

V. (S) NARRATIVE:

(S) The month of November marked the end of the combat operations for one of the oldest units in Southeast Asia, The 1st Special Operations Squadron, and the last combat strikes by U.S.A.F. A-1's. The 1st SOS and the A-1's have earned a chapter in Air Force history for their search and rescue operations in Southeast Asia. In November all the A-1's were turned over to the South Vietnamese Air Force and all squadron personnel were reassigned.

(C) On 7 November Capt. Screws and Maj. Ohr (Sandy 07/08) successfully completed the last SAR for the 1st SOS. Coachman 159, an Army Huey helicopter with seven survivors, was downed the evening before by an unknown cause on the Song Tra Khuc River approximately 15 miles west of Quang Ngai, South Vietnam. A typhoon was forecast to hit the coast of South Vietnam around 1800 with winds as high as 140 knots. The weather had prevented King and several Army helicopters from spotting the exact location of the survivors. The Sandys launched knowing any delay would cause the SAR force to be grounded by the typhoon, leaving the survivors in enemy territory. The first two attempts to reach the survivors by the Sandys were thwarted by heavy rain, severe turbulence, and low clouds. Capt. Screws, Sandy 07, was able to reach the survivors' location on his third attempt by flying at dangerously

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41

(S) The last SAR involving the SANDYS occurred on 7 November. An Army Huey helicopter with seven survivors was downed approximately 15 miles west of Quang Ngai, South Vietnam. With time of the essence, the SANDYS were launched, despite the forecast of a severe typhoon. Because of the heavy rain, turbulence and low clouds, the A-1 crews were forced to fly at dangerously low altitudes (200 ft or less) in order to locate the survivors. Once their exact location had been determined, the SANDYS protected the departing rescue helicopters by effectively silencing the small arms fire that was harassing this bold rescue.

(S) During this final five month period of 1972, only one major accident occurred. 1Lt Lance Smith successfully ejected and was rescued over Northern Laos. He sustained only minor injuries.

(S) The loss of this aircraft reduced the assigned A-1 inventory from 20 to 19. The officer strength decreased from a high of 31 in July to 25 in November. On seven separate occasions the A-1s received extensive battle damage. However, as a tribute to the outstanding professionalism of the men of the 1st SOS, no pilots or additional aircraft were lost to the enemy during this final period.

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low altitudes and sheer determination. The Jollys were scrambled from Quang Ngai. They had landed there to refuel. During the ingress, the clouds forced Sandy 08 and the Jollys to fly up the river at less than 100 ft., but the Jollys were able to reach the area and pick up the seven survivors. During the ingress the Jollys came under small arms fire, but one low pass by Sandy 08 silenced the ground fire. The last SAR for the 1st SOS exemplified the resourcefulness and courage displayed by the Sandy aircrews in their efforts to recover downed airmen. During the first four days of November, the Hobos continued to strike enemy positions in the Barrel. The last Hobo flight was typical of the type air support the 1st SOS, flying the A-1, has provided throughout the war in SEA. Capt. Kramer and Capt. Caughlin struck a TPG late in the afternoon of the fourth. When the Hobos departed the target area, they had left five sustained fires and the Raven had observed seven secondary explosions.

(S) On November 3rd the first group of four A-1s, was turned over to the VNAF at Bien Hoa. The following day four more A-1's were flown to Bien Hoa to strengthen the Vietnamese Air Force. The last remaining A-1's at WWP, five E models, were flown out on the 5th. The 1st SOS was left with six A-1N's on Sandy alert at Da Nang, until the 7th when they were turned over to the VNAF at Bien Hoa.

JUCA #29

On the 9th, 7th Air Force decided that six A-1's were needed for Sandy Alert at Da Nang; Six pilots left for Binh Hoa to pick up the aircraft on hand receipts from the VNAP. By the 11th the six A-1's were on alert at Da Nang. On the 15th the aircraft were returned to the VNAP, and the Air Force's A- inventory was zero.

(U) As the squadron closed down, the aircrews were reassigned throughout the USA and PACAF. Returning to the USA are: Lt Col. William Latham, Ent AFB; Maj. Danny Roberson, Laredo AFB; Capt. Gene Bardal, Reese AFB; Capt. Don Screws, Lt Mike Cahill, and Lt Tim Brady, England AFB; Lt Bob Carlsen, Shephard AFB; Capt. Dave Finch and Capt. Don Caughlin have not received their assignments; Remaining in PACAF are: Maj. Ed Rider, Maj. Sam Westbrook, Maj. Doer Kari, and Maj. Ken Ohr, Korat RTAFB; Capt. Bob Simica, Capt. Robert Plant, and Lt William Gilbert, Osan AB; Capt. Jim Barden and Capt. Gary Koldyke, Udorn RTAFB; Maj. Jim Rutledge, Capt. Jim Elliott, Capt. Willie Kramer, Capt. T. Q. McCammon, and Capt. Gerry Homewood (arrived at NKP on 31 October), Clark AFB; and Capt. Ron Boatwright, Tan Son Nhut.

(U) The outstanding job the 1st Special Operations Squadron has done in SEA can best be expressed by the countless number of downed aircrews who have been saved from the POW/MIA list. Col. Norbert Simon, Commander of the 56th Special Operations Wing, summed up many peoples feelings in a letter to the 1st SOS when he said "It

DOC A ~~28~~ 28

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56 SOW

Jul - Dec 72 vol. 3A

K-WG-56-HI

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is with pangs of regret that I see 5 November 1972 come to pass. This day marks the last time our ramps and runways will respond to the throaty roar of the mighty A-1. God knows we hate to see the valiant crews of the Hobo Squadron disband and leave NKP. There is a vacuum that cannot be filled. I can only extend my thanks to a magnificent group who have done a fantastic job in Southeast Asia. I can only say good luck and God speed to you loyal Hobos and Sandys." On the 15th of December the 1st SOS will be transferred to Kadena AB without personnel or equipment.

VI. (S) COMMANDER'S COMMENTS:

(S) As we finalize the last historical report of the 1st Special Operation Squadron, it might be appropriate to acknowledge the fine briefing and instructing the 1SOS pilots accomplished teaching the A-7 pilots to assume the SAR role in Southeast Asia. Several weeks of intense briefings, instructing and playing the role of a survivor in the field encompassed the training program. The A-7 assumed the responsibility for the SAR role on 15 Nov 72 and to date have accomplished 3 successful SARs. The first one in North Vietnam, a real tough one, gave the A-7 personnel the confidence required to pick up this new and demanding task. The personnel of the 1SOS are sure the A-7 will be able to accomplish this mission and continue the fine traditions started by the A-1 Sandys. We are all pleased that the A-7's will use the "Hobo" and "Sandy" call signs while flying their demanding missions in Southeast Asia.

(S) Although the A-1's are gone, the mission will be carried out. For the A-1 and the 1SOS Sandy and Hobo pilots this is the end of an era.



15 NOVEMBER 1972

THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN TODAY AS THE LAST SIX A1E SANDIES IN THE AIR FORCE FLEW OUT OF DANANG AFD ON THEIR LAST FLIGHT. IT BRINGS TO AN END THE LAST FIVE YEARS OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE BY THESE VENERABLE AIRCRAFT AS ESCORT AND CONTROL BIRDS ON SARs IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. THE JOB OF ESCORTING THE HH-53 SUPER JOLLY GREENS WILL BE TAKEN OVER BY THE A-7 CORSAIR--BUT THE MEN OF THE 37 ARRS CAN NEVER AND WILL NEVER FORGET THE DARING YOUNG MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES CALLED:

SANDY