

DATE: 30 March 1972

MISSION NUMBER: B-3-027

MISSION DESIGNATION: Jolly Green 53, 62, 60, 64, and 63

OBJECT: Rescue and Recovery of fifteen AC-130 crewmembers with all sign of Spectre 22 Alpha thru Oscar. Pickup attempt unsuccessful on 31 March 1972 for all fifteen crewmembers. Thirteen crewmembers were picked up by Jolly Greens.

ADDITIONAL SAR FORCES: Sandy's 1 through 8; King 27, 21, and 54; Raven 40.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY: The 40 ARRSq, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, was notified of a downed AC-130, Spectre 22, at 2212L, 30 Mar 72. The crew of fifteen had bailed out 10 miles North-Northeast of Pakxong, Laos, in the area of 15°37'N, 106°29'E. The crews of Jolly Green 53 (L) and 62 (H) First Element, and JG 60 (L) and 64 (H), Second Element, (all HH-53C helicopters) briefed for first light attempt at 0315L, 31 Mar 72, with the Sandys (A-1E) and Nails OV-10. A night recovery attempt was ruled out due to terrain and foliage conditions in the area (the inability to locate the survivors visually) and reported hostile ground forces in the area.

JG 53 and 62 departed NKP at 0415L and arrived at the initial orbit point at 0525L. JG 60 and 64 departed NKP at 0455L and proceeded south for air refueling with King 54 (HC-130P). JG 64 reported a nose gear chip light at 0614L and made a precautionary landing at Ubon RTAFB, Thailand. JG 63 was launched from Ubon and joined JG 60. Sandys Three and Four evaluated the area and pinpointed the survivors while JG 53 and 62 moved to the final holding point. With JG 62 holding high, JG 53 descended for the first pickup at 0715L. JG 53 came to a hover over 22 India at 0725L and lowered a PJ to assist the survivor. 22 India suffered a back injury during his PLF. 22 India was recovered at 0730L and 22 Alpha was hoisted on board at 0735L without incident. JG 53 departed the area with the survivors due to low fuel and JG 62 descended for his pick up as JG 60 and 63 entered the area as cover for JG 62. JG 62 recovered 22 Fox at 0735L and departed the area to refuel with King 27. JG 53 landed at Ubon at 0840L and JG 62 arrived at Ubon at 0915L. JG 60 descended into the area at 0745L with JG 64 holding high. JG 60 picked up 22 Charlie, 22 Hotel, 22 Oscar, 22 Kilo, 22 Delta, 22 Juliet, 22 Gulf, and 22 Lima in that order. JG 60 lowered a PJ to assist 22 Oscar who had a broken leg. The eight survivors were located in 40 to 50 foot trees and two were within 100 yards of several houses. Seven of the survivors were in a two mile circle and one was three miles from the main group. No ground fire was observed although there were several small housing areas near the survivors. Raven 10 gave very accurate directions to the survivor's locations by flying in a tight circle above each survivor. Raven 40 also greatly assisted Sandy 5 in controlling and reassuring the survivors. Sandy 5 brought each

survivor up on the pick-up frequency as soon as previous survivor was on the hoist. Jolly 60 was able to read only one survivor on UHF guard and Sandy 5 relayed the survivors directions. Most of the survivors stated that they probably pointed their antennas at the helicopter this blocking their transmissions. No other difficulties were encountered and _____

_____ the run-in was started. Jolly 60 then returned to the _____ while Jolly 63 descended into the same area to recover 22 Echo and 22 November. JG 60 and 63 terminated at Ubon at 0930L.

MISSION FLYING TIME:

Det 4, 3 ARRGp - 3 sorties 2.1 Hours
40 ARRSq - 7 sorties 21.2 Hours
56 SOW - 33 sorties 83.4 Hours
37 ARRSq - 5 sorties 11.2 Hours
Non USAF Helicopters - 4 sorties 7.8 Hours
38 TFWg - 6 sorties 5.7 Hours

Seven aerial refueling were accomplished.

CREW OF JOLLY GREEN 64

Capt Mark C. Schibler	AC
Capt Thomas J. Laut	CP
TSgt Eldridge M. Neal	RS
SSgt Michael L. Walker	RS
SSgt George M. Holland	AP
Sgt John C. Lepper	NM

CREW OF JOLLY GREEN 53

Maj Kenneth E. Ernest	AC
Capt Bennie D. Orrell	CP
SSgt Charles D. Morrow	RS
SSgt Gary T. Osborne	RS
AlC Jeffrey A. Fox	AP

CREW OF JOLLY GREEN 60

Capt Dale E. Stovall	AC
1st Lt Stephen R. Connelly	CP
TSgt Rufus B. Russell	NM
SSgt Donald H. Goodlett	RS
Sgt Charles D. McGrath	RS
SSgt Hal Smith	AP

CREW OF JOLLY GREEN 63

Maj David G. Daus	AC
Capt Joel L. Summers	CP
SSgt Raymond Duarte	
Sgt Michael D. Nunes	RS
Sgt Paul C. Perry	RS
Sgt Kenneth D. Novitt	AP

CREW OF JOLLY GREEN 62

Maj Frederick C. Hartstein

Capt Charles M. Swager

Sgt Danny R. Squiers

Sgt William D. Brinson

Sgt Michael D. Voge

AC

CP

NM

RS

RS

KENNETH E. ERNEST, Major, USAF

Assistant Operations Officer

Excerpt from Rescue, June 1972 (with APRS,
18 July 1972 to Jan 1974, Vol VI, Dec 1980) **Pagell**



A RESCUED CREWMAN steps down from a HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant after being pulled to safety from the jungles of southern Laos. He was one of 15 airmen who bailed out of an AC-130 gunship and was rescued by members of the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron.

40th ARRSq rescues Spectre crew

TAN SON NHUT AB, RVN -- All 15 crewmembers of a downed AC-130 Spectre were rescued from Laos in one of the most successful recovery efforts in the Vietnam war.

The gunship was hit by communist antiaircraft artillery fire while on an interdiction mission over the lower panhandle of Laos. Although the aircraft was seriously damaged, the gunship pilot managed to keep the plane airborne long enough for all crewmen to bail out.

The 15 men successfully parachuted to the ground, and forward air controllers established radio contact with all the men. Each airman's location was pinpointed and rescue aircraft remained overhead throughout the night to assure the safety of the downed men.

At first light, the rescue forces began the actual recovery. The first man was picked up at 8:30 a.m. by an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant commanded by Maj. Kenneth E. Ernest.

Other rescues were made by helicopters commanded by Majors Frederick C. Hartstein and David G. Daus and Capt.

Dale E. Stovall. Captain Stovall recovered eight of the downed airmen.

Sgt. Charles D. McGrath and SSgt. Charles D. Morrow descended on jungle penetrators to aid injured men on board the rescue helicopters.

The last crewman was hoisted aboard at 10:30 a.m. Several men experienced minor injuries during bail out. However, one airman did sustain a leg fracture and another a wound in the neck. None were listed as serious.

The four rescue helicopters, from the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, experienced no ground fire in the rescue operation.

41st aircrew catches rocket nose cone

Turey, was waiting at 18,000 feet for the descending nose cone.

The rocket pushed the cone to an altitude of 41,000 feet where the nose separated and parachuted toward earth.

Immediately spotting the parachute, the recovery crew flew two inspection passes to make sure the parachute had deployed properly and there are no irregularities in the payload (nose cone).

They then made ready for the catch.

During the recovery, the rear ramp of the aircraft is opened and two 25-foot long poles connected by a cable with grappling hooks are extended out at a downward angle. The cable is attached to a winch which acts like the drag on a fishing rod.

Satisfied with the inspection passes, Major Turey made his first recovery pass. He flew a few feet above the

parachute, allowing the hooks to grab it. The cable disengaged from the poles and played out from the winch to absorb the shock and prevent the line from snapping.

Within 10 minutes the nose cone was safely hauled aboard the aircraft.

Crewmembers manning the recovery equipment were MSgt. Edward Anderson, Technical Sergeants Norm Taul and Grady Coleman, and Sgt. Oakley Allen.

~~SECRET~~

Interview with Lt Col J.H. Kyle, Chief, Special Operations, Hq PACAF,
11 July 72. (S)

"There were 15 crewmembers aboard Spectre 22. After the aircraft was hit, the pilot gave the bail out order. Two crewmembers left immediately. The remainder of the crew left later (about 10-15 minutes). This resulted in a separation of about 50 miles between the first and last of the crew.

The first two were picked up by Air America and taken to Pakse. They had gone down in the Steel Tiger area.

Spectres were used though the night to locate the positions of the downed aircrew. The information was passed on reducing the confusion when it came time to pick them up."

~~SECRET~~

Footnote # 88

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Interview: Author with Captain Richard L. Fuller, Information Officer,
3ARRGp, TSN, 4 April 1972.

"As of midnight, 31 March 1972, the 39ARRSq at Cam Ranh Bay was inactivated. Previous to that time, the unit (Less four aircraft and approximately 100 personnel) had become part of Det 4 of the 3ARRGp and was flying out of Korat RTAFB".

"As of the same time (31 March 1972) there were four Dets in SEA solely to provide the LBR function at five bases. The Det at TSN was expanded to provide LBR at both TSN and Bien Hoa".

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Footnote #

2, 11

PART I - Background

NAME: Falk, Weylon O.

GRADE: Captain

SSAN: [REDACTED]

Type Aircraft: AC-130H

Crew Position: Aircraft Commander

Experience in Aircraft: 4,000 hours total flying time, 450 combat hours, 91st mission.

Survival/EPE Training: 5AF Water Survival School, Numazu, Japan; Land Survival School, Fort Ord, CA; Pacific Jungle Survival School, Clark AB, Philippines; Theater Indoctrination,

Survival/D&E Equipment: Standard; 2 radios, 2 water bottles.

Pre-mission Briefing: Intelligence briefing was given in fine form including S&R posture for the area of operation; authenticator data was on file.

Circumstances Lead to the Incident: Capt Falk described the mission as follows: "We were scheduled for [REDACTED] to it. We went to [REDACTED] and we were equipped with [REDACTED] and had fire control problems all night. We found three or four trucks that we had to be validated in that area. We went around a couple trucks with [REDACTED] We finally started throwing some [REDACTED] and we finally got two blowers. We had used up about two hours of our FOT and hadn't even been to [REDACTED] we decided to go to [REDACTED] and just forget these guys in [REDACTED]. So we went to [REDACTED]. Up to this point we had picked up no [REDACTED] which is very unusual for [REDACTED]. We went into [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED] side. We were about 7500 AGL and we were there because of fire control problems. The overcast, even with 100 percent moon, was causing [REDACTED] to have trouble seeing the ground and picking up targets. [REDACTED] was bad from almost the beginning of the mission when it started losing [REDACTED]. We picked up one truck under a small cloud layer and had an extremely [REDACTED], even as bad as it was, but the cloud layer moved in and we couldn't shoot at it. Because of this we adjusted our altitude with [REDACTED] information so we were at approximately 7500 AGL and 10,500 FSL. We left that truck and moved over to another one at about fifteen or twenty minutes prior to the end of our FOT which was from 1500 to 2200. We started to shoot at this truck and, after two or three orbits, started picking up [REDACTED] 57mm from three or four guns. They were in the vicinity of us but none never really accurate--we never broke. [REDACTED] called up and asked if we had escorts. We had three aircraft assigned to us, but there was a mix up of what they thought our FOT was--they thought our FOT was running to [REDACTED]. In all likelihood they came to [REDACTED]

as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] it. The one [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] was [REDACTED]

Footnote # 87

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

Interview with Major James C. Harding, Operations Officer for the
1SOS, NKP. 27 March, 1972 (at NKP)

Q. What new tactics do you see for SAR operations if the A-1 force is reduced to 10 UE?

A. Our SAR tactics with fewer Aircraft are going to have to change drastically. The present tactic is to pretty much launch the Sandys (at least 4) as soon as anything has happened in the area--whether we have an objective or not--especially if it's a reasonably safe area. By that I mean can we get in and out without the danger of a SAM, MIGs, or real heavy AAA. For this reason, we often waste resources because we will get four Sandys launched out to the area and find that either there is no objective, or that it may take some time before we can even reasonably hope to ~~attempt~~ attempt a rescue. For this reason, we use forces a lot of the time that we shouldn't be using. One of the things we are going to have to decide very soon (after losing A-1s) is that we will not be able to launch the force until we have an objective; if we continue to launch four, or even two Sandys, there is a good possibility that we could run out of resources--Sandys--before we have an objective identified and are able to get out to the area, or get into the area to effect the rescue. Some instances that have pointed this out to us very vividly have been aircraft that have been shot down in NVN or along the trail where they never did find an objective--did not hear a beeper, or get any type of a chute sighting from the aircraft that were in the area. We went there and trolled around in the area for quite some time, exposing ourselves to some quite heavy defenses ~~which~~ for which we, ourselves, have no defenses--such as SAMS and MIGS-- we have no RHAW gear in the A-1 nor in the OV-10, and for this reason we have to depend on Guard to have this information relayed to us. This takes 5 or 10 minutes which is too long. We should not be in these high-threat areas unless there is an absolute objective we know we are going to try to rescue, then of course we will go on in-- whatever the risk, we'll take it if we have to. In the case of NVN, we have already suggested that the fast FACs--F-4s or F-105s--determine if there is an objective, and if there is one then we will launch and go up there by the best route possible and attempt to get to the survivor. Another thing that we've asked--suggested that they do, is that they try to neutralize the area as much as possible, although we realize we can't wait too long or we will lose the survivor. We feel that we will only compound the problem by putting our slow-movers--the Jollys and the Sandys--if we put them in there too quick we'll get them shot down and then we're going to have to pick up those same people. We try to get the fast facs to go in and determine the threat, and if the threat is too great, to try to partially neutralize it with fast mover aircraft. The SAR we just had is perhaps an example of putting the slow-movers in a little too soon--a little too low--we got one of our Sandys shot down and another heavily damaged--it'll be out of commission for two or three months. We feel that the FACs knew this area well enough that they could have possibly neutralized some of the heavy AAA that they knew was in the area prior to putting the Sandys over the scene of the survivors. This might have possibly saved us at least one of the A-1s. Now there is only one way to check the area to see if it is survivable for the Jollys and that's to go down close in the area and troll for groundfire and, if getting any,

DECLASSIFIED ~~SECRET~~

Footnote # 21, 49, 53, 60, 93

~~SECRET~~

having the FACs up over us spotting it and putting strikes in on it. This is pretty touchy business, and it's O.K. as long as it is ~~pretty~~ fairly small caliber AAA, but if it's 37 or 57 very close to the vicinity, then we're stepping out of our area --we just can't combat that. We've got to stay at medium altitude--eight or nine thousand feet until it is determined that this threat is pretty ~~much~~ ^{well} stopped. We can't be sure, but if there

is at least a pretty good idea that it is down there, than we should at least attempt to do this. That pretty well handles the high-threat areas, and the other areas--on several SARs we were launched out and it was later determined that there was no objective, the aircraft went, no beeper, chute, or voice contact. We would get to the area and about all we did was waste flying time, getting the aircraft airborne and out to the area and found that there was no need for us when we got there. We were launched "on the come" you might say. In other words we were launched right away in case there were survivors, ~~we would then be~~ ^{we would then be} need to make the pickup as soon as possible. That was fine as long as we had a large Sandy force to draw on. But with a much smaller Sandy force, we are going to have to change. We are going to have to let the FACs--the Nails, the King birds, somebody else determine if there actually is a survivor out there before we can afford to launch the Sandys. In other words we are going to have to turn the search phase over to other aircraft. We can no longer afford the luxury of searching for the survivor, if we don't have some sort of contact with him before we go out. If we are on an orbit, this a different situation. If we have been launched on a daily Sandy orbit, we are sitting our alert in an airborne posture then there's no harm in our going over and searching for him. One of the main reasons I feel that this a workable solution is ~~that~~ because the Nails have as good a capability as we do for searching for survivors. They have the same radios as we do, plus they have a much better knowledge of the area. With the drawdown in forces, and the elimination of the Hobo lines, we don't do as much flying in the area, and a lot of our pilots are new and don't have a familiarity with the terrain that some of the Sandy pilots who have flown the Hobo missions have. For this reason, the FACs are probably better suited to search for the survivor. They can give a general idea of where he is and they know the general area where the groundfire can be expected. Plus, the Pave Nails have the LORAN which gives them the capability to absolutely pinpoint the position once they have spotted the survivor. Also, the Pave Nails have two crewmembers which enable them to keep track of little things that might get by a Sandy pilot. I don't think that the Sandy Birds can be replaced with another aircraft. As far as I am concerned, the only airplane that can replace the A-1, for the role it has to do, is a new A-1. The jets don't have the loiter capability nor can they withstand the groundfire that we have to take when we are trolling the area prior to bringing in the Jollys. We have armor plating around the pilot and the engine which enables us to withstand most any small arms hits and still get the aircraft back to the field. The A-37, the F-4, the A-7--all of these aircraft are very vulnerable to even the smallest of small arms fire if they take a hit in the engine section. Also, the pilots of these aircraft have little protection. Only the A-7 can get slow enough to get down and do the job that we have to do to get the survivor out.

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

[Major Harding goes on to discuss some other missions of the A-1s at NKP--they are too sensitive to be included here. The main point is that the A-1s should support them, but most likely will not be able to after a reduction to 10 A-1s is accomplished. Ed.]

"Of course our tactics in all of this depends pretty much on the ordnance we carry. The LAU-3 is a high-drag, very heavy weapon. For this reason, at low airspeeds, it is difficult for us to jink as much as we should be doing. We do need forward-firing ordnance for the SAR mission and we have asked that the SUU-23 be validated for use on the A-1. (External 20mm gun capable of 6,000 rounds a minute.) This would eliminate the need for us to carry the LAU-3s (2.75" rockets). Although the SUU-23 is a ~~low-drag weapon~~ heavy weapon it is a low-drag one. Weight is not a problem on the Sandy load as much as drag. Hopefully, we will get it validated in the near future. It has been approved by PACAF. Eliminating the LAU-3s would provide two more stations on each Sandy to carry smoke-producing weapons (M-47s). It has been the practice to request two A-1 smoke aircraft to provide the smoke during the extraction. With the Sandys providing their own smoke, the special smoke aircraft would not be needed which will be of great importance as the A-1 force decreases.

Essentially, to summarize what I've been talking about, the problem is going to be very intense because we are going to have very few aircraft. We are faced with a training problem because the new pilots we get in will not have the advantage of flying Hobo strike missions to get familiar with the area and the aircraft. Our Sandy pilots will be flying less because we also flew them on the Hobo lines and we will therefore be faced with a lower pilot proficiency. We hope to solve this by flying more Sandy orbits--pulling our alert airborne. We have already got permission to withdraw some of our forward operating aircraft. Joker has approved our bringing back the Sandy alert from DaNang. This will put six on alert ~~and~~ at NKP and improve the chances of flying more airborne alert. We will continue to keep two alert aircraft at Ubon to give us quicker reaction to the Southern trail. Also we will rotate these aircraft every three days instead of five which will provide more sorties for training.

The big thing that I think is going to make the difference is if we can continue to turn over more of the search phase to the Nails and the King bird and judiciously use the Sandy force; we may be able to continue. I think it is a very unrealistic force posture that they have given us in that they expect us to maintain an adequate Sandy alert posture with insufficient aircraft. When we had 21 aircraft, it depleted our resources just trying to keep aircraft over the survivor for 12-14 hours. As we go down lower and lower we are reaching the point where we will have to get another type aircraft or more A-1s."

Teams traveled around SEA briefing the crewmembers on what to expect from the SAR forces and what they should do to assist the SAR forces during a rescue operation.

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

INTERVIEW

MAJOR KENNETH E. ERNEST, pilot with the 40ARRSq, NKP, by Lt Col Lowe,
Project CHECO. 26 Mar 1972 at NKP.

Question: Would you describe the pickup of Ashcan 01?

Maj Ernest: On Ashcan 01, we went in on a Saturday and worked most of the day trying to get in. We were thinking of how to get in. The cloud level up to the survivor's position was only about 500 feet. The survivor's position was in the clouds. Other problems were that the wind was 30-35 knots gusting, coming over the hills, and primarily the first day we were concerned with finding a clear route into the survivor--some valley where we could stay VFR long enough to get up to him.

We were using the aircraft doppler as a position to head for. We would fly over over the survivor with the Sandy or one of the Nails and zero zero our doppler and then try to get back to him under the clouds--dive through a hole and get back. We were just not able to do it that first day. In one instance we went too far south and got some ground fire--we got something like eight hits, but it didn't bother the airplane.

That night we got together--the crew, the weather people, and the Sandies that were flying that day--trying to come up with a better way to do it, and there just wasn't any way to do it except waiting for the weather to clear. After we quit talking that night, I got together with the crew and we decided to just go in in the weather--in a hover right on the trees. And I briefed everybody on how I wanted them to pass our position. We knew at times there would just be one person who would have sight of a tree, and everybody else would be IFR and I would just fly on that one person.

If someone sighted something on one side of the airplane or in the

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

Footnotes 31, 69, 73

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

rear he would say 'clear' in that area. That meant that he had something in sight and then he would start giving 'move left five feet' and I'd have my eyes out front hoping I could catch something. Then we would leap to it and wait for something else to clear in front and then leap to that tree.

Question: Did your rotor wash help clear the clouds?

Maj Ernest: No--because with the 35 knot winds, it was just constantly blowing new clouds in. It was to our benefit to have the high winds as far as visibility was concerned, because you would get thick parts and then it would thin out to where maybe you could see 50 feet. If you could get 50-foot visibility and spot a tree up ahead, then you could move up to it and wait again. We did this--I guess it took us about an hour to get two miles--we started two-three miles south of the survivor and worked up the ridge to him.

Question: I understand that during the run-in to the survivor, you came across the body of Ashcan 01 Bravo.

Maj Ernest: Right. By accident, we just happened to spot the parachute of Bravo. I thought it might be Alpha but he was saying 'no'; I still had to come. [Major Ernest explained the run-in from south to north, using the Pave Nail FAC to give angle-off to the survivor through DF cuts on both the survivor and the Jolly. The Jolly also had its doppler set at the survivor's location, and the survivor further aided the effort through voice transmissions to the Jolly. Additionally the Sandy orbited behind the Jolly assisting with azimuth information to the survivor³. While we were doing this we happened to fly over Bravo.

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED
~~SECRET~~

He was in a tree--about 50 feet off the ground and he was in about the middle of the tree. The tree was about 75 feet or taller. So I hovered on the tree--hovered on him and watched him. We had a flight surgeon on board and he was looking at him and, of course, the PJ was looking at him and I was trying to think; just how safe is it to lower a PJ on a pendulum swinging back and forth trying to get him into Bravo. It was real hard to hold the helicopter in a hover. You're talking about changes in altitude of 5-10 feet due to the gusts; you're talking about moving back and forth as gusts hit you--you have this man going up and down and swing^{ing} back and forth. It's a big decision to make. We watched this man for about five minutes and our rotor wash was swinging him back and forth and he was hitting against the tree and he made no motions of life. Also, we had a good idea of what had happened to Alpha. He had hit the trees so hard that he had been ripped right out of his chute. That's why he had a real bad arm. He had hit the trees so hard, he had kept going and his chute had stayed in the tree--he just fell out of his chute. So, we figured Bravo had hit pretty hard too. Their chutes as they lay over the trees were not completely opened--you know when a normal chute hits the trees it just fluffs open. These were thin...

Question: Like a streamer?

Maj Ernest: Like a streamer. And we knew that they had bailed out pretty low. Talking to Alpha, they were hit, and he blacked out and never talked to Bravo after that. He blacked out and when he woke up they were in an inverted spin, coming apart and he punched out, and he said he knew he hit the trees and he hit the ground right after that. So, I

DECLASSIFIED ~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

looked at it and I talked it over with Sandy and I said, 'look, we accidentally found Bravo and we've got to make a decision on whether I'm going to pick him up or not because I may not be able to find him if I try to come back'. O.K., what happens if I lower the PJ down there--we only have one penetrator--what happens if I get him or the penetrator stuck down there in the trees? We would have to abort the whole mission because we wouldn't have a penetrator to pick up Alpha. That's one thing; also risking the life of the PJ going after a dead man--that's the second thing. Also--here's a live man. Let's get him. Let's get him right now.

It was almost impossible to get back to Bravo due to the fact that you can't back up a helicopter with all that wind. You can't turn your tail to it either. Getting back to him would have been pure luck, and just as we were thinking of all this, the flight surgeon said, 'Ken, he's dead. He just can't be alive'. I asked Sandy to take that into consideration. I was talking back and forth to Sandy who, of course, was Randy [Captain Edward R. Wayne, pilot with the 150S] and he agreed that it wasn't worth it. We decided to get the one we knew was alive, and not to risk losing the penetrator or the PJ, and we would have risked getting Alpha also because if I had lost the penetrator, we would have had no way to pick him up. That would have meant that another bird would have had to come in and do the same thing, or I would have had to come out and get another bird and go back in and I didn't want to do it again. It was a real problem--I'd never done it before. I'd probably do it again, however, there's a lot of briefing, a lot of

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

crew coordination. I didn't make the pickup. The guy on the ground helped so damned much. His vectors--stuff like that, trying to get me to him. Little helpful hints on what the area looked like and what to look for.

Also, the co-pilot made sure I didn't hit anything forward left, and the PJ in the tail kept the tail clear, and the flight engineer kept the right side clear and the other PJ kept the left side clear. There were many, many times where I saw nothing but white, and someone would say 'hold' and then something like, 'O.K., move a little bit left', and I would just think of moving a little left.

Question: How long did you say you were in the weather?

Maj Ernest: About an hour.

Question: An hour to go two or three miles?

Maj Ernest: Right.

Question: Would you now discuss the Limited Night Recovery System?

Maj Ernest: As far as the INRS is concerned, we have a system that right now works and I would say it is 90-95 percent reliable, as far as doing what it is designed to do. What it is designed to do is to pick up a survivor who is on the ground, in the clear where we have slant range vision on him in rolling to flat terrain. What this negates is picking someone out of the trees, because then you can't see a survival beacon--a beacon with an IR light--through trees. And you can't hover a helicopter by the side of a mountain. Things like that. So what we have is a limited system. The limited system we have right now works real well in a limited area.

DECLASSIFIED

5
~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

The problem with rescues over here is that if a survivor goes down in a friendly area he is going to be picked up immediately. If he goes down in the clear in an unfriendly area, he is going to be picked up immediately by the enemy. In the 25 or 30 rescues in which I was intimately concerned, the survivor has lived and he has survived because he has gone down in a bad area, in other words on the side of a karst or in a heavily wooded forest. The ones that get caught are the ones that go in on the trail and are in the clear and are just immediately scooped up. That's the trouble with the system. It's not capable of picking someone up from the trees, and it is not capable of picking someone up from the side of a karst.

Question: What is your opinion when people say they are skeptical of the system?

Maj Ernest: O.K. When people hear of us complaining of having to pull alert with the night system--let me rephrase that. When people hear us complain about the night system, what we are complaining about is that we do not have a complete night system. We are not bad-mouthing the present system that we have, however, a lot of people think we can make a night pickup anywhere with the system and that's not true. People here like the system--it's a good system--but we don't want to be put in the position of having to use it in an area where it can't be used. Of course we are constantly justifying; 'how come you didn't go in?' Well, we couldn't go in--we didn't pinpoint the survivor. 'How come you didn't go in?' We couldn't go in because they dropped area denial munitions in the area which negates the use of our night equipment.

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

With a little money, we have terrain avoidance to think about. Finding the survivor is a big problem--we have to spend money on a better ADF system or a better system of locating the survivor electronically. Our visual means of locating the survivor are rather limited in that we can't pick up that strebe until we get into about a mile or a mile-and-a-half from the survivor. Those then are the problems.

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

INTERVIEW WITH MAJOR ROBERT E. BELLI

By Mr. Melvin Porter, Project CHECO, SEA
At U-Tapao USAF Hospital, Thailand, 30 Jan 72

(INTERVIEWER'S NOTE: Major Belli was the pilot of an F-105G Iron-hand aircraft, "Ashcan 01" shot down by a SAM in the Mu Gia Pass area at 1123H, 10 December 1971. Rescued the following day, he was hospitalized at U-Tapao for a shattered left arm and totally dislocated right knee. Major Belli was a member of the 388th TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand.)

PORTER: Can you describe what happened?

BELLI: Well, we had Fan Song and launch indications, and I started evasive action, but it got us. It really got us. I think we took it somewhere near the aft of the aircraft because we really went immediately totally out of control. I called for the backseater to get out, and then I tried to reach for the handles. The negative "G"s made it almost impossible to reach them, but I do remember finally grabbing them. And that's all I do remember until I woke up on the ground.

PORTER: Nothing about the ejection itself, the opening shock?

BELLI: Nothing. I woke up on the ground--they told me it was about 15 minutes later--I'd been unconscious that long--and looked up and there were my shroud lines hanging about ten feet above me like spaghetti. They'd torn completely loose. I could see my parachute. I guess I came through the trees pretty hard because my chute was torn completely in half--half of it was in one tree and the other half in another.

The first thing I tried to do was undo my harness, and that's when I found out my arm was broken. I was moving my fingers to get them up to my harness, and they moved, but my arm didn't. Then I saw that ^{my} right leg was at a funny angle, and found that I couldn't

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Footnote * 65, 66

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

use it either. Oh, it moved alright, about 360 degrees in any direction, but I had no control whatever over it, so I knew that I was going to stay right there until either they rescued me or something else happened.

PORTER: Were the "bad guys" around you?

BELLI: I don't know. There was quite a lot of rain and the winds were gusty, and there were a lot of noises that made me think they were searching for me, but pretty soon I figured it was tree branches and rain on the leaves, and decided to try not to worry about it. If they came, they came, but I wasn't going anywhere anyway.

I got on the radio--oh, there was one of my problems, I couldn't reach up to turn the beeper off, and that caused a little bit of trouble, but anyway I got in contact with the people above me, and that's when they told me I'd been out for fifteen minutes. Well, they set up a SAR effort but couldn't get in that day, and finally told me they would have to give it up because of weather and darkness, but they'd be back first thing in the morning. That didn't feel too good because I was already wet and cold, but there wasn't much we could do about it, so I said Roger to that.

I kept in contact with King throughout the night, and first thing in the morning the SAR people showed up again, and we said Good Morning, and they got to work. The Jolly homed on me, and I guess they had to work from tree to tree, the weather was that bad. The rain and winds were still gusty, and I could see the cloud cover right over the top of the tree canopy. Anyway, they finally got over me, and they asked

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

if I wanted a PJ to come down. I told them I guessed one had better since I wasn't in much of a condition to help myself. Actually, they sent two down, which was probably lucky because I think it took both of them to get me on the penetrator. It was kind of funny, because I could see the penetrator with the PJs coming down, and I could see the bottom of the helicopter but the top of it was in the clouds. I thought that chopper pilot must be having one helluva tough time trying to hover there, with the gusty winds, and him just about IFR. Anyway, they got me on the penetrator and pulled me aboard.

I remember they got me in, and this one man started to fool around with my arm and leg, and I told him, "Don't touch a damned thing until we get to a doctor." And he opened the front of his flying suit, and sure enough, he was a flight surgeon. So I let him do what he could. Then we flew back to NKP, and I guess that's about all there was to it there. Then they evacuated me down here and went to work on me.

(INTERVIEWER'S NOTE: Doctors at U-Tapao had to perform extensive surgery on both Major Belli's arm and leg. All the tendons and ligaments in his right knee had to be reattached. His left arm, still in a cast six weeks after his experience, had a livid scar coming up out of the cast and curling back down around his shoulder. Doctors had had to cut in order to move a four inch section of his upper arm bone down from his shoulder where it had been jammed and reset the bone in place. He commented on the scar, and said he thought he would have a Cobra tattooed on top the scar, since its shape resembled a cobra rearing to strike. Major Belli was in excellent spirits, recounted those portions of his experience that he remembered with full clarity, and was quite articulate. He indicated he would be flying again as soon as the doctors indicated he could.)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

II

Interview with Captain Edward R. Jayne, pilot with 1SOS, NKP,
25 March 1972. (At NKP)

Discussing command and control for SAR operations

There are basically two problems. One is a continuing command and control problem that people spoke of long before I got here. Secondly, the threat has increased. We need to get the same forces deployed for the SAR operation but, due to the increased threat, command and control becomes even more critical. I can give you a couple of examples. We have ordnance now that we can put very close to ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ a man that can partially or completely seal him off. The problem is that this type of ordnance is not normally carried on daily fragged missions. So, we have to have a system that gets this stuff up-loaded on an airplane--in some cases it requires that ordnance be down-loaded first--get the crews briefed and get the stuff out to the area at the time specified by the on-scene commander. At times, when the man lands on the route structure itself, this timing becomes critical. So, the way the system works, the request has to go from the Sandy (OSC), to the King bird, to the RCC that is controlling the SAR. ~~THAT'S~~ From there to Joker at TSN; from Joker to Blue Chip, there in the same building; from Blue Chip back to the appropriate wing to get the ordnance loaded. Very often, there are major delays at the RCC level, at the Joker level, at the Blue Chip level in deciding whether or not the OSC request is a valid one and what the priority is. The way the regulation reads now, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~AS~~ as far as air assets are concerned, is very clear. The SAR effort will receive all air assets necessary to conduct the mission. That sounds very broad and very noble, but you run into obvious problems. Speaking of command and control problems, this is a big bottleneck in getting the forces on sooner. Basically, we've found that the people in the ABCCC know the frags, know the airplanes, and know the ordnance. They control the war every day and are ^{able} able to get the stuff on the scene, if they are allowed to do so.

When a SAR starts, whatever ordnance ~~that's~~ available is used, but where the trouble starts is when those aircraft return to base for turnaround. They are often scheduled for special missions such as gunship escort, sensor laying, the cancellation of which may set the schedule back 24 hours or a week, and we realize the matter of priorities comes into play here. However, whatever ~~is~~ decision is made, it is taking unbearably long. While our requests for special ordnance are met, we can conceive of a SAR where we aren't going to get enough. The Nail 31 SAR on the 18th and 19th of March was a case where, if we hadn't picked them up in that hour or two, we would have run out of ordnance simply because we would have exhausted that portion of the force that was made available to us.

Q. Were you low Sandy on the Nail 31 SAR?

A. I was low Sandy for about 3½ hours on the first afternoon and, while I was OSC, I got not only all the available ordnance in the area, I also got the special ordnance that had been requested earlier in the day.

~~SECRET~~

Footnote # 63

DECLASSIFIED

SECRET

Had we not put that ordnance in--I'm talking here primarily of area denial-type weapons-- if we hadn't put that ordnance in, if it had not been available, those men would not have made it through the night, because they were right in the middle of an enemy storage area, bivouac area, an extremely large concentration of enemy troops and AAA. It was not a situation where you could just send the rescue force out, suppress fire, and put the helicopter in to pick them up. It's been very difficult for us, the rescue force, to impress upon people that this type of SAR is very different. They see us go out and pick people up in 30 minutes in some cases--they see helicopters pick people up without escort in some cases depending on the area. But in this case I think the facts speak for themselves as to the degree of the threat in that we lost one A-1 without an hour, and another A-1 will be out for a number of months due to battle damage, within the course of two hours, and for 24 hours we took an amount of AAA that made it impossible to make a pickup except under very special conditions--and these conditions are predicated upon our getting that special ordnance. So, everytime we make an ordnance request, or any request, we're faced with that piece of information filtering back through the system. It doesn't do any good to complain about command and control problems unless you can foresee some suggestion as to how to make it better. We believe now, today, March 1972, with the SAR forces concentrated here at NKP, that we can have a man from this wing on the ground, who can act as a SAR controller--what we call our SAR coordinator. It started out as a rather informal job that dealt primarily with our A-1 assets, but now it's ~~become~~ ^{become} significantly because we have the other forces here with us. In this situation, we feel that, between the people on the ground here and the normal ABCCC, we can probably accomplish what we're doing now in a somewhat simpler manner. This is not to say that if you are in a bigger deployment and in a different tactical situation as we were, say two years ago, when we had SAR forces all over Southeast Asia, here you would need some sort of centralized control. But perhaps through the use of ABCCC, who daily has the job of coordinating forces, would be better than to impose on the system a separate ~~command~~ ^{command} and control, which really, unfortunately so, is out of contact with the combat units and our operation. It has much less feel for why we ask for what we ask for; what our problems are; why we can't do certain things, and why we can do certain things. And it's a continuing education process between us and the command and control system to try to explain these things to them, and after each SAR we find we're sort of back where we started."

Q. You mentioned at the beginning that there were two problem areas. The first, command and control, you've pretty well covered. What was the second?

A. "The second is the problem of the threat. It is no longer an operation where two A-1s, or four A-1s and two Jolly Greens go out and make a pickup, in a lot of cases. The concept of the SAR force being limited to those two aircraft is long behind us. We were able to do some innovating here, partially because some people had some foresight and partially due to circumstances. We found that the new OV-10 capability--

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

the Pave Nail--gave us some remarkable abilities that we did not have before. We found ~~that~~ the combination of the Pave Nail and the laser-guided bomb capability that we are much better able to deal with large enemy AAA than we were in the past. We found that with LORAN delivery capability combined with the Laser again to pinpoint the survivor, we can protect him and drop ordnance around him even in IFR ~~weather~~ conditions. Unfortunately in the last five years we've lost a lot of survivors--captured--because of weather not allowing the pickup. We've rescued three aircrews this year already out of weather, in each case, initially so bad that the A-1 could not get under the clouds--between the clouds and the trees. One of these people was picked up out of that kind of weather by a helicopter, a very unusual situation, and one that existed only because of the Pave Nail's equipment and the Jolly Green's equipment.

What we try to do now, the SAR concept has changed, ~~is~~ to take advantage of this. When we are scrambled on a SAR mission we hope to have an on scene FAC who knows the area. We use him to give us a briefing on the area and to put strikes in while we're working. We also try to scramble or divert a Pave Nail to the area immediately. The first thing we want to do is get the man's position down to the last foot. We do a visual search and a communications search and hopefully, at some point, we are able to pinpoint the man's position exactly, so the R.O. in the Pave Nail can see the guy on his scope--mark his parachute, a tree, something to give us an exact location. Because if we can do this, problems of weather coming in or nightfall, don't limit us. We can still protect the man with ordnance. We can work close to him--close, meaning around 1,000 meters--and drop ordnance without fear of injuring the survivor. Now, we've done this four or five times now and in no case have we come near to endangering the survivor by dropping ordnance. We've also found out that we can make a weather pickup in an area in which the helicopter is not vulnerable. We can do this by finding a man from above the clouds simply by sound, by marking that position with the LORAN on the Paved Nail, by bringing the Jolly overhead and zeroing the Jolly's inertial navigation system--his doppler system--then letting the Jolly go down underneath the clouds by using DF cuts on the radio coordinate between the survivors position and the Jolly's position and see if you can get the two to match up simply by positioning one aircraft on the heading to the survivor and the other 90° off that and the two aircraft continually take cuts ~~on~~ the Jolly. We got this one man out of Ashcan 01 in zero zero weather--the survivor couldn't see the whole helicopter when the pilot got over him. Again, if Paved Nail hadn't been there, there was no way we could have got him, because we couldn't have made the transition between the Sandy knowing over the clouds where the man was on his TACAN, and getting the Jolly under the clouds on the tree-tops to the same position. "

Protection for the survivor.

"We've got our area denial munitions that we've used for a long time, BLUEY 52, CBU-42 mines, CBU-14 gravel; you all these things

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

and the fact that we know where the man is exactly, we build a protective box around him, to keep people from moving in on him. We know for a fact, using TFA sensor information, that we do deny access to an area if we use this stuff properly. We also know that in most SAR cases the man does not land right in the middle of the bad guys and most guys are captured because during the course of 4, 8, 12, or 24 hours, the enemy is able to move over 1 mile, 5 miles, or even farther to pick up the man. So, if we are able to cut the access to the man's position in this way, we make the job a lot easier. We can also deny the enemy the use of gun position, even when we can't kill the guns, by dropping this ordnance on them. The riot control agent disperses rapidly in the rain, is ~~not~~ not long term, and can be completely or partially foiled by use of a gas mask. But it is something that we can keep putting down and, we feel, that in a couple of SARs it has made a difference. We also have the capability when and if the survivor and the Sandy pilot decide that the man is in imminent danger of capture, in other words he has people right on top of him, we can deliver the stuff right on top of him and we have done this and it has worked. It incapacitates the survivor, but we also incapacitate anyone around him. We have equipped the helicopter crews with sufficient protective equipment so that they can go in, put a man down on the hoist, and pick the survivor up. This is a last-ditch effort but we have found that it can work if we have assets available on the tanker, or overhead immediately, when we need it. It also requires pinpoint ordnance delivery.

Q. Was Falcon 74 an example?

A. Yes, we put the BLUE-52 in very close to him. We also put CBU-14 in but it apparently did not get on top of him. The advantage of the CBU-14 is that it has a delayed arming feature that allows you to drop it on the survivor. He has time to clear a little area around and as long as the penetrator can get to him, he is sitting in the middle of a small mine field.

None of these things is going to completely stop the enemy from coming through, but you are going to hinder him, hopefully to the extent that we can get the man out.

So there we have the second point; simply it's an application of our technology against the technology on the other side. We've used the IRON HAND capability to a great extent, we've used the airborne GCI capability to protect us against the MIG threat--on several SARs we had a large MIG threat, but we had the forces deployed to take of that too. The thing is, all of this takes a lot of air assets--it takes a lot of airplanes to give you continuous MIGCAP; It takes a lot of airplanes to give you continuous on-scene IRON HAND; It takes a lot of airplanes to build a protective fence around a man with area denial munitions. It just takes a lot of ordnance and sorties to do this. It's something that we feel we've proven will work, but we're not sure that we will be able to continue doing it, given the fact that we're cutting down the forces.

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

TFA assistance (paraphrased)

Ordnance is fragged directly from 7AF to the TFA. As the regulation states, SAR is high-priority so TFA can easily direct its ordnance to the SAR effort. They make suggestions on where best to cut the roads since they know the area so well. They sometime pick up conversation through the sensor system divulging the enemy's plan. Very helpful.

Q. How about when the enemy holds his fire waiting for the helicopter?

A. When you're deciding it's time to pick the guy up, you have to be very careful, to make sure you have suppressed the fire as much as you can. If the enemy is not going to shoot at you and is going to wait for the helicopter, it complicates the problem. But, you put this problem together with the fact that sometime you are going to run out of your own assets--both A-1s and your fast-moving ordnance support, then you are faced with a tough decision as to when to attempt a pickup. Sometimes waiting is going to hurt you. If you've killed a certain number of the enemy and silenced a certain number of his guns, and then wait without putting in a continuous stream of ordnance, the bad guys may bring in some stuff. In four hours it may be worse than it is now. It's a hard decision and one that nobody can make but the guy that's down there as OSC. But it's going to be harder to make due to our inability to go much past 24 hours.

We have been fortunate, very fortunate this dry season. Every survivor this season that has talked to a Sandy has been rescued. One hundred percent of the guys who have come up on the radio and talked to a Sandy have been rescued.

5
~~SECRET~~