



AMERICAN ADVISORS EVACUATED from Quang Tri before it fell to enemy forces are greeted by personnel at Da Nang Afd. Altogether, 132 American and Vietnamese were taken to safety by three HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

HH-53s evacuate 132 from Quang Tri

TAN SON NHUT AB, RVN -- Fire Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants performed the largest evacuation of the Southeast Asian conflict when they airlifted 132 American and Vietnamese out of Quang Tri.

Three of the HH-53s, of the 37th ARRSq at Da Nang Afd, were responsible for carrying out the evacuees. A fourth helicopter landed to make sure all persons were evacuated and a fifth stood by in case it was needed.

The 132 evacuees were taken to Da Nang.

U.S. Air Force and Navy air strikes paved the way for the helicopters,

which still had to weave through a corridor or ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and antiaircraft guns on their way into and out of the provincial capital.

Miraculously, no one was injured aboard the helicopters during the rescue operation.

While supporting the effort, an Air Force O-2 forward air control aircraft and A-1 Skyraider rescue support fighter were shot down. The FAC pilot bailed out and was rescued by friendly ground

forces. The fighter pilot ditched his A-1 in the ocean and was picked up by an Army helicopter.

The first Super Jolly Green Giant to land received sniper fire from two enemy soldiers. SSgt. Robert L. LaPointe, a pararescueman, silenced them with bursts from his mini-gun in the rear of the helicopter.

After his helicopter landed, Ser-

geant LaPointe jumped out and organized the persons on the ground so the operation would go smoothly. He remained on the ground and boarded the second helicopter to land.

The first helicopter picked up 37 evacuees, the second, 45 and the third, 50.

The fourth Super Jolly Green Giant landed to make sure that all the persons had been picked up. When it was on the ground it received AK-47 automatic weapon and sniper fire from the North Vietnamese in the landing area. Sgt. William J. Thompson, a PJ, knocked out the AK-47 with bursts of his mini-gun and the sniper fire was suppressed by Sgt. Daniel G. Manion, another PJ.

All the HH-53s returned safely to Da Nang.

Also on the first HH-53 to land were Maj. Jackson R. Scott Jr., aircraft commander; Capt. David E. Mullenix, copilot; Sgt. Ronald W. Blackwell, flight engineer; and Sgt. David Young, PJ.

The second helicopter crew was Capt. Rodney S. Griffith, aircraft commander; Maj. Anthony A. Gates, copilot; SSgt.

David Garcia, flight engineer; SSgt. Cole E. Panning and Sgt. Charles B. McQuoid, PJs.

The third Super Jolly Green Giant was crewed by Capt. John R. Weiner, aircraft commander; Capt. Gary A. Dake, copilot; SSgt. William A. Simm, flight engineer; Sgt. Michael A. Aillet and Sgt. Richard L. Steed, PJs.

Besides the PJs on the fourth helicopter, were Capt. Donald A. Sutton, aircraft commander; Maj. Jerry J. Gilbert, copilot; and SSgt. Jimmie D. Minshew, flight engineer.