

1968

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Unless otherwise specified, this chronology is excerpted from the 7th AF Chronological Summary 1 January thru 30 June 1969 AFHRA K740.052-1

It's code name was "TCH – TKN" which are the initials for the Vietnamese words "Tong Cong Kich – Tong Khoi Nghia." It's English translation is "General Offensive – General Uprising." It became simply known as the Tet Offensive and it led off the year 1968. The plan was to use large numbers of NVA regulars to divert attention from the primary objectives and tie down American forces at Khe Sanh. It was a bold plan that was well thought out in advance by the leaders of the DRV. A massive resupply of VC forces in SVN was completed during the last half of 1967. The VC were issued new weapons, tons of ammunition, and all the other supplies needed to achieve victory. Then on 30 January 1968, local Viet Cong forces would attack and seize a large number of cities throughout South Vietnam. Finally, the citizens of South Vietnam would join the VC and also stage massive uprisings against the South Vietnamese government. The South Vietnamese government would then fall and Vietnam would be reunited under communist rule. Amazingly, U.S. intelligence personnel had a captured copy of this plan in their possession on 25 November 1967. Their conclusion was that it was propaganda and not a real plan. These "intelligence" personnel would live to regret this analysis. *source = Summons of the Trumpet p174*

Most historians agree that 1968 was the pivotal year in the history of America's Vietnam War. The Tet Offensive initiated by the NVA was supposed to be a triumph which would result in a general uprising by the majority of the citizens of South Vietnam and the final reunification of Vietnam by the DRV. A major battle at Khe Sanh was hoped to be another Dien Bien Phu, but at a minimum they would become a diversionary force that would tie up US forces so they could not be used elsewhere during the offensive. That was their plan but it did not work out as intended. Over 85,000 VC and NVA troops unleashed the attack when it was over, approximately 45,000 of them were killed in action. The Viet Cong forces were virtually wiped out and the VC never recovered their strength again. The VC and NVA they were forced to retreat from every city and town

they had initially captured. Most embarrassingly, the citizens of South Vietnam did not rise in defense of the VC and NVA. Instead they fled them, turned them in to ARVN and US forces, and treated them as enemies rather than liberators. It turned out to be the most significant military defeat of NVA forces inside South Vietnam in the entire war. It also turned out to be the NVA's most significant psychological victory of the war.

1968

Late in January 1968, the Communists launched their famous Tet Offensive throughout South Vietnam. They hoped to achieve a dramatic victory that would force the U.S. to accept defeat. First, they attacked Khe Sanh, a U.S. Marine base in far northwest South Vietnam. Nine days later, they attacked throughout the country, striking numerous installations, cities and airfields simultaneously. Initially, the enemy made some gains but under a withering assault from both air and ground, the offensive failed by late February. However, the Tet Offensive had a devastating effect upon the U.S. Many people at home, watching the nightly TV news, were appalled by the carnage they saw; some even believed the Communists had won and the U.S. had lost. As a consequence, the U.S. sent even more troops to South Vietnam in an attempt to accelerate the time when responsibility for the war could be turned over to South Vietnam and the U.S. could withdraw its forces.

5 Jan 68

3rd ARRGp JSRCC relocates into 7th AF Command Post

10 Jan 68

Two NVA AN-2 Colt bi-planes bomb Lima Site 85. Both shot down by helicopter.

15 Jan 68

Operation "Niagara I" began. This was the intelligence collection phase of the air operation to defend Khe Sanh. Operation "Niagara II" the defensive stage began on 22 January.

21 Jan 68

NVA Regulars begin artillery barrage on Khe Sanh followed by a ground attack. They were beaten back but this was the opening blow in an intense battle that was going to last over two months.

27 Jan 68

"Jolly Green Giant" statue arrives Tuy Hoa aboard HC-130. Shipped to Det 2, 37th ARRS Udorn RTAFB

29 Jan 68

During the evening, Det 7, 38 ARRS notified that allied bases near the DMZ were under heavy attack and that casualties were mounting very quickly. Two HH-43's conducted an emergency medivac transporting five critical litter patients. Because the attacks were intensifying, no further medivacs were completed that night. Det. 7 was put on alert for an intensive medivac schedule to commence at first light on 30 January.

US and South Vietnam begin unilateral 36-hour cease fire for Tet religious holiday.

Start of Tet Offensive by NVN, later called the First Offensive.

30 Jan 68

At 0330, DaNang AB was attacked with rockets, mortars, and sappers. 89 rounds hit the base in what was the largest attack by fire on DaNang during the entire war. Immediately after rockets stopped falling, Det. 7 launched two Pedros to search for and evacuate on base casualties. Ground fire was taken by one Pedro, but no hits were received. At first light, Det. 7 was advised by the 903rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron to expect to transload hundreds of casualties that were going to be flown from the front lines to DaNang on C-130's. Once the C-130's were at DaNang, the Pedro's would be needed to fly them to a nearby Naval Support Hospital. Major William Cline was Det 7's commander. He realized that his three Pedro's would not be able to keep up with the medivac requirements. Major Cline contacted the commander of the colocated 37th ARRS and requested that the Jolly Green Giants also support the DaNang medivac requirements. For the next few days, litter patients came in by the hundreds and both the Pedro's and Jolly's conducted around the clock medivacs delivering patients to the NSA and off shore hospital ships

Pleiku AB attacked by 122mm rockets and mortars. During this initial attack on the base, one HH-43 took shrapnel from a near miss. Battle damage consisted of 207 holes in the aircraft. The aircraft was out of service for 23 days.

31 Jan 68

In massive Tet Offensive, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong attack bases all over South Vietnam, and undercut confidence and support for the war by the American public.

The Tet offensive began. The first report of enemy activity was received at 0310 local, stating that the American Embassy was under attack. Ten minutes later, small arms fire hit the Tan Son Nhut east perimeter and Central Security Control declared "Covered Wagon." At that time the TSN base command post advised all personnel to take cover. At 0340, the west perimeter was under rocket and small arms fire. The perimeter fence was penetrated by an unknown number of hostiles and an extensive firefight developed on the south perimeter of TSN. Enemy progress into TSN was stopped at 1125. Sporadic ground fighting in the area continued through 3 February at TSN as it did throughout friendly bases throughout RVN

The attack on the U.S. Embassy Saigon was principally a small scale symbolic action. It succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of those who conceived it. A squad of 19 VC participated in the attack. They were armed with AK-47's, grenades and B-40 grenade launchers. The embassy was guarded by two army MP's and three marines. The VC breached the wall, killing the two MP's. Two marines inside the embassy rushed to the lobby doors and slammed them shut just as the VC arrived at them. The VC fired rocket propelled grenades at the doors and inside the lobby. A brief gunfight ensued as the leader of the VC attempted to enter the lobby of the embassy. The leader of the VC was shot and killed by one of the marines defending the lobby. The remaining VC ceased attempting to enter the Embassy. With their leader dead, they were unsure of what to do next and assumed defensive positions in the courtyard. They had no way of knowing that there were only two very lightly armed marines inside and that they were both wounded. US reinforcements arrived, a gunfight occurred, and three Americans and all of the VC were killed in the courtyard. These VC had killed five Americans and caused minor damage to the Embassy compound and had been wiped out. Back in the USA, the evening news rushed on the air with completely erroneous information. They stated the VC had seized the embassy, were holding it and there was a tremendous firefight going on. Walter Cronkite went on the air and stated "What the hell is going on. I thought we were winning this war." The American press cried that if we could not even hold our own embassy, how could we win the war. In the first 10 days of the Tet offensive, thirty thousand VC would be killed. All of them combined did not accomplish as much as the nineteen VC who attacked the embassy and the American press who put incorrect information on the air. Even today many Americans still believe that the VC actually seized our embassy. The reality is that not one VC ever entered the embassy and the attackers were wiped out. Because of the erroneous US Press reports, the DRV was able to make this defeat into one of the most significant victories of the war. The military aspects of all this were irrelevant. All that mattered was the propaganda value of the attack. The North Vietnamese were masters of propaganda and no one in the press seriously challenged the false claims of the DRV.

Hue was also attacked on 31 January. Unlike Saigon, the ARVN troops defending the city were overwhelmed. The ARVN headquarters was located in a four section stone walled fortress called the "citadel". The citadel was directly in the center of the city. The ARVN commander had put his staff on alert and ordered his troops on increased alert. The ARVN troops defending the perimeter of the city had no way of knowing that 7500 VC had already infiltrated the city and that they did not need to keep the enemy out. They were going to have to recapture the city. The VC owned the city and attacked the citadel. Despite ferocious attacks the best they could do was occupy one half of the fortress. For 23 days, the VC held the city. One of the reasons they held the city as long as they did was a reluctance by US commanders to use massive firepower against the city while tens of thousands of friendly citizens were still inside the city. They became human shields for the VC. In the three weeks the VC held the city, they exhibited the type of government the citizens could come to expect. Any civilian who had worked for the Saigon government was executed. Entire families were executed to intimidate any future cooperation with Saigon. Over 3000 civilians were summarily executed. When the US commanders learned of these massacres, the gloves came off. Fighter bombers

began direct close air support for the troops recapturing the city. If gunfire came from a building it was destroyed. The enemy forces occupying half of the citadel now came under relentless air attack. During the night of 23 February the VC retreated from the city and it was reoccupied by friendly forces. American and ARVN losses were over 500 KIA. The enemy losses were calculated to be between 4000 and 5000.

From 3rd ARRGp Feb 1969 Monthly Commander's Letter – Signed by Col. Paul E. Leske "Literally and figuratively, we wound up the month of January with a bang. The VC attack on 31 Jan was not entirely unexpected but the viciousness of the attack was unparalleled. Here at Tan Son Nhut, 112 VC were killed within the base perimeter, with another 325 KIA just outside the perimeter (actual body count)...At DaNang, the Jolly Greens and Pedro's provided sustained, around the clock, evacuation of incoming casualties being received from the DMZ area and flown to DaNang on C-130's. Over 1,790 casualties were evacuated from DaNang to the 1st MAW Field Hospital and the hospital ships Sanctuary and Repose by the 37th and Det 7 38th in the six day period, starting 31 January; 943 by Jolly Green and 853 by Pedro. Although these missions will not show as saves, the performance of our DaNang people was outstanding. OL-1 39 ARRS is still on the books at Udorn even though the personnel are at Tuy Hoa. Each Monday, the HC-130 is rotated along with crew and four maintenance personnel. This seems to support the position for maintaining an alert aircraft at Udorn."

From 37th ARRS Jan-Mar68 Unit History " During the TET emergency period, 37th medivac support included transport of 975 WIA transloaded from C-130's at DaNang to nearby NSA hospitals. These missions were carried out at all hours, often when both landing areas were under attack and heavy fighting was going on at both facilities. In addition, 5,750 pints of whole blood was flown from the DaNang NSA Hospital to the hospital ships and the NSA hospital at Hue.

February

The US news throughout the month of February was dominated by fighting in Vietnam. Reinforcements were flown to Vietnam, and US casualties in the second week of the offensive were 543 killed and 2547 wounded. Khe Sanh was under heavy bombardment from enemy artillery and the Selective Service announced a draft call of 48,000, the second highest of the war. At the end of the month, news commentator Walter Cronkite stated on air that the war was hopelessly stalemated and only negotiations could extract the US from Vietnam. American forces in Vietnam totaled 525,000 men
source = Summons of the Trumpet, p.204

1 Feb 68

DaNang attacked by 122mm rockets prior to sunrise.

2 Feb 68

JCS authorizes the use of riot control agents during search and rescue operations in Laos. Add p95#7

4 Feb 68

Lt. Lynn Gormley becomes the first WAF assigned to 3 ARRGp as the admin Officer for the 38 ARRS. She was followed here at TSN by Mrs. Delores Alexander, who arrived from Korea to fill the position of secretary to the Commander. Both ladies were billeted in the Auriga Hotel, only two blocks outside the main gate of Tan Son Nhut. On 18 Feb, two 122mm rockets impacted within a block of the Auriga and killed 12 Vietnamese. HQ 3 ARRGp now boasts two female combat seasoned veterans on its staff.

source = 6 Mar 68 3 ARRGp CC monthly letter

7 Feb 68

An HH-43 engaged in a night recovery was shot down. The debriefs of the crew revealed some lessons learned. The two pilots were not wearing their survival vests; but had placed them on the floor, next to their seats. During the crash, the pilots vest and M-16 were pulled from the aircraft as it descended through the trees. The copilots vest had caught on fire and he could not recover it. Although the PJ was wearing his vest properly, when he egressed the aircraft, the HH-43 exploded and his clothing caught on fire. Because he had to strip of the clothing that was on fire, his survival gear was destroyed by fire or lost. Once on the ground, the three crewmembers were without any signaling devices except for a flashlight one of them had in a pocket. Fortunately, an Army UH-1 picked them up.

8 Feb 68

US pilots downed three MiG-21's and two MiG-17's to three US aircraft lost to MiG's. This was the first time since October 1967 that the USAF shot down more MiG's than MiG's shot down US aircraft

9 Feb 68

Final HC-130 modified as "F" model

12 Feb 68

The NVA introduced the PT-76 amphibious tank into the Khe Sanh area. An NVN AN-2 Colt was shot down over friendly territory; the first such aircraft downed by friendly forces.

25 Feb 68

USAF battle casualties were the highest for a single day since the start of the Vietnam War; 38 KIA, 9 non-battle deaths, and 199 WIA

27 Feb 68

Tet was the "turning point" in Americans perception of the war. Up until Tet, the peace movement in the U.S. was not mainstream opinion. A growing chorus of dissenters doubted the truthfulness of military leaders, questioned the wisdom of national strategy, and increasingly emphasized the futility of staying the course. However, the silent majority of American's supported President Johnson and his handling of the war in Vietnam.

Popular CBS TV anchor Walter Cronkite suspected that the Pentagon and General Westmorland had been for some time been at best giving overly optimistic reports on the progress of the war or at worse intentionally misinforming the American public. So, in February 1968, he went to Vietnam and saw:

1. How badly the Tet Offensive had hurt the U.S. and GVN forces.
2. How radically inaccurate the military's reports of the situation were.

What he saw was reported on a CBS News broadcast "Who, What, When, Where, Why: Report from Vietnam." on February 27, 1968.

He had written the narrative himself, brushing up his work as a radio reporter in World War II. The show opened with battlefield images over which came his familiar steady voice: *These ruins are in Saigon, capital and largest city of South Vietnam. They were left here by an act of war, Vietnamese against Vietnamese. Hundreds died here. Here in the ruins can be seen physical evidence of the Vietcong's Tet Offensive, but far less tangible is what these ruins mean, and like everything else in this burned and blasted and weary land, they mean success or setback, victory or defeat, depending on whom you talk to.*

Anyone who has wandered through these ruins knows that an exact count is impossible. Why, just a short while ago a little old man came and told us that two VC were buried in a hastily dug grave at the end of the block. Had they been counted? And what about these ruins? Have they gone through all of them for buried civilians and soldiers? And what about those fourteen VC we found in the courtyard behind the post office at Hue? Had they been counted and tabulated? They certainly hadn't been buried.

"We came to Vietnam to try to determine what all this means to the future of the war here. We talked to officials, top officials, civilian and military, Vietnamese and American. We toured damaged areas like this, and refugee centers. We paid a visit to the Battle at Hue, and to the men manning the northernmost provinces, where the next big communist offensive is expected. All of this is the subject of our report".

During the next half hour, contradicting Westy's assurances, Cronkite reviewed the totality of the holiday surprise: *"Intelligence people American and Vietnamese, agree on the same story. They figured that the enemy might launch a big attack on Saigon or another South Vietnam city, but they admit they grossly underestimated the enemy*

ability to plan, to provision, to coordinate, to launch such a widespread full-scale attack as this."

Turning to Hue, he summarized the month long struggle, and, showing images of the smashed city, he said, *"The destruction here was almost total. There is scarcely an inhabitable building in the whole of Hue. Whatever price the communists paid for this offensive, the price to the allied cause was high. If our intention is to restore normalcy, peace, serenity to this country, the destruction of those qualities in this, the most historical and probably serene of all South Vietnamese cities, is obviously a setback."*

He noted that Hanoi's hope of triggering a popular uprising had failed, but he quoted Nguyen Xuan Oanh, a critic of President Thieu explaining that the disruption of life in the South had made the effort "very successful." Cronkite detailed the failure of the pacification program and the clear evolution of the conflict from small-scale encounters with a furtive, relatively powerless enemy to "large armies locked in combat, moving toward a decision on the battlefield."

Then he wrapped it up, delivering the commentary that he had conceived even before his trip to Vietnam, and which he now felt he had confirmed firsthand: *"Tonight, back in more familiar surroundings in New York, we'd like to sum up our findings in Vietnam, an analysis that must be speculative, personal, subjective. Who won and who lost in the great Tet Offensive against these cities? I'm not sure. The Vietcong did not win by a knockout, but neither did we. The referees of history may make it a draw . . . On the political front, past performance gives no confidence that the Vietnamese government can cope with its problems, now compounded by the attack on the cities. It may not fall, it may hold on, but it probably won't show the dynamic qualities demanded of this young nation. Another stand-off."*

We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds . . . To say we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest that we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory conclusion."

On the off chance that military and political analysts are right, in the next few months we must test the enemy's intentions, in case this is indeed his last big gasp before negotiations. But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could. This is Walter Cronkite. Good night."

Cronkite's cautious pessimism had tremendous impact and made it much harder to dismiss those who opposed the war as "hippies" or un-American. It was hard to imagine an American more conventional and authentic than Walter Cronkite. The anchorman may not have declared an end to the war, but he had declared the end of something far

more significant. For decades, certainly since World War II, the mainstream press and, for that matter, most of the American public, believed their leaders, political and military. Tet was the first of many blows to that faith in coming years. Americans would never again be so trusting. Citations: "Who, What, When, Where, Why; Report from Vietnam". CBS Television, 27 February 1968 and Hue 1968: A Turning Point of the American book by Mark Bowden, CBS News archive

27Feb 68

The AC-130 flew its first official combat mission in SEA against trucks on the Ho Chi Mina Trail.

28 Feb 68

The 3rd ARRGp passed the 1,000th combat save since it began operations in SEA in 1964 when Major Dale Oderman and his Jolly crew of Det 1 37 ARRS at NKP made a pickup near Mu Gia Pass. The recovery had all of the ingredients of a good story; an F-105 pilot with 79 missions completed, two broken legs, a first save for the RCC, a descent into the jungle by the PJ, the 21st save for the PJ Sgt Joe Duffy, on a 6 month tour extension, and a bit of hostile action in the neighborhood.

11. We had excellent exposure and coverage on our 1000th combat save. As usual with some of these stories, we had to stretch a couple of points to have everything line up properly, however, all the necessary ingredients were obviously there: an F-105 pilot with 79 missions; two broken legs; a SAR Task Force; scramble; pararescue descent; ground fire; a first save for the RCC; the 21st save for the PJ; and an Air Force Academy graduate for the co-pilot. We brought the crew to TSN from NKP, went through their story a couple of times and then did a TV panel type discussion at the AFVN studios. Cameras were present from NBC, ABC, CBS, BBC, and AFN. Without even a note we plugged away at that for a half hour after which we went down to JUSPAO for a "Show and Tell" before 60 to 70 press representatives from all over the world. Although the recovery film was not of the best quality, it was fresh and new and well received. Following that, we did essentially a repeat of the TV show with each man telling of his part in the mission followed by a question and answer session. According to the 7AF Director of Information, it was a good show all the way through and I believe we got as much mileage out of number 1000 as we possibly could. The crew said they'd much rather make a few more flights to North Vietnam rather than go through that again.

From 7 Mar 68 3Gp CC letter for Feb 1968

29 Feb 68

For the first time a special close in B-52 ARC LIGHT strike was flown where the clearance limit was reduced from three to one kilometer. All bombs impacted in the desired area.

13. Save summary for February 1968:

	<u>Combat</u>	<u>Non- Combat</u>	<u>USAF</u>	<u>USN</u>	<u>USMC</u>	<u>USA</u>	<u>ARVN</u>
HH-53	4	0	4	0	0	0	0
HH-3E	11	34	4	7	33	0	1
HH-43	10	24	20	2	0	12	0
Total	25	58	28	9	33	12	1

Paul E. Leske

PAUL E. LESKE, Colonel, USAF
Commander

cy: PAC ARRC

From 7 Mar 68 3Gp CC letter for Feb 1968

March 1968

1 Mar 68

7th AF SAR Manual 64-1 was published this date and released to all field units by 7 March

10 Mar 68

The AGM-78A was employed for the first time in combat. Wild Weasel crews (F-105) from Takhli RTAFB used it against an SA-2 Fansong radar at a SAM site in NVN.

11 Mar 68

Lima Site 85 overrun by NVA. Crown 1 & 2 coordinated and refueled the Jolly Greens evacuating 128 friendlies from the site.

15 Mar 68

The first six F-111A's arrived at Takhli RTAFB to begin operational tests. Called "Combat Lancer" flights began on 20 March while the first sorties over NVN were on 25 March. Two aircraft were lost during the last week of March.

18 Mar 68

Det 1 37 ARRS HH-3E's based out of Nakhon Phanom RTAFB redesignated Det 1 40 ARRS

20 Mar 68

Commando Super Sabre FACs (F-100Fs) stopped an estimated 150 - 200 vehicle truck convoy in an incident that became known as the Great Truck Massacre.

25 Mar 68

F-111s fly their first combat mission against military targets in North Vietnam.

27 Mar 68

Extensive search started for "Omaha," the first F-111 downed in SEA. Two F-111's lost during the last week in March

31 Mar 68

President Johnson in a television address announces that he will not seek reelection, and as a bid for peace, he orders a bombing halt north of 20° north parallel in NVN effective 1 April and proposes peace talks. The halt initially applies above the 20th parallel, but is soon moved south to the 19th parallel. Later in the year, this halt merges into a broader bombing halt.

He hoped once again to induce North Vietnam's leaders to return to the Paris peace table. Although Hanoi agreed to begin discussions, it continued to pour 22,000 troops into South Vietnam every month. So the U.S. doubled its air operations south of the 20th parallel, concentrating on enemy troops and supplies crossing the DMZ.

After several months of discussions at Paris, on Oct. 31 President Johnson ordered a complete halt of all air, naval, and military artillery bombardment of North Vietnam and the "Rolling Thunder" campaign came to an end. The enemy had a sanctuary at home as well as in Cambodia.

April 1968

6 April 68

The 1st Cavalry Division and the 1st Marine Regiment along with ARVN rangers and paratroopers moved overland and relieved the troops at Khe Sanh. They met little resistance because the NVA had begun to withdraw ten days earlier. The 77 day siege at Khe Sanh was over and the battle won by the United States.

Operation Niagara completed. During the 70 days of operations, the USAF delivered nearly 96,000 tons of ordnance. This was twice as much as the 48,000 tons that were delivered in the Pacific Campaign by the AAF during the 1942-43 period. Sortie totals were: TAC = 9,745 USN = 5,436 EB-66 = 366 SAC = 2,553 USMC = 6,034 RECON = 1,542 FAC = 1,586

14 Apr 68

Det 1 40 ARRS transfers one HH-3E to 37th ARRS. Begin of drawdown of Det 1

15 Apr 68

Crown watches pilot of Bear 3 eject over South China Sea. Calls in Jolly Green Giants to make pickup; survivor in the water less than five minutes

21 April 68

Crown locates survivors of Blue Max 27, and Army UH-1, using HC-130P DF equipment. Eight survivors rescued under heavy enemy fire.

23 Apr 68

Det 1 40 ARRS transfers a secondS HH-3E to 37th ARRS

30 Apr 68

LtCol Costello assumes command of 39th ARRS relieving Col Marshall

May 1968

3-4 May 68

TIC SAR. PJ James Locher WIA & two JG's battle damaged. Locher survived his injuries in this mission only to be KIA in June 68.

5 May 68

Start of another major enemy offensive against Saigon, the May or "Second Tet Offensive" spread throughout the country

7 May 68

The Paris peace talks begin.

The first Walleye (AGM-62) mission was flown

The AC-130 was declared operational

11 May 68

Death toll for the week ending 11 May was 562, the highest to date in the war

12 May 68

Crown coordinates rescue of USA CH-46 "Swift 5-1 WIA x 25, crew x 5, KIA 16 Total 46 at scene. PJ deployed via hoist. Darkness settled in. 4 JG's conduct night hoist recoveries until all but 8 rescued. Those 8 picked up at first light.

13 May 68

First PJ graduates from Recondo School. Harwell Quilliam

14 May 68

President Lyndon B. Johnson presents the Medal of Honor to Captain Young.

22 May 68

40th ARRS HH-53B hit by 37mm. The first Paveway mission was flown in SEA.

24 May 68

The first SA-2 SAM missile site was discovered in the Dong Hoi area in NVN

25 May 68

The first OV-10 Bronco's arrived at Bien Hoa AB

30 May 68

The number of USAF personnel authorized in RVN was 61,132

30 May 68

During a rescue mission in Laos, 40th ARRS PJ Sgt Thomas A. Newman descends from an HH-53 while under intense enemy ground fire to rescue a downed Air Force pilot. Hindered by darkness and enemy fire, Newman orders the helicopter to depart. On the ground he starts a search for the missing pilot. Risking detection by the enemy he calls out for the pilot. Newman finally finds his pilot and radios the Jolly to return. When the chopper returns, Newman secured the pilot to the forest penetrator and shielded him with his own body as they were hoisted into the aircraft. For heroism in battle he is awarded the Air Force Cross.

SERGEANT THOMAS A. NEWMAN. Late in the afternoon of 30 May 1968, a Jolly Green crew from Detachment 1, 40th ARRS, Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand, is launched to recover the pilot of a downed F-105 Thunderchief near Savannakhet, Laos. While en route, the helicopter's copilot receives word the downed airman is incapacitated. Upon arrival at the scene, Sergeant Newman volunteers to descend the rescue hoist and recover him.

Surrounded by enemy forces, Sergeant Newman sets up a circular search to locate the survivor. In the dense jungle, it is full darkness. After making one circle, Sergeant Newman sees and hears automatic weapons fire being directed at the hovering helicopter overhead. He urgently demands the helicopter leave in order to protect itself and to make it quiet so he can more stealthily search for the pilot. It departs. Newman sees a muzzle flash off to his side. Not knowing if it is the downed crewman, he drops to the ground and inches forward knowing if it is the downed crewman, he might be mistaken for the enemy. If it is the enemy, he risks death. Another shot rings out. He inches closer. When he is certain the barely discernible image in front of him is the survivor, he closes in and identifies himself. In the darkness, the two men hear weapons fire and movement around them. Newman radios he is shutting down his radio for a few minutes to avoid detection. Within twenty minutes, the searching soldiers move away, and Newman calls the helicopter back for an immediate extraction. But when the forest penetrator is lowered, Newman loses sight of the cable in the darkness and the vines. He radios for the excess slack to be taken up. Unaware that he is entangled, he is jerked off his feet and upward through the trees. Upside down at some eighty feet above the ground, he manages to radio the helicopter that he is entangled. It immediately lowers him back toward the jungle floor. At his precarious viewpoint, he sees intense automatic weapons fire some fifty to seventy-five yards away, all of it being directed at the Jolly. Suddenly his body catches on some branches. His foot is released from its tangled hold in the cable and he falls to the ground. Miraculously, his only injury is a sprained wrist. Newman quickly puts the survivor on the forest penetrator and joins him, protecting him with his own body during the ascent to the helicopter. As they are hoisted in, automatic weapons fire again rakes the darkness, searching for the Jolly Green. Under its cloak, they depart the area and make it back to NKP. In addition to receipt of the Air Force Cross, Sergeant Newman is also named recipient of the Cheney Award, the twelfth enlisted man to ever receive this prestigious award. After his pararescue commitment, Sergeant Newman leaves the Air Force and attends college. He receives a commission and returns to the Air Force to serve a full career.

31 May 68

Streetcar 304 SAR. 189 sorties used to rescue survivor who was picked up on 2 June.
(see JRCC log pages 6 thru 28)

June 1968

1 Jun 68

LtCol Thacker assumes command of 39 ARRS relieving LtCol Costello. A VC sapper team penetrated Tuy Hoa AB and at 0130, a series of explosions occurred destroying two C-130's and damaging another. Pedro 24 from Det 11 38 ARRS provided firefighting assistance to the fire department that resulted in saving another C-130 from being engulfed in the flames from adjacent fire.

3 Jun68

Jolly 25 in the water at 190/52 Ch12 due to transmission failure. Jolly's 31 & 10 enroute to area. Parts and transmission fluid being flown to Jolly 25. Temp repairs made and JG25 flew back to DaNang. See SAR log p.32 thru 34

6 Jun 68

Hobo 17 down at 330/11/ch85 1 POB. Scrambled Jolly 27 & 31 from DaNang. JG AC says performance charts say hover not possible at survivors location. However, survivor was on top of mountain at 5100 feet. JG 31 dumped fuel down to 500lbs, and with a 10-12 knot wind and a planned escape route, he will attempt a pickup. JG31 picked up survivor. See SAR log p39 & 41
JG 31 medevac 11 POP enroute Ch 107

7 Jun 68

Hobo 17 & 17 SAR. JG 68 put PJ on ground at 2nd site, Reports site completely hopeless as finding a body. Spads escorting JG 68 to Khe Sanh See SAR log p44
Updated info: JG did not put man on ground. Site looked completely burned over. Directed to return and put man down on ground or say why they can't.
King to Queen: Send Jolly to southern crash site and check for body. Take KIA from northern site to NKP per Col Holman

MEDEVAC JG 33 to Cu Lao Cham Island for critically injured person. Picked up small Vietnamese boy and delivered him to NSA Hospital RTB Ch 77 at 10:27

MEDEVAC Det 10 Pedro 39 scrambled for PBR P/U at XS020020. Navy man with head wound. Took him to Dong Tam Hospital. Pedro 37 landed Binh Tuy 1115. SAR log p45

8 Jun 68

Master 01 SAR. F-105D downed in NVN at 0909L Sandy's scrambled. JG's holding feet wet. Misty 41 has voice contact with pilot on ground. Take ground fire up to 15,000 feet. 37mm up to 5,000 feet, other AAA up to 15,000 feet. Waco flight going in with CBU's to suppress AAA. 0944L Blue Chip gives border clearance. Spads taking heave 37mm fire

and having trouble locating survivor. 1017L high performance aircraft hosing down the area heavily. 1027L Spad 11 took hits. Spad 12 reports heavy fire from all quadrants. 1038L Misty 41 states that in his opinion will not be able to get survivor out due to heavy ground fire and loss of voice contact with survivor. Gen. Sweat orders all SAR forces to pull out now. 1840L strong beeper of short duration 10 miles NW of Master 01.

Hudson 82 A&B SAR. F-4D downed in support of Master 01 SAR. Both rescued.

Hobo 16/17 JG 68 in area at 0100Z. One tail number 2267 is A-1 that KIA came from. Spad has looked at other wreckage and says there is nothing to see. Bluechip ordered mission suspended

2220Z Redeye 15 SAR opened. Overhead A/C has voice contact with survivor position 190/39/77. Queen launching 2 JG's and 2 Spads. Voice contact with one survivors and beeper contact with 2nd survivor. Negative ground fire in area. Updated position 219/55/77 FAC in area OSC has visual contact with "B" and beeper response from "A" 2330Z JG's 23/33 in area will try pickup "B" first. 2345Z JG 23 being vectored to "B" 2356 JG 23 has "B" on board and moving in to get "A" 0004Z JG-23 has "A" parachute in sight. 0014Z JG 23 has "A" on board and heading to CH 77

9 Jun 68 See SAR log p45-57

0035Z Master 01 SAR reopened. F4 has voice contact with survivor at 327/25/109. Area is still hot. Misty says there is a 37mm within 400 yards of survivor. Suppression aircraft needed. Misty believes area can be sanitized. JG 07/28 scrambled from Quang Tri.

0045Z Misty 11 reports 37&57mm within 400 meters of survivor. Looks like a SAR trap. 2 Spads scrambled from Ch107. 6 F-4's coming from Panama Control

0058Z JG 07/28 holding feet wet.

0115Z from Misty 11, new position for survivor YD066931, still in contact with survivor

0126Z survivor has authenticated correctly. Multiple fast movers strafing area with napalm, 250's and 500's. Sy's, JG's, & Spad's holding feet wet. Spad 11 & 12 launching from Ch77 and they have gas masks. Pickup attempt around 0330Z

0230Z JG's 07/28 will refuel using USN high drink.

F-105 pilot Major Carl Light was rescued by a Jolly.

0220Z Hellborn 215 down north Asha Valley, 225/37/69 area is hot. JG's 22/23 scrambled from Ch77

0317Z Hudson 02 bailed out feet wet. Two good chutes in sight. JG 07 has them in sight and is waiting for them to hit the water, position 350/25/109

0323Z JG 07 landing on water making pickup.

0325Z JG 07 has both survivors. Both in good condition and will bring them to Ch103

0342Z JG 07 drops Hudson survivors at Ch103. Will be back feet wet orbit 0410Z. JG29 will go in for Hellborn p/u without a high bird if needed.

0400Z Hellborn SAR. JG22 going in for pickup. Survivor popping smoke now. PJ will have to go down due to survivor injuries. JG had to pull out due to ground fire.
 0425Z JG23 took hits and is down in the area with fire in the rear fuselage
 0442Z JG23 looks like negative survivors. This is report from Spad 01 who is checking again.
 0445Z Spad 01 confirms no survivors; 4 POB (see SAR log p55)
 0525Z FAC states JG-23 hit ground on fire and broke apart. Spads 1 & 2 both hit by ground fire in wings, engine, prop and fuselage
 0606Z Queen area is suppressed enough for a try. JG-28, SY 9&10, & Seaworthy gunships going in.
 0611Z Forces pulling out. Took GF, will work area over again. JG-28 took hits
 0615Z JG 28 says fire is out and will try to make it as far as he can before he has to land. JG 24 escorting 28 which is trying for CH85
 0620Z SY 6/6 have survivor in sight. JG 28 has lost 1 engine
 0624Z JG31 in for attempt. Master Lead survivor rescued. Hellborn SAR still open.
 0645Z JG 28 landed CH85. JG24 with him.
 0702Z Crown 2 requests use of spads with CS agent. TACC will check with Pleiku.
 0707 TACC Spads with CS agent will be ready in 1 hour
 0733 Blue Chip says Pettycoat 07 will be available to air photo JG23 wreckage.
 0748 2 Spads with CS CBU-19 ready in 15 minutes and will launch ASAP. JGs 33 & 27 will be onscene about 0830 and they have gas masks on board.
 0811 One Spad went through area and picked up no GF. Thinks it's safe for JG. JG 24 will be low bird.
 0816 JG 24 about 1 mile out. Took GF and is pulling out.

Hellborne 215, Jolly 23, Master 1, & Hudson 2 SARs. 120 sorties used to rescue survivor (*fm 39th unit history*). In the middle of a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) encampment, thirty-seven miles west of Hue RVN, a USMC A-4E "Hellborn 215" has been shot down. Its pilot, 1Lt Walter R Schmidt, lies on the ground with a broken arm and leg. The enemy is using him as bait to lure SAR aircraft, especially the very vulnerable Jolly Green Giants, within killing range. Jolly 22 and Jolly 23, 37th ARRS scramble to Lt Schmidt's shoot down location. Air strikes pound the area and brutalize the enemy, but with little effect. Three times Jolly 22 attempts to reach the survivor, but each time it is repelled by ground fire. When that Jolly is forced to depart because of low fuel, Jolly 23 assumes the low bird role. Jolly 23 is piloted by Lt Jack Rittichier and Lt Richard Yeend. The FE, Sgt. Elmer Holden and the PJ, Sgt James Locker manned the aircraft defensive weapons. The crew fights its way in but is forced to withdraw. Again, it goes in, this time surrounded by gunships, but, again, the enemy attacks. As the crew hovers over the survivor, bullets punch into the aircraft and it begins to burn. Jolly Green 23 attempts to egress, but is mortally wounded; it falls to the ground and explodes, killing all onboard. The pilot, USCG Lieutenant Jack Rittichier, one of three U.S. Coast Guard exchange pilots flying with the 37th ARRS at DaNang AB, becomes one of the USCG's

war fatalities. Sandy lead then flies low over the survivor and observes what appears to be his lifeless body. SAR attempts were called off at this point. The four Jolly crewmembers and Hellborn 215 are declared MIA. Their status is later changed to KIA. Sources = SAR logs, 50 years and folder

5. We bailed the Navy out again this month by providing a Jolly Green and crew to the carrier Yorktown for 3 days. During a coastal penetration of North Vietnam after a downed Navy pilot, one of their Big Mollars (SH-3 armored) was shot up pretty badly but made it back to the DLG. Due to the confined space, they couldn't move it after landing so that it blocked the second bird. All the rest of their armored helicopters were out of commission so they swallowed their pride and asked the Air Force for help. No missions were accomplished for the Navy during this period.

6. The 9th of June was Black Sunday. The 37th used 9 helicopters to prosecute two missions, one of which was in the A Shau Valley with the other in North Vietnam above the DMZ and inland from the beach some 5 miles. The A Shau Valley mission was unsuccessful, however, on the other mission, the F-105 pilot was successfully retrieved from North Vietnam. The persistence and sheer guts of our crews was nothing less than magnificent. Even after Jolly Green 23 was shot down, destroyed, and the crew KIA, the remaining crews wanted to press on to recover the wounded Marine pilot (Hellborn 215) in the A Shau. However, the mission was terminated late that evening by direction of General Momver after all attempts failed to isolate the downed pilot. Jolly Green 28 was hit earlier in the mission and, with an engine out due to fire, headed for Khe Sanh, jettisoning equipment

to gain enough altitude to barely clear the mountains. Although flying in ground fire enroute no hits were taken and the crew succeeded in landing the aircraft successfully. With Khe Sanh under intermittent mortar attack, there seemed to be a good possibility of losing JG 28 on the ground, but fortunately, two days later an Army Skycrane airlifted it back to Danang.

8. Save summary for June 1968:

	<u>HH-53</u>	<u>HH-3</u>	<u>HH-43</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Combat	1	17	9	27
Non-combat	0	2	12	14
USAF	1	10	6	17
USN	0	3	2	5

Source = 3rd ARRGp Monthly CC Letter 4 July 1968

10 Jun 68

OL-1 39 ARRS Udorn RTAFB and Det 2 39 ARRS Clark AB, RP deactivated

11 Jun 68

LtCol Wesley assumes command of 39 ARRS. LtCol Thacker becomes operations officer.

37th ARRS June 68 demographics – Average unit strength was 187 PCS personnel. Authorized strength was 247 for an average 70% manning. 14 HH-3's were assigned to the unit.

In the first six months of 1968, Hanoi lost over 100,000 troops killed in action and had countless others wounded. This was about one half of their entire strength in Laos and SVN at the beginning of the year. This was the equivalent of ten army divisions. By comparison, allied losses during the same period were 20,000 KIA. From May through July, thousands of enemy soldiers were defecting for the first time in the war. The 1968 Tet Offensive was over, NVN had run out of men. The offensive had been an unmitigated military disaster. Politically, NVN was in better shape. They had a bombing halt in NVN, the peace movement in the USA was at an apex of activity, political will in the USA to continue the war was wavering, and a new president was going to be elected soon. Perhaps the new president of the USA would quit the war.

source = Summons of the Trumpet p.208-209

July 1968

1 Jul 68

AIRMAN FIRST CLASS JOEL E. TALLEY. On 1 July 1968, Jolly Greens 27 and 31, from the 37th ARRS, DaNang AB, RVN, are dispatched to intercept an F-105 aircraft that has received battle damage and is en route to the Gulf of Tonkin for bailout. But the aircraft fails to make it, and the pilot ejects. He lands in the jungle just outside the enemy town of Dong Hoi. The downed pilot is surrounded by enemy troops, all who are aggressively searching for him. Jolly 27 flies in and attempts the rescue but is driven off by ground fire. Having jettisoned its external fuel tanks, low on fuel, and deep in enemy territory, Jolly 27 leaves the area, escorted by Jolly 31. Jolly Greens 29 and 22 soon arrive on scene. Jolly 29 works its way to the area of the downed crewmen, but hostile fire is too intense. It makes another attempt but is again driven away by ground fire. Darkness settles over the scene, forcing both rescuers and enemy to wait. The stranded pilot, injured from his ejection, spends a painful night evading and concealing himself from a determined foe. The next day, the contest continues. Attempts are made but fruitlessly so. One Jolly receives so much battle damage, it is forced to return to base. An A1-E, Spad 11, is shot down; the pilot doesn't eject. Finally, Jolly 21 blazes its way through the heavily defended region and Airman Joel Talley descends to the ground. It takes him a while to locate the badly injured pilot. He does so only by moving amongst the enemy, carefully plotting their location, realizing at any moment he could be discovered. When Talley finds the man, it is obvious a fractured pelvis prevents any travel to a predetermined pickup area. Using his radio, Talley vectors Jolly 21 to his location. The extraction device is lowered, and Talley encircles the survivor to protect him from enemy fire. And it comes. As soon as they are lifted off the ground, a hail of gun fire encircles the helicopter. No sooner do the two men clear the tree tops than the pilot, a USCG exchange pilot, immediately exits the area with the two men dangling below. They are eventually reeled aboard the aircraft, and Airman Talley administers medical treatment to the badly injured man during the return trip to base. *Source = 50 years*

1 Jul 68

LtCol Charles Klinkert assumes command of 37th ARRS

37th daily alert schedule July 68 was

Gulf Tonkin	AM	1 HH-3E
Orbit Mission	PM	1 HH-3E
Quang Tri Alert		2 HH-3E
DaNang Alert		2 HH-3E
DaNang Training / Alert Standby		1 HH-3E

1 July 68

Start of Operation THOR in the southeast sector of the DMZ, aimed at reducing the threat from AAA and Artillery positions in the area.

2 Jul 68

Scotch 03 SAR. F-105 pilot rescued after being down overnight in North Vietnam

8 Jul 68

Roman 02 SAR. F-4D downed in NVN. Alpha was 1Lt Charles W. Mosley. Bravo was 1Lt Don M. Hallenbeck. Both were rescued by Jolly 19. Unable to rescue on first day because of darkness setting in prior to the Jolly's arrival. Survivors bedded down for the night. Both were authenticated and then rescued the next day during a first light SAR.

Source = www see folder

14 July 68

Start of an interdiction program in Route Package I which continued until October.

15 Jul 68

On his 82nd combat mission, Major R.K. Hanna's F-105, call sign Panda is shot down by antiaircraft fire in North Vietnam. His parachute descent ended with him landing on the side of a cliff and breaking his ankle. He is rescued by HH-3 Jolly Green 37. Jolly crew was: Captain Heft A/C, Captain Gibson CP, TSgt Peale FE, Sgt Jay T. Lombard PJ.

25 Jul 68

Hellborn 20 SAR. USMC A-6 Intruder pilot shot down on the evening of 25 July 68, about 32 miles north of the DMZ. Hellborn 20 Alpha (Major Curtis Lawson) is on the bank of a river, and talking to overhead aircraft on his survival radio. No radio contact was ever made with Bravo. Due to darkness, Alpha is bedded down for the night. A FAC remains in the area to keep in touch with him. Sandy's from NKP launch at first light and start working the area. Next, Sandy's and Jolly's were scrambled out of DaNang at 1000L. The Jolly's and their Sandy's were put on a high orbit about 10 miles west of Hellborn 20. After the NKP A-1's started taking significant amounts of ground fire, they ordered the DaNang Jolly's out of the area and had the DaNang A-1's accompany them back to DaNang. They were told to refuel, have lunch and be ready to return when needed. In the meantime, the on scene command was passed to a FAC who was putting in airstrikes every 5 minutes or so. This FAC had coordinated over 120

strike sorties into the area around Hellborn 20 Alpha. At about 1500L, the aircraft from DaNang launched again. Despite all this close air support, the FAC and Sandies were still taking a lot of 12.7mm fire. When the area was as quiet as the Sandy's thought it could get, the Jolly started in and picked up Major Lawson. It turned out that Bravo (Captain Paul G Brown had been captured. He was repatriated on 14 March 1973, as part of "Operation Homecoming." See *Hellborn folder*.

29 July 68

Two Viet Cong sapper teams infiltrate Tuy Hoa AB, RVN and destroy two HC-130 "Crown" aircraft, tail numbers 66-0218 and 66-0214

HEADQUARTERS 3RD AEROSPACE RESCUE & RECOVERY GROUP (HARRG) APO SAN FRANCISCO 96307	
REPLY TO ATTN OF:	3C
SUBJECT:	Monthly Commander's Letter
TO:	Brigadier General Allison C. Brooks Commander Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service Scott AFB, Illinois
6 August 1968	

1. The pace in Southeast Asia, if not accelerating, remains at a sufficiently high level of activity to keep the days from becoming dull. The trend in out-country missions for the past eight months has been towards massive tactical support of a given SAR mission in order to negate increased hostile efforts to prevent recovery. This, coupled with what appears to be the start of the third phase of the NVA 1968 offensive, manages to keep the majority of 3rd Group personnel on their toes. In the Saigon area we've had some excitement due to terrorist activity, however, that's not exactly news around here. The good news is that the countermeasures developed at the direction of General Abrams have apparently been quite effective since no rocket attacks have occurred this month. At Danang, however, it was another story on 22 July when Danang took an attack by six 122MM rockets, three of which landed outside, but close to, the Jolly Green area. No battle damage or casualties were sustained, however, on the same day high gusty winds, connected with a thunderstorm, blew about 80% of the hangar roof off and the operations and administrative areas were thoroughly inundated. Red Horse got right with the program replacing the sheet metal, this time fastening it down a little more soundly. Of course, the hangar has not been usable since it has been under repair.

2. A 3ARRGp Commander's Conference was held at Udorn on 26-27 July, which was quite successful. With the changes in commanders, it is necessary from time to time to talk through policies and emphasize certain recurring problems. On the night of our arrival, the base suffered its first attack by infiltrators, in fact the first of any base in Thailand. The center of interest was a C-141, reputedly at Udorn to evacuate the three pilots to be released from North Vietnam. A Det 5 Pedro saved this aircraft from being seriously damaged or destroyed, and the infiltration squad was driven off with two killed and five captured. We are not yet knowledgeable of the ethnic origin of this group.

Handwritten notes: *For dist.*, *Ex 100*, *12/9*, *12/10*, *00C*, *7200*

4. In order to get some sort of handle on the costs of saving a life in SEA, we have roughed out some figures that we think put us somewhere in the ballpark for such determination. In FY 68, 905 lives were saved by 3ARRGp units and detachments (combat and noncombat). Our operating costs for this fiscal year were determined at approximately \$19.4 million. This total was reached with the assistance of the 7AF Comptroller and is subject to correction by ARBDC. However, represented within this total are best estimates of messing costs, expendable supplies, building maintenance, office equipment, ground and aircraft accident costs, maintenance and POL costs for all aircraft, and wages and TDY funds expended for all personnel. The procurement costs of our authorized aircraft was approximately \$85 million. Assuming a ten year amortization based on airframe life, one year's depreciation is \$8.5 million plus costs of aircraft lost, which in FY 68 was roughly \$5 million (four HH-3's and one HH-43F). Dividing 905 saves into the total of \$32.9 million shows an approximate cost of \$36,350 per life saved. Not included are hardware recoveries (F-111 capsule, drones, etc.) and hundreds of med evacs. Commercially, it might be hard to sell; militarily, it's a bargain.

9. Save summary for July 1968:

	<u>HH-3</u>	<u>HH-43</u>	<u>HH-53</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Combat	8	6	0	14
Non-combat	2	15	0	17
USAF	6	6	0	12
USN	0	1	0	1
USA	0	2	0	2
USMC	4	3	0	7
F/MIL	0	3	0	3
CIV	0	6	0	6

Paul E. Leske

PAUL E. LESKE, Colonel, USAF
Commander

1 Atch
a/s

Source = 3rd ARRGp Monthly CC Letter 6 Aug 1968

August 1968

1 Aug 68

Gen. George S. Brown assumed duties as Commander, 7AF, and as Deputy Commander for Air Operations, MACV.

1 Aug 68

56 Air Commando Wing redesignated 56 Special Operations Wing. 1st SOS (Hobo), 6th SOS (Spad), 22nd SOS (Zorro), & 602nd SOS (Firefly) provided A-1's for RESCORT. A-1's on the frag order for SAR support used the callsign Sandy. During a SAR, fraged for missions other than SAR were commonly diverted and these aircraft would use their squadron callsigns.

12 Aug 1968

OV-10 Bronco FAC aircraft directed its first strike in RVN

18 Aug 1968

Start of the enemy's August or "Third Tet Offensive", with attack by fire in III Corps, spreading with attacks by fire and ground assaults throughout RVN. This offensive showed the lessening combat capability of the VC/NVA, which had taken heavy losses during TET and again in May.

30 Aug 1968

Udorn RTAFB, Thailand. 40th ARRS pararescueman Leon "Lenny" Fullwood is part of a three-man team that attempts to recover the crew of a T-28 aircraft that has crashed into a river in a known insurgent area. The crash causes interest at very high levels, both within and outside the Department of Defense. He makes repeated dives into the river, fighting a twelve knot current and zero visibility. The work is highly dangerous. Not only is the team in constant danger of attack by hostile forces, the inherent hazards of performing underwater operations within the tangled mass of wreckage lends its own risks. Fullwood is awarded the Bronze Star for this effort. Two months later, as a crewmember on a HH-53 crew, he earns his first oak leaf cluster (OLC) to his Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) while recovering an injured fighter pilot downed by enemy fire in hostile territory. The helicopter comes under heavy automatic fire during the recovery, and Fullwood, while unprotected on the rear ramp, pours devastatingly effective fire into the hostile positions. The pickup is a success. That same year, he earns his second OLC to the DFC by, again delivering highly effective suppressive fire power *on enemy positions while his helicopter hovers* for twenty-two minutes to recover an injured pilot. He also receives his eighth OLC to the Air Medal as a member of a backup crew that acts as a decoy in an extraction area to draw ground fire away from the recovery helicopter. Source = 50 years

30 Aug

Bihn Thuy AB mortared. Det. 10 38 ARRS suffered damage to one HH-43 that included the rotor shaft, rotor blades, and nose bubble. The helicopter was out of commission for 24 days. During the 3rd quarter of 1968, Det. 10's PJ's volunteered 316 hours of medical work assisting the emergency room and surgical department of the Can Tho Province hospital.

31 Aug 68

Boxer 01 SAR an F-4 is down feet wet off of Cam Rahn Bay. Don Goodlet receives Airman's medal for this mission.

September 1968

1 Sept 68

Carter 02 SAR in NVN. F-4 (Major Wilson) shot down. HH-3, Jolly 36 recovered Wilson. Jolly crew was: Captain Heft A/C, Major Silver CP, Sgt Gallagher FE, SSgt Beasley (need to find out which Beasley)

3 Sept 68

LtCol John Devlin assumed command of 37th ARRS. Unit manning was at 80%

5 Sept 68

Super "Typhoon Bess" hit DaNang. The 37th ARRS hanger received severe damage. The entire roof was blown off and the heavy rains caused major damage to the office complex. Civil engineer and 1500 hours of self help repairs began immediately. In two weeks, a new roof had been installed and the office complex cleaned and rendered usable for operations.

6 Sept 68

Start of Stormy FAC missions, using F-4s, which gathered intelligence data and directed airstrikes against targets in NVN and Laos.

14 Sept 68

Barracuda SAR in Laos. F-105 (Captain Tribble) downed. Rescued by Jolly 20. Jolly crew was: Capt Harwood AC, Major Silver CP, Sgt Anderson FE, A1C David Cobb PJ

17 Sept 68

Thermal SAR in Laos. An RF-4 is (Captain Leighton) downed. It's pilot is rescued even though he could not remember his call sign or how he was shot down. Jolly 16 made the pickup. It's crew was: Major Silver AC, Major Reagan CP, SSgt Price FE, A1C Charles King PJ

20 Sept 68

Col Hollon H Bridges assumes command of 3 ARRGp

27 Sept 68

0-1 FAC Black Ace 19 and JG 27 SAR. PJ deployed. FE WIA.

30 Sept 1968

USAF strength in RVN was 61,405

October 1968

5 Oct 68

JG 10 lost on SOG team extraction in Laos. Major Wester and Sergeant Lawrence KIA. Two HH-3s assigned to the 37ARRS were scrambled from DaNang to extract a ground party in the vicinity of the A Shau Valley. In the course of the mission, one of the HH-3s was disabled and forced to return to base. The other HH-3 was shot down and destroyed. Three more HH-3s were scrambled to recover a total of eight survivors (including 2 from JG 10). Major Don Olsen and his crew hoisted the survivors into their helicopter. Major Olsen was awarded the Air Force Cross.

20 Oct 68

F-4 Dover Lead down by Tiger Island. JG 29 downed during Dover SAR. All were rescued by another JG. Steve Northern's last SAR. See folder Vietnam, Misc, Steve Northern. At that time he was the most living decorated PJ in USAF

22 Oct 68

Hobo SAR. A-1 (Major Bagwell) downed in Laos. Rescued by Jolly 17. Jolly crew was: LtCol Brown AC, Captain Lintner CP, Sgt Burnett FE, A1C Douglas Horka PJ

25 Oct 68

Manual SAR. F-4 (Lt Richardson) downed in North Vietnam. Rescued by Jolly 16. Jolly crew was: LtCol Brown AC, Captain Heron CP, MSgt Maples FE, A1C Barry Hebert PJ. The weather was terrible. "We were really lucky to make the pickup," was the way Lt Col Royal Brown, an HH-3E "Jolly Green" rescue crew commander described Friday's (October 25) early morning rescue mission, over the southern panhandle of North Vietnam. Col Brown and his crew, all assigned to Detachment 1, 40th ARRS, picked up 1st Lt Darrell Richardson, an F-4 "Phantom" pilot assigned to the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing, DaNang AB, RVN.

Lt Richardson's F-4 was hit by antiaircraft fire 20 miles southwest of Dong Hoi, North Vietnam. He punched out and landed in a double canopy jungle, suspended 30 feet above the ground. He decided to remain up in the trees to conceal himself from enemy forces searching for him. The plane went down at 10 P.M. on October 24th. Lt Richardson knew he would be spending the night in North Vietnam because the rescue helicopters did not have a combat night recovery capability.

The "Jolly Greens" were scrambled in the early morning hours, timing their arrival for the first rays of the morning sun. At first light, four A-1E Sandy's from the 602nd SOS were over the area searching for Lt Richardson. The cloud ceilings were so low and the flight visibility so poor that the A-1E's were unable to effectively search for the downed pilot. Col Brown volunteered to enter the area with his helicopter and crew and conduct a search. "Finding the pilot was a real problem," said Col Brown. "The weather was so bad, we were actually hovering in the clouds. The ceiling was less than 150 feet with less than one-half mile visibility. Finally, we could see him from the side, but not from directly above because of the trees.

MSgt Lee Maples, the flight engineer, let down the penetrator "...but we had to bring in back up because the trees blocked it from reaching the downed pilot. We had to send the Pararescueman down." A1C Barry D. Hebert, our PJ, was the real key to the rescue according to co-pilot Captain Robert Heron. "The PJ just snatched him right out of there." Airman Hebert was hoisted into the trees near Lt Richardson. The PJ used his hand held radio to let the FE know when he was next to Lt Richardson. "The pilot was still hung in the trees by his parachute," said Airman Hebert. "I lifted him up a little on to the second seat of the penetrator and then cut him free of his parachute. Despite being out there all night he was in good spirits," Airman Hebert said. The pickup was completed by 7:25 A.M. **Lt Richardson had this to say during his ride on the Jolly back to DaNang, "My eye is messed up. My shoulder is messed up. My knee is messed up. But I feel great!"** Nothing like another satisfied customer to start the day off. *Stars & Stripes use photo in Lee Maples folder*

27 Oct 68

A-1E pilot rescued

30 October 68

MAC pararescueman Sgt Duane D. Hackney recived the Cheney Award for gallantry in action in Vietnam.

31 October 68

President Lyndon Johnson orders the military to cease bombing of North Vietnam. Operation Rolling Thunder ends. This order remains in effect until the Easter Offensive of 1972.

31 October 68

Project COMBAT BRONCO completed. Following the evaluation, OV-10s were assigned to operational units.

NOVEMBER

Friday, 1 November 1968 (2000 hrs-L, Việt Nam time)

President Johnson halts all bombing of North Vietnam. All air, naval, and artillery bombardment of NVN was stopped by order of President Johnson. Reconnaissance missions continue, as do "protective reaction" strikes if reconnaissance flights are fired upon.

"Now, as a result of all of these developments, I have now ordered that all air, naval, and artillery bombardment of North Vietnam cease as of 8 a.m., Washington time (EST) Friday (1 November 1968) morning."

Note: The President recorded the address on 30 October 1968, in the Family Theater at the White House for broadcast over nationwide radio and television at 8 p.m. on 31 October.

Air Recon continued. NVN sorties redirected to LOC in Laos. Reconnaissance missions continue, as do "protective reaction" strikes if reconnaissance flights are fired upon.

2 Nov 68

4. Significant Missions:

a. Mission 6-38-20-8307. At 1635 local on 2 November 1968 Pedro 95 was launched by JSARC to recover the crew of a U.S. Army OH-6 Helicopter which had been downed 42 miles northwest of Bien Hoa. Upon reaching the scene at 1720 local Pedro 95 contacted the FAC (Sidewinder 16) who was orbiting the wreckage located in the triple-canopy jungle. Two UH-1 gunships, two OH-6's and one CH-47 were also in the area. One survivor was walking around and the other was pinned under the wreckage. The PJ (A1C Ingulli) was lowered to the scene on the forest penetrator. He took with him 200 feet of nylon rope which had one end secured to the RH-43. Airman Ingulli tied the rope to the wreckage and Pedro 95 with the help of an Army patrol team, which had just arrived, lifted the wreckage so that the survivor could be pulled free. Airman Ingulli put the severely injured man in the litter which had been lowered and advised Pedro 95 to take the man to the nearest hospital because he was dying. After evacuating the injured man Pedro 95 return to the scene of the downed OH-6 and recovered the other survivor and A1C Ingulli. This occurred after darkness had settled. Pedro 95 went in blacked out and located the spot by a flare set off by A1C Ingulli. The second man had a broken leg. A total of one hour hover time was used during the recoveries. I later learned from the Air Force ALO for the 199th Infantry Brigade that the first man was dead on arrival and that the autopsy showed an AR-47 round had entered his head above the left eye. The 27 man Army patrol which assisted had been airlifted into the area to assist in the recovery. They were extracted the next morning after a wild night. This mission was further complicated by the failure of the right main gear on Pedro 95 while landing at Quan Loi. Lt Kolar the RCC completed the rest of the mission by hovering the helicopter for off-loading the second survivor and until a Jack and sand bags were placed under the aircraft upon return to Bien Hoa.

Source = Det 6 38 ARRS monthly Commanders letter to 3 ARRGp

9 Nov 68

Udon RTAFB, Thailand. 40th ARRS pararescueman Robert Koecher aids the successful recovery of an injured fighter pilot by manning an automatic rifle in the exposed helicopter door and supplying suppressive fire at enemy gun positions. His defensive instincts are so keen he is able to anticipate nearly every enemy move. His actions bring a successful conclusion to the mission, and he is awarded the DFC. Three months later, he earns the first OLC to his DFC for again providing uncanny suppressive fire power from an exposed gun position during the rescue of an airman

deep in hostile territory. He receives an Air Medal for participating in sustained combat missions from 24 August 1968 to 25 November 1968.

10 Nov 68

Nine man recon team rescued

11 Nov 68

Operation Commando Hunt initiated. The goal was to interdict men and supplies on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, through Laos and into South Vietnam.

15 Nov 68

U.S. Navy aircraft, formerly bombing in NVN, started strikes in Laos, and ARC LIGHT strikes increased there. Between 15 November and 31 December, 838 B-52 sorties were flown in support of COMMANDO HUNT and in STEEL TIGER South (below 16 30' N latitude).

18 Nov 68

Nail SAR, O-2 (Captain Grenoble) downed in Laos, rescued by H-3 Jolly 15.

Litter SAR, F-100 (Captain Welch) downed in Laos, rescued by H-3 Jolly 15. Jolly 15 crew was: LtCol Brown AC, Captain Wheate CP, Sgt Hannegan FE, TSgt Aaron Farrior PJ

19 Nov 68

Wolf SAR. F-4 (Lt Boone) downed in Laos. Rescued by H-3 Jolly 15. Jolly crew was: Major Sancton AC, Captain McKinley CP, Sgt Berry FE, A1C Douglas Horka PJ

21 Nov 68

Typhoon evac from Tuy Hoa by HC-130's

22 Nov 68

Five man ground team rescued.

In November 1968, the U.S. launched an air campaign against the Ho Chi Mina Trail because North Vietnam was sending more troops and supplies than ever along this route to South Vietnam. Increased sortie rate available because of bombing halt in NVN. This new operation was still in full force as 1968 ended.

December 1968

4 Dec 68

Tampa SAR. F-4 (Major Gallagher) downed in Laos. Rescued by H-3 Jolly 17. Jolly crew was: Captain Harwood AC, Major Warwick CP, Sgt Burnett, TSgt Beasley PJ

6 Dec 68

Dallas SAR. F-105 (Captain Walker) downed in Laos. Rescued by H-3 Jolly 36. Jolly crew was: LtCol Brown AC, Major Weeden CP, MSgt Maples FE, A1C Charles King PJ

8 Dec 68

A-1E pilot rescue

11 Dec 68

Pleiku AB, RVN. Detachment 9, 38th ARRS, pararescueman Leif Arvidson is awarded the Silver Star for saving eight critically injured survivors of an Army UH-1 Huey helicopter after it crashes. The helicopter rests in extremely tall trees on a sixty degree slope and can only be reached by using the hoist and jungle penetrator. Arvidson is lowered to the ground where he spends more than nine hours assessing the men's injuries and administering medical treatment before allowing them to be hoisted out. All the while he is being sniped at by enemy forces who take advantage of his lack of personal concern and safety. Multiple HH-43 Pedro's sorties, under fire, are required but all personnel are extracted.

12 Dec 68

Ridge SAR. F-4 (Captain Drewery) downed in Laos. Rescued by H-3 Jolly 15. Jolly crew was: Major Reinhardt AC, Captain Gibson CP, Sgt Gallagher FE, A1C Charles King PJ

13 Dec 68

Candlestick SAR. C-123 (Lt Turner) downed in Laos. Rescued by H-3 Jolly 16. Jolly crew was: Captain Harwood AC, Major Warwick CP, Sgt Scott FE, TSgt Dolford

20 Dec 68

Milestone 407 USN A-6 SAR

21 Dec 68

Litter 81 SAR for F-100

25 Dec 68

HH-3's from Det 1 40 ARRS scramble into Laos for a downed pilot. A1C Charles D. King, the PJ, was lowered at the site, where he located the pilot and secured him to the hoist. At this point ground fire erupted and Airman King radioed this message. "I'm hit, I'm hit. Pull out." Airman King was listed as MIA.

28 Dec 68

ARRS combat saves in SEA pass 1,500

31 December 68

USAF authorized strength in RVN was 61,579

Sergeant Steve M. Northern, completed 30 months in SEA and personally recorded a total of 51 combat saves. He received two Silver Stars during his tour of duty. Later in 1970, Sergeant Northern was killed in an industrial accident in Los Angeles.

During 1968, there were two RCCs in SEA. One was at NKP and its call sign was "COMPRESS." The other was at DaNang and its call sign was "QUEEN." Source = Royal Brown Oral History file named Royal Brown.pdf

Note: Check to confirm this. There was probably an RCC in Saigon. The oral history may have missed his statement that there were "two sub-RCCs in SEA." This is speculation on my part and needs confirmation.

1968 was the climatic year of the Vietnam War. While the VC were virtually wiped out and the NVA suffered enormous casualties, the battles of the Tet Offensive caused American's to lose faith in the ability to win the war. Democratic President Johnson ended his one term presidency and a Republican President Nixon had been elected. He promised to end the war with honor. Peace talks were in progress in Paris and beginning in 1969, US troop withdrawals would result in a continual draw down of US ground troops. We were transferring the responsibility for the ground defense to the ARVN and the days of Americanizing the war were over. A new policy known as Vietnamization was the intended result.

Combat sorties in SEA exceeded one million in 1968.

(Source = 7th AF chronology 1968-69)

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