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(C) Bobbin 05. On 16 November, Bobbin 05, an F-105G Wild Weasel with Captain Kenneth D. Thaete as pilot and Major Norbert J. Mair as electronic warfare officer, was shot down by a surface-to-air missile over North Vietnam. During the ejection sequence and subsequent landing, Captain Thaete suffered facial burns and a wrenched leg. Major Mair severely bruised his right thigh, sprained the right side of his back, and injured his right arm. Shortly after reaching the ground, both crewmen camouflaged their extra survival equipment, went into hiding, and attempted to contact U.S. aircraft on their survival radios. Although Major Mair and Captain Thaete did not know it, SAR forces had already been alerted by other members of the Bobbin flight.

(C) Major Mair and Captain Thaete were unable to make radio contact with friendly forces until approximately 0500 on 17 November when they reached two F-4 Fast FACs. The RCC at Nakhon Phanom ordered the 354th TFW to launch A-7 Sandys which were on 15-minute ground alert. The weather in the rescue area was 1,000 foot overcast, and the two downed crewmembers were situated in terrain characterized by rugged mountains and deep valleys. The weather did not clear, and the survivors were told that a pick-up would be attempted the following day.

(C) Enemy defenses near the rescue area included three known SAM sites, and numerous AAA sites with 85 and 100 millimeter radar controlled guns. Considering the heavy enemy defenses, the JRCC decided to launch a first light SAR effort. A myriad of details were worked out including the composition of the SARTF, ordnance, and the responsibilities of 16

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A-7 Sandy aircraft. The Search and Rescue coordinating officers from the 354 TFW and the Jack RCC staff worked through the night arranging support aircraft, planning ingress/egress routes, selecting orbit points, scheduling tanker support, and preparing briefings. Included in the SARTF, in addition to the Jolly Green/A-7 Sandy team and the HC-130 Kings, were F-4 Anti-MIG Combat Air Patrol (MIGCAP), F-4 Gunfighters, F-105 Wild Weasel SAM suppressors, EB-66 Electronic Intelligence aircraft, and KC-135 tankers.

(C) On 18 November, the general planning of briefings and the mission data packages were completed. Briefings were held and pertinent information distributed. Sandys 01 through 05 were launched at 0358 hours, Sandys 11-16 launched at 0434 hours, and Sandys 08 and 09 launched at 0608 hours.

(C) Contact was made with Bobbin 05B (Major Mair), but there was initially no contact with Bobbin 05A (Captain Thaele). However, on a pass over the survivors' area, Sandy 01 and Wolf 01, a Fast FAC, made contact with both crewmembers. Attempts were made to find routes for the helicopters to ingress/egress through the weather and mountains, but these attempts were unsuccessful. The first light effort was abandoned, and Sandy forces began recycling through the tankers.

(S) Tanker support was a serious problem because the tankers on station were becoming fuel limited. Several Sandys rendezvoused with tankers which already had F-4s and F-105s waiting to refuel. At one time, 16 fighters were waiting to receive fuel from one tanker. The tankers responded by allocating fuel as equitably as possible, providing information about other tankers in the area, obtaining permission to go

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below Bingo fuel* or to land at other than home bases, and requesting that the appropriate agencies launch all available tankers.

(C) Sandy 01, the OSC, had found an ingress route from the coast to the survivors. Because of heavy AAA fire, the helicopters could not reach Major Mair and Captain Thaete along this route. Sandy 01 led Sandy 04 and 05 over the route to familiarize them with the area. Sandy 04 and 05 backtracked to the helicopters' orbit area and tried several times to get at least one helicopter through the clouds and into a valley for a pick-up run. These attempts failed. The helicopters, using radar altimeters, descended until they were 500 feet above ground level (AGL), but were still in the clouds and had to climb back up.

(C) The aircraft were getting low on fuel again. The Sandys and Jolly Greens refueled using the increased numbers of tankers that had become available. Sandy 01 had been airborne over six hours, flying in bad weather, over rugged mountain terrain, and through heavy enemy defenses. Major Clarke, a Sandy pilot, remarked:

(C) I guess the adrenaline took a pump break about this time, because I realized how tired I was getting and how good a sandwich would have tasted right then. All I had was my water bottle which was almost empty. I knew that if the next effort failed again, we were through for the day.

(C) The Jolly Green and Sandy force refueled from King and KC-135s respectively. Sandys 01, 04, and 05 proceeded to the helicopter orbit point. Sandy 01 escorted Jolly 03 in an attempt to find an ingress route.

*A predetermined fuel quantity at which an aircraft returns to base.

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Sandys 04 and 05 proceeded on top of the clouds to the Gulf of Tonkin, went under the clouds, and ingressed to the survivors' position. Sandys 04 and 05 received a barrage of AAA, and it took two attempts for them to reach the objective area. They then had to backtrack from the survivors towards the Jolly Green's orbit, hoping to intercept Sandy 01 and Jolly 03 and lead them to the survivors. Sandys 02 and 03 rendezvoused with Sandys 11-16 and proceeded to the coast to try to break under the weather. Sandy 01 and Jolly 03 proceeded eastward above the overcast. Sandy 01
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remarked:

(C) I asked him (Jolly 03) how low the ground was under him. He said he was in a valley, so I punched down into the stuff. . . . when I got under him and broke out underneath, I was in a valley, sure enough.

(C) Captain John M. Gillespie, the aircraft commander of Jolly 03
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stated: (U)

(S) Circling the valley, with a 1,000 foot or less ceiling Major Clarke used his direction finding equipment to vector my aircraft into the valley. The two aircraft, an A7D and an HH-53, then began the long run inbound to the survivors. Originally the route was 27 miles long, but due to low ceiling and obscured mountain ridges, the run in went up and down valleys covering about 45 miles. During the run in, Major Clarke displayed great skill and courage maneuvering his high speed aircraft between narrow valleys made even narrower by the low clouds. It was difficult for me in a slow flying helicopter to maneuver through the mountains and weather, for Major Clarke it was a fantastic example of bravery and skill.

(C) Maneuvering around villages and other possible enemy defenses, Sandy 01 and Jolly 03 reached the ridgeline where Major Mair and Captain Thaete were located. Sandy 01 flew over the survivors and received ground

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fire near Major Mair's location. Two smoke flights, Sandys 11-13 and 14-16 led by Sandys 02 and 03, made their run in from the coast. By this time, all aircraft were subjected to heavy AAA fire. The flights delivered their smoke perfectly and the smoke screens were effective in shielding the helicopter from the view of the AAA sites. Captain Thaete estimated that each aircraft that passed over him took 40-80 rounds of AAA fire and that the rate doubled during the smoke flight run. Shielded by smoke from the AAA fire, Jolly 03 began the pickup of Captain Thaete and Major Mair. Jolly 03 received small arms and automatic weapons fire and returned the fire using miniguns. The survivors were picked up successfully, but Sandy 01 was hit and had to be escorted to Da Nang. Jolly 03 returned to Nakhon Phanom without incident.

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(C) The SAR mission, from the time the first sandy took off until the last one landed, lasted nine hours. While this mission was being conducted, F-4 and F-105 aircraft were attacking SAM and other radar sites in the area. At least seven different kinds of aircraft were involved in the rescue.

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(C) Several problems were encountered during the Bobbin 05 mission. These were insufficient initial tanker support, lack of planning beyond a first light effort, poor radio discipline, occasional absence of an OSC in the rescue area, and improper use of the King aircraft. Many of these problems were a result of incomplete training of the A-7 crews.

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(C) The Bobbin 05 rescue effort was the first use of the A-7 for a SAR mission. Two characteristics of the aircraft were significant:

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(1) the higher speed increased the survivability of this RESCORT aircraft, and (2) its navigation system was very effective in locating survivors and leading the Jolly Greens to them. ¹²⁶

(C) Jackel 33. On 22 December 1972, Jackel 33, an F-111 from Takhli RTAFB, was downed by unknown causes ¹²⁷ 17 miles southwest of Hanoi. ¹²⁸
After several days delay due to weather, SAR forces attempted to rescue the Jackel 33 crew on 27 December during a LINEBACKER II mission. The task force consisted of 13 A-7 Sandys, four Jolly Greens, two HC-130 Kings, and 32 F-4s. ¹²⁹

(C) Upon reaching the objective area, Jolly Green 01 began ingress 18 miles from the survivor. With the aid of a smoke screen set up by two Sandys, the Jolly Green reached the rescue area without encountering enemy defenses. As the Jolly Green neared one survivor, enemy gunfire came from all directions. Using miniguns and automatic rifles to engage the enemy, the helicopter hovered over the survivor and dropped the penetrator. The survivor got within five feet of the penetrator but was blown off his feet by the helicopter downwash. ¹³⁰

(C) At this time, the copilot of the Jolly Green was wounded and five or six enemy soldiers attempted to run under the aircraft. The helicopter had been in a hover for over 60 seconds and the enemy was still firing from all directions. There was blood all over the cockpit from the copilot's wound. With the situation hopeless, the pilot left without the survivor. ¹³¹

(C) During egress, the aircraft experienced stability and control problems and was low on fuel. An attempt to refuel with King was unsuccessful

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helicopter flight mechanic gave the "Jolly Green" pilot hover information to properly position the helicopter. The jungle penetrator was lowered and the survivor(s) were brought aboard the HH-53. The A-7 "Sandy" pilot again became OSC, and the "Sandys" escorted the helicopter from the pickup area, suppressing enemy fire as necessary.⁸ (GDS-82)

Rescue of "Bobbin" 05

(S) Nearly all of these combat rescue elements functioned during a successful SAR mission over North Vietnam on 18 November 1972. On 16 November 1972 "Bobbin" 05, an F-105G Wild Weasel* with a two-man crew, was shot down by a surface-to-air missile (SAM). During the ejection and subsequent landing Captain Kenneth F. Thae, the pilot, suffered facial cuts and a wrenched leg; and Major Norbert J. Mair, the electronic warfare officer, bruised his right thigh, sprained the right side of his back, and injured his right arm. After landing, both men camouflaged their survival equipment, went into hiding, and attempted to summon aid with their survival radios. Unknown to the crew, other members of the "Bobbin" flight had already contacted SAR forces. (GDS-82)

(S) Major Mair and Captain Thae established a radio contact with two F-4's at 0400 on 17 November 1972. Having pinpointed the location of the survivors, the RCC at Nakhon Phanom (NKP) RTAFB launched two A-7 "Sandys" from the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing. The weather in the rescue area was found to be 1,000 feet overcast and it did not clear, so the survivors were told that a pickup would be attempted on the following day. (GDS-82)

(S) The JRCC at Tan Son Nhut AB planned to launch a first light SAR effort. During the night a myriad of details were worked out, including the composition of the SARTF, the ordnance, and the responsibilities of the A-7's. Enemy defenses in the rescue area were known to include SAM sites, and 85 and 100 millimeter radar-controlled guns. At the RCC at NKP the staff worked out the arrangement of support aircraft, ingress and egress routes, orbit points, and tanker support. (GDS-82)

(S) They "put it all together" in a SARTF consisting of HH-53's, A-7's, HC-130's, an F-4 anti-Mig Combat Air Patrol, F-4 Gunfighters, F-105 Wild Weasel SAM suppressors, EB-66 electronic intelligence, and KC-135 tankers. (GDS-82)

(S) In the early hours of 18 November 1972 briefings were given and information was distributed. "Sandys" 01 through 05 were launched at 0358, 11 through 16 at 0434, and 08 and 09 at 0608. Radio contact was established with both survivors in the rescue area, but the "Sandy" could not find any routes for the helicopters to penetrate into the area. Therefore the first light effort was abandoned and the A-7's began aerial refueling. At one point the "Sandys" led an HH-53 into the rescue area, but although the helicopter was about 500 feet above the ground, clouds still covered the area and it was forced to egress. (GDS-82)

(S) Finally "Sandy" 01 and "Jolly" 03 were able to break through the overcast and found themselves in a valley. After flying up and down a series of valleys for about 45 miles, they reached the site of the survivors. "Sandy" 01 flew over the survivors and encountered ground fire. "Sandys" 11,

8. Project CHECO Rprt (S), "Search and Rescue Operations in SEA," 1 Apr 72-30 Jun 73, in MAC/CSH files (GDS-82).

* The mission of wild weasel aircraft was to ferret out enemy surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites and destroy them.

** This was probably the first SAR mission in SEA involving A-7's.

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12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 02, and 03 all came in low from the Gulf of Tonkin and layed a smoke screen shielding "Jolly" 03 from the SA guns. (GDS-82)

(S) "Jolly" 03 began the pickup of Major Mair and Captain Thaete. When "Jolly" 03 received small arms fire, it returned fire with its miniguns. The survivors were picked up successfully and returned to NKP, but "Sandy" 01 was hit and had to be escorted back to Da Nang. The total airborne time for the mission lasted approximately nine hours.⁹ (GDS-82)

Rescue Support during Israeli Airlift

(U) Between 14 October 1973 and 17 November 1973 ARRS aircrews were brought to an increased state of readiness in response to the Arab-Israeli crisis in the Middle East and the ensuing Israeli Airlift (Operation Nickel Grass). ARRS forces were positioned at Lajes Field, Azores, and Rota AB, Spain, to provide search and rescue support as might be required and to provide precautionary orbit support for fighter aircraft moving to Europe and the Middle East. A total of 366 flying hours were logged by HC-130's, and HH-53's flew 40 hours.¹⁰ Fortunately there was no need to rescue anyone.

Total Saves*

(U) ARRS units and their personnel saved the lives of 1,559 persons during FY 1973 and 453 persons during FY 1974. Approximately 1,600 were civilians and about 400 were military personnel. Total cumulative saves by ARRS units between the establishment of ARRS in 1940 and 30 June 1974 numbered 10,840 persons. This figure included 996 combat saves during the Korean War and 2,628 combat saves during the War in Southeast Asia.¹¹

(U) Total ARRS Saves from 1 July 1972 through 30 June 1974 were:¹²

	<u>Jul-Dec 1972</u>	<u>Jan-Jun 1973</u>	<u>Jul-Dec 1973</u>	<u>Jan-Jun 1974</u>
Combat, SEA	95	14	0	0
Non-Combat, SEA	62	32	24	17
Non-Combat, Other	1,088	268	181	231
Semiannual Totals	1,245	314	205	248
FY Totals		1,559		453

9. Project CHECO Rprt (S), Search and Rescue Operations in SEA, 1 Apr 72-30 Jun 73, in MAC/CSH files. (GDS-82)
10. Ltr (U), ARRS/DO (DCS/Ops) to MAC/CSH (Historical Off), subj: Developments of Possible Historical Interest, 1 July-31 December 1973, 1 Mar 74, Sup Doc 344; a chronology (S) of all ARRS significant actions during this crisis, "ARRS in the 1973 Israeli Crisis" (in draft format), Sup Doc 345. (GDS-81) (Info used is UNCLASSIFIED.)
- * For a further breakdown of these figures, see Command Data, Appendicies M(2), FY 1973 and FY 1974, this rprt, and News Releases (U), "Rescue Service Crews Save 1,748 Lives in 1972," 2 Feb 73, Sup Doc 346 and "Air Rescue Crews Save 519 Lives in 1973," 25 Jan 74, Sup Doc 347.
11. Intvw (U), ARRS historian w/Mr W J Nee, Reqmts & Analysis Div, Dir of Current Ops, DCS/Ops, HQ ARRS.
12. ARRS Ops Performance Digests (FOUO), Jun 72 through Jun 74, in MAC/CSH historical files.

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