

62-4511

62-4511	COMMAND	WING	UNIT	STATION	FROM	UNTIL	
HH-43B	KACBC			BLOOMFIELD	*		*
HH-43B		CARC	DET.34	BIGGS	**	04/06/1963	**
HH-43B		CARC	DET.32	WEBB	04/06/1963	31/01/1964	
HH-43B		WARC	DET.18	WEBB	31/01/1964	26/05/1965	
HH-43B	KACBC			BLOOMFIELD	26/05/1965	05/10/1965	CONTR. WORK ***
HH-43F		PARC	38 ARS, DET.1	NAKHON PHANOM	05/10/1965	24/11/1965	
HH-43F		PARC	38 ARS, DET.9	PLEIKU	24/11/1965	08/01/1966	
HH-43F	PARRC	3 ARRG	38 ARRS, DET.9	PLEIKU	08/01/1966	28/10/1966	
HH-43F	PARRC	3 ARRG	38 ARRS, DET.9	PLEIKU	28/10/1966	-	****

- * AFHRA-WRAMA-document gives 28 SEP 1962 as acceptance date by the Air Force.
- ** Individual Aircraft History Card gives no date for initial assignment.
- *** Aircraft was one of 6 modified to HH-43F configuration before assignment to SEA ; which was unique, because all other "B" models were modified much later (1971).
- **** Aircraft was lost due to enemy action on a combat mission.
From AFHRA document :

On 28 October Pedro 42 (HH-43F SN 62-4511) on an Army Med Evac mission (DET.9-38-31-28 Oct) near Pleiku was shot down and burned.

Three evacuees and the Flight Mechanic in the rear of the helicopter were killed. Army troops and the Pararescueman (PJ) on the ground helped get the Pilot and Copilot out of the burning wreckage under enemy fire. The PJ, Pilot and Copilot were flown out the next morning by another Pedro helicopter. The Copilot subsequently died from injuries received in the shooting down and crash of the helicopter.

Full mission report : DET.9-38-31-28 Oct (RCC Narrative)

DET.9, 38th ARRSq was notified at 2115 hours on 28 Oct 66 by the AF of the need to med evac nine wounded USArmy soldiers, members of the 25th Inf Div, from 14-06N 107-33E. Three of the wounded

were

listed as critical and it was doubtful that they would make it through the night. JSARC was contacted and told of the circumstances and gave the approval to launch. The secondary crew arrived at the line at 2130. The aircraft were refueled and launched at 2140. The full moon aided in navigation and Plei Djereng was visible from 10 miles East. Contact was made with Compose 02 who was controlling the operation in the

area.

As we came up on channel, Compose 02 was briefing a flight of A-1Es and an AC-47 for air strikes into

the

area just east of the point of pick-up. Compose 02 stated that the air strikes would be held until after the med evac was completed.

Compose 02 led Pedro 42 into the pick up point and the company commander "Cobra 19" (requesting the med evac) ignited a flare to mark his exact position. Pedro 56 maintained an orbit at 4,000 feet, while the AC-47 held 4,500 and the A-1Es held 5,000. Compose 02 orbited at minimum terrain clearance. Pedro 42 established his hover and lowered the hoist with the pararescue specialist and two semi-rigid letters. The trees were 100 to 150 feet and it was difficult to thread the cable down, as it was catching on the tree limbs. Pedro 42 picked up the three most critically wounded and lowered the hoist for the fourth pickup. Pedro 42 had been hovering for approximately 25 minutes at the time. Pedro 56 had requested 42 to give some time prior to leaving the spot so that 56 could make his approach to the spot in minimum time. Prior to raising the hoist, Pedro 42 was told, "Pedro, you better get out, we're" and 56 looked to the spot and saw a white flash. There was no radio transmission from 42 or from Cobra 19. Pedro 42 could be seen burning on the jungle floor. The time was 2240. Compose 02 immediately called in the air strikes for the

area

as planned, napalm and 260 frags. The strikes were directed at an area 100 meters East, 100 meters North and 200 meters South of 42's position. The air strikes by the A-1Es (1st ACS) and the AC-47 (4th ACS)

were

outstanding.

The following events took place almost simultaneously and several details only became known after the pararescue specialist Airman Second Class Allen R. Stamek was picked up later on, 29 October 1966. The attack on Pedro 42 was the start of an offensive thrust by the North Vietnamese Forces. Cobra 19 company was hit with small arms fire. The helicopter crashed through 150 foot trees cartwheeled forward and landed inverted. Airman Stamek and several soldiers rushed to the wreckage, and even though it was burning, they broke through the bubble and extracted the pilot. The fire was too intense in the cabin, and though a trench was dug to get the spilled fuel to run off, they were unable to get the occupants out. The four men in the cabin, three wounded and the crew chief, Airman Second Class Francis Rice perished. While the men extracted the pilot and copilot, the company suffered several WIA by exposing themselves. As soon as the pilots were out of the wreckage, Cobra 19 had hand combat at several positions along the defense perimeter. Airman Stanek reported that the NVN Army made suicidal attacks and resorted to

jumping

into defensive positions. Pedro 56 continued to orbit the area until after the air strikes were completed in

the

hope that we could return to the site and pickup survivors. Cobra 19 transmitted after 15 minutes and

stated

that the fighting was heavy. Pedro 56 stayed in the area for another five to ten minutes and then followed Compose 02 to a forward med evac station, 3-Golf, five miles South of the Plei Djereng Special Forces

Camp.

The company commander told Airman Stanek that he saw the helicopter get shot down. He heard and saw the 81 mm anti-tank rocket leave the tube and followed it to the helicopter. Several of the other men said

that

they saw the rocket leaving a trail of sparks on its way towards the helicopter. The man that fired the

rocket

was killed and the company captured the weapon.

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We landed at 2310 and contacted Pleiku AB via field phone, notifying them of the status. At 2345 Cobra

survived

advised us not to try and return to the area until daylight. We were told that the pilot and copilot had

the crash but were injured. We departed 3-Golf at 0005L 29 October and landed at Pleiku at 0030L. This is the first mission that DET.9 received any hits from ground fire. DET.9 has received ground fire on several previous missions both ACR and med evac, but did not sustain any hits. I have several recommendations to make. First I suggest that a hoist with a faster re-wind capability be installed on the HH-43F. Second, as mentioned on previous narratives, I suggested that the heavy armor vests (bullet

proof)

be made available to all ACR detachments. Though vests are programmed for Sept 67, I feel that this is

not

soon enough. We have a requirement for them now. Several detachments are finding used vests available

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some that the Army has discharged. However, I find this less than satisfactory. Third, I suggest that considerations be given to the continuance of the med evac mission. It is a necessary one, but gives detachments much over exposure to hostile action. I do not feel that Air Rescue Recovery Service can say no to the Army, when they have men dying on the battlefield and we have the only means of saving their lives. It is a high risk mission, but one we must be willing to assume.

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(Continuation of mission the following morning) We departed Pleiku at 0720 on 29 October 66 to pick Captain Vermeys and Lt Bonnell and A2C Stanek and one WIA at the crash site of Pedro 42 (14-06N Weather was VFR with patchy ground fog which presented no problem. We landed at Landing Zone 3- at 0745 for briefing on security of area and arrangement of Gunships. After departing the LZ we were by the FAC, COMPOSE 05, to sneak up a valley from the south at low level to avoid being seen or heard we had at least reached the pickup point. This we did at about 90 knots and established a hover over the at about 0825. We lowered Sgt Jenkins, our Pararescue Specialist, with semi-rigid litters, to help Airman who had been out there all night. We hovered for about five minutes when we heard gunfire and the the ground waved us off. We had the hoist out about 50 feet and A1C Hull, our Crew Chief, began what he could by hand while we took off. No hits were taken. We headed out the same way we had come orbited at the end of the valley for about five minutes and went back in. The FAC advised us that what heard was probably the Gunships making passes nearby and the ground party told us to get out, after experiencing what had happened the night before at this same spot. We went up the valley again and behind a tree over the ground troops. Airman Hull pulled up Lt Bonnell first and then Captain Vermeys. Lt Bonnell was having trouble breathing and blood was bubbling up through the tracheotomy tube so we decided to take them to LZ 3-Golf immediately so they could be evacuated to Pleiku. It took us about 20 to get them into our bird. We were hovering at approximately 100 feet. It was a 10 minute flight to the medical help was waiting. We were low on fuel at this time so we flew to the Plei Djereng Special Forces and refueled before going to pick up the Army WIA, Airman Stanek and SSgt Jenkins.

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We were orbiting to the south waiting to go in when Compose 05 advised us that the area was under again and the ground party said to stay out. During our orbit we were advised that a UH-1 had gone near the river. When we arrived at the crash all crewmen were being picked up by another UH-1. We returned to LZ 3-Golf to wait. While at the LZ a Dustoff pilot asked us to help them pickup eight troops at 14-01N 107-28E. We were told it would be at least an hour before we could get back to our point, so we followed the Dustoff bird to the new area. We had trouble contacting the people on the and orbited for about 30 minutes looking for them. The Dustoff bird had found them and taken two out. We finally spotted their smoke grenade and went in. We were in a hover at 1100 and lowered our last semi-rigid litter. The man we picked up had a bad abdominal wound and couldn't be taken off the litter had no other means to pick up another man, as our forest penetrator had been left on the ground with Sgt

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The other wounded were not critical so we pulled off the spot at 1110 and took our wounded to LZ 3-Golf. Captain Lowery and I decided to return to Pleiku for horse collars and semi-rigid litters. We refueled and returned to Pleiku at 1200 hours. Captain Tyree and Captain Bergold took over during the afternoon. A helicopter and complete crew were due in that afternoon from Nha Trang and Captain Lowery and I were to take their bird and return to LZ 3-Golf.

Pedro 56 was shot down about 3 hours later and our Headquarters advised us to suspend med evac missions. Pedro 98, from Nha Trang, was restricted to LBR only. The recommendation for a high-speed hoist cannot be overemphasized. We were put in a tough position by having to pull off the spot with 50 feet of cable out. With a faster re-wind capability, we would be assured of not dragging the cable through tree tops and reducing the possibility of snapping a badly needed cable.

(Continuation of mission after crew change). On 29 October 66, Pedro 56 had returned to Pleiku at 1200L for needed equipment and a crew change. DET.9 was informed the following med evac requirements existed:

- (1) three seriously wounded plus our two pararescuemen (PJs) at the crash site;
- (2) one seriously wounded at 14-07N 107-40E;
- (3) and 3 critically wounded at 14-00N, 107-29E.

We were given FAC and ground call signs and frequencies. We departed Pleiku at 1300L. When we arrived over Polei Djerang, we contacted the FAC and were advised the first order of business was at the site of Pedro 42's crash. Two gunships that were waiting for us just south of the pickup point were contacted, and the flight flew up the valley to the site. The UH-1s made two low level passes over the area and Pedro 56 made an approach. Because we were heavy on fuel, only one man was recovered and returned to Landing Zone (LZ) 3-Golf. The ground party requested we med evac about 10 more out, but another agency, presumably the Battalion Commander, came up on frequency and advised differently. Because none of the remaining personnel required immediate med evac, he wanted them to wait until a LZ could be hacked out for dust-off aircraft in order to cut down our exposure. We agreed. We then returned and picked up our two PJs and lowered a chain saw and fuel to the ground party. At this point, our fuel state was such that we could pick up one additional man, so we proceeded to the second point before dropping our two PJs off at LZ 3-Golf.

It took several minutes to contact the ground party, and then found they had only a heat stroke victim who was up and walking. They were in pursuit of enemy forces and did not want us to pick up their man as it would alert them to the situation. We explained to the FAC that we could not expose our aircraft for a non-serious case. We then proceeded to LZ 3-Golf to drop off our two PJs and to refuel. The last portion of the mission was to extract 3 critically wounded from a partially cleared LZ at 14-00N, 107-29E. After refueling, we once again linked up with our FAC and our two gunships. We arrived over the LZ and the gunships looked it over. It seemed quiet and the ground party said the area had been quiet all afternoon. He requested we expedite as three of the thirty wounded were fading. While we were on final approach, he reported one man had died. The LZ was not suitable for landing, but we were able to hover below the tops of the trees, greatly cutting down our exposure. We lowered Amn Kelsey to the ground and quickly hoisted two aboard. Sgt

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advised one man was in very bad shape, bleeding badly and had a weak pulse. We immediately took off for LZ 3-Golf. After we off-loaded the two men, we were advised the one had died enroute (later were

the man was the one reported having died while we were on final). After about 10 minutes ground time,

departed, joining up with gunships and FAC over the pickup point. Two UH-1s had been in the LZ for a

hover pickup of 2 men each. Then an Army Hiller came in and picked up two more. By the time we

the area, a CH-47 Chinook helicopter was in the LZ at a low hover. Picking up the rest of the wounded

of the KIA victims, the Chinook departed. We then went in, dropped off three chain saws and picked up Amn Kelsey and one heat exhaustion case. We took off and started our climbout. After flying a short

and climbing to about 7-8000 feet (**comment below**), we came under automatic weapons fire. We heard

shots, then several hits, then several more shots. The enemy gunner had caught us briefly in the middle

5-7 second volley. We called ground fire and maintained course, discovering the helicopter was

not significantly damaged to prevent flight. No control or engine damage was apparent, so we continued

toward LZ 3-Golf, which was now about seven miles away. Meanwhile, during the ground fire, Sgt

saw the Pyrotechnics container take a round. It began smoking, followed by an intense fire between it

the M-16 ammo container. Without hesitation, Sgt Brundridge tossed out the pyro container and

to explode with an approximately tenfoot fireball after falling a few yards from the helicopter. He still had

ammo can in his left hand and noticed a six inch torch flame emitting from a bullet hole. Out it went

Sgt Brundridge's presence of mind and unhesitating action saved the aircraft and crew. About five miles

of the LZ 3-Golf, Amn Kelsey saw smoke trailing from the bottom of the helicopter. I gave a may-day

an immediate power-off approach to a US Army artillery battalion, LZ 3-Hotel, which lay conveniently dead ahead. Sgt Brundridge, with Amn Kelsey holding his legs, hung out the cabin door and by holding

to a bear-paw, scanned the bottom of the helicopter.

A minimum hover to a power on landing was made and the aircraft was quickly evacuated by one very fortunate crew plus med-evacuee. The smoke must have been pyro smoke that had filled the fuel tank

through the bullet hole. A total of seven 12.75 mm bullets had struck the helicopter. One through a

inboard of the spring constant area. It left a 2 inch exit hole, destroying about half of the spar, chord

in that area. One bullet drilled a neat hole through the engine oil inlet line continuing into and out of the

shaft housing and damaging the right tower bearing assembly. One came up through the left forward

through the ARC-34 radio, the pyro container, deflected through the M-16 ammo container, through a

member and was stopped by the co-pilot's shoulder-level armor plating. One bullet came up through the

then back out just above the chin armor, taking off quite a large portion of the PA horn mount.

Two more went through the empanage.

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The helicopter was secured and stripped of equipment, and the crew began coordinating for a ride back to Pleiku. The Air Force Liaison Officer at LZ 3-Golf was contacted and he began coordinating for Army helicopter enroute to Pleiku to stop at LZ 3-Hotel to pick us up. However, Pedro 98, an HH-43F DET.12, Nha Trang had been dispatched into the area and arrived at the scene. The crew, commanded by Lt. William Wirstrom, took three of us with equipment back to Pleiku, and then made another sortie the remaining three members of our unit.

As a result of the series of sorties flown during this mission, several things have come to light.

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The URT-10 radio is not reliable when the PJ is directly under the hovering helicopter. Sgt Jenkins had relay through the company FM radio which was several yards away. This added to the hover time. Although we can never be guaranteed safely, I feel the med-evac mission can be continued with good results by minimizing the danger : (1) by lowering the PJ, all of the litters and a chain saw, the pilots can depart while the PJ completely prepares the eare; (2) the PJ then can cut either an LZ or a low-hover cut down on the exposure radius; (3) while the hoist operator is arranging an evacuee in the rear of the helicopter, the pilot can lower the hoist for the next pickup.

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Note : only when the clearing is large enough, and with the HM checking the progress; (4) and by insuring the ground party understands we only bring out the critical cases, leaving the others to wait an LZ can be built for Army UH-1 dust off aircraft. During this series of missions, the problem of litter spinning was frequently encountered. A 200' rope will be used so the PJ can stabilize the litter from the ground. The litter can be untethered and the rope dropped as soon as the HM lays hands on the litter. It is virtually impossible to take on two or more litter cases when the rear armor doors are closed.

suggests they be relocated further aft. The semi-rigid litters should be rolled up before lowering to the ground by the hoist as rotor wash swings them around too much. A fast wind, variable speed hoist should be developed for combat use. We further suggest that pyrotechnics aboard the aircraft be carried in an armor plated container.

It is the plan of this unit to construct a container from salvaged armor from Pedro 42.

Oct) in

In the afternoon of 29 Oct Pedro 56 (SN 62-4525) flying in support of the mission (DET.9-38-31-28 which Pedro 42 was lost, received a volley of groundfire and had to make a forced landing at Army LZ 3-Hotel, near Pleiku. Crew sustained only minor injuries and was returned to Pleiku that afternoon. HH-43 (Pedro 56) was repaired locally and is back in operation.

Jan 2006 COMMENT made by Mr. Fredrik M. Bergold (LtCol USAF, Ret.) , the Pedro 56 pilot :

"It was 700-800 feet and it was on climb out when we starting taking the hits. We flew directly over the 50 cal as one round went between my legs another behind my back hitting the box of pyrotechnics. The other box held eight hand grenades. Bottom line Sgt Brundridge's quick response saved us."

last update 08/06/2007