

# 1968

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**Unless otherwise specified, this chronology is excerpted from the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 Sahn 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.

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.

31 Jan 68

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 Chronkite 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 propoganda value of the attack. The North Vietnamese were masters of propoganda 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.

February 68

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*

2 Feb 68

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

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 MiGs than MiGs shot down US aircraft

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

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

28 Feb 68

The 3<sup>rd</sup> ARRGp passed the 1,000<sup>th</sup> combat save since it began operations in SEA in 1964

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.

March 1968

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 Fanson radar at a SAM site in NVN.

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.

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.

On March 31, President Johnson ordered a bombing halt north of the 20th parallel. 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 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Regiment along with ARVN rangers and paratroopers moved overland and relieved the troops at Khe Sahn. 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

May 1968

5 May 68

Start of an other major enemy offensive against Saigon, the May or Second Offensive, which 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

14 May 68

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

22 May 68

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, 40<sup>th</sup> 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.

June 1968

8 Jun 68

Master 01 SAR. F-105D downed in NVN. Pilot Major Carl Light was rescue by a Jolly. Hudson 82 A&B SAR. F-4D downed in support of Master 01 SAR. Both rescued.

9 Jun 68

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, 37<sup>th</sup> ARRS scramble to Lt Schmidt's shootdown 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. *Source = 50 years and folder*

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*

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*

15 Jul 68

On his 82<sup>nd</sup> combat mission, Major R.K. Hanna's F-105, call sign Panda is shot down by anti-aircraft 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*.

August 1968

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 offensive, with attack by fire in III Corps, spreading with ABFs 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

Udon 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

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)

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. RF-4 (Captain Leighton) downed. Jolly 16 crew was: Major Silver AC, Major Reagan CP, SSgt Price FE, A1C Charles King PJ

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

October 1968

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, 40<sup>th</sup>

ARRS, picked up 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Darrell Richardson, an F-4 "Phantom" pilot assigned to the 366<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, DaNang AB, RVN.

Lt Richardson's F-4 was hit by anti-aircraft 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 24<sup>th</sup>. 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 602<sup>nd</sup> 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*

September 1968

30 Sept 1968

USAF strength in RVN was 61,405

November 1969

1 Nov 1968

Bombing halt ordered by President Johnson

9 Nov 1968

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.

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

In November 1968, the U.S. launched an air campaign against the Ho Chi Minh 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

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

28 Dec 68

ARRS combat saves in SEA pass 1,500

31 December 68

USAF authorized strength in RVN was 61,579

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.

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