

30 March 1972

AC-130E 69-6571

16 SOS, 8 TFW, USAF, Ubon

Capt Waylon O Fulk (survived)

Capt E N Bolling (survived)

13 crew, names unknown (survived)

Another Spectre gunship was lost on the night of the 30th, this time without casualties. The aircraft was one of the newer AC-130E Pave Spectre gunships that were supplementing the ageing AC-130As. The first AC-130E arrived at Ubon on 25 October 1971. The aircraft had more powerful engines and were more heavily armed with a larger ammunition load and more protective armour than the old A-models. From February 1972 under the Pave Aegis programme AC-130s were refitted with a huge 105mm howitzer that replaced the two rear 40mm guns.

Spectre 22 spotted a convoy of trucks on the Trail 35 miles north of Muang Fangdeng in southern Laos. The aircraft destroyed three of the trucks and was about to fire again to make sure of the kill when it was hit by ground fire. The aircraft was flying at 195 knots and 7,500 feet when 57mm anti-aircraft shells hit its starboard wing and fuselage. The AC-130 caught fire when fuel leaking from the starboard pylon tank ignited. Capt Fulk headed northwest towards Thailand in the hope of reaching Ubon but the crew were forced to abandon the aircraft which crashed about 15 miles southeast of Saravan. The abandonment set in motion one of the largest SAR missions ever mounted by