

DATE: 1 June 1972

MISSION NUMBER: B-02-047

Mission narrative

FLIGHT DESIGNATION: Jolly Green 30 (Low) and Jolly Green 60 (High)

No. 0581396

OBJECTIVE: Rescue and recovery of Oyster 01 Bravo, Capt Roger C. Locher, USAF, F-4E, shot down on 10 May 1972, 10 NM east of Yen Bai Airfield, North Vietnam. Recovered by Jolly Green 30 on 2 June 1972.

ADDITIONAL SAR FORCES: Kings 21, 22 and 27; Sandys 1 through 4 (both days); Jolly Green 73.

DETAILED SAR ACTIONS: This is the mission narrative on the two day SAR for Oyster 01. As aircraft commander for Jolly Green 53 and Jolly Green 30, I was involved both days. We launched at 0800L for our orbit point in North Central Laos in support of Linebacker Mission. While at our orbit point we overheard radio traffic that a beeper and voice contact had been established with a downed aircraft member. I was low bird in Jolly Green 57 and Jolly Green 30 was high bird. We immediately proceeded toward the general area of the survivor as passed to us by King (HC-130P). We were following the Sandys (ALRs) but fell behind because of their higher air speed. The navigation from our orbit point until crossing the Black River in NVN was very difficult. The terrain was all very similar and all the mountains were the same height. As we approached the Black River we were able to locate our position. At this time we began to pass over many villages but did not see any ground fire. We climbed to 7000' MSL to get over a pass between two 9000'+ mountains and found our way blocked by clouds on the tops and in the saddle of the mountains. We detoured to the south and at this time JG 30, which had the ELF gear on board, picked up the survivor and Sandy 01 on guard. Using the ELF equipment we were able, with directions from JG 30, to navigate to a low ridge line about four miles from the Red River. At the bottom of this ridge was a village and every valley we crossed both days was populated as well as many of the hill sides. We were holding for about two minutes when Sandy 01, who had been in constant contact with us, sighted a SAM that was fired at and hit a F-4 MIG Cap flying overhead. Sandy 01 called out that the F-4 had taken a direct hit and was coming down but the F-4 pilot was able to stay with the aircraft and made a controlled bail out over Udorn. Sandy 01 was taking heavy AAA fire from the flat lands around the Red River. Because Sandy 01 was having trouble locating Oyster 01, JG 30 attempted to use the ELF equipment to locate the survivor. JG 30 did get a good lock on and I told JG 30 to take over the low position as he would have the only chance to find the survivor if we made an attempt as the Sandys were drawing heavy AAA. Just as we were changing lead a MIG-21 made a high speed pass on us. He made a quartering pass on JG 30 but for some reason did not fire. Sandy 02 called the MIG out and gave us some time to start a break. I broke down and rolled out at 100' AGL over the village and flew up a gully across the valley from the

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GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

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ridge line. As I was crossing the valley I saw the MIG flying away from me to the NW up the valley about 500' AGL. I called JG 30 to see if he was ok, and said I would join him so that the Sandys could give us better cover. He had remained on the northern side of the valley. Sandy 01 had returned to our position and was calling for more MIG Cap. About two minutes after we had rejoined, the MIG or another MIG again made a pass on us. JG 30 which was holding about 300 yards to the NW of my position was again the target but although the MIG got into his 6 o'clock, the MIG did not fire. At this point we were all, the Sandys and Jollys, low on fuel, and had not been able to sight the survivor. We began to exit the area. Our holding point was about 7 NM SE of Yen Bai Airfield, NVN. Although, we did not see any ground fire, we were probably taking small arms fire from the villages but our preoccupation with the MIG probably caused us to miss it. Because of the survivor's apparent calmness, the Sandys and myself thought it might be a trap and that the survivor had been forced into calling the SAR forces. I did not quit believing it was a trap until Oyster 01 got on the penetrator the next day. King 27 met the Jollys in the northern part of Laos at 102 on the 034 radial of Ch 119, at this time both Jollys had reached a critical fuel state and both aircraft had low fuel caution lights. While air refueling with King 27, we flew to the west and ended up about 8 NM from the "Chinese Road" to the NW of Luang Prabang, Laos. I do not think the King birds have enough intelligence information on the gun position in the Barrel Roll area as he was going to take us over the gun position near Luang Prabang but was afraid to fly toward Lima 16 (Vang Vieng) which was our normal crossing point. Anyway, we had difficulty locating our position in the weather, there were many thunderstorms and buildups in the area. After we were able to tune in Ch 119 we had no further difficulty in returning to NKP. The first day we landed at 1535L at NKP after JG 30 had made an emergency landing 7 NM NW of NKP due to an engine problem. After considerable discussion of the threats involved, the Commander decided to continue with the SAR attempt on a voluntarily basis. That night we did extensive flight planning with the Sandy pilots. The crews and aircraft were changed for the second day. Only myself and the Flight Engineer remained from the first day's crew of JG 57. That night with a maximum effort from the 40th ARRSq Maintenance, JG 30 was repaired in the field in which it had landed, flown back to NKP and was ready for my crew the next morning at 0530L. The reason I changed to JG 30 was to make the ELF equipment available on the low bird. Due to the airborne abort of my wing man, JG 53, I had to wait for a replacement and was 35 minutes behind the scheduled flight plan to reach the final holding point at 0930L. I was able to make up 30 of the 35 minutes by flying very low with high power settings and some excellent navigation and short cuts computed by my copilot. Not only did he preplan our flight path to make up for lost time, he was able to pin point our position all day long using visual map readings from low altitude and dead reckoning as our doppler was inoperative. JG 57 who had launched with JG 60 followed us to the normal holding point for the Linebacker orbit and acted as backup. King 21 refueled all three Jollys north of the PDJ. The Sandys had taken off after the Jollys and had flown the more direct route to the east of the PDJ. Due to the low clouds in northern Laos,

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we crossed the Black River on the southern edge of the 9000+ mountain range. By this time I was fairly familiar with the route and my copilot's excellent navigation enabled me to stay at low altitude so that the NVA GCI radar would not pick up the Jollys. We were south of the holding point (India) in the mountains but I had an excellent ELF location both the survivor and Sandy 01, so I called Sandy 03 & 04 and told them I would join up with them at the final holding point (Zulu) at 0945L. The point I chose to hold at was the same one I had used the day before and was about 3 NM east of the planned holding point. I decided to use it because of the clouds that were laying on the ridge to give us cover if attacked by MIGs. With the clouds on the ridge line, I could slow up to 20 KTS A/S pop above the ridge to get an ELF position on the survivor. The survivor was on a hill 15 NM from my position and directly in line of sight facing me; therefore, I had a very strong ELF signal. From this I thought the survivor was only eight miles away just across the Red River on a small hill. I cannot say enough about Sandy 01, Capt Ron Smith, without him the SAR effort would have not been successful. Sandy 01 and 02 were taking very heavy and accurate AAA fire from a dam directly between my position and the survivor. Sandy 01 called a F-4 strike that knocked out most of the guns and left a large fire burning all the time we were in the area. I wanted to make a low level high speed run in across the flat land along the Red River but Sandy 01 located the survivor at 0955L and advised me that it was 15 NM to the survivor's position of 2152N 10506E and I would not be able to get past the gun positions. Sandy 01 then directed a move to point Oscar, a holding point to the northwest of Yen Bai, north of the Red River. With Sandy 01 and 02 in front and Sandy 03 and 04 behind, JG 30 and 60 proceeded very low level through the hills next to Yen Bai to the crossing point. At one point we were about four miles from Yen Bai airfield but Sandy 01 had seen a strike hit the field earlier in the day. It must have been good as we only saw one MIG that day. Just before we crossed the Red River 10 NM northwest of Yen Bai we took fire from the area of a parked military truck. Before we crossed the Red River, Sandy 01 called the MIG Cap on guard and the MH Cap frequency but was unable to raise anyone. At this time King 21 informed us that we didn't have a MIG Cap as they were on the tankers. It was not until we had picked up the survivor and were back across the Red River that a MIG Cap arrived in the area. If there was a MIG Cap in the area, we were unable to raise them on any frequency. From the Red River to the survivor and back, both Jollys took ground fire from almost every village, because JG 60 was a little behind JG 30, JG 60 received most of the ground fire. Both PJs and the IM as well as the AP on JG 30 directed suppressing mini gun fire on all villages that fired at either helicopter. We flew at 50' to 500' AGL to stay below the SAM radar of the two sites near Yen Bai and to prevent any MIGs from seeing the Jollys. The Sandys, meanwhile, were flying well above us, exposed to both the SAM and MIG threat. As we neared the ridge that the survivor was on, Sandy 01 went ahead and re-established contact with the survivor. Because the survivor was on the opposite side of a 1650' ridge and could not hear the helicopters or MHs, he was not up on his radio and we did not have any ELF indications until we popped over the ridge and the survivor came up on the radio. The high bird JG 60 held on the north side of the ridge as the Sandys could not have left him along the way with the MIG threat. Because I was still not sure we were not

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being trapped, I kept my A/S around 150 KTS as I came over the ridge, I got an ELP indication, turned in the direction of the survivor and started to show down but got ELP station passage at 100 KTS. My copilot spotted the survivor's signal mirror, which the survivor had also used to signal the Sandys with good success. I turned around and flew north back along the ridge until we again passed over the survivor. Because the slope was about 40-50°, the right side of the helicopter had to be facing the hill in order to use the hoist. I was unable to see the survivor, but the copilot had him in sight and hovered the helicopter down the slope with the hoist operator and #2 PJ advising him of his position in relation to the hillside and trees. Because the hover references were on my side, I took the helicopter after we arrived over the survivor and hovered while the pick up was being made. As soon as we went into the hover we began taking ground fire from several of the 40 or so houses at the base of the ridge line. During the pick up, the Sandys laid a smoke screen to our SE to shield us from nearby AAA positions that had been firing at them. They also strafed the village. The high bird was 1/3 of a mile away on the north side of the ridge also taking ground fire. When the survivor was out of the trees, I applied maximum power and did a vertical ascent to the top of the ridge line. At this time the survivor was in the door and we began accelerating and joined with JG 60. From our arrival at the ridge at 1025L until leaving the area of the survivor took three minutes. The weather in the SAR area was approximately 8000' scattered to broken. The gunners and the AP did an outstanding job of suppressing the ground fire as we did not take a single hit the entire day. The quick and accurate return of ground fire from both helicopters, especially JG 60, accounted for 15 KIA, three damaged trucks, approximately 40 to 50, 55 gallon drums were left burning and several cars on the train were damaged before Sandy 03 finished it off. During the egress from the pick up point to the mountain range about 15 NM south of the Red River, we took ground fire from the 10 or so villages that fired on us on the ingress. We were unable to avoid flying over the villages as the whole area was heavily populated and the ridge lines we followed in and out were the only ones we could use. The gunners spotted several trucks and two military compounds with which they traded fire. On the egress across the Red River, Sandy 01 spotted a train that had stopped exactly at our crossing point. The train had several guns mounted on the cars and these began to fire at the Sandies. Both Jollys were close behind the Sandies 01, 02 and 04 and crossed over the train at 500 AGL and all gunners returned the fire. Sandies 01, 02 and 04 each made one pass on the train. Sandy 03 made a rocket/CEU run the length of the train, blow up the engine and left several cars burning. He also made three strafing passes on the train. The rest of the SAR force continued to egress. As the SAR force crossed the Red River Valley, a MIG-17 approached and was spotted by JG 60. Sandy 03 attacked the MIG and then the MIG broke off the engagement. After crossing the Red River, SAR forces started into the mountains and received ground fire from three or four villages. The SAR force had some difficulty in navigating through the 9000+ mountains because of low clouds in the area. Both Jolly crews were nearing

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their minimum fuel when they were met by King 22 tanker inside of North Vietnam. After refueling, JG 60 noticed an oil leak from one of his engines and he suspected battle damage. The Sandys accompanied both Jolly crews to Ch 70, landing at 1326L. Upon inspection, JG 60 did not confirm the suspected battle damage.

The following areas were of importance in the mission.

1. The survivor used mirror to good advantage.
2. ELF equipment will be an extremely important asset in any SAR especially useful in Night Recovery System. The Sandy aircraft need ELF as much as the Jollys.
3. The Sandy pilots did the usual fantastic job.
4. The King aircraft came into NVN to refuel the Jollys.
5. We lost contact with MIG Cap at a very critical point in the SAR.
6. No radio contact can be expected with the SAR forces when they are north of the 9000+ mountain range in North Vietnam.
7. DISCO gave valuable aid in communications and navigation.
8. The strike on the Yen Bai Airfield prevented possible MIG reaction the second day.
9. All Jolly Green crewmembers performed in the finest tradition of Air Rescue.

Flying Activity:

Det 4, 3 ARW, 8 Sorties, 51.5 Hours
40 ARW, 9 Sorties, 42.1 Hours
56 SCW, 8 Sorties, 44.4 Hours
432 TRW, 25 Sorties, 43.5 Hours
383 TFW, 2 Sorties, 4.0 Hours
366 TFW, 4 Sorties, 8.0 Hours
8 TFW, 8 Sorties, 12.0 Hours
10 Air Refuelings were accomplished.

Dale E. Stovall

DALE E. STOVALL, CAPT, USAF
Aircraft Commander

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115 Green Word:

Jolly Green 30

- AC - Captain Dale E. Stevall,
- CP - Captain John M. Gillespie II,
- RM - ALC James T. Walsh,
- RS - Sgt Charles B. McQuoid II,
- BS - ALC Kenneth W. Cakebread,
- AP - TSgt Debbie L. Wolborn,

Jolly Green 60

- CO - Captain Jerry W. Shipman,
- CP - Captain Stanley J. Ziobinski Jr.,
- RM - Sgt William T. Miles,
- RS - SSgt Donald H. Goodlott,
- BS - Sgt Dennis C. Williamson,
- AP - SSgt Hal Smith,

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