

27Mar72 Jolly 23 Loss

TODAY IN SEA AIR WAR HISTORY ➤ Monday, 27 March 1972 . Capt. David E. Pannabecker, pilot; Capt. Richard E. Dreher, co-pilot; Sgt. James Manor, flight Engineer; Sgt. Raymond J. Crow, Jr., pararescueman; and A1C Raymond A. Wagner, pararescueman/recovery specialist; comprised the crew of a HH-53C Super Jolly Green Giant, s.n. 68-10359 (Call Sign Jolly 23) on a morning escort mission into Cambodia.

The aircraft departed Nakhom Phanom Royal Thái Air Force Base at 0830 hours as the #2 aircraft in a flight-of-two. Following aerial refueling over southern Thailand, the two Super Jolly's rendezvoused with the rest of their flight. Upon sighting the aircraft to be escorted, Lead radioed "Tally Ho," the signal acknowledging he had visual contact with the other aircraft. When there was no response from Capt. Pannabecker's helicopter, Lead attempted to locate him visually.

After completing a 180-degree turn, Lead reported seeing a column of black smoke rising from the dense jungle 5 miles away. The location of the crash is 20 kilometers east of Siem Pang, 7 kilometers northeast of Chan Tuy and 15 meters north of Kiribongsa villages, Stoeng Treng Province, Cambodia. It was also 3 miles north of the O Smang River, 11 miles east of the Tonle Kong River, 4 miles northeast of Highway 194 and 78 miles southwest of the tri-border region where South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia meet. Small hamlets and villages were scattered throughout the area along with small clearings, rice fields and patches of bamboo.

A search and rescue/recovery (SAR) pararescue team from the Lead helicopter was lowered to the ground at the crash site to check for survivors. During the over three hours the team spent on the ground, they could not approach near enough to the burning wreckage to determine if there were crew members trapped inside the aircraft due to the intense heat.

However, the team searched the surrounding area and reported finding two partially deployed parachutes, but no trace of the men who had used them, near the burning helicopter. Later that afternoon, a second rescue team was deployed in the immediate area of the crash. They reported the fire was out and the aircraft had been completely destroyed. They also reported no remains were visible. There were no further attempts to locate or recover any crewmen from the downed Super Jolly Green due to the presence of hostile forces who had moved into the area.

At the time the formal search effort was terminated, Richard Dreher, David Pannabecker, Raymond Wagner, James Manor and Raymond Crow were all declared Killed in Action/Body Not Recovered even though it was never determined if they all actually died in the crash.

In December 1993, a US team under the auspices of the Joint task Force for Full Accounting (JTFFA) investigated and conducted a site survey of Jolly Green 23's crash site. In addition to snaps, zippers, lap belts, adjustment buckles, a pilot's seat inflation

bag, a metal set of parachutist wings, and parachute "D" ring, they found two data plates which are from the sleeve and spindle assembly of a HH-53C main rotor hub. Since no other HH-53C was lost within a 160-kilometer radius of this crash site, there is no doubt of its identity.

Citation: Task Force Omega