



Mekong Express Mail

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THE THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD, INC.

www.TLC-Brotherhood.org

“MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY – Gunfighter 69 going down!”

by Bill Peterson

It was the Tactical Air Control Center - North Sector “Swid Shift” which is the evening “swing” shift and the midnight to 0700 “mid” combined into one 14-hour overnighter in June 1967. We were engaged in our missions and all was routine, but that was about to change.

The Tactical Air Control Center typically has subordinate radar sites engaged in regional control of fighters and reporting of air surveillance information, but the North Sector TACC atop Monkey Mountain 6 nautical miles northeast of Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam, was uniquely different. It engaged not only the radar inputs of several networked radar sites but also incorporated digitized “special inputs” from the world of special intelligence. This combined to present a composite battle management air picture, which showed in minute detail the air activity of all of North Vietnam, the entire People’s Republic of China (PRC) border to a depth of about 50 miles from the South China Sea across to Burma, including all of Laos.

The primary missions of TACC-NS, callsign “Motel,” included:

Real time warnings to friendly aircraft when they came close to crossing borders into China, using a codeword announced on Guard Channel and the friendly’s callsign,

Issuing “Bandit calls” when hostile MiGs threatened friendly forces operating in ROLLING THUNDER (North Vietnam), BARREL ROLL (Laos) or STEEL TIGER (southern Laos), by transmitting “Bandits Bandits Bulls-eye” (Hanoi) and a location in miles from the bulls-eye, like “west 40” followed by altitude and heading,

Flight Following specific aircraft (photo recce for example),

Large “Alpha Day Strike” missions involving more than 100 F-105 fighter-bomber strike

aircraft and their escort fighters designed to suppress flak or AAA and accompanied by F-4C for MiG CAP,

Supporting Special Operations (like U-2 and SR-71 flights),

Supporting 37th ARRS Search & Rescue missions for downed aircrews.

Border Warnings were critical to the politics of the war in Indochina. In essence, we were being totally proactive in our attempt to warn American pilots of an imminent over-flight, but we were there to vector them away from “the line” and to document the event should that data be needed later by the highest US authority. In addition we were there to make sure our pilots obeyed the “rules of engagement” which prohibited fly-

See *Ambush*, continued next page.

Christmas Message

At this time of year as President of the TLC-Brotherhood let me again extend my family’s best wishes to everyone. No matter your beliefs or even if you embrace no particular religion. May the Warmest and Joyous Wonders come upon you and all of your Family. I hope the coming year will bring prosperity and fulfillment to all of us. May the Lord protect and guide our military men and women who are in harm’s way to protect us. They by the thousands will spend a Christmas away from their family. Look after their families and give them the strength to see the long and lonely separation through. Try to find a way to send a package or two to them or welcome some of them home, the way we never were welcomed. I pray the Flag of Our Great Country will continue to fly above us in the coming year.

May the Good Lord Bless and Keep Each and Every one of us.

John Loftus

President TLC-B

Margaret (Peggy) A. Loftus

My wife

ing into China except when our pilots were engaged with the North Vietnamese Air Force and the dog fight carried both combatants over the border during the fight: the “Hot Pursuit” policy.

The TACC-NS managed the airspace with an eye toward mission accomplishment while we did all we could to prevent an international incident that could serve the political interests of the Chinese or North Vietnam governments. We did not want to give them cause to claim a provocation that could somehow widen the war, or bring China into the war against the United States or take action in other areas, like occupying Laos.

Border violations occurred routinely with the over-flight of SR-71 missions but those were fair game—we expected the enemy to fire at will and fail. Border violations by USAF F-105 fighter-bombers loaded with lethal bombs were another matter, especially when the F-105 could be shot down and create a ton of evidence and some POWs on the ground.

If you look at the structure of the Chinese forces, they are deployed to accomplish specific geographic missions. The nature of the threat varies significantly according to which years you are analyzing, but there are three major areas of concern at almost any time: the Sino-Soviet Border, the Taiwan issue, and

DEW Line and it is called the “two island chain”. These are believed to be “trip wires” for their defenses. Notice that our WESTPAC US operations, including our strategic bases at Clark, and other places like Japan, Taiwan and Korea *lie inside their trip wire*.

It did not occur to us that, from the Chinese perspective, two things were true: we were residing inside their perimeter, and they had us more or less surrounded.

366th Tactical Fighter Wing, Da Nang AB F-4C/E “Gunfighters”

The 366th TFW moved to Da Nang AB and regained the 390th FIS in October 1966. While at Da Nang, pilots were frustrated that they were missing opportunities to shoot down enemy MiGs because the F-4C lacked a cannon and its missiles were ineffective at short ranges. So wing maintainers and aircrews modified the mounting of an external 20-millimeter Gatling gun pod on the F-4Cs used for ground attack for use in air-to-air combat, and in less than a month, starting on May 14, 1967, the wing’s pilots had scored four MiG kills. The gun pod innovation and the MiG kills that followed earned the wing the nickname it carries today, the “Gunfighters.” During this period,

the wing earned a Presidential Unit Citation for shooting down 11 enemy aircraft in a six-week period and other combat actions.

It should be noted that not all the action was in the air. Starting with a Viet Cong rocket attack in February 1967 followed by similar attacks in July and September of that year and with increasing frequency thereafter, several ground personnel were killed and injured. The number of enemy attacks throughout the remainder of the conflict earned Da Nang Air Base its well-deserved nickname: “Rocket City”. The more extensive scheduled aircraft maintenance took place at Clark Air Base, PI.” [Source: *The 366 Wing History Office*]



the PRC-North Vietnam border. The location of bases, and the types of ground attack aircraft reflect the needs to deliver fire-power on the enemy in each of those areas. The mechanics of aircraft range and payload determine what bases are used and what types of aircraft are made available.

Secondly, it is a truism of war that time relates to distance and that has a bearing on early warning and preparedness. The Chinese have a strategic defense concept similar to the NORAD



64th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Da Nang AB F-102 “Scorpions”



In early 1966 the 64th was selected to move to Clark AB, in the Philippines to boost the F-102 inventory in the Pacific region. In preparation for their move, F-102s from the 64th FIS would receive in-flight refueling capability and a Southeast Asia camouflage scheme. In June 1966 during a project code named “Hot Spice”, F-102s from the 64th, would make the flight to Clark AB and officially become a part of the Pacific Air Force’s F-102 force. The 64th FIS “Scorpions” discontinued their alert commitments in Southeast Asia and were inactivated on 15 November 1969.

Besides flying air defense sorties, F-102s of the

See *Ambush*, continued page 9.

The Desk Trip to Long Tieng

By MacAlan Thompson with photos furnished by the author

24 August, Sunday

It was Sunday, August 24th, in Thailand and my wife Sunee and I were off to Vientiane again. It is about an 8-hour drive from our home north of Bangkok, all on 4-to-10 lane roads all the way. It sure is not like it was 30 or even 20 years ago, getting behind a line of 10-wheel trucks on the old 2-lane highway, or trying to pass the “Orange Crush” local buses. The trip is much nicer these days, with lots of gas stations along the way for pit stops, eateries, etc.

We left my Toyota HiAce van at the secure parking, near the international Mekong River bridge at Nong Khai, zipped through Thai Immigration and then went across the bridge through Lao Immigration. In a hired van we went on into Vientiane, which is another 30 minutes or so upstream. In Vientiane we stayed one night at the Maly Guest House near the Nam Phu (fountain square). We had been worried a bit about the flooding from the Mekong River but the water had receded a few days earlier and all that was left were lots of sandbags, and some mud and sand, and downtown was fine and dry. That evening we had dinner with friends at the Sticky Fingers restaurant.

25 August, Monday

We stayed in Vientiane on Monday to attend several meetings. On Tuesday we were off upcountry. Roger Warner (author of *Shooting at the Moon*) was in town. Roger and I had “opened up” Long Tieng in March of 2006 for access. At least we sort of had; access still seems to be highly restricted for most people. The TLCB, however, is a special group. Roger asked if he could accompany us on this trip, and we were delighted to have him.

After seven hours of rough roads we pulled into Xaysomboun/Moung Cha/LS-113, the nearest “town” to Long Tieng. (Note, LS-113 is marked on Jim Henthorn’s super “map scan” project, as are the other Lao airfield sites, at: <http://www.nexus.net/~911gfx/sea-ao.html>) The road up is largely either gravel or dirt, though portions have been improved by

The Phu Bia Hotel and its single-story disco in Xaysomboun awaits the influx of tourists.



the Australian Phu Bia Mining Co. because of needed access for their large (up to 18-wheeler) trucks, which have also wrecked portions of the road. The Phu Bia mine folks are repairing some of the roads where it benefits them. Xaysomboun town is the closest town to Long Tieng that has a large market area, hardware stores, furniture makers and a half-way decent Phu Bia Hotel (at least two stars) with hot water and satellite TV with Thai channels for Sunee. The gal at the hotel told us a couple of trips ago that it had been built by the government in 1995 “for the influx of tourists,” that have not come as yet, so the hotel is mostly shut down except when a few international officials show up and call the cell phone number on the door for the lonely desk clerk/maid to come over and open up. Still, it is the only show in town, except for 2 or 3 “no star” guest houses, so it is fine with us. This trip, the attached disco was open, which looked promising. But our Lao driver, the same guy we have hired for four trips, went over to check it out, and



Maintenance on the road to Long Tieng, beyond Phu Bia.

found it was quiet, and shut down by early evening.

When we got settled we were off to the market area and the restaurant for an early meal and meeting with Bounsouk, the Lao Government area development guy whom we first met in March 2006 when he was based at Long Tieng. Bounsouk was transferred to Xaysomboun in 2007 and has been very helpful to our program.

We informed Bounsouk of the purpose for this trip, which was primarily to fund 70 sets of school desks and benches/stools for the Long Tieng Primary School. They had requested these in February during our visit with John and Nancy Sweet and Bill Tilton. The TLCB Assistance Committee had ap-

Please see **Desks**, continued on page 4

proved a budget of over \$1,000 for this project.

With Bounsouk, we then visited two furniture makers in town and settled on one of them for the project. He gave a two-week period for crafting and then a week or so more to arrange



Ordering the desks. Bounsouk is seated, facing camera and Mac is at far left.

transport up to Long Tieng, some three hours distant.

In the early evening we went back to the hotel and went right to bed. We were surprised at about 0130 hours by a “knock, knock” on the door. Was it Lao police, or military? We did not know; they were not in uniform. But they politely asked for our passports, looked at them, said “fine” and went on their way. I guess they had heard that some “farangs” (foreigners) were in town and wanted to check on them. That is the first time that has happened to us. I guess it must have been Roger, at 6 foot plus, because he is more noticeable than I am.

27 August, Wednesday

We were up early, and were off to the morning market and breakfast at the restaurant. Bounsouk met us there and off we went to Houy Kham, the “Gold Mine Junction,” as I call it, where you turn off north to Long Tieng. Getting there involved one long hour of rough-rough road with billiard-ball rocks on it (right, John, Nancy, Bill?). There is a good-sized market here but we did not stop to look around, having done that before. Gold Mine Junction is quite close to the one-time LS-207. Soon we were off to Long Tieng, which is situated two more hours north (over a less rough road, by comparison, but it still keeps your speed at about 20-30 kph, or 12-18 mph). On this old road they still have several of the old USAID 1973-installed “Bailey Bridges” along the road.

(Note: while Long Tieng is called “LS-20A” or “20 Alternate,” it is not listed as such in the Air America site book for Laos. It is listed, with old information as “LS-30” and “LS-98.” It was a secret place, remember?)

For our lunch on arrival at Long Tieng we had Vietnamese “pho” soup, of course, at the noodle shop with Bounsouk, Xayasith (principal of the Long Tieng primary schools), the #2 from the Ban Nam Ngoua secondary school, and the “nai ban” (village head). Over lunch we discussed the furniture procurement with Xayasith, since the furniture is for his school. Then



Present water source for the school. (New water source photo on page 7.)

we were off to visit the Ban Nam Ngoua site, about five minutes north. The TLCB Assistance Committee had also agreed to a budget of \$400 to fund a water line for the school from an existing water source over to a 2-squatter crapper behind the school that was not being utilized because of lack of water.

Then we went back to Long Tieng to the primary school to see the 4-squatter crapper funded earlier this year by the TLCB, but not quite finished when we visited last February. It had been our first big project, and I had been so afraid we had given them that money and would see nothing to show for it. Now—it is working! But we do need to buy some paint for it on the next trip.



Noodle shop owner in the kitchen, at Long Tieng.

So then we went back to the noodle shop, which is by the road that parallels the old Long Tieng runway, for more talk. By this time it was getting on towards late afternoon, and if we were departing we would need to get going soon, as we’ve had to do in the past. So I again raised the idea with Bounsouk of an RON (remain over night) right there at Long Tieng, which had not been allowed on our previous visits. He said, “Why not? But very difficult, as no place to stay.” I suggested (general) Vang Pao’s old office/house, the only two-story building there, which still stands not far from the noodle shop. Bounsouk said we could not use that because it has been leased by the

people who are going to build the large Nam Ngum 3 dam, nearby. OK, I pressed, how about the old SKY building where Bounsouk used to have a cubbyhole? That would not do either, having no other rooms—if we ROned, he would use his old small room. Grasping at straws by this time, I asked about Xayasith's fairly large house (left over from the "old" days, pre-1975). That is when the noodle shop lady popped up and said we could stay at her place; all four of us: me, Sunee, Roger, and our Lao driver.

That was fine with me, and Sunee went ahead of us to check it out. She came back and said OK; there were roll-out mattresses on the floor, blankets and mosquito nets, and all that is necessary for our stay. Hey, I have stayed like this during my



Sunee getting ready for bed in Long Tieng hooch, hosted by the noodle shop owner.

earlier nine years in Laos, and it is not a problem, though to many folks these hooches would look rather primitive.

By the way, I had noticed a fluorescent light fixture in the dirt floored restaurant and a switch fuse box. I wondered, did they have electricity already? We had seen the fans and a large fuse panel at the SKY building earlier. The answer is: not yet. Long Tieng is wired up, but the power has not yet been turned on. Obviously, it is coming soon.

We enjoyed a big dinner as a group, featuring a fish that the owner had ordered up for her family from the market at the Gold Mine Junction, local rice, some really tough chicken, plenty of fresh veggies, and of course, BEER LAO with ice cubes. After dinner, folks scattered and we got ready for bed. Sunee was happy, as there was satellite TV run off a car battery and there were a few low wattage fluorescent lights. They had a COLD water dip bath just down the stairs to the outside for those brave souls who like such. (For Bill Tilton: it was much nicer on the floor than that "nasty," as you called it, guest house in Gnommarath, mentioned in the last MEM. By the way, I actually thought that Gnommarath guest house was quite OK, compared to a couple of the other places Sunee and I have stayed at while on these TLCB assistance runs in Laos.)

28 August, Thursday

We were up early with the chickens (all Laos seems to have these two-legged alarm clocks) and I went downstairs for a cold shave. It took a while to locate a nail to hang my USAF signal mirror on for shaving. Do you remember those things, the ones with the hole in the middle for sighting an airplane, then flashing a signal? I have been carrying this mirror for

Please see **Desks**, continued on page 6

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TLCB Official addresses and payments to TLCB

ALL payments of *any kind*, as listed below, are to be made payable to: **The TLC Brotherhood, Inc.**, and shall be mailed to the treasurer, at:

TLC Brotherhood
P.O. Box 343
Locust Grove, GA 30248

Always write *payment purpose* on memo line.
Dues (\$25 per year) **Student Assistance Fund**
Assistance donation **BX purchase**
Monument donation **Medical Fund.....etc.**

Reunion 2009: SPACE COAST of Florida

TLCB tax return and board minutes: On web site, in *members only* section. Password 1/15/09): AnneMarie



Sunee and Roger Warner, up for early coffee.

many years as part of my shaving kit.

We had noodle shop breakfast, again with the guys from Long Tieng. Our topics were the two TLCB funded projects, a “contract/agreement” signed by me and the Long Tieng principals and witnessed by Bounsouk representing the Xaysomboun



Below Assistance Committee member Mac Thompson hands generous wad of Lao kip to Bounsouk after agreement signing session. Mac's wife, Sunee, at far right.



District development office and the nai ban. Then there was the exaggerated handing over of the bundles of Lao kip (note, at \$1 = kip 8630, one hundred dollars makes a good sized bundle). By mid-morning we were ready to move on.

First there was the two rugged two hours back to the Gold Mine Junction where Roger took some background video shots and Sunee and I walked around doing a survey of the existing guesthouses. We found one real nice one, one pretty nice, and three real dumps, one of which we knew to be a dump because we had stayed there in 2007 on a trip.

Since it was too late to get all the way back to Vientiane that day, we asked Roger where he would like to RON: here, at Long San, where Roger and I had stayed in March 2006 and we had also stayed with the Sweets and Bill Tilton last February? Or drive on for four hours over the really rough east-west road out to highway 13N and up to Vang Vieng, which was once known as LS-16. I was out-voted by Roger and Sunee, and off we went to Vang Vieng.

On the way, we stopped by Ban Xon, LS-272, the former USAID base after we got kicked out of Sam Thong, LS-20, in March 1970. We found the airfield, but there were no warehouses or other buildings left standing. We came upon 10 modern flat bed tractor-trailers parked by the side of the road. They were 20-wheelers. We asked the villagers what these were doing up in this backwoods spot, because they surely did not look like they had any association with the Phu Bia Gold Mine company or the Nam Ngum 3 dam project. We were right about that: they were Vietnamese trucks, there to pick up some of the 3-4 foot diameter logs that have been lying by the side of the road for the last few years, drying out. They have been sold to Vietnam and would be heading on a long journey up to Hanoi via the Plain of Jars and Sam Nuea.

Then we went on to Vang Vieng, getting there about 1700 hrs. We checked into a nice guesthouse, and enjoyed dinner and suds at a nice restaurant. Vang Vieng is equipped to cater to Western tourists, including groups of American students during spring break.



Vang Vieng in the morning.

29 August, Friday

As always, we were up early, and went out to the river on the west side of town to photograph the tall karsts there with the sun rise and morning ground fog lifting, which makes for some very nice views. Finally we headed south towards Vientiane, a four hours drive on Hwy 13N, stopping at the “Chao La Memorial” en route. Chao La was the Yao/Iu Mien ethnic leader up in the Ban Houei Sai, L-25 and Nam Yu, LS-118A, area in northwest Laos for many years. He died in France. Now there are many from this ethnic group in the Portland, Oregon and Oakland, California areas.

Upon arrival back in Vientiane we had a late lunch at the new restaurant adjoining the Asia Pavilion Hotel (the old Constellation) on Samsenthai Road. We enjoyed a change of menu: hamburger for Sunee and good ribs for me. That evening we had our dinner again at the Sticky Fingers, while reporting on the trip to several resident American friends who showed up.

30 August, Saturday

His business for this TLCB trip finished, Roger Warner chose to stay around Vientiane for a few more days, and Sunee and I were off to Nong Khai to pick up our van and make the

eight-hour drive home. We were tired, but it had been a particularly interesting trip, made especially notable by our RON at Long Tieng, which was a first for us.



As MEM went to press...

In mid-December Mac and Sunee emerged from the wilds of Central Laos from their latest visit and sent us a few “teaser” photographs of what they had found. Here are two photos from Long Tieng.

See these and more of Mac’s photos in color, at <http://picasaweb.google.com/mactbkk/?pli=1>



Mac Thompson, a school official, and Sunee in front of the new water source that makes the bathroom behind them usable at last. See photo of the old water source on page 4.



Sunee Thompson waving from her seat at one of the new desks TLCB has provided this school. Below, the situation before.



2009 Reunion and Annual Meeting

Don't forget: this one will be another great opportunity to get back together and re-new old friendships (or maybe heal old wounds) with your brothers and sisters, and meet new members with experiences you had never heard of. And....it will be held on the **SPACE COAST of Florida**—Don't miss it!

Watch for details at www.TLC-Brotherhood.org, and in the March issue of MEM.

Long Tieng (LS20A) then and now

Photos at left are scanned from prints loaned to MEM by TLCB member Phil French. They were taken during the mid-1960s by Phil at the Secret War headquarters, Long Tieng. In February, 2008, Bill Tilton took the photos at right while on a trip to Long Tieng with Mac and Sunee Thompson and John and Nancy Sweet. This trip was reported in the June issue of MEM. Watch future issues of MEM for more of Phil's photos.



Soldiers, probably Royal Lao, stroll on Long Tieng street.



"Main Street" of modern Long Tieng near the North end of the old runway. Vang Pao house is just to the left, out of the photo.



Among women crossing the East side ramp at the North end of the runway. View is Northwest across the runway toward Skyline Ridge, which is now bare with no road.



Looking South down the runway from what is left of the West side ramp. Town is still to the right, across the runway. Road approach to Long Tieng is from the South, passing along the far (East) side of the runway. Gate is at long rooftops at right.



Long Tieng, looking South. Two-story Vang Pao house in center, runway to left.



Vang Pao main house today, as seen from road near the pho shop.



Ambush, continued from page 2

64th FIS at Da Nang accompanied SAC B-52s on combat air patrols over North Vietnam providing fighter cover against North Vietnamese MiGs. Although missions were flown over North Vietnam, the Southeast Asia-stationed F-102As are not thought to have actually engaged North Vietnamese Air Force fighters in air-to-air combat. In addition, F-102A actually did fly some close-support missions over the South, even though the aircraft was totally unsuited for this role. In these operations F-102s used their heat seeking Falcon missiles to lock onto heat sources over the Ho Chi Minh Trail at night, often Viet Cong campfires. This was more of a harassment tactic than it was serious assault. They would even fire their radar-guided missiles if their radars managed to lock onto something. The pilots were never sure if they actually hit anything, but occasionally they would observe secondary explosions.

The small number of aircraft committed to SEA air defense before 1965 tripled by the end of 1966. At that time 12 F-102s stood alert in South Vietnam (6 at Bien Hoa and 6 at Da Nang) and another 10 in Thailand (6 at Udorn and 4 at Don Muang). Little change occurred in 1967 and 1968, the Air Force keeping a minimum of 14 F-102s on 5 minute alert with the remainder of the force on 1 hour call. [Unit history; Mc Chord Air Museum]

26 June 1967

We were engaged in our missions and all was pretty routine, but that was about to change. Real time intelligence of a grave nature started to flow in and it was obvious that our full



F-102 Delta Daggers on alert at Da Nang



64th FIS Delta Daggers at Da Nang Air Base 1967 - 68 Photo credit: Henry Mclean SSgt, USAF 1st Mob Comm Gp. Posted in www.Airliners.net Photo used with written permission.

attention would be required not in ROLLING THUNDER but over the South China Sea.

The intel reported:

The Chicom airbase at Ling Sui on Hainan's south coast launched MiG-17s

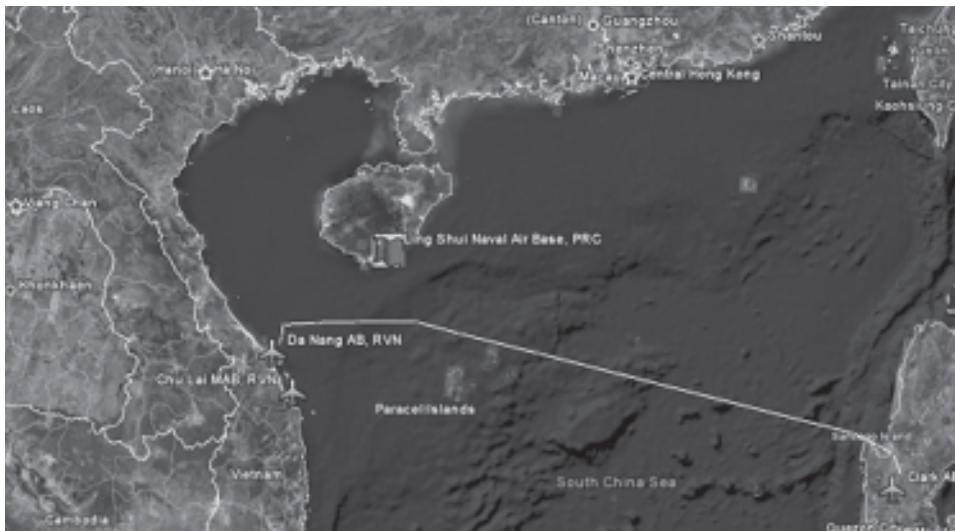
Hostile intent - orders to shoot down the intruder "violating their airspace"

They had identified the target at 135km southeast - the American Phantom

We verified the only possible American target, which was *Gunfighter 69*, an unarmed F-4C from the 390th TFS of the 366th Tac Fighter Wing, Da Nang returning to base from scheduled maintenance at Clark AB in the Philippines. Later, we would find out it was Maj J. C. Blandford and 1Lt J. M. Jarvis ferrying aircraft F-4C 63 7577 from Clark AFB in the Philippines when they were intercepted by Chinese Air Force Shenyang J-5s (MiG-17s) about 25 miles off the southern tip of Hainan island. It became our belief from the evidence that they were *meaconed* (meaconing is the intentional substitution of a false radio beacon signal for the purpose of disrupting navigation generally with the objective of luring an aircraft off its intended course) off their route between Da Nang and Clark beginning about 85 nautical miles out from the Hainan coast causing them to fly almost to the Chinese beach, violating PRC airspace. *So this appeared to be an attack on Hainan and the Chinese were causing it!*

We assessed the situation: an unarmed USAF Phantom over

See **Ambush**, continued next page.



Chinese language official sources and translation service described the incident as follows:

June 26, 1967, in Wenchang County, Hainan Island, 135 km south-east over the international airspace found an American F-4C fighter, 8500 meters high, 850 km per hour. [This is the correct location, altitude and speed for Gunfighter 69. I believe at this point the meaconing was initiated which drew the aircrew off course and toward Hainan from the southeast.]

Hainan Island Naval Aviation Division, 6th Battalion commander was responsible for the air defense

Ambush, continued from page 2

the South China Sea in international airspace was about to be destroyed without warning. There was no positive control yet and it might be another 5 minutes or more until Gunfighter 69 was in radio range and able to establish contact. The men next door at “Panama” CRC (Control and Reporting Center) had no radio contact, nor did they have radar contact. The fact that the PRC had demonstrated “hostile intent” was vested in their launch of two MiG-17s with orders to attack the Phantom.

The Battle for Gunfighter 69

Gunfighter 69 was not yet on *Panama* GCI* surveillance radar nor was it under positive control at this point. The mission of *Motel*, the TACC, was to manage the battle. The mis-

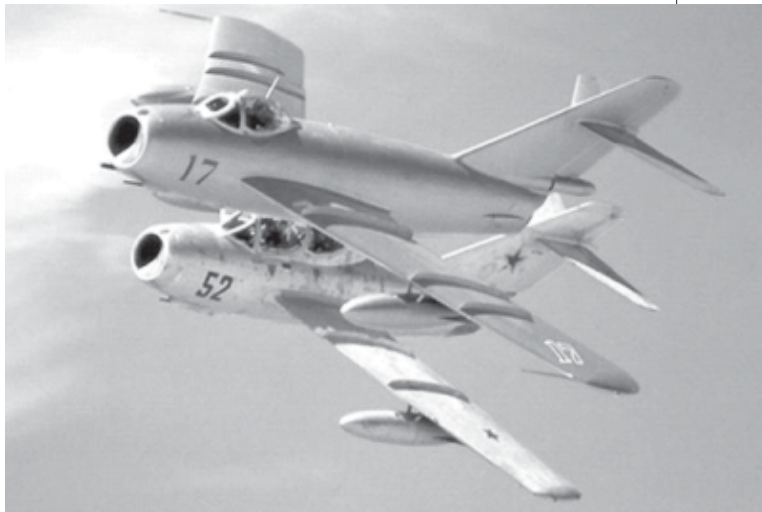
to determine if U.S. aircraft, along international air routes to the south in order to have an international cover for the aircraft for eastern invasion of Hainan Island of Hainan Island from the angle to the south. along the Lingshui activities.

To buy time, the commander immediately ordered 16 Chief Deputy Wang Shu-Shi and Lu and pilots to face enemy. Two-plane after take-off, rushed to the theater (in pairs with maximum power).

Complex weather conditions seriously affected the fighting started. 9000 meters over a large area of dense clouds and cumulonimbus, the 600 meters at low altitude while a thunderstorm. Wang Shu-flying climb to 10,000 meters, is preparing to turn left to the enemy attack, the U.S. plane suddenly dropped a high turn left, slipped out of China’s territorial sea line. A few minutes later, the U.S. plane entered again into Chinese airspace to the east. Wang Shu-chu, another preparation, but once again the U.S. plane suddenly fly out of the island’s territorial waters.

I played “hide and seek” game with U.S. plane—with the plane in the air (heavy cloud formations). Navigator of inaction, according to the intention of the commander, decided to adopt the “enemy outside, I inside, the enemy turned around, I pulled out” as a (tactic) means to guide and Lu Shu-chu and Wang Jiliang are patrolling the coastline on standby.

When the U.S. planes in the Lingshui 55 kilometers turn right onto 3rd invasion of the airspace of China [27nm southeast of the Hainan coast], Wang Shu-Turn hard left at once, rapidly approaching at a distance of 250 meters when the gun salvo has hit 204 meters away from the enemy, the U.S. plane knock down. Lu and Jiliang also hold several meeting and flew on. The U.S. plane crashed immediately with explosion.]



sion of *Panama*, the CRC, was to provide radar and voice control for fighters. Events began to develop very rapidly. *Motel* was now following *Gunfighter 69*, trying to warn the crew while watching the MiG-17s and more PRC fighters, using TACCS Special Sources.

* GCI stands for Ground Controlled Intercept

Badly damaged by cannon fire from the MiGs, the crew ejected at an altitude of about 25,000 feet. At this point we got momentary radio contact with Gunfighter 69 and confirmed by intel: “MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY - Gunfighter 69 going down!”

Motel exercised overall control to defend Gunfighter 69 by expediting the launch of two F-102 air defense birds at Da Nang to intercept the MiGs. As the Delta Dagger F-102s departed Da Nang eastbound, climbing out over the South China Sea, more Intel came in. Other MiGs were launching from another Chinese airfield on Hainan Island. We were outgunned again, so we looked for support from both the 366th TFW F-4s, Gunfighter 69's own Wing, and the Marine F-4s at Chu Lai under the agreement we had with HQ III MAF, but it would be some time before they could launch and be in position to help. Clearly, the Chinese had picked the time and place to bush-whack Gunfighter 69, putting all the American forces seriously behind the power curve and playing catch-up.

The TACC was linked to Red Crown Yankee Station and TF 77 naval forces were now responding with SAR resources enroute to pick up the Gunfighter 69 aircrew. The US Navy was in a race and behind the curve as the Chinese vessel had a head start, and was rapidly closing on the aircrew afloat, alone in the blackness of night. Motel shared our combat information and updated Red Crown. The original MiG-17s had completed their mission and now, with two USAF F-102s closing on them, the MiGs returned to base at Ling Shui on the south coast of Hainan Island. No other MiGs had yet gone feet wet - they maintained an orbit over Hainan Island. The Delta Daggers were coming in fast but they had no MiG targets. The immediate problem was providing protection for our aircrew

until the US Navy ship and SAR helicopter could arrive and effect a rescue.

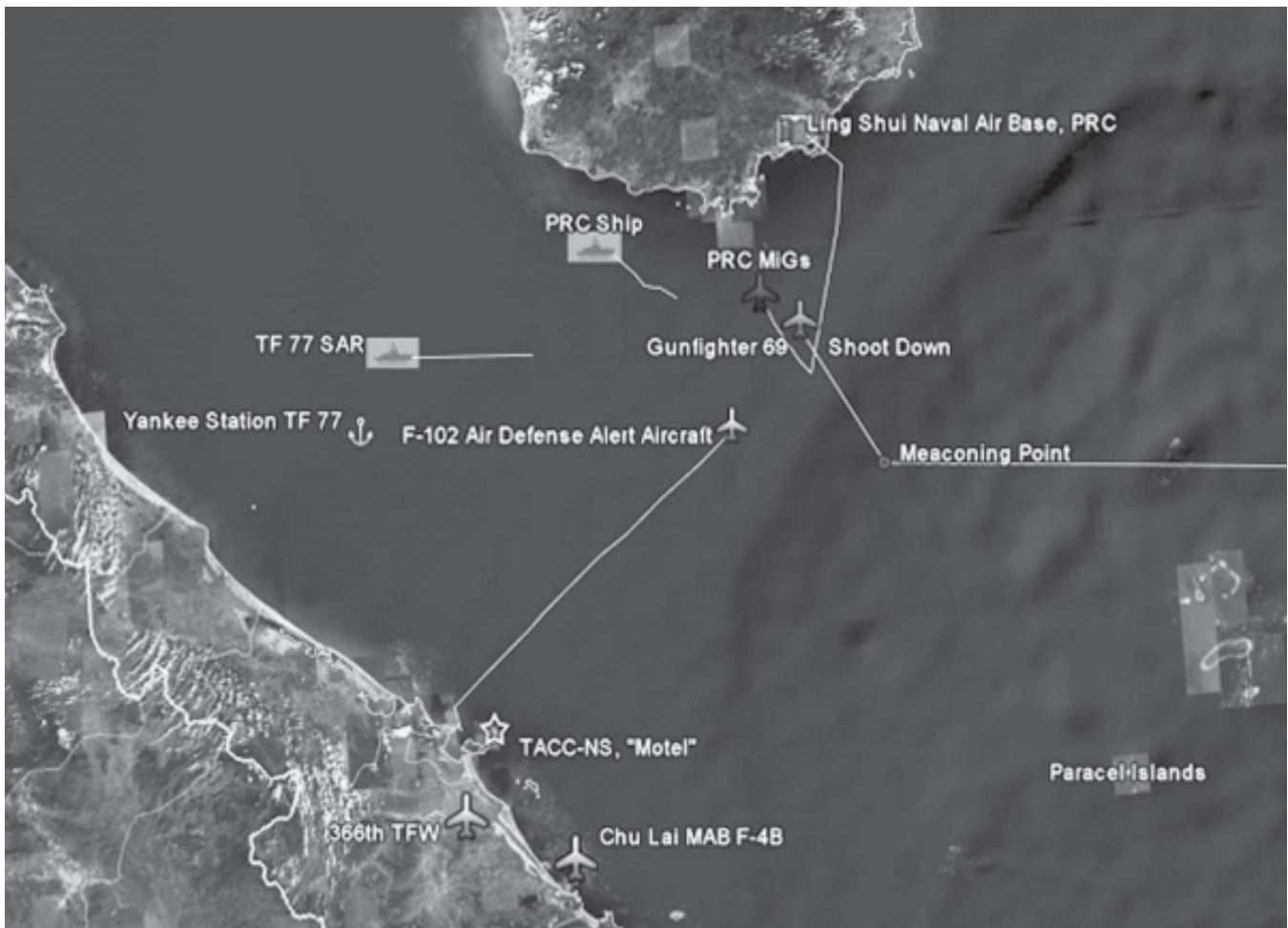
A few minutes later the Chinese MiGs had cleared the area so I re-directed the F-102s to the area where the Chinese ship was supposed to be. After a few minutes the "Deuces" called a visual Ident on the Chinese ship. Lead asked permission to fire and I authorized it: "Permission granted, sink the @\$%^&!" The Deuces rolled in on the ship, then launched 24 2.75mm Folding Fin Aerial Rockets each. After 48 rockets detonated the F-102 pilot reported "Splash One" which confirms a kill. Presumably 48 rockets pierced the ship in a mini-holocaust that ended the combat then and there.

The U.S. Navy picked up the Gunfighter 69 aircrew and all other fighters returned to base.

The orbiting MiGs stayed over Hainan Island, electing to protect the homeland from a safe location. The F-102s recovered at Da Nang. I was briefly chewed out by the Blue Chip Duty Officer, a Brigadier, who asked what my authority was. As a 1/LT Ops Crew Senior Director I answered: "As ranking duty officer I had the obligation to defend our forces and I did, sir." I sweated that for the next two days.

The New York Times covered the story in their 26 June 1967 edition stating that bad weather and faulty American communications caused our jet "to stray over Hainan". It was "war

See **Ambush**, continued page 12.



Ambush, continued from page 11

provocation” said the NYT quoting the Chinese Communist press agency Hsinhua. The Times went on to talk about other shoot downs with the United States steadily escalating the war effort. There was no mention by either the communists or the New York Times of Chinese meaconing an unarmed plane or our destruction of the ship.

This incident should have had some severe repercussions but it did not. Presumably, we killed about 30 Chinese sailors and sank a ship. It is ironic that we focused so much time, effort and treasure along the PRC borders north of Vietnam and Laos while somewhat neglecting the southern airspace. We defended against attacks that came to us and at least one time that did happen, but we had a gap in the area south of Hainan and the Chinese exploited it.

On April 1, 2001 there was a collision between a Chinese F-3 fighter and the United States Navy IT-3E ‘Aries’ surveil-

lance plane resulting in a U.S. emergency landing on Hainan Island. McGill Law School studied that incident in depth: “... it represented a very public clashing of the world’s two great super powers as they strove to define their positions in the world order and postured to save face, in their oriental and occidental ways. Above all, the incident raised five distinct questions for the future of world peace.”

Interesting. I have not heard a word about the 26 June 1967 incident in 40 years, an event that was caused by the Chinese and which resulted in a heroic save by American forces and in death to the Chinese combatants. Now I am going to go paint a red ship on my Jeep Liberty.

William R. Peterson was the Senior Director of the TACC - North Sector, Charlie Crew, at the time of this incident. He had subsequent service as a squadron operations officer and commander, followed by assignments in the Pentagon, NSA and CIA.



Lima Site under attack

By Jim Stanitz

The navigation arts, when applied to aviation, are particularly critical, especially when the aerospace vehicle is down in the weeds, among the trees, mountains and other constructs that can cause instant grief to the aviator. This is a story of navigation in the midst of war in Barrel Roll (northern Laos).

As Airborne Intelligence Officer on ABCCC Alleycat, maps were part of my purview. One night, I believe it was in November or December 1968, a Lima Site in our area of responsibility came under heavy attack, and the Forward Air Guide (FAG) called Alleycat for assistance. Fortunately, we had a flight of two A1 Skyraider aircraft that we could divert to support the site. Unfortunately, when the aircraft arrived overhead the site, heavy undercast hid the mountains and valleys. The FAG reported low but workable ceilings. What to do?

After consultation between Alleycat Senior Controller and the flight leader, the leader said that if Alleycat could come up with a good radial and distance for the site from Udorn TACAN (tactical aid to navigation) and a let-down heading, he would go into the undercast. The Senior Controller directed me to come up with the essential information – and it better be accurate!

My Intel tech, Curt Ulrich, and I dug out the 1:50,000 charts and taped them together on the floor of the capsule. Then, using a Weems plotter (a ruler and protractor combined) and a piece of string, we laid out the radial to the site. We then worked out the distance, using the scale at the bottom of the chart. Once we had that information, we reviewed the local area around the site and determined the best let-down heading for the A1s. After we had double and triple-checked the calculations, the senior controller looked at everything closely and said we would go with it. The information was passed to flight lead.

My heart was in my throat; my mouth felt as though it were full of cement dust; I felt I was sweating blood. I prayed that the calculations were correct and that two brave pilots were not going to their doom.

Happily for all concerned, our plot was accurate, our heading was true, and the A1s safely descended into the valley and were able to save the site.

All these years later, I no longer remember the site, but do remember that it was in the northeast sector from Udorn. Perhaps it was LS-01, Muong Ngai. Nor do I remember the call sign of the A1 flight (Firefly, Hobo or Zorro) or the FAG (Red Hat?), but I can never forget the bravery of those pilots who let down on my say-so!

Jim Stanitz was a lieutenant during his tour as an airborne intelligence officer with ABCCC Alleycat, from May, 1968, to April, 1969. He flew 131 missions with 1655.3 hours in that year. After a tour in Europe, he was selected for flight training and became a C-130 pilot. In 1974 and 1975, he flew out of Clark AB, Philippines, throughout Asia, including the Klonghopper base shuttle missions in Thailand. He also flew into Phnom Penh during the siege there, and flew a mission in support of the ICCS (International Control and Supervisory Commission) from Saigon to Hanoi Gia Lam.



The Paraffin Test

by Joseph P. Martino

The year was 1962. The war in Vietnam was at the guerrilla level. Most of the Viet Cong were part-time fighters. They made their living as farmers, but engaged in occasional raids, check-points and ambushes. Counterinsurgency was the US watchword. The problem was to tell the good guys from the bad guys.

I was stationed in Thailand with the Advanced Research Project Agency’s Combat Development and Test Center. Our job was to conduct research and development on means to deal with insurgency. I did a lot of testing of electronic equipment for counterinsurgent potential, as well as carrying out operations research on the wars in Vietnam and Laos.

One obvious distinguishing mark between the good guys and the bad guys was that the bad guys were firing guns. Any fan of CSI is familiar with the term “gunshot residue.” Every time you fire a gun, you get fragments of gunpowder and its combustion products on your hands.

I knew that that the standard police test for gunshot residue was the “paraffin test.” This test is now obsolete, but at the time most police departments used it. The test required using a special low-melting-point paraffin. It was similar to the paraffin my mother used to use to seal jars of home-made jelly. However, that paraffin had a melting point high enough to burn your hands. The kind used in the paraffin test would feel warm to the touch, but would not burn you. The melted paraffin was put on the suspect’s hands with a paintbrush. When it cooled, it was peeled off, like removing the front and back halves of a glove. A special chemical was then dripped on the paraffin. Wherever there was any nitrate, the chemical would turn blue.

I proposed the potential of the paraffin test as a means to tell the good guys from the bad guys. The project was approved and our Thai Army colleagues arranged for me to meet with a detective from the Bangkok Police Department’s “Scientific Crime Detection Department.” They had the equipment and technicians to carry out the test and were eager to take part in the project.

It was easy to take a single suspect down to the station house and run the paraffin test on him. The question we had to answer was whether the test could be applied to a whole village, in the field and in a reasonable time.

Where do you find people who have been shooting guns? One obvious place is an army base. We arranged with a nearby Thai Army base to run the test there. We brought all the equipment and the technicians with us. The only thing the base provided was a shelter under which we could operate and several dozen enlisted men as test subjects.

The project ran smoothly. Once we were set up, the troops filed through, got their hands painted, the solidified paraffin removed, and the chemical applied to the paraffin. We could run them through at the rate of one every two or three minutes.

At first, the results looked good. We were getting positive tests, which we expected. However, it soon became obvious that the results were TOO good. We were getting positive results on clerks who had not fired a gun since basic training. It turned out that carbon paper (remember carbon paper?) tested positive. It also became obvious that these soldiers rarely if ever washed their hands. They were picking up all kinds of things that reacted with the test chemical, and never washed them off.

Administratively, the project was a success. We demonstrated that we could take the equipment and the technicians into the field, run the test on a fairly large group and do it quickly. Operationally, though, the project was a failure. The “false positive” rate was so high there was no chance of using the paraffin test to tell the good guys from the bad guys.

I did have one positive outcome from the project. There was a “cottage industry” in Thailand in making what amounted to a pistol that fired a 12-gauge shotgun shell. It was popular among criminals, but also among the ordinary people. The de-

tective from the Bangkok Police Dept. took me into a room where they had hundreds of them, confiscated from criminals. He gave me one. He also showed me the scars on his hand from when he had test-fired one and it blew up. I decided I was never going to fire mine. Once back in the States, I had a gunsmith “de-mil” it so it would be legal. It is now a non-firing souvenir of my days in Thailand.



The team effort that saved Spooky 03

By Jim Stanitz

An incident that required swift use of navigational skills exists today on audio tape, still very clear and understandable after 36 years. On March 18, 1969, only five days after four AC-47 Spooky gunships had been deployed to Udorn to support General Vang Pao’s forces in Barrel Roll, one aircraft, Spooky 03, lost an engine (fuel starvation – possible fuel blockage) near the PDJ (Plaine des Jarres) and could not maintain 6,500 feet, the safe minimum obstacle clearance altitude for the flight back to Thailand and safety. Spooky’s navigator worked desperately on his map table to determine a course to snake them safely out of the mountains. Spooky also called on Ethan 04, an EC-121 radar picket plane on station over Laos, for assistance with determining/verifying position.

Besides the tactical pilotage charts onboard Spooky, the aircraft had a Tacan receiver and was working off Tacan Channel 113, a unit that was deployed at that time on or near Lima Site 20, also known as Ban San Tong or simply Sam Thong. However, Tacan, like most radio aids, is line-of-sight only, so if Spooky got below the mountain tops, he would lose reception. Having Ethan to provide assistance was a blessing.

Though not evident on the audio tape, it is probable that the crew on Spooky 03 threw everything possible overboard – ammunition, flares, the guns – anything to lighten the plane and help it fly higher and better on a single engine.

Another aircraft in the area, Spooky 02, received interception vectors from Ethan 04 to Spooky 03. The second aircraft could provide stand-off assistance with radio relay, and should the crew of 03 have to bail out, could provide immediate SAR (search and rescue) cover and contact with survivors until SAR forces could arrive.

Using the positions from Tacan 113 for Spooky 03 as provided by Ethan 04, I plotted the course the stricken aircraft took. It was indeed a tortuous route, using valleys to the maximum. I connected the locations provided by Ethan 04 with straight lines to show the approximate route, though I know

See **Spooky**, continued on page 15.

Medical Assistance at Work

by John Schillo, Assistance Committee chairman

One area of the Assistance Program that does not get a lot of attention is the Medical Fund. Thailand has a form of socialized medicine. This means that medical aid is available at little or no charge to the Thai people. However, like all forms of socialized medicine, the availability of services is limited.

In this country, we assume that every hospital or acute care facility can conduct the tests we need, treat the illness we have or perform the surgery we require. Unless you have some rare malady, you would be correct. However, in Thailand, you may have to travel a great distance to get to a facility that can treat your problem. If you are a poor family, as many are in Thailand, you do not have the money for travel, let alone food and hotel bills. That is where our medical fund comes in.



Jiraporn Nonthasri

In August, we had two children, Jiraporn Nonthasri and Phanotep Chawchai., who have heart problems and needed help. In the last issue of the MEM, we reported on Jiraporn (seen here).

Both children were first referred to the Heart Center at Ubon and then both were referred to the Regional Heart Center at Khon Kaen. Neither family could afford this much travel expense. The Assistance Committee approved John

Middlewood's request for \$320.00 travel expense for the children and a family member to travel to Khon Kaen. Jiraporn had heart surgery on August 27th and was in the ICU until September 16. At last report, she was out of the hospital and continuing to improve. Jiraporn had a follow-up visit to Khon Kaen last week at the heart center, and the doctors pronounced her heart surgery a success with no complications. She is not out of the woods yet. In addition to the heart problems, she also has Down Syndrome and suffers from asthma. She is undergoing treatment for asthma. The good thing is that this can be treated at the local hospital. Where would this little girl be now if there were no John Middlewood, no TLCB Assistance Program and no one willing to donate to the program?

We have lost touch with Phanotep and her family. They no longer live where they used to. We can only hope that they have moved closer to the medical facility.

In addition to Jiraporn, we also have another child, Thaipope, who has also been in the hospital at Khon Kaen for the past several weeks. He is now back home again. As I understand it, the doctors have said there is nothing more they can do for him. He has been given instructions as to what to do to live as long as possible. Not a pleasant outlook. All we can do is provide for more trips for treat-

ment for him and his family so that they can spend the maximum amount of time together and he can be as comfortable as possible.

Not all of our children are heart patients. Earlier in the year I told you about Neua, whose foot was badly deformed. Well, with your help, he has undergone surgery and his foot is getting better but still has a way to go before it is straight. The doctors have said there are still improvements to be made but the family is worried about the pain to their little boy and do not want him to undergo any more surgery right now. This is typical of Thai thinking about today rather than the future, which is not unlike the way many Americans think. We can hope that they will allow him to have the surgery and a chance at a more normal life.

In this picture, Somboon is on the left and Neua is on the right.

In May, we paid for Somboon and his mother to travel to Bangkok. He has undergone two surgeries so far is doing very well and his follow-up exam was okay. He is another case, where, were it not for TLCB, he probably would not still be with us today. Bangkok and Chiangmai were the only two places in Thailand that have the kind of surgery that was required for Somboon



Somboon and Neua



Nawapon with his family

We have a new little boy who is being helped and he is quite a kid. His name is Nawapon, and he is in First Grade. Here he is with his family.

He suffers from a blood disorder called thalassemia. He has made two trips to Ubon under TLCB sponsorship and has had several blood transfusions and there seems to be marked improvement. The parents are thankful because they had run out of options and money for treating their son.

see **Medical** continued next page

Medical continued from previous page

Mother is unusual in that her son has missed a lot of school because of his illness but rather than give up, she has taken over home teaching and the boy is ahead of his grade level by over a year already.

We have in the past reported to you about the children who have been successful in fighting their illness. You win some and you lose some. Thaipope's fight will not end in success and the future of Neua is in doubt. Is Phanotep getting treatment? Jiraporn's fight will continue for years to come. It is easy to report a success but not so easy for John Middlewood

and the Assistance Committee members to live with the not so successful outcomes. You cannot save everyone but we want to. We can only do what can be done and we cannot do that without your help. This is not a "reality show." This is reality. Thaipope has not been voted off of the island. Failure is not an option but all too often it is an option we must endure. Do we quit? Do we turn our backs because it is too hard? Do we just abandon Nawapon when he has just begun to fight? Not this group, we may be old but we have always been and always will be committed to help "Any time – Any Place".



Spooky, continued from page 13.

that the onboard navigator was calling out a twisted route to his pilots, bringing them around mountains and keeping them in the clear. (See attached chart.) The confirmation of their location by Ethan was certainly a big help to the crew. On certain occasions, Spooky could not hear the positions provided by Ethan, and Alleycat relayed them since we were closer.

Finally, Spooky 03 emerged from the mountainous labyrinth in one piece. Shortly thereafter, the radar at Udorn, Brigham, made radar contact on the 020 radial at 57 miles from Udorn. Brigham provided vectors to bring Spooky 03 back to Udorn, where he landed safely. (While over Thailand, the crew got the dead engine to start, and it continued to run until they were safely on the ground at Udorn.)

The big hero in this story was the hard-working navigator on Spooky 03, who knew where he was and was able to apply his navigational skills to rescue his crew. The assistance of the crew on Ethan 04 was likewise essential to the safe conclusion of this mission, providing confirmation to the navigator that his plot was accurate.

The audio tape has been cut to reduce nulls, and there are no time hacks. The audio lasts 30 minutes. From the point the audio starts until Spooky 03 lands, the plane had to cover approximately 120 nautical miles. I would estimate it took about an hour of flying time for this event to unfold.

Such stories illustrate the professional efforts of trained military personnel in difficult situations. Navigational training, proper use of charts and radio aids, and keeping a cool head brought such incidents to successful conclusions.



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