



GUNFIGHTER GAZETTE

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Jollys evacuate Quang Tri advisors

"This may have been the biggest and the hottest extraction in the history of the Air Force rescue service," exclaimed Lt. Col. William M. Harris, commander of the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron here.



SURVIVOR IS GLAD TO BE BACK!!!!!!!

Four of the squadron's Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters, accompanied by heavy close air support, went into Quang Tri City at approximately 1635 hours Monday, bringing out all the remaining American advisors. A total of 132 personnel were lifted from the center of the city, including some ARVN and Popular Forces. All personnel landed safely here and the mission was terminated at 1850 hours.

Despite the close air support provided by U.S. Air Force fighter-bombers, the Jollys received considerable ground fire from inside and around the city, with mortar and artillery rounds coming in from the surrounding areas and sporadic ground and sniper fire from inside the city itself. At the time of the rescue, Quang Tri was surrounded by three NVA divisions. There was no battle damage to the four helicopters.

The first Jolly to go in airlifted 37 of the advisors.

While on the ground, the crew encountered hostile sniper fire from two enemy troops. Sergeant Robert L. LaPointe, a pararescueman (PJ), returned fire with the mini-gun from his position in the rear of the aircraft. Both snipers were believed to be dead.

The second Jolly encountered sporadic small arms fire, but "nothing close" during their touchdown. 45 persons were picked up this time.

The third helicopter experienced light hostile fire as they lifted the remaining 50 persons. However, they reported that ground troops were approaching the landing pad as they lifted off.

Since the original plan for the rescue was for each bird to pick up 40 persons, the fourth bird went in expecting to pick up the last load of advisors.

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The advisors were supposed to run up the ramp in the back of the aircraft as soon as it touched down. When no one came, Sgt. William J. Thompson, another pararescueman, stuck his head out to look around. Almost immediately, an enemy troop began "walking up" automatic M-16 fire towards his position. Quickly slipping behind the mini-gun, Thompson silenced the gunman.

After getting a radio affirmation that all the American advisors had been picked up, Capt. Donald A. Sutton, aircraft commander, decided the area was too hot to stick around.

Although Captain Sutton's crew did not pick up any survivors, they have the distinction of being the last Americans in Quang Tri.

Both the rescue crews and the advisors commented on the smoothness and efficiency of the mission. One advisor said, "The Air Force did a tremendous job of laying down very close air-to-ground support. They must have laid out one hell of an operation to get us out."

Colonel Harris added, "The FACs (forward air controllers) worked with the fast-movers (fighter-bombers) and did a tremendous job of putting in air strikes and all the good ordnance at the critical places. The Sandys (A-1 Skyraiders) did a fantastic job of laying in air support and escorting our Jollys."

Crewing the first HH-53 rescue helicopter were Maj. Jackson K. Scott, Jr., aircraft commander; Capt. David E. Mullenix, co-pilot; Sgt. Ronald W. Blackwell, flight engineer; Sgt. David W. Young, and Sgt. LaPointe, pararescuemen.

The second chopper was crewed by Capt. Rodney S. Griffith, aircraft commander; Maj. Anthony A. Gates, co-pilot; SSgt. David Garcia, flight engineer; and SSgt. Cole E. Panning and Sgt. Charles B. McQuoid II, pararescuemen.

On board the third rescue craft were Capt. John K. Weimer, aircraft commander; Capt. Gary A. Dake, co-pilot; SSgt. William A. Simm, flight engineer; and Sgt. Richard L. Steed and A1C Michael A. Aillet, were the pararescuemen.

Along with Captain Sutton on the fourth chopper were Maj. Jerry J. Gilbert, co-pilot, SSgt. Jimmy D. Minshew, flight engineer; and Sergeant Manion and Sergeant Thompson, pararescuemen.



CREWMEN ARE GLAD IT'S OVER, SAYING

