| 15 | (U) | The 56th Special Operations Wing assumed Command and Control of the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron. |
| 16 | (S) | An A-1J of the 1st Special Operations Squadron made a gear-up landing at NKP due to battle damage. The aircraft received major damage. |
| 18 | (S) | Nail 31, an OV-10A of the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron was shot down in Steel Tiger. |
| 18 | (S) | Sandy 01, an A-1J of the 1st Special Operations Squadron was shot down in Steel Tiger while searching for survivors of Nail 31. The pilot was rescued by an Air America helicopter which was on the scene. |
| 19 | (S) | Search and Recovery mission for Nail 31 was successful. |
| 27 | (C) | Search and Recovery mission for Jolly Green 61 downed in Northern Cambodia unsuccessful. No objective. |
| 31 | (C) | Search and Recovery mission for Spectre 22 shot down near the Bolovens Plateau in Laos successful. The entire crew of fifteen was recovered. |

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DATE: 18 Mar 1972

MISSION NUMBER: 3-3-022

FLIGHT DESIGNATION: Jolly Green 61

OBJECTIVE: Rescue and Recovery of two OV-10 crew members with callsign of Nail 31 Alpha and Bravo. Pickup attempt successful on 19 Mar 72.

ADDITIONAL SAR FORCES: JG 56, 32, 53, 63, Sandy's 1 through 10, King 42, 27.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY: At 1025 local on 18 March 1972 two HH-53C helicopters were launched from Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand in response to the bailout of Nail 31 (OV-10) Alpha and Bravo. Jolly Green callsigns were 32(L) and 53(H). The survivors were located in the region of the "Catchers Mitt" approximately 42 miles north west of Saravane, Laos (16°22'N, 105°57'E). Nail 31 had apparently been hit by enemy AAA fire in this heavily defended area of Route 23, where intelligence had established defenses up to 57mm AAA. Initial orbit was established at 1125L, approximately 12 miles to the south of the survivor's position, over a karst area on the east side of route 23. Both survivors had been in contact with Nail 15, the first on-scene commander. Nail 31 Bravo could transmit, but was unable to receive on Delta channel. Both survivors requested PJ assistance because of ankle injuries. The survivors were under dense tree cover approximately 150 - 200 meters apart. The known animosity of ground forces in the area was immediately reemphasized by the loss of Sandy 01 (A-1E) about five minutes into the orbit. Hit by ground fire, he left the area, bailed out, and was immediately recovered by Hotel 70, a friendly non-USAF helicopter that was in the area. Three other Sandy aircraft also received hits during the mission. Jolly Greens 56 and 57 (HH-53C) launched from Nakhon Phanom RTAFB at 1140L to provide backup capability and continuous coverage during cycling on the tanker. Throughout the day USAF and USN forces expended massive amounts of ordinance, including area denial agents, in preparation for the recovery attempt. The survivors were completely encircled by 37mm, 23mm, 12.7mm and assorted small arms and automatic weapons. The Sandys and Nails experienced great difficulty in their attempts to pinpoint the survivors, especially 31 Bravo because of his transmit-only capability. Although enemy resistance had not been reduced to a level deemed really satisfactory for a recovery, all concerned agreed to a last light effort at 1800L. Factors favoring the attempt were poor visibility for enemy gunners, confusion caused by the day-long pounding by our forces, and particularly the small chance that the survivors could remain free overnight. A steep, circling approach from 11,000 ft AGL, almost directly over the survivors was planned. Smoke 43 and 44 (A-1E), and Sandys 13 and 14 preceeded Jolly Green 32 in the descent. By 5000 ft AGL, visual contact with the Als was intermittent due to smoke and darkness. By 4000' AGL multiple tracers filled the air from both high and low rate-of-fire weapons. Visual contact with the Als was lost by 2000' AGL and the rescue attempt was aborted. The survivors were briefed for the nights operation and a first light effort on 19 March. A Night Recovery System effort was not made due to the environment and the requirement for the crew to wear gas masks. The next morning Jolly Green 32(L) and 61(H) launched at 0430L for the first light effort. Jolly Green 30(L) and 61(H) launched at 0505L as backup crew. The Jolly Greens established an orbit west of the survivor's position and held while our forces

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GROUP 1
Declassified at 3 year
intervals; declassified
after 12 years

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JOLLY GREEN 56

Captain Richard E. Dreher
Major Ralph L. Allred
SSgt Raymond Duarte
Sgt Charles D. McGrath
SSgt Charles D. Morrow
SSgt Harold Smith

AC
CP
HM
RS
RS
AP



KENNETH E. ERNEST, Major, USAF
Aircraft Commander

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2. As was already known, the gas masks used by the helicopter crews hampered communications.

3. The downwash caused by the HH-53 constitutes a real hazard to the survivor on the ground and precautions should be continually emphasized.

Nail 31

When the crew of Nail 31, an OV-10 from NKP, bailed out over the Ho Chi Minh Trail on 18 March 1972, they landed in one of the most hostile environments yet faced by rescue forces. The crew was both skillful and fortunate in avoiding capture or death during the period immediately following their bailout. The pilot, Lieutenant David G. Breskman, had traveled about 600 meters from his parachute and was sitting by a tree when he detected an enemy soldier with an automatic weapon coming toward him. ^{83/}

I took out my gun as he approached and sat very still hoping he would veer away from my position. . . . He kept coming toward me; I remained motionless. He looked in my direction a number of times but apparently didn't see me. He was within 10 feet of my position when I wheeled around and fired four times. . . . I cautiously moved over to him and took his MK-47. There was a lot of groundfire at this time and my shots apparently didn't attract attention.

The SAR force had meanwhile arrived, and the groundfire that Lieutenant Breskman heard was most likely that which was directed at Sandy 01 who was trolling the area looking for enemy positions. On one of his passes Sandy 01 was hit and downed by AAA. The pilot bailed out and was immediately picked up by an Air America helicopter. Before he was shot down, Sandy 01 had pinpointed the location of Captain Steven L. Boretsky, the weapons

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Captain Boretsky was, but both crewmembers were found and safely evacuated. The accuracy and the amount of firepower delivered against the enemy during the Nail 31 operation caused Colonel Cecil N. Muirhead, Jr., Commander, 3ARRGp, to speculate that, "toward the end of this operation, the enemy probably wished we would just finish and leave him alone."^{85/}

The SAR conference at which Colonel Muirhead made his remarks was held at NKP on 26 March 1972. Those in attendance included the crew of Nail 31 and most of the participants in the SAR operation. The purpose of the conference was to determine what lessons could be learned from the Nail 31 experience. The minutes of the conference included the following:^{86/}

1. It was suggested that in extremely high-threat areas, the Nail FACs maintain longer OSC prior to allowing the Sandys in the area for in-close trolling. The Sandys should insure that they are briefed thoroughly by the on-scene FAC and by King.
2. It was emphasized that the cycling and scheduling of Pave Nail assets represented a critical problem due to aircraft availability and maintenance. It was suggested that Joker coordinate closely with the 56SOW to insure the best utilization of the assets.
3. It was noted that first light planning apparently created a considerable fast-mover overload on tanker resources. This resulted from holding certain night flights over until first light without expending them. Like other assets, tankers were limited, and strike flights should expend as soon as possible to avoid excessive refuelings and exhaustion of tanker resources

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DECLASSIFIED
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138

NAIL 31A/B

(C) The most contested SAR of the quarter began when Nail 31, an OV-10A Pave Nail of the 23rd TASS, was shot down in the "Catcher's Mitt" area of Steel Tiger. The Catcher's Mitt was one of the most heavily defended areas of Steel Tiger with numerous 12.7mm, 14.5mm, 23mm, 37mm, and 57mm anti-aircraft guns. The shootdown of Nail 31 occurred at about 1015L, on 18 March, as the crew was directing an airstrike in the area.¹⁵¹

(C) Joker designated Jack to coordinate the SAR effort. King 21 was near the area and Nail 15 was just entering from NKP when Nail 31 was hit. Nail 15 assumed on-scene command and immediately learned that Air America helicopters and Pave Nails were nearby. Air America was not called in because of the high threat environment. Nail 15 did request the Pave Nails. He then made quick contact with the survivors who advised that AAA positions were within 200 meters of their positions.¹⁵²

(S) At 1030L, Sandys 01/02/03/04 and Jolly Greens 32/53 were launched from NKP. At 1100L, the Sandys arrived in the area and Sandy 01 took over as on-scene commander. Nail 15, with Sandy 01 on his wing, descended to point out the approximate locations of the survivors. During this maneuver Sandy 01 took a direct hit by a 37mm round in the right side of the engine.

¹⁵¹. SARCO Report for Nail 31A/B, 19 Mar 72, (Doc 66).

¹⁵². Ibid.

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DECLASSIFIED
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141

drops very near the survivors. Radio interference and AAA had greatly impeded search efforts so the Sandys requested that Nails 15/52 expend their fast movers on the AAA in the area. The next hour and a half was consumed marking targets, expending ordnance on AAA, and further narrowing the positions of the survivors. Nail 31 Bravo was beginning to have radio problems.¹⁵⁵

(C) Sandys 05/06 were launched out of DaNang at 1245L, and arrived on the scene at about 1330L. On scene command was passed to 05 and as 03/04 were exiting the area Sandy 03 took a near miss from a 37mm round that caused minor damage. Sandys 03/04 RTBed to NKP. Sandys 05/06 then attempted to pinpoint the locations of the survivors and in so doing Sandy 05 took a hit in the right wing. A 37mm round passed through the wing from underneath and exploded just after exiting. Both Sandys immediately headed Southwest in the event a bailout might be necessary. However, Sandy 05 was able to nurse his stricken aircraft back to NKP.¹⁵⁶

(C) At 1250L, Smokes 43/44 had been launched from NKP. Fifty miles out from NKP Smoke 43's propeller control linkage broke and he had to RTB. After a quick repair, he relaunched at 1400L. At 1330L, Sandys 09/10 launched from NKP and were briefed by Sandy 05 as they passed each other. Sandys 09/10 then entered the area and continued the AAA suppression. When Smoke 43 arrived he assumed on-scene command and decided that a last light attempt should be

155. Ibid.
156. Ibid.

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143

from NKP, Ubon, and DaNang participated in the effort.¹⁵⁹

(C) During the night the Nails had been working the area with fast movers and a Spectre gunship was working the roads. Strikes continued on into the daylight hours to sanitize the area. Enemy big guns were now quiet and only sporadic ZPU and 12.7mm fire was being encountered. All active guns were to the Northwest of the survivors so the planned ingress for the helicopter was from the Southeast.¹⁶⁰

(C) During the night Nail 31 Bravo had moved and was now very close to Alpha. He was still having trouble on backup frequency so it was decided to conduct the entire SAR on Guard. The survivors reported that they had heard nothing in their immediate vicinities for some time. Ten hundred was chosen as the pickup time. Smoke 43 screened the area from the guns to the Northwest while Nail 52 led Jolly Green 61 in from the Southeast. Four Sandys flew a protective daisy chain around the helicopter and expended most of their ordnance to the Northwest of the pickup area. During this time Sandy pilots reported some 23mm and 37mm fire but it was at a low angle and inaccurate. They also saw explosions below their aircraft that appeared to be rocket propelled grenades. Since Bravo's radio was not good he was instructed to pop his smoke first. His smoke was quickly sighted and in a few minutes he was aboard the Jolly Green. Then Alpha

159. Ibid.

160. Ibid.

DECLASSIFIED

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56 SOW
Jan - Mar 72 vol. 1
K-WG-56-HI

DECLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

144

popped his smoke and he was quickly picked up. The Jolly Green then turned and egressed the area as it had come in, at treetop level. A most difficult and successful SAR was terminated at 1030L.

161. Ibid.

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S T A T E M E N T

19 March 1972

SUBJECT: Sandy 9 and 10 (SAR Report Nail 31A/B)

1. Sandy 9 flight was briefed at 0605 because of an abort in Sandy 3 flight. We were airborne at 0740 after awaiting the munitions for Sandy 10.
2. While enroute to the SAR area Sandy 1 flight was on scene and Sandy 5 flight was being briefed to take over on scene command.
3. We proceeded to the briefed initial holding point and rendezvoused with Jolly Green 32 and 30. Jolly Green 61 and Smoke 44 and 45 were also at the holding point at our arrival of 0815.
4. At 0850 Sandy 1 gave on scene command to Sandy 5. A pick up attempt was being considered by Sandy 5 and he called for Smoke 44 flight to proceed to the survivors location. At 0900 Sandy 5 called for Sandy 9 flight to enter the area for a briefing prior to the pick-up.
5. At 0910 Sandy 9 flight arrived in the sar area and received a briefing on the planned pick up attempt from Sandy 5. Sandy 7 flight was enroute from CH77 to the Jolly Green holding point. At 0920 Sandy 5 passed on scene command to Sandy 9 and 5 exited the area.
6. Sandy 7 had rendezvoused with Jolly 32 flight. Smoke 44 was having difficulty finding the area and Sandy 10 attempted to direct them in using ADF. Sandy 5 had reported no ground fire so Sandy 9 decided to try a pick-up as soon as the Smoke flight was in the area.
7. I continued making passes over the area both to pinpoint the survivors and to draw gun fire if any was in the vicinity.
8. After 10 minutes a 12.7 began firing from about 1km north of the survivors. After this 23mm, 37mm, and rocket propelled grenade (RPG) began firing at various times. All guns were north or west of the survivors and firing at a low angle.
9. Smoke 44 was unable to locate the SAR area and returned to CH89.
10. The survivors had heard nothing in their immediate vicinity and Sandy 9 decided to try a pick up. The plan was to bring the Jolly in from the southeast on the tree tops to avoid the guns to the north and west. Sandy 9 and 10 would use their CEU 22 for an "L" shaped smoke screen west and north of the survivors, since alpha and Bravo were very close and Bravo's radio was not as good as Alphas it was decided to pick Bravo up first. Nail 52 was to help escort Sandy 7/8 and the Jollys to the survivors and Sandy 10 was to drop an M-47 at the turn point about 5mm SE of the survivors. From that point on the Jolly Green would be at tree top elevation. The entire operation was to be conducted on guard channel because of Bravo's radio.
10. Sandy 9 briefed everyone on VHF 123.1 and was then informed that the survivors were located.

IH-95-GM-X

MOS 95

STATEMENT

Sandy 07 and 08 launched from Danang AB RVN at 0135Z on 19 March 1972. We arrived at the holding point assigned prior to takeoff at approximately 0250Z and rendezvoused with Jolly Green 32 and 30 and 61 and 57 who were already in the area. Sandy 09 and 10 were making final plans for a pickup attempt with Sandy 09 being on-scene commander. Sandy 09 had the position of both survivors narrowed down to approximately 100 meter circles and began to brief the plan of attack. However, Sandy 09 and 10 began taking more ground fire and the pickup was postponed for the time being. At this point Sandy 07 experienced temporary transmitter failure and signalled Sandy 08 to take command of the flight. After 10 minutes Sandy 07's radio problems corrected themselves and he resumed command of the flight. Shortly thereafter Jolly Green 32 and 30 left for the tanker to refuel. Sandy 09 stated that he was ready for the pickup attempt and started the briefing. King interrupted and said that there was only one Jolly Green ready to go and advised Sandy 09 to wait for Jolly Green 32 and 30 to return before starting the pickup. Jolly Green 61 quickly confirmed that he had Jolly Green 57 with him as high bird and the briefing continued. Nail 52 arrived just before execution and led Jolly Green 61 and Sandy 07 and 08 into the area. Sandy 10 was supposed to drop an armed M-47 as an IP with three 2.75"wp rockets marking ingress heading but his compass system failed and Sandy 09 put in the appropriate marks instead of Sandy 10. Nail 52 spotted the IP mark at the 8 o'clock position and directed Jolly Green 61 and Sandy 07 and 08 to it. With the IP and the marking rockets in sight, Jolly Green 61 proceeded into the area with Sandy 07 and 08 escorting. Sandy 09 directed Jolly Green 61 to slow down and for Nail 31B, the survivor, to pop his smoke. There was some confusion at this point as to which was which survivor but Jolly Green 61 spotted some smoke and went into a hover over it. Sandy 09 and 10 with Sandy 07 and 08 formed a "daisy chain" around Jolly Green 61 and expended CBU-25, 2.75" rockets, 20mm and 7.62mm cannon fire in a 360 degree circle around the helicopter. Most of the ordnance was directed to the north and west which was the direction from which the airbursts and tracers of the AAA was originating. Also observed airbursts which were later thought to be rocket propelled grenades going off below us at approximately 500 to 600 feet. No fire reported coming from inside the "daisy chain" at the helicopter. With one man on board Jolly Green 61 was directed to the other man's position by Sandy 07 and 09 and Sandy 09 instructed the second survivor to pop his smoke. Jolly Green 61 spotted the smoke and completed the pickup. All four A-1's expended along the egress route and Sandy 07 assumed on-scene command when Sandy 09 had to RTB due to low fuel. Egress was successful and Sandy 07 and 08 RTB'd to Ch 89 due to the possibility of battle damage. Battle damage results were negative and Sandy 07 and 08 returned to Danang at 1300Z on 19 March 1972.

Robert F. Burke
 ROBERT F. BURKE, Capt, USAF
 Sandy 07

Sandy 07 - Captain Robert F. Burke
 Sandy 08 - First Lieutenant Byron E. Hukee

IH-96-GW-K
 Jan - Mar 72 Vol. 2
 MOS 96

DOC 6611

STATEMENT

19 March 1972

SUBJECT: Sandy 5 and 6 (SAR for Nail 31A/B)

1. The following is a sequence of events of Sandy 5 (Capt Lambeth), and Sandy 6 (Lt Horklotz) for the Nail 31 A/B SAR. All events were on the 19th of Mar, and all times are Thailand local.

2. At 0608, we launched to replace Sandy 3 and 4 who air aborted. We rendezvoused with the Jolly Greens and Smoke 44 flight at approx. 0650. After about 10 minutes of holding, Sandy 1 reported taking a hit and was departing the area. I immediately started heading for the SAR area. Before arriving, Sandy 1 determined that the hit was minor, and he remained on scene commander. We went into the survivors area with Sandy 1, and started getting a briefing from Sandy 1 on the survivor's position and area defenses.

3. The immediate area of the survivors and the planned run in headings for the Jollys had been pretty well sanitized with the exception of 3 ZPU pits just south of the survivors. Sandy 1 and 2 worked over the pits prior to turning over on scene commander to me.

4. Shortly after becoming CSC, I contacted Nail 31 A and had him vector me directly over him. I attempted contact with Bravo, but his receiver was apparently not working well. I flew over his estimated position and Bravo came up on the radio and told me to gun my engine if I was hearing him. This I did, and Bravo told me he understood I was hearing him. A few seconds later he came up on Guard channel, and could receive me well. I had him vector me over his position, and found that Bravo was much closer to Alpha than I had thought.

5. I had not received any ground fire up to this time in the area of the survivors. The guns to the northeast were not going to affect the Jolly Green. I received no ground fire trolling over the area at lower and lower altitudes. I decided that it was time to organize the pickup. I sent Sandy 6 out to the Jolly's and requested Smoke 44 flight, and Sandy 7 and 10 to come into the area for a briefing. At this time Sandy 6 was getting very low on fuel, and it was apparent that he would not be able to stay on station long enough for the pickup. Sandy 7 and 8 were only ten minutes out, so I started briefing Sandy 9 on the situation. Smoke 44 flight was having difficulty finding the survivor's area, and did not reach the scene prior to my leaving. As soon as Sandy 7 flight arrived on scene with the Jollys, I told Sandy 6 to RTB. After briefing Sandy 9 on the survivor's position and Bravo's difficulties with Delta Channel, I expended my ordnance on the ZPU pits south of the survivors, thus assuring those guns would no longer be a threat.

6. Throughout the entire time that I was CSC, I had the Nails directing fast mover ordnance to the north of the survivors, which seemed to be where most of the big guns were located.

7. I did not have enough fuel to stay around for the pickup attempt. I turned on scene command over to Sandy 9 and RTB'ed. I landed at 0710.

Jan-Mar 72 Vol 2
K-WG-58-101
MOS 96

DECLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~DOC 66 ¹⁴STATEMENT

18 March 1972

SUBJECT: Smoke 43 and 44 (SAR Report Nail 31 A & B)

1. At 1250L, Smoke 43 flight launched to the SAR with an M-47-only ordnance load (CBU-30 was not loaded due to the time required and the immediate requirement for Smoke). Approximately 50NM out, Smoke 43's prep control linkage broke, and I RTBed for a quick repair. At 1400L, 43 relaunched, with fuel tanks refilled. Smoke 44 had proceeded on into the area and was holding on scene with Sandy 9 and 10. Smoke 43 flight held high while the Sandy's and Nail 01 destroyed gun positions near the survivor. Smoke 43 was asked by Sandy 9 to coordinate ordnance with King, and I did so, working with Nail 01 and Nail 33 and monitoring the fastmover strikes used to cut Rte 23 and to strike gun positions. I assisted Nail 33 in killing one 37mm which had fired at one of his strike flights.
2. Sandy 9 brought Smoke 43 flight down over the survivors and pointed out their positions. He then passed on-scene command to Smoke 43. Sandy 9 and 10 then RTB'ed for fuel, delivering their CBU-25 on enemy gunners just north of the survivors as they exited. I decided to attempt a last -light pickup if I could get sufficient fastmover ordnance and if two more Sandys were available to assist Sandys 11 and 12, who were holding with the Jollys. Smoke 44, having been airborne over one hour longer than 43, had to RTB. He delivered his M-47s along the portion of Rte 23 next to the survivors, and his ordnance created secondary fires and explosions which lasted for almost two hours.
3. 1800L was selected as the execution time, and Nail 33 continued to direct fastmover strikes on gun positions. Nail 25 (Pavemail) arrived, and Smoke 43 briefed the pickup on VHF. The most difficult aspect was that the Jolly would have to make a very steep descent some two to three miles out from the survivor and make his final run-in on the deck. Only in this way could the Jolly be screened from the large 37mm guns located beyond the survivors. Nail 31 Bravo was not talking on the radio, but I felt that we could make a pickup on Alpha and that Bravo, hearing the effort, would again transmit. Although Bravo's receiver appeared to be inoperative, I was willing to attempt his rescue too provided he popped a smoke or vectored the Jolly visually.
4. Smoke 43 sent Nail 25 out to lead the Jollys and Sandy 13 flight into the final holding point. While Sandy 11 marked the IP point, I FAC'ed in a last BLU-52 strike just northwest of the survivors, and Gunfighter 24 and 25 made two excellent 20 meter passes. Our execution was delayed some 20 minutes due to the haze and approaching darkness. When Jolly 32 began his run, he failed to descend to the deck, and was thus exposed to enemy guns. At about the two mile point, the Jolly was above 3000 feet, and a 37mm opened up on him. At the same time, other guns outside the immediate area of the survivor began attacking the Sandys. The 37mm was within 100-150 meters of Nail 31 Alpha, and Smoke 43 rolled in on that gun as the Jolly exited. After that pass, darkness forced us to withdraw, and on-scene command was passed to Nail 51, who was inbound.

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IH-96-GW-K
Jan-Mar 72 Vol. 2
SOW 96

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DOC 66-10

5. I told Nail 31 Alpha that we would see him in the morning, and asked him to listen for other gun positions RTB was normal. Bravo was still not talking on the radio.

Edward E. Jayne

E. R. JAYNE III, Capt, USAF
Smoke 43

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56 SOW
Jan-Mar 72 vol. 2
K-WG-56-HI

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DOC ¹⁸66

STATEMENT

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18 March 1972

SUBJECT: Sandy 13 and 14 (SAR for Nail 31 A/B)

1. On 18 Mar 72 Sandy 13/A launched @ 1010Z with madden kits on board both aircraft. Enroute S 13/14 was advised that as soon as they arrived a pick up was going to be attempted. Smoke 43 was OSC W/S 11/12 in the area also. The plan was that Smoke 43 would lay a smoke screen to the northwest and run the Jolly in from the southeast with S 11/12/13/14 covering the Jolly. We rendezvoused with the Jolly's @ 0605L and arrived at the scene at 0620L. Immediately the plan was executed because of darkness and the poor visibility. Smoke 43 laid the smoke to the west. Sandy 11 dropped a M-47 for the Jolly to start his run in. Jolly began his run in and didn't get low enough. S 11 led the Jolly in and the rest of us covered the Jolly. I was at the Jolly's 8 o'clock and a 23mm opened up directly underneath the Jolly. I rolled in W/20mm and 1 LAU-3 pod. It was dark now and two 37mm opened up on S 11 who was north of the survivors. The Jolly did a 360 climbing and went north of the survivors on the way back south the 37mm's opened up on the Jolly and created more confusion. Everyone exited the area and RTB'ed leaving Nail FAC's on scene all night.

2. (Note: 1. When delivering ordnance at night your biggest threat is running into the ground.
2. Even if the Jolly had been on the treetops he would have still flown over that 23mm.

C. BLEVINS JR, 1Lt, USAF
Sandy 13

Richard E. Brown

R. BROWN, 1Lt, USAF
Sandy 14

GROUP-4
Downgraded at 3 year intervals;
Declassified after 12 years.

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66 SOW
Jan-Mar 72 Vol. 2
IH-WG-56-HI

S T A T E M E N T

18 March 1972

SUBJECT: Sandy 11 and 12 (SAR for Nail 31A/B)

1. On 18 March 72 Sandy 11/12 launched at 0730z and proceeded toward the SAR scene. Sandy 9/10 were on scene, as well as Smoke 43/44, and we were directed by King to rendezvous with the Jolly Green flight and assume escort. We remained on escort while Sandy 9/10 located hostile AAA activity and coordinated with the Nail FACs on scene for fast-mover ordnance. Sandy 9/10 departed the area at approximately 0900z and on-scene command was passed to Smoke 43 who continued to direct ordnance on hostile ground fire. At 1000z Smoke 43 called us into the area to aid in locating ground fire, and Sandy 13/14 were enroute to assume the Jolly Green escort. Between 1000z and 1030z very little resistance was encountered and Smoke 43 decided to attempt a last light effort. Communication with Nail 31A was very good, but 31B was unable to receive. Sandy 13/14 escorted the Jolly Green to the final holding point, approximately 6 miles southeast of the survivors, and as they arrived, Smoke 43 had all SAR forces come up VHF and gave a thorough briefing on the execution of the pickup. It was getting dark very quickly and the smoke and haze made the visibility very low as the execution began. Sandy 11/12 rejoined with the Jolly Greens and led from the final holding point to the survivors. I knew the Jolly would have difficulty keeping me in sight, so I expended white phosphorous rockets on the ingress route. The Jolly reported having them in sight and was heading directly toward Nail 31A's position. At the time I passed over the survivor's position I was at approximately 500's AGL with the Jolly and Sandy escorts directly behind. As I started to pull up to start a daisy chain around the Jolly, enemy AAA (both 23 and 37MM) came up off my left wing tip and directly behind me. Smoke 43 and Sandy 12 were in position to suppress the ground fire and the Jolly immediately turned to the egress heading. Darkness and low visibility prevented another attempt and all SAR forces exited the area.

2. (Note: Though we never had visual contact with either survivor, Nail 31A's position was exactly pinpointed, as he reported seeing the Jolly Green directly overhead. One point which I believe should be covered with the Jolly Green crews is their capability to descend rapidly from the final holding point. I believe I overestimated their capability, as they were still at approximately 2000-3000's as they arrived over the survivor, even though all SAR forces were thoroughly briefed on the necessity to run in as low as possible).

George E. Throckmorton
G. THROCKMORTON, Capt, USAF
Sandy 11

Lance L. Smith
L. SMITH, Lt, USAF
Sandy 12

IH-95-GW-K
Jan-Mar 72 vol. 2
56 SOW

UNCLASSIFIED

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66⁹

STATEMENT

18 March 1972

SUBJECT: Sandy 09 and 10 (Nail 31A/B SAR)

1. Sandys 09 and 10 took off at 1330 on 18 March and proceeded to the area of Delta 47. Sandy 05, on scene commander, had radio contact with both survivors and was taking heavy AAA, up to 57mm. Nail 31A was reported to be in good shape and the owner of an AK 47; 31B was reported to have hurt both his ankles, and therefore would probably need a para jumper. Contact had not been made with B on D freg. We received a full briefing on their survival gear which was pretty standard. With Sandy 09 and 10 still about 30 min. from the SAR area; Sandy 09 took over OSC at about 1430. The Nail over head gave us a general briefing on defences and survivors locations. Sandy 09 went into the area at about 6500 feet with Sandy 10 trail at 8500 feet. As AAA came up from every possible location. Sandy 09 and 10 in coordination with Nail 21 and later Nail or directed fastmover "smart" ordnance on them at the same time Sandy 09 and 10 worked an electronic then a visual search to pin point the survivors. "A" position was pretty well pinpointed because he was able to vector Sandy 09 over his position. Two way communications with "B" was very poor, Sandy 09/10 could hear him but he couldn't hear us we later learned that he could not receive on Delta freg. Although "B" position was not pinpointed we knew his approximate position due to bailout heading and ADF cuts. We were forced to put BLU 52 on several gun positions which were very close to the survivors positions. The survivors reported no ill effects from the BLU 52 but the guns did slow down. (Nail 33 was putting in many sets of fast mover air of all types along route 23 and to the north of the survivors. Nail 01 cut the ford in the "catcher's mit" thumb and to the north of the survivors above the "Y". We directed a flight of F-4 CBU 42 across some active 12.7 and ZPU pits about 150 meters north of "A"'s position. Nail 01 was shown the survivors positions when he arrived on scene, he used his smart bird to relay this information in the form of Loran time delays. At about 1545 most of the heavy AAA had quieted down and Sandy 09 moved down to 4500' with Sandy 10 at 6,500' to troll for 12.7 and ZPU in the area. We found several north of "A" about 150 meters, several south east of "A" about 100 to 150 meters and at least one south and west of "B". Sandy 10 saw a ZPU gun pit firing at Sandy 09 and marked it with a WP rocket. Sandy 09 and 10 then expended their LAU-3 rockets on this ZPU pit, silencing it. It became obvious at this time that Sandy 09/10 would not have gas enough to kill all these guns and make the pick-up. We reminded King of our 1630 bingo. Since Sandys 11/12 only had about 45 min. more gas than 09/10. We decided to make Smoke 43/44 O.S.C. since they had fuel until after dark. The Smoke birds were brought in and briefed, Sandys 09/10 put the rest of their ordnance on 12.7 and ZPU positions north and southeast of "A"'s position and RTB'ed. Sandys 09/10 landed at 1740.

John Lackey

J. LACKEY, Captain, USAF

Sandy 09

~~SECRET~~

GROUP-4

Downgraded at 3 year intervals.
Declassified after 7 years.
MOS 95

UNCLASSIFIED

S T A T E M E N T

18 March 1972

SUBJECT: Sandy 5 and 6 (Nail 31 SAR)

1. Sandy 5 and 6 were launched from Da Nang to the catchers mitt in support of Nail 31 SAR, at 0145Z.
2. Sandy 5 and 6 arrived on scene, and were briefed by Sandy 03 on the situation. Sandy 5 and 6 located Nail 31A and showed his location to Nail 52. While searching for Nail 31B Sandy 5's air-plane was shot.
3. Sandy 5 and 6 RTB'ed channel 89, landing at 0745Z.

DONALD P. MILNER, Maj, USAF
Sandy 05

Donald E. Morse
DONALD E. MORSE, Captain, USAF
Sandy 06

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

DOC

667

4. I advised king that we would need replacements at 1330 and he advised that sandy 05/06 were on their way. Sandy 4 continued to talk to the survivors and make lower and lower passes over the Area to locate the survivors. I marked guns when I spotted with wp rockets advised nail 52 to strike them. we determined that the survivors were east of the road coming out to the thumb and I requested nail 52 to put strikes all along the road as I had marked several guns along that road.

5. At approximately 1325 sandy 05/06 entered the general area and I marked our position with a M-47 smoke bomb west of the road coming out of the thumb. I then briefed sandy 5 on the location of the survivors and AAA and gave him on scene command.

6. I then tried to contact sandy 4 but he has lost his ability to transmit and was striking guns along the road running out of the thumb. While attempting to join on his wing to determine his problems I felt a blast which shook the whole aircraft. Later on landing the crew chief advised that I had taken several hits in the armor plates but otherwise the A/C was ok. Sandy 3/4 departed the area and RTB'ed to NKP and I lead sandy 4 in for a radio out approach.

Robert S. Herklotz
R. Herklotz, 1Lt, USAF
Sandy 03

Glen C. Priebe
G. Priebe, 1Lt, USAF
Sandy 04

GROUP 3
Downgraded at 12 year interval
Not automatically declassified

IH-96-GA-K
Jan - Mar 72
SOW 96

UNCLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

DOC 66⁴

S T A T E M E N T

18 March 72

SUBJECT: Sandy 01, 02 (SAR Report NAIL 31 A&B)

1. Sandy 01, Capt Fess, and Sandy 02, Lt Lamar Smith launched at 1030, 18 Mar 72, in support of the NAIL 31 SAR. Sandy 1 Flt was to proceed direct to the area and assume on scene command. Sandy 3 Flt were to rendezvous with the Jolly Green Flt and proceed to initial holding pt. I advised the initial holding pt to be in the high ground area of 110/105/99 tacan read out.
2. Enroute Sandy 1 requested 2 Flts of F-4's with BLU 52 to be upload and cockpit alert. King advised it was being done. Also enroute Sandy 1 was in contact with NAIL 15, who was present on scene command. I was advised that N-15 had a positive fix on their positions. I asked N-32 (a pave Nail) to hook up with N-15 and get zap on A&B position.
3. Air American helicopter HOTEL 70&85 were orbiting 5 miles west of the SAR area (DELTA 47). They repeatedly requested the UTM coordinates so they could make a pick up attempt. I told them about the intelligence briefed high threat AAA in the area and advised them to hold west of Rt. 23 until I assumed on scene command. NAIL 15 advised likewise. At approximately 1115 Sandy 1 Flt crossed over D-47 at 11,000 and descended into the SAR area. I instructed Sandy 2 to follow me down. I rendezvous with N-15 after a delay caused by poor visibility due to the haze at 6-7,000 level. He pointed out a ground reference and stated their position relative to it. I understood and descended lower to start a round vector pattern overhead. I had voice contact with both A&B. However I asked A to remain silent because I had very good voice with B and desired to work with him first. His first direction was that he could hear me but didn't know where I was. I then told him I was making a pass from South to North and to tell me when I passed abeam of him. This attempt resulted in me being east of him. I then made a pass from North to South for another identification. I had to break off this pass because Sandy 2 told me I was taking ground fire from 12 o'clock. I then turned left and asked NAIL-15 to come down to pick me up and then lead me in on a low altitude pass over their position for an identification. I attempted to tell him my location with respect to the river but my directions were not very good. While I assumed he was coming down to my altitude 2,500 indicated (about 1500 MGL) I made another round pass from Northwest to Southeast. I was told B could hear me to the North coming his way. I continued and as I was looking out over the nose I felt a solid jolt on the very front of the engine and saw a bright orange flash surrounded the engine momentarily. The engine immediately started running rough and to vibrate with white smoke coming from the stacks. I checked my engine gauge unit and it showed all steady at normal (oil, press and temp and fuel press). I vered to the left and pulled all my stores off, outboard and inboard. I was on main internal because during my let down into the area my Rt. stub went dry and I switched to main internal. After I pulled my load off I was told by N-31 and Sandy 2 to turn South heading 180 OSDS

SECRET

GROUP-3

upgraded at 12 year interval;
Not automatically declassified.

DECLASSIFIED 18 MAR 72 DOC 66'

~~SECRET~~

FROM: 1st SOS (Maj Patte/2754)

SUBJECT: SARCO Report (Nail 31A & 31B)

TO: 56th SOW (DO)

1. On 18 March 1972 a SAR was declared for Nail 31 (A & B) shot down at approximately 1015 while working as a FAC putting in airstrike near D 47 in the area of the "Catcher's Mitt". Jack was designated by Joker to work the SAR and King 21 was over head. Nail 15 was the initial, OSC. Air America helicopter available in the SAR area. Pave Nails were sent to the SAR area.
2. Sandy 1, 2, 3, and 4 and G 32 and 53 were launched to a holding point northwest of the approximate survivor location, away from known enemy defenses. The holding point was later moved southwest of the SAR area to provide quicker and safer access to the final holding point. The SARCO advised Jack to order the standard mix of denial weapons loaded: CBU-42, CBU-49, CDU-14, and BLU-52, and requested CBU-52 and LGB's be ordered for AAA suppression. Hobo assets were released by Blue Chip for SAR support. Two Air America helicopters offered their assistance to King 21. They then set up orbit points for emergency bail-out and reported this to King 21.
3. Nail 15, the assistant SARCO (Nail), and intelligence report that the SAR area is extremely high threat with numerous 12.7, 14.5, 23mm, 37mm, and 57mm guns in the immediate vicinity of the survivor. Contact with survivors is made quickly and they report guns within 200m of their position. TFA was asked to monitor and advise.
4. At 1100, Sandy 01 took over OSC and made contact with both survivors but took a hit and had to extract after only a few minutes in the SAR area. He was quickly picked up by an Air America helicopter H 70 and Sandy 02 assumed OSC. Sandy 01 was taken to Pakse and later returned to NKP with no injuries. Sandy 05 and 06 were launched from DNG to replace 01 and 02.
5. At 1140, the Sandys went back to the JG holding area to allow the FACs to neutralize the AAA. JG 56 and 57 took off to join the SAR force.
6. At 1200, the survivors reported enemy activity in the area and injuries that would require PJ assistance during pickup.
7. OSC was shifted to Sandy 03 and then to Sandy 05. The Nails continued to FAC ordnance into the SAR area in an effort to neutralize the AAA. BLU-52 was also used.
8. At 1330, Sandy 09 and 10 were airborne to replace Sandy 03 and 04. Smoke 43 and 44 were also launched with a full load of M-47's. Sandy 05 took over as OSC.

CORONA HAWK

DO NOT DESTROY

1058103.1

~~SECRET~~

GROUP 4
Downgraded at 3 year intervals
Declassified after 12 years

Jan-Mar 72 Vol 2
K-WG-56-H
56 SOW

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DOC 66²

9. At 1400 Sandy 05 took a hit and RTE'd NKP with Sandy 06. Sandy 09 took OSC and later passed it to Smoke 43.

10. At 1425 Sandy 11 and 12 took off to replace Sandy 05 and 06. AAA activity decreased in the SAR area as airstrikes continued. The survivors are reported to be separated by some distance- can't talk to each other on radios.

11. Medden kits were loaded on Sandy 13 and 14 in case more radios were needed for the survivors. Only 3 in stock. We should insure at least 4 kits are available at all times.

12. At 1635, King 27 took over from King 21 and at 1710, Sandy 13 and 14 were airborne.

13. Smoke 43 planned a pick-up attempt at 1800. JG 56 and 57 had to leave the SAR area for an IFE.

14. The pick-up attempt was aborted when JG 32 took fire on the run-in. No further attempts were made and all Sandy and JG assets were ordered to RTE.

15. The Nails immediately started working to pinpoint the survivors location in order to allow them to lay area denial ordnance around the survivor and attack the known and suspected AAA positions. King and Nail aircraft maintained continuous coverage throughout the night. The Nails continued to attack gun positions and seal off ingress routes with area denial ordnance. Spectre aircraft were also used to suppress ground fire, search for enemy activity, and help pinpoint survivor positions.

16. Joker requested two Pave Nails be on scene all night but resources prevented this. One Pave Nail was available all night.

17. First light pick-up planning was started at 1500 and the SARCO advised Jack of the plan and ordnance needed. This plan was firmed up after the aborted pick-up attempt and ordnance requests were confirmed: 4 A/C with CBU-42 (QRF), 4 A/C with CBU-49 (2QRF-2 overhead), and 10 A/C with BLU-52 (4 A/C QRF-4 A/C overhead). CBU-52 and LGB's were requested for all night attacks on AAA. TFA resources were diverted as necessary to meet requirements during the night. The first light plan was to have 4 Sandys, 2 Jollys, 1 Pave Nail, 1 Nail, and King at the SAR area 15 minutes before first light, briefed and ready to execute. Two Smoke aircraft and two additional Jollys were launched 30 minutes later than the rest of the force to provide continuity of operation for the Jollys and smoke available for the first light attempt. All forces arrived as scheduled.

18. At 0540, Sandy 04 experienced difficulty and had to RTE with Sandy 03. Sandy 05 and 06 were launched to replace them and were in the air at 0605.

Declassified at 3 year intervals:

GROUP 4

K-WG-56-HI

Jan-Mar 72 Vol. 2

56 SOW

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DOC 66³

19. Sandy 01, OSC determined the ground fire too intense to attempt a pick-up and directed the Nails to continue to suppress it while he trolled for more ground fire and pinpointed the survivors. During this search, Sandy 01 took a hit and flew off to one side to allow Sandy 02 to look him over. He continued after determining the damage was not hazardous.

20. At 0810, Sandy 09 and 10 were airborne to replace Sandy 01 and 02. Sandy 05 took OSC from Sandy 01 and continued SAR plan. At 0840, Sandy 07 and 08 were airborne to replace Sandy 05 and 06.

21. One attempt was made at 0940 to pickup the survivors but were driven off by AAA. Sandy 09 was OSC. More ordnance was expended by the Nails and one set of Jollys went to the tanker to refuel.

22. At 1020, the pickup attempt was started again with Sandy 09 as on OSC. On this attempt, the Jollys were on the tree tops for the final run-in and success fully picked both survivors. The Jollys were escorted from the SAR area on the treetops and all forces RTB NKP.

23. The coordination and cooperation during this SAR was the best I have ever witnessed. All forces involved should be congratulated for a job well done.

24. A SAR conference was convened by Joker following the successfull termination and many items relevant to future SAR were discussed. One of the immediate results of the SAR conference was the return of the Sandys from Da Nang to NKP. Other results include improved command and control instructions, specific coordination instructions for controlling agencies,

George A. Batte

GEORGE A. BATTE, Maj, USAF
SARCO

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

56 SOW
Jan - Mar 72 vol 2
K-WG-56-HI