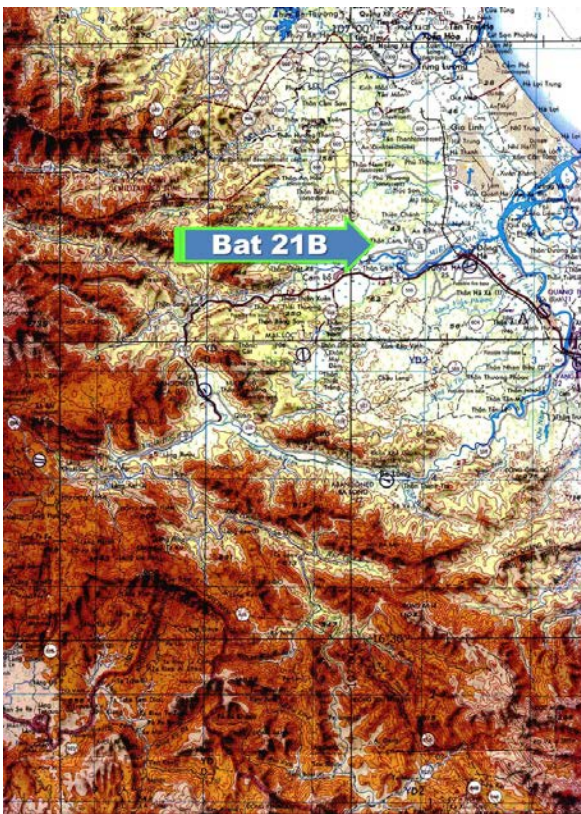
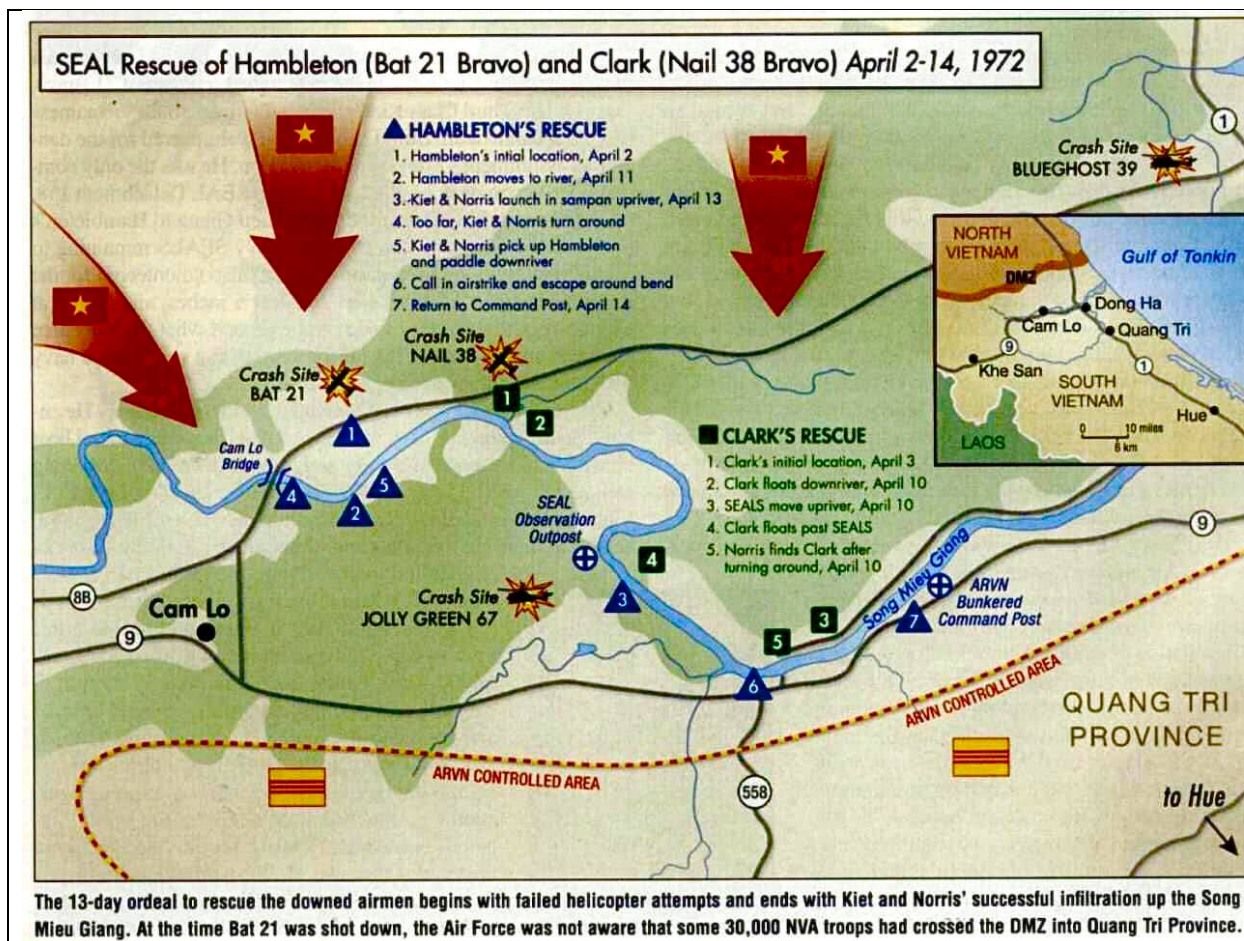


3Apr72 Bat 21 summary fm Laymon





Bob Laymon

[April 3, 2013](#) ·

☰☼☷ **Today in Southeast Asia (SEA) Air War History** ➤ Easter Sunday, 2 April 1972
The shoot down of EB-66C (call sign BAT 21)

BAT 21 was the call sign of an EB-66C Destroyer flying an electronic path-finder mission, escorting a B-52D three-ship cell (call sign 'Copper') attacking massed NVA armor northwest of the abandoned ARVN Fire Base Fuller and Camp Carol in Military Region One (MR I) just below the DMZ.

BAT 21, EB-66C, s.n. 54-0466, 42nd TEWS, Korat RTAFB was shotdown by a North Vietnamese SA-2 SAM and crashed south of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in the area of Cam Lô (N16.50 - E107.01) on the north side of the Miêu Giang River.

The Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) lists the following BAT 21 crewmembers as status XX - Presumptive Finding of Death: Maj Wayne L. Bolte – Pilot, Lt Col

Charles A. Levis – EWO, Lt Col Anthony R. Giannangeli – EWO, Maj Henry M. Serex – EWO and 1st Lt Robin F. Gatwood – EWO.

Also aboard the EB-66C was 'Bat 21 Bravo', the personal call sign of Lt Col Iceal "Gene" Hambleton, the Destroyer's navigator ...and only survivor of the shootdown.

Details:

The crew of an F-105G Wild Weasel (561 TFS **WW**) supporting the Arc Light mission received a Fan Song high PRF missile indicator warning in their cockpit. The F-105G saw the missile's contrail as it traveled skyward, then saw the SAM explosion at about 26,000 feet. At the same time, they saw an aircraft diving in the vicinity of that explosion and thought it had evaded the SAM. The F-105G crew then saw flames trailing from each wing of the Destroyer before the aircraft broke into pieces. The F-105G pilot followed the burning wreckage to the ground. None of the other pilots or aircrews observed any of the Bat 21 crew eject from the crippled aircraft; however, one member of the flight reported hearing an intermittent 'beeper' on guard channel 243.0 MHz.

The location of loss was in a populated and hotly contested flat agricultural area in MR-1. Bat 22 was in a SAM-break maneuver at the same time and did not see the missile strike Bat 21.

However, personnel aboard Bat 22 also reported hearing a short beeper and then another pilot in the AOR request the downed crewman to 'come up on voice.' Shortly thereafter, the crew of Bat 22 heard the pilot establish voice contact with Lt Col Hambleton. He reported he was okay and in good spirits.

An O-2A Skymaster pilot, 1st Lt 'Bill'

[William Jankowski](#)

(call sign Bilk 34) 20th TASS, Đà Nẵng AB, RVN was also an eyewitness to the shootdown. By circumstances and fate, Jankowski became the first (in a series of) "On Scene Commanders" (OSCs) during the search-and-rescue (SAR) effort for BAT 21B, including other O-2A FACs

Capt (★★★★)

[Bill Begert](#)

, Bilk xx, and Capt 'Harry'

[Harold J. Icke](#)

, Bilk 11.

Nearby, another SAR force consisting of a Lockheed HC-130P command-and-control aircraft (call sign King 22) Major Bruce Driscoll was AMC on the first day and was relieved by Major

[Dennis Constant](#)

as King 27, later in the day.

Sikorsky HH-53Cs (call sign Jolly Green 65 & 67)

[Donald Sutton](#)

/

[Robert Lapointe](#)

long-range rescue helicopters and a force of 10 Douglas A-1 Skyraiders (call sign Sandy) were orbiting east of Quảng Tri, alerted to support the SAR for an O-2A FAC, 20 TASS (Cessna O-2A-CE Super Skymaster s.n. 68- 10842) shotdown south of the DMZ and bailed out over the South China Sea (recovered) call sign Mike 81.

The Sandy flight lead was a Capt Don Morse (a.k.a. call sign 'Tango Mike') along with 1st Lt

[Bob Carlsen](#)

in the Skyraider gaggle. Fate would also have Morse become the next On Scene Commander for the initial few days of the BAT 21B SAR effort.

US Army helicopters Blueghost 28 (Cobra s.n. 68-17033) and Blueghost 39 (Huey s.n. 67-17801) assigned to F Troop of the 8th Cavalry at Huế - Phú Bài AAF proceeded into the battle area at low altitude and high speed to attempt a spontaneous "snatch-&-go" rescue of Lt Col Hambleton.

Blueghost 39 was out front at 50 feet above the ground. Blueghost 28 was at 300 feet, about 3,000 feet in trail, the proper position to deliver rocket and machine gun fire against anything that might shoot at Blueghost 39. But as they passed Đông Hà and crossed to the north side of the Miêu Giang River, they began to take heavy ground fire as they turned west towards the E-&-E hiding location of BAT 21 Bravo.

Blueghost 39 crash-landed north of the Miêu Giang River and came under direct attack by invading PAVN forces. The aircraft exploded, killing three crewmembers. The door gunner SP5 Jose Astorga was wounded and taken as a prisoner of war by the PAVN (until being released at the end of the war).

The crew of Blueghost 39 consisted of the following American heroes: pilots 1LT Byron Kulland and Warrant Officer John Frink, crew chief Specialist Five Ronald Paschall (all KIA) and gunner Specialist Five Jose Astorga (POW).

Blueghost 28, the Cobra gunship with Capt Rosebeary and Gunner Warrant Officer Charles Gorski were severely battle damaged, but manages to fly back to the east and land on the coastal beach in MR I and were rescued by Jolly Green 67, an HH-53C from the 37th ARRS at Đà Nẵng.

Thus ended a very difficult day in the war ...and set-off a remarkable chain-of-events that would become a part of our joint-service military heritage.

FYI: Lt Col Hambleton would spend the next eleven and a half days behind enemy lines until being rescued by USN Seal, LT Tom Norris and Vietnamese sea commando Petty Officer Nguyễn Văn Kiệt.

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