

~~SECRET~~

68

100-200 yards from the Stinger.⁷³

(S) On 2 May, Stinger 41 was flying a daylight support mission over An Loc. Multiple 37mm hits blew off the right jet and disabled the right reciprocating engine. Immediate bailout would have meant certain capture and probable death for the crew. The aircraft commander elected to try for safer territory and steered the rapidly descending gunship toward the Southwest away from the city. Delaying as long as possible, the AC finally gave the bailout order. Still, some crewmembers received ground fire while descending in their parachutes. The last to escape was the copilot who ran as hard as he could to the rear of the aircraft and pulled his lanyard as he leaped from the door. A Sundog FAC later stated that the copilot was "in the treetops" when the chute finally blossomed. The seven surviving crewmembers were picked up shortly by Army and Jolly Green helicopters. The bodies of the other three crewmembers were recovered on 6 May.⁷⁴

(S) Early in May the SA-7 "Strella" made its debut in the Vietnamese skies. Because of its mobility and accuracy, this missile had more impact on Stinger operations than any other weapon in the NVA arsenal. A no fly line was drawn across Quang

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid. Also see Aircraft and Personnel Losses, this volume, pages 59 and 60.

~~SECRET~~

Classified by *William M. Brown*
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED ON 31 DECEMBER 1980

56 SOW

Apr - Jun 72 vol. 3

18 SOS Apr - June 72

K-WG-56-HI

18 SOS APR-JUN 72

DOC B¹⁴

struck in the right wing by an estimated six rounds of 37mm fire.

In the ensuing crash, Capt Courtney, aircraft commander, Capt David Slagle, navigator and Sgt Kenneth Brown, illuminator operator, were killed. The remaining seven crew members bailed out successfully. One was immediately rescued by a UH1 Huey from the 1st Cav Division.¹¹ The remaining six were rescued by two HH3 aircraft from the 3rd Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group at Tan Son Nhut AB.¹² Capt Courtney has been submitted for the Congressional Medal of Honor for remaining at the controls of the stricken aircraft to enable the remainder of the crew to have time to bail out.¹³

2. During a Viet Cong rocket attack on Danang AB during the night of 13 June, Capt Thomas Hammon, an AC119K aircraft commander was struck with shrapnel from the first incoming rocket and was mortally wounded. He died two days later while regaining consciousness.

E. (U) Battle Damage

On 25 May, Stinger 33, piloted by Lt Bruce Whelen, was on a mission in Barrel Roll when the aircraft, #940, was hit by 37mm fire in the right side of the cargo compartment immediately aft of the bulkhead. The aircraft lost the use of the auxillary power unit, the left jet, control of propeller RPM, the complete

-
11. Interview with CPT William Sinclair USA, 30 June 72, pilot of first rescue helicopter
 12. Telephone call to Joint Rescue Control Center, 6 Aug 72
 13. Interview with Sgt Craig Corbett, aerial gunner on Stinger 41, 9 Aug 72

Dry spell broken for 'Pedro' rescuers

The end of a long dry spell for the Pedros of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS) at Da Nang came early May 26 with a "feet wet" pickup of two crew members from a U.S. Marine A-4.

Capt. Robert R. Ames, 25, Parma, Ohio, and his four-man crew launched their HH-43 Huskie helicopter in response to an in-flight emergency early that morning.

A Marine Corps A-4 was on final, declaring lost hydraulic pressure. The Pedros were prepared to extinguish a blaze and rescue the two crew members should they crash off base.

As the aircraft slowed below 140 knots, the Marine pilot was losing control and elected to bail out at sea.

Captain Ames said, at that point, he left the 1,000-pound fire suppression bottle at the end of the runway and followed the crippled A-4 to a point 10 miles out to sea, approximately eight miles southeast of Da Nang.

(Continued on Page 8)



CAPT. ROBERT R. AMES

Dry spell broken...

(Continued from Page 1)

"We saw the aircraft impact in the water," he explained, "and about two minutes later we saw the chutes."

The Pedro aircraft commander said it had to be one of the fastest pickups ever. One crew member was out of the water within three minutes and within three more, the second Marine was aboard.

The feet wet pickup marked the first save for the Da Nang Pedros since June 1971. It added two more names to the more than 1,100 persons saved by the local Pedro detachment since 1965.

Capt. William E. Ransbottom, the A-4 pilot and CW02 Bruce E. Boltz, the rear-seater, smiled their gratitude at the Pedro crew as they were picked up.

In on the save with Captain Ames were Capt. Michael F. Schmidt, 29, Austin, copilot; fire fighters SSgt. David C. Newman, 24, Cuero, Tex., and SSgt. Michael J. Knodash, 27, Graham, Wash.; and medical technician Sgt. Larry Johnson, 21, Morganton, N.C.

SECRET

DOC A¹²

SA-7 hit in the engine and ~~the aircraft continued~~ The aircraft continued to run with the engine on fire until the oil pressure went to zero. Lt Seitz extracted about five miles off shore and was picked up by an Army helicopter within 30 seconds. The SAR was turned over to Hobo 42/43 by Sandy 07 but Hobo 42 (Lt Rick Fossum) was immediately hit by another SA-7. He stamped out the fire in the cockpit with his feet and the engine kept running allowing an emergency landing at Da Nang.

The next morning Hobo 20/21 Maj Harding and Capt Screws entered the SAR area but they too were shot down by SA-7 missiles. Both were rescued by Army helicopters but Capt Screws had sustained a broken shoulder during extraction. Bilk 34 was subsequently rescued by ground forces as all A-1's were ordered out of the area after the loss of three in less than 24 hours.

On 5 May Musket 03 (F-4) was downed at 293/33/69 with two survivors. The Sandys 07/08 (Capt Throckmorton, Lt Blevins) proceeded directly to the area and began trolling for ground fire. None was observed so the Jollys were brought in for a quick pick-up. Musket 03A was rescued first but ground fire drove the Jolly off before Bravo could be picked-up. The Sandys suppressed the ground fire and brought in another Jolly to rescue Bravo.

On 7 May Bootleg 51 (F-4) was downed at 295/50/69 with one survivor. Sandys 07/08 (Maj Encinas, Lt L. L. Smith) arrived on scene at 1705L and began trolling for ground fire. Several 23mm and 37mm guns were spotted and neutralized with fast mover