

'Jolly' crew rescues Gunfighter duo

A Jolly Green crew from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron here plucked a local F-4 crew from dense low jungle about five miles west of Khe Sanh one recent afternoon.

Capt. Andy N. Arnold, 28, of Tucson,

Ariz., the F-4 pilot and back-seater Capt. Tom E. Kincaid, 27, Sacramento, Calif., ejected from their F-4 fighter-bomber shortly after noon after the jet was struck by enemy Triple A (anti-aircraft artillery.) Both are assigned to the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing.

The Jolly Green aircraft commander, Capt. Gary A. Dake, 27, of Bakersfield, Calif., said the jungle was very dense in the area where the pickup was made, although the canopy was only single-layered and about 30-feet high.

"It would have been difficult to move through the area on the ground," Captain Dake said. He said although the two F-4 crew members were only separated by some 75 feet, each was not aware of the other's position.

A1-E Sandy aircraft and F-4s raked the area near the survivors for about an hour before the rescue helicopter was escorted into the area.

"On the way to the site," Captain Dake said, "the Sandy's took Triple A and 51 caliber machine gun fire. The fast movers came in and silenced the guns."

The Jolly aircraft commander said his ship was hovering in the area about five minutes when it started taking small arms fire from a nearby ridge.

"I believe our mini-gun silenced that gun" Captain Dake said. But to be on the safe side, the A-1s again raked the ridgeline.

"After that, we took no more fire that we were aware of," Captain Dake said. "The pickups were pretty routine after that."

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Captain Kincaid was the first to be hoisted up to the hovering HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopter, and after some maneuvering, Captain Arnold joined his back-seater.

The F-4 crew was off the ground around 1800 hours and Captain Dake had already called the second rescue chopper saying he would need a gas station when he pulled out of the area.

"They had a 'King' bird (HC-130 refueling aircraft) all ready and waiting for us," Captain Dake explained.

Both Jolly Green helicopters needed to gulp in some fuel before turning for Da Nang after four hours in the air.

"After refueling, we became aware of the heavy thunderstorms around us," Captain Dake said. To skirt around the storms, both helicopters and Sandys made their way south and then broke for the coast, coming out near Chu Lai.

Almost seven hours after their ejection the F-4 crewmen landed on the Da Nang ramp in the HH-53 helicopter.

Captain Dake said the Khe Sanh pickup was "a classic jungle search and rescue mission. In many respects, the jungle rescue is the principle situation for which we have trained and developed procedures."

Captain Dake, who flew with the 37th Jollys which evacuated Quang Tri earlier during May, has been in on 51 combat saves since May 1. He said there were many lessons to be learned from his latest for him and his crew, all of whom participated in their first combat save on this Friday mission.

The other Jolly Green crew members were Capt. James D. Bruner, 30, Selma, Ala., co-pilot; Sgt. Cayetano Pina, 26, San Antonio, flight engineer; and pararescuemen Sgt. John W. Stephens, 23, Midland, Mich., and SSgt. Cole E. Panning, 25, LaPorte, Tex.



CAPT DAKE TALKS WITH SURVIVOR AFTER RESCUE