

30 MAR. 72

1710 BR Pedro ~~41~~ ^{BR} Pedro 41 ↓ 1705 // ADVSD TEEPEE.
 1725 BR Pedro 41 ↑ 1725 // ADVSD ~~TEEPEE~~ TEEPEE.
 1735 BR JG 64 ↓ 1755 // ADVSD JACK & TEEPEE.
 1810 BR Pedro 41 ↓ 1810 // ADVSD TEEPEE
 1845 TN SSGT BECKER OFF DUTY SGT NEALIS ON DUTY
 1915 TN JG 30 & CH 89 / TP / JACK
 2025 TN COMM CENTER CALLED HAVE 1 TS CALL DUTY OFFICER / SAID HE WOULD
 FIND SOMEONE TO PICK UP MESSAGE
 2120 TN JACK CALLED SPECTER DOWN EAST OF CH 93 / NOTIFIED
 DUTY OFFICER & ADV CREW TO HIT THE SACK
 2135 TN JACK CALLED HAVE HOME CREWS GO FOR LNRS TAKE OFF
 NOTIFIED CREW / COMD / MX /
 2400 TN LOG CLOSED
 0001 TN LOG OPENED

31 MAR 72

0130 TN HAS VOICE CONTACT WITH ALL CREW MEMBERS / LNRS TAKE
 OFF NO GOOD WILL TRY FOR FIRST LIGHT / 3 OF THE PER-
 SONNEL ARE ~~HEAT~~ HEAT
 0310 TN ALL MEN EXCEPT L + N HAVE BEEN PIN POINTED ARE
 LOOK FOR L MAN AT THIS TIME
 0415 TN JG 53 + 62 ↑ CH 89 / TP / JACK
 0455 TN JG 64 + 60 ↑ CH 89 / TP / JACK
 0600 TN PICKED UP 1 SECRET (301150Z) PLACE IN 13C
 0615 TN JG 64 CHIP LIGHT RTB CH 93 / JG 30 TO TAKE PLACE
 OF BIRD AT CH 93 WHO WILL REPLACE JG 64
 0730 TN "I" & "A" MAN ON BOARD AT THIS TIME
 0755 TN "G" ON BOARD
 0758 TN JG-62 PICKED UP "F"
 0830 TN "C" "E" R/VG
 0845 TN "N" ON BOARD / JG-60 / 63 RTB CH-93 AT THIS TIME
 0930 TN LAST MAN PICKED UP / MISSION CLOSED / SAR FORCES TO RTB
 0950 TN PEDRO 21 ↑ CH 89 / T.P.
 1022 TN JG-30 ↑ CH 89 / JACK-T.P.
 1135 TN JG-30 ↓ CH 93
 1145 TN JG-62 / 60 / 53 ↑ CH 93 // MX // ETA CH 89 - 1255L
 1235 TN JG-30 ↑ CH 93 / T.P. // ETA 1.0 Hr.
 1255 TN JG-60 / 62 / 53 ↓ CH 89 / JACK-T.P.
 1330 TN JG-30 ↓ CH 89 / JACK-T.P.
 1545 TN PEDRO 41 ↑ FOR FCF / T.P.
 1650 TN JACK WANTS US TO ALERT PEDRO // HODO 25-40 mi. OUT // TOOK
 HIT IN ROCKET POD / RTD 89
 1618 TN HODO 25 ↓ CH 89 OK

"Paul Miller" <PJ1SGT@aol.com>, "Philip Prince" <psprince@onramp.net>,
"Robert LaPointe" <rlapointe@compuserve.com>,
"Rod Alne" <ralne@swbell.net>, "Scott Fales" <FOXALPHAL@aol.com>,
"Scott Shepard" <PJ2PA@worldnet.att.net>,
"Shorty Mutschler" <SMutschler@health.state.ak.us>,
"Skip Kula" <RKULA@AKANC.ANG.AF.MIL>,
"Soo Lee Bruce" <sbruce@lscs.edu>, "Swerv Petty" <eapetty@aol.com>,
"Ted Hawkins" <thawkins@bsc.net>,
"Terry & Ruby Gaffery" <dgaffery@jps.net>,
"Tom Connell" <pjsere@aol.com>, "Tony Hughes" <tony@thuntek.net>,
"Udo Fischer" <ufischer@earth.wazoo.com>,
"Wayne Fisk" <wfisk@landmarknet.net>,
"Wiley Mayfield" <mayfield@computronix.net>

Subject: Request for 1972 CSAR info
Date: Fri, 13 Nov 1998 12:04:22 -0900
Message-ID: <000001be0f49\$30340f60\$85629ad1@cy96-pentium>
MIME-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: text/plain;
charset="iso-8859-1"
Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7bit
X-Priority: 3 (Normal)
X-MSMail-Priority: Normal
X-Mailer: Microsoft Outlook 8.5, Build 4.71.2377.0
Importance: Normal
X-MimeOLE: Produced By Microsoft MimeOLE V4.72.3110.3

SPECTER 22 SAR
- APR 72

To all:

Saw this posted on guest register at
AC-130 Gunship Aircraft Photo Album
<http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/8758/ac-130.html>
Don Goodlett and I were with Dale Stovall and picked up eight.
Chuck Morrow was on the bird that picked up two I think. Passing
it on should any of you be able to provide some info.

v/r

Chuck McGrath, PJ

David J. Preston - 11/13/98 06:03:35
My Email: candypjt@aol.com
Vietnam Veteran?: yes
Former Gunshipper?: no

Comments:

I was airborne mission commander flying King 27 for the rescue/recovery of
all 15 Spectre 22 survivors after shoot down
March 30, 1972. One of the largest rescue missions of the war--it involved
all SAR forces in SEA and over 100 aircraft total
including AA Hotels, Ravens, Nails, Jollies, Sandies, Kings, 11 strike
flights (F-4s), EB-66s, F-105s, F-4 photo/rec,
KC-135s and others. I'm interested in contacts with those who may have a
personal interest in this mission--especially the
rescued crewmembers or those who participated. Objective: gathering of
information for possible literary attempt. David J.
Preston 4600 Bramble Trl. Lee's Summit, MO 64064

To:
CC:
From: INTERNET:
Date: 5/23/99, 10:55 PM
Re: Re: Rescue Book

Thanks for your e-mail. I was Unaware that the HC-130 AMC changed call signs.

During my recent research trip to Maxwell I obtained a copy of a mission report for a downed AC-130 on 28 Mar 72.

Tail number 550044, Pilot Major Irving B. Ramsower. The reports consist of two IMMEDIATE messages from 3 ARRGp to Chief Staff USAF. Total number of pages five.

Both these messages identify the downed aircraft as SPECTRE 13.

I would be glad to mail you a copy of these messages if you send me a postal address.

I collected several hundred mission reports during my trip to Maxwell. However I was able to get less than 25 reports from 1972. They are all classified FOUO. I am in the process of obtaining an official sponsor so that I can access this last bit of data.

If I am successful in accessing this data, I will provide you the mission reports you asked for. I do not anticipate returning to Maxwell until Jan 2000. The info I collected on my first trip needs to be processed into usable form first.

In return for this assistance I would request your assistance in providing information on the transition from Crown to King callsigns. If you have any type primary source material (see my web site <http://home.gci.net/~rlapointe> case sensitive) for a description of primary source material. It is located under the purpose statement. In the event you have nothing primary, e-mail testimony might be usable.

Good luck with your book. It is time to tell these stories. There has been entirely too much fiction written about Vietnam.

Bob LaPointe

-----Original Message-----

From: King2721@aol.com <King2721@aol.com>
To: rlapointe@gci.net <rlapointe@gci.net>
Date: Wednesday, May 12, 1999 7:54 AM
Subject: Rescue Book

>Bob,

> I applaud your efforts in writing a comprehensive history of rescue in
>Southeast Asia. I have had hopes of duplicating at least some of your work
>in compiling material for a book detailing the Spectre 22 mission (Mar
30-31,
>1972) which involved the successful rescue of 15 AC-130 crewmen from the
>Steel Tiger. I participated in that mission and several others as Airborne
>Mission Commander from King aircraft. In your synopsis of participants, I
>note that you include Crown (our predecessor) but not King which later
>handled the command/coordination/refueling role. I would hope that the
>contributions of King would not be left out of your book. If you have
need
>for background information regarding our operations, I would be happy to
>assist you. In return, I would appreciate any mission report material you
>may have on the Spectre 22, Nail 31, Gunfighter 82, Ashcan 01, Oyster 01B.

From:

To:

Date: Wednesday, May 12, 1999 7:54 AM

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Bob,

I applaud your efforts in writing a comprehensive history of rescue in Southeast Asia. I have had hopes of duplicating at least some of your work in compiling material for a book detailing the Spectre 22 mission (Mar 30-31, 1972) which involved the successful rescue of 15 AC-130 crewmen from the Steel Tiger. I participated in that mission and several others as Airborne Mission Commander from King aircraft. In your synopsis of participants, I note that you include Crown (our predecessor) but not King which later handled the command/coordination/refueling role. I would hope that the contributions of King would not be left out of your book. If you have need for background information regarding our operations, I would be happy to assist you. In return, I would appreciate any mission report material you may have on the Spectre 22, Nail 31, Gunfighter 82, Ashcan 01, Oyster 01B. I also plan to spend some time at Maxwell, but since I am still employed full-time as a corporate flight department chief pilot and manager, I find it difficult to utilize time to this end.

Sincerely,

Dave Preston

The Loss of Specter 22

30 March 1972
from an email submitted by
David J. Preston

(Webmaster note: This email was the result of a posting on the "Can You Help" page from Donna M. Inman (Tison).)

I tried last night to send the accompanying letter (email) in response to your "can you help" notice on the Jolly Green page. I experienced technical difficulties in transmitting but fortunately saved the letter to file. I hope it may prove to be of some help to you. I'm copying to the jolly site with hopes it might be posted. In going over my notes, I compiled the following data regarding the number of aircraft flown during this mission: 7 Jolly Greens (HH-53s), 8 Sandies, 3 Kings (1 tanker, 1 reserve), 11 strike flights (7 expended ordinance), 4 B-66s, 6 F-105s, 13-14 Nail FACs, 3 Raven FACs, 3 Hotels (Air America helicopters), 4 Spectres, 1 Stormy (F-4 Recce/FAC), and other assorted support aircraft.

David J. Preston

Dear Donna,

You are looking for information regarding Spectre 22 and the subsequent rescue of its fifteen crewmembers. I believe I may be able to help in some way. I was the Airborne Mission Commander flying the "King 27" aircraft that fateful night. I say fateful because fate surely played a part in that eventual successful recovery. My crew and I were on rescue alert that night and were scrambled from Korat RTAFB and arrived on scene before midnight. Spectre 01 and Spectre 21 were in the area trying to raise any survivors on rescue radio frequencies. The crash site was in southern Laos in a traditionally hostile location not too far from Saravane. At this time it had not been determined how many had survived. Just one or two nights earlier, another Spectre had been shot down and no one had survived. After gathering as much information from Spectre 21 as I could, Spectre 20 relieved Spectre 21 on scene shortly thereafter and thence began one of the largest and most complex combat rescue operations ever attempted.

We had by this time determined that we had an unknown number of survivors from the 15 crewmember aircraft. (Note: Because most of our rescues involved only one or two crewmembers and were, in themselves, highly complex operations, we in King often questioned our own procedures and preparedness for prosecuting a rescue for a large-crewmember aircraft. As fate would have it, I would be the one to find out.)

After the Spectre had obtained radio contact with some of the survivors and learned that the aircraft had traveled some distance after being hit before they bailed out, I started to plan the on-scene operation assuming that most, if not all, had gotten out of the aircraft and were potential survivors. My objective, at this point, was to facilitate a communication and night visual search for as many as 15 men in preparation for either a night (LNRS) recovery or a first light attempt. We requested multiple Nail FAC (Forward Air Control) aircraft to overfly the target area and attempt communication on each of the four rescue frequencies. Allocating one frequency to each of four Nail FACs as they arrived on scene, we began a night-long process of

minimize hover time in the area. The pickups were made successfully and those east-side resources began their egress to the west. Hotel 45 picked up the B man and Hotel 59 picked up the M crewmember at 0928 local time. This completed the successful recovery of all 15 crewmembers.

What had taken place that night of March 30-31, 1972 took its place as the largest successful aircrew recovery of the entire war. A day or two later, the renowned Bat 21 rescue operation commenced on Easter Sunday. It too was a very large, but prolonged rescue and recovery--and resulted in the eventual rescue of but one survivor and the loss of one Jolly Green with all aboard. A book was written about that mission which later was made into a movie (a poor representation of the professionalism and extensive resources employed by those who served in the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service and other supporting groups--Special Operations).

Donna, I offer my sincere condolences to you and your children for your loss. I have never met any of those men from Spectre 22, nor from any of the numerous other rescue missions in which I participated, with the exception of Lt. Col Hambleton, the subject of the Bat 21 operation. I wish I could have met your husband. Who knows the cumulative effects of combat flying and the effect of at least one terror-filled night alone in the jungle which he experienced. Be assured though, he was a very important man, as was any man unfortunate enough to become the object of a rescue mission in Southeast Asia. Scores of military men have risked, and many have lost their lives in such missions. No expense was ever spared to save just one man and that's why I'm extremely proud to have experienced, firsthand, the bravery and dedication of all those who served that cause--especially the Jolly, Sandy, Air America and FAC crews.

Just one final note in regard to your questions. In the letter designations assigned to each crewmember of a multi-crewmember aircraft, A is assigned to the aircraft commander, B to the copilot, C to the navigator and so on through the crew list. The two survivors which were picked up on the east side were B and M which indicates that one was the copilot and the other was a crewmember in the rear of the aircraft. I don't know what crew position your husband was but perhaps that will answer one of your questions. To answer another of your questions, the Air America helicopters transferred their survivors to one of the Jollies for their delivery back to Ubon. If a copy of the flight orders could be located from Spectre records, you could determine the name of the B and M crewmembers. My notes from the mission indicate a broken leg suffered only by the N crewmember who was picked up on the west side. Others suffered various neck and back injuries.

I hope that this has been of some help to you. Through the years, I often thought that a book written about the Spectre 22 mission would present some kind of closure for me but life has been too busy to do all the necessary preparations and story gathering. I am copying this letter to the Jolly Green bulletin board with hopes that someone involved in that mission and others might share what information and recollections they may have--Ken Ernst, Dale Stovall, Super-Sandy Randy Jaynes--where are you?

Sincerely,
David J. Preston
King2721@aol.com

[Pacific Stars and Stripes](#) Article on the rescue.

15 Gunshipmen Rescued From Southern Laos

Reprinted from Pacific Stars and Stripes--date approx. April 3, 1972

TAN SON NHUT AB--"Happiness is Air Rescue at its best. Beautiful! Fantastic! Thanks from the SPECS," was the message received by the 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group commander, Col. Cecil N. Muirhead, on behalf of his units' performance in the rescue of 15 downed AC-130 gunshipmen.

All 15 crewmembers of a downed Spectre gunship were rescued March 31 from Laos in one of the most successful recovery efforts in the Vietnam war.

The gunship, hit by communist AAA fire on an interdiction mission over the lower panhandle of Laos, was seriously damaged. The gunship pilot managed to keep the plane airborne long enough for all airmen to bail out.

The 15 men successfully parachuted to the ground, and FACs established radio contact with all the men. Each airman's location was pinpointed and rescue aircraft remained overhead throughout the night to assure the safety of the downed men.

At first light, the rescue forces began actual recovery operations. The first man was picked up at 8:30 a.m. (by) an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter commanded by Maj. Kenneth E. Ernest.

Other rescues were made by choppers commanded by Majors Frederick C. Hartstein and David G. Daus, and Capt. Dale E. Stovall recovered eight of the downed airmen, the first saves for the captain as a chopper commander.

Sgt. Charles D. McGrath and SSgt. Charles D. Morrow descended on jungle penetrators to aid injured men onto the rescue helicopters.

The last crewman was hoisted aboard at 10:30 a.m. Several men experienced minor injuries during bail out. One sustained a leg fracture and another a wound in the neck. None were listed as serious.

The Jolly Green crews experienced no ground fire in the rescue operations. The four rescue helicopters belonged to the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

The rescued airmen brought the total of combat saves by the 40th to over 150 men. SEA saves by all the 3d ARRG units now total more than 3,450.

accompanied by photo of crewmember being greeted by large crowd on flight line at Ubon. (Photo not currently available.)

caption: A rescued crewman steps down from a Super Jolly Green helicopter after being pulled to safety from the jungles of Southern Laos. He was one of 15 airmen who bailed out of an AC-130 gunship and was rescued by members of the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.



A rescued crewman steps down from a Super Jolly Green helicopter after being pulled to safety from the jungles of Southern Laos. He was one of 15 airmen who bailed out of an AC-130 gunship and was rescued by members of the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

1971 (cont)

2 Nov- on 5 November. When the cost was tallied, it was determined that
 5 Nov 71 shipment by airlift or sealift would have been less expensive.
 (cont) However, ferrying was a viable option, and airlift or sealift might not be available.

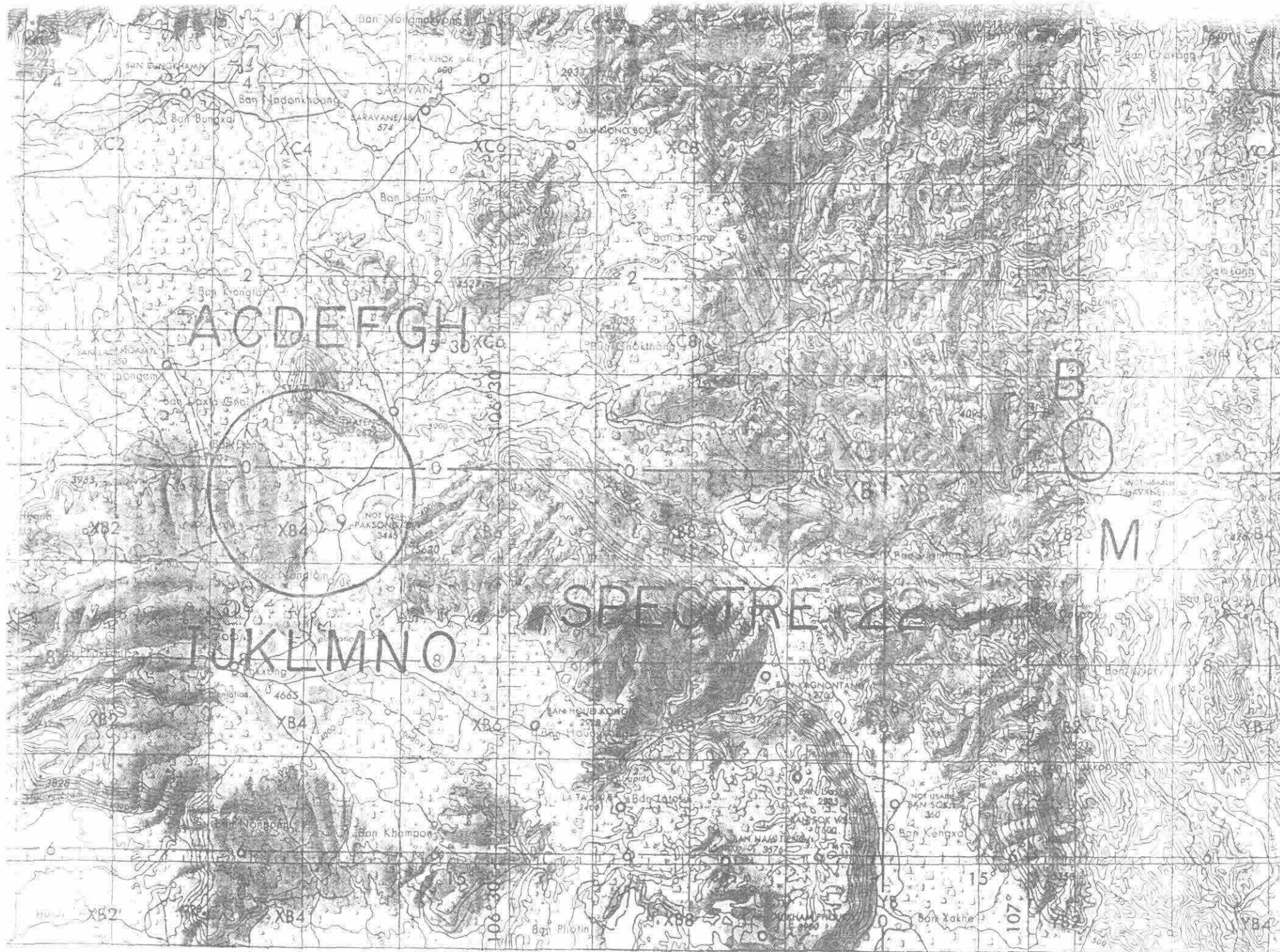
1972

20 Feb 72 Operation Long Flight. ARRS established a new world record for turbo-prop aircraft distance in a straight line for 14,052 kilometers (or 8,732.09 miles) on 20 February 1972. Lieutenant Colonel Edgar L. Allison, Jr., was pilot of the HC-130. The flight originated at Chung Chuan Kang AB, Taiwan, and touched down at Scott AFB, Illinois, after 21 hours and 12 minutes of total flight time. The flight broke the previous distance record as it passed over Portland, Oregon. Later, during 1974, Lieutenant Colonel Allison (Retired) was awarded the Harmon International Trophy in recognition of this achievement.

30 Mar- An AC-130, "Spectre 22," with 15 crewmen aboard was hit by enemy
 31 Mar 72 antiaircraft fire near Paksong, Laos, but all crewmen were able to bail out. On the following day the 40th ARR Squadron sent out five HH-53s and brought back all 15 crewmen.

1 Apr- The ARRS detachment at Clark AB, Republic of the Philippines,
 2 Apr 72 launched an H-3 and an HC-130 to rescue a scientific expedition of 46 persons, including Charles A. Lindbergh, stranded in a jungle area of Mindanao. The group had been studying a lost tribe in the tropical rain forest. Forty-six saves were recorded.

13 Apr 72 Captain Bennie D. Orrell won the Air Force Cross as a result of a rescue mission in Southeast Asia. Following the enemy spring offensive through the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on 30 March, rescue activity increased dramatically. On 13 April the 40th ARR Squadron was tasked to find United States Marine Corps Major Clyde D. Smith who was down between Tchepone, Laos, and the DMZ. Captain Orrell, piloting an HH-53, approached the search area, and Major Smith "popped his smoke" to show his location. The smoke drifted uphill before it emerged from the trees. When Captain Orrell hovered at that spot, Major Smith made a "max effort" run uphill to the hoist. He grabbed it, but Captain Orrell encountered enemy fire and was forced to retract the hoist and didn't know Major Smith was there until the hoist cleared the trees.



Red Guns Zero in on Spectres

By KIM WILLENSON

SAIGON (UPI) — The downing of two AC130 "Spectre" gunships over Laos in the past two days is a serious setback for the U.S. Air Force campaign to stop Communist supplies flowing down the Ho Chi Minh Trail — and possibly for Vietnamization as well — military sources say.

Unless the Air Force can come up quickly with a way to defend the lumbering 350 million-hour gunships from the surface-to-air missiles and the deadly 57mm ack-ack that shot down the two planes Wednesday and Thursday, the heart may be cut out of the interdiction program code-named "Islero White." There aren't enough Spectres available to risk sustained losses.

The trouble is that the Spectres — and smaller AC119 "Sungster" companion gunships — have been operating in what Air Force sources like to call a "permissive environment" — military jargon meaning they weren't shot at very accurately.

Suddenly the trail environment has become much less "permissive." One AC130 was hit by a SAM fired from near Tchepone in south central Laos early Wednesday morning, and went down with 14 aboard.

That could have been a lucky shot. It also could have been caused by some modifications in the SAMs to make it more effective against low and slow aircraft, military sources say.

A second Spectre was hit by 57mm fire well south of Tchepone late Thursday night. Its 13 crewmen parachuted and were rescued, but the \$7 million plane was lost.

Although the command says the AC130s still were flying "normal" missions as of Friday, a few more days like Wednesday and Thursday and it is doubtful they won't be — there just aren't that many available.

And if the Spectres have to quit attacking the trail, the threat of significant Communist action all over South Vietnam and Cambodia will be vastly increased.