

19/20 April 1972

F-4D 65-0602 421 TFS, 366 TFW, USAF, Da Nang
Capt Thomas Hugh Amos (KIA)
Capt Mason Irwin Burnham (KIA)

A Phantom was lost during a night mission with an AC-130 gunship in the Steel Tiger area of southern Laos. A target had been found and marked and Capt Amos and Capt Burnham were lining up for an attack when several of the AC-130 crew saw a huge fireball on the ground. The Phantom did not respond to radio calls and the crew was posted missing. The aircraft had crashed near the South Vietnamese border with Laos about 15 miles to the west of Kham Duc. Aerial searches lasted for three days without result. In May 1993 a joint US-Vietnamese team found two villagers who had discovered a crash site and had collected artefacts including ID tags for Amos and Burnham. Between 1994 and 1998 excavations recovered human remains that were positively identified in November 1999 as those of the missing airmen. As an indication of the danger of these excavations, the last dig in June 1998 had to be halted and the site closed to further work due to the large amount of unexploded ordnance found in the area. The mortal remains of Capt Amos and Capt Burnham were buried at Arlington National Cemetery on 25 May 2000.