

7 April 1972

OV-10A 68-3820 20 TASS, 366 TFW, USAF, Da Nang

1Lt Bruce Charles Walker (KIA)

1Lt Larry Fletcher Potts, USMC (KIA)

As the NVA swept south through Military Region I the vital fire support bases were overrun denying the defenders artillery support. To compensate the Navy brought in more ships to provide naval gunfire support and Marine Corps observers were attached to USAF FAC units to act as artillery observers. The ships included the mighty battleship the USS *New Jersey* with its 16-inch guns that had a range of 23 miles. An Air Force Bronco with a Marine Corps observer on board was tasked with spotting for artillery just south of the DMZ. While it was on station the aircraft was hit by a SAM and crashed three miles northwest of Dong Ha. The missile was one of a total of 83 SAMs spotted in the DMZ area on this day. The location of the crash was about four miles northeast of where Lt Col Hambleton and 1Lt Clark were still hiding but the loss of this aircraft is not directly connected with the attempt to rescue the pair. Both the OV-10 crew ejected from their aircraft and 1Lt Walker evaded capture for 11 days. During this time he used his survival radio to direct air strikes on camouflaged enemy positions. A survival kit was dropped to him and he was told to make his way northeast to the coast for an attempted rescue. On the morning of the 18th his last radio message to rescue aircraft was to warn them not to attempt a pick up as enemy soldiers were chasing him and closing in. When he was last seen, 1Lt Walker was lying in a ditch surrounded by about 20 North Vietnamese soldiers who were clearly heard on the Lieutenant's survival radio. It has also been reported that 1Lt Potts was captured and died of wounds in Quang Binh prison. Larry Potts was shot down on his 25th birthday.