

Super Jolly Green Giant saves F-4 crew

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DA NANG AFLD, RVN -- An Air Force F-4 Phantom crew surrounded by communists was pulled to safety by HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

Captains Peter G. Kulzer and Robert W. Comstock were forced to parachute into enemy-held territory near Hue after a surface-to-air missile downed their F-4.

"The area didn't look good," stated Maj. Anthony A. Gates, commander of one of the four rescue helicopters involved in the mission.

The mission plan called for Captain Comstock to be picked up first, but a smoke signal released too soon dissipated before the helicopters arrived on the scene.

"While we were waiting for another signal from Captain Comstock," Major

Gates continued, "Captain Kulzer came up with a signal. We were halfway between them so we went after the good signal."

A jungle penetrator was lowered on a hoist to Captain Kulzer who had moved into a clearing. Within three minutes the rescue team pulled him on board their helicopter.

"Then we moved over to Captain Comstock," Major Gates explained. "We found him and the hoist was going down when ground fire opened up on us."

Capt. Gary A. Date, copilot on Major Gates' helicopter, added, "Once you pick up ground fire like that you've got to go out and wait until they clean it up."

After air strikes pounded the area, a second helicopter commanded by Maj. Jerry J. Gilbert, moved in for the rescue.

"We spent two or three minutes going back and forth over the area looking for him, then one of my crew members shouted, 'I've got him in sight.'"

Thick jungle approximately 40 feet high hampered the operation for only a moment while the hoist was being lowered for the rescue.

"As soon as I saw him grab hold of the penetrator, I started him up," SSgt. William A. Simm, flight engineer, explained. "He got dragged through some trees but he got out."

Also on Major Gates' crew were SSgt.

David Garcia, flight engineer; and Sergeants Michael L. Wagner and Craig A. Marsh, pararescuemen.

Major Gilbert's crew included Capt. Darrel R. Knutson, copilot; and Sergeants Cole E. Panning and Charles B. McQuod II, pararescuemen.